Selected Readings
from

In Search of Lost Time
Volume III

The Guermantes Way

by
Marcel Proust

PART ONE

Move into a new apartment in a wing of the Hôtel de Guermantes (1). Poetic dreams conjured up by the name Guermantes dispelled one by one (4).

Françoise holds court at lunch-time below stairs (12). Jupien (14); his niece (16).

The name Guermantes, having shed its feudal connotations, now offers my imagination a new mystery, that of the Faubourg Saint-Germain (28). The Guermantes' doormat: threshold of the Faubourg (31).

A gala evening at the Opéra (39). Berma in *Phèdre* once more (39, 49). The Prince of Saxony? (40). The Faubourg Saint-Germain in their boxes (44). The Princesse de Guermantes's *baignoire*: the water-goddesses and the bearded tritons (44). Berma in a modern piece (58). Berma and Elstir (59). The Princesse and the Duchesse de Guermantes (61). Mme de Cambremer (64).

My stratagems for seeing the Duchesse de Guermantes out walking (69); her different faces (74). Françoise's impenetrable feelings (81). I decide to visit Saint-Loup in his garrison, hoping to approach the Duchess through him (85).

Doncières. The cavalry barracks (86). The Captain, the Prince de Borodino (90). Saint-Loup's room (91). Noises and silence (91). My Doncières hotel (102). The world of sleep (106). Field manoeuvres (114). Saint-Loup's popularity (117). The streets of Doncières in the evening (120). Dinner at Saint-Loup's *pension* (124). I ask him to speak to his aunt about me (129). He wants me to shine in front of his friends (131). He denies the rumour of his engagement to Mlle d'Ambresac (133). Major Duroc (135). The Army and the Dreyfus case (138). Aesthetics of the military art (140). Saint-Loup and his mistress (156). Captain de

Borodino and his barber (165). My grandmother's voice on the telephone (176). Saint-Loup's strange salute (181; cf. 233).

Return to Paris. I discover how much my grandmother has changed as a result of her illness (184). End of winter (186). Mme de Guermantes in lighter dresses (189). Work-plans, constantly postponed (196). Mme Sazerat a Dreyfusard (200). Legrandin's professed hatred of society (202). Visit to the suburbs to meet Saint-Loup's mistress (204). I recognise her as "Rachel when from the Lord" (208). Pear-trees in blossom (212). Jealous scenes in the restaurant (217). In the theatre after lunch (228). Rachel's cruelty (229). Her transformation on stage (231). Rachel and the dancer (235). Saint-Loup and the journalist (240). Saint-Loup and the passionate stranger (242).

An afternoon party at Mme de Villeparisis's (244). Her social decline (244; cf. V 383); her literary qualities (246). The social kaleidoscope and the Dreyfus case (252). Mme de Villeparisis's *Memoirs* (258). The three Parcae (263). The portrait of the Duchesse de Montmorency (265). Legrandin in society (268). Mme de Guermantes's face and her conversation lack the mysterious glamour of her name (273, 281). Mme de Guermantes's luncheons (276); the Mérimée and Meilhac and Halévy type of mind (278). Bloch's bad manners (292). Entry of M. de Norpois (297). Entry of the Duc de Guermantes (300). Norpois and my father's candidature for the Academy (302). Generality of psychological laws (305). Various opinions on Rachel (305; cf. 292, 300, 308), on Odette (307), on Mme de Cambremer (311). Norpois and the Dreyfus case (313, 323). The laws of the imagination and of language (317). Mme de Villeparisis's by-play with Bloch (335). The Comtesse de Marsantes (337). Entry of Robert de Saint-Loup (343). Mme de Guermantes's amiability towards me (344, 356). Norpois and Prince von Faffenheim (349). Oriane refuses to meet Mme Swann (357). Charles Morel pays me a visit (358); Mme Swann and the "Lady in pink" (361). Charlus and Odette (362). Charlus's strange behaviour to his aunt (363). Mme de Marsantes and her son (366, 378). I learn that Charlus is the Duc de Guermantes's brother (376). The affair of the necklace (377, 381). Mme de Villeparisis tries to prevent me from going home with M. de Charlus (385). Charlus offers to guide my life (386). "Terrible, almost insane" remarks about the Bloch family (391). M. d'Argencourt's coldness towards me (396). Strange choice of a cab (401).

The Dreyfus case below-stairs (402). My grandmother's illness (404). The thermometer (405). Dr du Boulbon's diagnosis (410). Expedition to the Champs-Elysées with my grandmother (419). The "Marquise" (419). My grandmother has a slight stroke (424).

PART TWO

Chapter One

My grandmother's illness and death. Professor E——(426). "Your grandmother is doomed" (431). Cottard (438). The specialist X—— (441). My grandmother's sisters remain at Combray (442). Visits from Bergotte, himself ill (443). Time and the work of art (445). The Grand Duke of Luxembourg (448). The leeches (455). The Duc de Guermantes (458). My grandmother's brother-in-law the monk (462). Professor Dieulafoy (466). My grandmother's death (470).

Chapter Two

Morning visits (473). The water-heater (474). Saint-Loup breaks with Rachel (475). Mme de Stermaria's divorce (475). Visit from Albertine (479). New words in her vocabulary (484). Françoise (489). Successive images of Albertine (493). Her kiss (499). My mother cures me of my infatuation with Mme de Guermantes (508). Indiscreet behaviour of a "tall woman" whom I shall later discover (**IV** 164) to be the Princesse d'Orvillers (510). Reception at Mme de Villeparisis's (507): conversation with Mme de Guermantes (512); she invites me to dinner (515), speaks to me about her brother-in-law (519). Charlus's strange attitude towards Bloch (524). Albertine accompanies me to the Bois, where I am to dine next day with Mme de Stermaria (530). Mme de

Stermaria cancels our appointment (536). Visit from Saint-Loup (539). Reflections on friendship (540; cf. **II** 430). Memory of Doncières (542). Night and fog (544). The Prince de Foix and his coterie: the hunt for "money-bags" (553). The Jews (559). A pure Frenchman (560). Saint-Loup's acrobatics (563). An invitation from M. de Charlus (564).

Dinner with the Guermantes (570). The Elstirs (573). The flower-maidens (579). The Princesse de Parme (580). The family genie (602). The Courvoisiers (604). The Duke a bad husband but a social ally to Mme de Guermantes (620). The Princesse de Parme's receptions (622). The Guermantes salon (626). The Duchess's mimicry (631). "Teaser Augustus" (637). Oriane's "latest" (654). The handsome supernumeries (657). Disillusionment with the Faubourg Saint-Germain (679). The charm of the historic name of Guermantes detectable only in the Duchess's vocal mannerisms: traces of her country childhood (688; cf. 677). Misunderstanding between a young dreamer and a society woman (689). Why Saint-Loup will return to a dangerous post in Morocco (701). The ritual orangeade (704). The Duchess praises the Empire style (709; cf. **I** 481). The Guermantes divorced from the name Guermantes (719). Norpois at once malicious and obliging (724). The Turkish Ambassadress (732). The poetry of genealogy (733). Exaltation in the carriage on the way to M. de Charlus (750).

Waiting in M. de Charlus's drawing-room (757). His strange welcome (759). Gentleness succeeding rage (768). He accompanies me home in his carriage (772).

