

**Guy De Maupassant**

Four Short Stories

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## Family Life

The tramcar to Neuilly had just passed Porte Maillot, and now was jogging along the long avenue which leads to the Seine. The little engine, harnessed to its wagon, whistled to clear away all obstacles, spat out its steam, panted like a man out of breath who is running; and its pistons made a hurrying noise of iron legs in motion. The heavy heat of the end of a summers day fell on the road, from which rose, though no breeze was blowing, a white dust, chalky, opaque, suffocating, and hot, that stuck on the damp skin, filled the eyes, entered the lungs.

People came out to their doors, seeking air.

The windows of the tram were lowered, and all the curtains were fluttering, moved by the rapidity of the course. Only a few passengers were seated inside (for people preferred on a hot day the top, or the platforms). There were fat ladies with over-stuffed dresses, those ladies of the suburbs who replace the distinction they lack by an ill-timed dignity: gentlemen tired of the office, with yellowed faces, their figures stooping, one shoulder a little higher than the other, through long hours of duty bent over tables. Their restless, sad faces told besides of domestic troubles, of incessant demands for money, old expectations definitely disappointed: for all of them belonged to that army of poor out-at-elbow devils who vegetate economically in a mean plaster house, with a flower bed for garden, amid that region of night-soil deposits which borders Paris.

Quite near to the door, a little fat man, his face puffed out, his stomach hanging down between his straddling legs, all dressed in black with a ribbon in his buttonhole, was talking to a tall, thin-faced, untidy fellow, dressed in very dirty white duck, and wearing an old panama hat. The first man spoke slowly with hesitations which made him sometimes seem to stutter: it was Monsieur Caravan, principal clerk at the Admiralty. The other, formerly a medical officer on board a merchant vessel, had finished by setting himself up at the Rond-Point of Courbevoie, where he applied to the wretched population of that spot the vague medical knowledge that was left him after an adventurous life. His name was Chenet, and he got himself called Doctor. Rumours were current as regards his morality.

Monsieur Caravan had always led the normal existence of men in offices. For thirty years he invariably went to his office, every morning, by the same route, meeting at the same time, at the same spots, the same faces of men going to their businesses: and he came back from the office every evening, by the same road, where he found the same faces that he had seen growing old.

Every day, after buying his halfpenny newspaper at the corner of the Faubourg Saint-Honor, he went to get his two rolls of bread, then he entered the Ministry like a guilty man who is giving himself up as a prisoner: and he gained his desk quietly, his heart full of uneasiness, in the eternal expectation of a reprimand for some bit of negligence that he might have committed. Nothing had ever come to change the monotonous order of his existence: for no event affected him outside the business of his office, promotions, and increases of salary. Whether he was at the Ministry or whether he was at home (for he had married, without a dowry, the daughter of a colleague), he only spoke of the service. Never did his mind, atrophied by the degrading daily task, have other thoughts, other hopes, other dreams, than those relative to the Ministry. But bitterness always ruined his clerky satisfaction; the accession of navy pursers, tinmen as they were called on account of their silver stripes, to the posts of under-chief and chief: and each Sunday, at dinner-time, with his wife, who shared his hate, he had a hot argument to prove that it is iniquitous in every respect to give positions in Paris to people bred to the sea.

He was old, now, not having felt his life go by, for without transition school had been continued by the office, and the school supervisors before whom he used to tremble in days gone by, were to-day replaced by his chiefs, whom he feared frightfully. The threshold of those chamber despots made him shudder from head to foot; and from this continual fear he had contracted an awkward way of approach, a humble attitude, and a sort of nervous stutter.

He did not know Paris any more than a blind man could know it, led by his dog, every day, under the same door: and if he read in his halfpenny paper of events and scandals, he saw them as fantastic tales invented at will to amuse petty clerks. An orderly man, a reactionary with no fixed party, but an enemy to novelty, he passed over the political events which his newspaper, for that matter, always misrepresented in the paid interests of a cause; and when he walked every evening up the Avenue of the Champs-lyses, he considered the swelling mob of pedestrians and the rolling tide of vehicles in the fashion of a traveller far from home, who might be crossing distant countries.

Having completed, this very year, his thirty years of obligatory service, he had been given on the first of January, the Cross of the Legion of Honour, which is the reward, in these administrations under military rule, for the long years of wretched servitude (they are referred to as loyal services) of those sad convicts riveted to the green portfolio. This unexpected dignity, giving him a new and high idea of his capacity, had changed his way of life completely. He had since then suppressed his coloured trousers, and his gay-coloured vests, worn black trousers and long frock-coats on which his *ribbon*, very wide, looked better: and, shaven every morning, scrubbing his nails more carefully,

changing his linen every two days through a legitimate feeling of propriety and of respect for the national *order* of which he made a part, he had become, in the space of a night, another Caravan, cleansed, majestic, and condescending.

In his own house, he would say my cross on every occasion. Such pride took possession of him that he could not even endure in any one else's buttonhole any ribbon of any sort. He was above all exasperated at the sight of foreign orders, which should not be permitted to be worn in France, and he was particularly angry with Dr. Chenet, whom he found every evening in the tramcar, adorned with some sort of a decoration, white, blue, orange, or green.

The conversation of the two men, from the Arc de Triomphe to Neuilly, was, for that matter, always the same: and this day, as on preceding days, they busied themselves first with different local abuses which shocked them both, the Mayor of Neuilly taking it at his ease. Then, as infallibly happened in company of a doctor, Caravan introduced the subject of diseases, hoping in this way to glean some little free bits of advice, or even a formal opinion, if he went about it properly, without letting him see the string on the bait. His mother, for that matter, had been worrying him for some time. She had frequent, prolonged, fainting fits, and although ninety years old, she would not consent to look after herself.

Her great age made Caravan affectionate, and he repeated ceaselessly to Dr. Chenet: Do you see many get as far as that? And he rubbed his hands with pleasure, not because he was greatly concerned perhaps in seeing the good woman live eternally on the earth, but because the long duration of the maternal life was like a promise for himself.

He continued: Oh, in my family, we go far. And so I am sure, that apart from accidents, I myself will die very old. The medical practitioner threw him a pitying look: he considered a second time the reddish face of his neighbour, his greasy neck, his belly falling between his two flabby fat legs, all the apoplectic roundness of an enervated clerk: and, raising with a sweep of his hand his greyish panama hat, he answered sneeringly: Not so sure as that, my boy. Your mother is a wizened runt, and you are only a fat mass of flesh.

Caravan was disturbed and said nothing.

But the tramcar arrived at the station. The two companions got out, and Monsieur Chenet offered a vermouth at the Globe Caf, opposite, where both of them were accustomed to go. The proprietor, a friend of theirs, stretched two fingers out to them, which they pressed over the bottles on the counter: and they went to join three domino players who had been sitting there since midday. Cordial words were exchanged, with the inevitable What news? Then the players went on with their game: then they wished them good night. They

put out their hands without raising their heads, and each went in to dinner. Caravan inhabited, near the Rond-Point of Courbevoie, a little house of two stories, whose ground floor was occupied by a barber.

Two rooms, a dining-room, and a kitchen, where the glued chairs were moved from room to room according to requirements, formed all the flat that Madame Caravan spent all her time cleaning, while her daughter Marie Louise, aged twelve, and her son Philip Augustus, aged nine, ran loose in the gutters of the avenue, with all the urchins of the district.

Above him, Caravan had installed his mother, whose greed was celebrated in the neighbourhood, and whose thinness gave rise to the saying that the good God had practised on her her own principles of parsimony. Always in a bad temper, she never let a day pass without quarrels and furious bursts of rage. She apostrophized from her window the neighbours on their doorsteps, the vegetable dealers, the street sweepers, and the street boys, who, to avenge themselves, followed her from afar when she went out, shouting, Heres another guy!

A small servant-girl from Normandy, incredibly stupid, did the housework, and slept on the second story, near the old lady, for fear of accident.

When Caravan entered his home, his wife, attacked by her chronic malady of house-cleaning, was polishing with a bit of flannel the mahogany of the chairs scattered thinly in the solitude of the rooms.

She always wore thread gloves, adorned her head with a bonnet with many-coloured ribbons perpetually slipping over an ear, and she would repeat, any time that anybody surprised her waxing, brushing, polishing, or washing:

I am not rich, in my house everything is simple, but cleanliness is my luxury, and thats just as good a one as any other.

Gifted with a self-willed, practical good sense, she was in everything her husbands guide. Every evening at table, and later on in their bed, they chatted at length about office business, and although she was twenty years younger than he, he confided in her as in a director of conscience, and followed all her advice.

She had never been pretty: she was ugly now, little and thinnish. The want of skill she showed in dressing had always hidden the feeble feminine attributes, which should artfully have come to light with a well chosen style of attire.

Her skirts seemed perpetually twisted on one side: and she scratched herself often, no matter where, with absolute indifference as to who was present, through a sort of mania which was almost a disease.

The only ornament she allowed herself consisted in a profusion of twisted silk ribbons on the pretentious bonnets she was accustomed to wear in the house.

As soon as she saw her husband, she rose, and kissing him on his whiskers: Did you remember Potin, my dear? (this referred to an errand he had prom-

ised to do). But he fell aghast on a seat: he had just forgotten it again for the fourth time.

Theres a fate in it! he said, theres a fate in it; its no use my thinking about it all the day; when the evening comes, I always forget. But, as he seemed distressed, she consoled him.

Youll remember about it to-morrow, thats all. Nothing new at the Ministry? Yes, great news; still another *tinman* nominated underchief.

She became very serious.

To what office?

The Office of Foreign Purchases.

She got angry.

In the place of Ramon then, exactly the one that I wanted for you: and what about Ramon? Retired?

He stammered: Retired.

She got raging angry, and the bonnet slipped on to her shoulder.

Its all done for, you see, that old office of yours, nothing to be done in it nowadays. And whats his name, your purser?

Bonassot.

She took the *Marine Year Book*, which she always had at hand, and looked it up. Bonnasot Toulonborn 1851 cadet-purser 1871, under-purser 1875. Has he been at sea, that fellow?

At this question Caravan brightened up. A fit of gaiety seized him which shook his stomach.

Just as Balin has, just like Balin, his chief. And he added, with a louder laugh, an old joke that all the Ministry found delicious. One mustnt send them by water to inspect the Naval Station at Pont-du-Jour, they would be ill on the paddle boats.

