Selected Readings
from

In Search of Lost Time
Volume V

The Captive
& The Fugitive

by
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cause she had talked enough, Mme de Villeparisis said nothing. She relapsed into a long silence which did not offend M. de Norpois, presumably because it did not surprise him and because it must have been one of the characteristics, perhaps one of the charms, of his life with her. And while she laboriously cut up her beans, he went back to telling her how interesting, and on the whole optimistic, the foreign ambassador had been, meanwhile keeping an eye out for a waiter from whom he could order their dessert. Before this had been served, my mother and I rose from the table, and, while keeping my head turned away so as not to attract their attention, I could nevertheless still see the two aged lovers, seemingly indifferent to one another, but in reality bent by time like two branches which have developed the same tilt, which have drawn so close to each other that they almost touch, and which nothing will ever either straighten up or separate again.

This was perhaps what might have happened to me in the long run if Albertine had lived. And yet, comforting though it must after all be, since worldly men and women sacrifice social life and ambition for it, I felt no regret that what might have been had failed to come about, so impervious had I become to the memory of Albertine. I cannot however say that sometimes in the evening, when we returned to our hotel (for, since our encounter with the old Villeparisis–Norpois couple, my mother had decided against our dining elsewhere), I did not feel, in the nervous restlessness of nightfall, that the Albertine of long ago, invisible to myself . . . (*cf. p. 866, line 17*).

Synopsis

THE CAPTIVE

Life with Albertine. Street sounds (1). Albertine and I under the same roof (2). My mother's disapproval (6). My irregular sleeping habits (9). Françoise's respect for tradition (9). Intellectual development and physical change in Albertine (12). My confidence in Andrée (15). I advise against a trip with Andrée to the Buttes-Chaumont (16). I no longer love Albertine, but my jealousy subsists (16). Ubiquity of Gomorrah (20). The virtues of solitude (22). I long to be free of Albertine (26). Jealousy, a spasmodic disease (28).

Visits to the Duchesse de Guermantes (30). What survives of the magic of her name (32; cf. **III** 28). The Fortuny dresses (34). Attraction of the Duchess's conversation (34–39). Mme de Chaussepierre (41–42; cf. **IV** 98). Digression about the Dreyfus case (43–44).

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Spring morning (146). Street sounds; the musical cries of the street-vendors (146–51). Reflections on different kinds of sleep (153–60). Albertine's enthusiasm for the cries of Paris and the foodstuffs they offer (160); her eloquent disquisition on the subject of ices (165).

The chauffeur and the expedition to Versailles (168). Alone at the window, I listen to the sounds of Paris (174). Nostalgia for little girls (177). Françoise sends me one to do an errand: a pretty dairymaid whom I had noticed (178), but whose glamour quickly evaporates when she is in my presence (183). Léa is to perform at the Trocadéro (185). How to prevent Albertine from meeting her? (188). I send Françoise to fetch her (196). Deterioration in Françoise's speech (199); her inability to tell the right time (201). Awaiting Albertine's return, I play Vinteuil's sonata (204). Music and introspection (206). Reflections on the attitude to their work of nineteenth-century artists (207). Morel's mysterious occupations (210). His outburst against Jupien's niece: *grand pied de grue* (212). Drive to the Bois with Albertine (216). Similarities between desire and travel (222). Alternations of boredom and desire (225). Our shadows in the Bois (227). My servitude and hers (230). A meeting with Gisèle (231). The lies of the little band fit together exactly (233). Albertine admits a lie (235).

I learn of Bergotte's death (238). His illness, prolonged by medical treatment (238). At the Vermeer exhibition: the little patch of yellow wall. Dead for ever? (244). Albertine's lie about meeting Bergotte (247). Her technique of lying (247, 250).

The Verdurins quarrel with M. de Charlus. I set off for the Verdurins' in secret (253). Encounter with a repentant Morel (254; cf. 255). His capriciousness and cynicism (212), and his rancour towards those to whom he causes pain (256). Meeting with Brichot (260). The death of Swann (260). Brichot evokes the Verdurin salon of old (265). Arrival of M. de Charlus, greatly changed (268). Brichot's attitude towards him (269). Homosexuality and the refinement of artistic tastes (270). M. de Charlus's conjugal behaviour with Morel (274). His detachment from social constraints (275). Morel's letter from Léa (280) M. de Charlus admires Morel's successes with women (284); and meanwhile tries to seduce other young men, in particular Bloch (285).

Arrival at the Verdurins' house (299). M. de Charlus and the footman (300). Saniette snubbed by M. Verdurin for announcing Princess Sherbatoff's death (302). Mme Verdurin obsessed with the desire to separate Charlus and Morel (305). Her reasons for resentment against the Baron: his veto on the society women she wanted to invite (306), in particular Mme Molé (310). The Verdurin salon and the Dreyfus Case (312), and the *Ballets russes* (314). Mme Verdurin and the death of Princess Sherbatoff (317). Her medical precautions against the effects of Vinteuil's music (320). Morel's improved manners (322). M. de Charlus's furtive exchanges with several important guests (323). Mme Verdurin draws up her plans (325). Rudeness of the Baron's guests (326), with the exception of the Queen of Naples (328).

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The guests file past the Baron (353); his witty or caustic remarks (354). Mme de Mortemart puts out feelers for a musical *soirée* (357). M. d'Argencourt and inverts (362). Mme Verdurin's growing rage (364). The Queen of Naples' fan (365). M. de Charlus and General Deltour (371). Mme Verdurin asks Brichot to talk to the Baron while M. Verdurin tackles Morel (373). Brichot reluctantly complies (377). M. de Charlus's re-

marks on Morel's playing: the lock of hair (382–83). He appreciates Brichot's wit (385). His attendance at Brichot's Sorbonne lectures (387). Mme de Villeparisis's real social position (392; cf. **III** 244–45). Brichot and Charlus on homosexuality (395); M. de Charlus's statistic (397); Swann, Odette and her many lovers (399), M. de Crécy (402; cf. **IV** 657). General observations on sodomy (404 et sqq.)

M. Verdurin's revelations to Morel about the Baron (414); Mme Verdurin confirms and reinforces them (415–24). Morel repudiates the Baron, who remains dumbfounded (424). The Queen of Naples, returning to collect her fan, leads M. de Charlus away (430). The change in the Baron after this *soirée*; his illness (433); moral improvement followed by a new decline (434). The Verdurins' generosity towards Saniette (436). Unexpected side to M. Verdurin's character (439).

Disappearance of Albertine. Return from the Verdurins' with Brichot (440). The window streaked with light, symbol of my servitude (444). Albertine's anger (447). Her admission about the supposed three-day trip to Balbec (449). A mysterious and horrible Albertine reveals herself ("casser le pot") (453). My mendacious proposal that we should separate (459). Esther's photograph (461; cf. 107). I am intoxicated by my grief (475), Albertine and Léa (479), which I suddenly bring to an end by "a renewal of the lease" (483). Albertine's sleeping body: a mysterious allegory (485). A letter from my mother (490). Curiosity and sagacity of Françoise (492). Albertine's artistic tastes (496). The Fortuny gowns (497). Albertine plays me some music (501). The profound truth of Vinteuil's music (504). Reflections on genius (505). Key-phrases (506); the example of Dostoievsky (508).

Return of spring; vain resolution to change my way of life (522). Mme Bontemps's revelations about the Buttes-Chaumont and Albertine's readiness to leave Balbec with me (524). Two character traits: the multiple utilisation of a single action (526; cf. **II** 636), and the incapacity to resist the temptation of a pleasure (527). My outburst of anger (531). Interrogation of Albertine about her relations with Andrée (534). Reconciliation,

but no good-night kiss (537). A presentiment of death (540). The noise of a window being opened in the silence of the night (541).

We go out together (544). The aeroplane (547; cf. **IV** 582). Albertine and the pastry-cook (548). Sounds and scents of spring (553); thirst for Venice (555). I resolve to leave Albertine immediately (557). Françoise informs me that she has just left (558).

THE FUGITIVE

Grieving and Forgetting. "Mlle Albertine has gone" (563). Albertine's letter (565–66). Hypotheses about the reasons for her departure (566). All my different "selves" must learn to live with my suffering (578–79). Albertine in Touraine (580). The little poor girl in my room (583).

Saint-Loup's mission to Touraine (587). His astonishment on seeing Albertine's photograph (589). Bloch's indiscretion and my anger (597). Summons from the Sûreté (597). First furtive hint of forgetting (603). My sleep is full of Albertine (604). First telegram from Saint-Loup: mission delayed (604); second telegram: Albertine has seen him (608). Furious, I cable to him telling him to return (610). A letter from Albertine (610). My mendacious reply (612). The declaration scene in *Phèdre* (617). The mystery of Albertine's rings (623; cf. 214). Another letter from Albertine (631). I ask Andrée to come and live with me, and tell Albertine (632). Saint-Loup's return; an overheard conversation shows him in a new light (634). His report on his mission (636).

A telegram from Mme Bontemps: Albertine's death in a riding accident (642). New and unprecedented suffering (642). Proliferation of memories (644–48). The baths at Balbec (663). Aimé's mission of inquiry (664). Alternation of odious suspicions and tender memories (665). Analogy between my love for Gilberte and my love for Albertine (677). Our mistresses are the daughters of our anguish (681). Lying words become prophetic truths (684). Aimé's letter confirming my suspicions (695). His

mission to Touraine (705). Albertine and the laundry-girl (706); evocation of an Elstir painting (710). Revival in my memory of a sweet, kind and innocent Albertine (713).

Beginnings of recovery (718). I grow accustomed to the idea of Albertine's death (719–20). Intermittent revival of my love and my suffering (723 et sqq.). Andrée confesses her taste for women, but denies having had relations with Albertine (737). Renewal of desire for other women (745). The power of oblivion (751).

Mlle de Forcheville. Three stages on the road to indifference (754). A walk in the Bois on All Saints' Day (754). The three girls (758). Some days later, one of them gives me a look which rouses my passion (759). I identify her with Mlle d'Eporcheville, whom Robert had met in a house of assignation (760; cf. **IV** 126). Robert, in reply to a cable from me, tells me it is the wrong girl (765). My article in the *Figaro* (766–72). Visit to the Guermantes' (772). The blonde girl: Mlle de Forcheville (773–74), in other words Gilberte (775). Mme de Guermantes's changed attitude towards Swann's wife and daughter after his death (780); she entertains Gilberte and talks to her about her father (783). The Duke reads my article (788). Gilberte's snobbery (790). Two congratulatory letters (797). Gilberte helps to bury the memory of her father (800) and hastens the process of forgetting in me as regards Albertine (801). A new social self replaces the one that loved Albertine (803).

Second stage on the road towards indifference: second conversation with Andrée (806); her relations with Albertine (810); Albertine and Morel (810); the evening of the syringa (812; cf. 64). Andrée's different natures (815); her engagement to the Verdurins' nephew, "I'm a wash-out" (817), an artist of genius underneath his crude and frivolous exterior (818). The Princesse de Parme's visit to my mother (828). Third visit from Andrée (830); a new explanation for Albertine's departure (830). Albertine and "I'm a wash-out" (832). His attitude towards me (840).

Sojourn in Venice. Third stage towards indifference (844). Venice and Combray (844). Mme de Villeparisis and M. de Norpois, greatly aged (854–66). A telegram from Albertine telling me she is alive; it gives me no joy (869). The self that loved Albertine is dead (870). My outings in Venice, alone or with my mother (875). The Giotto chapel at Padua (878). Evening walks in Venice (881).

I ask my mother to postpone our departure (883); she refuses, and I decide to stay (884). Solitude, misery, *O sole mio* (884). The train (888). A letter from Gilberte announcing her engagement to Robert de Saint-Loup (889); the recent telegram was from her (889).

New Aspect of Saint-Loup. My mother tells me of another marriage, that of the Cambremers' son and Mlle d'Oloron, Jupien's niece (893). My mother's reflexions on the news, and thoughts of my grandmother (893). Ups and downs of Saint-Loup's engagement plans (898). Disapproval from Combray (899). Reactions of society people (902). Opposite effects of the same vice in Charlus and Legrandin (904). Roles of the Princesse de Parme, Charlus and Legrandin in Mlle d'Oloron's marriage (904). Change in Legrandin (906). Gilberte, at first happy in her new social position (908), becomes indifferent to it (909). Mlle d'Oloron's death (913). The Muse of History (919).

A visit to Tansonville (921). Saint-Loup's infidelity; his relations with Morel (922–23). Retrospective analysis of Robert's sexual tastes (924–30). Robert and Mme de Forcheville (930–31). My tarnished friendship (936).

At daybreak, my face still turned to the wall, and before I had seen above the big window-curtains what shade of colour the first streaks of light assumed, I could already tell what the weather was like. The first sounds from the street had told me, according to whether they came to my ears deadened and distorted by the moisture of the atmosphere or quivering like arrows in the resonant, empty expanses of a spacious, frosty, pure morning; as soon as I heard the rumble of the first tramcar, I could tell whether it was sodden with rain or setting forth into the blue. And perhaps these sounds had themselves been forestalled by some swifter and more pervasive emanation which, stealing into my sleep, diffused in it a melancholy that announced snow or else (through a certain intermittent little person) burst into so many hymns to the glory of the sun that, having first of all begun to smile in my sleep, having prepared my eyes, behind their shut lids, to be dazzled, I would awake finally to clarion peals of music. It was, in fact, principally from my bedroom that I took in the life of the outer world during this period. I know that Bloch reported that, when he called to see me in the evenings, he could hear the sound of conversation; as my mother was at Combray and he never found anybody in my room, he concluded that I was talking to myself. When, much later, he learned that Albertine had been staying with me at the time, and realised that I had concealed her presence from everybody, he declared that he saw at last

the reason why, during that phase of my life, I had always refused to go out of doors. He was wrong. His mistake was, however, perfectly excusable, for reality, even though it is necessary, is not always foreseeable as a whole. People who learn some correct detail about another person's life at once draw conclusions from it which are not accurate, and see in the newly discovered fact an explanation of things that have no connexion with it whatsoever.

When I reflect now that, on our return from Balbec, Albertine had come to live in Paris under the same roof as myself, that she had abandoned the idea of going on a cruise, that she was installed in a bedroom within twenty paces of my own, at the end of the corridor, in my father's tapestried study, and that late every night, before leaving me, she used to slide her tongue between my lips like a portion of daily bread, a nourishing food that had the almost sacred character of all flesh upon which the sufferings that we have endured on its account have come in time to confer a sort of spiritual grace, what I at once call to mind in comparison is not the night that Captain de Borodino allowed me to spend in barracks, a favour which cured what was after all only a passing distemper, but the night on which my father sent Mamma to sleep in the little bed beside mine. So true is it that life when it chooses to deliver us once more from sufferings that seemed inescapable, does so in different, at times diametrically opposed conditions, so much so that it seems almost sacrilegious to note the identical nature of the consolations vouchsafed!

When Albertine had heard from Françoise that, in the darkness of my still curtained room, I was not asleep, she had no qualms about disturbing me as she washed

herself in her bathroom. Then, frequently, instead of waiting until later in the day, I would go to my own bathroom, which adjoined hers and was a very agreeable place. Time was when a stage manager would spend hundreds of thousands of francs to begem with real emeralds the throne upon which a great actress would play the part of an empress. The Russian ballet has taught us that simple lighting effects, trained upon the right spot, will beget jewels as gorgeous and more varied. This decoration, already more ethereal, is not so pleasing, however, as that which, at eight o'clock in the morning, the sun substitutes for what we were accustomed to see when we did not rise before noon. The windows of our respective bathrooms, so that their occupants might not be visible from without, were not smooth and transparent but crinkled with an artificial and old-fashioned hoar-frost. All of a sudden, the sun would colour this muslin glass, gild it, and, gently disclosing in my person an earlier young man whom habit had long concealed, would intoxicate me with memories, as though I were in the heart of the country amidst golden foliage in which even a bird was not lacking. For I could hear Albertine ceaselessly humming:

> For melancholy
> Is but folly,
> And he who heeds it is a fool.

I was too fond of her not to be able to spare a smile for her bad taste in music. This song had, as it happened, during the past summer, delighted Mme Bontemps, who presently heard people say that it was silly, with the result that, instead of asking Albertine to sing it when she had company, she would substitute:

A song of farewell rises from troubled springs,

which in its turn became "an old jingle of Massenet's the child is always dinning into our ears."

A cloud passed, blotting out the sun; I saw the prudish, leafy screen of glass grow dim and revert to a grey monochrome.

The partition that divided our two dressing-rooms (Albertine's, identical with my own, was a bathroom which Mamma, who had another at the opposite end of the flat, had never used for fear of disturbing my rest) was so thin that we could talk to each other as we washed in double privacy, carrying on a conversation that was interrupted only by the sound of the water, in that intimacy which is so often permitted in hotels by the smallness and proximity of the rooms but which, in private houses in Paris, is so rare.

On other mornings, I would remain in bed, drowsing for as long as I chose, for orders had been given that no one was to enter my room until I had rung the bell, an act which, owing to the awkward position in which the electric push had been hung above my bed, took such a time that often, tired of feeling for it and glad to be left alone, I would lie back for some moments and almost fall asleep again. It was not that I was wholly indifferent to Albertine's presence in the house. Her separation from her girlfriends had succeeded in sparing my heart any fresh anguish. It kept it in a state of repose, in a semi-immobility which would help it to recover. But this calm which my mistress procured for me was an assuagement of suffering rather than a joy. Not that it did not enable

me to taste many joys from which the intensity of my anguish had debarred me, but, far from my owing them to Albertine, who in any case I no longer found very pretty and with whom I was bored, with whom I was indeed clearly conscious that I was not in love, I tasted these joys on the contrary when Albertine was not with me. And so, to begin the morning, I did not send for her at once, especially if it was a fine day. For some moments, knowing that he would make me happier than Albertine, I remained closeted with the little person inside me, the melodious psalmist of the rising sun, of whom I have already spoken. Of the different persons who compose our personality, it is not the most obvious that are the most essential. In myself, when ill health has succeeded in uprooting them one after another, there will still remain two or three endowed with a hardier constitution than the rest, notably a certain philosopher who is happy only when he has discovered between two works of art, between two sensations, a common element. But I have sometimes wondered whether the last of all might not be this little mannikin, very similar to another whom the optician at Combray used to set up in his shop window to forecast the weather, and who, doffing his hood when the sun shone, would put it on again if it was going to rain. I know how selfish this little mannikin is; I may be suffering from an attack of breathlessness which only the coming of rain would assuage, but he pays no heed, and, at the first drops so impatiently awaited, all his gaiety forgotten, he sullenly pulls down his hood. Conversely, I dare say that in my last agony, when all my other "selves" are dead, if a ray of sunshine steals into the room

while I am drawing my last breath, the little barometric mannikin will feel a great relief, and will throw back his hood to sing: "Ah, fine weather at last!"

I would ring for Françoise. I would open the *Figaro*. I would scan its columns and ascertain that it did not contain an article, or so-called article, which I had sent to the editor, and which was no more than a slightly revised version of the page that had recently come to light, written long ago in Dr Percepied's carriage, as I gazed at the spires of Martinville. Then I would read Mamma's letter. She found it odd, if not shocking, that a girl should be living alone with me. On the first day, at the moment of leaving Balbec, when she saw how wretched I was and was worried about leaving me by myself, my mother had perhaps been glad when she heard that Albertine was travelling with us and saw that, side by side with our own boxes (those boxes among which I had spent the night in tears in the hotel at Balbec) Albertine's too—narrow and black, having for me the appearance of coffins, and as to which I did not know whether they would bring life or death to our house—had been loaded on to the "twister." But I had never even asked myself the question, being all overjoyed, in the radiant morning, after the fear of having to remain at Balbec, that I was taking Albertine with me. But if at the start my mother had not been hostile to this proposal (speaking kindly to my friend like a mother whose son has been seriously wounded and who is grateful to the young mistress who is nursing him with loving care), she had become so now that it had been all too completely realised and the girl was prolonging her sojourn in our house, moreover in the absence of my parents. I cannot, however, say that my mother ever openly

manifested this hostility to me. As in the past, when she had ceased to dare to reproach me with my nervous instability and my laziness, now she had qualms—which perhaps I did not altogether perceive or did not wish to perceive at the time—about running the risk, by offering any criticism of the girl to whom I had told her that I intended to make an offer of marriage, of casting a shadow over my life, making me in time to come less devoted to my wife, of sowing perhaps, for a season when she herself would no longer be there, the seeds of remorse at having grieved her by marrying Albertine. Mamma preferred to seem to be approving a choice which she felt herself powerless to make me reconsider. But all the people who saw her at that time have since told me that in addition to her grief at having lost her mother she had an air of constant preoccupation. This mental strife, this inward debate, had the effect of overheating my mother's brow, and she was constantly opening the windows to let in the fresh air. But she failed to come to any decision, for fear of influencing me in the wrong direction and so spoiling what she believed to be my happiness. She could not even bring herself to forbid me to keep Albertine for the time being in our house. She did not wish to appear more strict than Mme Bontemps, who was the person principally concerned, and who saw no harm in the arrangement, which greatly surprised my mother. All the same, she regretted that she had been obliged to leave us together, by departing just at that moment for Combray where she might have to remain (and did in fact remain) for many months, during which my great-aunt required her incessant attention by day and night. Everything was made easier for her down there thanks to the kindness and devotion of

Legrandin who, sparing himself no pains, kept putting off his return to Paris from week to week, not that he knew my aunt at all well, but simply, first of all, because she had been his mother's friend, and also because he knew that the invalid, condemned to die, valued his attentions and could not do without him. Snobbery is a grave disease, but it is localised and so does not utterly corrupt the soul. I, on the other hand, unlike Mamma, was extremely glad of her absence at Combray, but for which I should have been afraid (being unable to tell Albertine to conceal it) of her learning of the girl's friendship with Mlle Vinteuil. This would have been to my mother an insurmountable obstacle, not merely to a marriage about which she had meanwhile begged me to say nothing definite as yet to Albertine, and the thought of which was becoming more and more intolerable to myself, but even to the latter's being allowed to stay for any length of time in the house. Failing so grave a reason, of which she was not aware, Mamma, through the dual effect of the edifying and liberating example of my grandmother, according to whom, in her admiration of George Sand, virtue consisted in nobility of soul, and of my own corrupting influence, was now indulgent towards women whose conduct she would have condemned in the past, or even now had they been any of her own middle-class friends in Paris or Combray, but whose large-heartedness I extolled to her and whom she forgave much because of their affection for me.

However all this may be, and even apart from any question of propriety, I doubt whether Mamma could have put up with Albertine, since she had retained from Combray, from my aunt Léonie, from all her kindred,

habits of punctuality and order of which my mistress had not the remotest conception. She would never think of shutting a door and, by the same token, would no more hesitate to enter a room if the door stood open than would a dog or a cat. Her somewhat inconvenient charm was, in fact, that of behaving in the household not so much like a girl as like a domestic animal which comes into a room and goes out again and is to be found wherever one least expects to find it, and she would often—something that I found profoundly restful—come and lie down beside me on my bed, making a place for herself from which she never stirred, without disturbing me as a person would have done. She ended, however, by conforming to my hours of sleep, and not only never attempted to enter my room but would take care not to make a sound until I had rung my bell. It was Françoise who impressed these rules of conduct upon her. She was one of those Combray servants, conscious of their master's place in the world, who feel that the least that they can do is to see that he is treated with all the respect to which they consider him entitled. When a stranger on leaving after a visit gave Françoise a tip to be shared with the kitchenmaid, he had barely slipped his coin into her hand before Françoise, with an unparalleled display of speed, tact and energy, had passed the word to the kitchenmaid who came forward to thank him, not in a murmur, but openly and clearly, as Françoise had told her that she must do. The parish priest of Combray was no genius, but he also knew what was right and proper. Under his instruction, the daughter of some Protestant cousins of Mme Sazerat's had been converted to Catholicism, and her family had behaved impeccably towards him. There was a question of

her marrying a young nobleman of Méséglise. The young man's parents wrote to inquire about her in a somewhat arrogant letter, in which they expressed contempt for her Protestant origin. The priest replied in such a tone that the Méséglise nobleman, crushed and grovelling, wrote a very different letter in which he begged as the most precious favour to marry the girl.

Françoise deserved no special credit for making Albertine respect my slumbers. She was imbued with the tradition. From her studied silence, or the peremptory response that she made to a proposal to enter my room, or to send in some message to me, which Albertine had expressed in all innocence, the latter realised with astonishment that she was now living in an alien world, where strange customs prevailed, governed by rules of conduct which one must never dream of infringing. She had already had a forewarning of this at Balbec, but, in Paris, made no attempt to resist, and would wait patiently every morning for the sound of my bell before venturing to make any noise.

The training that Françoise gave her was also salutary for our old servant herself, in that it gradually stilled the lamentations which, ever since our return from Balbec, she had not ceased to utter. For, just as we were boarding the train, she had remembered that she had failed to say good-bye to the housekeeper of the hotel, a mustachioed lady who looked after the bedroom floors and barely knew Françoise by sight, but had been comparatively civil to her. Françoise insisted on getting out of the train, going back to the hotel, making her farewells to the housekeeper, and postponing her departure for Paris until the

following day. Common sense, coupled with my sudden horror of Balbec, restrained me from granting her this concession, but my refusal had infected her with a morbid ill-humour which the change of air had not sufficed to cure and which lingered on in Paris. For, according to Françoise's code, as illustrated in the carvings of Saint-André-des-Champs, to wish for the death of an enemy, or even to inflict it, is not forbidden, but it is a horrible sin not to do the right thing, not to return a civility, to omit, like a regular churl, to say good-bye to the housekeeper before leaving a hotel. Throughout the journey, the continually recurring memory of her not having taken leave of this woman had dyed Françoise's cheeks with a scarlet flush that was quite alarming. And if she refused to eat or drink until we reached Paris, it was perhaps because this memory was a real "weight" on her stomach (every social class has its own pathology) even more than to punish us.

Among the reasons which led Mamma to write me a letter every day, a letter which never failed to include some quotation from Mme de Sévigné, was the memory of my grandmother. Mamma would write to me: "Mme Sazerat gave us one of those little luncheons of which she possesses the secret and which, as your poor grandmother would have said, quoting Mme de Sévigné, deprive us of solitude without affording us company." In one of my earlier replies I was inept enough to write to Mamma: "By those quotations, your mother would recognise you at once." Which brought me, three days later, the reproof: "My poor boy, if it was to speak to me of *my mother*, your reference to Mme de Sévigné was most inappropriate. She would have answered you as she answered Mme de Gri-

that unknowable thing which, when we seek to form a definite idea of it, another person's life invariably is to us. I would continue to interrogate Andrée while Albertine, from tact and in order to leave me free (was she conscious of this?) to question her friend, prolonged her toilet in her own room.

"I think Albertine's uncle and aunt both like me," I would thoughtlessly remark to Andrée, forgetting her peculiar nature.

At once I would see her glutinous features change, like a mixture that has turned; her face would seem permanently clouded. Her mouth would become bitter. Nothing remained in Andrée of that juvenile gaiety which, like all the little band and notwithstanding her delicate health, she had displayed in the year of my first visit to Balbec and which now (it is true that Andrée was several years older) became so rapidly eclipsed in her. But I would make it reappear involuntarily before Andrée left me that evening to go home to dinner. "Somebody was singing your praises to me today in the most glowing terms," I would say to her. Immediately a ray of joy would beam from her eyes; she looked as though she really loved me. She avoided my gaze but smiled at the empty air with a pair of eyes that had suddenly become quite round. "Who was it?" she would ask with an artless, avid interest. I would tell her, and, whoever it was, she was delighted.

Then the time would come for her to leave me. Albertine would come back to my room; she had undressed, and was wearing one of the crêpe de Chine dressing-gowns or Japanese kimonos which I had asked Mme de Guermantes to describe to me, and for some of which

supplementary details had been furnished me by Mme Swann, in a letter that began: "After your long eclipse, I felt as I read your letter about my *tea-gowns* that I was hearing from a ghost."

Albertine had on her feet a pair of black shoes studded with brilliants which Françoise indignantly called clogs and which were modelled upon those which, from the drawing-room window, she had seen Mme de Guermantes wearing in the evening, just as a little later Albertine took to wearing slippers, some of gold kid, others of chinchilla, the sight of which gave me great pleasure because they were all of them signs (which other shoes would not have been) that she was living under my roof. She had also certain things which had not come to her from me, including a fine gold ring. I admired upon it the outspread wings of an eagle. "It was my aunt who gave me it," she explained. "She can be quite nice sometimes after all. It makes me feel terribly old, because she gave it to me on my twentieth birthday."

Albertine took a far keener interest in all these pretty things than the Duchess, because, like every obstacle in the way of a possession (in my own case the ill health which made travel so difficult and so desirable), poverty, more generous than opulence, gives to women far more than the clothes that they cannot afford to buy: the desire for those clothes which goes hand in hand with a genuine, detailed, thorough knowledge of them. She, because she had never been able to afford these things, and I, because in ordering them for her I was seeking to give her pleasure, were both of us like students who already know all about the pictures which they are longing to go to Dresden or Vienna to see. Whereas rich women, amid the vast

quantities of their hats and gowns, are like those tourists to whom a visit to a gallery, being preceded by no desire, gives merely a sensation of bewilderment, boredom and exhaustion. A particular toque, a particular sable coat, a particular Doucet dressing-gown with pink-lined sleeves, assumed for Albertine, who had observed them, coveted them and, thanks to the exclusiveness and meticulousness that characterise desire, had at once isolated them from the rest against an empty background in which the lining or the sash stood out to perfection, and studied them down to the smallest detail—and for myself who had gone to Mme de Guermantes in quest of an explanation of what constituted the peculiar merit, the superiority, the stylishness of each garment and the inimitable cut of the great designer—an importance, a charm which they certainly did not possess for the Duchess, surfeited before she had even acquired an appetite, and would not, indeed, have possessed for me had I seen them a few years earlier while accompanying some lady of fashion on one of her wearisome tours of the dressmakers' shops.

To be sure, a woman of fashion was what Albertine too was gradually becoming. For, while each of the things that I ordered for her was the prettiest of its kind, with all the refinements that might have been added to it by Mme de Guermantes or Mme Swann, she was beginning to possess these things in abundance. But it mattered little, since she had admired them beforehand and in isolation. When we have been smitten by one painter, then by another, we may end by feeling for the whole gallery an admiration that is not frigid, for it is made up of successive enthusiasms, each one exclusive in its day, which finally have joined forces and become reconciled in one whole.

She was not, moreover, frivolous, read a great deal when she was alone, and read aloud to me when we were together. She had become extremely intelligent. She would say, quite falsely in fact: "I'm appalled when I think that but for you I should still be quite ignorant. Don't contradict. You have opened up a world of ideas to me which I never suspected, and whatever I may have become I owe entirely to you."

It will be remembered that she had spoken in similar terms of my influence over Andrée. Had either of them a real feeling for me? And, in themselves, what were Albertine and Andrée? To know the answer, I should have to immobilise you, to cease to live in that perpetual state of expectancy ending always in a different presentment of you, I should have to cease to love you in order to fix your image, cease to be conscious of your interminable and always disconcerting arrival, O girls, O successive rays in the swirling vortex wherein we throb with emotion on seeing you reappear while barely recognising you, in the dizzy velocity of light. We might perhaps remain unaware of that velocity, and everything would seem to us motionless, did not a sexual attraction set us in pursuit of you, O drops of gold, always dissimilar and always surpassing our expectation! Each time, a girl so little resembles what she was the time before (shattering, as soon as we catch sight of her, the memory that we had retained of her and the desire that we had proposed to gratify), that the stability of nature which we ascribe to her is purely fictitious and a convention of speech. We have been told that some pretty girl is tender, loving, full of the most delicate feelings. Our imagination accepts this assurance, and when we behold for the first time, beneath the woven

girdle of her golden hair, the rosy disc of her face, we are almost afraid that this too virtuous sister, cooling our ardour by her very virtue, can never be to us the lover for whom we have been longing. What secrets, however, we confide to her from the first moment, on the strength of that nobility of heart, what plans we make together! But a few days later, we regret that we were so confiding, for the rosy-cheeked girl, at our second meeting, addresses us in the language of a lascivious Fury. As for the successive facets which after pulsating for some days the roseate light, now eclipsed, presents to us, it is not even certain that a momentum external to these girls has not modified their aspect, and this might well have happened with my band of girls at Balbec. People extol to us the gentleness, the purity of a virgin. But afterwards they feel that something more spicy would please us better, and recommend her to show more boldness. In herself was she one more than the other? Perhaps not, but capable of yielding to any number of different possibilities in the headlong current of life. With another, whose whole attraction lay in a certain ruthlessness (which we counted upon subduing to our own will), as, for instance, with the fearsome jumping girl at Balbec who grazed in her leaps the bald pates of startled old gentlemen, what a disappointment when, a new facet of her personality being presented to us, just as we are making tender declarations fired by the memory of her cruelty to others, we hear her telling us, by way of an opening gambit, that she is shy, that she can never say anything intelligent to anyone at a first introduction, so frightened is she, and that it is only after a fortnight or so that she will be able to talk to us at her ease. The steel has turned to cotton wool, and there is nothing left for us

to attempt to break down, since of her own accord she has shed her hard integument. Of her own accord, but through our fault perhaps, for the tender words which we addressed to Harshness had perhaps, even without any deliberate calculation on her part, suggested to her that she ought to be gentle. (Distressing as the change may have been to us, it was not altogether maladroit, for our gratitude for all her gentleness may exact more from us than our delight at overcoming her cruelty.)

I do not say that a day will not come when, even to these luminous girls, we shall assign sharply defined characters, but that will be because they will have ceased to interest us, because their entry upon the scene will no longer be, for our heart, the apparition which it expected to be different and which, each time, leaves it overwhelmed by fresh incarnations. Their immobility will come from our indifference to them, which will deliver them up to the judgment of our intelligence. The latter's conclusions will not in fact be very much more categorical, for after deciding that some defect, predominant in the one, was happily absent from the other, it will see that this defect was offset by some precious quality. So that, from the false judgment of our intelligence, which comes into play only when we have lost interest, there will emerge well-defined, stable characters of girls, which will enlighten us no more than did the surprising faces that used to appear every day when, in the bewildering speed of our expectation, they presented themselves daily, weekly, too different to allow us, since their course was never arrested, to classify them, to award degrees of merit. As for our sentiments, we have said so too often to repeat it here, as often as not love is no more than the associa-

tion of the image of a girl (whom otherwise we should soon have found intolerable) with the heartbeats inseparable from an endless wait in vain and her failure to turn up at the end of it. All this is true not only of impressionable young men in the face of changeable girls. At the stage that our narrative has now reached, it appears, as I later learned, that Jupien's niece had altered her opinion of Morel and M. de Charlus. My chauffeur, to reinforce her love for Morel, had extolled to her, as existing in the violinist, boundless refinements of delicacy in which she was all too ready to believe. And at the same time Morel never ceased to complain to her of the despotic treatment that he received from M. de Charlus, which she ascribed to malevolence, never imagining that it could be due to love. She was moreover forced to acknowledge that M. de Charlus was a tyrannical presence at all their meetings. And in corroboration of this, she had heard society women speak of the Baron's atrocious spitefulness. Lately, however, her judgment had been completely reversed. She had discovered in Morel (without ceasing for that reason to love him) depths of malevolence and perfidy, compensated it was true by frequent gentleness and genuine sensitivity, and in M. de Charlus an immense and unsuspected kindness mixed with incomprehensible asperities. And so she had been no more able to arrive at a definite judgment of what, each in himself, the violinist and his protector really were, than I was able to form of Andrée, whom nevertheless I saw every day, or of Albertine who was living with me.

On the evenings when the latter did not read aloud to me, she would play me some music or begin a game of draughts, or a conversation, which I would interrupt with

kisses. Our relations had a simplicity that made them soothing. The very emptiness of her life gave Albertine a sort of eagerness to comply with the few demands I made on her. Behind this girl, as behind the purple light that used to filter beneath the curtains of my room at Balbec, while outside the concert blared, there shone the blue-green undulations of the sea. Was she not, after all (she in whose being there now existed an idea of me so habitual and familiar that, next to her aunt, I was perhaps the person whom she distinguished least from herself), the girl whom I had seen the first time at Balbec, beneath her flat cap, with her insistent laughing eyes, a stranger still, slender as a silhouette projected against the waves? These effigies preserved intact in our memory astonish us, when we recall them, by their dissimilarity from the person we know, and we realise what a task of remodelling is performed every day by habit. In the charm that Albertine had in Paris, by my fireside, there still survived the desire that had been aroused in me by that insolent and blossoming cortége along the beach, and just as Rachel retained in Saint-Loup's eyes, even after he had made her abandon it, the glamour of her stage life, so in this Albertine cloistered in my house, far from Balbec whence I had hurried her away, there persisted the excitement, the social confusion, the restless futility, the roving desires of seaside life. She was so effectively caged that on certain evenings I did not even ask her to leave her room for mine, she whom at one time all the world pursued, whom I had found it so hard to overtake as she sped past on her bicycle, whom the lift-boy himself was unable to bring back to me, leaving me with little hope of her coming, although I sat up waiting for her all night. Had not Alber-

tine been—out there in front of the hotel—like a great actress of the blazing beach, arousing jealousy when she advanced upon that natural stage, speaking to no one, jostling the habitués, dominating her friends? And was not this so greatly coveted actress the same who, withdrawn by me from the stage, shut up in my house, was now here, shielded from the desires of all those who might henceforth seek for her in vain, sitting now in my room, now in her own, engaged in some work of design or engraving?

No doubt, in the first days at Balbec, Albertine seemed to exist on a parallel plane to that on which I was living, but one that had converged on it (after my visit to Elstir) and had finally joined it, as my relations with her, at Balbec, in Paris, then at Balbec again, grew more intimate. Moreover, what a difference there was between the two pictures of Balbec, on my first visit and on my second, pictures composed of the same villas from which the same girls emerged by the same sea! In Albertine's friends at the time of my second visit, whom I knew so well, whose good and bad qualities were so clearly engraved on their features, how could I recapture those fresh, mysterious strangers who once could not thrust open the doors of their chalets with a screech over the sand or brush past the quivering tamarisks without making my heart beat? Their huge eyes had sunk into their faces since then, doubtless because they had ceased to be children, but also because those ravishing strangers, those actresses of that first romantic year, about whom I had gone ceaselessly in quest of information, no longer held any mystery for me. They had become for me, obedient to my whims, a mere grove of budding girls, from among whom I was not a little proud of having plucked, and hidden away from the rest of the world, the fairest rose.

Between the two Balbec settings, so different one from the other, there was the interval of several years in Paris, the long expanse of which was dotted with all the visits that Albertine had paid me. I saw her in the different years of my life occupying, in relation to myself, different positions which made me feel the beauty of the intervening spaces, that long lapse of time during which I had remained without seeing her and in the diaphanous depths of which the roseate figure that I saw before me was carved with mysterious shadows and in bold relief. This was due also to the superimposition not merely of the successive images which Albertine had been for me, but also of the great qualities of intelligence and heart, and of the defects of character, all alike unsuspected by me, which Albertine, in a germination, a multiplication of herself, a fleshy efflorescence in sombre colours, had added to a nature that formerly could scarcely have been said to exist, but was now difficult to plumb. For other people, even those of whom we have dreamed so much that they have come to seem no more than pictures, figures by Benozzo Gozzoli against a greenish background, of whom we were inclined to believe that they varied only according to the point of vantage from which we looked at them, their distance from us, the effect of light and shade, such people, while they change in relation to ourselves, change also in themselves, and there had been an enrichment, a solidification and an increase of volume in the figure once simply outlined against the sea.

Moreover, it was not only the sea at the close of day that existed for me in Albertine, but at times the drowsy

murmur of the sea upon the shore on moonlit nights. For sometimes, when I got up to fetch a book from my father's study, my mistress, having asked my permission to lie down while I was out of the room, was so tired after her long outing in the morning and afternoon in the open air that, even if I had been away for a moment only, when I returned I found her asleep and did not wake her. Stretched out at full length on my bed, in an attitude so natural that no art could have devised it, she reminded me of a long blossoming stem that had been laid there; and so in a sense she was: the faculty of dreaming, which I possessed only in her absence, I recovered at such moments in her presence, as though by falling asleep she had become a plant. In this way, her sleep realised to a certain extent the possibility of love: alone, I could think of her, but I missed her, I did not possess her; when she was present, I spoke to her, but was too absent from myself to be able to think of her; when she was asleep, I no longer had to talk, I knew that I was no longer observed by her, I no longer needed to live on the surface of myself.

By shutting her eyes, by losing consciousness, Albertine had stripped off, one after another, the different human personalities with which she had deceived me ever since the day when I had first made her acquaintance. She was animated now only by the unconscious life of plants, of trees, a life more different from my own, more alien, and yet one that belonged more to me. Her personality was not constantly escaping, as when we talked, by the outlets of her unacknowledged thoughts and of her eyes. She had called back into herself everything of her that lay outside, had withdrawn, enclosed, reabsorbed herself into her body. In keeping her in front of my eyes, in my

hands, I had an impression of possessing her entirely which I never had when she was awake. Her life was submitted to me, exhaled towards me its gentle breath.

I listened to this murmuring, mysterious emanation, soft as a sea breeze, magical as a gleam of moonlight, that was her sleep. So long as it lasted, I was free to dream about her and yet at the same time to look at her, and, when that sleep grew deeper, to touch, to kiss her. What I felt then was a love as pure, as immaterial, as mysterious, as if I had been in the presence of those inanimate creatures which are the beauties of nature. And indeed, as soon as her sleep became at all deep, she ceased to be merely the plant that she had been; her sleep, on the margin of which I remained musing, with a fresh delight of which I never tired, which I could have gone on enjoying indefinitely, was to me a whole landscape. Her sleep brought within my reach something as serene, as sensually delicious as those nights of full moon on the bay of Balbec, calm as a lake over which the branches barely stir, where, stretched out upon the sand, one could listen for hours on end to the surf breaking and receding.

On entering the room, I would remain standing in the doorway, not venturing to make a sound, and hearing none but that of her breath rising to expire upon her lips at regular intervals, like the reflux of the sea, but drowsier and softer. And at the moment when my ear absorbed that divine sound, I felt that there was condensed in it the whole person, the whole life of the charming captive outstretched there before my eyes. Carriages went rattling past in the street, but her brow remained as smooth and untroubled, her breath as light, reduced to the simple expulsion of the necessary quantity of air. Then, seeing that

her sleep would not be disturbed, I would advance cautiously, sit down on the chair that stood by the bedside, then on the bed itself.

I spent many a charming evening talking and playing with Albertine, but none so sweet as when I was watching her sleep. Granted that she had, as she chatted with me, or played cards, a naturalness that no actress could have imitated; it was a more profound naturalness, as it were at one remove, that was offered me by her sleep. Her hair, falling along her pink cheek, was spread out beside her on the bed, and here and there an isolated straight tress gave the same effect of perspective as those moonlit trees, lank and pale, which one sees standing erect and stiff in the backgrounds of Elstir's Raphaelesque pictures. If Albertine's lips were closed, her eyelids, on the other hand, seen from where I was placed, seemed so loosely joined that I might almost have questioned whether she really was asleep. At the same time those lowered lids gave her face that perfect continuity which is unbroken by the eyes. There are people whose faces assume an unaccustomed beauty and majesty the moment they cease to look out of their eyes.

I would run my eyes over her, stretched out below me. From time to time a slight, unaccountable tremor ran through her, as the leaves of a tree are shaken for a few moments by a sudden breath of wind. She would touch her hair and then, not having arranged it to her liking, would raise her hand to it again with motions so consecutive, so deliberate, that I was convinced that she was about to wake. Not at all; she grew calm again in the sleep from which she had not emerged. Thereafter she lay motionless. She had laid her hand on her breast, the limpness of the arm so artlessly childlike that I was obliged, as I gazed at her, to suppress the smile that is provoked in us by the solemnity, the innocence and the grace of little children.

I, who was acquainted with many Albertines in one person, seemed now to see many more again reposing by my side. Her eyebrows, arched as I had never noticed them, encircled the globes of her eyelids like a halcyon's downy nest. Races, atavisms, vices reposed upon her face. Whenever she moved her head, she created a different woman, often one whose existence I had never suspected. I seemed to possess not one but countless girls. Her breathing, as it became gradually deeper, made her breast rise and fall in a regular rhythm, and above it her folded hands and her pearls, displaced in a different way by the same movement, like boats and mooring chains set swaying by the movement of the tide. Then, feeling that the tide of her sleep was full, that I should not run aground on reefs of consciousness covered now by the high water of profound slumber, I would climb deliberately and noiselessly on to the bed, lie down by her side, clasp her waist in one arm, and place my lips upon her cheek and my free hand on her heart and then on every part of her body in turn, so that it too was raised, like the pearls, by her breathing; I myself was gently rocked by its regular motion: I had embarked upon the tide of Albertine's sleep.

Sometimes it afforded me a pleasure that was less pure. For this I had no need to make any movement, but allowed my leg to dangle against hers, like an oar which one trails in the water, imparting to it now and again a gentle oscillation like the intermittent wing-beat of a bird

asleep in the air. I chose, in gazing at her, the aspect of her face which one never saw and which was so beautiful. It is I suppose comprehensible that the letters which we receive from a person should be more or less similar to one another and combine to trace an image of the writer sufficiently different from the person we know to constitute a second personality. But how much stranger is it that a woman should be conjoined, like Radica with Doodica,[2] with another woman whose different beauty makes us infer another character, and that in order to see them we must look at one of them in profile and the other in full face. The sound of her breathing, which had grown louder, might have given the illusion of the panting of sexual pleasure, and when mine was at its climax, I could kiss her without having interrupted her sleep. I felt at such moments that I had possessed her more completely, like an unconscious and unresisting object of dumb nature. I was not troubled by the words that she murmured from time to time in her sleep; their meaning was closed to me, and besides, whoever the unknown person to whom they referred, it was upon my hand, upon my cheek that her hand, stirred by an occasional faint tremor, tightened for an instant. I savoured her sleep with a disinterested, soothing love, just as I would remain for hours listening to the unfurling of the waves.

Perhaps people must be capable of making us suffer intensely before they can procure for us, in the hours of remission, the same soothing calm as nature does. I did not have to answer her as when we were engaged in conversation, and even if I could have remained silent, as for that matter I did when it was she who was talking, still while listening to her I did not penetrate so far into the

depths of her being. As I continued to hear, to capture from moment to moment, the murmur, soothing as a barely perceptible breeze, of her pure breath, it was a whole physiological existence that was spread out before me, at my disposal; just as I used to remain for hours lying on the beach, in the moonlight, so long could I have remained there gazing at her, listening to her. Sometimes it was as though the sea was beginning to swell, as though the storm was making itself felt even inside the bay, and I would press myself against her and listen to the gathering roar of her breath.

Sometimes, when she was too warm, she would take off her kimono while she was already almost asleep and fling it over an armchair. As she slept I would tell myself that all her letters were in the inner pocket of this kimono, into which she always thrust them. A signature, an assignation, would have sufficed to prove a lie or to dispel a suspicion. When I could see that Albertine was sound asleep, leaving the foot of the bed where I had been standing motionless in contemplation of her, I would take a step forward, seized by a burning curiosity, feeling that the secret of this other life lay offering itself to me, flaccid and defenceless, in that armchair. Perhaps I took this step forward also because to stand perfectly still and watch her sleeping became tiring after a while. And so, on tiptoe, constantly turning round to make sure that Albertine was not waking, I would advance towards the armchair. There I would stop short, and stand for a long time gazing at the kimono, as I had stood for a long time gazing at Albertine. But (and here perhaps I was wrong) never once did I touch the kimono, put my hand in the pocket, examine the letters. In the end, realising that I would never

make up my mind, I would creep back to the bedside and begin again to watch the sleeping Albertine, who would tell me nothing, whereas I could see lying across an arm of the chair that kimono which would perhaps have told me much.

And just as people pay a hundred francs a day for a room at the Grand Hotel at Balbec in order to breathe the sea air, I felt it to be quite natural that I should spend more than that on her, since I had her breath upon my cheek, between my lips which I laid half-open upon hers, through which her life flowed against my tongue.

But this pleasure of seeing her sleep, which was as sweet to me as that of feeling her live, was cut short by another pleasure, that of seeing her wake. It was, carried to a more profound and more mysterious degree, the same pleasure as I felt in having her under my roof. It was gratifying to me, of course, that when she alighted from the car in the afternoon, it should be to my house that she was returning. It was even more so to me that when, from the underworld of sleep, she climbed the last steps of the staircase of dreams, it was in my room that she was reborn to consciousness and life, that she wondered for an instant: "Where am I?" and, seeing the objects by which she was surrounded, and the lamp whose light scarcely made her blink her eyes, was able to assure herself that she was at home on realising that she was waking in *my* home. In that first delicious moment of uncertainty, it seemed to me that once again I was taking possession of her more completely, since, instead of her returning to her own room after an outing, it was my room that, as soon as Albertine should have recognised it, was about to enclose, to contain her, without there being any sign of misgiving in her eyes, which remained as calm as if she had never slept at all. The uncertainty of awakening, revealed by her silence, was not at all revealed in her eyes.

Then she would find her tongue and say: "My—" or "My darling—" followed by my Christian name, which, if we give the narrator the same name as the author of this book, would be "My Marcel," or "My darling Marcel." After this I would never allow a member of my family, by calling me "darling," to rob of their precious uniqueness the delicious words that Albertine uttered to me. As she uttered them, she pursed her lips in a little pout which she spontaneously transformed into a kiss. As quickly as she had earlier fallen asleep, she had awoken.

No more than my own progression in time, no more than the fact of looking at a girl sitting near me beneath a lamp that shed upon her a very different light from that of the sun when I used to see her striding along the seashore, was this material enrichment, this autonomous progress of Albertine, the determining cause of the difference between my present view of her and my original impression of her at Balbec. A longer term of years might have separated the two images without effecting so complete a change; it had come about, this sudden and fundamental change, when I had learned that Albertine had been virtually brought up by Mlle Vinteuil's friend. If at one time I had been overcome with excitement when I thought I detected mystery in Albertine's eyes, now I was happy only at times when from those eyes, from those cheeks even, as revealing as the eyes, at one moment so gentle but quickly turning sullen, I succeeded in expelling every trace of mystery. The image which I sought, upon which I relied,

for which I would have been prepared to die, was no longer that of Albertine leading an unknown life, it was that of an Albertine as known to me as it was possible for her to be (and it was for this reason that my love could not be lasting unless it remained unhappy, for by definition it did not satisfy the need for mystery), an Albertine who did not reflect a distant world, but desired nothing else—there were moments when this did indeed appear to be the case—than to be with me, to be exactly like me, an Albertine who was the image precisely of what was mine and not of the unknown.

When it is thus from an hour of anguish in relation to another person that love is born, when it is from uncertainty whether we shall keep or lose that person, such a love bears the mark of the revolution that has created it, it recalls very little of what we had previously seen when we thought of the person in question. And although my first impressions of Albertine, silhouetted against the sea, might to some small extent persist in my love for her, in reality, these earlier impressions occupy but a tiny place in a love of this sort, in its strength, in its agony, in its need of comfort and its resort to a calm and soothing memory with which we would prefer to abide and to learn nothing more of the beloved, even if there were something horrible to be known. Even if the previous impressions are retained, such a love is made of very different stuff!

Sometimes I would put out the light before she came in. It was in the darkness, barely guided by the glow of a smouldering log, that she would lie down by my side. My hands and my cheeks alone identified her without my eyes seeing her, my eyes that were often afraid of finding her changed; so that, by virtue of these blind caresses, she

may perhaps have felt bathed in a warmer tenderness than usual.

On other evenings, I undressed and went to bed, and, with Albertine perched on the side of the bed, we would resume our game or our conversation interrupted by kisses; and in the physical desire that alone makes us take an interest in the existence and character of another person, we remain so true to our own nature (even if, on the other hand, we abandon successively the different persons whom we have loved in turn) that on one occasion, catching sight of myself in the mirror at the moment when I was kissing Albertine and calling her "my little girl," the sorrowful, passionate expression on my own face, similar to the expression it would have worn long ago with Gilberte whom I no longer remembered, and would perhaps assume one day with another if I were ever to forget Albertine, made me think that, over and above any personal considerations (instinct requiring that we consider the person of the moment as the only real one), I was performing the duties of an ardent and painful devotion dedicated as an oblation to the youth and beauty of Woman. And yet with this desire by which I was honouring youth with a votive offering, with my memories too of Balbec, there was blended, in my need to keep Albertine thus every evening by my side, something that had hitherto been foreign to my amorous existence at least, if it was not entirely new in my life. It was a soothing power the like of which I had not experienced since the evenings at Combray long ago when my mother, stooping over my bed, brought me repose in a kiss. To be sure, I should have been greatly astonished at that time had anyone told me that I was not extremely kind and especially that I

would ever seek to deprive someone else of a pleasure. I must have known myself very imperfectly then, for my pleasure in having Albertine to live with me was much less a positive pleasure than the pleasure of having withdrawn from the world, where everyone was free to enjoy her in turn, the blossoming girl who, if she did not bring me any great joy, was at least withholding joy from others. Ambition and fame would have left me unmoved. Even more was I incapable of feeling hatred. And yet to love carnally was none the less, for me, to enjoy a triumph over countless rivals. I can never repeat it often enough: it was more than anything else an appeasement.

For all that I might, before Albertine returned, have doubted her, have imagined her in the room at Montjouvain, once she was in her dressing-gown and seated facing my chair or (if, as was more frequent, I had remained in bed) at the foot of my bed, I would deposit my doubts in her, hand them over for her to relieve me of them, with the abnegation of a worshipper uttering a prayer. All through the evening she might have been there, curled up in a mischievous ball on my bed, playing with me like a cat; her little pink nose, the tip of which she made even tinier with a coquettish glance which gave it a daintiness characteristic of certain women who are inclined to be plump, might have given her an inflamed and provocative air; she might have allowed a tress of her long, dark hair to fall over her pale-pink waxen cheek and, half shutting her eyes, unfolding her arms, have seemed to be saying to me: "Do what you like with me"—but when the time came for her to leave me, and she drew close to me to say good-night, it was a softness that had become almost familial that I kissed on either side of her sturdy neck

which then never seemed to me brown or freckled enough, as though these solid qualities were associated with a certain frank good nature in Albertine.

"Are you coming with us tomorrow, old crosspatch?" she would ask before leaving me.

"Where are you going?"

"That will depend on the weather and on you. But have you written anything today, my little darling? No? Then it was hardly worth your while not coming with us. Tell me, by the way, when I came in this evening, you knew my step, you guessed at once who it was?"

"Of course. Could I possibly be mistaken? Couldn't I tell my little goose's footstep among a thousand? She must let me take her shoes off before she goes to bed, it will give me such pleasure. You're so nice and pink in all that white lace."