Letter from the young footman to his cousin (776). Invitation from the Princesse de Guermantes (779). Diversity of society people in spite of their apparently monotonous insignificance (780). Visit to the Duke and Duchess: view of the neighbouring houses (784). Remarkable discovery which will be described later (786; cf. **IV** 1). The Duc de Bouillon (786). The coins of the Order of Malta (787). The Duc de Guermantes's "Philippe de Champaigne" (792). Swann greatly "changed" (793). His Dreyfusism (796). The Duke's ball and Amanien's illness (806). Swann's illness (815). The Duchess's red shoes (818).

meal bread. It was here, in this charming room, that I could have dined and slept with a calm and happy mind. Saint-Loup seemed almost to be present in it by reason of the text-books which littered his table, between his photographs, among which I recognised my own and that of the Duchesse de Guermantes, by reason of the fire which had at length grown accustomed to the grate, and, like an animal crouching in an ardent, noiseless, faithful watchfulness, merely let fall now and then a smouldering log which crumbled into sparks, or licked with a tongue of flame the sides of the chimney. I heard the tick of Saint-Loup's watch, which could not be far away. This tick changed place every moment, for I could not see the watch; it seemed to come from behind, from in front of me, from my right, from my left, sometimes to die away as though it were a long way off. Suddenly I caught sight of the watch on the table. Then I heard the tick in a fixed place from which it did not move again. That is to say, I thought I heard it at this place; I did not hear it there, I saw it there, for sounds have no position in space. At least we associate them with movements, and in that way they serve the purpose of warning us of those movements, of appearing to make them necessary and natural. True, it sometimes happens that a sick man whose ears have been stopped with cotton-wool ceases to hear the noise of a fire such as was crackling at that moment in Saint-Loup's fireplace, labouring at the formation of brands and cinders, which it then dropped into the fender, nor would he hear the passage of the tram-cars whose music rose at regular intervals over the main square of Doncières. Then, if the sick man reads, the pages will turn silently as though fingered by a god. The ponderous rumble of a

bath being filled becomes thin, faint and distant, like a celestial twittering. The withdrawal of sound, its dilution, rob it of all its aggressive power; alarmed a moment ago by hammer-blows which seemed to be shattering the ceiling above our head, we take pleasure now in receiving them, light, caressing, distant, like the murmur of leaves playing by the roadside with the passing breeze. We play games of patience with cards which we do not hear, so much so that we imagine that we have not touched them, that they are moving of their own accord, and, anticipating our desire to play with them, have begun to play with us. And in this connexion we may wonder whether, in the case of love (to which we may even add the love of life and the love of fame, since there are, it appears, persons who are acquainted with these latter sentiments), we shouldn't act like those who, when a noise disturbs them, instead of praying that it may cease, stop their ears; and, in emulation of them, bring our attention, our defences, to bear on ourselves, give them as an object to subdue not the external being whom we love, but our capacity for suffering through that being.

To return to the problem of sound, we have only to thicken the wads which close the aural passages, and they confine to a pianissimo the girl who has been playing a boisterous tune overhead; if we go further, and steep one of these wads in grease, at once the whole household must obey its despotic rule; its laws extend even beyond our portals. Pianissimo is no longer enough; the wad instantly closes the piano and the music lesson is abruptly ended; the gentleman who was walking up and down in the room above breaks off in the middle of his beat; the movement of carriages and trams is interrupted as though a

sovereign were expected to pass. And indeed this attenuation of sounds sometimes disturbs our sleep instead of protecting it. Only yesterday the incessant noise in our ears, by describing to us in a continuous narrative all that was happening in the street and in the house, succeeded at length in sending us to sleep like a boring book; today, on the surface of silence spread over our sleep, a shock louder than the rest manages to make itself heard, gentle as a sigh, unrelated to any other sound, mysterious; and the demand for an explanation which it exhales is sufficient to awaken us. On the other hand, take away for a moment from the sick man the cotton-wool that has been stopping his ears and in a flash the broad daylight, the dazzling sun of sound dawns afresh, blinding him, is born again in the universe; the multitude of exiled sounds comes hastening back; we are present, as though it were the chanting of choirs of angels, at the resurrection of the voice. The empty streets are filled for a moment with the whirr of the swift and recurrent wings of the singing tram-cars. In the bedroom itself the sick man has created, not, like Prometheus, fire, but the sound of fire. And when we increase or reduce the wads of cotton-wool, it is as though we were pressing alternately one and then the other of the two pedals which we have added to the sonority of the outer world.

Only there are also suppressions of sound which are not temporary. The man who has become completely deaf cannot even heat a pan of milk by his bedside without having to keep an eye open to watch, on the tilted lid, for the white hyperborean reflexion, like that of a coming snowstorm, which is the premonitory sign it is wise to obey by cutting off (as the Lord stilled the waves) the

electric current; for already the fitfully swelling egg of the boiling milk is reaching its climax in a series of sidelong undulations, puffs out and fills a few drooping sails that had been puckered by the cream, sending a nacreous spinnaker bellying out in the hurricane, until the cutting off of the current, if the electric storm is exorcised in time, will make them all twirl round on themselves and scatter like magnolia petals. But should the sick man not have been quick enough in taking the necessary precautions, presently, his drowned books and watch scarcely emerging from the milky tidal wave, he will be obliged to call the old nurse, who, for all that he is an eminent statesman or a famous writer, will tell him that he has no more sense than a child of five. At other times in the magic chamber, standing inside the closed door, a person who was not there a moment ago will have made his appearance; it is a visitor who has entered unheard, and who merely gesticulates, like a figure in one of those little puppet theatres, so restful for those who have taken a dislike to the spoken tongue. And for this stone-deaf man, since the loss of a sense adds as much beauty to the world as its acquisition, it is with ecstasy that he walks now upon an earth become almost an Eden, in which sound has not yet been created. The highest waterfalls unfold for his eyes alone their sheets of crystal, stiller than the glassy sea, pure as the cascades of Paradise. Since sound was for him, before his deafness, the perceptible form which the cause of a movement assumed, objects moved soundlessly now seem to be moved without cause; deprived of the quality of sound, they show a spontaneous activity, seem to be alive. They move, halt, become alight of their own accord. Of their own accord they vanish in the air like the

winged monsters of prehistory. In the solitary and neighbourless house of the deaf man, the service which, before his infirmity was complete, was already showing more reserve, was being executed silently, is now carried out, with a sort of surreptitious deftness, by mutes, as at the court of a fairy-tale king. And again as on the stage, the building which the deaf man looks out on from his window—whether barracks, church, or town hall—is only so much scenery. If one day it should fall to the ground, it may emit a cloud of dust and leave visible ruins; but, less substantial even than a palace on the stage, though it has not the same exiguity, it will subside in the magic universe without letting the fall of its heavy blocks of stone tarnish the chastity of the prevailing silence with the vulgarity of noise.

The silence, altogether more relative, which reigned in the little barrack-room where I sat waiting was now broken. The door opened and Saint-Loup rushed in, dropping his monocle.

"Ah, Robert, how comfortable it is here," I said to him. "How good it would be if one were allowed to dine and sleep here."

And indeed, had it not been against the regulations, what repose untinged by sadness I could have enjoyed there, guarded by that atmosphere of tranquillity, vigilance and gaiety which was maintained by a thousand ordered and untroubled wills, a thousand carefree minds, in that great community called a barracks where, time having taken the form of action, the sad bell that tolled the hours outside was replaced by the same joyous clarion of those martial calls, the ringing memory of which was kept perpetually alive in the paved streets of the town, like the

dust that floats in a sunbeam—a voice sure of being heard, and musical because it was the command not only of authority to obedience but of wisdom to happiness.

"So you'd rather stay with me and sleep here, would you, than go to the hotel by yourself?" Saint-Loup asked me, smiling.

"Oh, Robert, it's cruel of you to be sarcastic about it," I answered. "You know it's not possible, and you know how wretched I shall be over there."

"Well, you flatter me!" he replied. "Because it actually occurred to me that you'd rather stay here tonight. And that is precisely what I went to ask the Captain."

"And he has given you leave?" I cried.

"He hadn't the slightest objection."

"Oh! I adore him!"

"No, that would be going too far. But now, let me just get hold of my batman and tell him to see about our dinner," he went on, while I turned away to hide my tears.

We were several times interrupted by the entry of one or other of Saint-Loup's comrades. He drove them all out again.

"Get out of here. Buzz off!"

I begged him to let them stay.

"No, really, they would bore you stiff. They're absolutely uncouth people who can talk of nothing but racing or stable shop. Besides, I don't want them here either; they would spoil these precious moments I've been looking forward to. Mind you, when I tell you that these fellows are brainless, it isn't that everything military is devoid of intellectuality. Far from it. We have a major here who's an admirable man. He's given us a course in

which military history is treated like a demonstration, like a problem in algebra. Even from the aesthetic point of view there's a curious beauty, alternately inductive and deductive, about it which you couldn't fail to appreciate."

"That's not the officer who's given me leave to stay here tonight?"