But she remained serious, as if she had not heard; then she murmured, slowly scratching her chin:

If only we had a Member of Parliament up our sleeve? When the House knows all that goes on there, the Minister will give a jump

Shouts broke out on the stair, interrupting her sentence. Marie Louise and Philip Augustus, who were coming back from the gutters, were bestowing on one another, from step to step, kicks and slaps. Their mother rushed out, furious, and taking each by an arm, she flung them into the room, shaking them vigorously.

As soon as they saw their father, they rushed on him and he kissed them tenderly, at length: then, sitting down, he took them on his knees, and chatted with them.

Philip Augustus was a nasty little urchin, ill combed, dirty from head to foot, with a stupid face. Marie Louise was already like her mother, spoke like her,

repeating her words, even imitating her gestures. She too said, Whats new at the Ministry?

He answered her gaily.

Your friend Ramon, who comes to dinner here every month, is going to leave us, little daughter. Theres a new under-chief in his place.

She raised her eyes to her father, and with the pity of a precocious child,

Thats another that has been promoted over your head, then?

He stopped laughing and did not answer; then, to create a diversion, addressing his wife who was now cleaning the windows:

Mammas quite well upstairs?

Madame Caravan stopped rubbing, turned round, set straight her bonnet which had quite got down her back, and, with a trembling lip:

Oh, yes, talk about your mother! She has played me a nice trick! Just think:

Madame Lebaudin, the barbers wife, came up just now to borrow a packet of starch from me, and, as I was out, your mother drove her away, and treated her like a beggar. So I settled her, the old woman! She pretended not to hear, as she always does when you tell her the truth about herself, but shes no more deaf than I am, believe me; its all put on, that; and the proof of it is, that shes gone up to her room at once without saying a word.

Caravan, upset, didnt say anything, and the little servant rushed in to announce dinner. Then, by way of letting his mother know, he took a long-handled broom, and hit the ceiling three times with it. Then they went through to the dining-room, and Madame Caravan the younger served the soup while they waited for the old lady. She didnt come and the soup got cold. Then they began quite quietly to eat: then, when the plates were empty, they waited again. Madame Caravan, furious, turned on her husband.

Shes doing it on purpose, you know. And you always back her up.

He, very perplexed between the two of them, sent Marie Louise to look for grandma, and sat motionless, his eyes down, while his wife angrily tapped the bottom of her glass with the end of her knife.

Suddenly the door opened, and the child reappeared alone, quite out of breath and very pale. She said very quickly:

Grandmas fallen on the floor.

Caravan, with a bound, got to his feet, and, throwing his napkin on the table, dashed for the stairs, where his heavy, hurried footsteps sounded, while his wife, thinking it an ill-tempered ruse of her mother-in-laws, came along more slowly, shrugging her shoulders in contempt.

The old lady was lying full length on her face in the middle of the room, and when her son had turned her over, she lay there motionless and dried up, with her yellow, wrinkled, tanned skin, and her eyes closed, her teeth clenched, and all her thin body stiff.

Caravan, on his knees beside her, groaned: My poor mother, my poor mother! But the other Madame Caravan, after looking at her for a minute, declared: Bah, shes got another fainting fit, thats all: its just to keep us from our dinner, you may be sure of that.

They carried the body to the bed, took off all her clothes, and all of them, Caravan, his wife, the servant, began to massage her. In spite of their efforts, she did not regain consciousness. Then they sent Rosalie to get Dr. Chenet. He lived on the quay, near Suresnes. It was a long way: the wait was long. At length he arrived, and after having looked at her, felt her, listened to the old womans chest, pronounced:

Its the end.

Caravan collapsed on the body, shaken by hurried sobs, and he kissed convulsively the rigid face of his mother, weeping with such abundance that the big tears fell like drops of water on the dead womans face.

Madame Caravan the younger had a conventional attack of grief, and standing behind her husband, she uttered feeble groans, and rubbed her eyes obstinately.

Caravan, his face swollen, his thin hair disordered, very ugly in his sincere sorrow, stood up suddenly: But, are you sure, doctorare you quite sure? The practitioner came up quickly, and, handling the body with professional dexterity, like a merchant who is showing off his goods: Look, my good man, look at her eye. He raised the lid and the glance of the old woman reappeared under his finger, not at all changed, with the pupil perhaps a little larger.

Caravan felt a blow at his heart, and a shudder ran up his bones.

Monsieur Chenet took the stiff arm, forced the finger to open, and, furious as in the face of someone who contradicted him:

But look at the hand: I never make a mistake, you can depend upon it!

Caravan fell back sprawling on the bed, almost bellowing; while his wife, still sniffing, did the necessary things, She brought up a night table, on which she spread a napkin, put on it four candles which she lit, took a branch of boxwood hung up behind the mirror on the mantelpiece, and put it between the candles in a plate which she filled with ordinary water, not having any holy water. But, after a quick reflection, she threw into the water a pinch of salt, imagining doubtless that she was making a sort of consecration in it.

When she had finished the ceremonies which should accompany death, she stood up, motionless. Then the doctor, who had helped her to arrange these objects, said to her in a low voice:

You must get Caravan away!

She made a sign of assent, and going up to her husband who was sobbing, still on his knees, she raised him by one arm, while Monsieur Chenet took him by the other.

They set him on a chair, and his wife, kissing his brow, lectured him. The practitioner approved of her arguments, counselling resolution, courage, resignation, all the virtues that we cannot display in devastating misfortune like this. Then both of them took him again by the arms and took him away. He was crying like a big baby, with convulsive sobs, limp, his arms swinging, his legs soft; and he went down the stair without knowing what he was doing, moving his feet mechanically.

They put him down in the arm-chair he always occupied at table, before his almost empty plate where the spoon was still lying wet in the remains of his soup. And he stayed there without a movement, his eyes fixed on his glass, so stupefied that he sat there even without thinking.

Madame Caravan, in a corner, was talking with the doctor, getting advice about the formalities, asking for all practical information. Finally, Monsieur Chenet, who seemed to be waiting for something, took his hat, and declaring that he hadnt had his dinner yet, made his bow before going out. She cried: What, you havent had dinner? But, stay, doctor, stay with us! What we have is going to be brought in: for you understand that people like us dont have a big meal.

He refused, excusing himself. She insisted.

Come now, stay. In such moments one is glad to have friends near one: and then, perhaps, you will persuade my husband to cheer up a little: he has so much need to take courage.

The doctor bowed, and, putting his hat on a table:

In that case, I accept, madame.

She gave orders to a bewildered Rosalie, then she herself sat down to the table, to make a pretence at eating, she said, and to keep the doctor company. The cold soup was brought in again. Monsieur Chenet asked for a second helping. Then appeared a dish of tripe la Lyonnaise, which shed a perfume of onions, and which Madame Caravan decided to taste. It is excellent, said the doctor. She smiled: Isnt it? Then turning to her husband: Take a little of it, then, my poor Alfred, only to put something in your stomach; remember that youve got to get through the night.

He handed up his plate obediently, just as he would have gone to bed if they had told him to, obeying everybody without resistance and without reflection. And he ate.

The doctor, helping himself, emptied his plate three times, while Madame Caravan, from time to time, speared a big bit on the end of her fork, and swallowed it with a sort of studied inattention.

When a salad dish appeared, full of macaroni, the doctor murmured, Jove, heres a good thing, and Madame Caravan, this time, helped everybody. She even filled the saucers in which the children were messing about, and who,

left to themselves, were drinking wine without water, and were already kicking one another under the table.

Monsieur Chenet recalled Rossini's love for these Italian dishes; then suddenly:

Wait! that rhymes; you could begin a bit of poetry:

Master Rossini,  
Loved macaroni.

Nobody was listening. Madame Caravan, become reflective all of a sudden, was thinking of the probable consequence of the event: while her husband rolled up little balls of bread which he then put on the table-cloth and looked at, with the expression of an idiot. As a blazing thirst burned his throat, he lifted steadily to his mouth his glass ready filled with wine; and his wits, already upset by the shock and the grief, became vague, and seemed to him to dance in the sudden dizziness of indigestion which was beginning.

The doctor, for that matter, was drinking like a fish, and visibly getting intoxicated; and Madame Caravan herself was undergoing the reaction which follows all nervous shock; was restless, troubled too, though she only drank water, and felt her head rather muddled.

Monsieur Chenet began to tell stories of deaths which seemed funny to him. For in this Parisian suburb, filled with a population from the provinces, you find this indifference of the peasant for death, whether it be his fathers or his mothers, this disrespect, this unconscious ferocity, so common in the country and so rare in Paris. He was saying.

Look, last week, in the Rue des Puteaux, someone calls me: I go. I find the sick man dead, and, near the bed, the family who are quietly finishing up a bottle of anisette bought the night before to satisfy a caprice of the dying man.

But Madame Caravan was not listening: she was thinking steadily of the inheritance: and Caravan, his brain empty, understood nothing at all.

Coffee was served, which had been made very strong to keep up their morale. Each cup, laced with brandy, caused a sudden flush to rise to their cheeks, and confused the last ideas of those already vacillating minds.

Then the doctor, suddenly getting possession of the bottle of brandy, poured out the *cup-rinser* for all the family. And, without speaking, wrapt in the gentle heat of digestion, possessed in spite of themselves by the animal sense of well-being which alcohol after dinner bestows, they let the sugared brandy, which formed a yellowish syrup at the bottom of their cups, trickle slowly down their throats.

The children had gone to sleep and Rosalie put them to bed.

Then Caravan, obeying mechanically the need for forgetting one's troubles

which drives on all the unfortunate, took several more drinks of brandy; and his dull eyes gleamed.

The doctor finally rose to go away; and taking hold of his friends arm: Come on, come with me, he said. A little fresh air will do you good: when a man has troubles, its not good to sit still.

The other obeyed quietly, put on his hat, took his stick, went out: and the two of them, arm in arm, went down towards the Seine under the clear stars.

Perfumed breaths of air were wafted in the warm night, for all the gardens of the neighbourhood were at that season full of flowers, whose scents, asleep through the day, seemed to awake at the approach of night and to exhale their fragrance, mingled with the light breezes that passed in the shade.

The avenue was deserted and silent with its two rows of gas jets in line up to the Arc de Triomphe. But lower down Paris muttered in its red fog. It was a sort of continuous roar to which as in answer came, from the plain afar, the whistle of a train rushing full steam ahead, speeding across the provinces to the sea.