Such was my answer; amid the sensual expressions, others will be recognised that were peculiar to my grandmother and my mother. For, little by little, I was beginning to resemble all my relations: my father who—in a very different fashion from myself, no doubt, for if things repeat themselves, it is with great variations—took so keen an interest in the weather; and not my father only, but, more and more, my aunt Léonie. Otherwise Albertine could not but have been a reason for my going out, so as not to leave her on her own, beyond my control. Although every day I found an excuse in some particular indisposition, what made me so often remain in bed was a person—not Albertine, not a person I loved but a person with more power over me than any beloved—who had transmigrated into me, a person despotic to the point of silencing at times my jealous suspicions or at least of pre-

venting me from going to verify whether they had any foundation, and that person was my aunt Léonie—my aunt Léonie, who was entirely steeped in piety and with whom I could have sworn that I had not a single point in common, I who was so passionately fond of pleasure, apparently worlds apart from that maniac who had never known any pleasure in her life and lay telling her beads all day long, I who suffered from my inability to actualise a literary career whereas she had been the one person in the family who could never understand that reading was anything other than a means of whiling away the time, of "amusing oneself," which made it, even at Eastertide, permissible on Sundays, when every serious occupation is forbidden in order that the whole day may be hallowed by prayer. And as if it were not enough that I should bear an exaggerated resemblance to my father, to the extent of not being satisfied like him with consulting the barometer, but becoming an animated barometer myself, as if it were not enough that I should allow myself to be ordered by my aunt Léonie to stay at home and watch the weather, from my bedroom window or even from my bed, here I was talking now to Albertine, at one moment as the child that I had been at Combray used to talk to my mother, at another as my grandmother used to talk to me. When we have passed a certain age, the soul of the child that we were and the souls of the dead from whom we sprang come and shower upon us their riches and their spells, asking to be allowed to contribute to the new emotions which we feel and in which, erasing their former image, we recast them in an original creation. Thus my whole past from my earliest years, and, beyond these, the past of my parents and relations, blended with my impure love

for Albertine the tender charm of an affection at once filial and maternal. We have to give hospitality, at a certain stage in our lives, to all our relatives who have journeyed so far and gathered round us.

Before Albertine obeyed and took off her shoes, I would open her chemise. Her two little uplifted breasts were so round that they seemed not so much to be an integral part of her body as to have ripened there like fruit; and her belly (concealing the place where a man's is disfigured as though by an iron clamp left sticking in a statue that has been taken down from its niche) was closed, at the junction of her thighs, by two valves with a curve as languid, as reposeful, as cloistral as that of the horizon after the sun has set. She would take off her shoes, and lie down by my side.

O mighty attitudes of Man and Woman, in which there seeks to be united, in the innocence of the world's first days and with the humility of clay, what the Creation made separate, in which Eve is astonished and submissive before Man by whose side she awakens, as he himself, alone still, before God who has fashioned him! Albertine would fold her arms behind her dark hair, her hip swelling, her leg drooping with the inflexion of a swan's neck that stretches upwards and then curves back on itself. When she was lying completely on her side, there was a certain aspect of her face (so sweet and so beautiful from in front) which I could not endure, hook-nosed as in one of Leonardo's caricatures, seeming to betray the malice, the greed for gain, the deceitfulness of a spy whose presence in my house would have filled me with horror and whom that profile seemed to unmask. At once I took Albertine's face in my hands and altered its position.

"Be a good boy and promise me that if you don't come out tomorrow you'll work," she would say as she slipped her chemise on again.

"Yes, but don't put on your dressing-gown yet."

Sometimes I ended by falling asleep by her side. The room would grow cold, more wood would be wanted. I would try to find the bell above my head, but fail to do so, after fingering all the copper rods in turn save those between which it hung, and would say to Albertine who had sprung from the bed so that Françoise should not find us lying side by side: "No, come back for a moment, I can't find the bell."

Sweet, gay, innocent moments to all appearance, and yet moments in which there gathers the unsuspected possibility of disaster, which makes the amorous life the most precarious of all, that in which the unpredictable rain of sulphur and brimstone falls after the most radiant moments, whereupon, without having the heart or the will to draw a lesson from our misfortune, we set to work at once to rebuild upon the slopes of the crater from which nothing but catastrophe can emerge. I was as carefree as those who imagine their happiness will last. It is precisely because this tenderness has been necessary to give birth to pain—and will return moreover at intervals to calm it—that men can be sincere with each other, and even with themselves, when they pride themselves on a woman's lovingness, although, taking things all in all, at the heart of their intimacy there lurks continuously and secretly, unavowed to the rest of the world, or revealed unintentionally by questions and inquiries, a painful disquiet. But this could not have come to birth without the preliminary tenderness, which even afterwards is intermittently necessary to make the pain bearable and to avoid ruptures; and concealment of the secret hell that a life shared with the woman in question really is, to the point of parading an allegedly tender intimacy, expresses a genuine point of view, a universal process of cause and effect, one of the modes whereby the production of grief and pain is rendered possible.

It no longer surprised me that Albertine should be in the house, and would not be going out tomorrow except with myself or in the custody of Andrée. These habits of shared life, these broad lines by which my existence was demarcated and within which nobody might penetrate but Albertine, and also (in the future plan, of which I was still unaware, of my life to come, like the plan drawn up by an architect for monuments which will not be erected until long afterwards) the remoter lines, parallel to these and broader still, by which, like an isolated hermitage, the somewhat rigid and monotonous prescription of my future loves was adumbrated, had in reality been traced that night at Balbec when, in the little train, after Albertine had revealed to me who it was that had brought her up, I had decided at all costs to remove her from certain influences and to prevent her from straying out of my sight for some days. Day after day had gone by, and these habits had become mechanical, but, like those rites the meaning of which History seeks to discover, I could have said (though I would not have wished to say) to anybody who asked me to explain the meaning of this life of seclusion which I carried so far as no longer to go to the theatre, that its origin lay in the anxiety of an evening and my need to prove to myself, during the days that followed,

that the girl of whose unfortunate childhood I had learned should have no possibility, whether she wished to or not, of exposing herself to similar temptations. I no longer thought, except very rarely, of these possibilities, but they were nevertheless to remain vaguely present in my consciousness. The fact that I was destroying them—or trying to do so—day by day was doubtless the reason why I took such pleasure in kissing those cheeks which were no more beautiful than many others; beneath any carnal attraction at all deep, there is the permanent possibility of danger.

I had promised Albertine that, if I did not go out with her, I would settle down to work. But in the morning, just as if, taking advantage of our being asleep, the house had miraculously flown, I awoke in different weather beneath another clime. We do not begin to work as soon as we disembark in a strange country to the conditions of which we have to adapt ourselves. And each day was for me a different country. How could I even recognise my indolence itself, under the novel forms which it assumed? Sometimes, on days when the weather was beyond redemption, mere residence in the house, situated in the midst of a steady and continuous rain, had all the gliding ease, the soothing silence, the interest of a sea voyage; another time, on a bright day, to lie still in bed was to let the lights and shadows play around me as round a tree-trunk. Or yet again, at the first strokes of the bell of a neighbouring convent, rare as the early morning worshippers, barely whitening the dark sky with their hesitant hail-showers, melted and scattered by the warm breeze, I would discern one of those tempestuous, disordered, delightful days, when the roofs, soaked by an intermittent downpour and dried by a gust of wind or a ray of sunshine, let fall a gurgling raindrop and, as they wait for the wind to turn again, preen their iridescent pigeon's-breast slates in the momentary sunshine; one of those days filled with so many changes of weather, atmospheric incidents, storms, that the idle man does not feel that he has wasted them because he has been taking an interest in the activity which, in default of himself, the atmosphere, acting as it were in his stead, has displayed; days similar to those times of revolution or war which do not seem empty to the schoolboy playing truant, because by loitering outside the Law Courts or by reading the newspapers he has the illusion of deriving from the events that have occurred, failing the work which he has neglected, an intellectual profit and an excuse for his idleness; days, finally, to which one may compare those on which some exceptional crisis has occurred in one's life from which the man who has never done anything imagines that he will acquire industrious habits if it is happily resolved: for instance, the morning on which he sets out for a duel which is to be fought under particularly dangerous conditions, and he is suddenly made aware, at the moment when it is perhaps about to be taken from him, of the value of a life of which he might have made use to begin some important work, or merely to enjoy a few pleasures, and of which he has failed to make any use at all. "If only I'm not killed," he says to himself, "how I shall settle down to work the very minute, and how I shall enjoy myself too!" Life has in fact suddenly acquired a higher value in his eyes, because he puts into life everything that it seems to him capable of giving instead of the little that he nor-

the face by suppressing all that the eyes express only too plainly, there was in the words, not devoid of meaning but interrupted by moments of silence, which Albertine uttered as she awoke, a pure beauty of a kind that is not constantly tarnished, as is conversation, by habits of speech, stale repetitions, traces of familiar defects. Moreover, when I had decided to wake Albertine, I would have been able to do so without fear, knowing that her awakening would bear no relation to the evening that we had passed together, but would emerge from her sleep as morning emerges from night. As soon as she had begun to open her eyes with a smile, she would have offered me her lips, and before she had even said a word, I would have savoured their freshness, as soothing as that of a garden still silent before the break of day.

The day after the evening when Albertine had told me that she might perhaps, then that she might not, be going to see the Verdurins, I awoke early, and, while I was still half asleep, my joy informed me that it was a spring day interpolated in the middle of the winter. Outside, popular themes skilfully transposed for various instruments, from the horn of the china repairer, or the trumpet of the chair mender, to the flute of the goatherd who seemed, on a fine morning, to be a Sicilian drover, were lightly orchestrating the matutinal air with an "Overture for a Public Holiday." Our hearing, that delightful sense, brings us the company of the street, of which it traces every line for us, sketches all the figures that pass along it, showing us their colours. The iron shutters of the baker's shop and of the dairy, which had been lowered last night over every possibility of feminine

bliss, were now being raised, like the canvas of a ship that is getting under way and about to set sail across the transparent sea, on to a vision of young shopgirls. This sound of the iron shutters being raised would perhaps have been my sole pleasure in a different part of the town. In this quarter a hundred other sounds contributed to my joy, of which I would not have missed a single one by remaining too long asleep. It is one of the enchantments of the old aristocratic quarters that they are at the same time plebeian. Just as, sometimes, cathedrals used to have them within a stone's throw of their portals (which have even preserved the name, like the door of Rouen cathedral styled the Booksellers', because these latter used to expose their merchandise in the open air beside it), so various minor trades, but in this case itinerant, passed in front of the noble Hôtel de Guermantes, and made one think at times of the ecclesiastical France of long ago. For the beguiling calls which they launched at the little houses on either side had, with rare exceptions, little connexion with song. They differed from song as much as the declamation—scarcely tinged by even the most imperceptible modulation—of *Boris Godunov* and *Pelléas*; but on the other hand recalled the drone of a priest intoning his office, of which these street scenes are but the good-humoured, secular, and yet half-liturgical counterpart. Never had I so delighted in them as since Albertine had come to live with me; they seemed to me a joyous signal of her awakening, and by interesting me in the life of the world outside made me all the more conscious of the soothing virtue of a beloved presence, as constant as I could wish. Several of the foodstuffs peddled in the street,

which personally I detested, were greatly to Albertine's liking, so much so that Françoise used to send her young footman out to buy them, slightly humiliated perhaps at finding himself mixing with the plebeian crowd. Very distinct in this peaceful quarter (where the noises were no longer a cause of lamentation to Françoise and had become a source of pleasure to myself), there reached my ears, each with its different modulation, recitatives declaimed by these humble folk as they would be in the music—so entirely popular—of *Boris*, where an initial tonality is barely altered by the inflexion of one note leaning upon another, music of the crowd, which is more speech than music. It was "Winkles, winkles, a ha'porth of winkles!" that brought people running to buy the cornets in which were sold those horrid little shellfish, which, if Albertine had not been there, would have repelled me, as did the snails which I heard being peddled at the same hour. Here again it was of the barely musical declamation of Moussorgsky that the vendor reminded me, but not of it alone. For after having almost "spoken" the refrain: "Who'll buy my snails, fine, fresh snails?" it was with the vague sadness of Maeterlinck, transposed into music by Debussy, that the snail vendor, in one of those mournful cadences in which the composer of *Pelléas* shows his kinship with Rameau: "If vanquished I must be, is it for thee to be my vanquisher?"[3] added with a singsong melancholy: "Only tuppence a dozen . . ."

I have always found it difficult to understand why these perfectly simple words were sighed in a tone so far from appropriate, as mysterious as the secret which makes everyone look sad in the old palace to which Mélisande

has not succeeded in bringing joy, and as profound as one of the thoughts of the aged Arkel who seeks to utter in the simplest words the whole lore of wisdom and destiny. The very notes upon which the voice of the old King of Allemonde or that of Golaud rises with ever-increasing sweetness to say: "We do not know what is happening here. It may seem strange. Perhaps nothing that happens is in vain," or else: "You mustn't be frightened . . . she was a poor little mysterious creature, like everyone," were those which served the snail vendor to repeat in an endless cantilena: "Only tuppence a dozen . . ." But this metaphysical lamentation scarcely had time to expire upon the shore of the infinite before it was interrupted by a shrill trumpet. This time it was not a question of victuals; the words of the libretto were: "Dogs clipped, cats doctored, tails and ears docked."

It was true that the fantasy or wit of each vendor or vendress frequently introduced variations into the words of all these chants that I used to hear from my bed. And yet a ritual suspension interposing a silence in the middle of a word, especially when it was repeated a second time, constantly evoked the memory of old churches. In his little cart drawn by a she-ass which he stopped in front of each house before entering the courtyard, the old-clothes man, brandishing a whip, intoned: "Old clothes, any old clothes, old clo . . . thes" with the same pause between the final syllables as if he had been intoning in plainchant: "*Per omnia saecula saeculo . . . rum*" or "*requiescat in pa . . . ce*" although he had no reason to believe in the immortality of his clothes, nor did he offer them as cerements for the eternal rest in peace. And similarly, as the

motifs, even at this early hour, were beginning to interweave with one another, a costermonger pushing her little hand-cart employed in her litany the Gregorian division:

> Tender and green,
> Artichokes tender and sweet,
> Ar . . . tichokes

although she had probably never heard of the antiphonary, or of the seven tones that symbolise, four the arts of the quadrivium and three those of the trivium.

Drawing from a penny whistle, or from a bagpipe, airs of his own southern country whose sunlight harmonised well with these fine days, a man in a smock, carrying a bullwhip in his hand and wearing a Basque beret on his head, stopped before each house in turn. It was the goatherd with two dogs driving before him his string of goats. As he came from a distance, he arrived fairly late in our quarter; and the women came running out with bowls to receive the milk that was to give strength to their little ones. But with the Pyrenean airs of this benign shepherd was now blended the bell of the grinder, who cried: "Knives, scissors, razors." With him the saw-setter was unable to compete, for, lacking an instrument, he had to be content with calling: "Any saws to set? Here's the setter!" while in a gayer mood the tinker, after enumerating the pots, pans and everything else that he repaired, struck up the refrain:

> Tan, ran, tan, tan, ran, tan,
> For pots or cans, oh! I'm your man.
> I'll mend them all with a tink, tink, tink,
> And never leave a chink, chink, chink,

and little Italians carrying big iron boxes painted red, upon which the numbers—winning and losing—were marked, and flourishing their rattles, issued the invitation: "Enjoy yourselves, ladies, here's a treat."

Françoise brought in the *Figaro*. A glance was sufficient to show me that my article had still not appeared. She told me that Albertine had asked whether she might come to my room and sent word that she had after all given up the idea of calling upon the Verdurins and had decided to go, as I had advised her, to the "special" matinée at the Trocadéro—what nowadays would be called, though with considerably less significance, a "gala" matinée—after a short ride which she had promised to take with Andrée. Now that I knew that she had abandoned her possibly nefarious intention of going to see Mme Verdurin, I said with a laugh: "Tell her to come in," and told myself that she might go wherever she chose and that it was all the same to me. I knew that by the end of the afternoon, when dusk began to fall, I should probably be a different man, moping, attaching to every one of Albertine's movements an importance that they did not possess at this morning hour when the weather was so fine. For my insouciance was accompanied by a clear notion of its cause, but was in no way modified thereby.

"Françoise assured me that you were awake and that I wouldn't be disturbing you," said Albertine as she entered the room. And since, next to making me catch cold by opening the window at the wrong moment, what Albertine most dreaded was to come into my room when I was asleep: "I hope I haven't done wrong," she went on. "I was afraid you'd say to me:

What insolent mortal comes to meet his doom?"

And she laughed that laugh which I always found so disturbing.

I replied in the same jesting vein:

Was it for you this stern decree was made?

And, lest she should ever venture to infringe it, added: "Although I'd be furious if you did wake me."

"I know, I know, don't be frightened," said Albertine.

To show that I was mollified, I added, still enacting the scene from *Esther* with her, while in the street below the cries continued, drowned by our conversation:

In you alone a certain grace I see
That always charms and never wearies me

(and to myself I thought: "Yes, she does weary me very often"). And remembering what she had said to me the night before, as I thanked her extravagantly for having given up the Verdurins, so that another time she would obey me similarly with regard to something else, I said: "Albertine, you distrust me although I love you and you place your trust in people who don't love you" (as though it were not natural to distrust the people who love you and who alone have an interest in lying to you in order to find out things, to thwart you), and added these lying words: "It's funny, you don't really believe that I love you. As a matter of fact, I don't *adore* you." She lied in her turn when she told me that she trusted nobody but myself and then became sincere when she assured me that she knew quite well that I loved her. But this affirmation

did not seem to imply that she did not believe me to be a liar who spied on her. And she seemed to forgive me as though she saw these defects as the agonising consequence of a great love or as though she herself did not feel entirely guiltless.

"I beg of you, my darling girl, no more of that trick riding you were practising the other day. Just think, Albertine, if you were to have an accident!"*

Of course I did not wish her any harm. But how delighted I should have been if, with her horses, she had taken it into her head to ride off somewhere, wherever she chose, and never come back to my house again! How it would have simplified everything, that she should go and live happily somewhere else, I did not even wish to know where!

"Oh! I know you wouldn't survive me for forty-eight hours. You'd kill yourself."*

Thus did we exchange lying speeches. But a truth more profound than that which we would utter were we sincere may sometimes be expressed and announced by another channel than that of sincerity.

"You don't mind all that noise outside?" she asked me. "Personally I love it. But you're such a light sleeper."

I was on the contrary often an extremely heavy sleeper (as I have already said, but am compelled to repeat in view of what follows), especially when I only fell asleep in the morning. As this kind of sleep is—on an average—four times as refreshing, it seems to the awakened sleeper to have lasted four times as long, when it has really been four times as short. A splendid, sixteenfold error in multiplication which gives so much beauty to our awakening and gives life a veritable new dimension, like

those drastic changes of rhythm which, in music, mean that in an andante a quaver has the same duration as a minim in a prestissimo, and which are unknown in our waking state. There, life is almost always the same, whence the disappointments of travel. Yet it would seem that our dreams are sometimes made of the coarsest stuff of life, but that stuff is as it were treated, kneaded so thoroughly—with a protraction due to the fact that none of the temporal limitations of the waking state is there to prevent it from tapering off into unbelievable heights—that we fail to recognise it. On the mornings after this good fortune had befallen me, after the sponge of sleep had wiped from my brain the signs of everyday occupations that are traced upon it as on a blackboard, I was obliged to bring my memory back to life; by an exercise of will we can recapture what the amnesia of sleep or of a stroke has made us forget, what gradually returns to us as our eyes open or our paralysis disappears. I had lived through so many hours in a few minutes that, wishing to address Françoise, for whom I had rung, in words that corresponded to the facts of real life and were regulated by the clock, I was obliged to exert all my inner power of compression in order not to say: "Well, Françoise, here we are at five o'clock in the evening and I haven't set eyes on you since yesterday afternoon." And seeking to dispel my dreams, giving them the lie and lying to myself as well, I said brazenly, compelling myself with all my might to silence, the direct opposite: "Françoise, it must be at least ten o'clock!" I did not even say ten o'clock in the morning, but simply ten o'clock, so that this incredible hour might appear to be uttered in a more natural tone. And yet to say these words, instead of those that continued to run in the mind of the half-awakened sleeper that I still was, demanded the same effort of equilibrium that a man requires when, jumping out of a moving train and running for some yards along the platform, he manages to avoid falling. He runs for a moment because the environment that he has just left was one animated by great velocity, and utterly unlike the inert soil to which his feet find it difficult to accustom themselves.

Because the dream world is not the waking world, it does not follow that the waking world is less real; far from it. In the world of sleep, our perceptions are so overloaded, each of them blanketed by a superimposed counterpart which doubles its bulk and blinds it to no purpose, that we are unable even to distinguish what is happening in the bewilderment of awakening: was it Françoise who had come to me, or I who, tired of calling her, went to her? Silence at that moment was the only way of revealing nothing, as when we are brought before a magistrate cognisant of all the charges against us when we ourselves have not been informed of them. Was it Françoise who had come, or was it I who had summoned her? Was it not, indeed, Françoise who had been asleep and I who had just awoken her? To go further still, was not Françoise contained within me, for the distinction between persons and their interaction barely exists in that murky obscurity in which reality is no more translucent than in the body of a porcupine, and our all but non-existent perception may perhaps give us an idea of the perception of certain animals? Besides, in the state of limpid unreason that precedes these heavy slumbers, if fragments of wisdom float there luminously, if the names of Taine and George Eliot are not unknown, the waking state re-

mains none the less superior to the extent that it is possible to continue it every morning, but not to continue the dream life every night. But perhaps there are other worlds more real than the waking world. Even it we have seen transformed by each new revolution in the arts, and still more, at the same time, by the degree of proficiency or culture that distinguishes an artist from an ignorant fool.

And often an extra hour of sleep is an attack of paralysis after which we must recover the use of our limbs and learn to speak. Our will would not be adequate for this task. We have slept too long, we no longer exist. Our waking is barely felt, mechanically and without consciousness, as a water pipe might feel the turning off of a tap. A life more inanimate than that of the jellyfish follows, in which we could equally well believe that we had been drawn up from the depths of the sea or released from gaol, were we but capable of thinking anything at all. But then from the highest heaven the goddess Mnemotechnia bends down and holds out to us in the formula "the habit of ringing for coffee" the hope of resurrection. Even then, the instantaneous gift of memory is not always so simple. Often we have at our disposal, in those first minutes in which we allow ourselves to glide into the waking state, a variety of different realities among which we imagine that we can choose as from a pack of cards. It is Friday morning and we have just returned from a walk, or else it is teatime by the sea. The idea of sleep and that we are lying in bed in our nightshirt is often the last thing that occurs to us. The resurrection is not effected at once; we think we have rung the bell, but we have not done so, and we utter senseless remarks. Movement alone restores thought, and when we have actually pressed the electric

button we are able to say slowly but distinctly: "It must be at least ten o'clock, Françoise. Bring me my coffee."

Françoise, *mirabile dictu*, could have had no suspicion of the sea of unreality in which I was still wholly immersed and through which I had had the energy to make my strange question penetrate. Her answer would be: "It's ten past ten," which made me appear quite rational and enabled me not to betray the fantastic conversations by which I had been interminably lulled (on days when a mountain of non-existence had not crushed all life out of me). By force of will, I had reintegrated myself with reality. I was still enjoying the last shreds of sleep, that is to say of the only source of invention, the only novelty that exists in story-telling, since none of our narrations in the waking state, even when embellished with literary graces, admit those mysterious differences from which beauty derives. It is easy to speak of the beauty created by opium. But to a man who is accustomed to sleeping only with the aid of drugs, an unexpected hour of natural sleep will reveal the vast, matutinal expanse of a landscape as mysterious and more refreshing. By varying the hour and the place in which we go to sleep, by wooing sleep in an artificial manner, or on the contrary by returning for a day to natural sleep—the strangest kind of all to whomsoever is in the habit of putting himself to sleep with soporifics—we succeed in producing a thousand times as many varieties of sleep as a gardener could produce of carnations or roses. Gardeners produce flowers that are delicious dreams, and others too that are like nightmares. When I fell asleep in a certain way I used to wake up shivering, thinking that I had caught the measles, or, what was far more painful, that my grandmother (of whom I no longer

ever thought) was hurt because I had mocked her that day at Balbec when, in the belief that she was about to die, she had wished me to have a photograph of her. At once, although I was awake, I felt that I must go and explain to her that she had misunderstood me. But already my bodily warmth was returning. The diagnosis of measles was set aside, and my grandmother was so far away that she no longer made my heart ache.

Sometimes over these different kinds of sleep a sudden darkness fell. I was afraid to continue my walk along an entirely unlighted avenue, where I could hear prowling foot-steps. Suddenly an argument broke out between a policeman and one of those women whom one often saw driving hackney carriages, and mistook at a distance for young coachmen. Upon her box among the shadows I could not see her, but she was speaking, and in her voice I could read the perfections of her face and the youthfulness of her body. I strode towards her, in the darkness, to get into her carriage before she drove off. It was a long way. Fortunately, her argument with the policeman was prolonged. I overtook the carriage which was still stationary. This part of the avenue was lighted by street lamps. The driver became visible. It was indeed a woman, but large and old and corpulent, with white hair tumbling beneath her cap, and a strawberry mark on her face. I walked past her, thinking: "Is this what happens to the youth of women? If we have a sudden desire to see those we have met in the past, have they grown old? Is the young woman we desire like a character on the stage when, through the defection of the actress who created the part, the management is obliged to entrust it to a new star? But then it is no longer the same."

Then I would be overcome with a feeling of sadness. We have thus in our sleep countless images of pity, like Renaissance Pietà's, not, like them, wrought in marble, but on the contrary unsubstantial. They have their purpose, however, which is to remind us of a more compassionate, more humane view of things, which we are too apt to forget in the icy common sense, sometimes full of hostility, of the waking state. Thus I was reminded of the vow that I had made at Balbec that I would always treat Françoise with compassion. And for the whole of that morning at least I would manage to compel myself not to be irritated by Françoise's quarrels with the butler, to be gentle with Françoise to whom everyone else showed so little kindness. For that morning only, and I would have to try to frame a code that was a little more permanent; for, just as nations are not governed for any length of time by a policy of pure sentiment, so men are not governed for long by the memory of their dreams. Already this dream was beginning to fade away. In attempting to recall it in order to portray it I made it fade all the faster. My eyelids were no longer so firmly sealed over my eyes. If I tried to reconstruct my dream, they would open completely. We must constantly choose between health and sanity on the one hand, and spiritual pleasures on the other. I have always been cowardly enough to choose the former. Moreover, the perilous power that I was renouncing was even more perilous than one might suppose. Those dreams, those images of pity, do not fly away alone. When we alter thus the conditions in which we go to sleep, it is not our dreams alone that fade, but, for days on end, sometimes for years, the faculty not merely of dreaming but of going to sleep. Sleep is divine but by no

means stable; the slightest shock makes it volatile. A friend to habit, it is kept night after night in its appointed place by habit, more steadfast than itself, protected from any possible disturbance; but if it is displaced, if it is no longer subjugated, it melts away like a vapour. It is like youth and love, never to be recaptured.

In these various forms of sleep, as likewise in music, it was the lengthening or shortening of the interval that created beauty. I enjoyed this beauty, but on the other hand I had missed in my sleep, however brief, a good number of the street cries which render perceptible to us the peripatetic life of the tradesmen, the victuallers of Paris. And so, habitually (without, alas, foreseeing the drama in which these late awakenings and the draconian, Medo-Persian laws of a Racinian Assuerus were presently to involve me) I made an effort to wake early so as to miss none of these cries. In addition to the pleasure of knowing how fond Albertine was of them and of being out of doors myself without leaving my bed, I heard in them as it were the symbol of the atmosphere of the world outside, of the dangerous stirring life through the midst of which I did not allow her to move save under my tutelage, in an external prolongation of her seclusion, and from which I withdrew her at the hour of my choosing to make her return home to my side.

Hence it was with the utmost sincerity that I was able to say in answer to Albertine: "On the contrary, they give me pleasure because I know that you like them."

"Straight from the boat, oysters, from the boat!"

"Oh, oysters! I've been simply longing for some!"

Fortunately Albertine, partly from fickleness, partly from docility, quickly forgot the things for which she had

been longing, and before I had time to tell her that she would find better oysters at Prunier's, she wanted in succession all the things that she heard cried by the fish woman: "Prawns, lovely prawns, alive, alive-o . . . skate, nice fresh skate . . . whiting to fry, to fry . . . here comes the mackerel, freshly caught mackerel, my ladies, beautiful mackerel . . . who'll buy my mussels, fine fat mussels!"

In spite of myself, the warning: "Here comes the mackerel" made me shudder. But as this warning could not, I felt, apply to our chauffeur, I thought only of the fish of that name, which I detested, and my uneasiness did not last.[4]

"Ah! mussels," said Albertine, "I should so like some mussels."

"My darling! They were all very well at Balbec, but here they're not worth eating; besides, I implore you, remember what Cottard told you about mussels."

But my remark was all the more ill-chosen in that the next costermonger announced a thing that Cottard had forbidden even more strictly:

> Lettuce, cos lettuce, not to hawk,
> Lovely cos lettuce out for a walk.

Albertine consented, however, to forgo the cos lettuces, on the condition that I would promise to buy for her in a few days' time from the woman who cried: "Argenteuil asparagus, lovely green asparagus." A mysterious voice, from which one would have expected some stranger utterance, insinuated: "Barrels, barrels . . ." One was obliged to remain under the disappointing impression that nothing more was being offered than barrels, for the word

unknown person who might perhaps come to love me, I created out of nothing desirable women, and said to myself: "How delightful they must be!" But of what use would it be to me that they were delightful, seeing that I was not going out alone?

Taking advantage of the fact that I still was alone, and drawing the curtains together so that the sun should not prevent me from reading the notes, I sat down at the piano, opened at random Vinteuil's sonata which happened to be lying there, and began to play; seeing that Albertine's arrival was still a matter of some time but was on the other hand certain, I had at once time to spare and peace of mind. Lulled by the confident expectation of her return escorted by Françoise and by the assurance of her docility as by the blessedness of an inner light as warming as the light of the sun, I could dispose of my thoughts, detach them for a moment from Albertine, apply them to the sonata. I did not even go out of my way to notice how, in the latter, the combination of the sensual and the anxious motifs corresponded more closely now to my love for Albertine, from which jealousy had been for so long absent that I had been able to confess to Swann my ignorance of that sentiment. No, approaching the sonata from another point of view, regarding it in itself as the work of a great artist, I was carried back upon the tide of sound to the days at Combray—I do not mean Montjouvain and the Méséglise way, but to my walks along the Guermantes way—when I myself had longed to become an artist. In abandoning that ambition *de facto*, had I forfeited something real? Could life console me for the loss of art? Was there in art a more profound reality, in which our true personality finds an expression that is not afforded it by the activities of life? For every great artist seems so different from all the rest, and gives us so strongly that sensation of individuality for which we seek in vain in our everyday existence! Just as I was thinking thus, I was struck by a passage in the sonata. It was a passage with which I was quite familiar, but sometimes our attention throws a different light upon things which we have known for a long time and we remark in them what we have never seen before. As I played the passage, and although Vinteuil had been trying to express in it a fancy which would have been wholly foreign to Wagner, I could not help murmuring "*Tristan*," with the smile of an old family friend discovering a trace of the grandfather in an intonation, a gesture of the grandson who has never set eyes on him. And as the friend then examines a photograph which enables him to specify the likeness, so, on top of Vinteuil's sonata, I set up on the music-rest the score of *Tristan*, a selection from which was being given that afternoon, as it happened, at a Lamoureux concert. In admiring the Bayreuth master, I had none of the scruples of those who, like Nietzsche, are bidden by a sense of duty to shun in art as in life the beauty that tempts them, and who, tearing themselves from *Tristan* as they renounce *Parsifal*, and, in their spiritual asceticism, progressing from one mortification to another, succeed, by following the most bloody of the stations of the cross, in exalting themselves to the pure cognition and perfect adoration of *Le Postillon de Longjumeau*.[6] I was struck by how much reality there is in the work of Wagner as I contemplated once more those insistent, fleeting themes which visit an act, recede only to return again and again, and, sometimes distant, dormant, almost detached, are at other

moments, while remaining vague, so pressing and so close, so internal, so organic, so visceral, that they seem like the reprise not so much of a musical motif as of an attack of neuralgia.

Music, very different in this respect from Albertine's society, helped me to descend into myself, to discover new things: the variety that I had sought in vain in life, in travel, but a longing for which was none the less renewed in me by this sonorous tide whose sunlit waves now came to expire at my feet. A twofold diversity. As the spectrum makes visible to us the composition of light, so the harmony of a Wagner, the colour of an Elstir, enable us to know that essential quality of another person's sensations into which love for another person does not allow us to penetrate. Then a diversity inside the work itself, by the sole means that exist of being effectively diverse: to wit, combining diverse individualities. Where a minor composer would claim to be portraying a squire, or a knight, while making them both sing the same music, Wagner on the contrary allots to each separate appellation a different reality, and whenever a squire appears, it is an individual figure, at once complicated and simplified, that, with a joyous, feudal clash of warring sounds, inscribes itself in the vast tonal mass. Whence the plenitude of a music that is indeed filled with so many different strains, each of which is a person. A person or the impression that is given us by a momentary aspect of nature. Even that which, in this music, is most independent of the emotion that it arouses in us preserves its outward and absolutely precise reality; the song of a bird, the call of a hunter's horn, the air that a shepherd plays upon his pipe, each carves its silhouette of sound against the horizon. True,

Wagner would bring them forward, appropriate them, introduce them into an orchestral whole, make them subservient to the highest musical concepts, but always respecting their original nature, as a carpenter respects the grain, the peculiar essence of the wood that he is carving.

But notwithstanding the richness of these works in which the contemplation of nature has its place alongside the action, alongside the individuals who are not merely the names of characters, I thought how markedly, all the same, these works partake of that quality of being—albeit marvellously—always incomplete, which is the characteristic of all the great works of the nineteenth century, that century whose greatest writers somehow botched their books, but, watching themselves work as though they were at once workman and judge, derived from this self-contemplation a new form of beauty, exterior and superior to the work itself, imposing on it a retroactive unity, a grandeur which it does not possess. Without pausing to consider the man who belatedly saw in his novels a *Human Comedy*, or those who entitled heterogeneous poems or essays *The Legend of the Centuries* or *The Bible of Humanity*, can we not say none the less of the last of these that he so admirably personifies the nineteenth century that the greatest beauties in Michelet are to be sought not so much in his work itself as in the attitudes that he adopts towards his work, not in his *History of France* nor in his *History of the Revolution*, but in his prefaces to those books? Prefaces, that is to say pages written after the books themselves, in which he considers the books, and with which we must include here and there certain sentences beginning as a rule with a: "Dare I say?" which is not a scholar's precaution but a musician's cadence.

The other musician, he who was delighting me at this moment, Wagner, retrieving some exquisite fragment from a drawer of his writing-table to introduce it, as a retrospectively necessary theme, into a work he had not even thought of at the time he composed it, then having composed a first mythological opera, and a second, and afterwards others still, and perceiving all of a sudden that he had written a tetralogy, must have felt something of the same exhilaration as Balzac when the latter, casting over his books the eye at once of a stranger and of a father, finding in one the purity of Raphael, in another the simplicity of the Gospel, suddenly decided, shedding a retrospective illumination upon them, that they would be better brought together in a cycle in which the same characters would reappear, and touched up his work with a swift brush-stroke, the last and the most sublime. An ulterior unity, but not a factitious one, otherwise it would have crumbled into dust like all the other systematisations of mediocre writers who with copious titles and sub-titles give themselves the appearance of having pursued a single and transcendent design. Not factitious, perhaps indeed all the more real for being ulterior, for being born of a moment of enthusiasm when it is discovered to exist among fragments which need only to be joined together; a unity that was unaware of itself, hence vital and not logical, that did not prohibit variety, dampen invention. It emerges (but applied this time to the work as a whole) like such and such a fragment composed separately, born of an inspiration, not required by the artificial development of a thesis, which comes to be integrated with the rest. Before the great orchestral movement that precedes the return of Isolde, it is the work itself that has attracted

towards itself the half-forgotten air of a shepherd's pipe. And, no doubt, just as the orchestra swells and surges at the approach of the ship, when it takes hold of these notes of the pipe, transforms them, imbues them with its own intoxication, breaks their rhythm, clarifies their tonality, accelerates their movement, expands their instrumentation, so no doubt Wagner himself was filled with joy when he discovered in his memory the shepherd's tune, incorporated it in his work, gave it its full wealth of meaning. This joy moreover never forsakes him. In him, however great the melancholy of the poet, it is consoled, transcended—that is to say, alas, to some extent destroyed—by the exhilaration of the fabricator. But then, no less than by the similarity I had remarked just now between Vinteuil's phrase and Wagner's, I was troubled by the thought of this Vulcan-like skill. Could it be this that gave to great artists the illusory aspect of a fundamental, irreducible originality, apparently the reflexion of a more than human reality, actually the result of industrious toil? If art is no more than that, it is no more real than life and I had less cause for regret. I went on playing *Tristan*. Separated from Wagner by the wall of sound, I could hear him exult, invite me to share his joy, I could hear the immortally youthful laughter and the hammer-blows of Siegfried ring out with redoubled vigour; but the more marvellously those phrases were struck, the technical skill of the craftsman served merely to make it easier for them to leave the earth, birds akin not to Lohengrin's swan but to that aeroplane which I had seen at Balbec convert its energy into vertical motion, glide over the sea and vanish in the sky. Perhaps, as the birds that soar highest and fly most swiftly have more powerful wings, one of these

frankly material vehicles was needed to explore the infinite, one of these 120 horse-power machines—the Mystère model—in which nevertheless, however high one flies, one is prevented to some extent from enjoying the silence of space by the overpowering roar of the engine!

Somehow or other the course of my musings, which hitherto had wandered among musical memories, turned now to those men who have been the best performers of music in our day, among whom, slightly exaggerating his merit, I included Morel. At once my thoughts took a sharp turn, and it was Morel's character, certain peculiarities of that character, that I began to consider. As it happened—and this might be connected though not confused with the neurasthenia to which he was a prey—Morel was in the habit of talking about his life, but always presented so shadowy a picture of it that it was difficult to make anything out. For instance, he placed himself entirely at M. de Charlus's disposal on the understanding that he must keep his evenings free, as he wished to be able after dinner to attend an algebra course. M. de Charlus conceded this, but insisted on seeing him after the lessons.

"Impossible, it's an old Italian painting" (this witticism means nothing when written down like this; but M. de Charlus having made Morel read *L'Education sentimentale*, in the penultimate chapter of which Frédéric Moreau uses this expression, it was Morel's idea of a joke never to say the word "impossible" without following it up with "it's an old Italian painting"), "the lessons go on very late, and they're already enough of an inconvenience to the teacher, who would naturally feel hurt . . ."

"But there's no need to have lessons, algebra isn't a

thing like swimming, or even English, you can learn it equally well from a book," replied M. de Charlus, who had guessed from the first that these algebra lessons were one of those images of which it was impossible to decipher anything at all. It was perhaps some affair with a woman, or, if Morel was seeking to earn money in shady ways and had attached himself to the secret police, an expedition with detectives, or possibly, what was even worse, an engagement as a gigolo whose services may be required in a brothel.

"A great deal more easily from a book," Morel assured M. de Charlus, "for it's impossible to make head or tail of the lessons."

"Then why don't you study it in my house, where you would be far more comfortable?" M. de Charlus might have answered, but took care not to do so, knowing that at once, preserving only the same essential element that the evening hours must be set apart, the imaginary algebra course would change to obligatory lessons in dancing or drawing. In this M. de Charlus could see that he was mistaken, partially at least, for Morel often spent his time at the Baron's in solving equations. M. de Charlus did raise the objection that algebra could be of little use to a violinist. Morel replied that it was a distraction which helped him to pass the time and to combat his neurasthenia. No doubt M. de Charlus might have made inquiries, have tried to find out what actually were these mysterious and inescapable algebra lessons that were given only at night. But M. de Charlus was too caught up in the toils of his own social life to be able to unravel the tangled skein of Morel's occupations. The visits he received or paid, the time he spent at his club, the dinner-

shadow, the pure and simplified shadow of her leg, of her bust, that the sun delineated in monochrome by the side of mine upon the gravel of the path. And the fusion of our shadows had a charm for me that was doubtless more insubstantial, but no less intimate, than the contiguity, the fusion of our bodies. Then we returned to the car. And it chose, for our homeward journey, a succession of little winding lanes along which the wintry trees, clothed, like ruins, in ivy and brambles, seemed to be pointing the way to the dwelling of some magician. No sooner had we emerged from their shady cover than we found, leaving the Bois, the daylight still so bright that I thought I should still have time to do everything I wanted to do before dinner, when, only a few moments later, as the car approached the Arc de Triomphe, it was with a sudden start of surprise and dismay that I perceived, over Paris, the moon prematurely full, like the face of a clock that has stopped and makes us think that we are late for an engagement. We had told the driver to take us home. For Albertine, this also meant returning to my home. The presence of women, however dear to us, who are obliged to leave us to return home does not bestow that peace which I found in the presence of Albertine seated in the car by my side, a presence that was conveying us not to the emptiness of the hours when lovers are apart, but to an even more stable and more sheltered reunion in my home, which was also hers, the material symbol of my possession of her. True, in order to possess, one must first have desired. We do not possess a line, a surface, a mass unless it is occupied by our love. But Albertine had not been for me during our drive, as Rachel had once been, a meaningless dust of flesh and clothing. At Balbec, the

imagination of my eyes, my lips, my hands had so solidly constructed, so tenderly polished her body that now, in this car, in order to touch that body, to contain it, I had no need to press my own body against Albertine, nor even to see her; it was enough for me to hear her, and, if she was silent, to know that she was by my side; my interwoven senses enveloped her completely and when, on our arrival at the house, she quite naturally alighted, I stopped for a moment to tell the chauffeur to call for me later, but my eyes enveloped her still as she passed ahead of me under the arch, and it was still the same inert, domestic calm that I felt as I saw her thus, solid, flushed, opulent and captive, returning home quite naturally with me, like a woman who belonged to me, and, protected by its walls, disappearing into our house. Unfortunately she seemed to feel herself in prison there, and—judging by her mournful, weary look that evening as we dined together in her room—to share the opinion of that Mme de La Rochefoucauld who, when asked whether she was not glad to live in so beautiful a home as Liancourt, replied: "There is no such thing as a beautiful prison." I did not notice it at first; and it was I who bemoaned the thought that, had it not been for Albertine (for with her I should have suffered too acutely from jealousy in a hotel where all day long she would have been exposed to contact with so many people), I might at that moment be dining in Venice in one of those little low-ceilinged restaurants like a ship's saloon, from which one looks out on the Grand Canal through little curved windows encircled with Moorish mouldings.

I ought to add that Albertine greatly admired a big bronze I had by Barbedienne which with ample justifica-

tion Bloch considered extremely ugly. He had perhaps less reason to be surprised at my having kept it. I had never sought, like him, to furnish for aesthetic effect, to arrange rooms artistically. I was too lazy for that, too indifferent to the things that I was in the habit of seeing every day. Since my taste was not involved, I had a right not to modulate my interiors. I might perhaps, in spite of this, have discarded the bronze. But ugly and expensive things are extremely useful, for they possess, in the eyes of people who do not understand us, who do not share our taste and with whom we may be in love, a glamour which a fine object that does not reveal its beauty may lack. Now the people who do not understand us are precisely the people with regard to whom it may be useful to us to take advantage of a prestige which our intellect is enough to ensure for us among superior people. Although Albertine was beginning to show some taste, she still had a certain respect for the bronze, and this was reflected back upon me in an esteem which, coming from Albertine, mattered infinitely more to me than the question of keeping a bronze which was a trifle degrading, since I loved Albertine.

But the thought of my bondage ceased of a sudden to weigh upon me and I looked forward to prolonging it still further, because I seemed to perceive that Albertine was sorely conscious of her own. True, whenever I had asked her whether she was unhappy in my house, she had always replied that she did not know where it would be possible for her to be happier. But often these words were contradicted by an air of nostalgia and edginess. Certainly if she had the tastes with which I had credited her, this prevention from ever satisfying them must have been as

frustrating to her as it was calming to myself, calming to such an extent that I should have decided that the hypothesis of my having accused her unjustly was the most probable, had it not been so difficult to fit into this hypothesis the extraordinary pains that Albertine took never to be alone, never to be free to go out with anyone, never to stop for a moment outside the front door when she came in, always to insist on being ostentatiously accompanied, whenever she went to the telephone, by someone who would be able to repeat to me what she had said—by Françoise or Andrée—always to leave me alone with the latter (without appearing to be doing so on purpose) after they had been out together, so that I might obtain a detailed report of their outing. Contrasted with this marvellous docility were occasional gestures of impatience, quickly repressed, which made me wonder whether Albertine might not be planning to shake off her chains.

Certain incidental circumstances seemed to corroborate my supposition. Thus, one day when I had gone out by myself, I ran into Gisèle in the neighbourhood of Passy, and we chatted about this and that. Presently, not without pride at being able to do so, I informed her that I saw Albertine constantly. Gisèle asked me where she could find her, since she *happened* to have something to say to her. "What is it?" "Something to do with some young friends of hers." "What friends? I may perhaps be able to tell you, though that needn't prevent you from seeing her." "Oh, girls she knew years ago, I don't remember their names," Gisèle replied vaguely, beating a retreat. She left me, supposing herself to have spoken with such prudence that I could not conceivably have suspected anything. But falsehood is so unexacting, needs so

little help to make itself manifest! If it had been a question of friends of long ago, whose very names she no longer remembered, why did she "happen" to need to speak to Albertine about them? This "happen," akin to an expression dear to Mme Cottard: "It couldn't be better timed," could be applicable only to something particular, opportune, perhaps urgent, relating to specific persons. Besides, simply the way she opened her mouth, as though about to yawn, with a vague expression, when she said to me (almost retreating bodily, as she went into reverse at this point in our conversation): "Oh, I don't know, I don't remember their names," made her face, and in harmony with it her voice, as clear a picture of falsehood as the wholly different air, keen, animated, forthcoming, of her "I happen to have" was of truth. I did not cross-examine Gisèle. Of what use would it have been to me? Of course she did not lie in the same way as Albertine. And of course Albertine's lies pained me more. But they had obviously a point in common: the fact of the lie itself, which in certain cases is self-evident. Not evidence of the reality that the lie conceals. We know that each murderer, individually, imagines that he has arranged everything so cleverly that he will not be caught, but in general, murderers are almost always caught. Liars, on the contrary, are rarely caught, and, among liars, more particularly the woman with whom we are in love. We do not know where she has been, what she has been doing. But as soon as she opens her mouth to speak, to speak of something else beneath which lies hidden the thing that she does not mention, the lie is immediately perceived, and our jealousy increased, since we are conscious of the lie, and cannot succeed in discovering the truth. With Albertine, the

impression that she was lying was conveyed by a number of characteristics which we have already observed in the course of this narrative, but especially by the fact that, when she was lying, her story erred either from inadequacy, omission, implausibility, or on the contrary from a surfeit of petty details intended to make it seem plausible. Plausibility, notwithstanding the idea that the liar holds of it, is by no means the same as truth. Whenever, while listening to something that is true, we hear something that is only plausible, that is perhaps more plausible than the truth, that is perhaps too plausible, an ear that is at all musical senses that it is not correct, as with a line that does not scan or a word read aloud in mistake for another. The ear senses it, and if we are in love, the heart takes alarm. Why do we not reflect at the time, when we change the whole course of our life because we do not know whether a woman went along the Rue de Berri or the Rue Washington, why do we not reflect that these few yards of difference, and the woman herself, will be reduced to the hundred millionth part of themselves (that is to say to dimensions far beneath our perception), if we only have the wisdom to remain for a few years without seeing the woman, and that she who has out-Gullivered Gulliver in our eyes will shrink to a Lilliputian whom no microscope—of the heart, at least, for that of the disinterested memory is more powerful and less fragile—can ever again discern! However that may be, if there was a point in common—mendacity itself—between Albertine's lies and Gisèle's, still Gisèle did not lie in the same way as Albertine, nor indeed in the same way as Andrée, but their respective lies dovetailed so neatly into one another, while presenting a great variety, that the little band had

the impenetrable solidity of certain commercial houses, booksellers for example or newspaper publishers, where the wretched author will never succeed, notwithstanding the diversity of the persons employed in them, in discovering whether or not he is being swindled. The director of the newspaper or review lies with an attitude of sincerity all the more solemn in that he is frequently obliged to conceal the fact that he himself does exactly the same things and indulges in the same commercial practices as he denounced in other newspaper or theatre directors, in other publishers, when he chose as his banner, when he raised against them the standard of Honesty. The fact of a man's having proclaimed (as leader of a political party, or in any other capacity) that it is wicked to lie obliges him as a rule to lie more than other people, without on that account abandoning the solemn mask, doffing the august tiara of sincerity. The "honest" gentleman's partner lies in a different and more ingenuous fashion. He deceives his author as he deceives his wife, with tricks from the vaudeville stage. The sub-editor, a crude, straightforward man, lies quite simply, like an architect who promises that your house will be ready at a date when it will not have been begun. The editor, an angelic soul, flutters from one to another of the three, and without knowing what the matter is, gives them, out of brotherly scruple and affectionate solidarity, the precious support of an unimpeachable word. These four persons live in a state of perpetual dissension to which the arrival of the author puts a stop. Over and above their private quarrels, each of them remembers the paramount military duty of rallying to the support of the threatened "corps." Without realising it, I had long been playing the part of this author in relation

to the little band. If Gisèle had been thinking, when she used the word "happen," of one of Albertine's friends who was prepared to go away with her as soon as my mistress should have found some pretext or other for leaving me, and had meant to warn Albertine that the hour had now come or would shortly strike, she, Gisèle, would have let herself be torn to pieces rather than tell me so; it was quite useless therefore to ply her with questions.

Meetings such as this one with Gisèle were not alone in reinforcing my doubts. For instance, I admired Albertine's paintings. The touching pastimes of a captive, they moved me so that I congratulated her upon them. "No, they're dreadfully bad, but I've never had a drawing lesson in my life." "But one evening at Balbec you sent word to me that you had stayed at home to have a drawing lesson." I reminded her of the day and told her that I had realised at the time that people did not have drawing lessons at that hour in the evening. Albertine blushed. "It's true," she said, "I wasn't having drawing lessons. I told you a great many lies at the beginning, that I admit. But I never lie to you now." How I should have loved to know what were the many lies that she had told me at the beginning! But I knew beforehand that her answers would be fresh lies. And so I contented myself with kissing her. I asked her to tell me one only of those lies. She replied: "Oh, well; for instance when I said that the sea air was bad for me." I ceased to insist in the face of this unwillingness to oblige.

Every person we love, indeed to a certain extent every person, is to us like Janus, presenting to us a face that pleases us if the person leaves us, a dreary face if we know him or her to be at our perpetual disposal. In the

case of Albertine, the prospect of her continued society was painful to me in another way which I cannot explain in this narrative. It is terrible to have the life of another person attached to one's own like a bomb which one holds in one's hands, unable to get rid of it without committing a crime. But one has only to compare this with the ups and downs, the dangers, the anxieties, the fear that false but probable things will come to be believed when we will no longer be able to explain them—feelings that one experiences if one lives on intimate terms with a madman. For instance, I pitied M. de Charlus for living with Morel (immediately the memory of the scene that afternoon made me feel that the left side of my chest was heavier than the other); leaving aside the relations that may or may not have existed between them, M. de Charlus must have been unaware at the outset that Morel was mad. Morel's beauty, his stupidity, his pride must have deterred the Baron from exploring so deeply, until the days of melancholia when Morel accused M. de Charlus of responsibility for his sorrows, without being able to furnish any explanation, abused him for his want of trust with the help of false but extremely subtle arguments, threatened him with desperate resolutions in the midst of which there persisted the most cunning regard for his own most immediate interests. But all this is only a comparison. Albertine was not mad.

To make her chains appear lighter, the clever thing seemed to me to be to make her believe that I myself was about to break them. But I could not confide this mendacious plan to her at that moment, since she had returned so sweetly from the Trocadéro that afternoon; the most I could do, far from distressing her with the threat of a

rupture, was to keep to myself those dreams of a perpetual life together which my grateful heart had formed. As I looked at her, I found it hard to restrain myself from pouring them out to her, and she may perhaps have noticed this. Unfortunately the expression of such feelings is not contagious. The case of an affected old woman like M. de Charlus who, by dint of never seeing in his imagination anything but a proud young man, thinks that he has himself become a proud young man, all the more so the more affected and ridiculous he becomes—this case is more general, and it is the misfortune of an impassioned lover not to realise that while he sees in front of him a beautiful face, his mistress is seeing his face, which is not made any more beautiful, far from it, when it is distorted by the pleasure that is aroused in it by the sight of beauty. Nor indeed does love exhaust the generality of this case; we do not see our own bodies, which other people see, and we "follow" our own train of thought, the object, invisible to other people, which is before our eyes. At times the artist reveals this object in his work. Whence it arises that the admirers of that work are disappointed in its author, on whose face that inner beauty is imperfectly reflected.

Retaining from my dream of Venice only what could concern Albertine and sweeten the time she spent in my house, I mentioned a Fortuny gown which we ought to go and order one of these days. I was looking for new pleasures with which to distract her. I would have liked to surprise her with a gift of old French silver, had it been possible to find any. As a matter of fact, when we had planned to acquire a yacht, a plan judged unrealisable by Albertine—and by me whenever I thought her virtuous

and life with her began to appear as financially ruinous as marriage to her seemed impossible—we had, though without her believing I would buy one, asked advice from Elstir.

I learned that a death had occurred that day which distressed me greatly—that of Bergotte. It was known that he had been ill for a long time past. Not, of course, with the illness from which he had suffered originally and which was natural. Nature scarcely seems capable of giving us any but quite short illnesses. But medicine has developed the art of prolonging them. Remedies, the respite that they procure, the relapses that a temporary cessation of them provokes, produce a simulacrum of illness to which the patient grows so accustomed that he ends by stabilising it, stylising it, just as children have regular fits of coughing long after they have been cured of the whooping cough. Then the remedies begin to have less effect, the doses are increased, they cease to do any good, but they have begun to do harm thanks to this lasting indisposition. Nature would not have offered them so long a tenure. It is a great wonder that medicine can almost rival nature in forcing a man to remain in bed, to continue taking some drug on pain of death. From then on, the artificially grafted illness has taken root, has become a secondary but a genuine illness, with this difference only, that natural illnesses are cured, but never those which medicine creates, for it does not know the secret of their cure.

For years past Bergotte had ceased to go out of doors. In any case he had never cared for society, or had cared for it for a day only, to despise it as he despised everything else, and in the same fashion, which was his own, namely to despise a thing not because it was beyond his reach but as soon as he had attained it. He lived so simply that nobody suspected how rich he was, and anyone who had known would still have been mistaken, having thought him a miser whereas no one was ever more generous. He was generous above all towards women—girls, one ought rather to say—who were ashamed to receive so much in return for so little. He excused himself in his own eyes because he knew that he could never produce such good work as in an atmosphere of amorous feelings. Love is too strong a word, but pleasure that is at all rooted in the flesh is helpful to literary work because it cancels all other pleasures, for instance the pleasures of society, those which are the same for everyone. And even if this love leads to disillusionment, it does at least stir, even by so doing, the surface of the soul which otherwise would be in danger of becoming stagnant. Desire is therefore not without its value to the writer in detaching him first of all from his fellow men and from conforming to their standards, and afterwards in restoring some degree of movement to a spiritual machine which, after a certain age, tends to come to a standstill. We do not achieve happiness but we gain some insights into the reasons which prevent us from being happy and which would have remained invisible to us but for these sudden revelations of disappointment. Dreams, we know, are not realisable; we might not form any, perhaps, were it not for desire, and it is useful to us to form them in order to see them fail and to learn from their failure. And so Bergotte said to himself: "I spend more than a multimillionaire on girls, but the pleasures or disappointments that they give me make

me write a book which brings me in money." Economically, this argument was absurd, but no doubt he found some charm in thus transmuting gold into caresses and caresses into gold. We saw, at the time of my grandmother's death, how a weary old age loves repose. Now in society there is nothing but conversation. Vapid though it is, it has the capacity to eliminate women, who become nothing more than questions and answers. Removed from society, women become once more what is so reposeful to a weary old man, an object of contemplation. In any case, now there was no longer any question of all this. I have said that Bergotte never went out of doors, and when he got out of bed for an hour in his room, he would be smothered in shawls, rugs, all the things with which a person covers himself before exposing himself to intense cold or going on a railway journey. He would apologise for them to the few friends whom he allowed to penetrate to his sanctuary; pointing to his tartan plaids, his travelling-rugs, he would say merrily: "After all, my dear fellow, life, as Anaxagoras has said, is a journey." Thus he went on growing steadily colder, a tiny planet offering a prophetic image of the greater, when gradually heat will withdraw from the earth, then life itself. Then the resurrection will have come to an end, for, however far forward into future generations the works of men may shine, there must none the less be men. If certain species hold out longer against the invading cold, when there are no longer any men, and if we suppose Bergotte's fame to have lasted until then, suddenly it will be extinguished for all time. It will not be the last animals that will read him, for it is scarcely probable that, like the Apostles at Pentecost, they

will be able to understand the speech of the various races of mankind without having learned it.