"No, thank God! The man you 'adore' for so very trifling a service is the biggest fool that ever walked the face of the earth. He's perfect at looking after messing, and at kit inspections; he spends hours with the senior sergeant and the master tailor. There you have his mentality. Besides, he has a vast contempt, like everyone here, for the excellent major in question, whom no one speaks to because he's a freemason and doesn't go to confession. The Prince de Borodino would never have an outsider like that in his house. Which is pretty fair cheek, when all's said and done, from a man whose great-grandfather was a small farmer, and who would probably be a small farmer himself if it hadn't been for the Napoleonic wars. Not that he isn't a little aware of his own rather ambiguous position in society, neither flesh nor fowl. He hardly ever shows his face at the Jockey, it makes him feel so deuced awkward, this so-called Prince," added Robert, who, having been led by the same spirit of imitation to adopt the social theories of his teachers and the worldly prejudices of his relatives, unconsciously combined a democratic love of humanity with a contempt for the nobility of the Empire.

I looked at the photograph of his aunt, and the thought that, since Saint-Loup had this photograph in his possession, he might perhaps give it to me, made me

cherish him all the more and long to do him a thousand services, which seemed to me a very small exchange for it. For this photograph was like a supplementary encounter added to all those that I had already had with Mme de Guermantes; better still, a prolonged encounter, as if, by a sudden stride forward in our relations, she had stopped beside me, in a garden hat, and had allowed me for the first time to gaze at my leisure at that rounded cheek, that arched neck, that tapering eyebrow (veiled from me hitherto by the swiftness of her passage, the bewilderment of my impressions, the imperfection of memory); and the contemplation of them, as well as of the bare throat and arms of a woman whom I had never seen save in a high-necked and long-sleeved dress, was to me a voluptuous discovery, a priceless favour. Those forms, which had seemed to me almost a forbidden spectacle, I could study there as in a text-book of the only geometry that had any value for me. Later on, looking at Robert, it struck me that he too was a little like the photograph of his aunt, by a mysterious process which I found almost as moving, since, if his face had not been directly produced by hers, the two had nevertheless a common origin. The features of the Duchesse de Guermantes, which were pinned to my vision of Combray, the nose like a falcon's beak, the piercing eyes, seemed to have served also as a pattern for the cutting out—in another copy analogous and slender, with too delicate a skin—of Robert's face, which might almost be superimposed upon his aunt's. I looked longingly at those features of his so characteristic of the Guermantes, of that race which had remained so individual in the midst of a world in which it remained isolated in its

divinely ornithological glory, for it seemed to have sprung, in the age of mythology, from the union of a goddess with a bird.

Robert, without being aware of its cause, was touched by my evident affection. This was moreover increased by the sense of well-being inspired in me by the heat of the fire and by the champagne which simultaneously bedewed my forehead with beads of sweat and my eyes with tears; it washed down some young partridges which I ate with the wonderment of a layman, of whatever sort he may be, who finds in a way of life with which he is not familiar what he has supposed it to exclude—the wonderment, for instance, of an atheist who sits down to an exquisitely cooked dinner in a presbytery. And next morning, when I awoke, I went over to Saint-Loup's window, which being at a great height overlooked the whole countryside, curious to make the acquaintance of my new neighbour, the landscape which I had not been able to see the day before, having arrived too late, at an hour when it was already sleeping beneath the outspread cloak of night. And yet, early as it had awoken, I could see it, when I opened the window and looked out, only as though from the window of a country house overlooking the lake, shrouded still in its soft white morning gown of mist which scarcely allowed me to make out anything at all. But I knew that, before the troopers who were busy with their horses in the square had finished grooming them, it would have cast its gown aside. In the meantime, I could see only a bare hill, raising its lean and rugged flanks, already swept clear of darkness, over the back of the barracks. Through the translucent screen of hoar-frost I could not take my

eyes from this stranger who was looking at me too for the first time. But when I had formed the habit of coming to the barracks, my consciousness that the hill was there, more real, consequently, even when I did not see it, than the hotel at Balbec, than our house in Paris, of which I thought as of absent—or dead—friends, that is to say scarcely believing any longer in their existence, caused its reflected form, even without my realising it, to be silhouetted against the slightest impressions that I formed at Doncières, and among them, to begin with this first morning, the pleasing impression of warmth given me by the cup of chocolate, prepared by Saint-Loup's batman in this comfortable room, which seemed like a sort of optical centre from which to look out at the hill—the idea of doing anything else but just gaze at it, the idea of actually climbing it, being rendered impossible by this same mist. Imbued with the shape of the hill, associated with the taste of hot chocolate and with the whole web of my fancies at that particular time, this mist, without my having given it the least thought, came to infuse all my thoughts of that time, just as a massive and unmelting lump of gold had remained allied to my impressions of Balbec, or as the proximity of the outside steps of sandstone gave a greyish background to my impressions of Combray. It did not, however, persist late into the day; the sun began by hurling at it in vain a few darts which sprinkled it with brilliants, then finally overcame it. The hill might expose its grizzled rump to the sun's rays, which, an hour later, when I went into the town, gave to the russet tints of the autumn leaves, to the reds and blues of the election posters pasted on the walls, an exaltation which raised my

spirits also and made me stamp, singing as I went, on the paving-stones from which I could hardly keep myself from jumping in the air for joy.

But after that first night I had to sleep at the hotel. And I knew beforehand that I was doomed to find sadness there. It was like an unbreathable aroma which all my life long had been exhaled for me by every new bedroom, that is to say by every bedroom—for in the one which I usually occupied I was not present, my mind remained elsewhere and sent mere Habit to take its place. But I could not employ this servant, less sensitive than myself, to look after things for me in a new place, where I preceded him, where I arrived alone, where I must bring into contact with its environment that "Self" which I rediscovered only at year-long intervals, but always the same, not having grown at all since Combray, since my first arrival at Balbec, weeping inconsolably on the edge of an unpacked trunk.

As it happened, I was mistaken. I had no time to be sad, for I was not alone for an instant. The fact of the matter was that there remained of the old palace a surplus refinement of structure and decoration, out of place in a modern hotel, which, released from any practical assignment, had in its long spell of leisure acquired a sort of life: passages winding about in all directions, which one was continually crossing in their aimless wanderings, lobbies as long as corridors and as ornate as drawing-rooms, which had the air rather of dwelling there themselves than of forming part of the dwelling, which could not be induced to enter and settle down in any of the rooms but roamed about outside mine and came up at once to offer me their company—neighbours of a sort, idle but never

noisy, menial ghosts of the past who had been granted the privilege of staying quietly by the doors of the rooms which were let to visitors, and who whenever I came across them greeted me with a silent deference. In short, the idea of a lodging, a mere container for our present existence, simply shielding us from the cold and from the sight of other people, was absolutely inapplicable to this dwelling, an assembly of rooms, as real as a colony of people, living, it was true, in silence, but which one was obliged to encounter, to avoid, to greet when one came in. One tried not to disturb, and one could not look at without respect, the great drawing-room which had formed, far back in the eighteenth century, the habit of stretching itself at its ease among its hangings of old gold beneath the clouds of its painted ceiling. And one was seized with a more personal curiosity as regards the smaller rooms which, without the least concern for symmetry, ran all round it, innumerable, startled, fleeing in disorder as far as the garden, to which they had so easy an access down three broken steps.