The outside air, striking the two men on the face, startled them at first, shook the doctors equilibrium, and accentuated in Caravan the dizzy spells which had been overtaking him since dinner. He went on like a man in a dream, his spirit torpid, paralysed, without any vibrant grief, seized by a sort of moral torpor which kept him from suffering, finding even a comfort which the lukewarm exhalations spreading in the night increased.

When they were at the bridge, they turned to the right, and the river swept on to their faces a fresh breath of air. It was flowing, melancholy and quiet, behind a curtain of high poplars; and the stars seemed to swim in the water, moving with the current. A thin whitish mist floating on the bank at the farther side brought a wet scent to their lungs, and Caravan stopped brusquely, struck by this smell of the river which stirred in his heart very old memories.

And suddenly he saw again his mother, long ago, in his childhood, on her knees before their door, down in Picardy, washing in the thin trickle of water which flowed through the garden the heaped up linen beside her. He heard her beating-stick in the quiet silence of the country, her voice crying: Alfred, bring me some soap. And he felt this same flowing scent, this same mist rising from the dripping earth, this marshy vapour whose savour had remained with him, unforgettable, which was coming back to him precisely on this very evening when his mother had just died.

He stopped rigid in another attack of passionate despair. It was like a blaze of light illuminating in a single flash the whole extent of his misfortune; and the encounter with this wandering breeze threw him into the black abyss of irremediable sorrow. He felt his heart torn in pieces by this endless separation.

His life was cut in half: and all his youth disappeared, swallowed up in this death. All the long ago was finished: all the memories of adolescence were vanished: nobody any more could speak to him of long-ago things, the people that he had formerly known, his native country, himself, the intimacy of this past life: it was a part of his being that had ceased to exist: it was for the other part to die now.

And the file past of awakened memories began. He saw again mamma, younger, dressed in clothes shabby by long use, worn so long that they seemed inseparable from her person; he found her again in a thousand forgotten episodes; with expressions that had been effaced from his memory, her gestures, her intonations, her habits, her whims, her fits of temper, the lines of her face, the movements of her thin figure, all the familiar attitudes that she would take no more.

And, clutching the doctor, he groaned. His flabby legs trembled: all his fat body was shaken by sobs, and he stammered: My mother, my poor mother! But his companion, still drunk, and dreaming of finishing the evening in haunts that he frequented in secret, was impatient at this sharp attack of sorrow, and made him sit down on the grass by the river, and almost at once left him on the pretext of seeing a patient.

Caravan wept for a long time: then, when he was at the end of his tears, when all his sufferings had, so to speak, poured out, he experienced again a sense of comfort, of repose, a sudden tranquillity.

The moon had risen; it bathed the horizon in its placid light. The tall poplars towered up, silver in the moonshine, and the mist, on the plain, seemed like floating snow: the river, where the stars swam no more, but which seemed covered with mother-of-pearl, still flowed on, wrinkled by spasmodic gleams. The air was mild, the breeze full of perfume. A feeling of indolence passed over the world in the earth's sleep, and Caravan drank in this mildness of the night: he breathed deep, thinking he felt penetrated to the extremity of his limbs by a freshness, a calm, a superhuman consolation.

All the same he resisted this invasive well-being, he repeated: My mother, my poor mother, urging himself to weep by a sort of feeling that a decent man should be weeping; but he couldn't weep any more: and no sadness even forced him to the thoughts which, just a moment before, had made him sob so painfully.

Then he rose to go in, coming back with slow steps, enveloped in the calm indifference of serene nature, and his heart appeased in spite of himself.

When he reached the bridge, he saw the head-lights of the last tramcar ready to set out, and behind it, the lit up windows of the Globe Caf.

Then a need came over him of telling somebody about the catastrophe, of exciting pity, of making himself interesting. He put on a mournful face;

pushed open the door of the establishment, and advanced to the counter where the proprietor was still on his throne. He counted on producing an effect; everybody would get up, would come to him, with their hands outstretched: Tell us, whats the matter? But nobody noticed the desolation on his face. Then he leant his elbows on the counter, and clutching his head in his hands, murmured: God, God!

The proprietor looked at him: You are ill, Monsieur Caravan? He answered: No, my poor chap, but my mother has just died. The proprietor let out an absent-minded Ah, and as a client at the back of the establishment, was shouting: Beer, please, he answered at once in a terrible voice: All right, booom! its coming! and rushed to serve him, leaving Caravan stupefied.

At the same table as before dinner, absorbed and motionless, the three domino fiends were still playing. Caravan went up to them in search of commiseration. As none of them seemed to see him, he decided to speak. A little while ago, he said to them, a great misfortune befell me.

They raised their heads slightly, all three at the same time, but keeping their eyes fixed on the game they were busy on.

Yes, whats happened?

My mother has just died.

One of them murmured: Ah, heavens! with that air of false distress which people who are indifferent assume. Another, finding nothing to say, nodded his head, and produced a kind of mournful whistling. The third went back to his game, as if he had thought: Thats all it is.

Caravan was expecting one of those expressions which are referred to as coming from the heart. Seeing himself received like this, he went away, indignant at their calm in face of a friends grief, although that grief, at this very moment, was so dulled that he hardly felt it any more.

And he went out.

His wife was waiting for him in her night-gown, seated on a low chair near the open window, and still thinking of the inheritance.

Take off your things, she said, well have a talk when we are in bed.

He raised his head, and, indicating the ceiling with his eyes: But up there. Is there anybody?

Excuse me, Rosalie is beside her; youll go up and relieve her at three in the morning when youve had a nap.

At the same time he kept his pants on, to be ready for anything that might happen, tied a handkerchief round his head, then joined his wife who had just slipped between the sheets.

They stayed some time lying side by side. She was thinking.

Her hair, even at that hour, was adorned with a rose coloured bow, hanging over a little towards one ear, as if in consequence of the unconquerable habit

of all the bonnets she wore.

Suddenly, turning her head to him:

Do you know if your mother has made a will? she said. He hesitated: Ill think not. No, theres no doubt about it: she hasnt made one.

Madame Caravan looked her husband in the eyes, and in a low stormy voice: Its an insult, dont you know: for here we are for ten years sweating ourselves to look after her, giving her a home, feeding her! Your sister isnt the kind to have done as much for her, nor me either, if I had known how I should be repaid for it! Yes, its a blot on her memory! Youll be telling me she paid for her keep; its true, but the care you get from your children isnt paid for with money: it is recognized in your will after you are dead. Thats how honest people behave. And so thats how Ive been had for my trouble and my bother! Oh, its a fine thing! Its a fine thing!

Caravan, bewildered, was repeating: My darling, my darling! I beg you, I beseech you

At length she calmed down, and resuming her everyday tone, she went on: To-morrow morning, well have to send your sister word.

He gave a start.

Thats true, I hadnt thought of that: as soon as morning comes Ill send her a telegram.

But she stopped him like a woman who had foreseen everything. No, send it only between ten and eleven, so that well have time to turn round before her arrival. From Charenton to here shell need two hours at the most. Well say you lost your head. In advising her in the morning, we dont put ourselves under the penalty of the law.

But Caravan smote his forehead, and with the timid intonation which he always used in speaking of his chief, the very thought of whom made him tremble:

Ill have to advise the Ministry too, he said.

She answered: Why advise it? On occasions like this, it is always excusable to have forgotten. Dont advise them, listen to me. Your chief can say nothing, and youll put him in a queer fix.

Oh, hell be in that, yes, and in a fine rage when he doesnt see me coming. Yes, youre right: its a rich idea. When I announce that my mother is dead, hell be simply compelled to keep silent.

And the clerk, highly delighted with this farce, rubbed his hands, thinking of his chiefs face, while above him the old womans body lay beside the sleeping servant-girl.

Madame Caravan became anxious, as if obsessed by a preoccupation difficult to talk about. Finally she made up her mind.

Your mother did give you her clock, didnt she, the one with the girl playing at

cup-and-ball?

He racked his memory and answered:

Yes, yes. She said to me (but its a long time ago, it was when she came here), she said to me: That clock will be for you, if you take good care of me.

Madame Caravan, her fears at rest, brightened up.

Then, you know, we must go and get it, because if you let your sister come, shell prevent us from taking it.

He hesitated: Do you think so?

She got angry: Certainly I think so; once its here whos going to know? its ours. Its the same with that chest of drawers in her room, the one with the marble top. She gave it to me, to me, one day she was in a good temper. Well bring it down at the same time.

Caravan seemed incredulous.

But, my dear, its a great responsibility.

She turned on him, furious.

Oh, is that so! youre always the same then! You will let your children die of hunger, you will, rather than make the slightest movement. From the minute she gave it to me, that chest of drawers is ours, isnt it? And if your sister isnt pleased, shell say so to me, wont she? I dont care a snap of my fingers for your sister. Come on, get up, so that we can carry off at once what your mother gave us.

Trembling and defeated, he got out of bed, and, as he was pulling on his trousers she stopped him.

It isnt worth the trouble of dressing. Come on, keep on your pants, thats enough: as for me, Ill go just as I am.

And both of them, in their night attire, set out, climbed the stairs noiselessly, opened the door with every precaution, and entered the room where the four candles, lighted round the plate with the holy box-wood, seemed alone to watch the dead woman in her rigid sleep: for Rosalie, stretched in a chair, her legs sticking out, her hands crossed on her skirt, her head fallen to one side, motionless also, her mouth open, was sleeping, and snoring a little.

Caravan took the clock. It was one of those grotesque objects of which Empire art has produced so many. A young girl in gilded bronze, her head adorned with various flowers, was holding in her hand a cup-and-ball, the bail of which served as a pendulum.

Give me that, said his wife to him, and take the marble slab of the drawers. He obeyed, breathing heavily, and he perched the slab on his shoulder with considerable effort.

Then the couple went away. Caravan stooped under the doorway, began to descend the staircase trembling, while his wife, walking backwards, lighted him with one hand, having the clock under her other arm.

When they were in their own room, she heaved a deep sigh.

The worst is over, she said, let's get the rest.

But the drawers of the chest were quite full of the old woman's clothes. These had to be hidden somewhere.

Madame Caravan had an idea.

Go and bring up the deal box that's in the vestibule; it isn't worth two francs: we can easily put it here.

And when the box arrived they began the removal.

They lifted out, one after the other, the cuffs, the collars, the chemises, the bonnets, all the poor belongings of the old body stretched out there behind them, and arranged them methodically in the wooden box in order to deceive Madame Braux, the other child of the dead woman who would come the next day.