In the months that preceded his death, Bergotte suffered from insomnia, and what was worse, whenever he did fall asleep, from nightmares which, if he awoke, made him reluctant to go to sleep again. He had long been a lover of dreams, even bad dreams, because thanks to them, thanks to the contradiction they present to the reality which we have before us in our waking state, they give us, at the moment of waking if not before, the profound sensation of having slept. But Bergotte's nightmares were not like that. When he spoke of nightmares, he used in the past to mean unpleasant things that happened in his brain. Latterly, it was as though from somewhere outside himself that he would see a hand armed with a damp cloth which, rubbed over his face by an evil woman, kept trying to wake him; or an intolerable itching in his thighs; or the rage—because Bergotte had murmured in his sleep that he was driving badly—of a raving lunatic of a cabman who flung himself upon the writer, biting and gnawing his fingers. Finally, as soon as it had grown sufficiently dark in his sleep, nature would arrange a sort of undress rehearsal of the apoplectic stroke that was to carry him off. Bergotte would arrive in a carriage beneath the porch of Swann's new house, and would try to get out. A shattering attack of dizziness would pin him to his seat; the concierge would try to help him out; he would remain seated, unable to lift himself up or straighten his legs. He would cling to the stone pillar in front of him, but could not find sufficient support to enable him to stand.

He consulted doctors who, flattered to be summoned by him, saw in his virtues as an incessant worker (he had done nothing for twenty years), in overwork, the cause of his ailments. They advised him not to read frightening stories (he never read anything), to take more advantage of the sunshine, which was "indispensable to life" (he had owed a few years of comparative health only to his rigorous confinement at home), to take more nourishment (which made him thinner, and nourished nothing but his nightmares). One of his doctors was blessed with an argumentative and contrary spirit, and whenever Bergotte saw him in the absence of the others and, in order not to offend him, suggested to him as his own ideas what the others had advised, this doctor, thinking that Bergotte was trying to get him to prescribe something that he liked, would at once forbid it, often for reasons invented so hurriedly to meet the case that, in face of the material objections which Bergotte raised, the doctor, contradicting him, was obliged in the same sentence to contradict himself, but, for fresh reasons, repeated the original prohibition. Bergotte would return to one of the previous doctors, a man who prided himself on his wit, especially in the presence of one of the masters of the pen, and who, if Bergotte insinuated: "I seem to remember, though, that Dr X—— told me—long ago, of course—that that might affect my kidneys and my brain . . . ," would smile mischievously, raise his finger and announce: "I said use, I did not say abuse. Naturally every drug, if one takes it in excess, becomes a double-edged weapon." There is in the human body a certain instinct for what is beneficial to us, as there is in the heart for what is our moral duty, an instinct which no authorisation by a doctor of medicine or divinity can replace. We know that cold baths are bad for us, but we like them: we can always find a doctor to recommend them, not to prevent them from doing us harm. From each of these doctors Bergotte took something which, in his own wisdom, he had forbidden himself for years past. After a few weeks, his old troubles had reappeared and the new ones had become worse. Maddened by uninterrupted pain, to which was added insomnia broken only by brief spells of nightmare, Bergotte called in no more doctors and tried with success, but to excess, different narcotics, trustingly reading the prospectus that accompanied each of them, a prospectus which proclaimed the necessity of sleep but hinted that all the preparations which induce it (except the one contained in the bottle round which the prospectus was wrapped, which never produced any toxic effect) were toxic, and therefore made the remedy worse than the disease. Bergotte tried them all. Some of these drugs may be of a different family from those to which one is accustomed, by-products, for instance, of amyl and ethyl. When one absorbs a new drug, entirely different in composition, it is always with a delicious expectancy of the unknown. One's heart beats as at a first assignation. To what unknown forms of sleep, of dreams, is the newcomer going to lead one? It is inside one now, it is in control of one's thoughts. In what way is one going to fall asleep? And, once asleep, by what strange paths, up to what peaks, into what unfathomed gulfs will this all-powerful master lead one? What new group of sensations will one meet with on this journey? Will it lead to illness? To blissful happiness? To death?

Bergotte's death came to him the day after he had thus entrusted himself to one of these friends (a friend? an enemy?) who proved too strong.

The circumstances of his death were as follows. A fairly mild attack of uraemia had led to his being ordered to rest. But, an art critic having written somewhere that in Vermeer's *View of Delft* (lent by the Gallery at The Hague for an exhibition of Dutch painting), a picture which he adored and imagined that he knew by heart, a little patch of yellow wall (which he could not remember) was so well painted that it was, if one looked at it by itself, like some priceless specimen of Chinese art, of a beauty that was sufficient in itself, Bergotte ate a few potatoes, left the house, and went to the exhibition. At the first few steps he had to climb, he was overcome by an attack of dizziness. He walked past several pictures and was struck by the aridity and pointlessness of such an artificial kind of art, which was greatly inferior to the sunshine of a windswept Venetian palazzo, or of an ordinary house by the sea. At last he came to the Vermeer which he remembered as more striking, more different from anything else he knew, but in which, thanks to the critic's article, he noticed for the first time some small figures in blue, that the sand was pink, and, finally, the precious substance of the tiny patch of yellow wall. His dizziness increased; he fixed his gaze, like a child upon a yellow butterfly that it wants to catch, on the precious little patch of wall. "That's how I ought to have written," he said. "My last books are too dry, I ought to have gone over them with a few layers of colour, made my language precious in itself, like this little patch of yellow wall." Meanwhile he was not unconscious of the gravity of his

condition. In a celestial pair of scales there appeared to him, weighing down one of the pans, his own life, while the other contained the little patch of wall so beautifully painted in yellow. He felt that he had rashly sacrificed the former for the latter. "All the same," he said to himself, "I shouldn't like to be the headline news of this exhibition for the evening papers."

He repeated to himself: "Little patch of yellow wall, with a sloping roof, little patch of yellow wall." Meanwhile he sank down on to a circular settee; whereupon he suddenly ceased to think that his life was in jeopardy and, reverting to his natural optimism, told himself: "It's nothing, merely a touch of indigestion from those potatoes, which were under-cooked." A fresh attack struck him down; he rolled from the settee to the floor, as visitors and attendants came hurrying to his assistance. He was dead. Dead for ever? Who can say? Certainly, experiments in spiritualism offer us no more proof than the dogmas of religion that the soul survives death. All that we can say is that everything is arranged in this life as though we entered it carrying a burden of obligations contracted in a former life; there is no reason inherent in the conditions of life on this earth that can make us consider ourselves obliged to do good, to be kind and thoughtful, even to be polite, nor for an atheist artist to consider himself obliged to begin over again a score of times a piece of work the admiration aroused by which will matter little to his worm-eaten body, like the patch of yellow wall painted with so much skill and refinement by an artist destined to be for ever unknown and barely identified under the name Vermeer. All these obligations, which have no sanction in our present life, seem to belong to a differ-

ent world, a world based on kindness, scrupulousness, self-sacrifice, a world entirely different from this one and which we leave in order to be born on this earth, before perhaps returning there to live once again beneath the sway of those unknown laws which we obeyed because we bore their precepts in our hearts, not knowing whose hand had traced them there—those laws to which every profound work of the intellect brings us nearer and which are invisible only—if then!—to fools. So that the idea that Bergotte was not dead for ever is by no means improbable.

They buried him, but all through that night of mourning, in the lighted shop-windows, his books, arranged three by three, kept vigil like angels with outspread wings and seemed, for him who was no more, the symbol of his resurrection.

I learned, as I have said, that Bergotte had died that day. And I was amazed at the inaccuracy of the newspapers which—each of them reproducing the same paragraph—stated that he had died the day before. For Albertine had met him the day before, as she informed me that very evening, and indeed she had been a little late in coming home, for he had chatted to her for some time. She was probably the last person to whom he had spoken. She knew him through me, for although I had long ceased to see him, as she had been anxious to be introduced to him I had written a year earlier to ask the old master whether I might bring her to see him. He had granted my request, though he was a trifle hurt, I fancy, that I should be visiting him only to give pleasure to another person, which was a confirmation of my indifference to him.

These cases are frequent: sometimes the man or woman whom we approach not for the pleasure of conversing with them again, but on behalf of a third person, refuses so obstinately that our protégé concludes that we have boasted of an influence which we do not possess; more often the man of genius or the famous beauty consents, but, humiliated in their glory, wounded in their affection, they feel for us afterwards only a diminished, sorrowful, slightly contemptuous regard. It was not until long afterwards that I discovered that I had wrongly accused the newspapers of inaccuracy, since on the day in question Albertine had not in fact met Bergotte. At the time I had never suspected this for a single instant, so artlessly had she described the meeting to me, and it was not until much later that I discovered her charming skill in lying naturally. What she said, what she admitted, had to such a degree the same characteristics as the formal evidence of the case—what we see with our own eyes or learn from irrefutable sources—that she sowed thus in the gaps of her life episodes of another life the falsity of which I did not then suspect. I have added "what she admitted" for the following reason. Sometimes odd coincidences would give me jealous suspicions about her in which another person figured by her side in the past, or alas in the future. In order to appear certain of my facts, I would mention the person's name, and Albertine would say: "Yes, I met her a week ago, just outside the house. I acknowledged her greeting out of politeness. I walked a little way with her. But there's never been anything between us. There never will be." Now Albertine had not even met this person, for the simple reason that the person had not been in Paris for the last ten months. But my mistress felt

that a complete denial would not sound very probable. Whence this imaginary brief encounter, related so simply that I could see the lady stop, greet her, and walk a little way with her. The evidence of my senses, if I had been in the street at that moment, would perhaps have informed me that the lady had not been with Albertine. But if I had known this to be the case, it was by one of those chains of reasoning in which the words of people in whom we have confidence insert strong links, and not by the evidence of my senses. To invoke this evidence by the senses I should have had to be in the street at that particular moment, and I had not been. One can imagine, however, that such a hypothesis is not improbable: I might have gone out, and have been passing along the street at the time at which Albertine was to tell me in the evening (not having seen me there) that she had walked a few steps with the lady, and I should then have known that Albertine was lying. But is this absolutely certain even then? A strange darkness would have clouded my mind, I should have begun to doubt whether I had seen her alone, I should hardly even have sought to understand by what optical illusion I had failed to perceive the lady, and I should not have been greatly surprised to find myself mistaken, for the stellar universe is not so difficult of comprehension as the real actions of other people, especially of the people we love, fortified as they are against our doubts by fables devised for their protection. For how many years on end can they not allow our apathetic love to believe that they have in some foreign country a sister, a brother, a sister-in-law who have never existed!

The evidence of the senses is also an operation of the mind in which conviction creates the facts. We have often

seen her sense of hearing convey to Françoise not the word that was uttered but what she thought to be its correct form, which was enough to prevent her from hearing the implicit correction in a superior pronunciation. Our butler was cast in a similar mould. M. de Charlus was in the habit of wearing at this time—for he was constantly changing—very light trousers which were recognisable a mile off. Now our butler, who thought that the word *pissotière* (the word denoting what M. de Rambuteau[8] had been so annoyed to hear the Duc de Guermantes call a Rambuteau convenience) was really *pistière*, never once in the whole of his life heard a single person say *pissotière*, albeit the word was frequently pronounced thus in his hearing. But error is more obstinate than faith and does not examine the grounds of its belief. Constantly the butler would say: "I'm sure M. le Baron de Charlus must have caught a disease to stand about as long as he does in a *pistière*. That's what comes of chasing the ladies at his age. You can tell what he is by his trousers. This morning, Madame sent me with a message to Neuilly. As I passed the *pistière* in the Rue de Bourgogne I saw M. le Baron de Charlus go in. When I came back from Neuilly, a good hour later, I saw his yellow trousers in the same *pistière*, in the same place, in the middle stall where he always stands so that people shan't see him." I can think of no one more beautiful, more noble or more youthful than a certain niece of Mme de Guermantes. But I once heard the commissionaire of a restaurant where I used sometimes to dine say as she went by: "Just look at that old trollop, what a fright! And she must be eighty if she's a day." As far as age went, I find it difficult to believe that he meant what he said. But the pages clustered round

him, who sniggered whenever she went past the hotel on her way to visit her charming great-aunts, Mmes de Fezensac and de Balleroy, who lived not far from there, saw upon the face of the young beauty the four-score years with which, in jest or otherwise, the commissionaire had endowed the "old trollop." You would have made them shriek with laughter had you told them that she was more distinguished than one of the two cashiers of the hotel, who, devoured by eczema, ridiculously fat, seemed to them a fine-looking woman. Perhaps sexual desire alone, if it had been let loose in the wake of the alleged old trollop, and if the pages had suddenly begun to covet the young goddess, would have been capable of preventing their error from taking shape. But for reasons unknown, which were most probably of a social nature, this desire had not come into play. The point is however highly debatable. The universe is real for us all and dissimilar to each one of us. If we were not obliged, in the interests of narrative tidiness, to confine ourselves to frivolous reasons, how many more serious reasons would enable us to demonstrate the mendacious flimsiness of the opening pages of this volume in which, from my bed, I hear the world awake, now to one sort of weather, now to another! Yes, I have been forced to whittle down the facts, and to be a liar, but it is not one universe, but millions, almost as many as the number of human eyes and brains in existence, that awake every morning.

To return to Albertine, I have never known any woman more amply endowed than herself with the happy aptitude for a lie that is animated, coloured with the very hues of life, unless it be one of her friends—one of my blossoming girls also, rose-pink as Albertine, but one

whose irregular profile, concave in one place, then convex again, was exactly like certain clusters of pink flowers the name of which I have forgotten, but which have long and sinuous recesses. This girl was, from the point of view of story-telling, superior to Albertine, for her narrative was never interspersed with those painful moments, those furious innuendoes, which were frequent with my mistress. The latter was however charming, as I have said, when she invented a story which left no room for doubt, for one saw then in front of one the thing—albeit imaginary—which she was describing, through the eyes, as it were, of her words. Verisimilitude alone inspired Albertine, never the desire to make me jealous. For Albertine, not perhaps from motives of self-interest, liked people to be nice to her. And if in the course of this work I have had and shall have many occasions to show how jealousy intensifies love, it is from the lover's point of view that I write. But if that lover has a little pride, and even though he would die of a separation, he will not respond to a supposed betrayal with kind words or favours, but will turn away or, without withdrawing, will force himself to assume a mask of coldness. And so it is entirely to her own disadvantage that his mistress makes him suffer so acutely. If, on the contrary, she dispels with a tactful word, with loving caresses, the suspicions that have been torturing him for all his show of indifference, no doubt the lover does not feel that despairing increase of love to which jealousy drives him, but ceasing there and then to suffer, happy, mollified, relaxed as one is after a storm when the rain has stopped and one hears only at long intervals under the tall chestnut-trees the splash of the suspended raindrops which already the reappearing sun has

knew that he was to be classed with the most brilliant talkers of the past.

Just as we were coming to Mme Verdurin's doorstep, I caught sight of M. de Charlus, steering towards us the bulk of his huge body, drawing unwillingly in his wake one of those ruffians or beggars who nowadays when he passed sprang out without fail from even the most apparently deserted corners, and by whom this powerful monster was, despite himself, invariably escorted, although at a certain distance, as a shark is by its pilot—in short, contrasting so markedly with the haughty stranger of my first visit to Balbec, with his stern aspect, his affectation of virility, that I seemed to be discovering, accompanied by its satellite, a planet at a wholly different period of its revolution, when one begins to see it full, or a sick man devoured by the malady that a few years ago was but a tiny spot which was easily concealed and the gravity of which was never suspected. Although an operation that Brichot had undergone had restored to some small extent the sight which he had thought to be lost for ever, I do not know whether he had observed the ruffian following in the Baron's footsteps. Not that this mattered much, for since La Raspelière, and notwithstanding the professor's friendly regard for M. de Charlus, the sight of the latter always made him feel somehow uneasy. No doubt to every man the life of every other extends along shadowy paths of which he has no inkling. Lying, though it is so often deceptive and is the basis of all conversation, conceals less thoroughly a feeling of hostility, or of self-interest, or a visit which one wants to appear not to have paid, or a short-lived escapade with a mistress which one is anxious to keep from one's wife, than a good reputation

covers up—to the extent of not letting its existence be guessed—sexual depravity. It may remain unsuspected for a lifetime; an accidental encounter on a pier, at night, discloses it; even then this accidental discovery is frequently misunderstood and a third person who is in the know must supply the elusive clue of which everyone is unaware. But, once known, it scares one by making one feel that that way madness lies, far more than by its immorality. Mme de Surgis le Duc could not be said to have a highly developed moral sense, and would have tolerated in her sons anything, however base, that could be explained by material interest, which is comprehensible to all mankind. But she forbade them to go on visiting M. de Charlus when she learned that, by a sort of internal clockwork, he was inevitably drawn upon each of their visits to pinch their chins and to make each of them pinch his brother's. She felt that uneasy sense of a physical mystery which makes us wonder whether the neighbour with whom we have been on friendly terms is not tainted with cannibalism, and to the Baron's repeated inquiry: "When am I going to see the young men?" she would reply, conscious of the wrath she was bringing down on herself, that they were very busy working for examinations, preparing to go abroad, and so forth. Irresponsibility aggravates faults, and even crimes, whatever may be said. Landru (assuming that he really did kill his women) may be pardoned if he did so from financial motives, which it is possible to resist, but not if it was from irresistible sadism.

The coarse pleasantries in which Brichot had indulged in the early days of his friendship with the Baron had given place, as soon as it was a question not of uttering commonplaces but of trying to understand, to an awkward

feeling which was cloaked by gaiety. He reassured himself by recalling pages of Plato, lines of Virgil, because, being mentally as well as physically blind, he did not understand that in their day to love a young man was the equivalent (Socrates's jokes reveal this more clearly than Plato's theories) of keeping a dancing girl before getting engaged to be married in ours. M. de Charlus himself would not have understood, he who confused his ruling passion with friendship, which does not resemble it in the least, and the athletes of Praxiteles with obliging boxers. He refused to see that for nineteen hundred years ("a pious courtier under a pious prince would have been an atheist under an atheist prince," as La Bruyère reminds us) all conventional homosexuality—that of Plato's young friends as well as that of Virgil's shepherds—has disappeared, that what survives and increases is only the involuntary, the neurotic kind, which one conceals from other people and misrepresents to oneself. And M. de Charlus would have been wrong in not disowning frankly the pagan genealogy. In exchange for a little plastic beauty, how vast the moral superiority! The shepherd in Theocritus who sighs for love of a boy will have no reason later on to be less hard of heart, less dull of wit than the other shepherd whose flute sounds for Amaryllis. For the former is not suffering from a disease; he is conforming to the customs of his time. It is the homosexuality that survives in spite of obstacles, shameful, execrated, that is the only true form, the only form that corresponds in one and the same person to an intensification of the intellectual qualities. One is dismayed at the relationship that can exist between these and a person's bodily attributes when one thinks of the tiny dislocation of a purely physical taste,

the slight blemish in one of the senses, that explains why the world of poets and musicians, so firmly barred against the Duc de Guermantes, opens its portals to M. de Charlus. That the latter should show taste in the furnishing of his home, which is that of a housewife with a taste for curios, need not surprise us; but the narrow loophole that opens upon Beethoven and Veronese! But this does not exempt the sane from a feeling of alarm when a madman who has composed a sublime poem, after explaining to them in the most logical fashion that he has been shut up by mistake through his wife's machinations, imploring them to intercede for him with the governor of the asylum, complaining of the promiscuous company that is forced upon him, concludes as follows: "You see that man in the courtyard, who I'm obliged to put up with; he thinks he's Jesus Christ. That should give you an idea of the sort of lunatics I've been shut up with; he *can't* be Jesus Christ, because *I'm* Jesus Christ!" A moment earlier, you were on the point of going to assure the psychiatrist that a mistake had been made. On hearing these words, even if you bear in mind the admirable poem at which this same man is working every day, you shrink from him, as Mme de Surgis's sons shrank from M. de Charlus, not because he had done them any harm, but because of the ceaseless invitations which ended up with his pinching their chins. The poet is to be pitied who must, with no Virgil to guide him, pass through the circles of an inferno of sulphur and brimstone, who must cast himself into the fire that falls from heaven in order to rescue a few of the inhabitants of Sodom! No charm in his work; the same severity in his life as in those of the unfrocked priests who follow the strictest rule of celibacy so that no

one may be able to ascribe to anything but loss of faith their discarding of the cassock. Even then, it is not always so with these writers. What asylum doctor has not had his own attack of madness by dint of continual association with madmen? He is lucky if he is able to affirm that it is not a previous latent madness that had predestined him to look after them. The subject of a psychiatrist's study often rebounds on him. But before that, what obscure inclination, what dreadful fascination had made him choose that subject?

Pretending not to see the shady individual who was gliding in his wake (whenever the Baron ventured on to the boulevards or crossed the main hall of the Gare Saint-Lazare, these hangers-on who dogged his heels in the hope of touching him for a few francs could be counted by the dozen), and fearful lest the man might be bold enough to accost him, the Baron had devoutly lowered his mascara'ed eyelids which, contrasting with his powdered cheeks, gave him the appearance of a Grand Inquisitor painted by El Greco. But this priest was frightening and looked like an excommunicate, the various compromises to which he had been driven by the need to indulge his taste and to keep it secret having had the effect of bringing to the surface of his face precisely what the Baron sought to conceal, a debauched life betrayed by moral degeneration. This last, indeed, whatever be its cause, is easily detected, for it is never slow to materialise and proliferates upon a face, especially on the cheeks and round the eyes, as physically as the ochreous yellows of jaundice or the repulsive reds of a skin disease. Nor was it merely in the cheeks, or rather the chaps, of this painted face, in the mammiferous chest, the fleshy rump of this

body abandoned to self-indulgence and invaded by obesity, that there now lingered, spreading like a film of oil, the vice at one time so jealously confined by M. de Charlus in the most secret recesses of his being. Now it overflowed into his speech.

"So this is how you prowl the streets at night, Brichot, with a good-looking young man," he said on joining us, while the disappointed ruffian made off. "A fine example. We must tell your young pupils at the Sorbonne that this is how you behave. But I must say the society of youth seems to agree with you, Monsieur le Professeur, you're as fresh as a rosebud. I've interrupted you though: you looked as though you were enjoying yourselves like a pair of giddy girls, and had no need of an old Granny Killjoy like me. But I shan't go to confession for it, since you were almost at your destination." The Baron's mood was all the more blithe since he was totally ignorant of the scene that afternoon, Jupien having decided that he would be better advised to protect his niece against a renewed onslaught than to go and inform M. de Charlus. And so the Baron still looked forward to the marriage and was delighted at the thought of it. One may suppose that it is a consolation to these great solitaries to alleviate their tragic celibacy with a fictitious fatherhood.

"But, upon my word, Brichot," he went on, turning towards us with a laugh, "I feel quite embarrassed to see you in such gallant company. You looked like a pair of lovers, going along arm in arm. I say, Brichot, you do go the pace!" Ought these remarks to have been ascribed to the ageing of a mind less master of its reflexes than in the past, which in moments of automatism lets out a secret that has been so carefully hidden for forty years? Or

rather to that contempt for the opinion of commoners which all the Guermantes felt in their hearts, and which M. de Charlus's brother, the Duke, displayed in a different form when, heedless of the fact that my mother could see him, he used to shave by his bedroom window in his unbuttoned nightshirt? Had M. de Charlus contracted, during those stimulating journeys between Doncières and Douville, the dangerous habit of putting himself at his ease and, just as he would push back his straw hat in order to cool his huge forehead, of loosening—for a few moments only at first—the mask that for too long had been rigorously imposed upon his true face? His conjugal attitude towards Morel might well have astonished anyone who was aware that he no longer loved him. But M. de Charlus had reached the stage when the monotony of the pleasures that his vice has to offer had become wearying. He had instinctively sought after new exploits, and tiring of the strangers whom he picked up, had gone to the opposite extreme, to what he used to imagine that he would always loathe, the imitation of "a household" or of "fatherhood." Sometimes even this did not suffice him; he required novelty, and would go and spend the night with a woman, just as a normal man may once in his life have wished to go to bed with a boy, from a similar though inverse curiosity, in either case equally unhealthy. The Baron's existence as one of the "faithful," living, for Charlie's sake, exclusively among the little clan, by undermining the efforts he had made for years to keep up lying appearances, had had the same influence as a voyage of exploration or residence in the colonies has upon certain Europeans who discard the ruling principles by which they were guided at home. And yet, the internal revolution of a mind ignorant at first of the anomaly it carried within it, then—having recognised it—horrified by it, and finally becoming so accustomed to it as to fail to perceive that one cannot with impunity confess to other people what one has come round to confessing without shame to oneself, had been even more effective in liberating M. de Charlus from the last vestiges of social constraint than the time that he spent at the Verdurins'. No banishment, indeed, to the South Pole, or to the summit of Mont Blanc, can separate us so entirely from our fellow creatures as a prolonged sojourn in the bosom of an inner vice, that is to say of a way of thinking different from theirs. A vice (so M. de Charlus used at one time to style it) to which the Baron now gave the genial aspect of a mere failing, extremely common, attractive on the whole and almost amusing, like laziness, absent-mindedness or greed. Conscious of the curiosity that his peculiar characteristics aroused, M. de Charlus derived a certain pleasure from satisfying, whetting, sustaining it. Just as a Jewish journalist will come forward day after day as the champion of Catholicism, probably not with any hope of being taken seriously, but simply in order not to thwart the expectation of a good-natured laugh, M. de Charlus would jokingly denounce sexual depravity in the company of the little clan, as he might have mimicked an English accent or imitated Mounet-Sully,[9] without waiting to be asked, simply to do his bit with good grace, by displaying an amateur talent in society; so that when he now threatened Brichot that he would report to the Sorbonne that he was in the habit of walking about with young men, it was in exactly the same way as the circumcised scribe keeps referring in and out of season to the "Eldest Daughter of

the Church" and the "Sacred Heart of Jesus," that is to say without the least trace of hypocrisy, but with more than a hint of play-acting. It was not only the change in the words themselves, so different from those that he allowed himself to use in the past, that seemed to require some explanation, there was also the change that had occurred in his intonation and his gestures, which now singularly resembled what M. de Charlus used most fiercely to castigate; he would now utter involuntarily almost the same little squeaks (involuntary in his case and all the more deep-rooted) as are uttered voluntarily by those inverts who hail one another as "my dear!"—as though this deliberate "camping," against which M. de Charlus had for so long set his face, were after all merely a brilliant and faithful imitation of the manner that men of the Charlus type, whatever they may say, are compelled to adopt when they have reached a certain stage in their malady, just as sufferers from general paralysis or locomotor ataxia inevitably end by displaying certain symptoms. As a matter of fact—and this is what this purely unconscious "camping" revealed—the difference between the stern, black-clad Charlus with his hair *en brosse* whom I had known, and the painted and bejewelled young men, was no more than the purely apparent difference that exists between an excited person who talks fast and keeps fidgeting all the time, and a neurotic who talks slowly, preserves a perpetual phlegm, but is tainted with the same neurasthenia in the eyes of the physician who knows that each of the two is devoured by the same anxieties and marred by the same defects. At the same time one could tell that M. de Charlus had aged from wholly different signs, such as the extraordinary frequency in his conversation of certain expressions that had taken root in it and used now to crop up at every moment (for instance: "the concatenation of circumstances") and upon which the Baron's speech leaned in sentence after sentence as upon a necessary prop.

"Is Charlie already here?" Brichot asked M. de Charlus as we were about to ring the door-bell.

"Ah! I really don't know," said the Baron, raising his arms and half-shutting his eyes with the air of a person who does not wish to be accused of indiscretion, all the more so as he had probably been reproached by Morel for things which he had said and which the other, as cowardly as he was vain, and as ready to disown M. de Charlus as he was to boast of his friendship, had considered serious although they were quite trivial. "You know, I've no idea what he does."

If the conversations of two people bound by a tie of intimacy are full of lies, these crop up no less spontaneously in the conversations that a third person holds with a lover about the person with whom the latter is in love, whatever the sex of that person.

"Have you seem him lately?" I asked M. de Charlus, in order to appear at the same time not to be afraid of mentioning Morel to him and not to believe that they were actually living together.

"He came in, as it happened, for five minutes this morning while I was still half asleep, and sat down on the side of my bed, as though he wanted to ravish me."

I guessed at once that M. de Charlus had seen Charlie within the last hour, for if one asks a woman when she last saw the man whom one knows to be—and whom she may perhaps suppose that one suspects of being—her

lover, if she has just had tea with him she replies: "I saw him for a minute before lunch." Between these two facts the only difference is that one is false and the other true. But both are equally innocent, or, if you prefer it, equally guilty. Hence one would be unable to understand why the mistress (and in this case, M. de Charlus) always chooses the false version, were one not aware that such replies are determined, unbeknown to the person who makes them, by a number of factors which appear so out of proportion to the triviality of the incident that one does not bother to raise them. But to a physicist the space occupied by the tiniest ball of pith is explained by the clash or the equilibrium of laws of attraction or repulsion which govern far bigger worlds. Here we need merely record, as a matter of interest, the desire to appear natural and fearless, the instinctive impulse to conceal a secret assignation, a blend of modesty and ostentation, the need to confess what one finds so delightful and to show that one is loved, a divination of what one's interlocutor knows or guesses—but does not say—a divination which, exceeding or falling short of his, makes one now exaggerate, now underestimate it, the unwitting desire to play with fire and the determination to rescue something from the blaze. Just as many different laws acting in opposite directions dictate the more general responses with regard to the innocence, the "platonic" nature, or on the contrary the carnal reality, of one's relations with the person whom one says one saw in the morning when one has seen him or her in the evening. However, on the whole it must be said that M. de Charlus, notwithstanding the aggravation of his malady which perpetually urged him to reveal, to insinuate, sometimes quite simply to invent compromising de-

tails, sought, during this period in his life, to maintain that Charlie was not a man of the same kind as himself and that they were friends and nothing more. This (though it may quite possibly have been true) did not prevent him from contradicting himself at times (as with regard to the hour at which they had last met), either because he forgot himself at such moments and told the truth, or proffered a lie out of boastfulness or a sentimental affectation or because he thought it amusing to mislead his interlocutor.

"You know that he is to me," the Baron went on, "a nice little friend, for whom I have the greatest affection, as I am sure" (did he doubt it, then, if he felt the need to say that he was sure?) "he has for me, but there's nothing else between us, nothing of that sort, you understand, nothing of that sort," said the Baron, as naturally as though he had been speaking of a woman. "Yes, he came in this morning to pull me out of bed. Though he knows that I hate being seen first thing in the morning, don't you? Oh, it's horrible, it flusters one so, one looks so perfectly hideous. Of course I'm no longer five-and-twenty, they won't choose me to be Queen of the May, but still one does like to feel that one's looking one's best."

It is possible that the Baron was sincere when he spoke of Morel as a nice little friend, and that he was being even more truthful than he supposed when he said: "I've no idea what he does; I know nothing about his life."

Indeed we may mention (to anticipate by a few weeks before resuming our narrative at the point where M. de Charlus, Brichot and myself are arriving at Mme Verdurin's front door), we may mention that shortly after this

evening the Baron was plunged into a state of grief and stupefaction by a letter addressed to Morel which he had opened by mistake. This letter, which was also indirectly to cause me acute distress, was written by the actress Léa, notorious for her exclusive taste for women. And yet her letter to Morel (whom M. de Charlus had never even suspected of knowing her) was written in the most passionate terms. Its indelicacy prevents us from reproducing it here, but we may mention that Léa addressed him throughout in the feminine gender, with such expressions as "Go on with you, naughty girl!" or "Of course you're one of us, you pretty sweetheart." And in this letter reference was made to various other women who seemed to be no less Morel's friends than Léa's. At the same time, Morel's sarcasm at the Baron's expense and Léa's at that of an officer who was keeping her, and of whom she said: "He keeps writing me letters begging me to be good! You bet! eh, my little white puss," revealed to M. de Charlus a state of things no less unsuspected by him than were Morel's peculiar and intimate relations with Léa. What most disturbed the Baron was the phrase "one of us." Ignorant at first of its application, he had eventually, now many moons ago, learned that he himself was "one of them." And now this notion that he had acquired was thrown back into question. When he had discovered that he was "one of them," he had supposed this to mean that his tastes, as Saint-Simon says, did not lie in the direction of women. And here was this expression taking on, for Morel, an extension of meaning of which M. de Charlus was unaware, so much so that Morel gave proof, according to this letter, of being "one of them" by having the same taste as certain women for other women. From then

on the Baron's jealousy could no longer confine itself to the men of Morel's acquaintance, but would have to extend to the women also. So, to be "one of them" meant not simply what he had hitherto assumed, but to belong to a whole vast section of the inhabitants of the planet, consisting of women as well as of men, of men loving not merely men but women also, and the Baron, in the face of this novel meaning of a phrase that was so familiar to him, felt himself tormented by an anxiety of the mind as well as of the heart, born of this twofold mystery which combined an enlargement of the field of his jealousy with the sudden inadequacy of a definition.

M. de Charlus had never in his life been anything but an amateur. That is to say that incidents of this sort could never be of any use to him. He worked off the painful impression that they might make upon him in violent scenes in which he was a past-master of eloquence, or in crafty intrigues. But to a person endowed with the qualities of a Bergotte, for instance, they might have been of inestimable value. This may indeed explain to a certain extent (since we act blindly, but choose, like the lower animals, the plant that is good for us) why men like Bergotte generally surround themselves with women who are inferior, false and ill-natured. Their beauty is sufficient for the writer's imagination, and excites his generosity, but does not in any way alter the nature of his mistresses, whose lives, situated thousands of feet below the level of his own, whose improbable connexions, whose lies, carried further and moreover in a different direction from what might have been expected, appear in occasional flashes. The lie, the perfect lie, about people we know, about the relations we have had with them, about our motive for

some action, formulated in totally different terms, the lie as to what we are, whom we love, what we feel with regard to people who love us and believe that they have fashioned us in their own image because they keep on kissing us morning, noon and night—that lie is one of the few things in the world that can open windows for us on to what is new and unknown, that can awaken in us sleeping senses for the contemplation of universes that otherwise we should never have known. As far as M. de Charlus is concerned, it must be said that if he was stupefied to learn with regard to Morel a certain number of things which the latter had carefully concealed from him, he was not justified in concluding from this that it is a mistake to make friends with the lower orders. Indeed, in the concluding section of this work, we shall see M. de Charlus himself engaged in doing things which would have stupefied the members of his family and his friends far more than he could possibly have been stupefied by Léa's revelations. (The revelation that he had found most painful had been that of a trip which Morel had made with Léa at a time when he had assured M. de Charlus that he was studying music in Germany. To build up his alibi he had made use of some obliging people to whom he had sent his letters in Germany, whence they were forwarded to M. de Charlus who, as it happened, was so positive that Morel was there that he had not even looked at the postmark.)

But it is time to rejoin the Baron as he advances with Brichot and myself towards the Verdurins' door.

"And what," he went on, turning to me, "has become of your young Hebrew friend whom we met at Douville? It occurred to me that, if you liked, one might perhaps in-

vite him to the house one evening." For M. de Charlus, who did not shrink from employing a private detective agency to spy on Morel's every movement, for all the world like a husband or a lover, had not ceased to pay attention to other young men. The surveillance which he instructed one of his old servants to arrange for the agency to maintain over Morel was so indiscreet that his footmen thought they were being shadowed, and one of the housemaids lived in terror, no longer daring to go out into the street for fear of finding a detective at her heels. "She can do whatever she likes! Who'd waste time and money tailing her? As if her doings were of the slightest interest to us!" the old servant ironically exclaimed, for he was so passionately devoted to his master that although he in no way shared the Baron's tastes, he had come in time, with such ardour did he employ himself in their service, to speak of them as though they were his own. "He is the very best of good fellows," M. de Charlus would say of this old servant, for there is no one we appreciate more than a person who combines with other great virtues that of placing those virtues wholeheartedly at the service of our vices. It was of men alone that M. de Charlus was capable of feeling any jealousy so far as Morel was concerned. Women inspired in him none whatever. This is indeed an almost universal rule with the Charluses of this world. The love of the man they love for a woman is something else, which occurs in another animal species (a lion leaves tigers in peace), does not bother them, and if anything reassures them. Sometimes, it is true, in the case of those who exalt their inversion to the level of a priesthood, this love arouses disgust. These men resent their friends' having succumbed to it, not as a betrayal but as a

fall from grace. A Charlus of a different variety from the Baron would have been as indignant to find Morel having relations with a woman as to read in a newspaper that he, the interpreter of Bach and Handel, was going to play Puccini. This is in fact why the young men who acquiesce in the love of Charluses for mercenary reasons assure them that women inspire them only with disgust, just as they would tell a doctor that they never touch alcohol and care only for spring water. But M. de Charlus, in this respect, departed to some extent from the general rule. Since he admired everything about Morel, the latter's successes with women, causing him no offence, gave him the same joy as his successes on the concert platform or at cards. "But do you know, my dear fellow, he has women," he would say, with an air of revelation, of scandal, possibly of envy, above all of admiration. "He's extraordinary," he would continue. "Wherever he goes, the most prominent whores have eyes for him alone. One notices it everywhere, whether it's on the underground or in the theatre. It's becoming such a bore! I can't go out with him to a restaurant without the waiter bringing him notes from at least three women. And always pretty women too. Not that it's anything to be wondered at. I was looking at him only yesterday, and I can quite understand them. He's become so beautiful, he looks like a sort of Bronzino; he's really marvellous." But M. de Charlus liked to show that he loved Morel, and to persuade other people, possibly to persuade himself, that Morel loved him. He took a sort of pride in having Morel always with him, in spite of the damage the young man might do to his social position. For (and this is often the case with men of some social standing and snobbish to boot, who, in their vanity,

sever all their social ties in order to be seen everywhere with a mistress, a *demi-mondaine* or a lady of tarnished reputation who is no longer received in society but with whom nevertheless it seems to them flattering to be associated) he had arrived at the stage at which self-esteem devotes all its energy to destroying the goals to which it has attained, whether because, under the influence of love, a man sees a sort of glamour, which he is alone in perceiving, in ostentatious relations with the beloved object, or because, by the waning of social ambitions that have been gratified, and the rising tide of ancillary curiosities that are all the more absorbing for being platonic, the latter have not only reached but have passed the level at which the former found it difficult to sustain themselves.

As for other young men, M. de Charlus found that the existence of Morel was no obstacle to his taste for them, and that indeed his brilliant reputation as a violinist or his growing fame as a composer and journalist might in certain instances provide a bait. If a young composer of pleasing appearance was introduced to the Baron, it was in Morel's talents that he sought an opportunity of doing the newcomer a favour. "You must," he would tell him, "bring me some of your work so that Morel can play it at a concert or on tour. There's so little decent music written for the violin. It's a godsend to find something new. And abroad they appreciate that sort of thing enormously. Even in the provinces there are little musical societies where they love music with a fervour and intelligence that are quite admirable." Without any greater sincerity (for all this served only as bait and it was seldom that Morel condescended to fulfil these promises), Bloch having confessed that he was something of a poet ("in my idle mo-

ments," he had added with the sarcastic laugh with which he would accompany a trite remark when he could think of nothing original), M. de Charlus said to me: "You must tell your young Hebrew, since he writes verse, that he really must bring me some for Morel. For a composer that's always the stumbling-block, finding something decent to set to music. One might even consider a libretto. It mightn't be uninteresting, and would acquire a certain value from the distinction of the poet, from my patronage, from a whole concatenation of auxiliary circumstances, among which Morel's talent would take the chief place. For he's composing a lot just now, and writing too, and very nicely—I must talk to you about it. As for his talent as an executant (there, as you know, he's already a real master), you shall see this evening how well the lad plays Vinteuil's music. He staggers me; at his age, to have such understanding while remaining such a schoolboy, such an urchin! Oh, this evening is only to be a little rehearsal. The big affair is to come off in two or three days. But it will be much more distinguished this evening. And so we're delighted that you've come," he went on, using the royal plural. "The programme is so magnificent that I've advised Mme Verdurin to give two parties: one in a few days' time, at which she will have all her own acquaintances, the other tonight at which the hostess is, as they say in legal parlance, 'disseized.' It is I who have issued the invitations, and I have collected a few people from another sphere, who may be useful to Charlie and whom it will be nice for the Verdurins to meet. It's all very well, don't you agree, to have the finest music played by the greatest artists, but the effect of the performance remains muffled, as though in cotton-wool, if the audience is composed of the milliner from across the way and the grocer from round the corner. You know what I think of the intellectual level of society people, but there are certain quite important roles which they can perform, among others the role which in public events devolves upon the press, and which is that of being an organ of dissemination. You understand what I mean: I have for instance invited my sister-in-law Oriane; it is not certain that she will come, but it is on the other hand certain that, if she does come, she will understand absolutely nothing. But one doesn't ask her to understand, which is beyond her capacity, but to talk, a task for which she is admirably suited, and which she never fails to perform. The result? Tomorrow as ever is, instead of the silence of the milliner and the grocer, an animated conversation at the Mortemarts' with Oriane telling everyone that she has heard the most marvellous music, that a certain Morel, and so forth, and indescribable rage among the people not invited, who will say: 'Palamède obviously thought we were not worth asking; but in any case, who are these people in whose house it happened?'—a counterblast quite as useful as Oriane's praises, because Morel's name keeps cropping up all the time and is finally engraved in the memory like a lesson one has read over a dozen times. All this forms a concatenation of circumstances which may be of value to the artist, and to the hostess, may serve as a sort of megaphone for an event which will thus be made audible to a wide public. It really is worth the trouble; you shall see what progress Charlie has made. And what is more, we've discovered a new talent in him, my dear fellow: he writes like an angel. Like an angel, I tell you."

ing the "musical presentation" itself, the bad manners they were exhibiting towards the Mistress. Morel had already mounted the platform, and the musicians were assembling, but one could still hear conversations, not to say laughter, and remarks such as "Apparently you have to be initiated in order to understand it." Immediately M. de Charlus, drawing himself erect as though he had entered a different body from the one I had seen, a short while before, dragging itself towards Mme Verdurin's door, assumed a prophetic expression and glared at the assembly with a severity which signified that this was no time for laughter, thus bringing a sudden blush to the cheeks of more than one lady caught out like a schoolgirl by her teacher in front of the whole class. To my mind, M. de Charlus's attitude, so noble in other respects, was somehow slightly comic; for at one moment he withered the guests with his blazing eyes, and at the next, in order to indicate to them with a sort of vade-mecum the religious silence it was proper to observe, the detachment from any worldly preoccupation, he himself presented, raising his white-gloved hands to his handsome forehead, a model (to which they were expected to conform) of gravity, already almost of ecstasy, ignoring the greetings of latecomers so indelicate as not to realise that it was now the time for High Art. They were all hypnotised; no one dared to utter another sound, to move a chair; respect for music—by virtue of Palamède's prestige—had been instantaneously inculcated in a crowd as ill-bred as it was elegant.

When I saw not only Morel and a pianist but other instrumentalists too line up on the little platform, I supposed that the programme was to begin with works of

composers other than Vinteuil. For I imagined that the only work of his in existence was his sonata for piano and violin.

Mme Verdurin sat alone, the twin hemispheres of her pale, slightly roseate brow magnificently bulging, her hair drawn back, partly in imitation of an eighteenth-century portrait, partly from the need for coolness of a feverish person reluctant to reveal her condition, aloof, a deity presiding over the musical rites, goddess of Wagnerism and sick-headaches, a sort of almost tragic Norn, conjured up by the spell of genius in the midst of all these "bores," in whose presence she would scorn even more than usual to express her feelings upon hearing a piece of music which she knew better than they. The concert began; I did not know what was being played; I found myself in a strange land. Where was I to place it? Who was the composer? I longed to know, and, seeing nobody near me whom I could ask, I should have liked to be a character in those *Arabian Nights* which I never tired of reading and in which, in moments of uncertainty, there appears a genie, or a maiden of ravishing beauty, invisible to everyone else but not to the perplexed hero to whom she reveals exactly what he wishes to learn. And indeed at that very moment I was favoured with just such a magical apparition. As when, in a stretch of country which one thinks one does not know and which in fact one has approached from a new direction, after turning a corner one finds oneself suddenly emerging on to a road every inch of which is familiar, but one had simply not been in the habit of approaching it that way, one suddenly says to oneself: "Why, this is the lane that leads to the garden gate of my friends the X——s; I'm only two minutes from their

house," and there, indeed, is their daughter who has come out to greet one as one goes by; so, all of a sudden, I found myself, in the midst of this music that was new to me, right in the heart of Vinteuil's sonata; and, more marvellous than any girl, the little phrase, sheathed, harnessed in silver, glittering with brilliant sonorities, as light and soft as silken scarves, came to me, recognisable in this new guise. My joy at having rediscovered it was enhanced by the tone, so friendly and familiar, which it adopted in addressing me, so persuasive, so simple, and yet without subduing the shimmering beauty with which it glowed. Its intention, however, this time was merely to show me the way, which was not the way of the sonata, for this was an unpublished work of Vinteuil in which he had merely amused himself, by an allusion that was explained at this point by a sentence in the programme which one ought to have been reading simultaneously, by reintroducing the little phrase for a moment. No sooner was it thus recalled than it vanished, and I found myself once more in an unknown world, but I knew now, and everything that followed only confirmed my knowledge, that this world was one of those which I had never even been capable of imagining that Vinteuil could have created, for when, weary of the sonata which was to me a universe thoroughly explored, I tried to imagine others equally beautiful but different, I was merely doing what those poets do who fill their artificial paradise with meadows, flowers and streams which duplicate those existing already upon earth. What was now before me made me feel as keen a joy as the sonata would have given me if I had not already known it, and consequently, while no less beautiful, was different. Whereas the sonata opened upon a lily-

white pastoral dawn, dividing its fragile purity only to hover in the delicate yet compact entanglement of a rustic bower of honeysuckle against white geraniums, it was upon flat, unbroken surfaces like those of the sea on a morning that threatens storm, in the midst of an eerie silence, in an infinite void, that this new work began, and it was into a rose-red daybreak that this unknown universe was drawn from the silence and the night to build up gradually before me. This redness, so new, so absent from the tender, pastoral, unadorned sonata, tinged all the sky, as dawn does, with a mysterious hope. And a song already pierced the air, a song on seven notes, but the strangest, the most remote from anything I had ever imagined, at once ineffable and strident, no longer the cooing of a dove as in the sonata, but rending the air, as vivid as the scarlet tint in which the opening bars had been bathed, something like a mystical cock-crow, the ineffable but ear-piercing call of eternal morning. The atmosphere, cold, rain-washed, electric—of a quality so different, subject to quite other pressures, in a world so remote from the virginal, plant-strewn world of the sonata—changed continually, eclipsing the crimson promise of the dawn. At noon, however, in a burst of scorching but transitory sunlight, it seemed to reach fulfilment in a heavy, rustic, almost cloddish gaiety in which the lurching, riotous clangour of bells (like those which set the church square of Combray aglow and which Vinteuil, who must often have heard them, had perhaps discovered at that moment in his memory like a colour which a painter has at hand on his palette) seemed the material representation of the coarsest joy. Truth to tell, this joyous motif did not appeal to me aesthetically; I

found it almost ugly, its rhythm was so laboriously earthbound that one could have imitated almost all its essentials simply with the noises made by rapping on a table with drumsticks in a particular way. It seemed to me that Vinteuil had been lacking, here, in inspiration, and consequently I was a little lacking also in the power of attention.

I looked at the Mistress, whose fierce immobility seemed to be a protest against the rhythmic noddings of the ignorant heads of the ladies of the Faubourg. She did not say: "You realise, of course, that I know a thing or two about this music! If I were to express all that I feel, you'd never hear the end of it!" She did not say this. But her upright, motionless body, her expressionless eyes, her straying locks said it for her. They spoke also of her courage, said that the musicians could carry on, that they need not spare her nerves, that she would not flinch at the andante, would not cry out at the allegro. I looked at the musicians. The cellist was hunched over the instrument which he clutched between his knees, his head bowed forward, his coarse features assuming an involuntary expression of disgust at the more mannerist moments; another leaned over his double bass, fingering it with the same domestic patience with which he might have peeled a cabbage, while by his side the harpist, a mere child in a short skirt, framed behind the diagonal rays of her golden quadrilateral, recalling those which, in the magic chamber of a sibyl, arbitrarily denote the ether according to the traditional forms, seemed to be picking out exquisite sounds here and there at designated points, just as though, a tiny allegorical goddess poised before the golden trellis of the heavenly vault, she were gathering, one by one, its stars.

As for Morel, a lock, hitherto invisible and submerged in the rest of his hair, had fallen loose and formed a curl on his forehead.

I turned my head slightly towards the audience to discover what M. de Charlus might be feeling at the sight of this curl. But my eyes encountered only Mme Verdurin's face, or rather the hands, for the former was entirely buried in the latter. Did the Mistress wish to indicate by this meditative attitude that she considered herself as though in church, and regarded this music as no different from the most sublime of prayers? Did she wish, as some people do in church, to hide from prying eyes, out of modesty or shame, their presumed fervour or their culpable inattention or an irresistible sleepiness? A regular noise which was not musical gave me momentarily to think that this last hypothesis was the correct one, but I realised later that it was produced by the snores, not of Mme Verdurin, but of her dog.

But very soon, the triumphant motif of the bells having been banished, dispersed by others, I succumbed once again to the music; and I began to realise that if, in the body of this septet, different elements presented themselves one after another to combine at the close, so also Vinteuil's sonata and, as I later discovered, his other works as well, had been no more than timid essays, exquisite but very slight, beside the triumphal and consummate masterpiece now being revealed to me. And I could not help recalling by comparison that, in the same way too, I had thought of the other worlds that Vinteuil had created as being self-enclosed as each of my loves had been; whereas in reality I was obliged to admit that just as, within the context of the last of these—my love for

Albertine—my first faint stirrings of love for her (at Balbec at the very beginning, then after the game of ferret, then on the night when she slept at the hotel, then in Paris on the foggy Sunday, then on the night of the Guermantes party, then at Balbec again, and finally in Paris where my life was now closely linked to hers) had been, so, if I now considered not my love for Albertine but my whole life, my other loves too had been no more than slight and timid essays that were paving the way, appeals that were unconsciously clamouring, for this vaster love: my love for Albertine. And I ceased to follow the music, in order to ask myself once again whether Albertine had or had not seen Mlle Vinteuil during the last few days, as one interrogates anew an inner pain from which one has been distracted for a moment. For it was in myself that Albertine's possible actions were performed. Of every person we know we possess a double; but, being habitually situated on the horizon of our imagination, of our memory, it remains more or less extraneous to us, and what it has done or may have done has no greater capacity to cause us pain than an object situated at a certain distance which provides us with only the painless sensations of vision. The things that affect these people we perceive in a contemplative fashion; we are able to deplore them in appropriate language which gives other people a sense of our kindness of heart, but we do not feel them. But ever since the wound I had received at Balbec, it was deep in my heart, and very difficult to extricate, that Albertine's double was lodged. What I saw of her hurt me, as a sick man would be hurt whose senses were so seriously deranged that the sight of a colour would be felt by him internally like an incision in his living flesh. It was fortunate that I

had not already yielded to the temptation to break with Albertine; the tedium of having to rejoin her presently, when I went home, was a trifling matter compared with the anxiety that I should have felt if the separation had occurred when I still had a doubt about her and before I had had time to grow indifferent to her. And at the moment when I thus pictured her waiting for me at home like a beloved wife, finding the time of waiting long, perhaps having fallen asleep for a while in her room, my ears were caressed by a passing phrase, tender, homely and domestic, of the septet. Perhaps—everything being so interwoven and superimposed in our inner life—it had been inspired in Vinteuil by his daughter's sleep (that daughter who was today the cause of all my distress) when it enveloped the composer's work on peaceful evenings with its quiet sweetness, this phrase which had so much power to calm me by virtue of the same soft background of silence that gives a hushed serenity to certain of Schumann's reveries, during which, even when "the Poet speaks," one can tell that "the child sleeps." Asleep or awake, I should find her again this evening, Albertine, my little child, when I chose to return home. And yet, I said to myself, something more mysterious than Albertine's love seemed to be promised at the outset of this work, in those first cries of dawn. I tried to banish the thought of my mistress and to think only of the musician. Indeed, he seemed to be present. It was as though, reincarnate, the composer lived for all time in his music; one could feel the joy with which he chose the colour of some timbre, harmonising it with the others. For with other and more profound gifts Vinteuil combined that which few composers, and indeed few painters, have possessed, of using

colours not merely so lasting but so personal that, just as time has been powerless to spoil their freshness, so the disciples who imitate their discoverer, and even the masters who surpass him, do not dim their originality. The revolution that their apparition has effected does not see its results merge unacknowledged in the work of subsequent generations; it is unleashed, it explodes anew, when, and only when, the works of the once-for-all-time innovator are performed again. Each tone was identified by a colour which all the rules in the world could not have taught the most learned composers to imitate, with the result that Vinteuil, although he had appeared at his appointed hour and had his appointed place in the evolution of music, would always leave that place to stand in the forefront whenever any of his compositions was performed, compositions which would owe their appearance of having originated after the works of more recent composers to this apparently paradoxical and indeed deceptive quality of permanent novelty. A page of symphonic music by Vinteuil, familiar already on the piano, revealed, when one heard it played by an orchestra—like a ray of summer sunlight which the prism of the window decomposes before it enters a dark dining-room—all the jewels of the *Arabian Nights* in unsuspected, multicoloured splendour. But how could one compare to that motionless dazzle of light what was life, perpetual and blissful motion? This Vinteuil, whom I had known so timid and sad, had been capable—when he had to choose a timbre and to blend another with it—of an audacity, and in the full sense of the word a felicity, as to which the hearing of any of his works left one in no doubt. The joy that certain sonorities had caused him, the increase of strength they had given

him wherewith to discover others, led the listener on too from one discovery to another, or rather it was the creator himself who guided him, deriving, from the colours he had just hit upon, a wild joy which gave him the strength to discover, to fling himself upon others which they seemed to call for, enraptured, quivering as though from the shock of an electric spark when the sublime came spontaneously to life at the clang of the brass, panting, intoxicated, unbridled, vertiginous, while he painted his great musical fresco, like Michelangelo strapped to his scaffold and from his upside-down position hurling tumultuous brush-strokes on to the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Vinteuil had been dead for a number of years; but in the sound of these instruments which he had loved, it had been given him to go on living, for an unlimited time, a part at least of his life. Of his life as a man solely? If art was indeed but a prolongation of life, was it worth while to sacrifice anything to it? Was it not as unreal as life itself? The more I listened to this septet, the less I could believe this to be so. No doubt the glowing septet differed singularly from the lily-white sonata; the timid question to which the little phrase replied, from the breathless supplication to find the fulfilment of the strange promise that had resounded, so harsh, so supernatural, so brief, causing the still inert crimson of the morning sky above the sea to vibrate. And yet these very different phrases were composed of the same elements; for, just as there was a certain world, perceptible to us in those fragments scattered here and there, in private houses, in public galleries, which was Elstir's world, the world he saw, the world in which he lived, so too the music of Vinteuil extended, note by note, stroke by stroke,

the unknown, incalculable colourings of an unsuspected world, fragmented by the gaps between the different occasions of hearing his work performed; those two very dissimilar questions that governed the very different movement of the sonata and the septet, the former interrupting a pure, continuous line with brief calls, the latter welding together into an indivisible structure a medley of scattered fragments—one so calm and shy, almost detached and as if philosophical, the other so urgent, anxious, imploring—were nevertheless the same prayer, bursting forth like different inner sunrises, and merely refracted through the different mediums of other thoughts, of artistic researches carried on through the years in which he had sought to create something new. A prayer, a hope which was at heart the same, distinguishable beneath these disguises in the various works of Vinteuil, and at the same time not to be found elsewhere than in his works. For those phrases, historians of music could no doubt find affinities and pedigrees in the works of other great composers, but only for secondary reasons, external resemblances, analogies ingeniously discovered by reasoning rather than felt as the result of a direct impression. The impression conveyed by these Vinteuil phrases was different from any other, as though, in spite of the conclusions which seem to emerge from science, the individual did exist. And it was precisely when he was striving with all his might to create something new that one recognised, beneath the apparent differences, the profound similarities and the deliberate resemblances that existed in the body of a work; when Vinteuil took up the same phrase again and again, diversified it, amused himself by altering its rhythm, by making it reappear in its original form, those

deliberate resemblances, the work of his intellect, necessarily superficial, never succeeded in being as striking as the disguised, involuntary resemblances, which broke out in different colours, between the two separate masterpieces; for then Vinteuil, striving to do something new, interrogated himself, with all the power of his creative energy, reached down to his essential self at those depths where, whatever the question asked, it is in the same accent, that is to say its own, that it replies. Such an accent, the accent of Vinteuil, is separated from the accents of other composers by a difference far greater than that which we perceive between the voices of two people, even between the bellowings and the squeals of two animal species; by the real difference that exists between the thought of this or that other composer and the eternal investigations of Vinteuil, the question that he put to himself in so many forms, his habitual speculation, but as free from analytical forms of reasoning as if it were being carried out in the world of the angels, so that we can gauge its depth, but no more translate it into human speech than can disembodied spirits when, evoked by a medium, they are questioned by him about the secrets of death. And even when I bore in mind that acquired originality which had struck me that afternoon, that kinship, too, which musicologists might discover between composers, it is indeed a unique accent, an unmistakable voice, to which in spite of themselves those great singers that original composers are rise and return, and which is a proof of the irreducibly individual existence of the soul. Though Vinteuil might try to make more solemn, more grandiose, or to make more sprightly and gay, to re-create what he saw reflected in the mind of the public, in spite of himself

he submerged it all beneath a ground-swell which makes his song eternal and at once recognisable. Where had he learned this song, different from those of other singers, similar to all his own, where had he heard it? Each artist seems thus to be the native of an unknown country, which he himself has forgotten, and which is different from that whence another great artist, setting sail for the earth, will eventually emerge. Certain it was that Vinteuil, in his latest works, seemed to have drawn nearer to that unknown country. The atmosphere was no longer the same as in the sonata, the questioning phrases had become more pressing, more unquiet, the answers more mysterious; the washed-out air of morning and evening seemed to affect the very strings of the instruments. Marvellously though Morel played, the sounds that came from his violin seemed to me singularly piercing, almost shrill. This harshness was pleasing, and, as in certain voices, one felt in it a sort of moral quality and intellectual superiority. But it could shock. When his vision of the universe is modified, purified, becomes more adapted to his memory of his inner homeland, it is only natural that this should be expressed by a musician in a general alteration of sonorities, as of colours by a painter. In any case, the more intelligent section of the public is not misled, since Vinteuil's last compositions were ultimately declared to be his most profound. And yet no programme, no subject matter, supplied any intellectual basis for judgment. One simply sensed that it was a question of the transposition of profundity into terms of sound.