If I wished to go out or come in without taking the lift or being seen on the main staircase, a smaller private staircase, no longer in use, offered me its steps so skilfully arranged, one close above another, that there seemed to exist in their gradation a perfect proportion of the same kind as those which, in colours, scents, savours, often arouse in us a peculiar sensuous pleasure. But the pleasure to be found in going up and downstairs was one I had had to come here to learn, as once in an alpine resort I had found that the act—as a rule not noticed—of breathing can be a perpetual delight. I received that dispensation from effort which is granted to us only by the

things to which long use has accustomed us, when I set my feet for the first time on those steps, familiar before ever I knew them, as if they possessed, stored up, incorporated in them perhaps by the masters of old whom they used to welcome every day, the prospective charm of habits which I had not yet contracted and which indeed could only dwindle once they had become my own. I went into a room; the double doors closed behind me, the hangings let in a silence in which I felt myself invested with a sort of exhilarating royalty; a marble fireplace with ornaments of wrought brass—of which one would have been wrong to think that its sole idea was to represent the art of the Directory—offered me a fire, and a little easy chair on short legs helped me to warm myself as comfortably as if I had been sitting on the hearthrug. The walls held the room in a close embrace, separating it from the rest of the world and, to let into it, to enclose in it what made it complete, parted to make way for the bookcase, reserved a place for the bed, on either side of which columns airily upheld the lofty ceiling of the alcove. And the room was prolonged in depth by two closets as wide as itself, one of which had hanging from its wall, to scent the occasion on which one had recourse to it, a voluptuous rosary of orris-roots; the doors, if I left them open when I withdrew into this innermost retreat, were not content with tripling its dimensions without spoiling its harmonious proportions, and not only allowed my eyes to enjoy the delights of extension after those of concentration, but added further to the pleasure of my solitude—which, while still inviolable, was no longer shut in—the sense of liberty. This closet gave on to a courtyard, a solitary fair stranger whom I was glad to have for a neighbour when next morning my eyes fell on her, a captive between her high walls in which no other window opened, with nothing but two yellowing trees which contrived to give a mauve softness to the pure sky above.

Before going to bed I left the room to explore the whole of my enchanted domain. I walked down a long gallery which displayed to me successively all that it had to offer me if I could not sleep, an armchair placed in a corner, a spinet, a blue porcelain vase filled with cinerarias on a console table, and, in an old frame, the phantom of a lady of long ago with powdered hair mingled with blue flowers, holding in her hand a bunch of carnations. When I came to the end, the bare wall in which no door opened said to me simply: "Now you must go back, but you see, you are at home here," while the soft carpet, not to be outdone, added that if I could not sleep that night I could perfectly well come in my bare feet, and the unshuttered windows looking out over the countryside assured me that they would keep a sleepless vigil and that, at whatever hour I chose to come, I need not be afraid of disturbing anyone. And behind a hanging curtain I came upon a little closet which, stopped by the outer wall and unable to escape, had hidden itself there shamefacedly and gave me a frightened stare from its little round window, glowing blue in the moonlight. I went to bed, but the presence of the eiderdown, of the slim columns, of the little fireplace, by screwing up my attention to a pitch beyond that of Paris, prevented me from surrendering to the habitual routine of my musings. And as it is this particular state of attention that enfolds our slumbers, acts upon them, modifies them, brings them into line with this or that series of past impressions, the images that filled my

dreams that first night were borrowed from a memory entirely distinct from that on which I was in the habit of drawing. If I had been tempted while asleep to let myself be swept back into my usual current of remembrance, the bed to which I was not accustomed, the careful attention which I was obliged to pay to the position of my limbs when I turned over, were sufficient to adjust or maintain the new thread of my dreams. It is the same with sleep as with our perception of the external world. It needs only a modification in our habits to make it poetic, it is enough that while undressing we should have dozed off involuntarily on top of the bed for the dimensions of sleep to be altered and its beauty felt. We wake up, look at our watch and see "four o'clock"; it is only four o'clock in the morning, but we imagine that the whole day has gone by, so vividly does this unsolicited nap of a few minutes appear to have come down to us from heaven, by virtue of some divine right, huge and solid as an Emperor's orb of gold. In the morning, worried by the thought that my grandfather was ready and they were waiting for me to set out for our walk along the Méséglise way, I was awakened by the blare of a regimental band which passed every day beneath my windows. But two or three times—and I say this because one cannot properly describe human life unless one bathes it in the sleep into which it plunges night after night and which sweeps round it as a promontory is encircled by the sea—the intervening layer of sleep was resistant enough to withstand the impact of the music and I heard nothing. On other mornings it gave way for a moment; but my consciousness, still muffled from sleep (like those organs by which, after a preliminary anaesthetic, a cauterisation, not perceived at first, is felt only at

the very end and then as a faint smarting), was touched only gently by the shrill points of the fifes which caressed it with a vague, cool, matutinal warbling; and after this fragile interruption in which the silence had turned to music it relapsed into my slumber before even the dragoons had finished passing, depriving me of the last blossoming sheafs of the surging bouquet of sound. And the zone of my consciousness which its springing stems had brushed was so narrow, so circumscribed with sleep that later on, when Saint-Loup asked me whether I had heard the band, I was not certain that the sound of its brasses had not been as imaginary as that which I heard during the day echoing, after the slightest noise, from the paved streets of the town. Perhaps I had heard it only in my dreams, prompted by my fear of being awakened, or else of not being awakened and so not seeing the regiment march past. For often when I remained asleep at the moment when on the contrary I had supposed that the noise would awaken me, for the next hour I imagined that I was awake, while still dozing, and I enacted to myself with tenuous shadow-shapes on the screen of my slumber the various scenes of which it deprived me but at which I had the illusion of looking on.

Indeed, what one has meant to do during the day it turns out, sleep intervening, that one accomplishes only in one's dreams, that is to say after it has been diverted by drowsiness into following a different path from that which one would have chosen when awake. The same story branches off and has a different ending. When all is said, the world in which we live when we are asleep is so different that people who have difficulty in going to sleep seek first of all to escape from the waking world. After

having desperately, for hours on end, with their eyes closed, revolved in their minds thoughts similar to those which they would have had with their eyes open, they take heart again on noticing that the preceding minute has been weighed down by a line of reasoning in strict contradiction to the laws of logic and the reality of the present, this brief "absence" signifying that the door is now open through which they may perhaps presently be able to escape from the perception of the real, to advance to a resting-place more or less remote from it, which will mean their having a more or less "good" night. But already a great stride has been made when we turn our backs on the real, when we reach the outer caves in which "auto-suggestions" prepare—like witches—the hell-broth of imaginary illnesses or of the recurrence of nervous disorders, and watch for the hour when the spasms which have been building up during the unconsciousness of sleep will be unleashed with sufficient force to make sleep cease.

Not far thence is the secret garden in which the kinds of sleep, so different one from another, induced by datura, by Indian hemp, by the multiple extracts of ether—the sleep of belladonna, of opium, of valerian—grow like unknown flowers whose petals remain closed until the day when the predestined stranger comes to open them with a touch and to liberate for long hours the aroma of their peculiar dreams for the delectation of an amazed and spellbound being. At the end of the garden stands the convent with open windows through which we hear voices repeating the lessons learned before we went to sleep, which we shall know only at the moment of awakening; while, presaging that moment, our inner alarm-clock ticks away, so well regulated by our preoccupation that when our housekeeper comes in and tells us it is seven o'clock she will find us awake and ready. The dim walls of that chamber which opens upon our dreams and within which the sorrows of love are wrapped in that oblivion whose incessant toil is interrupted and annulled at times by a nightmare heavy with reminiscences, but quickly resumed, are hung, even after we are awake, with the memories of our dreams, but they are so murky that often we catch sight of them for the first time only in the broad light of the afternoon when the ray of a similar idea happens by chance to strike them; some of them, clear and harmonious while we slept, already so distorted that, having failed to recognise them, we can but hasten to lay them in the earth, like corpses too quickly decomposed or relics so seriously damaged, so nearly crumbling into dust that the most skilful restorer could not give them back a shape or make anything of them.

Near the gate is the quarry to which our heavier slumbers repair in search of substances which coat the brain with so unbreakable a glaze that, to awaken the sleeper, his own will is obliged, even on a golden morning, to smite him with mighty blows, like a young Siegfried. Beyond this, again, are nightmares, of which the doctors foolishly assert that they tire us more than does insomnia, whereas on the contrary they enable the thinker to escape from the strain of thought—nightmares with their fantastic picture-books in which our relatives who are dead are shown meeting with serious accidents which at the same time do not preclude their speedy recovery. Until then we keep them in a little rat-cage, in which they are smaller than white mice and, covered with big red spots out of each of which a feather sprouts, regale us

with Ciceronian speeches. Next to this picture-book is the revolving disc of awakening, by virtue of which we submit for a moment to the tedium of having to return presently to a house which was pulled down fifty years ago, the image of which is gradually effaced by a number of others as sleep recedes, until we arrive at the image which appears only when the disc has ceased to revolve and which coincides with the one we shall see with opened eyes.