When this was done, they first carried down the drawers, then the bulk of the chest of drawers, taking an end each: and both of them sought for a time in which place it would go best. They decided on the bedroom, opposite the bed, between the two windows.

Once the drawers were in place, Madame Caravan filled it with her own linen. The clock was put on the dining-room mantelpiece, and the couple considered the effect obtained. They were immediately charmed by it.

That goes very well, she said.

Yes, very well.

Then they went to bed. She blew out the candle, and soon everybody was asleep on both floors of the house.

It was already broad daylight when Caravan opened his eyes. His wits were all muddled when he awoke, and he did not recall what had happened until several minutes had gone. The remembrance struck him like a blow in his heart, and he jumped out of bed, greatly affected, ready to cry again.

He went up very quickly to the room above, where Rosalie was still asleep, in the same position as the night before, having spent the whole night in one long nap. He sent her away to her work, replaced the burnt-out candles, then he looked at his mother, turning over in his mind those imitations of profound thoughts, those religious and philosophical banalities which haunt average intelligences in the face of death.

But as his wife was calling him, he went downstairs. She had drawn up a list of things to do in the forenoon, and she handed him the long list of which he was afraid. He read:

- (1) Make the declaration at the Town Hall.
- (2) Ask for the doctor to certify death.
- (3) Order the coffin.
- (4) Call at the church.

- (5) The undertakers.
- (6) The printers for the invitations.
- (7) The lawyer.
- (8) The telegraph office to tell the family.

Besides a crowd of small messages.

Then he took his hat and went away.

Now, the news having spread, the neighbours began to arrive and asked to see the dead.

In the barbers shop, on the ground floor, a scene had even taken place on this subject between the wife and the husband while he was shaving a client. The wife, knitting a stocking all the while, murmured: Another one less, and a miser she was, there arent many like her. I didnt like her, its true: all the same I must go and see her.

The husband grunted, soaping the customers chin all the while.

Theres a queer notion for you! Its only women who do that sort of thing. It isnt enough to annoy you in their lifetime, they cant even leave you in peace once theyre dead.

But his wife, without being at all disconcerted, went on:

I cant help it: I must go. Its been on my mind since morning. If I didnt see her, it seems to me I would think about her all my life. But when Ive had a good look at her face, I shall be satisfied afterwards.

The razor-wielder shrugged his shoulders, and confided to the gentleman whose cheeks he was scraping:

I ask you now, what ideas they have, those confounded females! Its not my idea of amusing myself, looking at dead people.

But his wife had heard him, and she answered without being upset:

Thats how it is: thats how it is.

Then, putting her knitting on the counter, she climbed to the first floor.

Two neighbours had already come, and were talking about the event with Madame Caravan, who was recounting the details.

They took their way to the death-chamber. The four women entered on tiptoe, sprinkling the sheet one after the other with the salted water, knelt down, made the sign of the cross, mumbling a prayer, then got up, their eyes wide, their mouths half open, looked a long time at the body, while the daughter-in-law of the dead woman, a handkerchief to her face, pretended to sob in despair.

When she turned round to go out, she saw, standing beside the door, Marie Louise and Philip Augustus, both of them in their night-gowns, watching curiously. Then, forgetting her feigned grief, she flung herself at them, her hand raised, shouting in a furious voice:

Will you get out of here, you wretched scoundrels, you!

Going up ten minutes later with another batch of neighbours, having for a second time scattered box-wood over her mother-in-law, prayed, wept, accomplished all her duties, she found her two children come up again behind her. She whacked them again for conscience sake; but, the next time, she didnt take any notice, and each time visitors returned, the two urchins always followed, kneeling down too in a corner, and invariably repeating all that they saw their mother do.

At the beginning of the afternoon the crowd of curious women diminished. Soon nobody came any more. Madame Caravan went in to her own house, and busied herself preparing things for the funeral ceremony, and the dead woman remained alone.

The window of the room was open. A torrid heat came in with puffs of dust; the flames of the four candles flickered round the motionless body; and on the sheet, on the face with its closed eyes, on the two stretched-out hands, little flies climbed, came and went, walking about, ceaselessly inspecting the old woman, waiting their coming hour.

But Marie Louise and Philip Augustus had gone out again to wander about the avenue. They were soon surrounded by their comrades, above all by little girls, more wide awake, scenting more quickly the mysteries of life. And they asked like grown-ups:

Your grandma is dead?

Yes, yesterday evening.

Whats a dead person?

And Marie Louise explained, told about the candles, the boxwood, the face. Then a mighty curiosity was roused in all the children, and they too asked to go up to the dead womans room.

At once, Marie Louise organized a first expedition, five girls and two boys, the biggest, the boldest. She made them take off their shoes so as not to be found out: the troop sneaked through the house and climbed the stairs quickly like an army of mice.

Once in the room, the little girl, imitating her mother, took charge of the ceremonial. She solemnly directed her comrades, knelt, made the sign of the cross, moved her lips, rose up, sprinkled the bed, and while the children in a close packed mass came near, terrified, curious, and delighted, to look at the face and the hands, she began suddenly to pretend to be sobbing, hiding her eyes in her little handkerchief.

Then, consoled by the thought of those who were waiting at the door, she swept off at a run all her visitors in order to bring up another group, then a third, for all the urchins of the neighbourhood, down to the little ragged beggars, ran to this new pleasure: and each time she simply imitated her mother with an absolute perfection.

In the long run, she got tired. Another game drew the children to a distance: and the old grandmother remained alone, forgotten completely by everybody. Shadows filled the room: the quivering flame of the candles made lights and shadows dance on her dry wrinkled face.

About eight o'clock Caravan came up, closed the window and renewed the candles. He came in now in a quiet fashion, already accustomed to consider the corpse as if it had been there for months. He even noticed that no decomposition had set in yet, and he remarked about it to his wife at the moment when she sat down to the table for dinner. She answered:

Oh, she's made of wood. She would keep for a year.

The soup was eaten without saying a word. The children, let loose all day, tired out with fatigue, were dozing on their chairs, and everybody remained silent.

Suddenly the light of the lamp went down.

Madame Caravan at once turned up the wick: but the apparatus gave out a hollow sound, a prolonged gurgling, and the light went out. They had forgotten to buy oil! To go to the grocers would delay dinner; they looked for candles, but there were no others than those lit in the room above on top of the night table.

Madame Caravan, prompt in her decisions, quickly sent Marie Louise to take two of them, and they waited for her in the darkness.

They heard the little girl's steps distinctly as she climbed the stairs.

Then there was a silence of several seconds: then the child came down again, precipitately. She opened the door, terrified, even more affected than she had been the evening before when she had announced the catastrophe, and she muttered in a stifled voice:

Oh, papa, grandmas putting on her clothes!

Caravan sprang up with such a start that his chair went rolling against the wall. He stammered:

You say What is it you are saying?

But Marie Louise, strangled by emotion, repeated:

Grandgrandmas putting on her clothes. She's coming down.

He rushed madly to the staircase, followed by his dumbfounded wife, but opposite the door of the second floor he stopped, shaken by fear, not daring to enter. What was he going to see? Madame Caravan, bolder, turned the handle, and advanced into the room.

The room seemed darker: and, in the centre, a tall thin figure was moving. She was on her feet, the old lady; and in waking from her lethargic sleep, even before consciousness had thoroughly returned, turning on her side and raising herself on an elbow, she had blown out three of the candles which burned near the bed of death. Then, gathering her strength, she had got up to get her

clothes. The absence of the chest of drawers had bothered her at first, but little by little she had found her possessions at the very bottom of the wooden box, and had quietly dressed herself. Then, having emptied the plate filled with water, replaced the box-wood behind the mirror, and put the chairs back in their places, she was about to come down when her son and her daughter-in-law appeared before her.

Caravan rushed forward, seized her hands, kissed her, tears in his eyes: while his wife, behind him, repeated with a hypocritical air:

What a blessing, what a blessing!

But the old woman, without any sign of softening, without even having the appearance of understanding, stiff as a statue, eyes icy, asked only:

Is dinner ready now?

He stammered, losing his head.

Yes, mamma, we are waiting for you, and with an immense earnestness, he took her arm, while Madame Caravan the younger seized the candle and lighted them, going down the staircase before them backwards and step by step, as she had done that very night before her husband carrying the marble top.

On arriving at the first floor, she almost fell against some people who were coming up. It was the family from Charenton, Madame Braux followed by her husband.

The wife, tall, fat, with a dropsical stomach that threw her chest back, opened terrified eyes, ready to flee. The husband, a Socialist shoemaker, a little man all hair up to his nose, just like a monkey, murmured without any emotion:

Well, well, whats this? Shes resuscitated!

As soon as Madame Caravan recognized them she made desperate signs to them; then aloud:

Ah, whats this! its you! What a nice surprise!

But Madame Braux, dumbfounded, did not comprehend; she answered in an undertone:

Its your telegram that brought us. We thought it was the end.

Her husband, behind her, pinched her to make her stop talking.

He added, with a malicious smile hidden in his thick beard:

Its really nice of you to have asked us. Weve come immediately, making an allusion in this way to the hostility that long had reigned between the two households. Then, as the old lady got to the last steps, he came forward briskly and rubbed against her cheeks the hairy mat which covered his face, and shouted in her ear, because of her deafness:

Feeling all right, mother? always fit, eh?

Madame Braux, in her amazement at seeing alive the woman she had expected to find dead, did not even dare to kiss her: and her enormous stomach

encumbered all the landing, preventing the others from advancing.

The old lady, uneasy and suspicious, but still without a word, looked at all those people round her: and her little grey eye, hard and scrutinizing, fixed now on one, now on another, full of easily read thoughts that disturbed her children.

Caravan said, by way of explanation:

She has been rather ill, but shes all right now, absolutely all right, arent you, mother?

Then the old lady, beginning to move again, answered in her broken, as it were far-away, voice:

It was a swoon: I heard you all the time.

An embarrassed silence followed; they went into the dining-room; they sat down to a hurriedly improvised dinner.

Monsieur Braux alone had kept his self-possession. His naughty monkey face grimaced, and he launched sentences with a double meaning that visibly disturbed everybody.

But every minute the vestibule bell rang: and Rosalie, all bewildered, came to fetch Caravan, who threw away his napkin, and jumped up.

His brother-in-law even asked him if this was his at-home day. He stammered: No, messages, nothing at all.