Composers do not remember this lost fatherland, but each of them remains all his life unconsciously attuned to it; he is delirious with joy when he sings in harmony with

his native land, betrays it at times in his thirst for fame, but then, in seeking fame, turns his back on it, and it is only by scorning fame that he finds it when he breaks out into that distinctive strain the sameness of which—for whatever its subject it remains identical with itself—proves the permanence of the elements that compose his soul. But in that case is it not true that those elements—all the residuum of reality which we are obliged to keep to ourselves, which cannot be transmitted in talk, even from friend to friend, from master to disciple, from lover to mistress, that ineffable something which differentiates qualitatively what each of us has felt and what he is obliged to leave behind at the threshold of the phrases in which he can communicate with others only by limiting himself to externals, common to all and of no interest—are brought out by art, the art of a Vinteuil like that of an Elstir, which exteriorises in the colours of the spectrum the intimate composition of those worlds which we call individuals and which, but for art, we should never know? A pair of wings, a different respiratory system, which enabled us to travel through space, would in no way help us, for if we visited Mars or Venus while keeping the same senses, they would clothe everything we could see in the same aspect as the things of Earth. The only true voyage, the only bath in the Fountain of Youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees, that each of them is; and this we can do with an Elstir, with a Vinteuil; with men like these we do really fly from star to star.

The andante had just ended on a phrase filled with a

tenderness to which I had entirely surrendered. There followed, before the next movement, a short interval during which the performers laid down their instruments and the audience exchanged impressions. A duke, in order to show that he knew what he was talking about, declared: "It's a difficult thing to play well." Other more agreeable people chatted for a moment with me. But what were their words, which like every human and external word left me so indifferent, compared with the heavenly phrase of music with which I had just been communing? I was truly like an angel who, fallen from the inebriating bliss of paradise, subsides into the most humdrum reality. And, just as certain creatures are the last surviving testimony to a form of life which nature has discarded, I wondered whether music might not be the unique example of what might have been—if the invention of language, the formation of words, the analysis of ideas had not intervened—the means of communication between souls. It is like a possibility that has come to nothing; humanity has developed along other lines, those of spoken and written language. But this return to the unanalysed was so intoxicating that, on emerging from that paradise, contact with more or less intelligent people seemed to me of an extraordinary insignificance. I had been able, while the music was playing, to remember people, to associate them with it; or rather I had associated with the music scarcely more than the memory of one person only, which was Albertine. And the phrase that ended the andante seemed to me so sublime that I told myself that it was a pity that Albertine did not know, and if she had known had not understood, what an honour it was to be associated with something so great as this which reunited us, and the

heartbreaking voice of which she seemed to have assumed. But once the music was interrupted, the people who were there seemed too insipid. Refreshments were handed round. M. de Charlus hailed a footman now and then with: "How are you? Did you get my note? Can you come?" No doubt there was in these salutations the freedom of the great nobleman who thinks he is flattering his interlocutor and is more one of the people than the bourgeois, but there was also the cunning of the delinquent who imagines that anything one flaunts is on that account considered innocent. And he added, in the Guermantes tone of Mme de Villeparisis: "He's a good boy, a friendly soul, I often employ him at home." But his adroitness turned against the Baron, for people thought his intimate courtesies and correspondence with footmen extraordinary. The footmen themselves were not so much flattered as embarrassed in the presence of their comrades.

Meanwhile the septet, which had begun again, was moving towards its close; again and again one phrase or another from the sonata recurred, but altered each time, its rhythm and harmony different, the same and yet something else, as things recur in life; and they were phrases of the sort which, without our being able to understand what affinity assigns to them as their sole and necessary abode the past of a certain composer, are to be found only in his work, and appear constantly in his work, of which they are the spirits, the dryads, the familiar deities; I had at first distinguished in the septet two or three which reminded me of the sonata. Presently—bathed in the violet mist which was wont to rise particularly in Vinteuil's later work, so much so that, even when he introduced a dance measure, it remained captive in the

heart of an opal—I caught a hint of another phrase from the sonata, still so distant that I scarcely recognised it; hesitantly it approached, vanished as though in alarm, then returned, intertwined with others that had come, as I later learned, from other works, summoned yet others which became in their turn seductive and persuasive as soon as they were tamed, and took their places in the round, the divine round that yet remained invisible to the bulk of the audience, who, having before their eyes only a dim veil through which they saw nothing, punctuated arbitrarily with admiring exclamations a continuous boredom of which they thought they would die. Then the phrases withdrew, save one which I saw reappear five times or six without being able to distinguish its features, but so caressing, so different—as no doubt the little phrase from the sonata had been for Swann—from anything that any woman had ever made me desire, that this phrase—this invisible creature whose language I did not know but whom I understood so well—which offered me in so sweet a voice a happiness that it would really have been worth the struggle to obtain, is perhaps the only Unknown Woman that it has ever been my good fortune to meet. Then this phrase broke up, was transformed, like the little phrase in the sonata, and became the mysterious call of the start. A phrase of a plaintive kind rose in answer to it, but so profound, so vague, so internal, almost so organic and visceral, that one could not tell at each of its re-entries whether it was a theme or an attack of neuralgia. Presently these two motifs were wrestling together in a close embrace in which at times one of them would disappear entirely, and then only a fragment of the other could be glimpsed. A wrestling match of disembodied energies only, to tell the truth; for if these creatures confronted one another, they did so stripped of their physical bodies, of their appearance, of their names, finding in me an inward spectator—himself indifferent, too, to names and particulars—to appreciate their immaterial and dynamic combat and follow passionately its sonorous vicissitudes. In the end the joyous motif was left triumphant; it was no longer an almost anxious appeal addressed to an empty sky, it was an ineffable joy which seemed to come from paradise, a joy as different from that of the sonata as some scarlet-clad Mantegna archangel sounding a trumpet from a grave and gentle Bellini seraph strumming a theorbo. I knew that this new tone of joy, this summons to a supraterrestrial joy, was a thing that I would never forget. But would it ever be attainable to me? This question seemed to me all the more important inasmuch as this phrase was what might have seemed most eloquently to characterise—as contrasting so sharply with all the rest of my life, with the visible world—those impressions which at remote intervals I experienced in my life as starting-points, foundation-stones for the construction of a true life: the impression I had felt at the sight of the steeples of Martinville, or of a line of trees near Balbec. In any case, to return to the particular accent of this phrase, how strange it was that the presentiment most different from what life assigns to us on earth, the boldest approximation to the bliss of the Beyond, should have materialised precisely in the melancholy, respectable little bourgeois whom we used to meet in the Month of Mary at Combray! But above all, how was it possible that this revelation, the strangest that I had yet received, of an unknown type of joy, should have come to me from him, since, it

was said, when he died he had left nothing but his sonata, everything else existing only as indecipherable scribblings. Indecipherable they may have been, but they had nevertheless been in the end deciphered, by dint of patience, intelligence and respect, by the only person who had been sufficiently close to Vinteuil to understand his method of working, to interpret his orchestral indications: Mlle Vinteuil's friend. Even in the lifetime of the great composer, she had acquired from his daughter the veneration that the latter felt for her father. It was because of this veneration that, in those moments in which people run counter to their true inclinations, the two girls had been able to take an insane pleasure in the profanations which have already been narrated. (Her adoration of her father was the very condition of his daughter's sacrilege. And no doubt they ought to have forgone the voluptuous pleasure of that sacrilege, but it did not express the whole of their natures.) And, moreover, the profanations had become rarer until they disappeared altogether, as those morbidly carnal relations, that troubled, smouldering conflagration, had gradually given way to the flame of a pure and lofty friendship. Mlle Vinteuil's friend was sometimes tormented by the nagging thought that she might have hastened Vinteuil's death. At any rate, by spending years unravelling the scribblings left by him, by establishing the correct reading of those secret hieroglyphs, she had the consolation of ensuring an immortal and compensatory glory for the composer over whose last years she had cast such a shadow. Relations which are not sanctioned by the law establish bonds of kinship as manifold, as complex, and even more solid, than those which spring from marriage. Indeed, without pausing to consider relations of so

special a nature, do we not find every day that adultery, when it is based on genuine love, does not weaken family feelings and the duties of kinship, but rather revivifies them? Adultery then brings the spirit into what marriage would often have left a dead letter. A good daughter who will wear mourning for her mother's second husband for reasons of propriety has not tears enough to shed for the man whom her mother singled out as her lover. In any case Mlle Vinteuil had acted only out of sadism, which did not excuse her, though it gave me a certain consolation to think so later on. No doubt she must have realised, I told myself, at the moment when she and her friend had profaned her father's photograph, that what they were doing was merely morbidity, silliness, and not the true and joyous wickedness which she would have liked to feel. This idea that it was merely a pretence of wickedness spoiled her pleasure. But if this idea recurred to her later on, since it had spoiled her pleasure so it must have diminished her grief. "It wasn't me," she must have told herself, "I was out of my mind. I can still pray for my father's soul, and not despair of his forgiveness." Only it is possible that this idea, which had certainly occurred to her in her pleasure, may not have occurred to her in her grief. I would have liked to be able to put it into her mind. I am sure that I would have done her good and that I could have re-established between her and the memory of her father a more comforting relationship.

As in the illegible note-books in which a chemist of genius, who does not know that death is at hand, jots down discoveries which will perhaps remain for ever unknown, Mlle Vinteuil's friend had disentangled, from papers more illegible than strips of papyrus dotted with a

cuneiform script, the formula, eternally true and for ever fertile, of this unknown joy, the mystic hope of the crimson Angel of the Dawn. And I for whom, albeit not so much, perhaps, as for Vinteuil, she had also been, had just been once more this very evening by reawakening my jealousy of Albertine, was to be above all in the future, the cause of so many sufferings, it was thanks to her, in compensation, that I had been able to apprehend the strange summons which I should henceforth never cease to hear, as the promise and proof that there existed something other, realisable no doubt through art, than the nullity that I had found in all my pleasures and in love itself, and that if my life seemed to me so futile, at least it had not yet accomplished everything.

What she had enabled us, thanks to her labour, to know of Vinteuil was to all intents and purposes the whole of Vinteuil's work. Compared with this septet, certain phrases from the sonata which were all that the public knew appeared so commonplace that it was difficult to understand how they could have aroused so much admiration. Similarly we are surprised that, for years past, pieces as trivial as the *Song to the Evening Star* or *Elisabeth's Prayer* can have aroused in the concert-hall fanatical worshippers who wore themselves out applauding and shouting *encore* at the end of what after all seems poor and trite to us who know *Tristan*, the *Rhinegold* and the *Mastersingers*. One must assume that those featureless melodies nevertheless already contained, in infinitesimal and for that reason perhaps more easily assimilable quantities, something of the originality of the masterpieces which alone matter to us in retrospect, but whose very perfection might perhaps have prevented them from being

understood; those earlier melodies may have prepared the way for them in people's hearts. But the fact remains that, if they gave a vague presentiment of the beauties to come, they left these in complete obscurity. The same was true of Vinteuil; if at his death he had left behind him—excepting certain parts of the sonata—only what he had been able to complete, what we should have known of him would have been, in relation to his true greatness, as inconsiderable as in the case of, say, Victor Hugo if he had died after the *Pas d'Armes du Roi Jean*, the *Fiancée du Timbalier* and *Sarah la Baigneuse*, without having written a line of the *Légende des Siècles* or the *Contemplations*: what is to us his real achievement would have remained purely potential, as unknown as those universes to which our perception does not reach, of which we shall never have any idea.

Moreover this apparent contrast and profound union between genius (talent too and even virtue) and the sheath of vices in which, as had happened in the case of Vinteuil, it is so frequently contained and preserved, was detectable, as in a popular allegory, in the very assembly of the guests among whom I found myself once again when the music had come to an end. This assembly, albeit limited this time to Mme Verdurin's salon, resembled many others, the ingredients of which are unknown to the general public, and which journalist-philosophers, if they are at all well-informed, call Parisian, or Panamist, or Dreyfusard, never suspecting that they may equally well be found in Petersburg, Berlin, Madrid, and in every epoch; if as a matter of fact the Under Secretary of State for Fine Arts, an artist to his fingertips, well-born and snobby, several duchesses and three ambassadors with their wives

were present this evening at Mme Verdurin's, the proximate, immediate cause of their presence lay in the relations that existed between M. de Charlus and Morel, relations which made the Baron anxious to give as wide a celebrity as possible to the artistic triumphs of his young idol, and to obtain for him the cross of the Legion of Honour; the remoter cause which had made this assembly possible was that a girl who enjoyed a relationship with Mlle Vinteuil analogous to that of Charlie and the Baron had brought to light a whole series of works of genius which had been such a revelation that before long a subscription was to be opened under the patronage of the Minister of Education, with the object of erecting a statue to Vinteuil. Moreover, these works had been assisted, no less than by Mlle Vinteuil's relations with her friend, by the Baron's relations with Charlie, a sort of short cut, as it were, thanks to which the world was enabled to catch up with these works without the detour, if not of an incomprehension which would long persist, at least of a complete ignorance which might have lasted for years. Whenever an event occurs which is within the range of the vulgar mind of the journalist-philosopher, a political event as a rule, the journalist-philosophers are convinced that there has been some great change in France, that we shall never see such evenings again, that no one will ever again admire Ibsen, Renan, Dostoievsky, D'Annunzio, Tolstoy, Wagner, Strauss. For the journalist-philosophers take their cue from the equivocal undercurrents of these official manifestations, in order to find something decadent in the art which is there celebrated and which as often as not is more austere than any other. There is not a name, among those most revered by these journalist-

philosophers, which has not quite naturally given rise to some such strange gathering, although its strangeness may have been less flagrant and better concealed. In the case of this gathering, the impure elements that came together therein struck me from another aspect; true, I was as well able as anyone to dissociate them, having learned to know them separately; but those which concerned Mlle Vinteuil and her friend, speaking to me of Combray, spoke to me also of Albertine, that is to say of Balbec, since it was because I had long ago seen Mlle Vinteuil at Montjouvain and had learned of her friend's intimacy with Albertine that I was presently, when I returned home, to find, instead of solitude, Albertine awaiting me; and those which concerned Morel and M. de Charlus, speaking to me of Balbec, where I had seen, on the platform at Doncières, their intimacy begin, spoke to me of Combray and of its two "ways," for M. de Charlus was one of those Guermantes, Counts of Combray, inhabiting Combray without having any dwelling there, suspended in mid-air, like Gilbert the Bad in his window, while Morel was the son of that old valet who had introduced me to the lady in pink and enabled me, years after, to identify her as Mme Swann.*

At the moment when, the music having come to an end, his guests came to take leave of him, M. de Charlus committed the same error as on their arrival. He did not ask them to shake hands with their hostess, to include her and her husband in the gratitude that was being showered on himself. There was a long procession, a procession which led to the Baron alone, and of which he was clearly aware, for as he said to me a little later: "The form of the artistic celebration ended in a 'few-words-in-the-vestry'

before Columbus or Peary. Nevertheless, at the moment of my discovery, M. Verdurin's nature offered me a new and unsuspected facet; and I concluded that it is as difficult to present a fixed image of a character as of societies and passions. For a character alters no less than they do, and if one tries to take a snapshot of what is relatively immutable in it, one finds it presenting a succession of different aspects (implying that it is incapable of keeping still but keeps moving) to the disconcerted lens.

Seeing how late it was, and fearing that Albertine might be growing impatient, I asked Brichot, as we left the Verdurins' party, to be so kind as to drop me home first, and my carriage would then take him on. He commended me for going straight home like this (unaware that a girl was waiting for me in the house) and for ending the evening so early and so wisely, when in fact all I had done was postpone its real beginning. Then he spoke to me about M. de Charlus. The latter would doubtless have been amazed had he heard the Professor, who was so amiable to him, the Professor who always assured him: "I never repeat anything," speaking of him and of his life without the slightest reticence. And Brichot's indignant amazement would perhaps have been no less sincere if M. de Charlus had said to him: "I'm told you've been speaking ill of me." Brichot did indeed have an affection for M. de Charlus, and if he had had to call to mind some conversation that had turned upon him, would have been far more likely to remember the friendly feelings he had had for the Baron, while saying the same things about him as everyone else, than those things themselves. He would not have thought that he was lying if he had said: "I who

speak of you with such friendliness," since he did feel friendly when he was speaking about M. de Charlus. The Baron had for Brichot the charm which he demanded above all else from the world of society—that of offering him real specimens of what he had long supposed to be an invention of the poets. Brichot, who had often expounded the second *Eclogue* of Virgil without really knowing whether its fiction had any basis in reality, belatedly found, in conversing with Charlus, some of the pleasure which he knew that his masters, M. Mérimée and M. Renan, and his colleague M. Maspéro, had felt when travelling in Spain, Palestine and Egypt on recognising in the landscapes and the present inhabitants of Spain, Palestine and Egypt the settings and the selfsame actors of the ancient scenes which they themselves had expounded in their books.

"Be it said without offence to that knight of noble lineage," Brichot declared to me in the carriage that was taking us home, "he is quite simply prodigious when he illustrates his satanic catechism with a dash of Bedlamite verve and the obsessiveness, I was going to say the candour, of a *blanc d'Espagne*[21] or an émigré. I can assure you, if I dare express myself like Mgr d'Hulst, I am by no means bored on the days when I receive a visit from that feudal lord who, seeking to defend Adonis against our age of miscreants, has followed the instincts of his race, and, in all sodomist innocence, has gone crusading."

I listened to Brichot, and I was not alone with him. As, for that matter, I had never ceased to feel since I left home that evening, I felt myself, in however obscure a fashion, tied fast to the girl who was at that moment in her bedroom. Even when I was talking to someone or

other at the Verdurins', I had somehow felt that she was by my side, I had that vague impression of her that we have of our own limbs, and if I happened to think of her it was as we think, with annoyance at being bound to it in complete subjection, of our own body.

"And what a fund of scandal," Brichot went on, "enough to supply all the appendixes of the *Causeries du Lundi*, is the conversation of that apostle! Just imagine, I learned from him that the treatise on ethics which I had always admired as the most splendid moral edifice of our age was inspired in our venerable colleague X by a young telegraph messenger. Needless to say, my eminent friend omitted to give us the name of this ephebe in the course of his demonstrations. In this he showed more circumspection, or, if you prefer, less gratitude, than Phidias, who inscribed the name of the athlete whom he loved upon the ring of his Olympian Zeus. The Baron had not heard this last story. Needless to say, it appealed to his orthodoxy. You can readily imagine that whenever I have to discuss with my colleague a candidate's thesis, I find in his dialectic, which for that matter is extremely subtle, the additional savour which spicy revelations added, for Sainte-Beuve, to the insufficiently confidential writings of Chateaubriand. From our colleague, whose wisdom is golden but who had little money, the telegraph-boy passed into the hands of the Baron, 'with the most honourable intentions' (you should have heard his voice when he said it). And as this Satan is the most obliging of men, he found his protégé a post in the Colonies, from which the young man, who has a sense of gratitude, sends him from time to time the most excellent fruit. The Baron offers these to his distinguished friends; some of the young

man's pineapples appeared quite recently on the table at the Quai Conti, causing Mme Verdurin to remark, with no malicious intent: 'You must have an uncle or a nephew in America, M. de Charlus, to get pineapples like these!' I admit that I ate them with a certain gaiety, reciting to myself the opening lines of a Horatian ode which Diderot loved to recall. In fact, like my colleague Boissier, strolling from the Palatine to Tibur, I derive from the Baron's conversation a singularly more vivid and more savoury idea of the writers of the Augustan age, without mentioning those of the Decadence, or harking back to the Greeks, although I once said to the excellent Baron that in his company I felt like Plato in the house of Aspasia. To tell the truth, I had considerably enlarged the scale of the two characters and, as La Fontaine says, my example was taken 'from smaller animals.' However that may be, you do not, I imagine, suppose that the Baron took offence. Never have I seen him so ingenuously delighted. A childish excitement caused him to depart from his aristocratic phlegm. 'What flatterers all these Sorbonnards are!' he exclaimed with rapture. 'To think that I should have had to wait until my age before being compared to Aspasia! An old fright like me! Oh, my youth!' I should have loved you to see him as he said this, outrageously powdered as he always is, and, at his age, scented like a young fop. All the same, beneath his genealogical obsessions, the best fellow in the world. For all these reasons, I should be distressed were this evening's rupture to prove final. What did surprise me was the way in which the young man turned on him. His manner towards the Baron has been, for some time past, that of a henchman, of a feudal vassal, which scarcely betokened such an insurrection. I hope

did. The only words we had exchanged—fairly long ago, it must be said—on the subject of jealousy seemed to prove the opposite. I remembered that, on a fine moonlight evening towards the beginning of our relationship, on one of the first occasions when I had accompanied her home and would have been just as glad not to do so and to leave her in order to run after other girls, I had said to her: "You know, if I'm offering to take you home, it's not from jealousy; if you have anything else to do, I shall slip discreetly away." And she had replied: "Oh, I know quite well that you aren't jealous and that you don't care a fig, but I've nothing else to do except to stay with you." Another occasion was at La Raspelière, when M. de Charlus, not without casting a covert glance at Morel, had made a display of friendly gallantry towards Albertine; I had said to her: "Well, he gave you a good hug, I hope." And as I had added half ironically: "I suffered all the torments of jealousy," Albertine, employing the language proper either to the vulgar background from which she sprang or to that other, more vulgar still, which she frequented, replied: "What a kidder you are! I know quite well you're not jealous. For one thing, you told me so, and besides, it's perfectly obvious, get along with you!" She had never told me since then that she had changed her mind; but she must have formed a number of fresh ideas on the subject, which she concealed from me but which an accident might betray willy-nilly, for that evening when, on reaching home, after going to fetch her from her own room and taking her to mine, I said to her (with a certain awkwardness which I did not myself understand, for I had indeed told Albertine that I was going to pay a call and had said that I did not know where, perhaps on Mme

de Villeparisis, perhaps on Mme de Guermantes, perhaps on Mme de Cambremer; it is true that I had not actually mentioned the Verdurins): "Guess where I've been—at the Verdurins'," I had barely had time to utter the words before Albertine, a look of utter consternation on her face, had answered me in words which seemed to explode of their own accord with a force which she was unable to contain: "I thought as much."

"I didn't know that you'd be annoyed by my going to see the Verdurins." (It is true that she had not told me that she was annoyed, but it was obvious. It is true also that I had not said to myself that she would be annoyed. And yet, faced with the explosion of her wrath, as with one of those events which a sort of retrospective second sight makes us imagine that we have already experienced in the past, it seemed to me that I could never have expected anything else.)

"Annoyed? What difference does it make to me? I couldn't care less. Wasn't Mlle Vinteuil to be there?"

Beside myself at these words, "You never told me you'd met her the other day," I said to her, to show her that I was better informed than she knew.

Believing that the person whom I reproached her for having met without telling me was Mme Verdurin and not, as I meant to imply, Mlle Vinteuil, "Did I meet her?" she inquired with a pensive air, addressing both herself, as though she were seeking to collect her fugitive memories, and me, as though it was I who could have enlightened her; and no doubt in order that I might indeed say what I knew, and perhaps also in order to gain time before making a difficult reply. But I was far less preoccupied with the thought of Mlle Vinteuil than with a fear

which had already crossed my mind but which now gripped me more forcibly. Indeed I imagined that Mme Verdurin had purely and simply invented the story of having expected Mlle Vinteuil and her friend, in order to enhance her own prestige, so that I was quite calm on arriving home. Only Albertine, by saying: "Wasn't Mlle Vinteuil to be there?" had shown me that I had not been mistaken in my original suspicion; but anyhow my mind was at rest in that quarter as far as the future was concerned, since by giving up her plan of visiting the Verdurins' Albertine had sacrificed Mlle Vinteuil for my sake.

"Besides," I said to her angrily, "there are plenty of other things which you hide from me, even the most trivial things, such as for instance when you went for three days to Balbec—I mention it by the way." I had added the words "I mention it by the way" as a complement to "even the most trivial things" so that if Albertine said to me "What was there wrong about my trip to Balbec?" I might be able to answer: "Why, I've quite forgotten. The things people tell me get muddled up in my mind, I attach so little importance to them." And indeed if I referred to that three-day excursion she had made with the chauffeur to Balbec, from where her postcards had reached me after so long a delay, I did so purely at random, and regretted that I had chosen so bad an example, for in fact, as they had barely had time to go there and return, it was certainly the one excursion in which there had not even been time for the interpolation of a meeting that was at all protracted with anybody. But Albertine supposed, from what I had just said, that I knew the real truth and had merely concealed my knowledge from her.

She had in any case been convinced, for some time past, that in one way or another, by having her followed, or in some such fashion, I was, as she had said the week before to Andrée, better informed about her life than she was herself. And so she interrupted me with a wholly unnecessary admission, for certainly I suspected nothing of what she now told me, and I was on the other hand shattered by it, so vast can the disparity be between the truth which a liar has travestied and the idea which, from her lies, the man who is in love with the said liar has formed of that truth. Scarcely had I uttered the words: "When you went for three days to Balbec, I mention it by the way," than Albertine, cutting me short, declared to me as something quite natural: "You mean I never went to Balbec at all? Of course I didn't! And I've always wondered why you pretended to believe that I did. All the same, there was no harm in it. The driver had some business of his own for three days. He didn't dare to mention it to you. And so out of kindness to him (it's typical of me, and I'm the one who always gets the blame), I invented a trip to Balbec. He simply put me down at Auteuil, at the house of a girlfriend of mine in the Rue de l'Assomption, where I spent the three days bored to tears. You see it's not very serious, no great harm done. I did begin to think that you perhaps knew all about it, when I saw how you laughed when the postcards began to arrive, a week late. I quite see that it was absurd, and that it would have been better not to send any cards at all. But that wasn't my fault. I'd bought them in advance and given them to the driver before he dropped me at Auteuil, and then the fathead put them in his pocket and forgot about them instead of sending them on in an envelope to a friend of his

near Balbec who was to forward them to you. I kept on imagining they were about to arrive. He only remembered them after five days, and instead of telling me, the idiot sent them on at once to Balbec. When he did tell me, I really let him have it, I can tell you! To go and worry you unnecessarily, the great fool, as a reward for my shutting myself up for three whole days, so that he could go and look after his family affairs! I didn't even venture out into Auteuil for fear of being seen. The only time I did go out, I was dressed as a man, just for a joke, really. And it was just my luck that the first person I came across was your Yid friend Bloch. But I don't believe it was from him that you learned that my trip to Balbec never existed except in my imagination, for he seemed not to recognise me."

I did not know what to say, not wishing to appear surprised, and shattered by all these lies. A feeling of horror, which gave me no desire to turn Albertine out of the house, far from it, was combined with a strong inclination to burst into tears. This last was caused not by the lie itself and by the annihilation of everything that I had so firmly believed to be true that I felt as though I were in a town that had been razed to the ground, where not a house remained standing, where the bare soil was merely heaped with rubble—but by the melancholy thought that, during those three days when she had been bored to tears in her friend's house at Auteuil, Albertine had never once felt the desire, that the idea had perhaps not even occurred to her, to come and pay me a visit one day on the quiet, or to send a message asking me to go and see her at Auteuil. But I had no time to give myself up to these reflexions. Whatever happened, I did not wish to appear

surprised. I smiled with the air of man who knows far more than he is prepared to say: "But that's only one thing out of hundreds. For instance, only this evening, at the Verdurins', I learned that what you had told me about Mlle Vinteuil . . ."

Albertine gazed at me fixedly with a tormented air, seeking to read in my eyes how much I knew. Now, what I knew and what I was about to tell her was the truth about Mlle Vinteuil. It is true that it was not at the Verdurins' that I had learned it, but at Montjouvain long ago. But since I had always refrained, deliberately, from mentioning it to Albertine, I could now appear to have learned it only this evening. And I had a feeling almost of joy—after having felt such anguish in the little train—at possessing this memory of Montjouvain, which I would postdate, but which would nevertheless be the unanswerable proof, a crushing blow to Albertine. This time at least, I had no need to "seem to know" and to "make Albertine talk": I *knew*, I had *seen* through the lighted window at Montjouvain. It had been all very well for Albertine to tell me that her relations with Mlle Vinteuil and her friend had been perfectly pure, but how could she, when I swore to her (and swore without lying) that I knew the habits of these two women, how could she maintain any longer that, having lived in daily intimacy with them, calling them "my big sisters," she had not been the object of approaches on their part which would have made her break with them, if on the contrary she had not acquiesced in them? But I had no time to tell her what I knew. Albertine, imagining, as in the case of the pretended excursion to Balbec, that I had learned the truth either from Mlle Vinteuil, if she had been at

the Verdurins', or simply from Mme Verdurin herself, who might have mentioned her to Mlle Vinteuil, did not allow me the chance to speak but made a confession, precisely contrary to what I should have imagined, which nevertheless, by showing me that she had never ceased to lie to me, caused me perhaps just as much pain (especially since I was no longer, as I said a moment ago, jealous of Mlle Vinteuil). Taking the initiative, she spoke as follows: "You mean that you found out this evening that I lied to you when I pretended that I had been more or less brought up by Mlle Vinteuil's friend. It's true that I did lie to you a little. But I felt so looked down on by you, and I saw that you were so keen on that man Vinteuil's music, that as one of my schoolfriends—this is true, I swear to you—had been a friend of Mlle Vinteuil's friend, I stupidly thought that I might make myself seem interesting to you by inventing the story that I had known the girls quite well. I felt that I bored you, that you thought me a goose; I thought that if I told you that those people used to see a lot of me, that I could easily tell you all sorts of things about Vinteuil's work, you'd think more highly of me, that it would bring us closer together. When I lie to you, it's always out of affection for you. And it needed this fatal Verdurin party to open your eyes to the truth, which perhaps they exaggerated a bit, incidentally. I bet Mlle Vinteuil's friend told you that she didn't know me. She met me at least twice at my friend's house. But of course, I'm not smart enough for people who've become so famous. They prefer to say that they've never met me."

Poor Albertine, when she had thought that to tell me that she had been on such intimate terms with Mlle Vinteuil's friend would postpone her being "ditched," would bring her closer to me, she had, as so often happens, reached the truth by a different road from that which she had intended to take. Her showing herself better informed about music than I had supposed would never have prevented me from breaking with her that evening in the little train; and yet it was indeed that speech, which she had made with that object, that had immediately brought about far more than the impossibility of a rupture. Only she made an error of interpretation, not about the effect which that speech was to have, but about the cause by virtue of which it was to produce that effect—that cause being my discovery not of her musical culture but of her disreputable associations. What had abruptly drawn me closer to her—far more, fused indissolubly with her—was not the expectation of a pleasure—and pleasure is too strong a word, a mildly agreeable interest—but the grip of an agonising pain.

Once again I had to be careful not to keep too long a silence which might have led her to suppose that I was surprised. And so, touched by the discovery that she was so modest and had thought herself despised in the Verdurin circle, I said to her tenderly: "But, my darling, I'd gladly give you several hundred francs to let you go and play the fashionable lady wherever you please and invite M. and Mme Verdurin to a grand dinner."

Alas! Albertine was several persons in one. The most mysterious, most simple, most loathsome of these revealed herself in the answer which she made me with an air of disgust, and the exact words of which, to tell the truth, I could not quite make out (even the opening words, for she did not finish her sentence). I did not succeed in re-

constituting them until some time later when I had guessed what was in her mind. We hear things retrospectively when we have understood them.

"Thank you for nothing! Spend money on them! I'd a great deal rather you left me free for once in a way to go and get myself b . . . (*me faire casser*) . . ."

At once her face flushed crimson, she looked appalled, and she put her hand over her mouth as though she could have thrust back the words which she had just uttered and which I had quite failed to catch.

"What did you say, Albertine?"

"Nothing, I was half asleep and talking to myself."

"Not a bit of it, you were wide awake."

"I was thinking about asking the Verdurins to dinner, it's very good of you."

"No, I mean what you said just now."

She gave me endless versions, none of which tallied in the least, not simply with her words which, having been interrupted, remained obscure to me, but with the interruption itself and the sudden flush that had accompanied it.

"Come, my darling, that's not what you were going to say, otherwise why did you stop short?"

"Because I felt that my request was presumptuous."

"What request?"

"To be allowed to give a dinner-party."

"No, no, that's not it, there's no need for ceremony between you and me."

"Indeed there is, we ought never to take advantage of the people we love. In any case, I swear to you that that was all."

On the one hand it was still impossible for me to doubt her sworn word; on the other hand her explanations did not satisfy my reason. I continued to press her. "Anyhow, you might at least have the courage to finish what you were saying, you stopped short at *casser*."

"No, leave me alone!"

"But why?"

"Because it's dreadfully vulgar, I'd be ashamed to say such a thing in front of you. I don't know what I was thinking of. The words—I don't even know what they mean, I heard them used in the street one day by some very low people—just came into my head without rhyme or reason. It had nothing to do with me or anybody else, I was simply dreaming aloud."

I felt that I would extract nothing more from Albertine. She had lied to me when she had sworn a moment ago that what had cut her short had been a social fear of being over-presumptuous, since it had now become the shame of using a vulgar expression in front of me. Now this was certainly another lie. For when we were alone together there was no expression too perverse, no word too coarse for us to utter during our embraces. However, it was useless to insist at that moment. But my memory remained obsessed by the word *casser*. Albertine often used expressions such as *casser du bois* or *casser du sucre*, meaning "to run someone down," or would say *Ah! ce que je lui en ai cassé!*, meaning "I fairly gave it to him!" But she would say this quite freely in my presence, and if it was this that she had meant to say, why had she suddenly stopped short, why had she blushed so deeply, placed her hands over her mouth, tried to refashion her sentence,

and, when she saw that I had heard the word *casser*, offered a false explanation? Meanwhile, abandoning the pursuit of an interrogation from which I would get no response, the best thing to do was to appear to have lost interest in the matter, and, retracing my thoughts to Albertine's reproaches to me for having gone to the Mistress's, I said to her, somewhat clumsily, making indeed a sort of stupid excuse for my conduct: "Actually I'd been meaning to ask you to come to the Verdurins' party this evening," a remark that was doubly maladroit, for if I meant it, since I saw her all the time, why wouldn't I have suggested it? Furious at my lie and emboldened by my timidity: "You could have gone on asking me for a thousand years," she said, "and I'd never have consented. Those people have always been against me, they've done everything they could to mortify me. There was nothing I didn't do for Mme Verdurin at Balbec, and look at the thanks I get. If she summoned me to her deathbed, I wouldn't go. There are some things it's impossible to forgive. As for you, it's the first time you've behaved badly to me. When Françoise told me you'd gone out (and she enjoyed telling me all right), I'd sooner have had my skull split down the middle. I tried not to show any sign, but never in my life have I felt so grossly insulted."

But while she was speaking there continued within me, in that curiously alive and creative sleep of the unconscious (a sleep in which the things that have barely touched us succeed in carving an impression, in which our sleeping hands take hold of the key that turns the lock, the key for which we have sought in vain), the quest for what it was that she had meant by that interrupted sentence, the missing end of which I was so anxious to know. And all of a sudden an appalling word, of which I had never dreamed, burst upon me: *le pot*.[22] I cannot say that it came to me in a single flash, as when, in a long passive submission to an incomplete recollection, while one tries gently and cautiously to unfold it, one remains ravelled in it, glued to it. No, in contrast to my habitual method of recall, there were, I think, two parallel lines of search: the first took into account not merely Albertine's words, but her look of exasperation when I had offered her a sum of money with which to give a grand dinner, a look which seemed to say: "Thank you, the idea of spending money upon things that bore me, when without money I could do things that I enjoy doing!" And it was perhaps the memory of the look she had given me that made me alter my method in order to discover the end of her unfinished sentence. Until then I had been hypnotised by the last word, *casser*. What was it she meant by *break*? *Casser du bois*? No. *Du sucre*? No. Break, break, break. And all at once her look, and her shrug, when I had suggested that she should give a dinner-party sent me back to the words that had preceded. And immediately I saw that she had not simply said *casser* but *me faire casser*. Horror! It was this that she would have preferred. Twofold horror! For even the vilest of prostitutes, who consents to such a thing, or even desires it, does not use that hideous expression to the man who indulges in it. She would feel it too degrading. To a woman alone, if she loves women, she might say it, to excuse herself for giving herself presently to a man. Albertine had not been lying when she told me that she was half dreaming. Her mind elsewhere, forget-

ting that she was with me, impulsively she had shrugged her shoulders and begun to speak as she would have spoken to one of those women, perhaps to one of my budding girls. And abruptly recalled to reality, crimson with shame, pushing back into her mouth what she was about to say, desperately ashamed, she had refused to utter another word. I had not a moment to lose if I was not to let her see the despair I was in. But already, after my first impulse of rage, the tears were coming to my eyes. As at Balbec, on the night that followed her revelation of her friendship with the Vinteuil pair, I must immediately invent a plausible reason for my grief, and one that was at the same time capable of having so profound an effect on Albertine as to give me a few days' respite before coming to a decision. And so, just as she was telling me that she had never felt so affronted as when she had heard that I had gone out alone, that she would sooner have died than be told this by Françoise, and just as, irritated by her absurd susceptibility, I was on the point of telling her that what I had done was trivial, that there was nothing wounding to her in my having gone out, my unconscious parallel search for what she had meant to say had come to fruition, and the despair into which my discovery plunged me could not be completely hidden, so that instead of defending, I accused myself. "My little Albertine," I said to her in a gentle voice which was drowned in my first tears, "I could tell you that you're mistaken, that what I did this evening was nothing, but I should be lying; it's you who are right, you have realised the truth, my poor sweet, which is that six months ago, three months ago, when I was still so fond of you, I should never have done such a

thing. It's a mere nothing, and yet it's enormous, because of the immense change in my heart of which it is the sign. And since you have detected this change which I hoped to conceal from you, I feel impelled to say this to you: My little Albertine" (I went on in a tone of profound gentleness and sorrow), "don't you see that the life you're leading here is boring for you. It is better that we should part, and as the best partings are those that are effected most swiftly, I ask you, to cut short the great sorrow that I am bound to feel, to say good-bye to me tonight and to leave in the morning without my seeing you again, while I'm asleep."

She appeared stunned, incredulous and desolate: "Tomorrow? You really mean it?"

And in spite of the anguish that I felt in speaking of our parting as though it were already in the past—partly perhaps because of that very anguish—I began to give Albertine the most precise instructions as to certain things which she would have to do after she left the house. And passing from one request to another, I soon found myself entering into the minutest details.

"Be so kind," I said with infinite sadness, "as to send me back that book of Bergotte's which is at your aunt's. There's no hurry about it, in three days, in a week, whenever you like, but remember that I don't want to have to write and ask you for it: that would be too painful. We have been happy together, but now we feel that we should be unhappy."

"Don't say that we feel that we'd be unhappy," Albertine interrupted me, "don't say 'we,' it's only you who feel that."

"Yes, very well, you or I, as you like, for one reason or another. But it's absurdly late, you must go to bed—we've decided to part tonight."

"Excuse me, *you've* decided, and I obey you because I don't want to upset you."

"Very well, it's I who have decided, but that doesn't make it any less painful for me. I don't say that it will be painful for long, you know that I'm not capable of remembering things for long, but for the first few days I shall be so miserable without you. And so I feel that it's no use stirring up the memory with letters, we must end everything at once."

"Yes, you're right," she said to me with a crushed air, which was enhanced by the signs of fatigue on her features due to the lateness of the hour, "rather than have one finger chopped off and then another, I prefer to lay my head on the block at once."

"Heavens, I'm appalled when I think how late I'm keeping you out of bed, it's madness. However, it's the last night! You'll have plenty of time to sleep for the rest of your life."

And thus while telling her that it was time to say good-night I sought to postpone the moment when she would have said it: "Would you like me, in order to take your mind off things during the first few days, to ask Bloch to send his cousin Esther to the place where you'll be staying? He'll do that for me."

"I don't know why you say that" (I had said it in an attempt to wrest a confession from Albertine), "there's only one person I care about, and that's you," Albertine said to me, and her words were infinitely sweet to me. But, the next moment, what a blow she dealt me! "I remember, of course, that I did give this Esther my photograph because she kept on asking me for it and I saw that it would give her pleasure, but as for having any great liking for her or wanting to see her again, never!" And yet Albertine was of so frivolous a nature that she went on: "If she wants to see me, it's all the same to me. She's very nice, but I don't care in the least either way."

Thus, when I had spoken to her of the photograph of Esther which Bloch had sent me (and which I had not even received when I mentioned it to her) Albertine had gathered that Bloch had shown me a photograph of herself which she had given to Esther. In my worst suppositions, I had never imagined that any such intimacy could have existed between Albertine and Esther. Albertine had been at a loss for words when I mentioned the photograph. And now, wrongly, supposing me to be in the know, she thought it advisable to confess. I was shattered.

"And, Albertine, let me ask you to do me one more favour: never attempt to see me again. If at any time, as may happen in a year, in two years, in three years, we should find ourselves in the same town, avoid me." And seeing that she did not answer my request in the affirmative, I went on: "My Albertine, don't do it, don't ever see me again in this life. It would hurt me too much. For I was really fond of you, you know. Of course, when I told you the other day that I wanted to see the friend I mentioned to you at Balbec again, you thought it was all settled. Not at all, I assure you, it was quite immaterial to me. You're convinced that I had long made up my mind to leave you, that my affection was all make-believe."

"Not at all, you're crazy, I never thought so," she said sadly.

"You're right, you must never think so, I did genuinely feel for you, not love perhaps, but a great, a very great affection, more than you can imagine."

"Of course I can imagine. And do you suppose that I don't love you!"

"It hurts me terribly to have to leave you."

"It hurts me a thousand times more," replied Albertine.

Already for some little time I had felt that I could no longer hold back the tears that came welling up in my eyes. And these tears did not spring from at all the same sort of misery which I had felt long ago when I said to Gilberte: "It is better that we should not see one another again; life is dividing us." No doubt when I wrote this to Gilberte, I said to myself that when I was in love not with her but with another, the excess of my love would diminish that which I might perhaps have been able to inspire, as though two people must inevitably have only a certain quantity of love at their disposal, of which the surplus taken by one is subtracted from the other, and that from her too, as from Gilberte, I should be doomed to part. But the situation was entirely different for several reasons, the first of which (and it had, in its turn, given rise to the others) was that the lack of will-power which my grandmother and my mother had observed in me with alarm, at Combray, and before which each of them, so great is the energy with which an invalid imposes his weakness upon others, had capitulated in turn, this lack of will-power had gone on increasing at an ever accelerated pace. When I felt that my presence bored Gilberte, I had still enough strength left to give her up; I had no longer the same strength when I had made a similar discovery with regard

to Albertine, and could think only of keeping her by force. With the result that, whereas I wrote to Gilberte saying that I would not see her again and really meant it, I said this to Albertine quite untruthfully and in the hope of bringing about a reconciliation. Thus we presented each to the other an appearance which was very different from the reality. And no doubt it is always so when two people are face to face, since each of them is ignorant of a part of what exists in the other (even what he knows, he can understand only in part) and both of them reveal what is least personal to them, either because they have themselves not properly untangled and regard as negligible what is most personal or because insignificant advantages which do not belong to them particularly seem more important and more flattering to themselves, and at the same time they pretend not to care about certain things they admire, in order not to be despised for not having them, and these are precisely the things that they appear to scorn above all else and even to abhor. But in love this misunderstanding is carried to its supreme pitch because, except perhaps in childhood, we try to see to it that the appearance we assume, instead of reflecting exactly what is in our thoughts, is what is best calculated to enable us to obtain what we desire, and this, in my case, since I had come in, was to be able to keep Albertine as docile as she had been in the past, and to ensure that she did not in her irritation ask me for greater freedom, which I wanted to grant her some day but which at this moment, when I was afraid of her hankerings after independence, would have made me too jealous. After a certain age, from self-esteem and from sagacity, it is to the things we most desire that we pretend to attach no importance. But in love,

mere sagacity—which in any case is probably not true wisdom—drives us all too quickly to this kind of duplicity. What I had dreamed of, as a child, as being the sweetest thing in love, what had seemed to me to be the very essence of love, was to pour out freely, to the one I loved, my tenderness, my gratitude for her kindness, my longing for an everlasting life together. But I had become only too well aware, from my own experience and from that of my friends, that the expression of such sentiments is far from being contagious. The case of an affected old woman like M. de Charlus who, as a result of seeing in his mind's eye only a handsome young man, thinks he himself has become a handsome young man, and betrays more and more effeminacy in his risible affectations of virility—such a case falls under a law which applies far more widely than to the Charluses alone, a law so generalised that not even love itself exhausts it entirely; we do not see our bodies, though others do, and we "follow" our thoughts, the object that is in front of us, invisible to others (made visible at times in a work of art, whence the frequent disillusionment of its admirers when they are admitted into the presence of the artist, whose inner beauty is so imperfectly reflected in his face). Once one has noticed this, one no longer "lets oneself go"; I had taken good care that afternoon not to tell Albertine how grateful I was to her that she had not remained at the Trocadéro. And tonight, having been afraid that she might leave me, I had feigned a desire to leave her, a pretence which moreover, as we shall see presently, had not been dictated solely by the experience I believed myself to have gained from my former loves and was seeking to turn to the profit of this one.

The fear that Albertine was perhaps going to say to me: "I want to be allowed to go out by myself at certain hours, I want to be able to stay away for twenty-four hours," or some such request for freedom which I did not attempt to define, but which alarmed me, this fear had crossed my mind for a moment during the Verdurin reception. But it had been dispelled, contradicted moreover by the memory of Albertine's constant assurances of how happy she was with me. The intention to leave me, if it existed in Albertine, manifested itself only in an obscure fashion, in certain mournful glances, certain gestures of impatience, remarks which meant nothing of the sort but which, if one analysed them (and there was not even any need for analysis, for one understands at once this language of passion, even the most uneducated understand these remarks which can be explained only by vanity, rancour, jealousy, unexpressed as it happens, but detectable at once by the interlocutor through an intuitive faculty which, like the "good sense" of which Descartes speaks, is "the most evenly distributed thing in the world"), could only be explained by the presence in her of a sentiment which she concealed and which might lead her to form plans for another life without me. Just as this intention did not express itself in her speech in a logical fashion, so the presentiment of this intention, which I had felt tonight, remained just as vague in me. I continued to live by the hypothesis which accepted as true everything that Albertine told me. But it may be that during this time a wholly contrary hypothesis, of which I refused to think, never left me; this is all the more probable since otherwise I should not have felt uncomfortable about telling Albertine that I had been to the Verdurins', and my lack of as-

tonishment at her anger would not have been comprehensible. So that what probably existed in me was an idea of Albertine entirely contrary to that which my reason formed of her, and also to that which her own words suggested, an Albertine who was none the less not wholly invented, since she was like an internal mirror of certain impulses that occurred in her, such as her ill-humour at my having gone to the Verdurins'. Besides, for a long time past, my constant anxieties, my fear of telling Albertine that I loved her, all this corresponded to another hypothesis which explained far more things and had also this to be said for it, that if one adopted the first hypothesis the second became more probable, for by allowing myself to give way to effusions of tenderness for Albertine, I obtained from her nothing but irritation (to which moreover she assigned a different cause).

I may say that what had seemed to me most serious and had struck me most forcibly as a symptom of the fact that she anticipated my accusation was that she had said to me: "I believe Mlle Vinteuil was to be there," to which I had replied in the cruellest possible way: "You didn't tell me you'd met her." As soon as I found Albertine less than nice, instead of telling her I was sad, I became nasty.

Analysing my feelings on the basis of this, on the basis of the unvarying system of ripostes expressing the opposite of what I felt, I can be quite certain that if, that night, I told her that I was going to leave her, it was because—even before I had realised it—I was afraid that she might desire some freedom (I should have been hard put to it to say what this freedom was that made me tremble, but anyhow a freedom which might have given her an opportunity of being unfaithful to me, or at least

which was such that I should no longer have been able to be certain that she was not) and because I wanted to show her, from pride and from cunning, that I was very far from fearing anything of the sort, as I had already shown at Balbec, when I was anxious that she should have a good opinion of me, and later on, when I was anxious that she should not have time to feel bored with me.

Finally, the objection that might be offered to this second, unformulated hypothesis, that everything that Albertine said to me indicated on the contrary that the life which she preferred was the life she led in my house, rest, quiet, reading, solitude, a loathing for Sapphic loves, and so forth, need not be considered seriously. For if on her part Albertine had wanted to gauge what I felt from what I said to her, she would have learned the exact opposite of the truth, since I never expressed a desire to part from her except when I was unable to do without her, and at Balbec I had twice confessed to her that I was in love with another woman, first Andrée, then a mysterious stranger, on the two occasions when jealousy had revived my love for her. My words, therefore, did not in the least reflect my feelings. If the reader has no more than a faint impression of these, that is because, as narrator, I expose my feelings to him at the same time as I repeat my words. But if I concealed the former and he were acquainted only with the latter, my actions, so little in keeping with them, would so often give him the impression of strange reversals that he would think me more or less mad. A procedure which would not, for that matter, be much more false than the one I adopted, for the images which prompted me to action, so opposed to those which were portrayed in my words, were at that moment extremely

obscure; I was but imperfectly aware of the nature which guided my actions; today, I have a clear conception of its subjective truth. As for its objective truth, that is to say whether the intuitions of that nature grasped more exactly than my reason Albertine's true intentions, whether I was right to trust to that nature or whether on the contrary it did not alter Albertine's intentions instead of making them plain—that I find difficult to say.

That vague fear which I had felt at the Verdurins' that Albertine might leave me had at first subsided. When I returned home, it had been with the feeling that I myself was a captive, not with that of finding a captive in the house. But the fear that had subsided had gripped me even more violently when, as soon as I informed Albertine that I had been to the Verdurins', I saw her face veiled with a look of enigmatic irritation which moreover was not making itself visible for the first time. I knew perfectly well that it was only the crystallisation in the flesh of reasoned grievances, of ideas clear to the person who forms but does not express them, a synthesis rendered visible but not therefore rational, which he who gathers its precious residue from the face of the beloved endeavours in his turn, so that he may understand what is occurring in her, to reduce by analysis to its intellectual elements. The approximate equation of that unknown quantity which Albertine's thoughts were to me had given me, more or less, the following: "I knew his suspicions, I was sure that he would attempt to verify them, and so that I might not hinder him, he has worked out his little plan in secret." But if this was the state of mind (which she had never expressed to me) in which Albertine was living, must she not regard with horror, no longer have

the strength to lead, might she not at any moment decide to terminate, a life in which, if she was, in desire at any rate, guilty, she must feel herself suspected, hunted, prevented from ever yielding to her desires, without thereby disarming my jealousy, and in which, if she was innocent in intention and fact, she had had every right, for some time past, to feel discouraged, seeing that, ever since Balbec, where she had shown so much perseverance in avoiding the risk of ever being alone with Andrée, until this very day when she had given up the idea of going to the Verdurins' and of staying at the Trocadéro, she had not succeeded in regaining my trust? All the more so because I could not say that her behaviour was not exemplary. If at Balbec, when anyone mentioned girls who behaved scandalously, she used often to copy their laughter, their wrigglings, their general manner, which was a torture to me because of what I supposed it must mean to her girlfriends, now that she knew my opinion on the subject she ceased, as soon as anyone made an allusion to things of that sort, to take part in the conversation, not only orally but with her facial expression. Whether it was in order not to contribute her share to the slanders that were being uttered about some woman or other, or for a quite different reason, the only thing that was noticeable then, upon those so mobile features, was that as soon as the topic was broached they had made their inattention evident, while preserving exactly the same expression as they had worn a moment earlier. And this immobility of even a light expression was as heavy as a silence. It would have been impossible to say whether she blamed, whether she approved, whether she knew or did not know about these things. Her features no longer bore any relation to any-

thing except one another. Her nose, her mouth, her eyes formed a perfect harmony, isolated from everything else; she looked like a pastel, and seemed to have no more heard what had just been said than if it had been uttered in front of a portrait by La Tour.