Sometimes I had heard nothing, being in one of those slumbers into which we fall as into a pit from which we are heartily glad to be drawn up a little later, heavy, overfed, digesting all that has been brought to us (as by the nymphs who fed the infant Hercules) by those agile vegetative powers whose activity is doubled while we sleep.

We call that a leaden sleep, and it seems as though, even for a few moments after such a sleep is ended, one has oneself become a simple figure of lead. One is no longer a person. How then, searching for one's thoughts, one's personality, as one searches for a lost object, does one recover one's own self rather than any other? Why, when one begins again to think, is it not a personality other than the previous one that becomes incarnate in one? One fails to see what dictates the choice, or why, among the millions of human beings one might be, it is on the being one was the day before that unerringly one lays one's hand. What is it that guides us, when there has been a real interruption—whether it be that our unconsciousness has been complete or our dreams entirely different from ourselves? There has indeed been death, as when the heart has ceased to beat and a rhythmical traction of the tongue revives us. No doubt the room, even if we have seen it only once before, awakens memories to which other, older memories cling, or perhaps some were dormant in us, of which we now become conscious. The resurrection at our awakening—after that beneficent attack of mental alienation which is sleep—must after all be similar to what occurs when we recall a name, a line, a refrain that we had forgotten. And perhaps the resurrection of the soul after death is to be conceived as a phenomenon of memory.

When I had finished sleeping, tempted by the sunlit sky but held back by the chill of those last autumn mornings, so luminous and so cold, which herald winter, in order to look at the trees on which the leaves were indicated now only by a few strokes of gold or pink which seemed to have been left in the air, on an invisible web, I raised my head from the pillow and stretched my neck, keeping my body still hidden beneath the bedclothes; like a chrysalis in the process of metamorphosis, I was a dual creature whose different parts were not adapted to the same environment; for my eyes colour was sufficient, without warmth; my chest on the other hand was anxious for warmth and not for colour. I got up only after my fire had been lighted, and studied the picture, so delicate and transparent, of the pink and golden morning, to which I had now added by artificial means the element of warmth that it lacked, poking my fire which burned and smoked like a good pipe and gave me, as a pipe would have given me, a pleasure at once coarse because it was based upon a material comfort and delicate because behind it were the soft outlines of a pure vision. The walls of my dressing-room were papered in a violent red, sprinkled with black

was for the wives of middle-class officers (provided they were not freemasons) that he would bring out not only a dinner service of royal blue Sèvres, fit for an ambassador (which had been given to his father by Napoleon, and appeared even more priceless in the commonplace house he inhabited on the avenue, like those rare porcelains which tourists admire with a special delight in the rustic china-cupboard of some old manor that has been converted into a comfortable and prosperous farmhouse), but other gifts of the Emperor also: those noble and charming manners, which too would have done wonders in a diplomatic post abroad (if for some it did not mean a lifelong condemnation to the most unjust form of ostracism merely to have a "name"), the easy gestures, the kindness, the grace, and, enclosing images of glory in an enamel that was also royal blue, the mysterious, illuminated, living reliquary of his gaze.

And in regard to the social relations with the middle classes which the Prince had at Doncières, it may be appropriate to add the following. The lieutenant-colonel played the piano beautifully; the senior medical officer's wife sang like a Conservatoire medallist. This latter couple, as well as the lieutenant-colonel and his wife, used to dine every week with M. de Borodino. They were certainly flattered, knowing that when the Prince went to Paris on leave he dined with Mme de Pourtalès, with the Murats and suchlike. "But," they said to themselves, "he's just a captain, after all; he's only too glad to get us to come. Still, he's a real friend to us." But when M. de Borodino, who had long been pulling every possible wire to secure an appointment nearer Paris, was posted to Beauvais, he packed up and went, and forgot the two musical couples as completely as he forgot the Doncières theatre and the little restaurant to which he used often to send out for his lunch, and, to their great indignation, neither the lieutenant-colonel nor the senior medical officer, who had so often sat at his table, ever had so much as a single word from him for the rest of their lives.

One morning, Saint-Loup confessed to me that he had written to my grandmother to give her news of me and to suggest to her that, since there was a telephone service functioning between Paris and Doncières, she might make use of it to speak to me. In short, that very day she was to give me a call, and he advised me to be at the post office at about a quarter to four. The telephone was not yet at that date as commonly in use as it is today. And yet habit requires so short a time to divest of their mystery the sacred forces with which we are in contact, that, not having had my call at once, my immediate thought was that it was all very long and very inconvenient, and I almost decided to lodge a complaint. Like all of us nowadays, I found too slow for my liking, in its abrupt changes, the admirable sorcery whereby a few moments are enough to bring before us, invisible but present, the person to whom we wish to speak, and who, while still sitting at his table, in the town in which he lives (in my grandmother's case, Paris), under another sky than ours, in weather that is not necessarily the same, in the midst of circumstances and preoccupations of which we know nothing and of which he is about to inform us, finds himself suddenly transported hundreds of miles (he and all the surroundings in which he remains immured) within reach of our ear, at the precise moment which our fancy has ordained. And we are like the person in the

fairy-tale for whom a sorceress, at his express wish, conjures up, in a supernatural light, his grandmother or his betrothed in the act of turning over a book, of shedding tears, of gathering flowers, close by the spectator and yet very far away, in the place where she actually is at the moment. We need only, so that the miracle may be accomplished, apply our lips to the magic orifice and invoke—occasionally for rather longer than seems to us necessary, I admit—the Vigilant Virgins to whose voices we listen every day without ever coming to know their faces and who are our guardian angels in the dizzy realm of darkness whose portals they so jealously guard; the All-Powerful by whose intervention the absent rise up at our side, without our being permitted to set eyes on them; the Danaïds of the unseen who incessantly empty and fill and transmit to one another the urns of sound; the ironic Furies who, just as we were murmuring a confidence to a loved one, in the hope that no one could hear us, cry brutally: "I'm listening!"; the ever-irritable handmaidens of the Mystery, the umbrageous priestesses of the Invisible, the Young Ladies of the Telephone.

And as soon as our call has rung out, in the darkness filled with apparitions to which our ears alone are unsealed, a tiny sound, an abstract sound—the sound of distance overcome—and the voice of the dear one speaks to us.

It is she, it is her voice that is speaking, that is there. But how far away it is! How often have I been unable to listen without anguish, as though, confronted by the impossibility of seeing, except after long hours of travel, the woman whose voice was so close to my ear, I felt more clearly the illusoriness in the appearance of the most tender proximity, and at what a distance we may be from the persons we love at the moment when it seems that we have only to stretch out our hands to seize and hold them. A real presence, perhaps, that voice that seemed so near—in actual separation! But a premonition also of an eternal separation! Many are the times, as I listened thus without seeing her who spoke to me from so far away, when it has seemed to me that the voice was crying to me from the depths out of which one does not rise again, and I have felt the anxiety that was one day to wring my heart when a voice would thus return (alone and attached no longer to a body which I was never to see again), to murmur in my ear words I longed to kiss as they issued from lips for ever turned to dust.

That afternoon, alas, at Doncières, the miracle did not occur. When I reached the post office, my grandmother's call had already been received. I stepped into the booth; the line was engaged; someone was talking who probably did not realise that there was nobody to answer him, for when I raised the receiver to my ear, the lifeless piece of wood began to squeak like Punchinello; I silenced it, as one silences a puppet, by putting it back on its hook, but, like Punchinello, as soon as I picked it up again it resumed its gabblings. At length, giving up in despair and hanging up the receiver once and for all, I stifled the convulsions of this vociferous stump which kept up its chatter until the last moment, and went in search of the telephonist, who told me to wait a while; then I spoke, and after a few seconds of silence, suddenly I heard that voice which I mistakenly thought I knew so well; for always until then, every time that my grandmother had talked to me, I had been accustomed to fol-

low what she said on the open score of her face, in which the eyes figured so largely; but her voice itself I was hearing this afternoon for the first time. And because that voice appeared to me to have altered in its proportions from the moment that it was a whole, and reached me thus alone and without the accompaniment of her face and features, I discovered for the first time how sweet that voice was; perhaps indeed it had never been so sweet as it was now, for my grandmother, thinking of me as being far away and unhappy, felt that she might abandon herself to an outpouring of tenderness which, in accordance with her principles of upbringing, she usually restrained and kept hidden. It was sweet, but also how sad it was, first of all on account of its very sweetness, a sweetness drained almost—more than any but a few human voices can ever have been—of every element of hardness, of resistance to others, of selfishness! Fragile by reason of its delicacy, it seemed constantly on the verge of breaking, of expiring in a pure flow of tears; then, too, having it alone beside me, seen without the mask of her face, I noticed in it for the first time the sorrows that had cracked it in the course of a lifetime.