Then, as a parcel was brought in, he stupidly opened it, and the invitations to the funeral, black-edged, appeared. Then, reddening up to his eyes, he shut the envelope, and covered it up with his waistcoat.

His mother had not seen it: she was obstinately looking at her clock, whose gilded cup-and-ball was swaying on the mantel-piece. And embarrassment grew amidst an icy silence.

Then the old woman, turning her wrinkled witchs face to her daughter, said, with a flicker of malice in her eyes.

On Monday, you will bring your little girl! I want to see her.

Madame Braux, her face lit up, cried: Yes, mamma, while Madame Caravan the younger turned pale and faint with anguish.

All the same, the two men, little by little, began to talk; and they started, apropos of nothing, a political discussion. Braux, upholding the revolutionary and communistic doctrines, gesticulated violently, his eyes alight in his hairy face, shouting:

Property, sir, is a theft from the worker; the earth belongs to everybody: inheritances are an infamy and a shame!

But he stopped brusquely, confused like a man who has just said a silly thing: then in a gentler tone:

But this is not the moment to discuss things like that.

The door opened: Dr. Chenet appeared. He experienced a second of astonish-

ment, then he regained his countenance and, approaching the old woman:  
Aha, mamma, youre all right to-day. Oh! I thought you would be, you know!  
and I was saying to myself just now, climbing the stairs: I bet the old lady will  
be on her feet, and he patted her gently on the back. Shes as solid as the Pont-  
Neuf Bridge: shell bury us all, youll see.

He sat down, accepting the coffee that was offered him, and took part in the  
conversation of the two men, approving Brauxs ideas, for he had himself been  
mixed up in the Commune.

Now the old lady, feeling tired, wanted to go away. Caravan rushed forward.  
Then she looked him full in the face and said to him:

Youre going to bring up at once my chest of drawers and my clock.

Then, as he stammered: Yes, mamma, she took her daughters arm and disap-  
peared with her.

The two Caravans remained aghast, mute, crushed under an atrocious disas-  
ter, while Braux rubbed his hands, sipping his coffee.

Suddenly Madame Caravan, mad with anger, rushed on him, howling:

Youre a thief, a scamp, a blackguard! Ill spit in your face. Ill Ill She could find  
no words, suffocating: but he laughed and went on drinking.

Then, as his wife just then came in, she hurled herself on her sister-in-law, and  
the two of them, the one enormous with her threatening stomach, the other  
epileptic and thin, their voices distorted, their hands trembling, launched out  
full throated on basket-loads of insults.

Chenet and Braux interfered, and the latter, pushing his better half by the  
shoulders, shoved her outside, crying:

Out you go, donkey, youve brayed too much!

And you could hear them in the road squabbling as they went along.

Monsieur Chenet took his leave.

The Caravans remained face to face. Then the man fell on a chair with a cold  
sweat on his brow, and murmured:

Whatever am I going to say to my Chief?

## Hautot Senior and Hautot Junior

### I

The house was half farm, half manor-house, one of those mixed rural dwellings, which used to be almost seigneurial, and which, at the present day, are occupied by big farmers. Before the door the dogs, tied to the apple-trees in the courtyard, barked and howled at the sight of the game-bags carried by the keeper and his boys. In the big kitchen-dining-room, Hautot Senior and Hautot Junior, Monsieur Bermont, the tax-collector, and Monsieur Mondaru, the notary, took a little refreshment, and drank a glass, before going out hunting, for it was the opening day.

Hautot Senior, proud of all his possessions, boasted in advance of the game that his guests were going to find on his land. He was a big Norman, one of those strong, full-blooded, bony men, who can lift apple carts on their shoulders. Half a peasant, half a gentleman, rich, respected, influential, authoritative, he had kept his son, Csar Hautot, at school up to the third form, so that he might be educated, and had stopped his studies there for fear that he might turn out a gentleman who didnt care for the land.

Csar Hautot, almost as tall as his father, but thinner, was a good sort of son, docile, pleased with everything, full of admiration, respect, and deference for the wishes and opinions of Hautot Senior. Monsieur Bermont, the tax-collector, a little fat man whose red cheeks showed a thin network of violet veins, like the tributaries and tortuous courses of rivers on a geography map, asked: And hares are there any hares?

Hautot Senior answered:

As many as you want, especially at the lower end of Puysatier.

Where are we to begin? asked the notary, a gay lad of a notary, fat and pale, bulging and strapped into a brand new hunting suit, bought at Rouen the other week.

Well there, at the lower end. We shall drive the partridges into the plain, and beat up above them.

And Hautot Senior rose. They all imitated him, took their guns from the corners, examined the locks, stamped with their feet to steady themselves in their rather hard shoes, not yet softened by the heat of the blood, then they went out; and the dogs, leaping up at the end of their leads, uttered shrill howls as they pawed the air.

They set out towards the lower ground.

It was a little valley, or rather a big undulation of land of bad quality, that had remained uncultivated for that reason, furrowed by ravines, covered with heather, an excellent game preserve.

The hunters placed themselves at regular distances, Hautot Senior taking the

right, Hautot Junior the left, and the two guests in the middle. The keeper and the boys who carried the game bags followed. It was the solemn instant when the first gunshot is expected, when the heart beats a little, while the nervous fingers touch the trigger every instant.

Suddenly it went off, that shot! Hautot Senior had fired. They all stopped, and saw a partridge, detaching itself from a covey that were flying at full speed, fall into a ravine under the thick brushwood. The excited hunter began to run, with great strides, tearing out the reeds that kept him back, and disappeared in his turn into the thicket, in search of the bird he had shot.

Almost at once, a second gunshot was heard.

Ah, ah, the scoundrel! cried Monsieur Bermont, hell have unearthed a hare down there!

They all waited, their eyes on the heap of branches that the sight could not penetrate.

The notary, making a trumpet with his hands, shouted: Have you got them? Hautot Senior did not answer: then, Csar, turning to the keeper, said to him: Go and help him then, Joseph. We must keep in line. We shall wait.

And Joseph, an old trunk of a dry, gnarled man, whose joints all formed protuberances, set out at a quiet pace, and descended the ravine, looking in all the practicable holes with the precautions of a fox. Then suddenly, he called: Come on, come on! Theres an accident happened!

They all ran and plunged into the reeds. Hautot Senior, on his side, unconscious, holding his stomach with his two hands, between which flowed across his cloth vest, torn by the bullet, long trickles of blood on to the grass. Letting go of his gun to seize the partridge lying dead within reach of his hand, he had dropped the weapon, whose second shot, going off with the fall, had shattered his abdomen. They drew him up from the ditch, they took his clothes off, and they saw a fearful wound from which the intestines protruded. Then, after tying it up as well as they could, they carried him home, and awaited the doctor who had been sent for along with the priest.

When the doctor came, he shook his head gravely, and turning to Hautot Junior who was sobbing on a chair:

My poor boy, he said, this doesnt look too well.

But when the bandaging was finished, the injured man moved his fingers, opened his mouth, then his eyes, looked before him with troubled, haggard looks, then seemed to search in his memory, remember, understand, and he murmured:

Jove, thats the end of it!

The doctor was holding his hand.

No, no! Some days rest only. It wont be anything.

Hautot went on:

Thats the end. Shot in the stomach! I know it all right.

Then suddenly:

I want to speak to my son, if I have time.

Hautot Junior, in spite of himself, was crying and repeating like a little boy:

Daddy, daddy, poor daddy!

But his father, in a firmer tone, said:

Come, dont cry any more; it isnt the time for that. I have to speak to you. Sit down there, quite close. Itll soon be finished, and Ill be more at ease. The rest of you, leave us alone a minute, please.

Everybody went out, leaving the son in front of the father.

As soon as they were alone:

Listen, my son, you are twenty-four. I can talk to you about things. And besides there is not so much mystery about it as we put into it. You know that your mother has been dead these seven years, isnt that true? and I am not more than forty-five years old, seeing that I was married at nineteen. Thats true, eh?

The son stammered:

Yes, its true.

So your mother died seven years ago, and I remained a widower. Well! Im not the sort of man who could remain a widower at thirty-seven, isnt that true?

The son answered:

Yes, its true.

The father, panting, quite pale, and his face contracted, went on:

God, but its sore! Well, you understand. Man isnt made to live alone, but I didnt want to give your mother a successor, seeing that I had promised her that. Soyou understand?

Yes, father.

So, I took a little lady at Rouen, 18 Rue de lperlan, third floor, second door. Im telling you that, dont forget it. But a little lady who has been utterly kind to me, loving, devoted, a real wife, eh? You grasp that, my boy?

Yes, father.

Well, if I go away, I owe her something. I mean something worth while, which will put her out of the reach of want. You understand?

Yes, father.

I tell you shes a fine woman, yes, a really fine woman, and but for you and the memory of your mother, and the house as well where we had lived all three, I would have brought her here, and then married her for sure Listenlisten, my boy I could have made a will I havent made one! I didnt want to for these things shouldnt be writtenthese things thats too big an injury to the legitimate heirs and, then, that messes everything up that ruins everybody. Look here, stamped paper isnt needed never use it. If I am rich, its because I never used it

in my life. You understand, my son?

Yes, father.

Listen again, listen hard. Then, I have not made my will I haven't wanted to and since I know you, you have a good heart; you are not stingy, or griping, are you? I said to myself that, when my time came, I would tell you all about it, and I would ask you not to forget the little lady: Caroline Donet, 18 Rue de Iperlan, third floor, the second door; don't forget. And then, listen again. Go there immediately when I'm gone, and then arrange so that she won't need to feel aggrieved at the memory of me. You have money to do it. You can't leave me leaving you enough. Listen. Through the week you won't find her. She works with Madame Moreau, Rue Beauvoisine. Go on Thursday, she expects me that day. It's been my day for six years. Poor little girl, will she cry? I tell you all this because I know you well, my son. These things one doesn't tell to the public, or to the notary, or to the priest. These things exist, everybody knows it, but they aren't talked about, except in case of necessity. Then no stranger in the secret, nobody but the family, because the family is all in one. You understand?

Yes, father.

You promise?

Yes, father.

You swear?

Yes, father.

I beg you, I beseech you, don't forget. I am set on it.

No, father.

You will go yourself. I want you to make sure of everything yourself.

Yes, father.

And then you will see you will see what she will explain to you. I can tell you no more. Is it an oath?

Yes, father.

Good, my son. Kiss me. Good-bye. I'm going to slip off, I'm sure of it. Tell them to come in.