My servitude, which had again been brought home to me when, as I gave the driver Brichot's address, I had seen her lighted window, had ceased to weigh upon me shortly afterwards, when I saw that Albertine appeared so cruelly conscious of her own. And in order that it might seem to her less burdensome, that she might not decide to break her bonds of her own accord, I had felt that the most effective plan was to give her the impression that it would not be permanent and that I myself was looking forward to its termination. Seeing that my feint had proved successful, I might well have felt happy, in the first place because what I had so dreaded, Albertine's supposed wish to leave me, seemed to be ruled out, and secondly because, quite apart from the object that I had had in mind, the very success of my feint, by proving that I was something more to Albertine than a scorned lover, whose jealousy is flouted, all of his ruses detected in advance, restored to our love a sort of virginity, revived for it the days in which she could still, at Balbec, so readily believe that I was in love with another woman. Doubtless she would no longer have believed that, but she gave credence to my feigned determination to part from her now and for ever.

She appeared to suspect that the cause of it might lie at the Verdurins'. I told her that I had seen a dramatist (Bloch), who was a great friend of Léa's and to whom Léa had said some strange things (I hoped by telling her this

to make her think that I knew a great deal more than I cared to say about Bloch's cousins). But feeling a need to calm the agitation induced in me by my pretence of a rupture, I said to her: "Albertine, can you swear that you have never lied to me?"

She gazed fixedly into space before replying: "Yes . . . that's to say no. I was wrong to tell you that Andrée was greatly taken with Bloch. We never met him."

"Then why did you say so?"

"Because I was afraid that you believed other stories about her."

"That's all?"

She stared once again into space and then said: "I ought not to have kept from you a three weeks' trip I went on with Léa. But I knew you so slightly in those days!"

"It was before Balbec?"

"Before the second time, yes."

And that very morning, she had told me that she did not know Léa! I watched a tongue of flame seize and devour in an instant a novel which I had spent millions of minutes in writing. To what end? To what end? Of course I realised that Albertine had revealed these two facts to me because she thought that I had learned them indirectly from Léa; and that there was no reason why a hundred similar facts should not exist. I realised too that Albertine's words, when one interrogated her, never contained an atom of truth, that the truth was something she let slip only in spite of herself, as a result of a sudden mixing together in her mind of the facts which she had previously been determined to conceal with the belief that one had got wind of them.

"But two things are nothing," I said to Albertine, "let's have as many as four, so that you may leave me with some memories. What other revelations have you got for me?"

Once again she stared into space. To what belief in a future life was she adapting her falsehood, with what gods less accommodating than she had supposed was she seeking to make a deal? It cannot have been an easy matter, for her silence and the fixity of her gaze continued for some time.

"No, nothing else," she said at length. And, notwithstanding my persistence, she adhered, easily now, to "nothing else." And what a lie! For, from the moment she had acquired those tastes until the day when she had been shut up in my house, how many times, in how many places, on how many excursions must she have gratified them! The daughters of Gomorrah are at once rare enough and numerous enough for one not to pass unnoticed by another in any given crowd. Thenceforward, a rendezvous is an easy matter.

I remembered with horror an evening which at the time had struck me as merely absurd. One of my friends had invited me to dine at a restaurant with his mistress and another of his friends who had also brought his. The two women were not long in coming to an understanding, but were so impatient to enjoy one another that already at the soup stage their feet were searching for one another, often finding mine. Presently their legs were intertwined. My two friends noticed nothing; I was in agonies. One of the women, who could contain herself no longer, stooped under the table, saying that she had dropped something. Then one of them complained of a headache and asked to

go upstairs to the lavatory. The other remembered that it was time for her to go and meet a woman friend at the theatre. Finally I was left alone with my two friends, who suspected nothing. The lady with the headache reappeared, but begged to be allowed to go home by herself to wait for her lover at his house, so that she might take a febrifuge. The two women became great friends and used to go about together, one of them, dressed as a man, picking up little girls and taking them home to the other to be initiated. This other had a little boy with whom she would pretend to be displeased and would hand him over for correction to her friend, who went to it with a will. One may say that there was no place, however public, in which they did not do what is most secret.

"But Léa behaved perfectly properly with me throughout the trip," Albertine told me. "In fact she was a great deal more reserved than plenty of society women."

"Are there any society women who have shown a lack of reserve with you, Albertine?"

"Never."

"Then what do you mean?"

"Oh, well, she was less free in her speech."

"For instance?"

"She would never, like many of the women you meet, have used the expression 'rotten,' or say: 'I don't care a damn for anybody.' "

It seemed to me that a part of the novel which the flames had so far spared had finally crumbled into ashes.

My discouragement might have persisted. Albertine's words, when I thought of them, made it give way to a furious rage. This subsided into a sort of tenderness. I too, since I had come home and declared that I wished to

break with her, had been lying. And this desire to separate, which I simulated perseveringly, brought for me little by little something of the sadness I would have felt had I truly wanted to leave Albertine.

Besides, even when I thought in fits and starts, in twinges, as we say of other bodily pains, of that orgiastic life which Albertine had led before she met me, I wondered all the more at the docility of my captive and ceased to feel any resentment. Never, in the course of our life together, had I ceased to make it clear to Albertine that that life would in all probability be merely temporary, so that she might continue to find some charm in it. But tonight I had gone further, having feared that vague threats of separation were no longer sufficient, contradicted as they would doubtless be, in Albertine's mind, by her idea of a great and jealous love of her, which must have made me, she seemed to imply, go and investigate at the Verdurins'. That night I thought that, among the other reasons which might have made me suddenly decide to put on this comedy of rupture, without even realising what I was doing except as I went on, there was above all the fact that when, in one of those impulses to which my father was prone, I threatened another person's safety, since unlike him I did not have the courage to put a threat into practice, in order not to give the impression that it had been nothing but empty words, I would go to considerable lengths in pretending to carry out my threat and would recoil only when my adversary, genuinely convinced of my sincerity, had begun seriously to tremble.

Besides, we feel that in these lies there is indeed a grain of truth, that, if life does not bring about any changes in our loves, it is we ourselves who will seek to

bring about or to feign them, so strongly do we feel that all love, and everything else in life, evolves rapidly towards a farewell. We want to shed the tears that it will bring long before it comes. No doubt there was, on this occasion, a practical reason for the scene that I had enacted. I had suddenly wanted to keep Albertine because I felt that she was scattered about among other people with whom I could not prevent her from mixing. But even if she had renounced them all for ever for my sake, I might perhaps have been still more firmly resolved never to leave her, for separation is made painful by jealousy but impossible by gratitude. I felt that in any case I was fighting the decisive battle in which I must conquer or succumb. I would have offered Albertine in an hour all that I possessed, because I said to myself: "Everything depends upon this battle." But such battles are less like those of old, which lasted for a few hours, than like those of today which do not end the next day, or the day after, or the following week. We give all our strength, because we steadfastly believe that we shall never need it again. And more than a year goes by without producing a "decision."

Perhaps an unconscious reminiscence of lying scenes enacted by M. de Charlus, in whose company I had been when the fear of Albertine's leaving me had seized hold of me, had contributed thereto. But later on I heard my mother tell a story, of which I then knew nothing, which leads me to believe that I had found all the elements of this scene in myself, in one of those obscure reserves of heredity which certain emotions, acting in this as drugs such as alcohol or coffee act upon the residue of our stored-up strength, place at our disposal. When my aunt Léonie learned from Eulalie that Françoise, convinced

that her mistress would never again leave the house, had secretly planned an outing of which my aunt was to know nothing, she pretended, the day before, to have suddenly decided to go for a drive next day. The incredulous Françoise was ordered not only to prepare my aunt's clothes beforehand, and to air those that had been put away for too long, but even to order the carriage and arrange all the details of the excursion down to the last quarter of an hour. It was only when Françoise, convinced or at any rate shaken, had been forced to confess to my aunt the plan that she herself had made, that my aunt publicly abandoned her own, so as not, she said, to interfere with Françoise's arrangements. Similarly, in order that Albertine should not think that I was exaggerating and in order to make her proceed as far as possible in the idea that we were to part, myself drawing the obvious inferences from the proposal I had advanced, I had begun to anticipate the time which was to begin next day and was to last for ever, the time when we should be separated, addressing to Albertine the same requests as if we were not presently to be reconciled. Like a general who considers that if a feint is to succeed in deceiving the enemy it must be pushed to the limit, I had used up almost as much of my store of sensibility as if it had been genuine. This fictitious parting scene ended by causing me almost as much grief as if it had been real, possibly because one of the actors, Albertine, by believing it to be real, had heightened the illusion for the other. We lived a day-to-day life which, however tedious, was still endurable, held down to earth by the ballast of habit and by that certainty that the next day, even if it should prove painful, would contain the presence of the other. And

here was I foolishly destroying all that heavy life. I was destroying it, it is true, only in a fictitious fashion, but this was enough to make me wretched; perhaps because the sad words which we utter, even mendaciously, carry in themselves their sorrow and inject it deeply into us; perhaps because we realise that, by feigning farewells, we anticipate an hour which must inevitably come sooner or later; then we cannot be certain that we have not triggered off the mechanism which will make it strike. In every bluff there is an element of uncertainty, however small, as to what the person whom we are deceiving is going to do. What if this make-believe parting should lead to a real parting! One cannot consider the possibility, however unlikely it may seem, without a pang of anguish. One is doubly anxious, because the parting would then occur at the moment when it would be most intolerable, when one has been made to suffer by the woman who would be leaving us before having healed, or at least soothed, one's pain. Finally, one no longer has the solid ground of habit upon which to rest, even in one's sorrow. One has deliberately deprived oneself of it, one has given the present day an exceptional importance, detached it from the days before and after it; it floats without roots like a day of departure; one's imagination, ceasing to be paralysed by habit, has awakened, one has suddenly added to one's everyday love sentimental dreams which enormously enhance it, making indispensable to one a presence upon which in fact one is no longer certain that one can rely. No doubt it is precisely in order to assure oneself of that presence for the future that one has indulged in the make-believe of being able to dispense with it. But one has oneself been taken in by the game, one has begun to suffer

anew because one has created something new and unfamiliar which thus resembles those cures that are destined in time to heal the malady from which one is suffering, but the first effects of which are to aggravate it.

I had tears in my eyes, like those people who, alone in their rooms, imagining, in the wayward course of their meditations, the death of someone they love, conjure up so precise a picture of the grief that they would feel that they end by feeling it. So, multiplying my injunctions as to how Albertine should behave towards me after we had parted, I seemed to feel almost as much distress as though we had not been on the verge of a reconciliation. Besides, was I so certain that I could bring about this reconciliation, bring Albertine back to the idea of a shared life, and, if I succeeded for the time being, that, in her, the state of mind which this scene had dispelled would not revive? I felt that I was in control of the future but I did not quite believe it because I realised that this feeling was due merely to the fact that the future did not yet exist, and that thus I was not crushed by its inevitability. And while I lied, I was perhaps putting into my words more truth than I supposed. I had just had an example of this, when I told Albertine that I would quickly forget her; this was what had indeed happened to me in the case of Gilberte, whom I now refrained from going to see in order to avoid, not suffering, but an irksome duty. And certainly I had suffered when I wrote to Gilberte to tell her that I would not see her any more. Yet I saw Gilberte only from time to time. Whereas the whole of Albertine's time belonged to me. And in love, it is easier to relinquish a feeling than to give up a habit. But all these painful words about our parting, if the strength to utter them had been given

me because I knew them to be untrue, were on the other hand sincere on Albertine's lips when I heard her exclaim: "Ah! I promise I shall never see you again. Anything sooner than see you cry like that, my darling. I don't want to cause you pain. Since it must be, we'll never meet again." They were sincere, as they could not have been coming from me, because, since Albertine felt nothing stronger for me than friendship, on the one hand the renunciation that they promised cost her less, and on the other hand because my tears, which would have been so small a matter in a great love, seemed to her almost extraordinary and distressed her, transposed into the domain of that state of friendship in which she dwelt, a friendship greater than mine for her, to judge by what she had just said—what she had just said, because when two people part it is the one who is not in love who makes the tender speeches, since love does not express itself directly—what she had just said and what was perhaps not altogether untrue, for the countless kindnesses of love may end by arousing, in the person who inspires without feeling it, an affection and a gratitude less selfish than the sentiment that provoked them, which, perhaps, after years of separation, when nothing of that sentiment remains in the former lover, will still persist in the beloved.

There was only one moment when I felt a kind of hatred for her, which merely sharpened my need to hold on to her. Since, being exclusively jealous of Mlle Vinteuil that night, I thought of the Trocadéro with the greatest indifference (not only because I had sent her there to avoid the Verdurins, but even when I thought of Léa's presence there, on account of which I had brought her back so that she should not meet her), I mentioned Léa's

name without thinking, and Albertine, at once on her guard, supposing that I had perhaps heard something more, took the initiative and exclaimed volubly, but without looking me straight in the face: "I know her very well. Some of my friends and I went to see her act last year, and after the performance we went behind to her dressing-room. She changed in front of us. It was most interesting." Then my mind was compelled to relinquish Mlle Vinteuil and, in a despairing effort, in that fruitless hunt through the abysses of possible reconstructions, attached itself to the actress, to that evening when Albertine had gone to see her in her dressing-room. On the one hand, after all the oaths she had sworn to me, and in so truthful a tone, after her complete sacrifice of her freedom, how could I possibly believe that there was anything wrong in it? And yet, on the other hand, were not my suspicions antennae pointing in the direction of the truth, since if she had given up the Verdurins for my sake in order to go to the Trocadéro, nevertheless at the Verdurins' Mlle Vinteuil had been expected, and at the Trocadéro, which she had moreover given up in order to go for a drive with me, there had been this Léa, who seemed to me to be disturbing me without cause and yet whom, in a remark which I had not extracted from her, she admitted having known on a larger scale than my fears had ever envisaged, in circumstances that were indeed dubious: for what could have induced her to go behind like that to her dressing-room? If I ceased to suffer on account of Mlle Vinteuil when I suffered because of Léa, those two tormentors of my day, it was either because of the inability of my mind to picture too many scenes at one time, or because of the intrusion of my nervous emotions of which my jealousy

was but the echo. I could deduce from them only that she had no more belonged to Léa than to Mlle Vinteuil and that I believed in the Léa hypothesis only because she was now uppermost in my mind. But the fact that my jealousies subsided—to revive from time to time one after another—did not mean, either, that they did not correspond each to some truth of which I had had a foreboding, that of these various women I must not say to myself none, but all. I say a foreboding, for I could not project myself to all the points of time and space which I should have had to occupy; and besides, what instinct would have given me the sequence and the co-ordinates to enable me to surprise Albertine at such and such a time with Léa, or with the Balbec girls, or with that friend of Mme Bontemps whom she had brushed against, or with the girl on the tennis-court who had nudged her with her elbow, or with Mlle Vinteuil?

"My little Albertine," I replied, "it is very good of you to make me this promise. Anyhow, for the first few years at least, I shall avoid the places where I might meet you. You don't know whether you'll be going to Balbec this summer? Because in that case I should arrange not to go there myself." Now, if I went on in this way, anticipating the future in my lying inventions, it was less with the object of frightening Albertine than that of distressing myself. As a man who at first has had no serious reason for losing his temper becomes completely intoxicated by the sound of his own voice and lets himself be carried away by a fury engendered not by his grievance but by his anger itself as it steadily grows, so I was sliding faster and faster down the slope of my wretchedness, towards an ever more profound despair, with the inertia of a man

who feels the cold grip him, makes no effort to struggle against it, and even finds a sort of pleasure in shivering. And if, presently, I had the strength at last to pull myself together, to react, to go into reverse, as I had every intention of doing, it was not so much for the pain that Albertine had caused me by greeting me with such hostility on my return, as for the pain I had felt in imagining, in order to pretend to be settling them, the formalities of an imaginary separation, in foreseeing its consequences, that Albertine's kiss, when the time came for her to bid me good-night, would have to console me now. In any case, it was important that this leave-taking should not come of its own accord from her, for that would have made more difficult the reversal whereby I would propose to her to abandon the idea of our parting. I therefore continued to remind her that the time to say good-night had long since come and gone, and this, by leaving the initiative to me, enabled me to put it off for a moment longer. And thus I interspersed the questions which I continued to put to Albertine with allusions to our exhaustion and the lateness of the hour.

"I don't know where I shall be going," she replied to the last of these questions with a preoccupied air. "Perhaps I shall go to Touraine, to my aunt's." And this first plan that she suggested froze me as though it were beginning actually to put our final separation into effect. She looked round the room, at the pianola, the blue satin armchairs. "I still can't get used to the idea that I shan't see all this again, tomorrow, or the next day, or ever. Poor little room. It seems to me quite impossible; I can't get it into my head."

"It had to be; you were unhappy here."

"No, I wasn't at all unhappy, it's now that I shall be unhappy."

"No, I assure you, it's better for you."

"For you, perhaps!"

I began to stare into space as though, tormented by a great uncertainty, I was struggling with an idea that had just occurred to me. Then, all of a sudden: "Listen, Albertine, you say that you're happier here, that you're now going to be unhappy."

"Why, of course."

"That appals me. Would you like us to try to carry on for a few weeks? Who knows, week by week, we may perhaps go on for a long time. You know that there are temporary arrangements which end by becoming permanent."

"Oh, it would be sweet of you!"

"Only in that case it's ridiculous of us to have made ourselves wretched like this over nothing for hours on end. It's like making all the preparations for a long journey and then staying at home. I'm absolutely dead beat."

I sat her on my knee, took Bergotte's manuscript which she so longed to have, and wrote on the cover: "To my little Albertine, in memory of a new lease of life."

"Now," I said to her, "go and sleep until tomorrow, my darling, for you must be worn out."

"Most of all I'm very happy."

"Do you love me a bit?"

"A hundred times more than ever."

I should have been wrong to be pleased with this little piece of play-acting. Even if it had stopped short of the sort of full-scale production I had given it, even if we had done no more than simply discuss a separation, it

would have been serious enough. In conversations of this sort, we imagine that we are speaking not just insincerely, which is true, but freely. Whereas they are generally the first faint murmur of an unsuspected storm, whispered to us without our knowing it. In reality, what we express at such times is the opposite of our desire (which is to live for ever with the one we love), but also the impossibility of living together which is the cause of our daily suffering, a suffering preferred by us to that of a separation, which will, however, end by separating us in spite of ourselves. But not, as a rule, at once. More often than not it happens—this was not, as we shall see, my case with Albertine—that, some time after the words in which we did not believe, we put into action a vague attempt at a deliberate separation, not painful, temporary. We ask the woman, so that afterwards she may be happier in our company, so that we at the same time may momentarily escape from continual bouts of gloom and exhaustion, to go away without us, or to let us go away without her, for a few days—the first that we have spent away from her for a long time past, and something that we should have thought inconceivable. Very soon she returns to take her place by our fireside. Only this separation, short but effectuated, is not so arbitrarily decided upon, not so certainly the only one that we have in mind. The same bouts of gloom begin again, the same difficulty in living together makes itself felt, only a parting is no longer so difficult as before; we have begun by talking about it, and have then put it into practice amicably. But these are only premonitory symptoms which we have failed to recognise. Presently, the temporary and benign separation will be

succeeded by the terrible and final separation for which, without knowing it, we have paved the way.

"Come to my room in five minutes and let me see something of you, my darling one. It would so nice if you would. But afterwards I shall fall asleep at once, for I'm almost dead."

It was indeed a dead woman that I saw when, presently, I entered her room. She had fallen asleep as soon as she lay down; her sheets, wrapped round her body like a shroud, had assumed, with their elegant folds, the rigidity of stone. It was as though, reminiscent of certain mediaeval Last Judgments, the head alone was emerging from the tomb, awaiting in its sleep the Archangel's trumpet. This head had been surprised by sleep almost upside down, the hair dishevelled. Seeing that expressionless body lying there, I asked myself what logarithmic table it constituted, that all the actions in which it might have been involved, from the nudge of an elbow to the brushing of a skirt, should be capable of causing me, stretched out to the infinity of all the points that it had occupied in space and time, and from time to time sharply reawakened in my memory, so intense an anguish, even though I knew that it was determined by impulses and desires of hers which in another person, in herself five years earlier or five years later, would have left me quite indifferent. It was all a lie, but a lie for which I had not the courage to seek any solution other than my own death. And so I remained, in the fur-lined coat which I had not taken off since my return from the Verdurins', beside that twisted body, that allegorical figure. Allegorising what? My death? My love? Soon I began to

hear her regular breathing. I went and sat down on the edge of her bed to take that soothing cure of breeze and contemplation. Then I withdrew very quietly so as not to wake her.

It was so late that, in the morning, I warned Françoise to tread very softly when she had to pass by the door of Albertine's room. And so Françoise, convinced that we had spent the night in what she used to call orgies, sarcastically warned the other servants not to "wake the Princess." And this was one of the things that I dreaded, that Françoise might one day be unable to contain herself any longer, might treat Albertine with insolence, and that this might introduce complications into our life. Françoise was now no longer, as at the time when it distressed her to see Eulalie treated generously by my aunt, of an age to endure her jealousy with fortitude. It distorted, paralysed our old servant's face to such an extent that at times I wondered, after some outburst of rage, whether she had not had a slight stroke. Having thus asked that Albertine's sleep should be respected, I was unable to sleep myself. I tried to understand Albertine's true state of mind. Was it a real peril that I had averted by that wretched farce which I had played, and notwithstanding her assurance that she was so happy living with me, had she really felt at certain moments a longing for freedom, or on the contrary was I to believe what she said? Which of these two hypotheses was the truth? If it often happened to me, especially later on, to extend an incident in my past life to the dimensions of history when I wished to understand some political event, conversely, that morning, in trying to understand the significance of our overnight scene, I could not help identifying it, in

spite of all the differences, with a diplomatic incident that had just occurred. I had perhaps the right to reason thus. For it was highly probable that the example of M. de Charlus had guided me unwittingly in the sort of lying scene which I had so often seen him enact with such authority; and what else was this on his part than an unconscious importation into the domain of his private life of the innate tendency of his German blood, guilefully provocative and arrogantly bellicose at need?

Various persons, among them the Prince of Monaco, having suggested the idea to the French Government that, if it did not dispense with M. Delcassé, a menacing Germany would definitely declare war, the Minister for Foreign Affairs had been asked to resign. Thus the French Government had admitted the hypothesis of an intention to make war upon us if we did not yield. But others thought that it was all a mere "bluff" and that if France had stood firm Germany would not have drawn the sword. No doubt in this case the scenario was not merely different but almost the reverse, since the threat of a rupture had never been put forward by Albertine; but a series of impressions had led me to believe that she was thinking of it, as France had been led to believe it of Germany. On the other hand, if Germany desired peace, to have provoked in the French Government the idea that she was anxious for war was a questionable and dangerous trick. True, my conduct had been adroit enough, if it was the thought that I would never make up my mind to break with her that provoked in Albertine sudden longings for independence. And was it not difficult to believe that she did not have such longings, to shut one's eyes to a whole secret existence, directed towards the satisfaction of her

vice, simply on the strength of the anger with which, on learning that I had gone to see the Verdurins, she had exclaimed: "I thought as much," and then gone on to reveal everything by saying: "Wasn't Mlle Vinteuil to be there?" All this was corroborated by Albertine's meeting with Mme Verdurin of which Andrée had informed me. And yet, perhaps, I told myself, when I tried to go against my own instinct, these sudden longings for independence were caused—supposing them to exist—or would eventually be caused by the opposite theory, to wit, that I had never had any intention of marrying her, that it was when I made, as though involuntarily, an allusion to our approaching separation that I was telling the truth, that I would leave her sooner or later whatever happened—a belief which the scene I had fabricated that night could then only have reinforced and which might end by engendering in her the resolution: "If it's bound to happen sooner or later, we might as well get it over with at once." Preparations for war, which are recommended by the most misleading of adages as the best way of ensuring peace, on the contrary create first of all the belief in each of the adversaries that the other desires a rupture, a belief which brings the rupture about, and then, when it has occurred, the further belief in each of the two that it is the other that has sought it. Even if the threat was not sincere, its success encourages a repetition. But the exact point up to which a bluff may succeed is difficult to determine; if one party goes too far, the other, which has yielded hitherto, advances in its turn; the first party, no longer capable of changing its methods, accustomed to the idea that to seem not to fear a rupture is the best way of avoiding one (which is what I had done that night with

Albertine), and moreover driven by pride to prefer death to surrender, perseveres in its threat until the moment when neither can draw back. The bluff may also be blended with sincerity, may alternate with it, and what was yesterday a game may become a reality tomorrow. Finally it may also happen that one of the adversaries is really determined upon war—that Albertine, for instance, had the intention of sooner or later not continuing this life any longer, or on the contrary that the idea had never even entered her head and that my imagination had invented the whole thing from start to finish.

Such were the different hypotheses which I considered while she lay asleep that morning. And yet as to the last I can say that never, in the period that followed, did I threaten to leave Albertine unless in response to a hankering for a baleful freedom on her part, a hankering which she did not express to me, but which seemed to me to be implied by certain mysterious dissatisfactions, certain words, certain gestures, for which it could be the only possible explanation and for which she refused to give me any other. Even then, quite often, I noted them without making any allusion to a possible separation, hoping that they were the result of a bad mood which would end that same day. But sometimes that mood would continue without remission for weeks on end, during which Albertine seemed anxious to provoke a conflict, as though she knew of pleasures which were available at that moment in some more or less remote place and which would continue to influence her until they came to an end, like those atmospheric changes which, right by our own fireside, affect our nerves even when they are occurring as far away as the Balearic islands.

That morning, while Albertine lay asleep and I was trying to guess what was concealed in her, I received a letter from my mother in which she expressed her anxiety at having heard nothing of what I had decided in these words from Mme de Sévigné: "As for me, I am convinced that he will not marry; but then, why trouble this girl whom he will never marry? Why risk making her refuse suitors whom she will henceforth regard only with scorn? Why disturb the mind of a person whom it would be so easy to avoid?" This letter from my mother brought me back to earth. "Why do I go on seeking after a mysterious soul, interpreting a face, and feeling myself surrounded by presentiments which I dare not explore?" I asked myself. "I've been dreaming, the matter is quite simple. I am an indecisive young man, and it is a case of one of those marriages as to which it takes time to find out whether they will happen or not. There is nothing in this peculiar to Albertine." This thought brought me immense but short-lived relief. Very soon I said to myself: "One can of course reduce everything, if one regards it in its social aspect, to the most commonplace item of newspaper gossip. From outside, it is perhaps thus that I myself would look at it. But I know very well that what is true, what at least is also true, is everything that I have thought, what I have read in Albertine's eyes, the fears that torment me, the problem that I continually put to myself with regard to Albertine. The story of the hesitant suitor and the broken engagement may correspond to this, as the report of a theatrical performance made by an intelligent reporter may give us the subject of one of Ibsen's plays. But there is something beyond those facts that are reported. It is

true that this other thing exists perhaps, were we capable of seeing it, in all hesitant suitors and in all engagements that drag on, because there is perhaps an element of mystery in everyday life." It was possible for me to neglect it in the lives of other people, but Albertine's life and my own I was living from within.

Albertine did not say to me after this midnight scene, any more than she had said before it: "I know you don't trust me, and I'm going to try to dispel your suspicions." But this idea, which she never expressed in words, might have served as an explanation of even her most trivial actions. Not only did she take care never to be alone for a moment, so that I could not help but know what she had been doing if I did not believe her own statements, but even when she had to telephone to Andrée, or to the garage, or to the livery stable or elsewhere, she pretended that it was too boring to stand about by herself waiting to telephone, what with the time the girls took to give you your number, and was careful that I should be with her at such times, or, failing me, Françoise, as though she were afraid that I might imagine reprehensible telephone conversations in which she would make mysterious assignations.

Alas, all this did not set my mind at rest. Aimé had sent me back Esther's photograph, saying that she was not the person. So there were yet others? Who? I sent this photograph back to Bloch. The one I should have liked to see was the one Albertine had given to Esther. How was she dressed in it? Perhaps in a low-cut dress. Who knew whether they had not been photographed together? But I dared not mention it to Albertine (for it would then have

appeared that I had not seen the photograph), or to Bloch, since I did not wish him to think that I was interested in Albertine.

And this life, which anyone who knew of my suspicions and her bondage would have seen to be agonising both to myself and to Albertine, was regarded from without, by Françoise, as a life of unmerited pleasures of which full advantage was cunningly taken by that "wheedler" and (as Françoise said, using the feminine form far more often than the masculine, for she was more envious of women) "charlatante." Indeed, as Françoise, by contact with myself, had enriched her vocabulary with new expressions, but adapted them to her own style, she said of Albertine that she had never known a person of such "perfidity," who was so skilful at "drawing my money" by play-acting (which Françoise, who was as prone to mistake the particular for the general as the general for the particular and who had but a very vague idea of the various forms of dramatic art, called "acting a pantomime"). Perhaps I was myself to some extent responsible for this misconception as to the true nature of the life led by Albertine and myself, owing to the vague confirmations of it which, when I was talking to Françoise, I cunningly let fall, from a desire either to tease her or to appear, if not loved, at any rate happy. And yet it did not take her long to detect my jealousy and the watch I kept over Albertine (which I would have given anything for Françoise not to be aware of), guided, like a thought-reader who finds a hidden object while blindfolded, by that intuition which she possessed for anything that might be painful to me, which would not allow itself to be turned aside by any lies that I might tell in the hope of

putting her off the scent, and also by that clairvoyant hatred which drove her—even more than it drove her to believe her enemies more prosperous, more cunning play-actresses than they really were—to uncover what might prove their undoing and precipitate their downfall. Françoise certainly never made any scenes with Albertine. But I knew her skill in the art of insinuation, the way she knew how to make the most of the implications of a particular situation, and I cannot believe that she resisted the temptation to let Albertine know, day after day, what a humiliating role she was playing in the household, to madden her by a slyly exaggerated portrayal of the confinement to which she was subjected. On one occasion I found Françoise, armed with a huge pair of spectacles, rummaging through my papers and replacing among them a sheet on which I had jotted down a story about Swann and his inability to do without Odette. Had she maliciously left it lying in Albertine's room? Besides, above all Françoise's innuendoes, which had merely been the muttering and perfidious accompaniment of it in the bass, it is probable that there must have risen, louder, clearer, more insistent, the accusing and calumnious voice of the Verdurins, irritated to see that Albertine was involuntarily keeping me and that I was voluntarily keeping her away from the little clan.

As for the money that I spent on Albertine, it was almost impossible for me to conceal it from Françoise, since I was unable to conceal any of my expenditure from her. Françoise had few faults, but those faults had created in her, for their own purposes, positive talents which she often lacked apart from the exercise of those faults. The principal one was her curiosity as to all money spent by

us upon people other than herself. If I had a bill to pay or a tip to give, it was useless my going into a corner, she would find a plate to be put in the right place, a napkin to be picked up, which would give her an excuse for approaching. And however short a time I allowed her before dismissing her with fury, this woman who had almost lost her sight, who could scarcely count, guided by the same expert sense whereby a tailor, on catching sight of you, instinctively calculates the price of the stuff of which your coat is made, and indeed cannot resist fingering it, or a painter is immediately responsive to a colour effect, Françoise furtively glimpsed and instantaneously calculated the amount that I was giving. If, in order that she should not tell Albertine that I was corrupting her chauffeur, I tried to forestall her and, apologising for the tip, said: "I wanted to be generous to the chauffeur, so I gave him ten francs," Françoise, for whom the merciless glance of an old and almost blind eagle had sufficed, would reply: "No no, Monsieur gave him a tip of 43 francs. He told Monsieur that the charge was 45 francs, Monsieur gave him 100 francs, and he handed back only 12 francs." She had had time to see and to reckon the amount of the gratuity which I myself did not know.

I wondered whether Albertine, feeling herself watched, would not herself put into effect the separation with which I had threatened her, for life in its changing course makes realities of our fables. Whenever I heard a door open, I gave a start, as my grandmother used to start in her last moments whenever I rang the bell. I did not believe that she would have left the house without telling me, but my unconscious thought so, as my grandmother's unconscious quivered at the sound of the bell when she

was no longer conscious. One morning, indeed, I had a sudden anxious fear that she had not only left the house but gone for good: I had just heard the sound of a door which seemed to me to be that of her room. I tiptoed towards the room, opened the door, and stood on the threshold. In the dim light the bedclothes bulged in a semicircle. It had to be Albertine, lying in a curve, sleeping with her head and her feet nearest the wall. The hair on that head, abundant and dark, which alone showed above the bedclothes, made me realise that it was she, that she had not opened her door, had not stirred, and I sensed this motionless and living semicircle, in which a whole human life was contained and which was the only thing to which I attached any value; I sensed that it was there, in my despotic possession.

If Albertine's object was to restore my peace of mind, she was partly successful; my reason moreover asked nothing better than to prove to me that I had been mistaken as to her evil plans, as I had perhaps been mistaken as to her vicious instincts. No doubt I took into account, in assessing the value of the arguments with which my reason furnished me, my desire to find them sound. But in order to be really impartial and to have a chance of perceiving the truth, short of acknowledging that it can never be known save by presentiment, by a telepathic emanation, ought I not to tell myself that if my reason, in seeking to bring about my cure, let itself be guided by my desire, on the other hand, as regards Mlle Vinteuil, Albertine's vices, her intention to lead a different life, her plan of separation, which were the corollaries of her vices, my instinct, in trying to make me ill, might have allowed itself to be led astray by my jealousy? Besides, her seclu-

sion, which Albertine herself contrived so ingeniously to render absolute, in eradicating my suffering gradually eradicated my suspicion and I could begin again, when evening revived my anxieties, to find in Albertine's presence the consolation of earlier days. Seated beside my bed, she would talk to me about one of those dresses or one of those objects which I was constantly giving her in order to make her life more agreeable and her prison more beautiful.

If I had questioned M. de Charlus about old French silver, this was because, when we had been planning to have a yacht, we had asked Elstir's advice on the off chance, even though Albertine did not believe that we would ever have one. Now, no less than in matters of women's dress, the painter's taste in the furnishing of yachts was refined and severe. He would allow only English furniture and old silver. This had led Albertine, who had at first thought only of clothes and furniture, to become interested in silver, and since our return from Balbec she had read books on the silversmith's art and on the hallmarks of the old craftsmen. But old French silver—having been melted down twice, at the time of the Treaty of Utrecht when the King himself, setting the example to his great nobles, sacrificed his silver plate, and again in 1789—is now extremely rare. At the same time, although modern silversmiths have managed to copy all this old plate from the Pont-aux-Choux designs, Elstir considered this reproduction work unworthy to enter the dwelling of a woman of taste, even a floating one. I knew that Albertine had read the description of the marvels that Roettiers had made for Mme du Barry. If any of these pieces remained, she longed to see them, and I to give them to

her. She had even begun to form a neat collection which she installed with charming taste in a glass case and which I could not contemplate without affectionate dismay, for the art with which she arranged them was that, born of patience, ingenuity, homesickness, the need to forget, which prisoners practise.

In the matter of dress, what appealed to her most at this time was everything made by Fortuny. These Fortuny gowns, one of which I had seen Mme de Guermantes wearing, were those of which Elstir, when he told us about the magnificent garments of the women of Carpaccio's and Titian's day, had prophesied the imminent return, rising from their ashes, as magnificent as of old, for everything must return in time, as it is written beneath the vaults of St Mark's, and proclaimed, as they drink from the urns of marble and jasper of the Byzantine capitals, by the birds which symbolise at once death and resurrection. As soon as women had begun to wear them, Albertine had remembered Elstir's prophecy, had coveted them, and we were shortly to go and choose one. Now even if these gowns were not those genuine antiques in which women today seem a little too got up in fancy dress and which it is preferable to keep as collector's items (I was looking for some of these also, as it happens, for Albertine), neither did they have the coldness of the artificial, the sham antique. Like the theatrical designs of Sert, Bakst and Benois, who at that moment were re-creating in the Russian ballet the most cherished periods of art with the aid of works of art impregnated with their spirit and yet original, these Fortuny gowns, faithfully antique but markedly original, brought before the eye like a stage decor, and with an even greater evocative power since the

decor was left to the imagination, that Venice saturated with oriental splendour where they would have been worn and of which they constituted, even more than a relic in the shrine of St Mark, evocative as they were of the sunlight and the surrounding turbans, the fragmented, mysterious and complementary colour. Everything of those days had perished, but everything was being reborn, evoked and linked together by the splendour and the swarming life of the city, in the piecemeal reappearance of the still-surviving fabrics worn by the Doges' ladies. I had tried once or twice to obtain advice on this subject from Mme de Guermantes. But the Duchess did not care for clothes that gave the effect of fancy dress. She herself, though she possessed several, never looked so well as in black velvet with diamonds. And with regard to gowns like Fortuny's, she had little useful advice to give. Besides, I had scruples about asking her advice lest I might give the impression that I called on her only when I happened to need her help, whereas for a long time past I had been declining several invitations a week from her. It was not only from her, moreover, that I received them in such profusion. Certainly, she and many other women had always been extremely friendly to me. But my seclusion had undoubtedly multiplied their friendliness tenfold. It seems that in our social life, a minor echo of what occurs in love, the best way to get oneself sought after is to withhold oneself. A man may think up everything that he can possibly cite to his credit, in order to find favour with a woman; he may wear different clothes every day, look after his appearance; yet she will not offer him a single one of the attentions and favours which he receives from another woman to whom, by being unfaithful to her, and in spite

of his appearing before her ill-dressed and without any artifice to attract, he has endeared himself for ever. Similarly, if a man were to regret that he was not sufficiently courted in society, I should not advise him to pay more calls, to keep an even finer carriage; I should tell him not to accept any invitation, to live shut up in his room, to admit nobody, and that then there would be a queue outside his door. Or rather I should not tell him so. For it is a sure way to become sought-after which succeeds only like the way to be loved, that is to say if you have not adopted it with that object in view, if, for instance, you confine yourself to your room because you are seriously ill, or think you are, or are keeping a mistress shut up with you whom you prefer to society (or for all these reasons at once), in the eyes of which, even if it is unaware of the woman's existence, and simply because you resist its overtures, it will simply be a reason to prefer you to all those who offer themselves, and to attach itself to you.

"We shall have to begin to think soon about your Fortuny dressing-gown," I said to Albertine one evening. Surely, for her, who had long desired them, who would choose them with me after long deliberation, who had a place reserved for them in advance, not only in her wardrobe but in her imagination, the possession of these gowns, every detail of which, before deciding among so many others, she would carefully examine, was something more than it would have been to a woman with too much money who has more dresses than she knows what to do with and never even looks at them. And yet, notwithstanding the smile with which Albertine thanked me, saying: "It's so sweet of you," I noticed how weary and even sad she was looking.

From time to time, while we were waiting for these gowns to be finished, I used to borrow others of the kind, sometimes merely the stuffs, and would dress Albertine in them, drape them over her; she walked about my room with the majesty of a Doge's wife and the grace of a mannequin. But my captivity in Paris was made more burdensome to me by the sight of these garments which reminded me of Venice. True, Albertine was far more of a prisoner than I. And it was curious to remark how fate, which transforms persons, had contrived to penetrate the walls of her prison, to change her in her very essence, and turn the girl I had known at Balbec into a dreary, docile captive. Yes, the walls of her prison had not prevented that influence from reaching her; perhaps indeed it was they that had produced it. It was no longer the same Albertine, because she was not, as at Balbec, incessantly in flight upon her bicycle, impossible to find owing to the number of little watering-places where she would go to spend the night with friends and where moreover her lies made it more difficult to lay hands on her; because, shut up in my house, docile and alone, she was no longer what at Balbec, even when I had succeeded in finding her, she used to be upon the beach, that fugitive, cautious, deceitful creature, whose presence was expanded by the thought of all those assignations which she was skilled in concealing, which made one love her because they made one suffer and because, beneath her coldness to other people and her casual answers, I could sense yesterday's assignation and tomorrow's, and for myself a sly, disdainful thought; because the sea breeze no longer puffed out her skirts; because, above all, I had clipped her wings, and she had

ceased to be a winged Victory and become a burdensome slave of whom I would have liked to rid myself.

Then, to change the course of my thoughts, rather than begin a game of cards or draughts with Albertine, I would ask her to give me a little music. I remained in bed, and she would go and sit down at the end of the room before the pianola, between the two bookcases. She chose pieces which were either quite new or which she had played to me only once or twice, for, beginning to know me better, she was aware that I liked to fix my thoughts only upon what was still obscure to me, and to be able, in the course of these successive renderings, thanks to the increasing but, alas, distorting and alien light of my intellect, to link to one another the fragmentary and interrupted lines of the structure which at first had been almost hidden in mist. She knew and, I think, understood the joy that my mind derived, at these first hearings, from this task of modelling a still shapeless nebula. And as she played, of all Albertine's multiple tresses I could see but a single heart-shaped loop of black hair clinging to the side of her ear like the bow of a Velasquez Infanta. Just as the volume of that angel musician was constituted by the multiple journeys between the different points in the past which the memory of her occupied within me and the different signs, from the purely visual to the innermost sensations of my being, which helped me to descend into the intimacy of hers, so the music that she played had also a volume, produced by the unequal visibility of the different phrases, according as I had more or less succeeded in throwing light on them and joining up the lines of the seemingly nebulous structure. She guessed

that at the third or fourth repetition my intellect, having grasped, having consequently placed at the same distance, all the parts, and no longer having to exert any effort on them, had conversely projected and immobilised them on a uniform plane. She did not, however, yet move on to another piece, for, without perhaps having any clear idea of the process that was going on inside me, she knew that at the moment when the exertions of my intelligence had succeeded in dispelling the mystery of a work, it was very rarely that, in compensation, it had not, in the course of its baleful task, picked up some profitable reflexion. And when in time Albertine said: "We might give this roll to Françoise and get her to change it for something else," often there was for me a piece of music the less in the world, perhaps, but a truth the more.

I was so convinced that it would be absurd to be jealous of Mlle Vinteuil and her friend, inasmuch as Albertine gave not the least sign of wanting to see them again, and among all the plans for a holiday in the country which we had formed had herself rejected Combray, so near to Montjouvain, that often I would ask her to play to me some of Vinteuil's music, without its causing me pain. Once only this music had been an indirect cause of jealousy. This was when Albertine, who knew that I had heard it performed at Mme Verdurin's by Morel, spoke to me one evening about him, expressing a keen desire to go and hear him play and to make his acquaintance. This, as it happened, was shortly after I had learned of the letter, unintentionally intercepted by M. de Charlus, from Léa to Morel. I wondered whether Léa might not have mentioned him to Albertine. The words "you naughty girl," "you vicious thing," came back to my horrified mind. But

precisely because Vinteuil's music was in this way painfully associated with Léa—and not with Mlle Vinteuil and her friend—when the anguish caused by Léa had subsided, I could listen to this music without pain; one malady had cured me of the possibility of the others. In the music I had heard at Mme Verdurin's, phrases I had not noticed, obscure larvae that were then indistinct, turned into dazzling architectural structures; and some of them became friends, that I had scarcely distinguished, that at best had appeared to me to be ugly, so that I could never have supposed that they were like those people, antipathetic at first sight, whom we discover to be what they really are only after we have come to know them well. Between the two states there was a real transmutation. At the same time, phrases which had been quite distinct the first time but which I had not then recognised, I identified now with phrases from other works, such as that phrase from the Sacred Variation for Organ which, at Mme Verdurin's, had passed unperceived by me in the septet, where nevertheless, like a saint that had stepped down from the sanctuary, it found itself consorting with the composer's familiar sprites. Moreover, the phrase evoking the joyful clanging of the bells at noon, which had seemed to me too unmelodious, too mechanical in its rhythm, had now become my favourite, either because I had grown accustomed to its ugliness or because I had discovered its beauty. This reaction from the disappointment which great works of art cause at first may in fact be attributed to a weakening of the initial impression or to the effort necessary to lay bare the truth—two hypotheses which recur in all important questions, questions about the truth of Art, of Reality, of the Immortality of the

Soul; we must choose between them; and, in the case of Vinteuil's music, this choice was constantly presenting itself under a variety of forms. For instance, this music seemed to me something truer than all known books. At moments I thought that this was due to the fact that, what we feel about life not being felt in the form of ideas, its literary, that is to say intellectual expression describes it, explains it, analyses it, but does not recompose it as does music, in which the sounds seem to follow the very movement of our being, to reproduce that extreme inner point of our sensations which is the part that gives us that peculiar exhilaration which we experience from time to time and which, when we say "What a fine day! What glorious sunshine!" we do not in the least communicate to others, in whom the same sun and the same weather evoke quite different vibrations. In Vinteuil's music, there were thus some of those visions which it is impossible to express and almost forbidden to contemplate, since, when at the moment of falling asleep we receive the caress of their unreal enchantment, at that very moment in which reason has already deserted us, our eyes seal up and before we have had time to know not only the ineffable but the invisible, we are asleep. It seemed to me, when I abandoned myself to this hypothesis that art might be real, that it was something even more than the merely nerve-tingling joy of a fine day or an opiate night that music can give; a more real, more fruitful exhilaration, to judge at least by what I felt. It is inconceivable that a piece of sculpture or a piece of music which gives us an emotion that we feel to be more exalted, more pure, more true, does not correspond to some definite spiritual reality, or life would be meaningless. Thus nothing resembled

more closely than some such phrase of Vinteuil the peculiar pleasure which I had felt at certain moments in my life, when gazing, for instance, at the steeples of Martinville, or at certain trees along a road near Balbec, or, more simply, at the beginning of this book, when I tasted a certain cup of tea. Like that cup of tea, all those sensations of light, the bright clamour, the boisterous colours that Vinteuil sent to us from the world in which he composed, paraded before my imagination, insistently but too rapidly for me to be able to apprehend it, something that I might compare to the perfumed silkiness of a geranium. But whereas in memory this vagueness may be, if not fathomed, at any rate identified, thanks to a pinpointing of circumstances which explain why a certain taste has been able to recall to us luminous sensations, the vague sensations given by Vinteuil coming not from a memory but from an impression (like that of the steeples of Martinville), one would have had to find, for the geranium scent of his music, not a material explanation, but the profound equivalent, the unknown, colourful festival (of which his works seemed to be the disconnected fragments, the scarlet-flashing splinters), the mode by which he "heard" the universe and projected it far beyond himself. Perhaps it was in this, I said to Albertine, this unknown quality of a unique world which no other composer had ever yet revealed, that the most authentic proof of genius lies, even more than in the content of the work itself. "Even in literature?" Albertine inquired. "Even in literature." And thinking again of the sameness of Vinteuil's works, I explained to Albertine that the great men of letters have never created more than a single work, or rather have never done more than refract through various media

an identical beauty which they bring into the world. "If it were not so late, my sweet," I said to her, "I would show you this quality in all the writers whose works you read while I'm asleep, I would show you the same identity as in Vinteuil. These key-phrases, which you are beginning to recognise as I do, my little Albertine, the same in the sonata, in the septet, in the other works, would be, say for instance in Barbey d'Aurevilly, a hidden reality revealed by a physical sign, the physiological blush of the Bewitched, of Aimée de Spens, of old Clotte, the hand in the *Rideau cramoisi*, the old manners and customs, the old words, the ancient and peculiar trades behind which there is the Past, the oral history made by the herdsmen with their mirror, the noble Norman cities redolent of England and charming as a Scottish village, the hurler of curses against which one can do nothing, la Vellini, the Shepherd, a similar sensation of anxiety in a passage, whether it be the wife seeking her husband in *Une vieille maîtresse*, or the husband in *L'Ensorcelée* scouring the plain and the Bewitched herself coming out from mass. Another example of Vinteuil's key-phrases is that stonemason's geometry in the novels of Thomas Hardy."

Vinteuil's phrases made me think of the "little phrase" and I told Albertine that it had been as it were the national anthem of the love of Swann and Odette, "the parents of Gilberte, whom I believe you know. You told me she was a bad girl. Didn't she try to have relations with you? She spoke to me about you."

"Yes, you see, her parents used to send a carriage to fetch her from school when the weather was bad, and I seem to remember she took me home once and kissed me," she said, after a momentary pause, laughing as

though it were an amusing revelation. "She asked me all of a sudden whether I was fond of women." (But if she only "seemed to remember" that Gilberte had taken her home, how could she say with such precision that Gilberte had asked her this odd question?) "In fact, I don't know what weird idea came into my head to fool her, but I told her that I was." (It was as though Albertine was afraid that Gilberte had told me this and did not want me to see that she was lying to me.) "But we did nothing at all." (It was strange, if they had exchanged these confidences, that they should have done nothing, especially as, before this, they had kissed, according to Albertine.) "She took me home like that four or five times, perhaps more, and that's all."

It cost me a great effort not to ply her with questions, but, mastering myself so as to appear not to be attaching any importance to all this, I returned to Thomas Hardy. "Do you remember the stonemasons in *Jude the Obscure*, and in *The Well-Beloved* the blocks of stone which the father hews out of the island coming in boats to be piled up in the son's work-shop where they are turned into statues; and in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* the parallelism of the tombs, and also the parallel line of the boat and the nearby railway coaches containing the lovers and the dead woman; and the parallel between *The Well-Beloved*, where the man loves three women, and *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, where the woman loves three men, and in short all those novels which can be superimposed on one another like the houses piled up vertically on the rocky soil of the island. I can't sum up the greatest writers like this in a few moments, but you'll see in Stendhal a certain sense of altitude symbolising the life of the spirit: the lofty place in

which Julien Sorel is imprisoned, the tower at the top of which Fabrice is incarcerated, the belfry in which the Abbé Blanès pores over his astrology and from which Fabrice has such a magnificent bird's-eye view. You told me you had seen some of Vermeer's pictures: you must have realised that they're fragments of an identical world, that it's always, however great the genius with which they have been re-created, the same table, the same carpet, the same woman, the same novel and unique beauty, an enigma at that period in which nothing resembles or explains it, if one doesn't try to relate it all through subject matter but to isolate the distinctive impression produced by the colour. Well, this novel beauty remains identical in all Dostoievsky's works. Isn't the Dostoievsky woman (as distinctive as a Rembrandt woman) with her mysterious face, whose engaging beauty changes abruptly, as though her apparent good nature was only play-acting, into terrible insolence (although at heart it seems that she is more good than bad), isn't she always the same, whether it's Nastasia Philipovna writing love letters to Aglaya and telling her that she hates her, or in a visit that's absolutely identical with this—as also the one where Nastasia Philipovna insults Gania's family—Grushenka, as charming in Katerina Ivanovna's house as the latter had supposed her to be terrible, then suddenly revealing her malevolence by insulting Katerina Ivanovna (although Grushenka is good at heart)? Grushenka, Nastasia—figures as original, as mysterious, not merely as Carpaccio's courtesans but as Rembrandt's Bathsheba. Mind you, he certainly didn't only know how to depict that striking dual face, with its sudden explosions of furious pride, which makes the woman seem other than she is ('You are

not like that,' says Myshkin to Nastasia during the visit to Gania's family, and Alyosha might have said the same to Grushenka during the visit to Katerina Ivanovna). But on the other hand when he wants 'ideas for paintings' they're always stupid and would at best result in the pictures where Munkacsy wanted to see a condemned man represented at the moment when . . . etc., or the Virgin Mary at the moment when . . . etc. But to return to the new kind of beauty that Dostoievsky brought to the world, just as, in Vermeer, there's the creation of a certain soul, of a certain colour of fabrics and places, so in Dostoievsky there's the creation not only of people but of their homes, and the house of the Murder in *Crime and Punishment*, with its janitor, isn't it as marvellous as the masterpiece of the house of Murder in *The Idiot*, that sombre house of Rogozhin's, so long, and so high, and so vast, in which he kills Nastasia Philipovna. That new and terrible beauty of a house, that new and two-sided beauty of a woman's face, that is the unique thing that Dostoievsky has given to the world, and the comparisons that literary critics may make, between him and Gogol, or between him and Paul de Kock, are of no interest, being external to this secret beauty. Besides, if I've said to you that from one novel to another it's the same scene, it's in the compass of a single novel that the same scenes, the same characters reappear if the novel is at all long. I could illustrate this to you easily in *War and Peace*, and a certain scene in a carriage . . ."

"I didn't want to interrupt you, but now that I see that you're leaving Dostoievsky, I'm afraid I might forget. My sweet, what was it you meant the other day when you said: 'It's like the Dostoievsky side of Mme de Sévigné.' I

must confess that I didn't understand. It seems to me so different."

"Come, little girl, let me give you a kiss to thank you for remembering so well what I say. You shall go back to the pianola afterwards. And I must admit that what I said was rather stupid. But I said it for two reasons. The first is a special reason. What I meant was that Mme de Sévigné, like Elstir, like Dostoievsky, instead of presenting things in their logical sequence, that is to say beginning with the cause, shows us first of all the effect, the illusion that strikes us. That is how Dostoievsky presents his characters. Their actions seem to us as deceptive as those effects in Elstir's pictures where the sea appears to be in the sky. We're quite surprised to find later on that some sly-looking individual is really the best of men, or vice versa."

"Yes, but give me an example in Mme de Sévigné."

"I admit," I answered her with a laugh, "that it's very far-fetched, but still I could find examples. For instance . . ."[23]

"But did he ever murder anyone, Dostoievsky? The novels of his that I know might all be called The Story of a Crime. It's an obsession with him, it isn't natural that he should always be talking about it."

"I don't think so, dear Albertine. I know little about his life. It's certain that, like everyone else, he was acquainted with sin, in one form or another, and probably in a form which the laws condemn. In that sense he must have been a bit criminal, like his heroes—who in any case are not entirely criminal, who are found guilty with extenuating circumstances. And perhaps it wasn't necessary for him to be criminal himself. I'm not a novelist; it's possible that creative writers are tempted by certain forms of life of which they have no personal experience. If I come with you to Versailles as we arranged, I shall show you the portrait of an ultra-respectable man, the best of husbands, Choderlos de Laclos, who wrote the most appallingly perverse book, and just opposite it the portrait of Mme de Genlis who wrote moral tales and, not content with betraying the Duchesse d'Orléans, tortured her by turning her children against her. I admit all the same that in Dostoievsky this preoccupation with murder is something extraordinary which makes him very alien to me. I'm amazed enough when I hear Baudelaire say:

> If not yet poison, arson, rape, and stabbing . . .
> It is because our soul, alas! lacks daring.