Was it, however, solely the voice that, because it was alone, gave me this new impression which tore my heart? Not at all; it was rather that this isolation of the voice was like a symbol, an evocation, a direct consequence of another isolation, that of my grandmother, for the first time separated from me. The commands or prohibitions which she constantly addressed to me in the ordinary course of life, the tedium of obedience or the fire of rebellion which neutralised the affection that I felt for her, were at this moment eliminated and indeed might be eliminated for

ever (since my grandmother, no longer insisting on having me with her under her control, was in the act of expressing her hope that I would stay at Doncières altogether, or would at any rate extend my visit for as long as possible, since both my health and my work might benefit by the change); and so, what I held compressed in this little bell at my ear was our mutual affection, freed from the conflicting pressures which had daily counteracted it, and henceforth irresistible, uplifting me entirely. My grandmother, by telling me to stay, filled me with an anxious, an insensate longing to return. This freedom she was granting me henceforward, and to which I had never dreamed that she would consent, appeared to me suddenly as sad as my freedom of action might be after her death (when I should still love her and she would for ever have abandoned me). "Granny!" I cried to her, "Granny!" and I longed to kiss her, but I had beside me only the voice, a phantom as impalpable as the one that would perhaps come back to visit me when my grandmother was dead. "Speak to me!" But then, suddenly, I ceased to hear the voice, and was left even more alone. My grandmother could no longer hear me; she was no longer in communication with me; we had ceased to be close to each other, to be audible to each other; I continued to call her, groping in the empty darkness, feeling that calls from her must also be going astray. I quivered with the same anguish which I had felt once before in the distant past, when, as a little child, I had lost her in a crowd, an anguish due less to my not finding her than to the thought that she must be searching for me, must be saying to herself that I was searching for her, an anguish not unlike that which I was later to feel, on the day when

we speak to those who can no longer reply and when we long for them at least to hear all the things we never said to them, and our assurance that we are not unhappy. It seemed to me as though it was already a beloved ghost that I had allowed to lose herself in the ghostly world, and, standing alone before the instrument, I went on vainly repeating: "Granny! Granny!" as Orpheus, left alone, repeats the name of his dead wife. I decided to leave the post office, and go and find Robert at his restaurant in order to tell him that, as I was half expecting a telegram which would oblige me to return to Paris, I wanted, just in case, to know the times of the trains. And yet, before reaching this decision, I felt I must make one more attempt to invoke the Daughters of the Night, the Messengers of the Word, the faceless divinities; but the capricious Guardians had not deigned once again to open the miraculous portals, or, more probably, had been unable to do so; untiringly though they invoked, as was their custom, the venerable inventor of printing and the young prince, collector of Impressionist paintings and driver of motor-cars (who was Captain de Borodino's nephew), Gutenberg and Wagram, those telephone exchanges, left their supplications unanswered, and I came away, feeling that the Invisible would continue to turn a deaf ear.

When I joined Robert and his friends, I withheld the confession that my heart was no longer with them, that my departure was now irrevocably fixed. Saint-Loup appeared to believe me, but I learned afterwards that he had from the first moment realised that my uncertainty was feigned and that he would not see me again next day. While he and his friends, letting their plates grow cold,

searched through the time-table for a train which would take me to Paris, and while the whistling of the locomotives in the cold, starry night could be heard on the line, I certainly no longer felt the same peace of mind as on so many evenings I had derived from the friendship of the former and the latter's distant passage. And yet they did not fail, this evening, to perform the same office in a different form. My departure oppressed me less when I was no longer obliged to think of it alone, when I felt that the more normal and healthy exertions of my energetic friends, Robert's brothers-in-arms, were being applied to what was to be done, and of those other strong creatures, the trains, whose comings and goings, morning and night, between Doncières and Paris, broke up in retrospect what had been too compact and unendurable in my long isolation from my grandmother into daily possibilities of return.

"I don't doubt the truth of what you say, and that you aren't thinking of leaving us just yet," said Saint-Loup, smiling, "but pretend you are going, and come and say good-bye to me tomorrow morning early, otherwise there's a risk of my not seeing you. I'm going out to lunch, I've got leave from the Captain, but I shall have to be back in barracks by two, as we are to be on the march all afternoon. I suppose the man to whose house I'm going, a couple of miles out, will manage to get me back in time."

Scarcely had he uttered these words than a messenger came for me from my hotel: the post office had asked for me on the telephone. I ran there, for it was nearly closing time. The word "trunks" recurred incessantly in the answers given me by the clerks. I was in a fever of anxiety,

for it was my grandmother who had asked for me. The post office was closing for the night. Finally I got my connexion. "Is that you, Granny?" A woman's voice, with a strong English accent, answered: "Yes, but I don't recognise your voice." Neither did I recognise the voice that was speaking to me; besides, my grandmother called me *tu*, and not *vous*. And then all was explained. The young man for whom his grandmother had called on the telephone had a name almost identical with mine, and was staying in an annex of my hotel. This call coming on the very day on which I had been telephoning to my grandmother, I had never for a moment doubted that it was she who was asking for me. Whereas it was by pure coincidence that the post office and the hotel had combined to make a twofold error.

The following morning I was late, and failed to catch Saint-Loup, who had already left for the country house where he was invited to lunch. About half past one, having decided to go to the barracks so as to be there as soon as he returned, I was crossing one of the avenues on the way there when I noticed, coming behind me in the same direction as myself, a tilbury which, as it overtook me, obliged me to jump out of its way. An NCO was driving it, wearing a monocle; it was Saint-Loup. By his side was the friend whose guest he had been at lunch, and whom I had met once before at the hotel where we dined. I did not dare shout to Robert since he was not alone, but, in the hope that he would stop and pick me up, I attracted his attention with a sweep of my hat which was by way of being motivated by the presence of a stranger. I knew that Robert was short-sighted, but I should have supposed that if he saw me at all he could not fail to recognise me. He did indeed see my salute, and returned it, but without stopping; driving on at full speed, without a smile, without moving a muscle of his face, he confined himself to keeping his hand raised for a minute to the peak of his cap, as though he were acknowledging the salute of a trooper whom he did not know. I ran to the barracks, but it was a long way; when I arrived, the regiment was forming up on the square, where I was not allowed to remain, and I was heart-broken at not having been able to say good-bye to Saint-Loup. I went up to his room, but there was no sign of him. I inquired after him from a group of sick troopers—recruits who had been excused route marches, the young graduate, one of the "old soldiers," who were watching the regiment form up.

"You haven't seen Sergeant Saint-Loup, by any chance?" I asked.

"He's already gone down, sir," said the old soldier.

"I never saw him," said the graduate.

"You never saw him," exclaimed the old soldier, losing all interest in me, "you never saw our famous Saint-Loup, the figure he's cutting with his new breeches! When the Cap'n sees that, officer's cloth, my word!"

"Oh, that's a good one, officer's cloth," replied the young graduate, who, having reported sick, was excused marching and ventured, not without some trepidation, to make bold with the veterans. "It isn't officer's cloth, it's just ordinary cloth."

"Monsieur?" inquired the old soldier angrily.

He was indignant that the young graduate should question his assertion that the breeches were made of officer's cloth, but, being a Breton, born in a village that went by the name of Penguern-Stereden, and having

learned French with as much difficulty as if it had been English or German, whenever he felt himself overcome by emotion he would go on saying "Monsieur?" to give himself time to find words, then, after this preparation, let loose his eloquence, confining himself to the repetition of certain words which he knew better than others, but without haste, taking every precaution to gloss over his unfamiliarity with the pronunciation.