Hautot Junior kissed his father, groaning, then, always obedient, opened the door, and the priest appeared, in his white surplice, carrying the sacred oils. But the dying man had closed his eyes, and he refused to open them again, he refused to answer, he refused to show even by a sign that he understood. He had spoken enough, this man, he could do no more. Besides, he felt his heart at ease now, he wanted to die in peace. What need had he to confess to the delegate of God, since he had just confessed to his son, who was one of his own family!

He was given the sacrament, purified, absolved, amid his friends and servants on their knees, without a single movement of his face showing that he was

still alive.

He died about midnight, after four hours of shudders that indicated atrocious sufferings.

## II

It was Tuesday when he was buried, the hunting having been opened on Sunday. Returned to his house, after having conducted his father to the cemetery, Csar Hautot passed the rest of the day in weeping. He hardly slept the following night, and he felt so sad when he woke, that he asked himself how he could go on living.

All day long till evening, however, he thought that to obey his fathers last wishes, he ought to go to Rouen next day, and see this girl, Caroline Donet, 18 Rue de Iperlan, third floor, the second door. He had repeated, under his breath, as a child does a prayer, this name and this address, an incalculable number of times, so that he would not forget them, and he finished by babbling them indefinitely, without being able to stop or to think of anything at all, his tongue and his mind were so obsessed by these phrases.

The next day, then, about eight oclock, he told them to harness Graindorge to the tilbury, and set out, at the heavy Norman horses full trot, on the high road from Ainville to Rouen. He wore on his back his black frockcoat, on his head his tall silk hat, and on his legs his strapped trousers, and he had not chosen, considering the circumstances, to wear on top of his fine suit the blue blouse which balloons out in the wind, protects the cloth from dust and stains, and is taken off quickly on arrival, as soon as you jump out of the carriage.

He entered Rouen just as ten oclock was striking, stopped as he always did at the Bon-Enfant hotel, Rue des Trois-Mares, submitted to the kiss of the landlord, the landlady, and their five sons, for the sad news was known: then, he had to give details of the accident, and that made him weep; he had to give refuse the services of all these people, officious because they knew that he was rich, and even to refuse their lunch, which offended them.

Then, having dusted his hat, brushed his coat, and rubbed up his boots, he began to look for the Rue de Iperlan, without daring to make inquiries of anybody, for fear of being recognized and arousing suspicions.

In the end, not finding it, he saw a priest, and trusting the professional discretion of the churchman, he asked information from him.

He had only a hundred yards to go, it was in fact the second road to the right. Then, he hesitated. Up to that moment, he had obeyed like a brute beast the will of the dead man. Now he felt all upset, confused, humiliated at the idea of finding himself, he, the son, before the woman who had been his fathers mistress. All the morality which lies deep in us, heaped up at the bottom of our feelings by centuries of hereditary teaching, all that he had learned since his catechism days about creatures of evil life, the instinctive contempt that

every man bears in himself towards them, even if he marries one, all his limited peasant honour, all that stirred in him, held him back, made him blushing and ashamed.

But he thought: I promised my father. I mustnt fail. Then he pushed the half-opened door of the house marked with the number 18, discovered a dark stairway, mounted three floors, saw a door, then another, found the bell rope and pulled it.

The ding-dong that echoed in the neighbouring room, caused a shudder to pass up his body. The door opened and he found himself in front of a very well dressed young woman, dark, with a warm complexion, who looked at him with bewildered eyes.

He didnt know what to say to her, and she, who didnt suspect anything, and who was expecting the other one, did not invite him to come in. They looked at each other so for about half a minute.

At last she asked:

What do you want, sir?

He murmured:

I am Hautot Junior.

She gave a start, turned pale, and stammered as if she had known him for a long while:

Mr. Csar?

Yes.

And then?

I have something to say to you on behalf of my father.

She said: Oh, my God! and drew back so that he could enter. He shut the door and followed her.

Then he saw a little boy of four or five who was playing with a cat, sitting on the ground before a stove from which rose the steam of dishes being kept warm.

Sit down, she said.

He sat down. She asked:

Well?

He did not dare to say more, his eyes fixed on the table set in the middle of the room, with three places set, one of them a childs. He looked at the chair, turned back to the fire, the plate, the napkin, the glasses, the bottle of red wine opened, and the bottle of white wine intact. It was his fathers place, back to the fire! He was expected. It was his bread that he saw, that he recognized beside the fork, for the crust had been taken off because of Hautots bad teeth. Then, raising his eyes, he saw, on the wall, his own picture, the big photograph taken in Paris in the year of the exhibition, the same that was nailed over his bed in his bedroom at Ainville.

The young woman said again:

Well, Mr. Csar?

He looked at her. A spasm of anguish had made her livid, and she was waiting, her hands trembling with fear.

Then he dared to speak.

Well, mademoiselle, daddy died on Sunday, opening the hunting.

She was so overwhelmed that she did not move. After several moments of silence, she murmured in an almost inaudible voice:

Oh, its not possible.

Then suddenly, tears came to her eyes, and, raising her hands, she covered her face, and began to sob.

Then the boy turned his head, and seeing his mother in tears, howled; then, understanding that this sudden grief came from this unknown man, he rushed at Csar, seized his trousers with one hand, and with the other struck his thigh with all his force. And Csar remained bewildered, touched, between this woman who was weeping for his father, and this child who was defending his mother. He felt himself overcome by emotion, his eyes swollen by grief, and to save his face he began to speak.

Yes, he said, the misfortune happened on Sunday morning about eight oclock. And he recounted, just as if she were listening, not forgetting a single detail, telling all the slightest things with a peasants fondness for minuti. And the little boy went on striking him, kicking him this time on the ankles with his feet.

When he came to the moment when Hautot Senior had spoken of her, she heard her name, uncovered her face, and asked:

Pardon me, I was not following you, I would very much like to know if it wouldnt bother you to begin again.

He began again in the same words:

The misfortune happened on Sunday morning about eight oclock

He told her everything, at length, with pauses, stops, reflections of his own from time to time. She listened greedily, seeing with her womans nervous sensibility all the sudden twists of fortune that he recounted, and trembling with horror, ejaculating Oh, my God! sometimes. The little boy, thinking her soothed, had stopped hitting Csar to take his mothers hand, and he was listening also as if he understood.

When the story was ended, Hautot Junior went on:

Now we are to make an arrangement together, according to his wish. Listen, I am well off, he has left me property. I dont want you to have any complaints. But she interrupted him energetically:

Oh, Mr. Csar, Mr. Csar, not to-day. My heart is bleeding another time, another time. If I accept, listen it is not for me. No, no, no, I swear it. It is for the boy.

Besides, it can be settled on him.

Then Csar, scared, guessed, and stammering:

Then its his the boy?

Yes, of course! she said.

And Hautot Junior looked at his brother with a confused, strong, painful emotion.

After a long silence, for she was weeping again, Csar, utterly ill at ease, spoke again:

Well then, Mademoiselle Donet, Im going away. When would you like us to speak about it?

She cried:

Oh, no, dont go away, dont go away, dont leave me all alone with mile. I would die of grief. I have nobody any more, nobody except my little boy. Oh! what wretchedness, what wretchedness, Mr. Csar! Here, sit down. You are going to talk to me again. Youll tell me what he did, down there on the farm, all the week.

And Csar sat down, accustomed to obeying.

She drew up, for herself, another chair near his, before the stove where the food was still simmering, took mile on her knee, and asked Csar a thousand things about his father, intimate things in which you could see, in which he felt, without thinking about it, that she had loved Hautot with all her poor womans heart.

And through the natural association of his rather limited ideas, he came back to the accident, and began to recount it with all the same details.

When he said, He had a hole in his stomach you could have put your two fists in, she uttered a sort of cry, and sobbed, and the tears rained again from her eyes. Then, seized by the contagion, Csar began to cry too, and as tears always soften the fibres of the heart, he leaned towards mile, whose forehead was within reach of his mouth, and kissed him.

The mother, catching her breath, murmured:

Poor little fellow, hes an orphan.

I am too, said Csar.

But suddenly, the practical instinct of the housewife, accustomed to think of everything, awoke in the young woman.

You have maybe eaten nothing since the morning, Mr. Csar?

No, mademoiselle.

Ah! you must be hungry. Youre going to eat a morsel.

No, thanks, he said, Im not hungry. Im in too great torment.

She answered:

In spite of sorrow, we must live. You wont refuse me that! And you will stay a little longer. When you are gone, I dont know what will become of me.

He yielded, after some more resistance, and sitting with his back to the fire, opposite her, he ate a plateful of the tripe which was crackling on the stove, and drank a glass of red wine. But he did not allow her to uncork the white wine.

Several times he wiped the little boys mouth, who had smeared all his chin with sauce.

As he rose to go away, he asked:

When would you like me to come back to speak of our business, Mademoiselle Donet?

If its all the same to you, next Thursday, Mr. Csar. That way I would lose no time. I always have my Thursdays free.

That suits me, next Thursday.

You will come for lunch, wont you?

Oh, as to that, I cant promise.

Because its easier to talk eating. Weve more time too.

Oh, well, all right. Twelve oclock, then.

And he went away, after kissing little mile again, and pressing Mademoiselle Donets hand.

### III

The week seemed long to Csar Hautot. He had never been alone, and the isolation appeared intolerable to him. Up to then he had lived beside his father, like his shadow, following him to the fields, surveying the execution of his orders, and when he had left him for some time, he found him again at dinner. They passed every evening smoking their pipes opposite one another, talking of horses, cows or sheep, and the handclasp which they exchanged at waking seemed the exchange of a deep family affection.

Now Csar was alone. He wandered through the autumn work in the fields, always expecting to see appear at the edge of the plain the tall gesticulating silhouette of his father. To kill the time, he went over to his neighbours, told the story of the accident to all those who had not heard it, repeated it sometimes to the others. Then, at the end of his occupations and his thoughts, he would sit at the side of the road, and ask himself if this kind of life was going to last a long time.

Often he thought of Mademoiselle Donet. He had found her satisfactory, a gentle, good woman as his father had saidyes, a fine woman, assuredly a fine woman. He was resolved to do the thing in style and to give her two thousand francs income on a capital settled on the child. He even felt a certain pleasure in thinking that he was going to see her again the following Thursday, and arrange that with her. And then the idea of this brother, of this little fellow of five, who was his fathers son, worried him, annoyed him a little, and at the same time warmed his heart. It was a kind of family he had there in that

little clandestine urchin who would never call himself Hautot, a family that he could take up or leave at his pleasure, but which recalled his father.