But I can at least assume that Baudelaire is not sincere. Whereas Dostoievsky . . . All that sort of thing seems to me as remote from myself as possible, unless there are parts of myself of which I know nothing, for we realise our own nature only in the course of time. In Dostoievsky I find the deepest wells of insight but only into certain isolated regions of the human soul. But he is a great creator. For one thing, the world which he describes does really appear to have been created by him. All those buffoons who keep on reappearing, like Lebedev, Karamazov, Ivolgin, Segrev, that incredible procession, are human types even more fantastic than those that people Rembrandt's *Night Watch*. And yet perhaps they're fantastic only in the same way, by the effect of lighting and costume, and are quite normal really. In any case the whole thing is full of profound and unique truths, which belong only to Dostoievsky. They almost suggest, those buffoons,

some trade or calling that no longer exists, like certain characters in the old drama, and yet how they reveal true aspects of the human soul! What I find so tedious is the solemn manner in which people talk and write about Dostoievsky. Have you ever noticed the part that self-esteem and pride play in his characters? It's as though, for him, love and the most passionate hatred, goodness and treachery, timidity and insolence, are merely two aspects of a single nature, their self-esteem, their pride preventing Aglaya, Nastasia, the Captain whose beard Mitya pulls, Krassotkin, Alyosha's enemy-friend, from showing themselves in their true colours. But there are many other great qualities as well. I know very few of his books. But what a simple, sculptural notion it is, worthy of the most classical art, a frieze interrupted and resumed in which the theme of vengeance and expiation is unfolded in the crime of old Karamazov getting the poor simpleton with child, the mysterious, animal, unexplained impulse whereby the mother, herself unconsciously the instrument of an avenging destiny, obeying also obscurely her maternal instinct, feeling perhaps a combination of resentment and physical gratitude towards her violator, comes to give birth to her child in old Karamazov's garden. This is the first episode, mysterious, grandiose, august, like the Creation of Woman in one of the sculptures at Orvieto. And as counterpart, the second episode more than twenty years later, the murder of old Karamazov, the infamy committed against the Karamazov family by the madwoman's son, Smerdiakov, followed shortly afterwards by another act as mysteriously sculpturesque and unexplained, of a beauty as obscure and natural as the childbirth in old Karamazov's garden, Smerdiakov hanging himself, his crime accomplished. Actually I wasn't straying as far from Dostoievsky as you thought when I mentioned Tolstoy, who imitated him a great deal. In Dostoievsky there's concentrated, still tense and peevish, a great deal of what was to blossom later on in Tolstoy. There's that proleptic gloom of the primitives which the disciples will brighten and dispel."

"What a bore it is that you're so lazy, my sweet. Just look at your view of literature, so much more interesting than the way we were made to study it; the essays that they used to make us write about *Esther*: 'Monsieur,'—you remember," she said with a laugh, less from a desire to make fun of her masters and herself than from the pleasure of finding in her memory, in our common memory, a recollection that was already quite venerable.

But while she was speaking, and I thought once more of Vinteuil, it was the other, the materialist hypothesis, that of there being nothing, that in turn presented itself to my mind. I began to doubt again; I told myself that after all it might be the case that, if Vinteuil's phrases seemed to be the expression of certain states of soul analogous to that which I had experienced when I tasted the madeleine soaked in tea, there was nothing to assure me that the vagueness of such states was a sign of their profundity rather than of our not having yet learned to analyse them, so that there might be nothing more real in them than in other states. And yet that happiness, that sense of certainty in happiness while I was drinking the cup of tea, or when I smelt in the Champs-Elysées a smell of moulder-ing wood, was not an illusion. In any case, whispered the spirit of doubt, even if these states are more profound than others that occur in life, and defy analysis for that

very reason, because they bring into play too many forces of which we have hitherto been unaware, the charm of certain phrases of Vinteuil's music makes us think of them because it too defies analysis, but this does not prove that it has the same profundity; the beauty of a phrase of pure music can easily appear to be the image of or at least akin to an unintellectual impression which we have received, but simply because it is unintellectual. And why then do we suppose to be specially profound those mysterious phrases which haunt certain quartets and this septet by Vinteuil?

It was not, however, his music alone that Albertine played me; the pianola was to us at times like a scientific magic lantern (historical and geographical), and on the walls of this room in Paris, supplied with inventions more modern than my room at Combray, I would see extending before me, according to whether Albertine played me Rameau or Borodin, now an eighteenth-century tapestry sprinkled with cupids and roses, now the Eastern steppe in which sounds are muffled by the boundless distances and the soft carpet of snow. And these fleeting decorations were as it happened the only ones in my room, for although, at the time of inheriting my aunt Léonie's fortune, I had resolved to become a collector like Swann, to buy pictures and statues, all my money went on horses, a motor-car, dresses for Albertine. But did not my room contain a work of art more precious than all these—Albertine herself? I looked at her. It was strange to me to think that it was she, she whom I had for so long thought it impossible even to know, who now, a wild beast tamed, a rosebush to which I had acted as the prop, the framework, the trellis of its life, was seated thus, day by day, at

home, by my side, before the pianola, with her back to my bookcase. Her shoulders, which I had seen drooping sullenly when she was carrying her golf-clubs, now leaned against my books. Her shapely legs, which on the first day I had with good reason imagined as having manipulated throughout her girlhood the pedals of a bicycle, now rose and fell alternately upon those of the pianola, upon which Albertine, who had acquired an elegance which made me feel her more my own, because it was from myself that it came, pressed her shoes of cloth of gold. Her fingers, at one time accustomed to handlebars, now rested upon the keys like those of a St Cecilia. Her throat, the curve of which, seen from my bed, was strong and full, at that distance and in the lamplight appeared pinker, less pink however than her face, bent forward in profile, which my gaze, issuing from the innermost depths of myself, charged with memories and burning with desire, invested with such a brilliancy, such an intensity of life that its relief seemed to stand out and turn with the same almost magic power as on the day, in the hotel at Balbec, when my vision was clouded by my overpowering desire to kiss her; and I prolonged each of its surfaces beyond what I was able to see and beneath what concealed it from me and made me feel all the more strongly—eyelids which half hid her eyes, hair that covered the upper part of her cheeks—the relief of those superimposed planes; her eyes (like two facets that alone have yet been polished in the matrix in which an opal is still embedded), become more resistant than metal while remaining more brilliant than light, disclosed, in the midst of the blind matter overhanging them, as it were the mauve, silken wings of a butterfly placed under glass; and her dark, curling hair,

presenting different conformations whenever she turned to ask me what she was to play next, now a splendid wing, sharp at the tip, broad at the base, black, feathered and triangular, now massing the contours of its curls in a powerful and varied chain, full of crests, of watersheds, of precipices, with its soft, creamy texture, so rich and so multiple, seeming to exceed the variety that nature habitually achieves and to correspond rather to the desire of a sculptor who accumulates difficulties in order to emphasise the suppleness, the vibrancy, the fullness, the vitality of his creation, brought out more strongly, but interrupting in order to cover it, the animated curve and, as it were, the rotation of the smooth, roseate face, with its glazed matt texture as of painted wood. And, by contrast with all this relief, by the harmony also which united them with her, who had adapted her attitude to their form and purpose, the pianola which half concealed her like an organ-case, the bookcase, the whole of that corner of the room, seemed to be reduced to the dimensions of a lighted sanctuary, the shrine of this angel musician, a work of art which, presently, by a charming magic, was to detach itself from its niche and offer to my kisses its precious, rose-pink substance. But no, Albertine was for me not at all a work of art. I knew what it meant to admire a woman in an artistic fashion, having known Swann. For my own part, however, no matter who the woman might be, I was incapable of doing so, having no sort of power of detached observation, never knowing what it was that I saw, and I had been amazed when Swann added retrospectively an artistic dignity—by comparing her to me, as he liked to do gallantly to her face, to some portrait by Luini, by recalling in her attire the gown or the jewels of

a picture by Giorgione—to a woman who had seemed to me to be devoid of interest. Nothing of that sort with me. Indeed, to tell the truth, when I began to regard Albertine as an angel musician glazed with a marvellous patina whom I congratulated myself upon possessing, it was not long before I found her uninteresting; I soon became bored in her company; but these moments were of brief duration: one only loves that in which one pursues the inaccessible, one only loves what one does not possess, and very soon I began to realise once more that I did not possess Albertine. I saw flitting across her eyes, now the hope, now the memory, perhaps the regret, of joys which I could not guess at, which in that case she preferred to renounce rather than reveal to me, and which, glimpsing no more of them than that gleam in her pupils, I no more perceived than does the spectator who has been refused admission to the theatre, and who, his face glued to the glass panes of the door, can take in nothing of what is happening on the stage. (I do not know whether this was the case with her, but it is a strange thing—like evidence of a belief in good in the most incredulous—this perseverance in falsehood shown by all those who deceive us. It would be no good our telling them that their lies hurt us more than a confession, it would be no good their realising it for themselves, they would start lying again a moment later, to remain consistent with what they had always told us that they were, or with what they had told us that we were to them. Similarly, an atheist who values his life will let himself be burned alive rather than give the lie to the view that is generally held of his bravery.) During these hours, I used sometimes to see hover over her face, in her expression, in her pout, in her smile, the

reflexion of those inner visions the contemplation of which made her on these evenings unlike her usual self, remote from me to whom they were denied. "What are you thinking about, my darling?" "Why, nothing." Sometimes, in answer to the reproaches I made to her that she told me nothing, she would at one moment tell me things which she was not unaware that I knew as well as anyone (like those statesmen who will never give you the least bit of news, but speak to you instead of what you could have read for yourself in the papers the day before), at another would describe without any precise details, in the manner of false confidences, bicycle rides that she had had at Balbec, the year before our first meeting. And as though I had guessed aright long ago, when I inferred therefrom that she must be a girl who was allowed a great deal of freedom, who went on long jaunts, the mention of those rides insinuated between Albertine's lips the same mysterious smile that had captivated me in those first days on the front at Balbec. She spoke to me also of the excursions she had made with some girlfriends through the Dutch countryside, of returning to Amsterdam in the evening, at a late hour, when a dense and happy crowd of people, almost all of whom she knew, thronged the streets and the towpaths of the canals, of which I felt that I could see reflected in Albertine's brilliant eyes, as in the glancing windows of a fast-moving carriage, the innumerable, flickering lights. How much more deserving of the name indifference is so-called aesthetic curiosity compared with the painful, unwearying curiosity I felt as to the places in which Albertine had stayed, as to what she might have been doing on a particular evening, her smiles, the expressions in her eyes, the words that she had uttered, the

kisses that she had received! No, never would the jealousy that I had felt one day of Saint-Loup, if it had persisted, have caused me this immense uneasiness. This love between women was something too unfamiliar; there was nothing to enable me to form a precise and accurate idea of its pleasures, its quality. How many people, how many places (even places which did not concern her directly, vague haunts of pleasure where she might have enjoyed some pleasure, places where there are a great many people, where people brush against one) had Albertine—like a person who, shepherding all her escort, a whole crowd, past the barrier in front of her, secures their admission to the theatre—from the threshold of my imagination or of my memory, where I paid no attention to them, introduced into my heart! Now, the knowledge that I had of them was internal, immediate, spasmodic, painful. Love is space and time made perceptible to the heart.

And yet perhaps, had I myself been entirely faithful, I might not have suffered because of infidelities which I would have been incapable of conceiving; whereas what it tortured me to imagine in Albertine was my own perpetual desire to find favour with new women, to start up new romances, was to suppose her guilty of the glance which I had been unable to resist casting, the other day, even while I was by her side, at the young bicyclists seated at tables in the Bois de Boulogne. As there is no knowledge, one might almost say that there is no jealousy, except of oneself. Observation counts for little. It is only from the pleasure that we ourselves have felt that we can derive knowledge and pain.

At moments, in Albertine's eyes, in the sudden inflammation of her cheeks, I felt as it were a gust of

warmth pass furtively through regions more inaccessible to me than the sky, in which Albertine's memories, unknown to me, lived and moved. Then this beauty which, when I thought of the successive years in which I had known Albertine, whether on the beach at Balbec or in Paris, I found that I had but recently discovered in her, and which consisted in the fact that she existed on so many planes and embodied so many days that had passed, this beauty became almost heart-rending. Then beneath that rose-pink face I felt that there yawned like a gulf the inexhaustible expanse of the evenings when I had not known Albertine. I could, if I chose, take Albertine on my knee, hold her head in my hands, I could caress her, run my hands slowly over her, but, just as if I had been handling a stone which encloses the salt of immemorial oceans or the light of a star, I felt that I was touching no more than the sealed envelope of a person who inwardly reached to infinity. How I suffered from that position to which we are reduced by the obliviousness of nature which, when instituting the division of bodies, never thought of making possible the interpenetration of souls! And I realised that Albertine was not even for me (for if her body was in the power of mine, her thoughts eluded the grasp of my thoughts) the marvellous captive with whom I had thought to enrich my home, while concealing her presence there as completely, even from the friends who came to see me and never suspected that she was at the end of the corridor, in the room next to my own, as did that person of whom nobody knew that he kept the Princess of China sealed in a bottle; urging me with cruel and fruitless insistence in quest of the past, she resembled, if anything, a mighty goddess of Time. And if I had

to waste years of my life and much of my fortune for her sake—and provided that I can tell myself, which is by no means certain, alas, that she herself lost nothing—I have nothing to regret. No doubt solitude would have been better, more fruitful, less painful. But if I had led the collector's life which Swann counselled, and the joys of which M. de Charlus reproached me with not knowing, when, with a blend of wit, insolence and good taste, he complained to me how ugly my rooms were, what statues, what pictures long pursued, at length possessed, or even, to put it in the best light, contemplated with detachment, would—like the little wound which healed quickly enough, but which the unconscious tactlessness of Albertine, or of people generally, or of my own thoughts, was never long in reopening—have given me access to that way out of oneself, that connecting road which, though private, opens on to the highway along which passes what we learn to know only from the day when it has made us suffer: the life of other people?

Sometimes there was such a beautiful moonlight that, an hour after Albertine had gone to bed, I would go to her bedside to tell her to look out of the window. I am certain that it was for this reason that I went to her room, and not to assure myself that she was really there. What likelihood was there of her being able to escape, even if she had wished? It would have required an improbable collusion with Françoise. In the dim room, I could see nothing except, against the whiteness of the pillow, a slender diadem of dark hair. But I could hear Albertine's breathing. Her sleep was so deep that I hesitated at first to go as far as the bed. Then I sat down on the edge of it. Her sleep continued to flow with the same murmur.

What I find it impossible to express is how gay her awakenings were. I would kiss her and shake her. At once she would cease to sleep, without even a moment's interval, would break out in a laugh, saying as she twined her arms round my neck: "I was just beginning to wonder whether you were coming," and then laugh even more blithely and tenderly. It was as though her charming head, when she slept, was filled with nothing but gaiety, affection and laughter. And in waking her I had merely, as when we cut open a fruit, released the gushing juice which quenches thirst.

Meanwhile winter was at an end; the fine weather returned, and often when Albertine had just bidden me good-night, my curtains and the wall above the curtains being still quite dark, in the nuns' garden next door I could hear, rich and mellow in the silence like a harmonium in church, the modulation of an unknown bird which, in the Lydian mode, was already chanting matins, and into the midst of my darkness flung the rich dazzling note of the sun that it could see. Soon the nights grew shorter still, and before what had been the hour of daybreak, I could see already stealing above my window-curtains the daily increasing whiteness of the dawn. If I resigned myself to allowing Albertine to continue to lead this life in which, notwithstanding her denials, I felt that she had the impression of being a prisoner, it was only because each day I was sure that on the morrow I should be able to set to work from time to time, to get up, to go out, to prepare our departure for some country place which we should buy and where Albertine would be able to lead, more freely and without anxiety on my account,

the open-air life of the country or the seaside, of boating or hunting, which appealed to her.

Only, the next day, from that past which I loved and detested by turns in Albertine (since, when it is the present, everyone, from calculation, or politeness, or pity, sets to work to weave, between himself and us, a curtain of falsehood which we mistake for the truth) it would happen that, retrospectively, one of the hours which composed it, even of those which I thought I knew, presented to me all of a sudden an aspect which she no longer made any attempt to conceal from me and which was then quite different from the aspect in which it had previously appeared to me. Behind some look in her eyes, in place of the benign thought which I had formerly supposed that I could read in it, a hitherto unsuspected desire would reveal itself, alienating from me a fresh region of Albertine's heart which I had believed to be assimilated to my own. For instance, when Andrée had left Balbec in the month of July, Albertine had never told me that she was to see her again shortly, and I imagined that she had seen her even sooner than she expected since, because of the great unhappiness that I had suffered at Balbec, on that night of the fourteenth of September, she had made me the sacrifice of not remaining there and of returning at once to Paris. When she had arrived there on the fifteenth, I had asked her to go and see Andrée and had said to her: "Was she pleased to see you again?" Now one day Mme Bontemps called round to bring something for Albertine. I saw her for a moment and told her that Albertine had gone out with Andrée: "They've gone for a drive in the country."

"Yes," replied Mme Bontemps, "Albertine is always ready to go to the country. Three years ago, for instance, she simply had to go every day to the Buttes-Chaumont." At the name Buttes-Chaumont, a place where Albertine had told me that she had never been, my breath stopped for a moment. The truth is the most cunning of enemies. It delivers its attacks at the point in one's heart where one was least expecting them and where one has prepared no defence. Had Albertine been lying, to her aunt then, when she said that she went every day to the Buttes-Chaumont, or to myself since, when she told me that she did not know the place? "Fortunately," Mme Bontemps went on, "that poor Andrée will soon be leaving for a more bracing countryside, for the real countryside. She needs it badly, she's not looking at all well. It's true that she didn't get all the fresh air she needs last summer. You see, she left Balbec at the end of July, expecting to go back there in September, and then her brother put his knee out, and she was unable to go back."

So Albertine was expecting her at Balbec and had concealed this from me! It is true that it was all the more kind of her to have offered to return to Paris with me. Unless . . .

"Yes, I remember Albertine's mentioning it to me" (this was untrue). "When did the accident occur, again? I'm a bit muddled about it all."

"Actually, in a way it happened just at the right moment, because a day later the lease of the villa would have begun, and Andrée's grandmother would have had to pay a month's rent for nothing. He damaged his leg on the fourteenth of September, and she had time to cable Albertine on the morning of the fifteenth that she wasn't coming and Albertine was in time to warn the agency. A day later, and the lease would have run on to the middle of October."

And so, no doubt, when Albertine, changing her mind, had said to me: "Let's go this evening," what she saw with her mind's eye was an apartment unknown to me, that of Andrée's grandmother, where, as soon as we returned, she would be able to see the friend whom, without my suspecting it, she had hoped to see again shortly at Balbec. The kind words with which she had expressed her willingness to return to Paris with me, in contrast to her stubborn refusal a little earlier, I had sought to attribute to a genuine change of heart. In fact they were simply the reflexion of one of those changes in a situation of which we do not know, and which are the whole secret of the variations in the conduct of women who do not love us. They obstinately refuse to meet us the following evening, because they are tired, because their grandfather insists on their dining with him: "But come later," we insist. "He keeps me very late. He may want to see me home." The simple truth is that they have a rendezvous with some man whom they like. Suddenly he is no longer free. And they come to tell us how sorry they are to have hurt us, that the grandfather has been given the brush-off, and that there is nothing in the world that could keep them from remaining with us. I ought to have recognised these phrases in what Albertine had said to me on the day of my departure from Balbec. But to interpret her words I should have needed not only to recognise those phrases but to remember two traits peculiar to Albertine's character.

The two traits now recurred to my mind, one to con-

sole me, the other to make me wretched, for we find a little of everything in our memory; it is a sort of pharmacy, a sort of chemical laboratory, in which our groping hand may come to rest now on a sedative drug, now on a dangerous poison. The first trait, the consoling one, was that habit of making a single action serve the pleasure of several persons, that multiple utilisation of whatever she did, which was characteristic of Albertine. It was quite in keeping with her character that, returning to Paris (the fact that Andrée was not coming back might have made it inconvenient for her to remain at Balbec without this meaning that she could not do without Andrée), she should use that single journey as an opportunity for pleasing two people of whom she was genuinely fond: myself by making me believe that it was in order not to leave me on my own, in order that I should not be unhappy, out of devotion to me, and Andrée by persuading her that, since she was not coming to Balbec, she herself did not wish to remain there a moment longer, that she had prolonged her stay there only in the hope of seeing Andrée and was now hurrying back to join her. Now, Albertine's departure with me was such an immediate sequel, on the one hand to my access of grief and my desire to return to Paris, and on the other hand to Andrée's telegram, that it was quite natural that Andrée and I, respectively unaware, she of my grief, I of her telegram, should both have supposed that Albertine's departure from Balbec was the effect of the one cause that each of us knew, which indeed it followed at so short an interval and so unexpectedly. And in this case, it was still possible for me to believe that the thought of keeping me company had been Albertine's real

object, though she had not wanted to neglect an opportunity of thereby establishing a claim to Andrée's gratitude.

But unfortunately I remembered almost at once another of Albertine's characteristics, which was the swiftness with which she was seized by the irresistible temptation of a pleasure. And I recalled how, when she had decided to leave, she had been so impatient to get to the train, how she had pushed past the hotel manager who in trying to detain us might have made us miss the omnibus, the shrug of complicity which she had given me and by which I had been so touched when, on the twister, M. de Cambremer had asked us whether we could not "postpone it by a sennight." Yes, what she saw in front of her eyes at that moment, what made her so feverishly anxious to leave, what she was so impatient to get to, was an uninhabited apartment I had once visited, belonging to Andrée's grandmother, a luxurious apartment looked after by an old manservant, facing south, but so empty, so silent, that the sun appeared to spread dust-sheets over the sofa and the armchairs of the room in which Albertine and Andrée would ask the respectful caretaker, perhaps unsuspecting, perhaps conniving, to allow them to rest for a while. I saw it constantly now, empty, with a bed or a sofa, and a maid who was either a dupe or an accomplice, that apartment to which, whenever Albertine seemed serious and in a hurry, she set off to meet her friend, who had doubtless arrived there before her since her time was more her own. Until then I had never given a thought to that apartment, which now possessed for me a horrible beauty. The unknown element in the lives of other people is like that of nature, which each fresh scientific discovery

merely reduces but does not abolish. A jealous lover exasperates the woman he loves by depriving her of a thousand unimportant pleasures, but those pleasures which are the keystone of her life she conceals in a place where, even at moments when he thinks that he is showing the most intelligent perspicacity and third parties are keeping him most closely informed, he never dreams of looking. However, at least Andrée was going to leave Paris. But I did not want Albertine to be in a position to despise me as having been the dupe of herself and Andrée. One of these days I would tell her. And thus I would force her perhaps to speak to me more frankly, by showing her that I was after all informed of the things that she concealed from me. But I did not wish to mention it to her for the moment, first of all because, so soon after her aunt's visit, she would guess where my information came from, would block that source and would not be worried about other, unknown ones; and then because I did not want to run the risk, so long as I was not absolutely certain of keeping Albertine for as long as I chose, of provoking her irritation to the extent of making her decide to leave me. It is true that if I reasoned, sought the truth, prognosticated the future on the basis of her words, which always approved of all my plans, assuring me how much she loved this life, how little her seclusion deprived her of, I had no doubt that she would remain with me always. I was in fact dismayed by the thought; I felt that life and the world, whose fruits I had never really tasted, were passing me by, bartered for a woman in whom I could no longer find anything new. I could not even go to Venice, where, while I lay in bed, I should be too tormented by the fear of the advances that might be made to her by the gondolier, the people in the hotel, the Venetian women. But if on the contrary I reasoned on the basis of the other hypothesis, that which rested not upon Albertine's words but upon silences, looks, blushes, sulks, and even fits of anger, which I could quite easily have shown her to be unfounded and which I preferred to appear not to notice, then I told myself that she was finding this life unbearable, that she felt constantly deprived of what she loved, and that inevitably she would leave me one day. All that I wished, if she did so, was that I might choose the moment, a moment when it would not be too painful to me, and also at a time of the year when she could not go to any of the places in which I imagined her debaucheries, neither to Amsterdam, nor to Andrée's, nor to Mlle Vinteuil's, though she would see them again, it was true, a few months later. But in the meantime I should have become calmer and it would no longer matter to me. In any case, before even thinking of it I must wait until I was cured of the slight relapse that had been caused by my discovery of the reasons on account of which Albertine, at a few hours' interval, had been determined not to leave, and then to leave Balbec immediately; I must allow time for the symptoms to disappear, since they could only go on diminishing if I learned nothing new, but were still too acute not to render more painful, more difficult, a process of separation now recognised as inevitable, but in no sense urgent, and one that would be better performed in "cold blood." I could control the choice of moment, for if she decided to leave me before I had made up my mind, as soon as she informed me that she had had enough of this life, there would always be time enough for me to think up some way of countering her arguments, to offer her a

larger freedom, to promise her some great pleasure in the near future which she herself would be anxious not to miss, and at worst, if I could find no other recourse but to appeal to her heart, to confess my anguish to her. My mind was therefore at rest from this point of view though I was not being very logical with myself. For, though the basis of this hypothesis was that I precisely disregarded what she said or intimated, I was assuming that, when the question of her leaving arose, she would give me her reasons beforehand, would allow me to resist and overcome them.

I felt that my life with Albertine was on the one hand, when I was not jealous, nothing but boredom, and on the other hand, when I was jealous, nothing but pain. If there had been any happiness in it, it could not last. In the same spirit of wisdom which had inspired me at Balbec, on the evening when we had been happy together after Mme de Cambremer's visit, I wanted to leave her, because I knew that by carrying on I should gain nothing. Only, even now, I imagined that the memory that I retained of her would be like a sort of vibration, prolonged by a pedal, of the last moment of our parting. Hence I was anxious to choose a moment of sweetness, so that it might be it that continued to vibrate in me. I must not be too particular, and wait too long, I must be sensible. And yet, having waited so long, it would be madness not to wait a few days longer, until an acceptable moment should offer itself, rather than risk seeing her depart with that same sense of revolt which I had felt in the past when Mamma left my bedside without bidding me goodnight, or when she said good-bye to me at the station. To be on the safe side, I heaped more and more presents on

her. As regards the Fortuny gowns, we had at length decided upon one in blue and gold lined with pink which was just ready. And I had ordered all the same the other five which she had relinquished with regret in favour of this one.

Yet with the coming of spring, two months after her aunt's conversation with me, I lost my temper with her one evening. It was the very evening on which Albertine had put on for the first time the indoor gown in gold and blue by Fortuny which, by reminding me of Venice, made me feel all the more strongly what I was sacrificing for her, who showed no corresponding gratitude towards me. If I had never seen Venice, I had dreamed of it incessantly since those Easter holidays which, when still a boy, I had been going to spend there, and earlier still, since the Titian prints and Giotto photographs which Swann had given me long ago at Combray. The Fortuny gown which Albertine was wearing that evening seemed to me the tempting phantom of that invisible Venice. It was overrun by Arab ornamentation, like Venice, like the Venetian palaces hidden like sultan's wives behind a screen of perforated stone, like the bindings in the Ambrosian Library, like the columns from which the oriental birds that symbolised alternatively life and death were repeated in the shimmering fabric, of an intense blue which, as my eyes drew nearer, turned into a malleable gold by those same transmutations which, before an advancing gondola, change into gleaming metal the azure of the Grand Canal. And the sleeves were lined with a cherry pink which is so peculiarly Venetian that it is called Tiepolo pink.

In the course of the day, Françoise had let fall in my hearing that Albertine was satisfied with nothing, that

when I sent word to her that I would be going out with her, or that I would not be going out, that the car would or would not come to fetch her, she almost shrugged her shoulders and would barely give a polite answer. That evening when I felt that she was in a bad mood, and when the first heat of summer had wrought upon my nerves, I could not restrain my anger and reproached her for her ingratitude. "Yes, you can ask anybody," I shouted at the top of my voice, quite beside myself, "you can ask Françoise, it's common knowledge." But immediately I remembered how Albertine had once told me how terrifying she found me when I was angry, and had applied to me the lines from *Esther*:

> Judge how, incensed against me, that great forehead
> Must then have cast into my troubled soul such dread.
> Alas! where is the heart audacious that defies
> Unmoved those lightnings starting from your eyes?

I felt ashamed of my violence. And, to make amends for what I had done, without however acknowledging defeat, so that my peace might be an armed and formidable peace, while at the same time I thought it as well to show her once again that I was not afraid of a rupture so that she might not feel tempted to provoke it: "Forgive me, my little Albertine, I'm ashamed of my violence, I don't know how to apologise. If we can't get on together, if we're to be obliged to part, it mustn't be like this, it wouldn't be worthy of us. We will part, if part we must, but first of all I wish to beg your pardon most humbly and from the bottom of my heart." I decided that, to atone for my outburst and also to make certain of her intention to remain with me for some time to come, at any

rate until Andrée should have left Paris, which would be in three weeks' time, it would be as well, next day, to think of some pleasure greater than any that she had yet had, but fairly far ahead; and since I was going to wipe out the offence that I had given her, perhaps it would be as well to take advantage of this moment to show her that I knew more about her life than she supposed. The resentment that she would feel would be removed next day by my generosity, but the warning would remain in her mind. "Yes, my little Albertine, forgive me if I was violent. But I'm not quite as much to blame as you think. There are wicked people in the world who are trying to make us quarrel; I've always refrained from mentioning it, as I didn't want to torment you. But sometimes I'm driven out of my mind by these accusations." And wishing to make the most of the fact that I was going to be able to show her that I was in the know as regards the departure from Balbec, I went on: "For instance, you knew that Mlle Vinteuil was expected at Mme Verdurin's that afternoon when you went to the Trocadéro."

She blushed: "Yes, I knew that."

"Can you swear to me that it was not in order to renew your relations with her that you wanted to go to the Verdurins'."

"Why, of course I can swear it. Why do you say *renew*, I never had any relations with her, I swear it."

I was deeply grieved to hear Albertine lie to me like this, deny the facts which her blush had made all too evident. Her mendacity appalled me. And yet, as it contained a protestation of innocence which, almost unconsciously, I was prepared to accept, it hurt me less than her sincerity when, after I had asked her: "Can you at least

swear to me that the pleasure of seeing Mlle Vinteuil again had nothing to do with your anxiety to go to the Verdurins' that afternoon?" she replied: "No, that I cannot swear. It would have been a great pleasure to see Mlle Vinteuil again."

A moment earlier, I had been angry with her because she concealed her relations with Mlle Vinteuil, and now her admission of the pleasure she would have felt at seeing her again turned my bones to water. True, when Albertine had said to me, on my return from the Verdurins': "Wasn't Mlle Vinteuil to be there?" she had revived all my anguish by proving that she knew of her coming. But doubtless in the meantime I had reasoned thus: "She knew of her coming, which gave her no pleasure in the least, but since she must have realised, after the event, that it was the revelation that she knew someone with such a bad reputation as Mlle Vinteuil that had distressed me at Balbec to the point of thinking of suicide, she didn't want to mention it." And now here she was being obliged to admit that the prospect of seeing Mlle Vinteuil gave her pleasure. Besides, the mystery in which she had cloaked her intention of going to see the Verdurins ought to have been a sufficient proof. But I had not given the matter enough thought. And so, while saying to myself now: "Why does she only half confess? It's even more stupid than wicked and sad," I was so crushed that I did not have the heart to pursue the question, as to which I was not in a strong position, having no damning evidence to produce, and to recover my ascendancy I hurriedly turned to the subject of Andrée which would enable me to put Albertine to rout by means of the overwhelming revelation of Andrée's telegram. "Anyhow," I said to her,

"now I'm being tormented and persecuted again with reports of your relations, this time with Andrée."

"With Andrée?" she cried. Her face was ablaze with fury. And astonishment or the desire to appear astonished made her open her eyes wide. "How charming! And may one know who has been telling you these pretty tales? May I be allowed to speak to these persons, to learn from them what basis they have for their slanders?"

"My little Albertine, I don't know, the letters are anonymous, but from people whom you would perhaps have no difficulty in finding" (this to show her that I did not believe that she would try) "for they must know you quite well. The last one, I must admit (and I mention it because it deals with a trivial thing and there's nothing at all unpleasant in it), made me furious all the same. It informed me that if, on the day when we left Balbec, you first of all wished to remain there and then decided to go, that was because in the meantime you had received a letter from Andrée telling you that she wasn't coming."

"I know quite well that Andrée wrote to tell me that she wasn't coming, in fact she telegraphed; I can't show you the telegram because I didn't keep it, but it wasn't that day. Besides, even if it had been that day, what difference do you suppose it could make to me whether Andrée came or not?"

The words "what difference do you suppose it could make to me" were a proof of anger and that it did make some difference, but were not necessarily a proof that Albertine had returned to Paris solely from a desire to see Andrée. Whenever Albertine saw one of the real or alleged motives of one of her actions discovered by a person to whom she had pleaded a different motive, she became

angry, even if the person was someone for whose sake she had really performed the action. That Albertine believed that this information about what she had been doing did not come to me from anonymous letters which I had received willy-nilly but was eagerly solicited by me could never have been deduced from the words which she next uttered, in which she appeared to accept my story of the anonymous letters, but rather from her look of fury with me, a fury which appeared to be merely the explosion of her previous ill-humour, just as the espionage in which, on this hypothesis, she must suppose that I had been indulging would have been only the culmination of a surveillance of all her actions which she had suspected for a long time past. Her anger extended even to Andrée herself, and deciding no doubt that from now on I should no longer be unworried even when she went out with Andrée, she went on: "Besides, Andrée exasperates me. She's a deadly bore. I never want to go anywhere with her again. You can tell that to the people who informed you that I came back to Paris for her sake. Suppose I were to tell you that after all the years I've known Andrée I couldn't even describe her face to you, so little have I ever looked at it!"

But at Balbec, that first year, she had said to me: "Andrée is lovely." It is true that this did not mean that she had had amorous relations with her, and indeed I had never heard her speak at that time except with indignation of any relations of that sort. But was it not possible that she had changed, even without being aware that she had changed, not thinking that her amusements with a girlfriend were the same thing as the immoral relations, not very clearly defined in her own mind, which she condemned in other women? Was this not possible, since this same change, and this same unawareness of change, had occurred in her relations with myself, whose kisses she had repulsed at Balbec with such indignation, kisses which afterwards she was to give me of her own accord every day, which, I hoped, she would give me for a long time to come, which she was going to give me in a moment?

"But, my darling, how do you expect me to tell them when I don't know who they are?"

This answer was so forceful that it ought to have dissolved the objections and doubts which I saw crystallised in Albertine's pupils. But it left them intact. I was now silent, and yet she continued to gaze at me with that persistent attention which we give to someone who has not finished speaking. I asked her forgiveness once more. She replied that she had nothing to forgive me. She had become very gentle again. But, beneath her sad and troubled features, it seemed to me that a secret plan had taken shape. I knew quite well that she could not leave me without warning me; in fact she could neither want to leave me (it was in a week's time that she was to try on the new Fortuny gowns), nor decently do so, as my mother was returning to Paris at the end of the week and her aunt also. Why, since it was impossible for her to leave, did I repeat to her several times that we should be going out together next day to look at some Venetian glass which I wished to give her, and why was I comforted when I heard her say that that was agreed? When it was time for her to say good-night and I kissed her, she did not behave as usual, but turned her face away—it was barely a minute or two since I had been thinking how

pleasing it was that she now gave me every evening what she had refused me at Balbec—and did not return my kiss. It was as though, having quarrelled with me, she was not prepared to give me a token of affection which might later on have appeared to me an act of duplicity that belied the quarrel. It was as though she was attuning her actions to that quarrel, and yet with moderation, whether so as not to announce it, or because, while breaking off carnal relations with me, she wished nevertheless to remain my friend. I kissed her then a second time, pressing to my heart the shimmering golden azure of the Grand Canal and the mating birds, symbols of death and resurrection. But for the second time, instead of returning my kiss, she drew away with the sort of instinctive and baleful obstinacy of animals that feel the hand of death. This presentiment which she seemed to be expressing overcame me too, and filled me with such anxious dread that when she had reached the door I could not bear to let her go, and called her back.

"Albertine," I said to her, "I'm not at all sleepy. If you don't want to go to sleep yourself, you might stay here a little longer, if you like, but I don't really mind, and I don't on any account want to tire you." I felt that if I had been able to make her undress, and to have her there in her white nightdress, in which she seemed pinker and warmer, in which she excited my senses more keenly, the reconciliation would have been more complete. But I hesitated for an instant, for the sky-blue border of her dress added to her face a beauty, a luminosity, without which she would have seemed to me harder.

She came back slowly and said to me very sweetly, and still with the same downcast, sorrowful expression: "I

can stay as long as you like, I'm not sleepy." Her reply calmed me, for, so long as she was in the room, I felt that I could prepare for the future, and it also reflected friendliness and obedience, but of a certain sort, which seemed to me to be limited by that secret which I sensed behind her sorrowful gaze, her altered manner, altered partly in spite of herself, partly no doubt to attune it in advance to something which I did not know. I felt that, all the same, I needed only to have her all in white, with her throat bare, in front of me, as I had seen her at Balbec in bed, to find the courage which would oblige her to yield.

"Since you're being kind enough to stay here a moment to console me, you ought to take off your gown, it's too hot, too stiff, I dare not approach you for fear of crumpling that fine stuff, and there are those fateful birds between us. Undress, my darling."

"No, I couldn't possibly take off this dress here. I shall undress in my own room presently."

"Then you won't even come and sit down on my bed?"

"Why, of course."

She remained, however, some way away from me, by my feet. We talked. Suddenly we heard the regular rhythm of a plaintive call. It was the pigeons beginning to coo. "That proves that day has come already," said Albertine; and, her brows almost knitted, as though she missed, by living with me, the joys of the fine weather, "Spring has begun, if the pigeons have returned." The resemblance between their cooing and the crow of the cock was as profound and as obscure as, in Vinteuil's septet, the resemblance between the theme of the adagio and that of the opening and closing passages, it being built on the

same key-theme but so transformed by differences of tonality, tempo, etc. that the lay listener who opens a book on Vinteuil is astonished to find that they are all three based on the same four notes, four notes which for that matter he may pick out with one finger upon the piano without recognising any of the three passages. Likewise, this melancholy refrain performed by the pigeons was a sort of cockcrow in the minor key, which did not soar up into the sky, did not rise vertically, but, regular as the braying of a donkey, enveloped in sweetness, went from one pigeon to another along a single horizontal line, and never raised itself, never changed its lateral plaint into that joyous appeal which had been uttered so often in the allegro of the introduction and the finale. I know that I then uttered the word "death," as though Albertine were about to die. It seems that events are larger than the moment in which they occur and cannot be entirely contained in it. Certainly they overflow into the future through the memory that we retain of them, but they demand a place also in the time that precedes them. One may say that we do not then see them as they are to be, but in memory are they not modified too?

When I saw that she deliberately refrained from kissing me, realising that I was merely wasting my time, that it was only after a kiss that the really soothing moments would begin, I said to her: "Good-night, it's too late," because that would make her kiss me and we would go on kissing afterwards. But after saying to me, "Good-night, try and sleep well," she contented herself with letting me kiss her on the cheek, exactly as she had done twice before. This time I dared not call her back. But my heart beat so violently that I could not lie down again. Like a

bird flying from one end of its cage to the other I alternated between anxiety lest Albertine should leave me and a state of comparative calm. This calm was produced by the argument which I kept repeating several times a minute: "She cannot go without warning me, and she never said anything about going," and I was more or less calmed. But at once I said to myself: "But what if tomorrow I find her gone! My very anxiety must be founded on something. Why didn't she kiss me?" At this my heart ached horribly. Then it was slightly soothed by the argument which I advanced once more, but I ended with a headache, so incessant and monotonous was this fluctuation of my thoughts. There are thus certain mental states, and especially anxiety, which, offering us only two alternatives, are somehow as atrociously circumscribed as a simple physical pain. I perpetually repeated both the argument which justified my anxiety and the one which proved it false and reassured me, within as narrow a space as the sick man who explores without ceasing, on an internal impulse, the organ that is causing his suffering and withdraws for an instant from the painful spot only to return to it a moment later. Suddenly, in the silence of the night, I was startled by a noise which, though apparently insignificant, filled me with terror, the noise of Albertine's window being violently opened. When I heard nothing more, I wondered why this noise had caused me such alarm. In itself there was nothing so extraordinary about it, but I probably gave it two interpretations which alarmed me equally. In the first place it was one of the conventions of our life together that, since I was afraid of draughts, nobody must ever open a window at night. This had been explained to Albertine when she came to stay in

the house, and although she was convinced that this was a fad on my part and thoroughly unhealthy, she had promised me that she would never infringe the rule. And she was so timorous about everything that she knew to be my wish, even if she disapproved of it, that she would have gone to sleep amid the fumes of a smouldering fire rather than open her window, just as, however important the circumstances, she would not have had me woken up in the morning. It was only one of the minor conventions of our life, but if she was prepared to violate this one without consulting me, might it not mean that she no longer needed to behave with circumspection, that she would violate them all just as easily? Besides, the noise had been violent, almost rude, as though she had flung the window open, crimson with rage, saying to herself: "This life is stifling me. I don't care, I must have air!" I did not exactly say all this to myself, but I continued to think, as of an omen more mysterious and more funereal than the hoot of an owl, of that sound of the window which Albertine had opened. Filled with an agitation such as I had not perhaps felt since the evening at Combray when Swann had been dining downstairs, I paced the corridor all night long, hoping, by the noise that I made, to attract Albertine's attention, hoping that she would take pity on me and would call me to her, but I heard no sound from her room. At Combray, I had asked my mother to come. But with my mother I feared only her anger; I knew that I would not diminish her affection by displaying mine. This made me hesitate to call out to Albertine. Gradually I began to feel that it was too late. She must long have been asleep. I went back to bed. In the morning, as soon as I awoke, since no one ever came to

my room, whatever happened, without a summons, I rang for Françoise. And at the same time I thought: "I must speak to Albertine about a yacht which I mean to have built for her." As I took my letters I said to Françoise without looking at her: "I shall have something to say to Mlle Albertine presently. Is she up yet?" "Yes, she got up early." I felt untold anxieties which I could scarcely contain rise up in me as in a gust of wind. The tumult in my chest was so great that I was quite out of breath, as though buffeted by a storm. "Ah! but where is she just now?" "I expect she's in her room." "Ah! good! Well, I shall see her presently." I breathed again; my agitation subsided; Albertine was here; it was almost a matter of indifference to me whether she was or not. Besides, had it not been absurd of me to suppose that she could possibly not be there? I fell asleep, but, in spite of my certainty that she would not leave me, it was a light sleep and its lightness related to her alone. For the sounds that were obviously connected with work in the courtyard, while I heard them vaguely in my sleep, left me untroubled, whereas the slightest rustle that came from her room, when she left it, or noiselessly returned, pressing the bell so gently, made me start, ran through my whole body, left me with a palpitating heart, although I had heard it in a deep drowse, just as my grandmother in the last days before her death, when she was plunged in a motionless torpor which nothing could disturb and which the doctors called coma, would begin, I was told, to tremble for a moment like a leaf when she heard the three rings with which I was in the habit of summoning Françoise, and which, even when I made them softer, during that week, so as not to disturb the silence of the death-chamber, no-

body, Françoise assured me, could mistake for anyone else's ring because of a way that I had, and was quite unconscious of having, of pressing the bell. Had I then myself entered into my last agony? Was this the approach of death?

That day and the next we went out together, since Albertine refused to go out again with Andrée. I did not even mention the yacht to her. These outings had completely restored my peace of mind. But in the evening she had continued to embrace me in the same new way, which left me furious. I could interpret it now in no other way than as a means of showing me that she was sulking, which seemed to me perfectly absurd after the kindnesses I continued to heap upon her. And so, no longer receiving from her even those carnal satisfactions on which I depended, finding her ugly in her ill humour, I felt all the more keenly my deprivation of all the women and of the travels for which these first warm days reawakened my desire. Thanks no doubt to scattered memories of forgotten assignations that I had had, while still a schoolboy, with women, beneath trees already in full leaf, this springtime region in which the journey of our dwelling-place through the seasons had halted three days since beneath a clement sky, and in which all the roads sped away towards picnics in the country, boating parties, pleasure trips, seemed to me to be the land of women just as much as it was the land of trees, and the land in which the pleasure that was everywhere on offer became permissible to my convalescent strength. Resigning myself to idleness, resigning myself to chastity, to tasting pleasure only with a woman whom I did not love, resigning myself to remaining shut up in my room, to not travelling, all this

was possible in the old world where we had been only yesterday, the empty world of winter, but not any longer in this new leafy world, in which I had awoken like a young Adam faced for the first time with the problem of existence, of happiness, and not bowed down beneath the accumulation of previous negative solutions. Albertine's presence weighed upon me. I looked at her, grim-faced and sullen, and felt it was a pity we had not broken with each other. I wanted to go to Venice, I wanted in the meantime to go to the Louvre to look at Venetian pictures and to the Luxembourg to see the two Elstirs which, as I had just heard, the Princesse de Guermantes had recently sold to that gallery, those that I had so greatly admired at the Duchesse de Guermantes's, the *Pleasures of the Dance* and the *Portrait of the X Family*. But I was afraid that, in the former, certain lascivious poses might give Albertine a desire, a nostalgic longing for popular rejoicings, might make her think that perhaps a certain life which she had never led, a life of fireworks and suburban pleasure-grounds, had something to recommend it. Already, in anticipation, I was afraid lest, on the Fourteenth of July, she would ask me to take her to a popular ball and I longed for some impossible event which would do away with the national holiday. And besides, there were also in those Elstirs nude female figures in verdant southern landscapes which might make Albertine think of certain pleasures, albeit Elstir himself (but would she not degrade his work?) had seen in them no more than sculptural beauty, or rather the beauty of white monuments, which women's bodies seated amidst verdure assume.

And so I resigned myself to abandoning that pleasure and decided instead to go to Versailles. Not wanting to go

out with Andrée, Albertine had remained in her room, reading, in her Fortuny dressing-gown. I asked her if she would like to go with me to Versailles. She had the charming quality of being always ready for anything, perhaps because she had been accustomed in the past to spend half her time as the guest of other people, and, just as she had made up her mind to come to Paris in two minutes, she said to me: "I can come as I am if we don't get out of the car." She hesitated for a moment between two Fortuny coats beneath which to conceal her dressing-gown—as she might have hesitated between two friends in choosing an escort—chose a beautiful dark-blue one, and stuck a pin into a hat. In a minute, she was ready, before I had put on my overcoat, and we went to Versailles. This very promptitude, this absolute docility left me more reassured, as though, without having any precise reason for anxiety, I had indeed been in need of reassurance. "After all I have nothing to fear. She does everything that I ask, in spite of the noise of her window the other night. The moment I spoke of going out, she flung that blue coat over her gown and out she came. That's not what a rebel would have done, a person who was no longer on friendly terms with me," I said to myself as we went to Versailles. We stayed there a long time. The sky consisted entirely of that radiant and slightly pale blue which the wayfarer lying in a field sees at times above his head, but so uniform and so deep that one feels that the pigment of which it is composed has been applied without the least alloy and with such an inexhaustible richness that one might delve more and more deeply into its substance without encountering an atom of anything but the

same blue. I thought of my grandmother who—in human art as in nature—loved grandeur, and who used to enjoy gazing at the steeple of Saint-Hilaire soaring into that same blue. Suddenly I felt once again a longing for my lost freedom on hearing a noise which I did not at first recognise and which my grandmother would also have loved. It was like the buzz of a wasp. "Look," said Albertine, "there's an aeroplane, high up there, very very high." I looked all over the sky but could see only, unmarred by any black spot, the unbroken pallor of the unalloyed blue. I continued nevertheless to hear the humming of the wings, which suddenly entered my field of vision. Up there, a pair of tiny wings, dark and flashing, punctured the continuous blue of the unalterable sky. I had at last been able to attach the buzzing to its cause, to that little insect throbbing up there in the sky, probably six thousand feet above me; I could see it hum. Perhaps at a time when distances by land had not yet been habitually shortened by speed as they are today, the whistle of a passing train two thousand yards away was endowed with that beauty which now and for some time to come will stir our emotions in the drone of an aeroplane six thousand feet up, at the thought that the distances traversed in this vertical journey are the same as those on the ground, and that in this other direction, where measurements appear different to us because the reach seemed impossible, an aeroplane at six thousand feet is no further away than a train at two thousand yards, is nearer even, the identical trajectory occurring in a purer medium, with no obstacle between the traveller and his starting point, just as on the sea or across the plains, in calm weather,

the wake of a ship that is already far away or the breath of a single zephyr will furrow the ocean of water or of corn.

I wanted something to eat. We stopped at a big pastry-cook's, situated almost outside the town, which at the time enjoyed a certain vogue. A lady was leaving the place, and asked the proprietress for her things. And after the lady had gone, Albertine cast repeated glances at the proprietress as though she wished to attract her attention while she was putting away cups, plates, cakes, for it was already late. She approached us only if I asked for something. And it happened then that, as the woman, who incidentally was extremely tall, was standing up while she waited on us and Albertine was seated beside me, Albertine, each time, in an attempt to attract her attention, raised vertically towards her a sunny gaze which compelled her to elevate her pupils to an inordinate height since, the woman being close up against us, Albertine had no possibility of tempering the angle with a sidelong glance. She was obliged, without raising her head unduly, to make her eyes ascend to that disproportionate height at which the woman's eyes were situated. Out of consideration for me, Albertine would quickly lower her eyes and then, the woman having paid no attention to her, would begin again. This led to a series of vain imploring elevations before an inaccessible deity. Then the proprietress moved away to clear a large table next to ours. Now Albertine could look sideways. But never once did the woman's eyes come to rest upon my mistress. This did not surprise me, for I knew that this woman, with whom I was slightly acquainted, had lovers, although she was married, but managed skilfully to conceal her intrigues,

which astonished me vastly in view of her prodigious stupidity. I studied the woman while we finished our meal. Engrossed in her task, she carried her disregard for Albertine's glances (which incidentally were in no way improper) almost to the point of rudeness. She went on clearing away and arranging things without letting anything distract her. The putting away of the coffee-spoons, the fruit-knives, might have been entrusted not to this large and handsome woman, but, by a labour-saving device, to a mere machine, and you would not have seen so complete an isolation from Albertine's attention; and yet she did not lower her eyes, did not appear self-absorbed, allowed her eyes, her charms to shine in an undivided attention to her work. It is true that if this woman had not been a particularly stupid person (not only was this her reputation, but I knew it from experience), this detachment might have been a supreme proof of guile. And I know very well that the stupidest person, if his desire or his pocket is involved, can, in that sole instance, emerging from the nullity of his stupid life, adapt himself immediately to the workings of the most complicated machinery; all the same, this would have been too subtle a supposition in the case of a woman as brainless as this. Her stupidity even took her to improbable lengths of impoliteness. Not once did she look at Albertine whom, after all, she could not help seeing. It was not very flattering for my mistress, but, when all was said, I was delighted that Albertine should receive this little lesson and should see that frequently women paid no attention to her. We left the pastry-cook's, got into our carriage and were already on our way home when I was seized by a sudden regret that I had not taken the proprietress aside and begged her

on no account to tell the lady who had come out of the shop as we were going in my name and address, which she must know perfectly well because of the orders I had constantly left with her. It was undesirable that the lady should be enabled thus to learn, indirectly, Albertine's address. But I felt that it was not worth while turning back for so small a matter, and that I should appear to be attaching too great an importance to it in the eyes of the idiotic and deceitful proprietress. I decided, however, that I should have to return there, in a week's time, to make this request, and that it is a great bore, since one always forgets half the things one has to say, to have to do even the simplest things in instalments.

We returned home very late, in a half-light through which here and there, by the roadside, a pair of red breeches pressed against a skirt revealed an amorous couple. Our carriage passed in through the Porte Maillot. For the monuments of Paris had been substituted, pure, linear, two-dimensional, a drawing of the monuments of Paris, as though in an attempt to recapture the appearance of a city that had been destroyed. But, at the edges of this picture, there rose so delicately the pale-blue mounting in which it was framed that one's thirsty eyes sought everywhere for a little more of that delicious hue which was too sparingly meted out to them: the moon was shining. Albertine admired the moonlight. I dared not tell her that I would have admired it more if I had been alone, or in quest of an unknown woman. I recited to her some lines of verse or passages of prose about moonlight, pointing out to her how from "silvery" which it had been at one time, it had turned "blue" in Chateaubriand, and in the

Victor Hugo of *Eviradnus* and *La Fête chez Thérèse*, to become in turn yellow and metallic in Baudelaire and Leconte de Lisle. Then, reminding her of the image that is used for the crescent moon at the end of *Booz endormi*, I talked to her about the whole poem.

Looking back, I find it difficult to describe how densely her life was covered in a network of alternating, fugitive, often contradictory desires. No doubt falsehood complicated this still further, for, as she retained no accurate memory of our conversations, if, for example, she had said to me: "Ah! that was a pretty girl, if you like, and a good golfer," and, when I had asked the girl's name, had answered with that detached, universal, superior air of which no doubt there is always enough and to spare, for all liars of this category borrow it for a moment when they do not wish to answer a question, and it never fails them: "Ah, I'm afraid I don't know" (with regret at her inability to enlighten me), "I never knew her name, I used to see her on the golf course, but I didn't know what she was called"—if, a month later, I said to her: "Albertine, you remember that pretty girl you mentioned to me, who used to play golf so well," "Ah, yes," she would answer without thinking, "Emilie Daltier, I don't know what's become of her." And the lie, like a line of earthworks, was carried back from the defence of the name, now captured, to the possibilities of meeting her again. "Oh, I couldn't say, I never knew her address. I can't think of anyone who could give it to you. Oh, no! Andrée never knew her. She wasn't one of our little band, now so scattered."

At other times the lie took the form of a base admission: "Ah! if I had three hundred thousand francs a

year . . ." She bit her lip. "Well? what would you do then?" "I should ask your permission," she said, kissing me, "to stay with you always. Where else could I be so happy?"

But, even allowing for her lies, it was incredible how spasmodic her life was, how fugitive her strongest desires. She would be mad about a person whom, three days later, she would refuse to see. She could not wait for an hour while I sent out for canvas and colours, for she wished to start painting again. For two whole days she would be impatient, almost shed the tears, quickly dried, of an infant that has just been weaned from its nurse. And this instability of her feelings with regard to people, things, occupations, arts, places, was in fact so universal that, if she did love money, which I do not believe, she cannot have loved it for longer than anything else. When she said: "Ah! if I had three hundred thousand francs a year!" or even if she expressed a nefarious but short-lived thought, she could not have held on to it any longer than to the idea of going to Les Rochers, of which she had seen an engraving in my grandmother's edition of Mme de Sévigné, of meeting an old friend from the golf course, of going up in an aeroplane, of going to spend Christmas with her aunt, or of taking up painting again.

"By the way, since neither of us is really hungry, we might look in at the Verdurins'," Albertine said to me. "This is their day and their hour."

"But I thought you were cross with them?"

"Oh! there are all sorts of stories about them, but really they're not so bad as all that. Madame Verdurin has always been very nice to me. Besides, one can't keep on

quarrelling all the time with everybody. They have their faults, but who hasn't?"

"You're not properly dressed, you would have to go home and dress, and that would make us very late."

"Yes, you're right, let's just go home," replied Albertine with that marvellous docility which never ceased to amaze me.

The fine weather, that night, made a leap forward as the mercury in a thermometer darts upwards in the heat. On those early-risen spring mornings I could hear from my bed the tramcars rumbling through a cloud of perfumes, in an atmosphere which became more and more saturated by the warmth until it reached the solidification and density of noon. In my bedroom, where on the contrary it was cooler, when the unctuous air had succeeded in glazing and isolating the smell of the wash-stand, the smell of the wardrobe, the smell of the sofa, simply by the sharpness with which they stood out, vertical and erect, in adjacent but distinct slices, in a pearly chiaroscuro which added a softer glaze to the shimmer of the curtains and the blue satin armchairs, I saw myself, not by a mere caprice of my imagination but because it was physically possible, following, in some new suburban quarter like that in which Bloch's house at Balbec was situated, the streets blinded by the sun, and finding in them not the dull butchers' shops and the white freestone facings, but the country dining-room which I could reach in no time, and the smells that I would find there on my arrival, the smell of the bowl of cherries and apricots, the smell of cider, the smell of gruyère cheese, held in suspense in the luminous coagulation of shadow which they delicately

vein like the heart of an agate, while the knife-rests of prismatic glass scatter rainbows athwart the room or paint the oilcloth here and there with peacock-eyes.