"Ah! so it's just ordinary cloth?" he broke out eventually with a fury whose intensity increased in direct proportion to the sluggishness of his speech. "Ah! so it's just ordinary cloth! When I tell you that it is officer's cloth, when-I-tell-you, since-I-tell-you, it's because I know, I would think. You'd better not spin your cock-and-bull yarns here."

"Oh, well, if you say so," replied the young graduate, overcome by the force of this argument.

"There, look, there's the Cap'n coming along. No, but just look at Saint-Loup, the way he throws his leg out, and his head. Would you call that a non-com? And his eyeglass—it's all over the shop."

I asked these troopers, who did not seem at all embarrassed by my presence, whether I too might look out of the window. They neither objected to my doing so nor moved to make room for me. I saw Captain de Borodino go majestically by, putting his horse into a trot, and seemingly under the illusion that he was taking part in the Battle of Austerlitz. A few loiterers had stopped by the gate to see the regiment file out. Erect on his charger, his face rather plump, his cheeks of an Imperial fullness, his eye clear-sighted, the Prince must have been the victim of some hallucination, as I was myself whenever, after

the tram-car had passed, the silence that followed its rumble seemed to me crossed and striated by a vaguely musical palpitation.

I was wretched at having failed to say good-bye to Saint-Loup, but I went nevertheless, for my only concern was to return to my grandmother; always until then, in this little country town, when I thought of what my grandmother must be doing by herself, I had pictured her as she was when with me, but eliminating myself without taking into account the effects on her of such an elimination; now, I had to free myself at the first possible moment, in her arms, from the phantom, hitherto unsuspected and suddenly called into being by her voice, of a grandmother really separated from me, resigned, having (something I had never yet thought of her as having) a definite age, who had just received a letter from me in the empty house in which I had already imagined Mamma when I had left her to go to Balbec.

Alas, it was this phantom that I saw when, entering the drawing-room before my grandmother had been told of my return, I found her there reading. I was in the room, or rather I was not yet in the room since she was not aware of my presence, and, like a woman whom one surprises at a piece of needlework which she will hurriedly put aside if anyone comes in, she was absorbed in thoughts which she had never allowed to be seen by me. Of myself—thanks to that privilege which does not last but which gives one, during the brief moment of return, the faculty of being suddenly the spectator of one's own absence—there was present only the witness, the observer, in travelling coat and hat, the stranger who does not belong to the house, the photographer who has called to

take a photograph of places which one will never see again. The process that automatically occurred in my eyes when I caught sight of my grandmother was indeed a photograph. We never see the people who are dear to us save in the animated system, the perpetual motion of our incessant love for them, which, before allowing the images that their faces present to reach us, seizes them in its vortex and flings them back upon the idea that we have always had of them, makes them adhere to it, coincide with it. How, since into the forehead and the cheeks of my grandmother I had been accustomed to read all the most delicate, the most permanent qualities of her mind, how, since every habitual glance is an act of necromancy, each face that we love a mirror of the past, how could I have failed to overlook what had become dulled and changed in her, seeing that in the most trivial spectacles of our daily life, our eyes, charged with thought, neglect, as would a classical tragedy, every image that does not contribute to the action of the play and retain only those that may help to make its purpose intelligible. But if, instead of our eyes, it should happen to be a purely physical object, a photographic plate, that has watched the action, then what we see, in the courtyard of the Institute, for example, instead of the dignified emergence of an Academician who is trying to hail a cab, will be his tottering steps, his precautions to avoid falling on his back, the parabola of his fall, as though he were drunk or the ground covered in ice. So it is when some cruel trick of chance prevents our intelligent and pious tenderness from coming forward in time to hide from our eyes what they ought never to behold, when it is forestalled by our eyes, and they, arriving first in the field and having it to themselves, set to

work mechanically, like films, and show us, in place of the beloved person who has long ago ceased to exist but whose death our tenderness has always hitherto kept concealed from us, the new person whom a hundred times daily it has clothed with a loving and mendacious likeness. And—like a sick man who, not having looked at his own reflexion for a long time, and regularly composing the features which he never sees in accordance with the ideal image of himself that he carries in his mind, recoils on catching sight in the glass, in the middle of an arid desert of a face, of the sloping pink protuberance of a nose as huge as one of the pyramids of Egypt—I, for whom my grandmother was still myself, I who had never seen her save in my own soul, always in the same place in the past, through the transparency of contiguous and overlapping memories, suddenly, in our drawing-room which formed part of a new world, that of Time, that which is inhabited by the strangers of whom we say "He's begun to age a good deal," for the first time and for a moment only, since she vanished very quickly, I saw, sitting on the sofa beneath the lamp, red-faced, heavy and vulgar, sick, day-dreaming, letting her slightly crazed eyes wander over a book, an overburdened old woman whom I did not know.

My request to be allowed to inspect the Elstirs in Mme de Guermantes's collection had been met by Saint-Loup with: "I'll answer for her." And indeed, unfortunately, it was he and he alone who did answer. We answer readily enough for other people when, setting our mental stage with the little puppets that represent them, we manipulate these to suit our fancy. No doubt even

that, whereas a period has features both particular and general which are stronger than those of a nationality, so that in an illustrated dictionary which goes so far as to include an authentic portrait of Minerva, Leibniz with his periwig and his neckerchief differs little from Marivaux or Samuel Bernard, a nationality has particular features stronger than those of a caste. In the present instance these found expression not in a discourse in which I had expected to hear the rustling of the elves and the dance of the kobolds, but by a transposition which certified no less plainly that poetic origin: the fact that as he bowed, short, red-faced and portly, over the hand of Mme de Villeparisis, the Rhinegrave said to her: "Goot-tay, Matame la Marquise," in the accent of an Alsatian concierge.

"Won't you let me give you a cup of tea or a little of this tart, it's so good?" Mme de Guermantes asked me, anxious to have shown herself as friendly as possible. "I do the honours in this house just as if it was mine," she explained in an ironical tone which gave a slightly guttural sound to her voice, as though she were trying to stifle a hoarse laugh.

"Monsieur," said Mme de Villeparisis to M. de Norpois, "you won't forget that you have something to say to the Prince about the Academy?"

Mme de Guermantes lowered her eyes and gave a semicircular turn to her wrist to look at the time.

"Gracious! It's time I said good-bye to my aunt if I'm to get to Mme de Saint-Ferréol's, and I'm dining with Mme Leroi."

And she rose without bidding me good-bye. She had just caught sight of Mme Swann, who appeared somewhat embarrassed at finding me in the room. Doubtless she remembered that she had been the first to assure me that she was convinced of Dreyfus's innocence.

"I don't want my mother to introduce me to Mme Swann," Saint-Loup said to me. "She's an ex-whore. Her husband's a Jew, and she comes here to pose as a Nationalist. Hallo, here's my uncle Palamède."

The arrival of Mme Swann had a special interest for me, owing to an incident which had occurred a few days earlier and which it is necessary to relate because of the consequences which it was to have at a much later date and which the reader will follow in detail in due course. A few days before this visit to Mme de Villeparisis, I had myself received a visitor whom I little expected, namely Charles Morel, the son, whom I did not know, of my great-uncle's old valet. This great-uncle (he in whose house I had met the lady in pink) had died the year before. His servant had more than once expressed his intention of coming to see me; I had no idea of the object of his visit, but should have been glad to see him, for I had learned from Françoise that he had a genuine veneration for my uncle's memory and made a pilgrimage regularly to the cemetery in which he was buried. But, being obliged for reasons of health to retire to his home in the country, where he expected to remain for some time, he had delegated the duty to his son. I was surprised to see a handsome young man of eighteen come into my room, dressed expensively rather than with taste, but looking, all the same, like anything but the son of a valet. He made a point, moreover, from the start, of emphasising his aloofness from the domestic class from which he sprang, by informing me with a complacent smile that he had won a first prize at the Conservatoire. The object of his visit to