So when he found himself on the road to Rouen, on Thursday morning, borne on by the sonorous trot of Graindorge, he felt his heart lighter, more rested than it had been since his misfortune.

When he entered Mademoiselle Donets flat, he saw the table laid as on the last Thursday, with the sole difference that the crust of the bread had not been cut off.

He grasped the young womans hand, kissed mile on the cheeks, and sat down, rather as if in his own house, with his heart full all the same. Mademoiselle Donet seemed to him a little thin, a little pale. She must have wept a great deal. Now her attitude towards him was constrained, as if she had realized what she had not felt the other week under the first shock of her misfortune, and she treated him with an excessive respect, a sad humility, and a touching solicitude, as if to repay him in attention and devotion the kindness he had shown her. They spent a long time over lunch, talking of the business which had brought him. She did not want so much money. It was too much, much too much. She earned enough to live on, but she wanted only that mile should find a few pennies waiting for him when he grew big. Csar stuck to his ground, and even added a present of a thousand francs to her for her mourning.

When he had taken his coffee, she asked:

You smoke?

YesI have my pipe.

He felt in his pocket. Heavens, he had forgotten it! He was just going to get vexed about it, when she offered him a pipe of his fathers, shut in a cupboard. He accepted it, took it, recognized it, stroked it, proclaimed its quality with emotion in his voice, filled it with tobacco and lit it. Then he put mile astride his leg, and gave him a horseback ride while she cleared the table and shut up in the bottom of the sideboard the dirty dishes, to be washed when he had gone.

About three oclock he rose regretfully, quite upset at the idea of going away. Well, Mademoiselle Donet, he said, I wish you good afternoon, and Im delighted to have found you like this.

She stood still before him, red, very moved, and looking at him, thinking of the other.

Are we never going to see one another again? she said.

He answered simply:

Of course, mademoiselle, if it gives you pleasure.

Certainly it does, Mr. Csar. Then next Thursday, does that suit you?

Yes, Mademoiselle Donet.

You'll come to lunch, surely?

But if you want me to, I shall not refuse.

That's settled, Mr. Cesar, next Thursday, at twelve o'clock, same as to-day.

Thursday, at twelve, Mademoiselle Donet.

## On Horseback

The poor couple were living laboriously on the husband's small salary. Two children had been born since their marriage, and the first pecuniary embarrassments had become one of those humble, veiled, shameful poverties, the poverty of a noble family which wants to keep up its rank all the same. Hector de Gribelin had been brought up in the provinces, in his paternal manor-house, by an old priest who was his tutor. They were not rich, but they rubbed along and kept up appearances.

Then at twenty, they sought for a position for him, and he was entered as a clerk at fifteen thousand francs at the Navy Office. He had run aground on that reef as all those do who are not prepared early for the rough fight for life, all those who see existence through a cloud and are ignorant of contrivances and resistance, in whom there have not been developed since infancy special aptitudes, special faculties, a keen energy for the struggle, all those into whose hands an arm and a weapon have not been given.

His first three years in the office were horrible.

He had found several friends of his family, old people behind the times, and not blessed with much fortune either, who lived in the streets of the nobility, the mournful streets of the Faubourg Saint-Germain: and he had made a circle of acquaintances.

Strangers to modern life, humble and proud, these hard-up aristocrats inhabited the top floors in houses that seemed asleep. From top to bottom of those dwellings, the tenants were titled: but money seemed scarce on the first as on the sixth floor.

The everlasting prejudices, the preoccupation with their rank, the anxiety not to fall from it, haunted these families, formerly brilliant, and ruined by their men-folks inaction. Hector de Gribelin met in this society a young girl, noble and poor like himself, and married her.

They had two children in four years.

During four years more, this household, harassed by poverty, knew no other distractions than a walk in the Champs-lyses on Sunday, and some evenings at the theatre, one or two a winter, thanks to free tickets offered by a colleague. But it happened that, towards spring, a supplementary bit of work was entrusted to the clerk by his chief, and he got an extraordinary fee of three hundred francs.

When he brought home the money he said to his wife:

My dear Henrietta, we must treat ourselves to something, for example a pleasure trip for the children.

And after a long discussion it was decided that they would go and have lunch in the country.

By Jove, cried Hector, once isnt a habit; we will have a carriage for you, the children, and the servant, and I will hire a horse at the riding school. Thatll do me good.

And all the week they spoke of nothing but the projected excursion.

Every evening, when he came in from the office, Hector would seize his elder son, set him astraddle on his foot, and jogging him energetically up and down, he would say:

Thats how daddy will gallop next Sunday, on our trip!

And the little chap, all day long, climbed astride of the chairs and dragged them round the dining-room, crying:

Its daddy, riding his horsie.

And the servant-girl herself looked at her master with admiration, thinking that he was going to accompany the carriage on horseback, and during all the meals, she listened to him talking of riding, recounting his former exploits, at his fathers house.

Oh! he had been to a good school, and, once the beast was between his legs, he was afraid of nothingno, nothing!

He would repeat to his wife, rubbing his hands:

If they could give me an animal a bit high spirited, I would be delighted. You will see how I ride: and if you like, we will come home by the Champs-lyses at the time when all the people are coming back from the Bois. As we shall put up a good show, I shouldnt be sorry if we met someone from the Ministry. It doesnt require more than that to make yourself respected by your chiefs.

On the appointed day, the carriage and the horse arrived at the same time before the door. He came down at once to examine his mount. He had got understraps sewn to his trousers, and was swishing a riding whip he had bought the night before.

He raised and felt, one after the other, the four legs of the beast, touched the neck, the ribs, the hocks, tried the loins with his finger, opened the mouth, examined the teeth, declared how old it was, and, as all the family came down, he delivered a sort of little theoretical and practical course on the horse in general, and on this one in particular, which he recognized as excellent.

When everybody was nicely placed in the carriage, he verified the girths of the saddle: then raising himself on a stirrup, let himself drop on the animal which began to dance under the weight, and almost unsaddled his rider.

Hector, distressed, tried to calm him.

Come now, quietly, my friend, quietly.

Then when the beast who carried him had recovered his tranquillity, and the

man who was carried his self-possession, he asked:

Everybody ready?

All their voices answered:

Yes.

Then he gave the order.

March!

And the cavalcade set out.

All their eyes were fixed on him. He trotted in the English fashion, exaggerating the action. Hardly had he fallen into the saddle again, than he rebounded as if to mount into space. Often he seemed about to fall on the horses neck: and he kept his eyes fixed in front of him, with his face set and his cheeks pale.

His wife, holding one of the children on her knees, and the maid who was carrying the other, went on repeating ceaselessly:

Look at daddy, look at daddy!

And the two small boys, intoxicated by the movement, the joy, and the keen air, shouted shrilly. The horse, frightened by this clamour, finished by taking to the gallop, and while the cavalier tried to stop him, his hat rolled on the ground. The coachman had to get off his seat to pick up this headgear, and when Hector had received it from his hands, he addressed his wife from a distance:

Keep the children from shouting out like that, will you: youll have him run away with me!

They had lunch on the grass in the Vsinet woods, on the provisions stowed away under the seat.

Although the coachman took care of the three horses, Hector got up every moment to go and see if his had everything he wanted: and he stroked him on the neck, giving him bread, cakes, and sugar to eat.

He declared:

Hes a hard trotter. He even shook me a little in the first few minutes: but you saw that I recovered myself quickly: he recognized his master, he wont forget now.

As he had resolved, they came home by the Champs-lyses.

The vast avenue was swarming with carriages. And on the paths the pedestrians were so numerous that you would have said that there were two long black ribbons stretched out from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde. A burst of sunshine illuminated everything, and made the varnish of the barouches, the steel of the harness, the handles of the carriage doors gleam.

A mad love of movement, an intoxication for life, seemed to stir the crowd of people, of carriages, and of horses. And the obelisk rose straight up in a mist

of gold.

Hector's horse, as soon as he had passed the Arc de Triomphe, was suddenly seized with a new ardour, and he slipped in and out between the wheels, at a full trot, towards his stable, in spite of all the efforts of his rider to calm him. The carriage was far away now, far away behind; and then when he was opposite the Palace of Industry, the animal, seeing the coast clear, turned to the right and began galloping.

An old woman in an apron was crossing the road tranquilly. She was exactly in Hector's path, and he was approaching at full speed. Unable to control his beast, he began to cry with all his might:

Hullo, hullo there!

She was deaf, maybe, for she peaceably continued on her way until the moment when, struck by the horse's chest, rushing on her like a locomotive, she went rolling ten steps farther, her skirts in the air, after turning three complete somersaults.

Voices cried:

Stop him!

Hector, aghast, hung on to the mane and shouted:

Help!

A terrible heave made him shoot like a cannon-ball over the ears of his charger, and fall into the arms of a police sergeant who had just flung himself into his way.

In a second, a furious, gesticulating, vociferating group formed round him.

An old gentleman especially, an old gentleman wearing a big round decoration and big white moustaches, seemed exasperated. He kept on repeating:

Good heavens, when you're as clumsy as that, you stay at home! You don't come killing people in the street, when you don't know how to ride a horse.

But four men appeared, carrying the old woman. She seemed dead, with her yellow face and her bonnet to one side, all grey with dust.

Carry that woman to a chemist's, ordered the old gentleman, and let us go to a police station.

Hector, between two policemen, began his journey. A third held his horse. A crowd followed: and suddenly the carriage appeared. His wife rushed forward, the servant lost her head, the babies squalled. He explained that he'd be home soon, that he had knocked a woman over, that it was nothing. And his distracted family moved off.

At the police station, the explanation was short. He gave his name, Hector de Gribelin, attaché to the Minister of the Navy, and they awaited news of the injured woman. A policeman, sent to get information returned. She had regained consciousness, but she was suffering frightfully inside, she said; she was a charwoman, aged sixty-five, and called Madame Simon.

When he knew that she wasn't dead, Hector took hope again, and promised to provide for the expenses of her cure. Then he ran to the chemists.

A crowd was stationed before the door: the old wife, sunk in an arm-chair, was groaning, her hands hanging, her face stupid. None of her limbs were broken, but they feared an internal lesion.

Hector spoke to her:

Are you suffering much?

Oh, yes.

Whereabouts?

It's like a fire I have in my innards.