Like a wind that swells in a steady roar, I heard with joy a car beneath the window. I sniffed its smell of petrol. The latter may seem regrettable to the oversensitive (who are always materialists and for whom it spoils the country), and to certain thinkers (materialists after their own fashion also) who, believing in the importance of facts, imagine that man would be happier, capable of higher flights of poetry, if his eyes were able to perceive more colours and his nostrils to distinguish more scents, a philosophical misrepresentation of the naïve idea of those who believe that life was finer when men wore sumptuous costumes instead of black coats. But to me (just as an aroma, unpleasing perhaps in itself, of naphthalene and vetiver would have thrilled me by bringing back to me the blue purity of the sea on the day of my arrival at Balbec), this smell of petrol which, together with the smoke from the exhaust of the car, had so often melted into the pale azure on those scorching days when I used to drive from Saint-Jean-de-la-Haise to Gourville, since it had accompanied me on my excursions during those summer afternoons when I left Albertine painting, called into blossom now on either side of me, for all that I was lying in my darkened bedroom, corn-flowers, poppies and red clover, intoxicated me like a country scent, not circumscribed and fixed like that of the hawthorns which, held in by its dense, oleaginous elements, hangs with a certain stability about the hedge, but like a scent before which the roads sped away, the landscape changed, stately houses came hurrying to meet me, the sky turned pale, forces were increased tenfold, a scent which was like a symbol of elastic motion and power and which revived the desire that I had felt at Balbec to climb into the cage of steel and crystal, but this time no longer to pay visits to familiar houses with a woman I knew too well, but to make love in new places with a woman unknown. A scent that was accompanied incessantly by the horns of passing motors, which I set to words like a military summons: "Parisian, get up, get up, come out and picnic in the country, and take a boat on the river, under the trees, with a pretty girl; get up, get up!" And all these day-dreams were so agreeable that I congratulated myself upon the "stern decree" which prescribed that until I had rung my bell no "timid mortal," whether Françoise or Albertine, should dare come in and disturb me "within this palace" where a majesty so terrible

Means that to my subjects I remain invisible.[24]

But all of a sudden the scene changed; it was the memory, no longer of old impressions but of an old desire, only recently reawakened by the Fortuny gown in blue and gold, that spread before me another spring, a spring not leafy at all but on the contrary suddenly stripped of its trees and flowers by the name that I had just murmured to myself: "Venice"; a decanted springtime, which is reduced to its own essence and expresses the lengthening, the warming, the gradual unfolding of its days in the progressive fermentation, no longer, now, of an impure soil, but of a blue and virginal water, springlike without bud or blossom, which could answer the call of May only by gleaming facets fashioned and polished by

May, harmonising exactly with it in the radiant, unalterable nakedness of its dusky sapphire. Likewise, too, no more than the seasons to its flowerless creeks, do modern times bring any change to the Gothic city; I knew it, even if I could not imagine it, or rather, imagining it, this was what I longed for with the same desire which long ago, when I was a boy, in the very ardour of departure, had broken and robbed me of the strength to make the journey: to find myself face to face with my Venetian imaginings, to observe how that divided sea enclosed in its meanderings, like the sinuosities of the ocean stream, an urbane and refined civilisation, but one that, isolated by their azure girdle, had evolved independently, had had its own schools of painting and architecture, to admire that fabulous garden of fruits and birds in coloured stone, flowering in the midst of the sea which kept it refreshed, lapped the base of the columns with its tide, and, like a sombre azure gaze watching in the shadows, kept patches of light perpetually flickering on the bold relief of the capitals.

Yes, I must go, the time had come. Now that Albertine no longer appeared to be angry with me, the possession of her no longer seemed to me a treasure in exchange for which one is prepared to sacrifice every other. For perhaps one would have done so only to rid oneself of a grief, an anxiety, which are now appeased. One has succeeded in jumping through the calico hoop through which one thought for a moment that one would never be able to pass. One has dispersed the storm, returned to a smiling serenity. The agonising mystery of a hatred with no known cause, and perhaps no end, is dispelled. Henceforward one finds oneself once more face to face with the

problem, momentarily thrust aside, of a happiness which one knows to be impossible.

It might well occur to us, were we better able to analyse our loves, to see that women often attract us only because of the counterpoise of all the men with whom we have to compete for them, although we suffer agonies from having thus to compete; this counterpoise removed, the charm of the woman declines. We have a painful and cautionary example of this in the predilection men have for women who have strayed before they came to know them, for those women whom they feel to be sinking in perilous quicksands and whom they must spend the whole period of their love in rescuing; a posthumous example, on the other hand, and one that is not in the least tragic, in the man who, conscious of a decline in his affection for the woman he loves, spontaneously applies the rules that he has deduced, and, to make sure that he does not cease to love the woman, places her in a dangerous environment where he is obliged to protect her daily. (The opposite of the men who insist on a woman's retiring from the stage even though it was because she was on the stage that they fell in love with her.)

Now that life with Albertine had become possible once again, I felt that I could derive nothing from it but misery, since she did not love me; better to part from her in the gentle solace of her acquiescence, which I would prolong in memory. Yes, this was the moment; I must make quite certain of the date on which Andrée was leaving Paris, use all my influence with Mme Bontemps to make sure that at that moment Albertine should not be able to go either to Holland or to Montjouvain; and when in this way there were no immediate drawbacks to Alber-

tine's departure, choose a fine day like this—and there would be plenty of them before long—when she had ceased to matter to me, when I was tempted by countless desires. I should have to let her leave the house without my seeing her, then, getting up and preparing myself in haste, leave a note for her, taking advantage of the fact that as she could not for the time being go anywhere that would upset me, I might be spared, during my travels, from imagining the wicked things which she might do—and which in any case for the moment seemed quite unimportant—and, without seeing her again, set off for Venice.

I rang for Françoise to ask her to buy me a guidebook and a timetable, as I had done as a boy when already I wanted to prepare in advance a journey to Venice, the fulfilment of a desire as violent as that which I felt at this moment. I forgot that, in the meantime, there was a desire which I had attained without any satisfaction—the desire for Balbec—and that Venice, being also a visible phenomenon, was probably no more able than Balbec to fulfil an ineffable dream, that of the Gothic age made actual by a springtime sea, that now teased my mind from moment to moment with an enchanted, caressing, elusive, mysterious, confused image. Françoise, having heard my ring, came into the room, rather uneasy as to how I would take what she had to say and what she had done. "I was very worried," she said to me, "that Monsieur should be so late in ringing this morning. I didn't know what I ought to do. This morning at eight o'clock Mademoiselle Albertine asked me for her boxes. I dared not refuse her, and I was afraid that Monsieur might scold me if I came and waked him. It was no use lecturing her, telling her to wait

an hour because I expected all the time that Monsieur would ring; she wouldn't have it, she left this letter with me for Monsieur, and at nine o'clock off she went." Then—so ignorant can we be of what is inside us, since I was convinced of my indifference to Albertine—my breath was cut short, I gripped my heart in my hands, which were suddenly moistened by a perspiration I had not experienced since the revelation she had made to me on the little train with regard to Mlle Vinteuil's friend, and I was incapable of saying anything else but: "Ah! very good, Françoise, you were of course quite right not to wake me. Leave me now for a moment, I shall ring for you presently."

jealous memories having died away, suddenly at times a feeling of tenderness for Albertine would well up in my heart, and then, thinking of my own love affairs with other women, I told myself that she would have understood, would have shared them—and her vice became almost a reason for loving her. At times my jealousy revived in moments when I no longer remembered Albertine, although it was of her that I was jealous. I thought that I was jealous of Andrée, apropos of whom I heard at that time of an amorous adventure she was having. But Andrée was to me merely a substitute, a by-road, a connecting link which brought me indirectly to Albertine. So it is that in dreams we give a different face, a different name to a person as to whose underlying identity we are not mistaken. When all was said, notwithstanding the continuing ebb and flow which upset in these particular instances the general law, the sentiments that Albertine had bequeathed to me were more difficult to extinguish than the memory of their original cause. Not only the sentiments, but the sensations. Different in this respect from Swann who, when he had begun to cease to love Odette, had not even been able to re-create in himself the sensation of his love, I felt myself still reliving a past which was now no more than the story of another person; my personality was now somehow split in two, and while the upper part was already hard and chilled, it still burned at its base whenever a spark made the old current pass through it, even after my mind had long ceased to conceive of Albertine. And as no image of her accompanied the painful palpitations that were substituted for it, and the tears that were brought to my eyes by a cold breeze blowing as at Balbec through apple-trees already

pink with blossom, I came to wonder whether the renewal of my grief was not due to entirely pathological causes and whether what I took to be the revival of a memory and the final period of a lingering love was not rather the first stage of heart-disease.

There are in certain affections secondary symptoms which the sufferer is too apt to confuse with the malady itself. When they cease, he is surprised to find himself nearer to recovery than he had supposed. Of this sort had been the suffering caused me—the "complication" brought about—by Aimé's letters with regard to the bathing establishment and the laundry-girls. But a spiritual healer, had such a person visited me, would have found that, in other respects, my grief itself was on the way to recovery. Doubtless, since I was a man, one of those amphibious creatures who are plunged simultaneously in the past and in the reality of the present, there still existed in me a contradiction between the living memory of Albertine and my consciousness of her death. But this contradiction was in a sense the converse of what it had been before. The idea that Albertine was dead, which at first used to contest so furiously with the idea that she was alive that I was obliged to run away from it as children run away from an oncoming wave, by the very force of its incessant onslaughts had ended by capturing the place in my mind that a short while before was still occupied by the idea of her life. Without my being precisely aware of it, it was now this idea of Albertine's death—no longer the present memory of her life—that for the most part formed the basis of my unconscious musings, with the result that if I interrupted them suddenly to reflect upon myself, what surprised me was not,

as during the first days, that Albertine, so alive in me, could be no longer existent upon the earth, could be dead, but that Albertine, who no longer existed upon the earth, who was dead, should have remained so alive in me. Built up and held together by the contiguity of the memories that followed one another, the black tunnel in which my thoughts had lain dreaming so long that they had even ceased to be aware of it was suddenly broken by an interval of sunlight, bathing in the distance a blue and smiling universe where Albertine was no more than a memory, insignificant and full of charm. Was it she, I wondered, who was the true Albertine, or was it the person who, in the darkness through which I had so long been travelling, seemed to me the sole reality? The person I had been so short a time ago, who lived only in the perpetual expectation of the moment when Albertine would come in to say good-night and kiss him, was now made to appear to me, by a sort of multiplication of myself, as no more than a faint fragment of me, already half stripped away, and, like a flower unfolding its petals, I felt the rejuvenating refreshment of an exfoliation. However, these brief illuminations succeeded perhaps only in making me more conscious of my love for Albertine, as happens with every idea that is too constant, needing opposition to make it affirm itself. People who were alive during the war of 1870, for instance, say that the idea of war ended by seeming to them natural, not because they did not think enough about the war, but because they thought of it all the time. And in order to understand how strange and momentous a fact war is, it was necessary that, something else wrenching them out of their permanent obsession, they should forget for a moment that a state of war prevailed

and should find themselves once again as they had been in peacetime, until all of a sudden, against that momentary blank, there stood out clearly at last the monstrous reality which they had long ceased to see, since there had been nothing else visible.

If only this withdrawal of my different impressions of Albertine had at least been carried out not in echelon but simultaneously, evenly, frontally, along the whole line of my memory, the recollections of her infidelities receding at the same time as those of her sweetness, forgetting would have brought me solace. It was not so. As upon a beach where the tide recedes unevenly, I would be assailed by the onrush of one of my suspicions when the image of her tender presence had already withdrawn too far from me to be able to bring me its remedial balm.

The betrayals had made me suffer because, however remote the year in which they had occurred, to me they were not remote; but I suffered from them less when they became remote, that is to say when I pictured them to myself less vividly, for the remoteness of a thing is in proportion rather to the visual power of the memory that is looking at it than to the real duration of the intervening days, as the memory of last night's dream may seem to us more distant in its imprecision and dimness than an event which is many years old. But, although the idea of Albertine's death made some headway in me, the reflux of the sensation that she was alive, if it did not arrest that progress, obstructed it nevertheless and prevented its being regular. And I realise now that during this period (doubtless because of my having forgotten the hours in which she had been cloistered in my house, hours which, by dispelling my anguish at misdeeds which seemed to

me almost unimportant because I knew that she was not committing them, had become tantamount to so many proofs of her innocence), I underwent the martyrdom of living in the constant company of an idea quite as novel as the idea that Albertine was dead (until then I had always started from the idea that she was alive), with an idea which I should have supposed it to be equally impossible to endure and which, without my noticing it, was gradually forming the basis of my consciousness, substituting itself for the idea that Albertine was innocent: the idea that she was guilty. When I thought I was doubting her, I was on the contrary believing in her; similarly I took as the starting point of my other ideas the certainty—often proved false as the contrary idea had been—of her guilt, while continuing to imagine that I still felt doubts. I must have suffered a great deal during this period, but I realise that it had to be so. One is cured of suffering only by experiencing it to the full. By protecting Albertine from any contact with the outside world, by creating for myself the illusion that she was innocent, and also, later on, by adopting as the basis of my reasoning the thought that she was alive, I was merely postponing the hour of recovery, because I was postponing the long hours of necessary suffering that must precede it. Now with regard to these ideas of Albertine's guilt, habit, were it to come into play, would do so in accordance with the same laws as I had already experienced in the course of my life. Just as the name Guermantes had lost the significance and the charm of a road bordered with red and purple flowers and of the window of Gilbert the Bad, Albertine's presence that of the blue undulations of the sea, the names of Swann, of the lift-boy, of the Princesse

de Guermantes and so many others, all that they had meant to me—that charm and that significance leaving me with a mere word which they considered big enough to stand on its own feet, as a man who comes to set a subordinate to work gives him his instructions and after a few weeks withdraws—similarly the painful knowledge of Albertine's guilt would be expelled from me by habit. Moreover between now and then, like an attack launched from both flanks at once, in this action undertaken by habit two allies would mutually lend a hand. It was because this idea of Albertine's guilt would become for me more probable, more habitual, that it would become less painful. But at the same time, because it would be less painful, the objections against my certainty of her guilt, which were inspired in my mind only by my desire not to suffer too acutely, would collapse one by one; and, one action precipitating another, I should pass quickly enough from the certainty of Albertine's innocence to the certainty of her guilt. I had to live with the idea of Albertine's death, with the idea of her misdeeds, in order for these ideas to become habitual, that is to say in order to be able to forget these ideas and in the end forget Albertine herself.

I had not yet reached this stage. At one time it was my memory, made clearer by some intellectual excitement—such as reading a book—which revived my grief; at other times it was on the contrary my grief—when it was aroused, for instance, by the anguish of a spell of stormy weather—which raised higher, brought nearer to the light, some memory of our love. Moreover these revivals of my love for Albertine might occur after an interval of indifference interspersed with other curiosities, as,

after the long interval which had begun with her refusal to let me kiss her at Balbec and during which I had thought far more about Mme de Guermantes, about Andrée, about Mlle de Stermaria, it had revived when I had started seeing her regularly again. But even now various preoccupations could bring about a separation—from a dead woman, this time—in which she left me more indifferent. All this for the same reason, that she was a living person for me. And even later on, when I loved her less, it remained nevertheless for me one of those desires of which we quickly tire, but which revive when we have allowed them to lie dormant for a while. I pursued one living woman, then another, then I returned to my dead one. Often it was in the most obscure recesses of myself, when I could no longer form any clear idea of Albertine, that a name would come by chance to stimulate painful reactions which I supposed to be no longer possible, like those dying people whose brain is no longer capable of thought and who are made to contract their muscles by the prick of a needle. And, during long periods, these stimulations occurred to me so rarely that I was driven to seek for myself occasions for grief, for a pang of jealousy, in an attempt to re-establish contact with the past, to remember her better. For, since regret for a woman is only a recrudescence of love and remains subject to the same laws, the keenness of my regret was intensified by the same causes which in Albertine's lifetime had increased my love for her and in the front rank of which had always appeared jealousy and grief. But as a rule these occasions—for an illness or a war can always last far longer than the most prophetic wisdom has calculated—took me unawares and caused me such violent shocks that I thought

far more of protecting myself against suffering than of appealing to them for a memory.

Moreover a word did not even need to be connected, like "Chaumont," with some suspicion (even a syllable common to two different names was sufficient for my memory—as for an electrician who is happy with any substance that is a good conductor—to restore the contact between Albertine and my heart) in order to reawaken that suspicion, to be the password, the "Open sesame" unlocking the door of a past which one had ceased to take into account because, having seen more than enough of it, literally one no longer possessed it; one had been shorn of it, had supposed that by this subtraction one's own personality had changed its form, like a geometrical figure which by the removal of an angle would lose one of its sides; certain phrases, for instance, in which there occurred the name of a street or a road where Albertine might have been, were sufficient to incarnate a potential, non-existent jealousy, in quest of a body, a dwelling, some physical location, some particular realisation.

Often it was simply during my sleep that these "reprises," these "da capos" of one's dreams, which turn back several pages of one's memory, several leaves of the calendar at once, brought me back, made me regress to a painful but remote impression which had long since given place to others but which now became present once more. As a rule, it was accompanied by a whole stage-setting, clumsy but striking, which, giving me the illusion of reality, brought before my eyes, voiced in my ears, what thenceforward dated from that night. Besides, in the history of a love-affair and of its struggles against forgetfulness, do not our dreams occupy an even larger place than

our waking state, since they take no account of the infinitesimal divisions of time, suppress transitions, oppose sharp contrasts, undo in an instant the web of consolation so slowly woven during the day, and contrive for us, by night, a meeting with her whom we would eventually have forgotten, provided always that we did not see her again? For whatever people may say, we can perfectly well have in a dream the impression that what is happening in it is real. It would be impossible only for reasons drawn from our waking experience, an experience which at that moment is hidden from us. With the result that this supposititious life seems to us real. Sometimes, by a defect in the internal lighting which spoiled the success of the play, my well-staged memories giving me the illusion of life, I really believed that I had arranged to meet Albertine, that I was seeing her again, but then I found myself incapable of advancing to meet her, of uttering the words which I meant to say to her, of relighting in order to see her the torch that had gone out—impossibilities which were simply in my dream the immobility, the dumbness, the blindness of the sleeper—as suddenly one sees a huge shadow which ought not to be visible obliterate the figures on the screen of a magic lantern, a shadow which is that of the lantern itself, or that of the operator. At other times Albertine was present in my dream, and proposed to leave me once again, without my being moved by her resolve. This was because a warning ray of light had managed to filter into the darkness of my sleep, and what deprived Albertine's future actions, her threatened departure, of any importance for me was the knowledge that she was dead. But often, even more clearly, this memory that Albertine was dead was combined, without destroying it, with the sensation that she was alive. I chatted to her, and while I was speaking my grandmother moved to and fro at the back of the room. Part of her chin had crumbled away like a corroded statue, but I found nothing unusual in that. I told Albertine that I had various questions to ask her with regard to the bathing establishment at Balbec, and to a certain laundress in Touraine, but I would put them off till later since we had plenty of time and there was no longer any urgency. She assured me that she was not doing anything wrong and that she had merely, the day before, kissed Mlle Vinteuil on the lips. "What? Is she here?" "Yes, in fact it's time for me to leave you, as I have to go and see her presently." And since, now that Albertine was dead, I no longer kept her a prisoner in my house as in the last months of her life, her visit to Mlle Vinteuil perturbed me. I did not want to show it; Albertine told me that she had done no more than kiss her, but she was evidently beginning to lie again as in the days when she used to deny everything. Presently, no doubt, she would not be content merely with kissing Mlle Vinteuil. Doubtless from a certain point of view I was wrong to let myself be disturbed like this, since, according to what we are told, the dead can feel nothing, can do nothing. People say so, but this did not alter the fact that my grandmother, who was dead, had continued nevertheless to live for many years, and at that moment was walking to and fro in my room. And no doubt, once I was awake, this idea of a dead woman who continued to live ought to have become as impossible for me to understand as it is to explain. But I had already formed it so many times in the course of those transient periods of madness which are our dreams, that I had be-

come in time familiar with it; our memory of dreams may become lasting, if they repeat themselves often enough. And long after my dream had ended, I remained tormented by that kiss which Albertine had told me she had given in words which I thought I could still hear. And indeed they must have passed very close to my ear since it was I myself who had uttered them. All day long, I continued to talk to Albertine; I questioned her, I forgave her, I made up for my forgetfulness of the things which I had always meant to say to her during her life. And all of a sudden I was startled by the thought that the creature invoked by memory to whom all these remarks were addressed no longer bore any relation to reality, that death had destroyed the various parts of the face to which the continual thrust of the will to live, now abolished, had alone given the unity of a person.

At other times, without my having dreamed, as soon as I awoke I felt that the wind had changed in me; it was blowing coldly and steadily from another direction, issuing from the remotest past, bringing back to me the sound of a clock striking far-off hours, of the whistle of departing trains which I did not ordinarily hear. One day I tried to interest myself in a book. I reopened a novel by Bergotte of which I had been especially fond. Its congenial characters appealed to me greatly, and very soon, reconquered by the charm of the book, I began to hope, as for a personal pleasure, that the wicked woman might be punished, while my eyes grew moist when the happiness of the young lovers was assured. "But then," I exclaimed in despair, "I cannot conclude, from the fact that I attach so much importance to what Albertine may have done, that her personality is something real which cannot be destroyed, that I shall find her one day in her own likeness in heaven, if I invoke with so many entreaties, await with such impatience, welcome with tears the success of a person who has never existed except in Bergotte's imagination, whom I have never seen, whose appearance I am at liberty to imagine as I please!" Besides, in this novel, there were seductive girls, amorous correspondences, deserted paths in which lovers meet, and all this, reminding me that one may love clandestinely, revived my jealousy, as though Albertine had still been able to stroll along deserted paths. And the novel also pictured a man who after fifty years meets a woman whom he loved in her youth, fails to recognise her, is bored in her company. And this reminded me that love does not last for ever and distressed me as though I were destined to be parted from Albertine and to meet her again with indifference in my old age. If I caught sight of a map of France, my fearful eyes took care not to fall upon Touraine so that I might not be jealous, nor, so that I might not be miserable, upon Normandy, where would certainly be indicated at least Balbec and Doncières, between which I could situate all those places we had traversed so many times together. In the midst of other names of towns or villages of France, names which were merely visible or audible, the name of Tours, for instance, seemed to be differently composed, to be made up, not of intangible images, but of venomous substances which acted instantaneously on my heart, making it beat faster and more painfully. And if this force extended to certain names, making them so different from the rest, how, when I stayed closer to myself, when I confined myself to Albertine herself, could I be astonished that this force which I found irresistible, and

to produce which any other woman might have served, had been the result of an entanglement, of a bringing into contact of dreams, desires, habits, affections, with the requisite conjunction of alternating pains and pleasures? And this continued her life in death, memory being sufficient to sustain the reality of life, which is mental. I recalled Albertine alighting from a railway carriage and telling me that she wanted to go to Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, and I saw her again before that, with her "polo" pulled down over her cheeks; I thought of new possibilities of happiness, towards which I sprang, saying to myself: "We might have gone on together to Infreville, to Doncières." There was no watering-place in the neighbourhood of Balbec in which I did not see her, with the result that that country, like a mythological land which had been preserved, restored to me, living and cruel, the most ancient, the most charming legends, those that had been most obliterated by the sequel of my love. Ah, what anguish were I ever to have to sleep again in that bed at Balbec around whose brass frame, as around an immovable pivot, a fixed bar, my life had moved and evolved, bringing successively into its compass gay conversations with my grandmother, the nightmare of her death, Albertine's soothing caresses, the discovery of her vice, and now a new life into which, looking at the glazed bookcases in which the sea was reflected, I knew that Albertine would never come again! Was it not, that Balbec hotel, like the single set of a provincial theatre, in which for years past the most diverse plays have been performed, which has served for a comedy, for first one tragedy, then another, for a purely poetical drama, that hotel which already stretched quite far back into my past? The fact that this part alone, with

its walls, its bookcases, its mirror, remained invariably the same throughout new epochs of my life, made me better aware that all in all it was the rest, it was myself, that had changed, and thus gave me that impression that the mysteries of life, of love, of death—which in their optimism children believe they have no share in—are not set apart, but one perceives with sorrowful pride that they have formed an integral part of one's own life through the course of the years.

I tried at times to take an interest in the newspapers. But I found the act of reading them repellent, and moreover by no means innocuous. The fact is that from each of our ideas, as from a crossroads in a forest, so many paths branch off in different directions that at the moment when I least expected it I found myself faced by a fresh memory. The title of Fauré's melody *Le Secret* had led me to the Duc de Broglie's *Secret du Roi*, the name Broglie to that of Chaumont;[26] or else the words "Good Friday" had made me think of Golgotha, Golgotha of the etymology of the word which is, it seems, the equivalent of *Calvus Mons*, Chaumont. But, whatever the path by which I had arrived at Chaumont, at that moment I received so violent a shock that I was far more concerned to ward off pain than to probe for memories. Some moments after the shock, my intelligence, which like the sound of thunder travels less rapidly, produced the reason for it. Chaumont had made me think of the Buttes-Chaumont, where Mme Bontemps had told me that Andrée used often to go with Albertine, whereas Albertine had told me that she had never seen the Buttes-Chaumont. After a certain age our memories are so intertwined with one another that what we are thinking of, the book we are read-

terest of this unexpected question, as though each different Albertine, each new memory, set a special problem of jealousy, to which the solutions of the other problems could not apply.

But I would have liked to know not only with what woman she had spent that evening, but what special pleasure it represented to her, what was happening inside her at that moment. Sometimes, at Balbec, Françoise had gone to fetch her, and had told me that she had found her leaning out of her window with an anxious, questing air, as though she were expecting somebody. Supposing I learned that the girl she was awaiting was Andrée—what was the state of mind in which Albertine awaited her, that state of mind concealed behind the anxious, questing gaze? How important were those tastes to Albertine? How large a place did they occupy in her thoughts? Alas, remembering my own agitation whenever I had caught sight of a girl who attracted me, sometimes when I had merely heard her spoken of without having seen her, my anxiety to look my best, to show myself to advantage, my cold sweats, I had only, in order to torture myself, to imagine the same voluptuous excitement in Albertine, as though by means of the apparatus which, after the visit of a certain practitioner who had shown some scepticism about her malady, my aunt Léonie had wished to see invented, and which would enable the doctor to undergo all the sufferings of his patient in order to understand better. And already it was enough to torture me, to tell me that, compared with this other thing, serious conversations with me about Stendhal and Victor Hugo must have counted for very little with her, to feel her heart being drawn towards other people, detaching itself from mine, implanting itself

elsewhere. But even the importance which this desire must have for her and the reserve with which she surrounded it could not reveal to me what it was qualitatively, still less how she referred to it when she spoke of it to herself. In physical suffering, at least we do not have to choose our pain ourselves. The malady determines it and imposes it on us. But in jealousy we have, so to speak, to try out sufferings of every shape and size, before we arrive at the one which seems to fit. And how much more difficult this is in the case of a suffering such as that of feeling that she whom we loved is finding pleasure with beings who are different from us, who give her sensations which we are not capable of giving her, or who at least by their configuration, their aspect, their ways, represent to her something quite different from us! Ah, if only Albertine had fallen in love with Saint-Loup, how much less, it seemed to me, I should have suffered!

It is true that we are unaware of the particular sensibility of each of our fellow-creatures, but as a rule we do not even know that we are unaware of it, for this sensibility of other people is a matter of indifference to us. So far as Albertine was concerned, my misery or happiness would have depended upon the nature of this sensibility; I was well aware that it was unknown to me, and the fact that it was unknown to me was painful in itself. Once, I had the illusion of seeing these unknown desires and pleasures of Albertine's, another time, of hearing them. Of seeing them when, some time after her death, Andrée came to see me.

For the first time she seemed to me beautiful. I said to myself that her almost frizzy hair, her dark, shadowed eyes, were doubtless what Albertine had loved so much,

the materialisation before my eyes of what she pictured in her amorous day-dreams, what she saw with the expectant eyes of desire on the day when she had so suddenly decided to leave Balbec. Like a strange, dark flower brought back to me from beyond the grave, from the innermost being of a person in whom I had been unable to discover it, I seemed to see before me, the unlooked-for exhumation of a priceless relic, the incarnate desire of Albertine which Andrée was to me, as Venus was the desire of Jove. Andrée regretted Albertine's death, but I sensed at once that she did not miss her. Forcibly removed from her friend by death, she seemed to have easily reconciled herself to a final separation which I would not have dared to ask of her while Albertine was alive, so afraid would I have been of failing to obtain her consent. She seemed on the contrary to accept this renunciation without difficulty, but precisely at the moment when it could no longer be of any advantage to me. Andrée abandoned Albertine to me, but dead, and having lost for me not only her life but retrospectively a little of her reality, now that I saw that she was not indispensable and unique to Andrée who had been able to replace her with others.

While Albertine was alive, I would not have dared to ask Andrée to confide in me about the nature of their friendship both mutually and with Mlle Vinteuil's friend, being uncertain, towards the end, whether Andrée did not repeat to Albertine everything I said to her. But now such an inquiry, even if it were to prove fruitless, would at least be unattended by danger. I spoke to Andrée, not in a questioning tone but as though I had known all the time, perhaps from Albertine, of the fondness that she herself, Andrée, had for women and of her own relations

with Mlle Vinteuil. She admitted it all without the slightest reluctance, smiling as she spoke. I could not help drawing the most painful conclusions from this avowal; first of all because Andrée, so affectionate and coquettish with many of the young men at Balbec, would never have been suspected by anyone of practices which she made no attempt to deny, so that by analogy, when I discovered this new Andrée, I felt that Albertine would have confessed them with the same ease to anyone other than myself, whom she felt to be jealous. But at the same time, Andrée having been Albertine's best friend, and the friend for whose sake she had probably returned in haste from Balbec, and Andrée having admitted to these tastes, the conclusion that was forced upon my mind was that Albertine and Andrée had always indulged them together. Of course, just as, in the presence of a stranger, we do not always dare to examine the gift he has brought us, the wrapper of which we shall not unfasten until the donor has gone, so long as Andrée was with me I did not retire into myself to examine the pain she had brought me. Although I could feel that it was already causing my bodily servants, my nerves, my heart, the greatest turmoil, out of good manners I pretended not to notice, chatting away on the contrary with the utmost affability to the girl who was my guest without diverting my gaze to these internal incidents. It was especially painful to me to hear Andrée say of Albertine: "Oh, yes, she always loved going to the Chevreuse valley." To the vague and non-existent universe in which Albertine's excursions with Andrée occurred, it seemed to me that the latter, by a subsequent and diabolical act of creation, had just added to God's work an accursed valley. I felt that Andrée was going to

tell me everything that she had been in the habit of doing with Albertine, and, as I went on trying, from politeness, from canniness, from pride, perhaps from gratitude, to appear more and more affectionate, while the space that I had still been able to concede to Albertine's innocence became smaller and smaller, it seemed to me that, despite my efforts, I presented the paralysed aspect of an animal round which a bird of prey is wheeling in steadily narrowing circles, unhurriedly because it is confident of being able to swoop on its helpless victim whenever it chooses. I gazed at her nevertheless, and, with such liveliness, naturalness and assurance as a person can muster who is trying to make it appear that he is not afraid of being hypnotised by someone's stare, I said casually to Andrée: "I've never mentioned the subject to you for fear of offending you, but now that we both find pleasure in talking about her, I may as well tell you that I found out long ago all about the things of that sort that you used to do with Albertine. And I can tell you something that you will be glad to hear although you know it already: Albertine adored you."

I told Andrée that it would be of great interest to me if she would allow me to see her (even if she simply confined herself to caresses which would not embarrass her unduly in my presence) performing such actions with those of Albertine's friends who shared her tastes, and I mentioned Rosemonde, Berthe, each of Albertine's friends, in the hope of finding out something.

"Apart from the fact that not for anything in the world would I do the things you mention in your presence," Andrée replied, "I don't believe that any of the girls whom you've named have those tastes."

Drawing closer in spite of myself to the monster that was mesmerising me, I answered: "What! You don't expect me to believe that of all your group Albertine was the only one with whom you did that sort of thing!"

"But I never did anything of the sort with Albertine."

"Come now, my dear Andrée, why deny things which I've known for at least three years? I see nothing wrong in them, far from it. For instance, that evening when she was so anxious to go with you the next day to Mme Verdurin's, you may remember perhaps . . ."

Before I had completed my sentence, I saw in Andrée's eyes, which it sharpened to a pinpoint like those stones which for that reason jewellers find it difficult to use, a fleeting, worried look, like the look on the face of a person privileged to go behind the scenes who draws back the edge of the curtain before the play has begun and at once withdraws in order not to be seen. This anxious look vanished and everything was back in place, but I sensed that whatever I saw from now on would have been artificially arranged for my benefit. At that moment I caught sight of myself in the mirror, and was struck by a certain resemblance between myself and Andrée. If I had not long since ceased to shave my upper lip and had had only a faint shadow of a moustache, this resemblance would have been almost complete. It was perhaps on seeing my moustache at Balbec when it had scarcely begun to grow again that Albertine had suddenly felt that impatient, furious desire to return to Paris.

"But I still can't say things that aren't true simply because you see no harm in them. I swear to you that I never did anything with Albertine, and I'm convinced that she detested that sort of thing. The people who told

you that were lying to you, probably with some ulterior motive," she said with a questioning, defiant air.

"Oh, very well then, since you won't tell me," I replied, pretending to appear to be unwilling to furnish a proof which in fact I did not possess. However, I mentioned vaguely and at random the Buttes-Chaumont.

"I may have gone to the Buttes-Chaumont with Albertine, but is it a place that has a particularly evil reputation?"

I asked her whether she could not raise the subject with Gisèle who had at one time been on intimate terms with Albertine. But Andrée told me that because of a vile thing that Gisèle had done to her recently, asking a favour of her was the one thing that she must absolutely decline to do for me. "If you see her," she went on, "don't tell her what I've said to you about her; there's no point in making an enemy of her. She knows what I think of her, but I've always preferred to avoid having violent quarrels with her which only have to be patched up afterwards. And besides, she's dangerous. But you must understand that when one has read the letter which I had in my hands a week ago, and in which she lied with such absolute treachery, nothing, not even the noblest actions in the world, can wipe out the memory of such a thing."

On the whole I felt that if, in spite of the fact that Andrée had those tastes to the extent of making no pretence of concealing them, and the fact that Albertine had felt for her the great affection which she undoubtedly had felt, Andrée had none the less never had any carnal relations with Albertine and had never been aware that Albertine had those tastes, this meant that Albertine did not have them, and had never enjoyed with anyone those relations which, rather than with anyone else, she would have enjoyed with Andrée. And so when Andrée had left me, I realised that her categorical assertion had brought me some peace of mind. But perhaps it had been dictated by a sense of the obligation, which Andrée felt that she owed to the dead girl whose memory still survived in her, not to let me believe what Albertine, while she was alive, had doubtless begged her to deny.

Having thought for a moment, contemplating Andrée, that I could actually see these pleasures of Albertine's which I had so often tried to imagine, on another occasion I received an intimation of them otherwise than through the eyes: I thought I heard them. I had had two young laundry-girls, from a district where Albertine had often gone, brought to a house of assignation. One of them, beneath the caresses of the other, suddenly began to utter sounds which at first I found difficult to identify; for one never understands precisely the meaning of an original sound expressive of a sensation which one does not experience oneself. Hearing it from a neighbouring room without being able to see, one may mistake for uncontrollable laughter the noise which is forced by pain from a patient being operated on without an anaesthetic; and as for the noise emitted by a mother who has just been told that her child has died, it can seem to us, if we are unaware of its origin, as difficult to translate into human terms as the noise emitted by an animal or by a harp. It takes us a little time to realise that those two noises express what, by analogy with the (very different) sensations we ourselves may have felt, we call pain; and it took me some time, too, to understand that *this* noise expressed what, by analogy with the (very different) sensations I myself had felt,

I called pleasure; and the pleasure must have been very great to overwhelm to this extent the person who was expressing it and to extract from her this strange utterance which seemed to describe and comment on all the phases of the exquisite drama which the young woman was living through and which was concealed from my eyes by the curtain that is for ever lowered for other people over what happens in the mysterious intimacy of every human creature. In any case these two girls could tell me nothing, as they had no idea who Albertine was.

Novelists sometimes pretend in an introduction that while travelling in a foreign country they have met somebody who has told them the story of another person's life. They then withdraw in favour of this chance acquaintance, and the story that he tells them is nothing more or less than their novel. Thus the life of Fabrice del Dongo was related to Stendhal by a canon of Padua. How gladly would we, when we are in love, that is to say when another person's existence seems to us mysterious, find some such well-informed narrator! And undoubtedly he exists. Do we not ourselves frequently relate the story of some woman or other quite dispassionately to one of our friends, or to a stranger, who has known nothing of her love-affairs and listens to us with keen interest? Such a person as I was when I spoke to Bloch about the Princesse de Guermantes or Mme Swann, such a person existed, who could have spoken to me of Albertine, such a person exists always . . . but we never come across him. It seemed to me that if I had been able to find women who had known her I should have learned everything I did not yet know. And yet to strangers it must have seemed that nobody could have known as much about her

life as I did. Indeed, did I not know her dearest friend, Andrée? Thus one imagines that the friend of a minister must know the truth about some political affair or cannot be implicated in a scandal. From his own experience the friend has found that whenever he discussed politics with the minister the latter confined himself to generalisations and told him nothing more than what had already appeared in the newspapers, or that if he was in any trouble, his repeated attempts to secure the minister's help have invariably been met with an "It's not in my power" against which the friend is himself powerless. I said to myself: "If I could have known such and such witnesses!"—from whom, if I had known them, I should probably have been unable to extract anything more than from Andrée, herself the custodian of a secret which she refused to surrender. Differing in this respect also from Swann who, when he was no longer jealous, ceased to feel any curiosity as to what Odette might have done with Forcheville, I found that, even after my jealousy had subsided, the thought of making the acquaintance of Albertine's laundry-girl, of people in her neighbourhood, of reconstructing her life in it, her intrigues, alone had any charm for me. And as desire always springs from an initial glamour, as had happened to me in the past with Gilberte and with the Duchesse de Guermantes, it was the women of Albertine's background, in the districts in which she had formerly lived, that I sought to know, and whose presence alone I could have desired. Whether or not I could learn anything from them, the only women towards whom I felt attracted were those whom Albertine had known or whom she might have known, women of her own background or of the sort with whom she liked

to associate, in a word those women who had in my eyes the distinction of resembling her or of being of the type that might have appealed to her. Recalling thus either Albertine herself or the type for which she doubtless had a predilection, these women aroused in me a painful feeling of jealousy or regret, which later, when my grief subsided, changed into a curiosity that was not devoid of charm. And among these last, especially girls of the working class, because of that life, so different from the life that I knew, which is theirs. No doubt it is only in one's mind that one possesses things, and one does not possess a picture because it hangs in one's dining-room if one is incapable of understanding it, or a landscape because one lives in it without even looking at it. But still, I had had in the past the illusion of recapturing Balbec, when in Paris Albertine came to see me and I held her in my arms, and similarly I established some contact, restricted and furtive though it might be, with Albertine's life, the atmosphere of workrooms, a conversation across a counter, the spirit of the slums, when I embraced a seamstress. Andrée, and these other women, all of them in relation to Albertine—like Albertine herself in relation to Balbec—were to be numbered among those substitute pleasures, replacing one another in a gradual declension, which enable us to dispense with the pleasure to which we can no longer attain, a trip to Balbec or the love of Albertine, pleasures which (just as going to the Louvre to look at a Titian consoles us for not being able to go to Venice where it originally was), separated one from another by indistinguishable gradations, convert one's life into a series of concentric, contiguous, harmonic and graduated zones, encircling an initial desire which has set the tone, eliminated everything

that does not combine with it, applied the dominant colour (as had, for instance, occurred to me also in the cases of the Duchesse de Guermantes and of Gilberte). Andrée and these women were to the desire, which I knew I could no longer gratify, to have Albertine by my side, what had been, one evening, before I knew Albertine except by sight and felt that she could never be mine, the writhing, sun-drenched freshness of a cluster of grapes.

Associated now with the memory of my love, Albertine's physical and social attributes, in spite of which I had loved her, oriented my desire on the contrary towards what at one time it would least readily have chosen: dark-haired girls of the lower middle class. Indeed what was beginning partially to revive in me was that immense desire which my love for Albertine had been unable to assuage, that immense desire to know life which I used to feel on the roads round Balbec, in the streets of Paris, that desire which had caused me so much suffering when, supposing it to exist in Albertine's heart also, I had sought to deprive her of the means of satisfying it with anyone but myself. Now that I was able to endure the idea of her desire, since that idea was at once aroused by my own desire, these two immense appetites coincided; I would have liked us to be able to indulge them together, saying to myself: "That girl would have appealed to her," and led by this sudden detour to think of her and of her death, I felt too unhappy to be able to pursue my own desire any further. As, long ago, the Méséglise and Guermantes ways had laid the foundations of my taste for the countryside and prevented me thereafter from finding any real charm in a place where there was no old church, where there were no cornflowers or buttercups, so it was by

linking them in my mind to a past full of charm that my love for Albertine made me seek out exclusively a certain type of woman; I was beginning once more, as before I loved her, to feel the need for overtones from her which would be interchangeable with a memory that had become gradually less exclusive. I could not have found pleasure now in the company of a golden-haired and haughty duchess, because she would not have aroused in me any of the emotions that sprang from Albertine, from my desire for her, from my jealousy of her love-affairs, from my grief at her death. For our sensations, in order to be strong, need to release inside us something different from themselves, a sentiment which cannot find its satisfaction in pleasure, but which adds itself to desire, swells it, makes it cling desperately to pleasure. Gradually, as the love that Albertine may have felt for certain women ceased to cause me pain, it attached those women to my past, made them somehow more real, as the memory of Combray gave to buttercups and hawthorn blossom a greater reality than to unfamiliar flowers. Even of Andrée, I no longer said to myself with rage in my heart: "Albertine loved her," but on the contrary, in order to explain my desire to myself, in an affectionate tone: "Albertine was fond of her." I could now understand the widowers whom we suppose to have found consolation and who prove on the contrary that they are inconsolable because they marry their deceased wife's sister.

Thus my waning love seemed to make new loves possible for me, and Albertine, like those women long loved for themselves who later, feeling their lover's desire fade, preserve their power by contenting themselves with the role of procuresses, provided me, as the Pompadour provided Louis XV, with fresh damsels. In the past, my time had been divided into periods in which I desired this woman or that. When the violent pleasures afforded by one had subsided, I longed for the other who would give me an almost pure affection until the need of more sophisticated caresses brought back my desire for the first. Now these alternations had come to an end, or at least one of the periods was being indefinitely prolonged. What I would have liked was that the newcomer should take up her abode in my house, and should give me at night, before leaving me, a familial, sisterly kiss. So that I might have been able to believe—had I not had experience of the intolerable presence of another person—that I regretted a kiss more than a certain pair of lips, a pleasure more than a love, a habit more than a person. I would have liked also that the newcomer should be able to play Vinteuil's music to me like Albertine, to talk to me as she had talked about Elstir. All this was impossible. Her love would not match up to Albertine's, I thought; either because a love which embraced all those episodes, visits to picture galleries, evenings at concerts, a whole complicated existence which allows correspondence, conversations, a flirtation preliminary to the more intimate relations, a serious friendship afterwards, possesses more resources than love for a woman who can only offer herself, as an orchestra possesses more resources than a piano; or because, more profoundly, my need of the same sort of tenderness as Albertine used to give me, the tenderness of a girl of a certain culture who would at the same time be a sister to me, was—like my need for women of the same background as Albertine—merely a recrudescence of my memory of Albertine, of my memory of my love for her.

And once again I discovered, first of all that memory has no power of invention, that it is powerless to desire anything else, let alone anything better, than what we have already possessed; secondly that it is spiritual, in the sense that reality cannot provide it with the state which it seeks; and lastly that, stemming from a dead person, the resurrection that it incarnates is not so much that of the need to love, in which it makes us believe, as that of the need for the absent person. So that even the resemblance to Albertine of the woman I had chosen, the resemblance of her tenderness, if I succeeded in winning it, to Albertine's, only made me the more conscious of the absence of what I had been unconsciously seeking, of what was indispensable to the revival of my happiness, that is to say, Albertine herself, the time we had lived together, the past in the search for which I was unwittingly engaged.

Certainly, on fine days, Paris seemed to me innumerably aflower with all the girls, not whom I desired, but who thrust down their roots into the obscurity of the desire and the unknown nocturnal life of Albertine. It was of one such that she had said to me at the outset, when she had not yet begun to be wary of me: "She's ravishing, that girl. What pretty hair she has!" All that I had wanted to know about her life in the past when I knew her only by sight, and at the same time all my desires in life, merged into this one sole curiosity, to know in what manner Albertine experienced pleasure, to see her with other women, perhaps because thus, when they had left her, I should have remained alone with her, the last and the master. And seeing her hesitations as to whether it

would be worth her while to spend the evening with this or that girl, her satiety when the other had gone, perhaps her disappointment, I should have elucidated, I should have restored to its true proportions, the jealousy that Albertine inspired in me, because seeing her thus experience them I should have taken the measure and discovered the limit of her pleasures. Of how many pleasures, of what an agreeable life she deprived us, I said to myself, by that stubborn obstinacy in denying her tastes! And as once again I sought to discover what could have been the reason for that obstinacy, all of a sudden the memory came back to me of a remark that I had made to her at Balbec on the day when she gave me a pencil. As I reproached her for not having allowed me to kiss her, I had told her that I thought a kiss just as natural as I thought it revolting that a woman should have relations with another woman. Alas, perhaps Albertine had remembered it.

I took home with me the girls who would have appealed to me least, I stroked sleek virginal tresses, I admired a small and well-shaped nose or a Spanish pallor. True, in the past, even with a woman I had merely glimpsed on a road near Balbec or in a street in Paris, I had felt the individuality of my desire and that it would be adulterating it to seek to assuage it with another person. But life, by disclosing to me little by little the permanence of our needs, had taught me that failing one person we must content ourselves with another, and I felt that what I had demanded of Albertine could have been given to me by another, by Mlle de Stermaria. But it had been Albertine; and between the satisfaction of my need for tenderness and the distinctive characteristics of her body,

such an inextricable network of memories had been woven that I could no longer detach all that embroidery from any new physical desire. She alone could give me that happiness. The idea of her uniqueness was no longer a metaphysical *a priori* based upon what was individual in Albertine, as in the case of the women I passed in the street long ago, but an *a posteriori* created by the contingent and indissoluble overlapping of my memories. I could no longer desire physically without feeling a need for her, without suffering from her absence. Hence the mere resemblance of the woman chosen, the caresses sought, to the happiness I had known only made me the more conscious of all that they lacked wherewith to revive it. The same vacuum that I had found in my room since Albertine had left, and had supposed that I could fill by taking women in my arms, I regained in them. They had never spoken to me, these women, of Vinteuil's music, of Saint-Simon's memoirs, they had not sprayed themselves with an overpowering scent before coming to see me, they had not played at intertwining their eyelashes with mine, all of which things are important because they seem to enable one to weave dreams round the sexual act itself and to give oneself the illusion of love, but in reality because they formed part of my memory of Albertine and it was she whom I wanted there. What these women had in common with Albertine made me feel all the more strongly what was lacking of her in them, which was everything, and would never exist again since Albertine was dead. And so my love for Albertine, which had drawn me towards these women, made me indifferent to them, and my regret for Albertine and the persistence of my jealousy, which had already outlasted my most pessimistic calculations, would perhaps never have altered appreciably if their existence, isolated from the rest of my life, had been subjected merely to the play of my memories, to the actions and reactions of a psychology applicable to immobile states, and had not been drawn into a vaster system in which souls move in time as bodies move in space.

As there is a geometry in space, so there is a psychology in time, in which the calculations of a plane psychology would no longer be accurate because we should not be taking account of Time and one of the forms that it assumes, forgetting—forgetting, the force of which I was beginning to feel and which is so powerful an instrument of adaptation to reality because it gradually destroys in us the surviving past which is in perpetual contradiction with it. And I really ought to have discovered sooner that one day I should no longer be in love with Albertine. When I had realised, from the difference that existed between what the importance of her person and of her actions was to me and what it was to other people, that my love was not so much a love for her as a love in myself, I might have drawn various conclusions from this subjective nature of my love and in particular deduced that, being a mental state, it might survive the person for some time, but also that, having no real connexion with that person, having no support outside itself, it must, like every mental state, even the most lasting, find itself one day obsolete, be "replaced," and that when that day came everything that seemed to attach me so sweetly, indissolubly, to the memory of Albertine would no longer exist for me. It is the tragedy of other people that they are merely showcases for the very perishable collections of one's own mind. For

this very reason one bases upon them projects which have all the fervour of thought; but thought languishes and memory decays: the day would come when I would readily admit the first comer to Albertine's room, as I had without the slightest regret given Albertine the agate marble or other gifts that I had received from Gilberte.

Chapter Two

MADEMOISELLE DE FORCHEVILLE

It was not that I did not still love Albertine, but I no longer loved her in the same fashion as in the final phase. No, it was in the fashion of the earlier days, when everything connected with her, places or people, made me feel a curiosity in which there was more charm than suffering. And indeed I was well aware now that before I forgot her altogether, before I got back to the initial stage of indifference, I should have to traverse in the opposite direction, like a traveller who returns by the same route to his starting-point, all the sentiments through which I had passed before arriving at my great love. But these stages, these moments of the past are not immobile; they have retained the tremendous force, the happy ignorance of the hope that was then soaring towards a time which has now become the past, but which a hallucination makes us for a moment mistake retrospectively for the future. I read a letter from Albertine in which she had announced her intention of coming to see me that evening, and I felt for an instant the joy of expectation. In these return journeys along the same line from a place to which one will never return, when one recognises the names and the appearance of all the places through which one passed on the outward journey, it happens that, while one's train is halted at one of the stations, for an instant one has the illusion of setting off again, but in the direction of the place from

Chapter Three

SOJOURN IN VENICE

My mother had taken me to spend a few weeks in Venice, and—as beauty may exist in the most precious as well as in the humblest things—I received there impressions analogous to those which I had felt so often in the past at Combray, but transposed into a wholly different and far richer key. When, at ten o'clock in the morning, my shutters were thrown open, I saw blazing there, instead of the gleaming black marble into which the slates of Saint-Hilaire used to turn, the golden angel on the campanile of St Mark's. Glittering in a sunlight which made it almost impossible to keep one's eyes upon it, this angel promised me, with its outstretched arms, for the moment when I appeared on the Piazzetta half an hour later, a joy more certain than any that it could ever in the past have been bidden to announce to men of good will. I could see nothing else so long as I remained in bed, but as the whole world is merely a vast sundial, a single sunlit segment of which enables us to tell what time it is, on the very first morning I was reminded of the shops in the Place de l'Eglise at Combray, which, on Sunday mornings, were always on the point of shutting when I arrived for mass, while the straw in the marketplace smelt strongly in the already hot sunlight. But on the second morning, what I saw on awakening, what made me get out of bed (because they had taken the place in my mem-

ory and in my desire of the recollections of Combray), were the impressions of my first morning stroll in Venice, in Venice where everyday life was no less real than in Combray, where as in Combray on Sunday mornings one had the pleasure of stepping down into a festive street, but where that street was entirely paved with sapphire-blue water, cooled by warm breezes and of a colour so durable that my tired eyes might rest their gaze upon it in search of relaxation without fear of its blenching. Like the good folk of the Rue de l'Oiseau at Combray, so also in this strange town, the inhabitants actually emerged from houses lined up side by side along the main street, but the role played there by houses of casting a patch of shade at their feet was entrusted in Venice to palaces of porphyry and jasper, above the arched doors of which the head of a bearded god (breaking the alignment, like the knocker on a door at Combray) had the effect of darkening with its shadow, not the brownness of the earth, but the splendid blueness of the water. On the Piazza, the shadow that would have been produced at Combray by the awning over the draper's shop and the barber's pole was a carpet of little blue flowers strewn at its feet upon the desert of sun-scorched flagstones by the relief of a Renaissance façade, which is not to say that, when the sun beat down, one was not obliged, in Venice as at Combray, to pull down the blinds, even beside the canal, but they hung between the quatrefoils and foliage of Gothic windows. Of this sort was the window in our hotel behind the balusters of which my mother sat waiting for me, gazing at the canal with a patience which she would not have displayed in the old days at Combray, at a time when, cherishing hopes for my future which had never been realised, she

was unwilling to let me see how much she loved me. Nowadays she was well aware that an apparent coldness on her part would alter nothing, and the affection she lavished upon me was like those forbidden foods which are no longer withheld from invalids when it is certain that they are past recovery. True, the humble details which gave an individuality to the window of my aunt Léonie's bedroom seen from the Rue de l'Oiseau, the impression of asymmetry caused by its unequal distance from the windows on either side of it, the exceptional height of its wooden ledge, the angled bar which served to open the shutters, the two curtains of glossy blue satin tied back with loops—the equivalent of all these things existed in this hotel in Venice where I could hear also those words, so distinctive and so eloquent, which enable us to recognise from a distance the dwelling to which we are going home to lunch, and afterwards remain in our memory as testimony that, for a certain period of time, that dwelling was ours; but the task of uttering them had, in Venice, devolved not, as at Combray and most other places, upon the simplest, not to say the ugliest things, but upon the ogive, still half Arab, of a façade which is reproduced in all the architectural museums and all the illustrated art books as one of the supreme achievements of the domestic architecture of the Middle Ages; from a long way away and when I had barely passed San Giorgio Maggiore, I caught sight of this ogival window which had already seen me, and the thrust of its pointed arches added to its smile of welcome the distinction of a loftier, scarcely comprehensible gaze. And because, behind its multi-coloured marble balusters, Mamma was sitting reading while she waited for me to return, her face shrouded in a tulle veil

as heartrending in its whiteness as her hair to me who sensed that, hiding her tears, she had pinned it to her straw hat not so much with the idea of appearing "dressed" in the eyes of the hotel staff as in order to appear to me to be less in mourning, less sad, almost consoled for the death of my grandmother; because, not having recognised me at first, as soon as I called to her from the gondola, she sent out to me, from the bottom of her heart, a love which stopped only where there was no longer any corporeal matter to sustain it, on the surface of her impassioned gaze which she brought as close to me as possible, which she tried to thrust forward to the advanced post of her lips, in a smile which seemed to be kissing me, within the frame and beneath the canopy of the more discreet smile of the arched window lit up by the midday sun—because of this, that window has assumed in my memory the precious quality of things that have had, simultaneously with us, side by side with us, their share in a certain hour that struck, the same for us and for them; and however full of admirable tracery its mullions may be, that illustrious window retains in my eyes the intimate aspect of a man of genius with whom we have spent a month in some holiday resort, where he has acquired a friendly regard for us; and if, ever since then, whenever I see a cast of that window in a museum, I am obliged to hold back my tears, it is simply because it says to me the thing that touches me more than anything else in the world: "I remember your mother so well."