A doctor came up:

You are the cause of the accident, sir?

Yes, sir.

This woman will have to be sent to a nursing home: I know one where they will take her for six francs a day. Would you like me to arrange it?

Hector, delighted, thanked him, and went back home comforted.

His wife was waiting for him in tears: he calmed her.

It's nothing. This Simon woman is better already: in three days it will not show at all. I have sent her to a nursing home. It is nothing.

Coming out of his office, next day, he went to inquire for Madame Simon. He found her busy eating thick soup with an air of satisfaction.

Well? he said.

She answered:

Oh, my poor sir, there's no change. I feel almost done for. It's no better.

The doctor declared that they would have to wait, a complication might supervene.

He waited three days, then he came back. The old woman, her skin clear, her eyes limpid, began to groan as soon as she saw him.

I can't move any more, my poor sir, I can't. I'll be like this till the end of my days.

A shudder ran up Hector's bones. He asked the doctor. The doctor raised his hands:

What can I say, sir? I do not know. She howls when we try to raise her. We can't even change the position of her chair, without her uttering heart-rending cries. I have to believe what she tells me, sir: I am not inside her. So long as I have not seen her walk, I have no right to suppose it's a lie on her part.

The old woman listened, motionless, her eyes cunning.

A week passed: then two weeks, then a month. Madame Simon did not leave her chair. She ate from morning to night, grew fat, talked gaily with the other patients, seemed accustomed to immobility as if it had been the well-earned repose, won by her fifty years of stairs climbed, of mattresses turned, of coal

carried from floor to floor, of sweepings and brushings.

Hector, aghast, came every day: every day he found her tranquil and serene, and declaring:

I cant move, my poor sir, I cant.

Every evening Madame de Gribelin asked, devoured by distress:

And Madame Simon?

And every time he answered with a despairing despondency:

No change, absolutely none!

They sent away the servant, whose wages became too great a burden. They economized still more: the whole extra fee was spent.

Then Hector called in four eminent doctors, who met around the old woman. She let them examine her, touch her, feel her, watching them with a shrewd eye.

She must be made to walk, said one.

She cried out:

I cant, my good sirs, I cant.

Then they seized hold of her, lifted her up, dragged her a few steps: but she slid out of their hands, and collapsed on the floor, emitting such fearful shouts that they put her back on her chair with infinite precautions.

They gave a discreet opinion, concluding all the same that it was impossible that she could go on working.

And when Hector took this news to his wife, she let herself fall on a chair, stammering:

It would be still better to take her in here, that would cost less.

He jumped.

Here, in our home, do you really mean it?

But she answered resigned to everything now, and with tears in her eyes:

What can we do, my dear? it isnt my fault

## The Necklace

She was one of those pretty and charming girls who are sometimes, as if by a mistake of destiny, born in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded, by any rich and distinguished man; and she let herself be married to a little clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was as unhappy as though she had really fallen from her proper station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank; and beauty, grace, and charm act instead of family and birth. Natural fineness, instinct for what is elegant, suppleness of wit, are the sole hierarchy, and make from women of the people the equals of the very greatest ladies.

She suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born for all the delicacies and all the luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, from the wretched look of the walls, from the worn-out chairs, from the ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant who did her humble housework aroused in her regrets which were despairing, and distracted dreams. She thought of the silent ante-chambers hung with Oriental tapestry, lit by tall bronze candelabra, and of the two great footmen in knee-breeches who sleep in the big armchairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the hot-air stove. She thought of the long *salons* fitted up with ancient silk, of the delicate furniture carrying priceless curiosities, and of the coquettish perfumed boudoirs made for talks at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attention they all desire.

When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a tablecloth three days old, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup tureen and declared with an enchanted air, Ah, the good *pot-au-feu*! I don't know anything better than that, she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry which peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvelous plates, and of the whispered gallantries which you listen to with a sphinx-like smile, while you are eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that; she

felt made for that. She would so have liked to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, who was rich, and whom she did not like to go and see any more, because she suffered so much when she came back.

But, one evening, her husband returned home with a triumphant air, and holding a large envelope in his hand.

There, said he, here is something for you.

She tore the paper sharply, and drew out a printed card which bore these words:

The Minister of Public Instruction and Mme. Georges Ramponneau request the honor of M. and Mme. Loiseles company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th.

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with disdain, murmuring:

What do you want me to do with that?

But, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had awful trouble to get it. Every one wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there.

She looked at him with an irritated eye, and she said, impatiently:

And what do you want me to put on my back?

He had not thought of that; he stammered:

Why the dress you go to the theater in. It looks very well, to me.

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was crying. Two great tears descended slowly from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth. He stuttered:

Whats the matter? Whats the matter?

But, by a violent effort, she had conquered her grief, and she replied, with a calm voice, while she wiped her wet cheeks:

Nothing. Only I have no dress, and therefore I cant go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I.

He was in despair. He resumed:

Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable dress, which you could use on other occasions, something very simple?

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally, she replied, hesitatingly:

I dont know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs.

He had grown a little pale, because he was laying aside just that amount to

buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks down there, of a Sunday.

But he said:

All right. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty dress. The day of the ball drew near, and Mme. Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening: What is the matter? Come, you've been so queer these last three days.

And she answered:

It annoys me not to have a single jewel, not a single stone, nothing to put on. I shall look like distress. I should almost rather not go at all.

He resumed:

You might wear natural flowers. It's very stylish at this time of the year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses.

She was not convinced.

No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich.

But her husband cried:

How stupid you are! Go look up your friend Mme. Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're quite thick enough with her to do that.

She uttered a cry of joy:

It's true. I never thought of it.

The next day she went to her friend and told of her distress.

Mme. Forestier went to a wardrobe with a glass door, took out a large jewel-box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Mme. Loisel:

Choose, my dear.

She saw first of all some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross, gold, and precious stones of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the glass, hesitated, could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

Haven't you any more?

Why, yes. Look. I don't know what you like.

All of a sudden she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb necklace of diamonds; and her heart began to beat with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it around her throat, outside her high-necked dress, and remained lost in ecstasy at the sight of herself.

Then she asked, hesitating, filled with anguish:

Can you lend me that, only that?

Why, yes, certainly.

She sprang upon the neck of her friend, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Mme. Loisel made a great success. She was prettier than them all, elegant, gracious, smiling, and crazy with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, endeavored to be introduced. All the attachés of the Cabinet wanted to waltz with her. She was remarked by the minister himself.

She danced with intoxication, with passion, made drunk by pleasure, forgetting all, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness composed of all this homage, of all this admiration, of all these awakened desires, and of that sense of complete victory which is so sweet to womans heart.

She went away about four oclock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight, in a little deserted ante-room, with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a very good time.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps which he had brought, modest wraps of common life, whose poverty contrasted with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and wanted to escape so as not to be remarked by the other women, who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back.

Wait a bit. You will catch cold outside. I will go and call a cab.

But she did not listen to him, and rapidly descended the stairs. When they were in the street they did not find a carriage; and they began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen whom they saw passing by at a distance.

They went down towards the Seine, in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient noctambulant coupés which, exactly as if they were ashamed to show their misery during the day, are never seen round Paris until after nightfall.

It took them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and once more, sadly, they climbed up homeward. All was ended for her. And as to him, he reflected that he must be at the Ministry at ten oclock.

She removed the wraps, which covered her shoulders, before the glass, so as once more to see herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She had no longer the necklace around her neck!

Her husband, already half-undressed, demanded:

What is the matter with you?

She turned madly towards him:

I haveI haveIve lost Mme. Forestiers necklace.

He stood up, distracted.

What!how?Impossible!

And they looked in the folds of her dress, in the folds of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere. They did not find it.

He asked:

You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?

Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the palace.

But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab.

Yes. Probably. Did you take his number?

No. And you, didn't you notice it?

No.

They looked, thunderstruck, at one another. At last Loisel put on his clothes. I shall go back on foot, said he, over the whole route which we have taken, to see if I can't find it.

And he went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without fire, without a thought.

Her husband came back about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to Police Headquarters, to the newspaper offices, to offer a reward; he went to the cab companies everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least suspicion of hope.

She waited all day, in the same condition of mad fear before this terrible calamity.

Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face; he had discovered nothing.

You must write to your friend, said he, that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round.

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope.

And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

We must consider how to replace that ornament.

The next day they took the box which had contained it, and they went to the jeweler whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

It was not I, madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case.

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, searching for a necklace like the other, consulting their memories, sick both of them with chagrin and with anguish.

They found, in a shop at the Palais Royal, a string of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one they looked for. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

So they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days yet. And they made a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs, in case they found the other one before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers, and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked his signature without even knowing if he could meet it; and, frightened by the pains yet to come, by the black misery which was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and of all the moral tortures which he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, putting down upon the merchants counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mme. Loisel took back the necklace Mme. Forestier said to her, with a chilly manner:

You should have returned it sooner, I might have needed it.

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Mme. Loisel for a thief?

Mme. Loisel now knew the horrible existence of the needy. She took her part, moreover, all on a sudden, with heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid.

She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her rosy nails on the greasy pots and pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts, and the dish-cloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And, dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, defending her miserable money sou by sou.

Each month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time.

Her husband worked in the evening making a fair copy of some tradesmans accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, everything, with the rates of usury, and the accumulations of the compound interest.

Mme. Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew, and red hands, she talked loud while washing the floor with great swishes of water.

But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window, and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so fêted.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? who knows? How life is strange and how changeable! How little a thing is needed for us to be lost or to be saved!

But, one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Elysées to refresh herself from the labors of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Mme. Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Mme. Loisel felt moved. Was she going to speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she was going to tell her all about it. Why not?

She went up.

Good-day, Jeanne.

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plain good wife, did not recognize her at all, and stammered:

But madame! I do not know you must have mistaken.

No. I am Mathilde Loisel.

Her friend uttered a cry.

Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!

Yes, I have had days hard enough, since I have seen you, days wretched enough and that because of you!

Of me! How so?

Do you remember that diamond necklace which you lent me to wear at the ministerial ball?

Yes Well?

Well, I lost it.

What do you mean? You brought it back.

I brought you back another just like it. And for this we have been ten years paying. You can understand that it was not easy for us, us who had nothing.

At last it is ended, and I am very glad.

Mme. Forestier had stopped.

You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?

Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very like.

And she smiled with a joy which was proud and naïve at once.

Mme. Forestier, strongly moved, took her two hands.

Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!