And as I went indoors to join my mother who by now had left the window, on leaving the heat of the open air I had the same sensation of coolness that I experienced long ago at Combray when I went upstairs to my room;

but in Venice it was a breeze from the sea that kept the air cool, and no longer on a little wooden staircase with narrow steps, but on the noble surfaces of marble steps continually splashed by shafts of blue-green sunlight, which, to the valuable instruction in the art of Chardin acquired long ago, added a lesson in that of Veronese. And since, in Venice, it is works of art, things of priceless beauty, that are entrusted with the task of giving us our impressions of everyday life, it is to falsify the character of that city, on the grounds that the Venice of certain painters is coldly aesthetic in its most celebrated parts (let us make an exception of the superb studies of Maxime Dethomas), to represent only its poverty-stricken aspects, in the districts where nothing of its splendour is to be seen, and, in order to make Venice more intimate and more genuine, to give it a resemblance to Aubervilliers. It has been the mistake of some very great artists, from a quite natural reaction against the artificial Venice of bad painters, to concentrate exclusively on the Venice of the more humble *campi*, the little deserted *rii*, which they found more real.

It was this Venice that I used often to explore in the afternoon, when I did not go out with my mother. The fact was that it was easier to find there women of the people, match-sellers, pearl-stringers, glass or lace makers, young seamstresses in black shawls with long fringes, whom there was nothing to prevent me from loving, because I had to a large extent forgotten Albertine, and who seemed to me more desirable than others, because I still remembered her a little. Who, in any case, could have told me precisely, in this passionate quest of mine for Venetian women, how much there was of themselves, how much of Albertine, how much of my old, long-cherished desire to visit Venice? Our slightest desire, though unique as a chord, nevertheless includes the fundamental notes on which the whole of our life is built. And sometimes, if we were to eliminate one of them, even one that we do not hear, that we are not aware of, one that has no connexion with the object of our quest, we would nevertheless see our whole desire for that object disappear. There were many things that I made no attempt to identify in the excitement I felt as I went in search of Venetian women.

My gondola followed the course of the small canals; like the mysterious hand of a genie leading me through the maze of this oriental city, they seemed, as I advanced, to be cutting a path for me through the heart of a crowded quarter which they bisected, barely parting, with a slender furrow arbitrarily traced, the tall houses with their tiny Moorish windows; and as though the magic guide had been holding a candle in his hand and were lighting the way for me, they kept casting ahead of them a ray of sunlight for which they cleared a route. One felt that between the mean dwellings which the canal had just parted, and which otherwise would have formed a compact whole, no open space had been reserved; so that a campanile or a garden trellis vertically overhung the *rio*, as in a flooded city. But, for both churches and gardens, thanks to the same transposition as in the Grand Canal, the sea so readily served as means of communication, as substitute for street or alley, that on either side of the *canaletto* the belfries rose from the water in this poor and populous district like those of humble and much-frequented parish churches bearing the stamp of their necessity, of their use by crowds of simple folk, the gardens

traversed by the canal cutting trailed their startled leaves and fruit in the water, and on the ledges of the houses whose crudely cut stone was still rough as though it had only just been sawn, urchins surprised by the gondola sat back trying to keep their balance and allowing their legs to dangle vertically, like sailors seated upon a swing-bridge the two halves of which have been swung apart, allowing the sea to pass between them. Now and again would appear a handsomer building that happened to be there like a surprise in a box which one has just opened, a little ivory temple with its Corinthian columns and an allegorical statue on its pediment, somewhat out of place among the ordinary surroundings in the midst of which, for all that we tried to make space for it, the peristyle with which the canal had provided it retained the look of a landing-stage for market gardeners. I had the impression, which my desire strengthened further, of not being outside, but of entering more and more into the depths of something secret, because each time I found something new which came to place itself on one side of me or the other, a small monument or an unexpected *campo*, keeping the surprised expression of beautiful things which one sees for the first time and of which one doesn't yet perfectly understand the intended purpose or the utility.

I returned on foot through narrow lanes; I accosted plebeian girls as Albertine perhaps had done, and I should have liked to have her with me. Yet these could not be the same girls; at the time when Albertine had been in Venice, they would have been children still. But, after having been unfaithful in the past, in a basic sense and out of cowardice, to each of the desires that I had conceived as unique—since I had sought an analogous object

and not the same one, which I despaired of finding again—now I systematically sought women whom Albertine had not known, just as I no longer sought those that I had desired in the past. True, it often happened to me to recall, with an extraordinary violence of desire, some wench of Méséglise or Paris, or the milk-girl I had seen early in the morning at the foot of a hill during my first journey to Balbec. But alas! I remembered them as they were then, that is to say as they certainly would not be now. So that if in the past I had been led to qualify my impression of the uniqueness of a desire by seeking, in place of a convent-girl I had lost sight of, a similar convent-girl, now, in order to recapture the girls who had troubled my adolescence or that of Albertine, I had to consent to a further departure from the principle of the individuality of desire: what I must look for was not those who were sixteen then, but those who were sixteen today, for now, in the absence of that which was most distinctive in the person and which eluded me, what I loved was youth. I knew that the youth of those I had known existed no longer except in my impassioned recollection, and that it was not them, however anxious I might be to make contact with them when my memory recalled them to me, that I must cull if I really wished to harvest the youth and the blossom of the year.

The sun was still high in the sky when I went to meet my mother on the Piazzetta. We would call for a gondola. "How your poor grandmother would have loved this simple grandeur!" Mamma would say to me, pointing to the Doges' Palace which stood contemplating the sea with the thoughtful expression that had been bequeathed to it by its architect and that it faithfully retained in its

mute attendance on its vanished lords. "She would even have loved those soft pink tints, because they are unmawkish. How she would have loved the whole of Venice, and what informality, worthy of nature itself, she would have found in all these beauties, this plethora of objects that seem to need no formal arrangement but present themselves just as they are—the Doges' Palace with its cubic shape, the columns which you say are those of Herod's palace, slap in the middle of the Piazzetta, and, even less deliberately placed, put there as though for want of anywhere better, the pillars from Acre, and those horses on the balcony of St Mark's! Your grandmother would have had as much pleasure seeing the sun setting over the Doges' Palace as over a mountain." And there was indeed an element of truth in what my mother said, for, as the gondola brought us back along the Grand Canal, we watched the double line of palaces between which we passed reflect the light and angle of the sun upon their pink flanks, and alter with them, seeming not so much private habitations and historic buildings as a chain of marble cliffs at the foot of which one goes out in the evening in a boat to watch the sunset. Seen thus, the buildings arranged along either bank of the canal made one think of objects of nature, but of a nature which seemed to have created its works with a human imagination. But at the same time (because of the always urban character of the impressions which Venice gives almost in the open sea, on those waters whose ebb and flow makes itself felt twice daily, and which alternately cover at high tide and uncover at low tide the splendid outside stairs of the palaces), as we should have done in Paris on the boulevards, in the Champs-Elysées, in the Bois, in any

wide and fashionable avenue, we passed the most elegant women in the hazy evening light, almost all foreigners, who, languidly reclining against the cushions of their floating carriages, followed one another in procession, stopped in front of a palace where they had a friend to call on, sent to inquire whether she was at home, and while, as they waited for the answer, they prepared to leave a card just in case, as they would have done at the door of the Hôtel de Guermantes, turned to their guidebooks to find out the period and the style of the palace, being shaken the while, as though upon the crest of a blue wave, by the wash of the glittering, swirling water, which took alarm on finding itself pent between the dancing gondola and the resounding marble. And thus any outing, even when it was only to pay calls or to leave visiting-cards, was threefold and unique in this Venice where the simplest social coming and going assumed at the same time the form and the charm of a visit to a museum and a trip on the sea.

Several of the palaces on the Grand Canal had been converted into hotels, and for the sake of a change or out of hospitality towards Mme Sazerat whom we had encountered—the unexpected and inopportune acquaintance whom one invariably meets when one travels abroad—and whom Mamma had invited to dine with us, we decided one evening to try a hotel which was not our own and in which we had been told that the food was better. While my mother was paying the gondolier and taking Mme Sazerat to the drawing-room which she had engaged, I slipped away to inspect the great hall of the restaurant with its fine marble pillars and walls and ceiling that were once entirely covered with frescoes, recently

and badly restored. Two waiters were conversing in an Italian which I translate:

"Are the old people going to dine in their room? They never let us know. It's annoying; I never know whether I ought to keep their table for them (*non so se bisogna conserva loro la tavola*). Serve them right if they come down and find it's been taken! I don't understand how they can take in *forestieri* (foreigners) like that in such a smart hotel. They're not our sort of people."

Notwithstanding his scorn, the waiter was anxious to know what action he was to take with regard to the table, and was about to send the lift-boy upstairs to inquire when, before he had had time to do so, he received his answer: he had just caught sight of the old lady who was entering the room. I had no difficulty, despite the air of melancholy and weariness that comes with the weight of years, and despite a sort of eczema, of red leprosy that covered her face, in recognising beneath her bonnet, in her black jacket made by W—— but to the untutored eye exactly like that of an old concierge, the Marquise de Villeparisis. The place where I was standing, engaged in studying the remains of a fresco between two of the beautiful marble panels, happened by chance to be immediately behind the table at which Mme de Villeparisis had just sat down.

"Then M. de Villeparisis won't be long. They've been here a month now, and they've only once not eaten together," said the waiter.

I was wondering who could be the relative with whom she was travelling and who was named M. de Villeparisis, when a few moments later I saw her old

lover, M. de Norpois, advance towards the table and sit down beside her.

His great age had weakened the resonance of his voice, but had in compensation imparted to his speech, formerly so reserved, a positive intemperance. The cause of this was perhaps to be sought in ambitions for the realisation of which he felt that little time remained to him and which filled him with all the more vehemence and ardour; perhaps in the fact that, cut off from a world of politics to which he longed to return, he imagined, in the naïvety of his desire, that he could turn out of office, by the savage criticisms which he launched at them, the men he was determined to replace. Thus do we see politicians convinced that the Cabinet of which they are not members cannot hold out for three days. It would, however, be an exaggeration to suppose that M. de Norpois had entirely forgotten the traditions of diplomatic speech. Whenever "important matters" were at issue, he became once more, as we shall see, the man whom we remember in the past, but for the rest of the time he would inveigh against this man and that with the senile violence which makes certain octogenarians hurl themselves at women to whom they are no longer capable of doing any serious damage.

Mme de Villeparisis preserved, for some minutes, the silence of an old woman who in the exhaustion of age finds it difficult to rise from recollection of the past to consideration of the present. Then, turning to one of those eminently practical questions that indicate the survival of a mutual affection:

"Did you call at Salviati's?"

"Yes."

"Will they send it tomorrow?"

"I brought the bowl back myself. You shall see it after dinner. Let us look at the menu."

"Did you send instructions about my Suez shares?"

"No; at the present moment the Stock Exchange is entirely taken up with oil shares. But there's no hurry, in view of the propitious state of the market. Here is the menu. As a first course there is red mullet. Shall we try them?"

"I shall, but you are not allowed them. Ask for a risotto instead. But they don't know how to cook it."

"Never mind. Waiter, some mullet for Madame and a risotto for me."

A fresh and prolonged silence.

"Here, I've brought you the papers, the *Corriere della Sera*, the *Gazzetta del Popolo*, and all the rest of them. Did you know that there is a strong likelihood of a diplomatic reshuffle in which the first scapegoat will be Paléologue, who is notoriously inadequate in Serbia. He may perhaps be replaced by Lozé, and there will be a vacancy at Constantinople. But," M. de Norpois hastened to add in a biting tone, "for an Embassy of such scope, in a capital where it is obvious that Great Britain must always, whatever happens, occupy the chief place at the council-table, it would be prudent to turn to men of experience better equipped to counter the subterfuges of the enemies of our British ally than are diplomats of the modern school who would walk blindfold into the trap." The angry volubility with which M. de Norpois uttered these last words was due principally to the fact that the newspapers, instead of suggesting his name as he had recommended them to do, named as a "hot favourite" a young minister of Foreign Affairs. "Heaven knows that the men of years and experience are far from eager to put themselves forward, after all manner of tortuous manoeuvres, in the place of more or less incapable recruits. I have known many of these self-styled diplomats of the empirical school who centred all their hopes in flying a kite which it didn't take me long to shoot down. There can be no question that if the Government is so lacking in wisdom as to entrust the reins of state to unruly hands, at the call of duty any conscript will always answer 'Present!' But who knows" (and here M. de Norpois appeared to know perfectly well to whom he was referring) "whether it would not be the same on the day when they came in search of some veteran full of wisdom and skill. To my mind, though everyone may have his own way of looking at things, the post at Constantinople should not be accepted until we have settled our existing difficulties with Germany. We owe no man anything, and it is intolerable that every six months they should come and demand from us, by fraudulent machinations and under protest, some full discharge or other which is invariably advocated by a venal press. This must cease, and naturally a man of high distinction who has proved his merit, a man who would have, if I may say so, the Emperor's ear, would enjoy greater authority than anyone else in bringing the conflict to an end."

A gentleman who was finishing his dinner bowed to M. de Norpois.

"Why, there's Prince Foggi," said the Marquis.

"Ah, I'm not sure that I know who you mean," muttered Mme de Villeparisis.

"But, of course you do—Prince Odo. He's the brother-in-law of your cousin Doudeauville. Surely you remember that I went shooting with him at Bonnétable?"

"Ah! Odo, is he the one who went in for painting?"

"Not at all, he's the one who married the Grand Duke N——'s sister."

M. de Norpois uttered these remarks in the cross tone of a schoolmaster who is dissatisfied with his pupil, and stared fixedly at Mme de Villeparisis out of his blue eyes.

When the Prince had drunk his coffee and was leaving his table, M. de Norpois rose, hastened towards him and with a majestic sweep of his arm, stepping aside himself, presented him to Mme de Villeparisis. And during the few minutes that the Prince was standing beside their table, M. de Norpois never ceased for an instant to keep his azure pupils trained on Mme de Villeparisis, with the mixture of indulgence and severity of an old lover, but principally from fear of her committing one of those verbal solecisms which he had relished but which he dreaded. Whenever she said anything to the Prince that was not quite accurate he corrected her mistake and stared into the eyes of the abashed and docile Marquise with the steady intensity of a hypnotist.

A waiter came to tell me that my mother was waiting for me. I went to join her and made my apologies to Mme Sazerat, saying that I had been amused to see Mme de Villeparisis. At the sound of this name, Mme Sazerat turned pale and seemed about to faint. Controlling herself with an effort: "Mme de Villeparisis who was Mlle de Bouillon?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"Couldn't I just get a glimpse of her for a moment? It has been the dream of my life."

"Then there's no time to lose, Madame, for she will soon have finished her dinner. But how do you come to take such an interest in her?"

"Because Mme de Villeparisis was, before her second marriage, the Duchesse d'Havré, beautiful as an angel, wicked as a demon, who drove my father to distraction, ruined him and then abandoned him immediately. Well, she may have behaved to him like the lowest prostitute, she may have been the cause of our having had to live, my family and myself, in humble circumstances at Combray, but now that my father is dead, my consolation is to think that he loved the most beautiful woman of his generation, and as I've never set eyes on her, it will be a sort of solace in spite of everything . . ."

I escorted Mme Sazerat, trembling with emotion, to the restaurant and pointed out Mme de Villeparisis.

But, like a blind person who looks everywhere but in the right direction, Mme Sazerat did not bring her eyes to rest upon the table at which Mme de Villeparisis was dining, but, looking towards another part of the room, said:

"But she must have gone, I don't see her where you say she is."

And she continued to gaze round the room in quest of the loathed, adored vision that had haunted her imagination for so long.

"Yes, there she is, at the second table."

"Then we can't be counting from the same point. At what I count as the second table there's only an old gentleman and a little hunchbacked, red-faced, hideous woman."

"That's her!"

Meanwhile, Mme de Villeparisis having asked M. de Norpois to invite Prince Foggi to sit down, a friendly conversation ensued among the three of them. They discussed politics, and the Prince declared that he was indifferent to the fate of the Cabinet and would spend another week at least in Venice. He hoped that by that time all risk of a ministerial crisis would have been avoided. Prince Foggi thought for a few moments that these political topics did not interest M. de Norpois, for the latter, who until then had been expressing himself with such vehemence, had become suddenly absorbed in an almost angelic silence which seemed capable of blossoming, should his voice return, only into some innocent and tuneful melody by Mendelssohn or César Franck. The Prince supposed also that this silence was due to the reserve of a Frenchman who naturally would not wish to discuss Italian affairs in the presence of an Italian. Now in this the Prince was completely mistaken. Silence and an air of indifference had remained, in M. de Norpois, not a sign of reserve but the habitual prelude to an intervention in important affairs. The Marquis had his eye upon nothing less (as we have seen) than Constantinople, after the prior settlement of the German question, with a view to which he hoped to force the hand of the Rome Cabinet. He considered, in fact, that an action on his part of international significance might be the worthy consummation of his career, perhaps even a prelude to fresh honours, to difficult tasks to which he had not relinquished his pretensions. For old age makes us incapable of doing but not, at first, of desiring. It is only in a third period that those who live to a very great age relinquish desire, as they have already

had to forgo action. They no longer even present themselves as candidates in futile elections where they have so often tried to win success, such as that for the Presidency of the Republic. They content themselves with taking the air, eating, reading the newspapers; they have outlived themselves.

The Prince, to put the Marquis at his ease and to show him that he regarded him as a compatriot, began to speak of the possible successors to the Prime Minister then in office. Successors who would have a difficult task before them. When Prince Foggi had mentioned more than twenty names of politicians who seemed to him suitable for office, names to which the ex-Ambassador listened with his eyelids drooping over his blue eyes and without moving a muscle, M. de Norpois broke his silence at length to utter the words which were to provide the chancelleries with food for conversation for many years to come, and afterwards, when they had been forgotten, would be exhumed by some personage signing himself "One Who Knows" or "Testis" or "Machiavelli" in a newspaper in which the very oblivion into which they had fallen enabled them to create a fresh sensation. So, Prince Foggi had mentioned more than twenty names to the diplomat who remained as motionless and silent as a deaf-mute, when M. de Norpois raised his head slightly, and, in the form in which his most pregnant and far-reaching diplomatic interventions had been couched, albeit this time with greater audacity and less brevity, shrewdly inquired: "And has no one mentioned the name of Signor Giolitti?" At these words the scales fell from Prince Foggi's eyes; he could hear a celestial murmur. Then at once M. de Norpois began to speak about one thing and

another, no longer afraid to make a noise, as, when the last note of a sublime aria by Bach has died away, the audience are no longer afraid to talk aloud, to go and look for their hats and coats in the cloakroom. He made the break even more marked by begging the Prince to pay his most humble respects to Their Majesties the King and Queen when next he should see them, a farewell phrase corresponding to the shout for a coachman at the end of a concert: "Auguste, from the Rue de Belloy." We cannot say what exactly were Prince Foggi's impressions. He must certainly have been delighted to have heard the gem: "And has no one mentioned Signor Giolitti's name?" For M. de Norpois, in whom age had extinguished or deranged his most outstanding qualities, had on the other hand, as he grew older, perfected his bravura, as certain aged musicians, who in all other respects have declined, acquire and retain until the end, in the field of chamber-music, a perfect virtuosity which they did not formerly possess.

However that may be, Prince Foggi, who had intended to spend a fortnight in Venice, returned to Rome that very night and was received a few days later in audience by the King in connexion with certain properties which, as we may perhaps have mentioned already, the Prince owned in Sicily. The Cabinet hung on for longer than might have been expected. When it fell, the King consulted various statesmen as to the most suitable leader of a new Cabinet. Then he sent for Signor Giolitti, who accepted. Three months later a newspaper reported Prince Foggi's meeting with M. de Norpois. The conversation was reported as we have given it here, with the difference that, instead of: "M. de Norpois shrewdly inquired," one

read: "M. de Norpois said with that shrewd and charming smile which is so characteristic of him." M. de Norpois considered that "shrewdly" had in itself sufficient explosive force for a diplomat and that this addition was, to say the least, excessive. He had even asked the Quai d'Orsay to issue an official denial, but the Quai d'Orsay did not know which way to turn. For, ever since the conversation had been made public, M. Barrère had been telegraphing several times hourly to Paris complaining of this unofficial ambassador to the Quirinal and describing the indignation with which the incident had been received throughout the whole of Europe. This indignation was non-existent, but the other ambassadors were too polite to contradict M. Barrère's assertion that everyone was up in arms. M. Barrère, guided only by his own reaction, mistook this courteous silence for assent. Immediately he telegraphed to Paris: "I have just had an hour's conversation with the Marchese Visconti-Venosta," and so forth. His secretaries were worn out.

M. de Norpois, however, had at his disposal a French newspaper of very long standing, which already in 1870, when he was French Minister in a German capital, had been of great service to him. This paper (especially its leading article, which was unsigned) was admirably written. But the paper became a thousand times more interesting whenever this leading article (styled "premier-Paris" in those far-off days and now, no one knows why, "editorial") was on the contrary badly expressed, with endless repetitions of words. Everyone sensed then, with great excitement, that the article had been "inspired." Perhaps by M. de Norpois, perhaps by some other man of the hour. To give an anticipatory idea of the Italian incident, let us

show how M. de Norpois made use of this paper in 1870, to no purpose, it may be thought, since war broke out nevertheless, but most efficaciously, according to M. de Norpois, whose axiom was that one ought first and foremost to prepare public opinion. His articles, every word in which was weighed, resembled those optimistic bulletins which are at once followed by the death of the patient. For instance, on the eve of the declaration of war in 1870, when mobilisation was almost complete, M. de Norpois (remaining, of course, in the background) had felt it his duty to send to this famous newspaper the following "editorial":

"The opinion seems to prevail in authoritative circles that, since the afternoon hours of yesterday, the situation, without of course being of an alarming nature, might well be envisaged as serious and even, from certain angles, as susceptible of being regarded as critical. M. le Marquis de Norpois would appear to have had several conversations with the Prussian Minister, with a view to examining, in a firm and conciliatory spirit, and in a wholly concrete fashion, the various existing causes of friction, if one may so put it. Unfortunately, we have not yet heard, at the time of going to press, whether Their Excellencies have been able to agree upon a formula that may serve as the basis for a diplomatic instrument."

Stop press: "It has been learned with satisfaction in well-informed circles that a slight slackening of tension seems to have occurred in Franco-Prussian relations. Particular importance would appear to be attached to the fact that M. de Norpois is reported to have met the British Minister 'unter den Linden' and to have conversed with him for fully twenty minutes. This report is regarded as

highly satisfactory." (There was added, in brackets, after the word "satisfactory" its German equivalent "*befriedigend.*") And on the following day one read in the editorial: "It would appear that, notwithstanding all the dexterity of M. de Norpois, to whom everyone must hasten to render homage for the skill and energy with which he has defended the inalienable rights of France, a rupture is now, one might say, virtually inevitable."

The newspaper could not refrain from following an editorial couched in this vein with a selection of comments, furnished of course by M. de Norpois. The reader may perhaps have observed in these last pages that the conditional was one of the Ambassador's favourite grammatical forms in the literature of diplomacy. ("Particular importance would appear to be attached" for "Particular importance is attached.") But the present indicative employed not in its usual sense but in that of the old "optative" was no less dear to M. de Norpois. The comments that followed the editorial were as follows:

"Never has the public shown itself so admirably calm" (M. de Norpois would have liked to believe that this was true but feared that it was precisely the opposite of the truth). "It is weary of fruitless agitation and has learned with satisfaction that the Government of His Majesty the Emperor would assume their responsibilities whatever the eventualities that might occur. The public asks" (optative) "nothing more. To its admirable composure, which is in itself a token of success, we shall add a piece of intelligence eminently calculated to reassure public opinion, were there any need of that. We are assured that M. de Norpois who, for reasons of health, was ordered long ago to return to Paris for medical treatment,

would appear to have left Berlin where he considered that his presence no longer served any purpose."

Stop press: "His Majesty the Emperor left Compiègne this morning for Paris in order to confer with the Marquis de Norpois, the Minister for War and Marshal Bazaine in whom public opinion has especial confidence. H. M. the Emperor has cancelled the banquet which he was to give for his sister-in-law the Duchess of Alba. This action created everywhere, as soon as it became known, a particularly favourable impression. The Emperor has held a review of his troops, whose enthusiasm is indescribable. Several corps, by virtue of a mobilisation order issued immediately upon the Sovereign's arrival in Paris, are, in any contingency, ready to move in the direction of the Rhine."*

Sometimes at dusk as I returned to the hotel I felt that the Albertine of long ago, invisible to my eyes, was nevertheless enclosed within me as in the lead-covered cells of an inner Venice, the tight lid of which some incident occasionally lifted to give me a glimpse of that past.

Thus for instance one evening a letter from my stockbroker reopened for me for an instant the gates of the prison in which Albertine dwelt within me, alive, but so remote, so profoundly buried that she remained inaccessible to me. Since her death I had ceased to indulge in the speculations that I had made in order to have more money for her. But time had passed; the wisest judgments of the previous generation had been belied by the next, as had occurred in the past to M. Thiers who had said that railways could never prove successful; and the stocks of which M. de Norpois had said to us: "The income from

them may not be very great, but at least the capital will never depreciate," were, more often than not, those which had declined most in value. In the case of my English Consols and Raffineries Say shares alone, I had to pay out such considerable sums in brokers' commissions, as well as interest and contango fees, that in a rash moment I decided to sell out everything and found that I now possessed barely a fifth of what I had inherited from my grandmother and still possessed when Albertine was alive. This became known at Combray among the surviving members of our family and their friends who, knowing that I went about with the Marquis de Saint-Loup and the Guermantes family, said to themselves: "Pride goes before a fall!" They would have been greatly astonished to learn that it was for a girl of Albertine's modest background, almost a protégée of my grandmother's former piano-teacher, Vinteuil, that I had made these speculations. Besides, in that Combray world in which everyone is classified for ever, as in an Indian caste, according to the income he is known to enjoy, no one would have been capable of imagining the great freedom that prevailed in the world of the Guermantes, where no importance was attached to wealth and where poverty was regarded as being as disagreeable as, but no more degrading, having no more effect on a person's social position, than a stomachache. Doubtless people at Combray imagined, on the contrary, that Saint-Loup and M. de Guermantes must be ruined aristocrats with heavily mortgaged estates, to whom I had been lending money, whereas if I had been ruined they would have been the first to offer, unavailingly, to come to my assistance. As for my comparative penury, it was all the more awkward at the moment, inas-

much as my Venetian interests had been concentrated for some little time past on a young vendor of glassware whose blooming complexion offered to the delighted eye a whole range of orange tones and filled me with such a longing to see her daily that, realising that my mother and I would soon be leaving Venice, I had made up my mind to try to create some sort of position for her in Paris which would save me from being parted from her. The beauty of her seventeen years was so noble, so radiant, that it was like acquiring a genuine Titian before leaving the place. But would the scant remains of my fortune be enough to tempt her to leave her native land and come to live in Paris for my sole convenience?

But as I came to the end of the stockbroker's letter, a passage in which he said: "I shall look after your credits" reminded me of a scarcely less hypocritically professional expression which the bath-attendant at Balbec had used in speaking to Aimé of Albertine: "It was I who looked after her," she had said. And these words which had never recurred to my mind acted like an "Open sesame!" upon the hinges of the prison door. But a moment later the door closed once more upon the immured victim—whom I was not to blame for not wishing to join since I was no longer able to see her, to call her to mind, and since other people exist for us only through the idea that we have of them—but who for a moment had been rendered more touching by my desertion of her, albeit she was unaware of it, so that for the duration of a lightning-flash I had thought with longing of the time, already remote, when I used to suffer night and day from the companionship of her memory. Another time, in San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, an eagle accompanying one of the Apostles, and

conventionalised in the same manner, revived the memory and almost the suffering caused by the two rings the similarity of which Françoise had revealed to me, and as to which I had never learned who had given them to Albertine.

One evening, however, an incident occurred of such a nature that it seemed as though my love must revive. No sooner had our gondola stopped at the hotel steps than the porter handed me a telegram which the messenger had already brought three times to the hotel, for owing to the inaccurate rendering of the addressee's name (which I recognised nevertheless, through the corruptions introduced by the Italian clerks, as my own) the post office required a signed receipt certifying that the telegram was indeed for me. I opened it as soon as I was in my room, and, glancing through the message which was filled with inaccurately transmitted words, managed nevertheless to make out: "My dear friend, you think me dead, forgive me, I am quite alive, I long to see you, talk about marriage, when do you return? Affectionately. Albertine." Then there occurred in me in reverse order a process parallel to that which had occurred in the case of my grandmother. When I had learned the fact of my grandmother's death, I had not at first felt any grief. And I had been really grieved by her death only when certain involuntary memories had brought her alive again for me. Now that Albertine no longer lived for me in my thoughts, the news that she was alive did not cause me the joy that I might have expected. Albertine had been no more to me than a bundle of thoughts, and she had survived her physical death so long as those thoughts were alive in me; on the other hand, now that those thoughts were dead,

Albertine did not rise again for me with the resurrection of her body. And when I realised that I felt no joy at the thought of her being alive, that I no longer loved her, I ought to have been more shattered than a man who, looking at his reflexion in a mirror, after months of travel or sickness, discovers that he has white hair and a different face, that of a middle-aged or an old man. This is shattering because its message is: "the man that I was, the fair-haired young man, no longer exists, I am another person." And yet, was not the impression that I now felt the proof of as profound a change, as total a death of my former self and of the no less complete substitution of a new self for that former self, as the sight of a wrinkled face topped with a white wig instead of the face of long ago? But one is no more distressed at having become another person, after a lapse of years and in the natural sequence of time, than one is at any given moment by the fact of being, one after another, the incompatible persons, malicious, sensitive, refined, caddish, disinterested, ambitious which one can be, in turn, every day of one's life. And the reason why one is not distressed is the same, namely that the self which has been eclipsed—momentarily in this latter case and when it is a question of character, permanently in the former case and when the passions are involved—is not there to deplore the other, the other which is for the moment, or from then onwards, one's whole self; the caddish self laughs at his caddishness because one is the cad, and the forgetful self does not grieve about his forgetfulness precisely because he has forgotten.

I should have been incapable of resuscitating Albertine because I was incapable of resuscitating myself, of resuscitating the self of those days. Life, in accordance with

its habit which is, by unceasing, infinitesimal labours, to change the face of the world, had not said to me on the morrow of Albertine's death: "Become another person," but, by changes too imperceptible for me to be conscious even that I was changing, had altered almost everything in me, with the result that my mind was already accustomed to its new master—my new self—when it became aware that it had changed; it was to this new master that it was attached. My feeling for Albertine, my jealousy, stemmed, as we have seen, from the irradiation, by the association of ideas, of certain pleasant or painful impressions, the memory of Mlle Vinteuil at Montjouvain, the precious good-night kisses that Albertine used to give me on the neck. But in proportion as these impressions had grown fainter, the vast field of impressions which they coloured with a hue that was agonising or soothing reverted to neutral tones. As soon as oblivion had taken hold of certain dominant points of suffering and pleasure, the resistance offered by my love was overcome, I no longer loved Albertine. I tried to recall her image to my mind. I had been right in my presentiment when, a couple of days after Albertine's flight, I was appalled by the discovery that I had been able to live for forty-eight hours without her. It had been the same as when I wrote to Gilberte long ago saying to myself: "If this goes on for a year or two, I shall no longer love her." And if, when Swann asked me to come and see Gilberte again, this had seemed to me as embarrassing as greeting a dead woman, in Albertine's case death—or what I had supposed to be death—had achieved the same result as a prolonged breach in Gilberte's. Death merely acts in the same way as absence. The monster at whose apparition my love had trembled,

oblivion, had indeed, as I had feared, ended by devouring that love. Not only did the news that she was alive fail to revive my love, not only did it enable me to realise how far I had already proceeded along the road towards indifference, it at once and so abruptly accelerated that process that I wondered retrospectively whether the opposite report, that of Albertine's death, had not, conversely, by completing the effect of her departure, rekindled my love and delayed its decline. Yes, now that the knowledge that she was alive and the possibility of our reunion made her suddenly cease to be so precious to me, I wondered whether Françoise's insinuations, our rupture itself, and even her death (imaginary, but believed to be real) had not prolonged my love, to such an extent do the efforts of third persons, and even those of fate, to separate us from a woman succeed only in attaching us to her. Now it was the contrary process that had occurred. Anyhow, I tried to recall her image and perhaps because I had only to raise a finger for her to be mine once more, the memory that came to me was that of a somewhat stout and mannish-looking girl from whose faded features protruded already, like a sprouting seed, the profile of Mme Bontemps. What she might or might not have done with Andrée or with other girls no longer interested me. I no longer suffered from the malady which I had so long thought to be incurable, and really I might have foreseen this. Certainly, regret for a lost mistress and surviving jealousy are physical maladies fully as much as tuberculosis or leukaemia. And yet among physical maladies it is possible to distinguish those which are caused by a purely physical agency, and those which act upon the body only through the medium of the intelligence. Above all, if the part of the

mind which serves as carrier is the memory—that is to say if the cause is obliterated or remote—however agonising the pain, however profound the disturbance to the organism may appear to be, it is very seldom (the mind having a capacity for renewal or rather an incapacity for conservation which the tissues lack) that the prognosis is not favourable. At the end of a given period after which someone who has been attacked by cancer will be dead, it is very seldom that the grief of an inconsolable widower or father is not healed. Mine was healed. Was it for this girl whom I saw in my mind's eye so bloated and who had certainly aged, as the girls whom she had loved had aged—was it for her that I must renounce the dazzling girl who was my memory of yesterday, my hope for tomorrow, to whom I could no longer give a sou, any more than to any other, if I married Albertine, that I must renounce this "new Albertine" whom I loved "not as Hades had beheld her . . . but faithful, but proud, and even rather shy"?[30] It was she who was now what Albertine had been in the past: my love for Albertine had been but a transitory form of my devotion to youth. We think that we are in love with a girl, whereas we love in her, alas! only that dawn the glow of which is momentarily reflected on her face.

The night went by. In the morning I gave the telegram back to the hotel porter explaining that it had been brought to me by mistake and that it was not for me. He told me that now it had been opened he might get into trouble, that it would be better if I kept it; I put it back in my pocket, but made up my mind to behave as though I had never received it. I had finally ceased to love Albertine. So that this love, after departing so greatly from

what I had anticipated on the basis of my love for Gilberte, after obliging me to make so long and painful a detour, had ended too, after having proved an exception to it, by succumbing, like my love for Gilberte, to the general law of oblivion.

But then I thought to myself: I used to value Albertine more than myself; I no longer value her now because for a certain time past I have ceased to see her. My desire not to be parted from myself by death, to rise again after my death—that desire was not like the desire never to be parted from Albertine; it still persisted. Was this due to the fact that I valued myself more highly than her, that when I loved her I loved myself more? No, it was because, having ceased to see her, I had ceased to love her, whereas I had not ceased to love myself because my everyday links with myself had not been severed like those with Albertine. But if my links with my body, with myself, were severed also . . . ? Obviously, it would be the same. Our love of life is only an old liaison of which we do not know how to rid ourselves. Its strength lies in its permanence. But death which severs it will cure us of the desire for immortality.

After lunch, when I was not going to roam about Venice by myself, I went up to my room to get ready to go out with my mother and to collect the exercise books in which I would take notes for some work I was doing on Ruskin. In the abrupt angles of the walls I sensed the restrictions imposed by the sea, the parsimony of the soil. And when I went downstairs to join Mamma who was waiting for me, at that hour when at Combray it was so pleasant to feel the sun close at hand in the darkness preserved by the closed shutters, here, from top to bottom of

the marble staircase where one could no more tell than in a Renaissance picture whether it was in a palace or on a galley, the same coolness and the same sense of the splendour of the scene outside were imparted thanks to the awnings which stirred outside the ever-open windows through which, upon an incessant stream of air, the warm shade and the greenish sunlight flowed as if over a liquid surface and suggested the mobile proximity, the glitter, the shimmering instability of the sea.

As often as not we would set off for St Mark's, with all the more pleasure because, since one had to take a gondola to go there, the church represented for me not simply a monument but the terminus of a voyage on these vernal, maritime waters, with which, I felt, St Mark's formed an indivisible and living whole. My mother and I would enter the baptistery, treading underfoot the marble and glass mosaics of the paving, in front of us the wide arcades whose curved pink surfaces have been slightly warped by time, thus giving the church, wherever the freshness of this colouring has been preserved, the appearance of having been built of a soft and malleable substance like the wax in a giant honeycomb, and, where on the contrary time has shrivelled and hardened the material and artists have embellished it with gold tracery, of being the precious binding, in the finest Cordoba leather, of the colossal Gospel of Venice. Seeing that I needed to spend some time in front of the mosaics representing the Baptism of Christ, and feeling the icy coolness that pervaded the baptistery, my mother threw a shawl over my shoulders. When I was with Albertine at Balbec, I felt that she was revealing one of those insubstantial illusions which clutter the minds of so many people who do not think

clearly, when she used to speak of the pleasure—to my mind baseless—that she would derive from seeing works of art with me. Today I am sure that the pleasure does exist, if not of seeing, at least of having seen, a beautiful thing with a particular person. A time has now come when, remembering the baptistery of St Mark's—contemplating the waters of the Jordan in which St John immerses Christ, while the gondola awaited us at the landing-stage of the Piazzetta—it is no longer a matter of indifference to me that, beside me in that cool penumbra, there should have been a woman draped in her mourning with the respectful and enthusiastic fervour of the old woman in Carpaccio's *St Ursula* in the Accademia, and that that woman, with her red cheeks and sad eyes and in her black veils, whom nothing can ever remove from that softly lit sanctuary of St Mark's where I am always sure to find her because she has her place reserved there as immutably as a mosaic, should be my mother.

Carpaccio, as it happens, who was the painter we visited most readily when I was not working in St Mark's, almost succeeded one day in reviving my love for Albertine. I was seeing for the first time *The Patriarch of Grado exorcising a demoniac*. I looked at the marvellous rose-pink and violet sky and the tall encrusted chimneys silhouetted against it, their flared stacks, blossoming like red tulips, reminiscent of so many Whistlers of Venice. Then my eyes travelled from the old wooden Rialto to that fifteenth-century Ponte Vecchio with its marble palaces decorated with gilded capitals, and returned to the canal on which the boats are manoeuvred by adolescents in pink jackets and plumed toques, the spitting image of those avowedly inspired by Carpaccio in that dazzling *Legend of*

Joseph by Sert, Strauss and Kessler. Finally, before leaving the picture, my eyes came back to the shore, swarming with the everyday Venetian life of the period. I looked at the barber wiping his razor, at the negro humping his barrel, at the Muslims conversing, at the noblemen in wide-sleeved brocade and damask robes and hats of cerise velvet, and suddenly I felt a slight gnawing at my heart. On the back of one of the *Compagni della Calza* identifiable from the emblem, embroidered in gold and pearls on their sleeves or their collars, of the merry confraternity to which they were affiliated, I had just recognised the cloak which Albertine had put on to come with me to Versailles in an open carriage on the evening when I so little suspected that scarcely fifteen hours separated me from the moment of her departure from my house. Always ready for anything, when I had asked her to come out with me on that melancholy occasion which she was to describe in her last letter as "a double twilight since night was falling and we were about to part," she had flung over her shoulders a Fortuny cloak which she had taken away with her next day and which I had never thought of since. It was from this Carpaccio picture that that inspired son of Venice had taken it, it was from the shoulders of this *Compagno della Calza* that he had removed it in order to drape it over the shoulders of so many Parisian women who were certainly unaware, as I had been until then, that the model for it existed in a group of noblemen in the foreground of the *Patriarch of Grado* in a room in the Accademia in Venice. I had recognised it down to the last detail, and, that forgotten cloak having restored to me as I looked at it the eyes and the heart of him who had set out that evening with Albertine for Versailles, I was overcome

for a few moments by a vague and soon dissipated feeling of desire and melancholy.

There were days when my mother and I were not content with visiting the museums and churches of Venice only, and once, when the weather was particularly fine, in order to see the "Virtues" and "Vices" of which M. Swann had given me reproductions that were probably still hanging on the wall of the schoolroom at Combray, we went as far afield as Padua. After walking across the garden of the Arena in the glare of the sun, I entered the Giotto chapel, the entire ceiling of which and the background of the frescoes are so blue that it seems as though the radiant daylight has crossed the threshold with the human visitor in order to give its pure sky a momentary breather in the coolness and shade, a sky merely of a slightly deeper blue now that it is rid of the glitter of the sunlight, as in those brief moments of respite when, though no cloud is to be seen, the sun has turned its gaze elsewhere and the azure, softer still, grows deeper. This sky transplanted on to the blue-washed stone was peopled with flying angels which I was seeing for the first time, for M. Swann had given me reproductions only of the Vices and Virtues and not of the frescoes depicting the life of the Virgin and of Christ. Watching the flight of these angels, I had the same impression of actual movement, literally real activity, that the gestures of Charity and Envy had given me. For all the celestial fervour, or at least the childlike obedience and application, with which their minuscule hands are joined, they are represented in the Arena chapel as winged creatures of a particular species that had really existed, that must have figured in the natural history of biblical and apostolic times. Constantly flitting about above the saints whenever the latter walk abroad, these little beings, since they are real creatures with a genuine power of flight, can be seen soaring upwards, describing curves, "looping the loop," diving earthwards head first, with the aid of wings which enable them to support themselves in positions that defy the laws of gravity, and are far more reminiscent of an extinct species of bird, or of young pupils of Garros practising gliding,[31] than of the angels of the Renaissance and later periods whose wings have become no more than emblems and whose deportment is generally the same as that of heavenly beings who are not winged.

On returning to the hotel I would meet young women, mainly Austrians, who came to Venice to spend the first fine days of this flowerless spring. There was one in particular whose features did not resemble Albertine's but who attracted me by the same fresh complexion, the same gay, light-hearted look. Soon I became aware that I was beginning to say the same things to her as I had said to Albertine at the start, that I concealed the same misery when she told me she would not be seeing me the following day because she was going to Verona, and that I immediately wanted to go to Verona too. It did not last—she was soon to leave for Austria and I would never see her again—but already, vaguely jealous as one is when one begins to fall in love, looking at her charming and enigmatic face I wondered whether she too loved women, whether what she had in common with Albertine, that clear complexion, that bright-eyed look, that air of friendly candour which charmed everyone and which stemmed more from the fact that she was not in the least interested in knowing about other people's actions, which

interested her not at all, than that she was confessing her own, which on the contrary she concealed beneath the most puerile lies—I wondered whether all this constituted the morphological characteristics of the woman who loves other women. Was it this about her that, without my being able rationally to grasp why, exercised its attraction upon me, caused my anxieties (perhaps a deeper cause of my attraction towards her by virtue of the fact that we are drawn towards that which will make us suffer), gave me when I saw her so much pleasure and sadness, like those magnetic elements in the air of certain places which we do not see but which cause us such physical discomfort? Alas, I should never know. I should have liked, when I tried to read her face, to say to her: "You really should tell me, it would interest me as an example of human natural history," but she would never tell me. She professed an especial loathing for anything that resembled that vice, and was extremely distant towards her women friends. Perhaps indeed this was proof that she had something to hide, perhaps that she had been mocked or reviled for it, and the air that she assumed in order that people should not think such things of her was like an animal's instinctive and revealing recoil from someone who has beaten it. As for my finding out about her life, it was impossible; even in the case of Albertine, how long it had taken me to get to know anything! It had taken her death to loosen people's tongues, such prudent circumspection had Albertine, like this young woman, observed in all her conduct. And in any case, could I be certain that I had discovered anything about Albertine? Moreover, just as the conditions of life that we most desire become a matter of indifference to us if we cease to love the person who, without our realising it, made us desire them because they enabled us to be close to her, to be in a position to please her, so it is with certain kinds of intellectual curiosity. The scientific importance which I attached to knowing the particular kind of desire that lay hidden beneath the delicate pink petals of those cheeks, in the brightness, a sunless brightness as at daybreak, of those pale eyes, in those days that were never accounted for, would doubtless subside when I had entirely ceased to love Albertine or when I had entirely ceased to love this young woman.

After dinner, I went out alone, into the heart of the enchanted city where I found myself in the middle of strange purlieus like a character in the *Arabian Nights*. It was very seldom that, in the course of my wanderings, I did not come across some strange and spacious *piazza* of which no guidebook, no tourist had ever told me. I had plunged into a network of little alleys, or *calli*. In the evening, with their high bell-mouthed chimneys on which the sun throws the brightest pinks, the clearest reds, it is a whole garden blossoming above the houses, its shades so various that you would have said it was the garden of some tulip lover of Delft or Haarlem, planted on top of the town. Moreover, the extreme proximity of the houses made of every casement a frame from which a day-dreaming cook gazed out, or in which a seated girl was having her hair combed by an old woman whose face in the dark looked like a witch's—made of each humble quiet house, so close because of the narrowness of the *calli*, a display of a hundred Dutch paintings placed side by side. Packed tightly together, these *calli* divided in all directions with

their furrows a chunk of Venice carved out between a canal and the lagoon, as if it had crystallised in accordance with these innumerable, tenuous and minute patterns. Suddenly, at the end of one of these alleys, it seemed as though a distension had occurred in the crystallised matter. A vast and splendid *campo* of which, in this network of little streets, I should never have guessed the scale, or even found room for it, spread out before me surrounded by charming palaces silvery in the moonlight. It was one of those architectural ensembles towards which, in any other town, the streets converge, lead you and point the way. Here it seemed to be deliberately concealed in an interlacement of alleys, like those palaces in oriental tales whither mysterious agents convey by night a person who, brought back home before daybreak, can never find his way back to the magic dwelling which he ends by believing that he visited only in a dream.

The next day, I set out in quest of my beautiful nocturnal *piazza*, following *calle* after *calle* which were exactly like one another and refused to give me the smallest piece of information, except such as would lead me further astray. Sometimes a vague landmark which I seemed to recognise led me to suppose that I was about to see appear, in its seclusion, solitude and silence, the beautiful exiled *piazza*. At that moment, some evil genie which had assumed the form of a new *calle* made me unwittingly retrace my steps, and I found myself suddenly brought back to the Grand Canal. And as there is no great difference between the memory of a dream and the memory of a reality, I finally wondered whether it was not during my sleep that there had occurred, in a dark patch of Venetian crystallisation, that strange mirage which offered a vast *piazza* surrounded by romantic palaces to the meditative eye of the moon.

But, far more than certain places, it was the desire not to lose for ever certain women that kept me while in Venice in a state of agitation which became febrile when, towards the end of the day on which my mother had decided that we should leave, and our luggage was already on the way to the station in a gondola, I read in the register of guests expected at the hotel: "Mme Putbus and attendants." At once, the thought of all the hours of casual pleasure of which our departure would deprive me raised this desire, which existed in me in a chronic state, to the level of a feeling, and drowned it in a vague melancholy. I asked my mother to put off our departure for a few days, and her air of not for a moment taking my request into consideration, of not even listening to it seriously, reawakened in my nerves, exacerbated by the Venetian springtime, that old desire to rebel against an imaginary plot woven against me by my parents, who imagined that I would be forced to obey them, that defiant spirit which drove me in the past to impose my will brutally upon the people I loved best in the world, though finally conforming to theirs after I had succeeded in making them yield. I told my mother that I would not leave Venice, but she, thinking it wiser not to appear to believe that I was saying this seriously, did not even answer. I went on to say that she would soon see whether I was serious or not. The porter brought us three letters, two for her, and one for me which I put in my wallet among several others without even looking at the envelope. And when the hour came at which, accompanied by all my belongings, she set off for the station, I ordered a drink to be brought out to

me on the terrace overlooking the canal, and settled down there to watch the sunset, while from a boat that had stopped in front of the hotel a musician sang *O sole mio.*

The sun continued to sink. My mother must be nearing the station. Soon she would be gone, and I should be alone in Venice, alone with the misery of knowing that I had distressed her, and without her presence to comfort me. The hour of the train's departure was approaching. My irrevocable solitude was so near at hand that it seemed to me to have begun already and to be complete. For I felt myself to be alone; things had become alien to me; I no longer had calm enough to break out of my throbbing heart and introduce into them a measure of stability. The town that I saw before me had ceased to be Venice. Its personality, its name, seemed to me to be mendacious fictions which I no longer had the will to impress upon its stones. I saw the palaces reduced to their basic elements, lifeless heaps of marble with nothing to choose between them, and the water as a combination of hydrogen and oxygen, eternal, blind, anterior and exterior to Venice, oblivious of the Doges or of Turner. And yet this unremarkable place was as strange as a place at which one has just arrived, which does not yet know one, or a place which one has left and which has forgotten one already. I could no longer tell it anything about myself, I could leave nothing of myself imprinted upon it; it contracted me into myself until I was no more than a beating heart and an attention strained to follow the development of *O sole mio.* In vain might I fix my mind despairingly upon the beautiful and distinctive curve of the Rialto, it seemed to me, with the mediocrity of the obvious, a bridge not merely inferior to but as alien to the notion I

had of it as an actor of whom, in spite of his blond wig and black garments, we know quite well that in his essence he is not Hamlet. So it was with the palaces, the canal, the Rialto, divested of the idea that constituted their reality and dissolved into their vulgar material elements. But at the same time this mediocre place seemed distant to me. In the dock basin of the Arsenal, because of an element which itself also was scientific, namely latitude, there was that singularity in things whereby, even when similar in appearance to those of our own land, they reveal themselves to be alien, in exile beneath other skies; I felt that that horizon so close at hand, which I could have reached in an hour by boat, was a curvature of the earth quite different from that of France, a distant curvature which, by the artifice of travel, happened to be moored close to where I was; so that the dock basin of the Arsenal, at once insignificant and remote, filled me with that blend of distaste and alarm which I had felt as a child when I first accompanied my mother to the Deligny baths, where, in that weird setting of a pool of water reflecting neither sky nor sun, which nevertheless amid its fringe of cabins one felt to be in communication with invisible depths crowded with human bodies in swimming-trunks, I had asked myself whether those depths, concealed from mortal eyes by hutments which made their existence impossible to divine from the street, were not the entry to arctic seas which began at that point, in which the poles were comprised, and whether that narrow space was not indeed the open water that surrounds the pole; and in this lonely, unreal, icy, unfriendly setting in which I was going to be left alone, the strains of *O sole mio,* rising like a dirge for the Venice I had known,

seemed to bear witness to my misery. No doubt I ought to have ceased to listen to it if I wished to be able to join my mother and take the train with her; I ought to have made up my mind to leave without losing another second. But this was precisely what I was powerless to do; I remained motionless, incapable not merely of rising, but even of deciding that I would rise from my chair. My mind, no doubt in order not to have to consider the decision I had to take, was entirely occupied in following the course of the successive phrases of *O sole mio*, singing them to myself with the singer, anticipating each surge of melody, soaring aloft with it, sinking down with it once more.

No doubt this trivial song which I had heard a hundred times did not interest me in the least. I could give no pleasure to myself or anyone else by listening to it religiously to the end. After all, none of the already familiar phrases of this sentimental ditty was capable of furnishing me with the resolution I needed; what was more, each of these phrases, when it came and went in its turn, became an obstacle in the way of my putting that resolution into effect, or rather it forced me towards the contrary resolution not to leave Venice, for it made me too late for the train. Wherefore this occupation, devoid of any pleasure in itself, of listening to *O sole mio* was charged with a profound, almost despairing melancholy. I was well aware that in reality it was the resolution not to go that I was making by remaining there without stirring, but to say to myself: "I'm not going," which in that direct form was impossible, became possible in this indirect form: "I'm going to listen to one more phrase of *O sole mio*"; but the

practical significance of this figurative language did not escape me and, while I said to myself: "After all, I'm only listening to one more phrase," I knew that the words meant: "I shall remain by myself in Venice." And it was perhaps this melancholy, like a sort of numbing cold, that constituted the despairing but hypnotic charm of the song. Each note that the singer's voice uttered with a force and ostentation that were almost muscular stabbed me to the heart. When the phrase was completed down below and the song seemed to be at an end, the singer had still not had enough and resumed at the top as though he needed to proclaim once more my solitude and despair.

My mother must by now have reached the station. In a little while she would be gone. I was gripped by the anguish that was caused me by the sight of the Canal which had become diminutive now that the soul of Venice had fled from it, of that commonplace Rialto which was no longer the Rialto, and by the song of despair which *O sole mio* had become and which, bellowed thus beside the insubstantial palaces, finally reduced them to dust and ashes and completed the ruin of Venice; I looked on at the slow realisation of my distress, built up artistically, without haste, note by note, by the singer as he stood beneath the astonished gaze of the sun arrested in its course beyond San Giorgio Maggiore, with the result that the fading light was to combine for ever in my memory with the shiver of my emotion and the bronze voice of the singer in an equivocal, unalterable and poignant alloy.

Thus I remained motionless, my will dissolved, no decision in sight. Doubtless at such moments our decision

has already been made: our friends can often predict it, but we ourselves are unable to do so, otherwise we should be spared a great deal of suffering.

But suddenly, from caverns darker than those from which flashes the comet which we can predict—thanks to the unsuspected defensive power of inveterate habit, thanks to the hidden reserves which by a sudden impulse it hurls at the last moment into the fray—my will to action arose at last; I set off in hot haste and arrived, when the carriage doors were already shut, but in time to find my mother flushed with emotion and with the effort to restrain her tears, for she thought that I was not coming. "You know," she said, "your poor grandmother used to say: It's curious, there's nobody who can be as unbearable or as nice as that child." Then the train started and we saw Padua and Verona come to meet us, to speed us on our way, almost on to the platforms of their stations, and, when we had drawn away from them, return—they who were not travelling and were about to resume their normal life—one to its plain, the other to its hill.

The hours went by. My mother was in no hurry to read her two letters, which she had merely opened, and tried to prevent me from pulling out my pocket-book at once to take from it the letter which the hotel porter had given me. She was always afraid of my finding journeys too long and too tiring, and put off as long as possible, so as to keep me occupied during the final hours, the moment at which she would seek fresh distractions for me, bring out the hard-boiled eggs, hand me the newspapers, untie the parcel of books which she had bought without telling me. We had long passed Milan when she decided to read the first of her two letters. At first I sat watching

her, as she read it with an air of astonishment, then raised her head, her eyes seeming to come to rest upon a succession of distinct and incompatible memories which she could not succeed in bringing together. Meanwhile I had recognised Gilberte's handwriting on the envelope which I had just taken from my pocket-book. I opened it. Gilberte wrote to inform me that she was marrying Robert de Saint-Loup. She told me that she had sent me a telegram about it to Venice but had had no reply. I remembered that I had been told that the telegraphic service there was inefficient. I had never received her telegram. Perhaps she would refuse to believe this. All of a sudden I felt in my brain a fact, which was installed there in the guise of a memory, leave its place and surrender it to another fact. The telegram that I had received a few days earlier, and had supposed to be from Albertine, was from Gilberte. As the somewhat laboured originality of Gilberte's handwriting consisted chiefly, when she wrote a line, in introducing into the line above it the strokes of her *t*'s which appeared to be underlining the words, or the dots over her *i*'s which appeared to be punctuating the sentence above them, and on the other hand in interspersing the line below with the tails and flourishes of the words immediately above, it was quite natural that the clerk who dispatched the telegram should have read the loops of *s*'s or *y*'s in the line above as an "-ine" attached to the word "Gilberte." The dot over the *i* of Gilberte had climbed up to make a suspension point. As for her capital *G*, it resembled a Gothic *A*. The fact that, in addition to this, two or three words had been misread, had dovetailed into one another (some of them indeed had seemed to me incomprehensible), was sufficient to explain the details of my error and