me was as follows: his father on going through the effects of my uncle Adolphe, had set aside some which he felt it unseemly to send to my parents but which he considered to be of a nature to interest a young man of my age. These were photographs of the famous actresses, the notorious courtesans whom my uncle had known, the last fading pictures of that gay life of a man about town which he kept separated by a watertight compartment from his family life. While the young Morel was showing them to me, I noticed that he affected to speak to me as to an equal. He derived from saying "you" to me as often and "sir" as seldom as possible the pleasure of one whose father had never ventured, when addressing my parents, upon anything but the third person. Almost all the photographs bore an inscription such as: "To my best friend." One actress, less grateful and more circumspect than the rest, had written: "To the best of friends," which enabled her (so I have been assured) to say afterwards that my uncle was in no sense and had never been her best friend but was merely the friend who had done the most small services for her, the friend she made use of, a good, kind man, in other words an old fool. In vain might young Morel seek to divest himself of his lowly origin, one felt that the shade of my uncle Adolphe, venerable and gigantic in the eyes of the old servant, had never ceased to hover, almost a sacred vision, over the childhood and youth of the son. While I was turning over the photographs Charles Morel examined my room. And as I was looking for somewhere to put them, "How is it," he asked me (in a tone in which the reproach had no need to be emphasised, so implicit was it in the words themselves), "that I don't see a single photograph of your uncle in your room?" I felt the blood rise to my cheeks and stammered: "Why, I don't believe I have one." "What, you haven't a single photograph of your uncle Adolphe, who was so fond of you! I'll send you one of the governor's—he's got stacks of them—and I hope you'll put it in the place of honour above that chest of drawers, which incidentally came to you from your uncle." It is true that, as I had not even a photograph of my father or mother in my room, there was nothing so very shocking in there not being one of my uncle Adolphe. But it was easy enough to see that for old Morel, who had trained his son in the same way of thinking, my uncle was the important person in the family, from whom my parents derived only a dim reflected glory. I was in higher favour, because my uncle used constantly to say to his valet that I was going to turn out a sort of Racine, or Vaulabelle, and Morel regarded me almost as an adopted son, as a favourite child of my uncle. I soon discovered that Morel's son was extremely "go-getting." Thus at this first meeting he asked me, being something of a composer as well and capable of setting short poems to music, whether I knew any poet who had a good position in "aristo" society. I mentioned one. He did not know the work of this poet and had never heard his name, of which he made a note. And I was to discover that shortly afterwards he wrote to the poet telling him that, being a fanatical admirer of his work, he, Morel, had composed a musical setting for one of his sonnets and would be grateful if the author would arrange for its performance at the Comtesse So-and-so's. This was going a little too fast and exposing his hand. The poet, taking offence, made no reply.

For the rest, Charles Morel seemed to possess, be-

sides ambition, a strong leaning towards more concrete realities. He had noticed, as he came through the courtyard, Jupien's niece at work upon a waistcoat, and although he explained to me only that he happened to want a fancy waistcoat at that very moment, I felt that the girl had made a vivid impression on him. He had no hesitation in asking me to come downstairs and introduce him to her, "but not as a connexion of your family, you follow me, I rely on your discretion not to drag in my father, say just a distinguished artist of your acquaintance, you know how important it is to make a good impression on tradespeople." Although he had suggested to me that, not knowing him well enough to call him, he quite realised, "dear friend," I might address him, in front of the girl, in some such terms as "not dear master, of course . . . although . . . well, if you like, dear distinguished artist," I avoided "qualifying" him, as Saint-Simon would have said, in the shop and contented myself with returning his "you's." He picked out from several patterns of velvet one of the brightest red imaginable, so loud that, for all his bad taste, he was never able to wear the waistcoat when it was made. The girl settled down to work again with her two "apprentices," but it struck me that the impression had been mutual, and that Charles Morel, whom she regarded as of my "station" (only smarter and richer), had proved singularly attractive to her. As I had been greatly surprised to find among the photographs which his father had sent me one of the portrait of Miss Sacripant (otherwise Odette) by Elstir, I said to Charles Morel as I accompanied him to the carriage gateway: "I don't suppose you can tell me, but did my uncle know this lady well? I can't think what stage of his life she fits into exactly; and

it interests me, because of M. Swann . . ." "Why, if I wasn't forgetting to tell you that my father asked me specially to draw your attention to that lady's picture. As a matter of fact, she was lunching with your uncle the last time you saw him. My father was in two minds whether to let you in. It seems you made a great impression on the wench, and she hoped to see you again. But just at that time there was a row in the family, from what my father tells me, and you never set eyes on your uncle again." He broke off to give Jupien's niece a smile of farewell across the courtyard. She gazed after him, doubtless admiring his thin but regular features, his fair hair and sparkling eyes. For my part, as I shook hands with him I was thinking of Mme Swann and saying to myself with amazement, so far apart, so different were they in my memory, that I should have henceforth to identify her with the "Lady in pink."

M. de Charlus was soon seated by the side of Mme Swann. At every social gathering at which he appeared, contemptuous towards the men, courted by the women, he promptly attached himself to the most elegantly dressed of the latter, by whose garments he felt himself to be embellished. The Baron's frock-coat or tails were reminiscent of a portrait by some great colourist of a man dressed in black but having by his side, thrown over a chair, the brilliant cloak which he is about to wear at some fancy-dress ball. These tête-à-têtes, generally with some royal lady, secured for M. de Charlus various privileges which he cherished. For instance, one consequence of them was that his hostesses, at theatricals or recitals, allowed the Baron alone to have a front seat in a row of ladies, while the rest of the men jostled one another at the

back of the room. Furthermore, completely absorbed, it seemed, in telling amusing stories to the enraptured lady at the top of his voice, M. de Charlus was dispensed from the necessity of going to shake hands with any of the others, was set free from all social duties. Behind the scented barrier which the chosen beauty provided for him, he was isolated in the middle of a crowded drawing-room, as, in a crowded theatre, behind the rampart of a box; and when anyone came up to greet him, through, as it were, the beauty of his companion, it was permissible for him to reply quite curtly and without interrupting his conversation with a lady. True, Mme Swann was scarcely of the rank of the persons with whom he liked thus to flaunt himself. But he professed admiration for her and friendship for Swann, knew that she would be flattered by his attentions, and was himself flattered at being compromised by the prettiest woman in the room.

Mme de Villeparisis meanwhile was not too well pleased to receive a visit from M. de Charlus. The latter, while admitting serious defects in his aunt's character, was genuinely fond of her. But every now and then in a fit of anger or imaginary grievance, he would sit down and write to her, without making the slightest attempt to resist his impulse, letters full of the most violent abuse, in which he made the most of trifling incidents which until then he seemed not even to have noticed. Among other examples I may instance the following, which my stay at Balbec brought to my knowledge: Mme de Villeparisis, fearing that she had not brought enough money with her to Balbec to enable her to prolong her holiday there, and not caring, since she was of a thrifty disposition and shrank from superfluous expenditure, to have money sent

to her from Paris, had borrowed three thousand francs from M. de Charlus. A month later, annoyed with his aunt for some trivial reason, he asked her to repay him this sum by telegraphic money order. He received two thousand nine hundred and ninety-odd francs. Meeting his aunt a few days later in Paris, in the course of a friendly conversation he drew her attention, very mildly, to the mistake that her bank had made when sending the money. "But there was no mistake," replied Mme de Villeparisis, "the money order cost six francs seventy-five." "Ah, well, if it was intentional, that's fine," said M. de Charlus. "I mentioned it only in case you didn't know, because in that case, if the bank had done the same thing with anyone who didn't know you as well as I do, it might have led to unpleasantness." "No, no, there was no mistake." "Actually you were quite right," M. de Charlus concluded gaily, stooping to kiss his aunt's hand. And in fact he bore her no ill will and was only amused at this little instance of her stinginess. But some time afterwards, imagining that, in a family matter, his aunt had been trying to cheat him and had "worked up a regular conspiracy" against him, as she rather foolishly took shelter behind the lawyers with whom he suspected her of having plotted to do him down, he had written her a letter boiling over with insolence and rage. "I shall not be satisfied with having my revenge," he added as a postscript, "I shall make you a laughing-stock. Tomorrow I shall tell everyone the story of the money order and the six francs seventy-five you kept back from me out of the three thousand I lent you. I shall disgrace you publicly." Instead of so doing, he had gone to his aunt the next day to apologise, having already regretted a letter in which he

had used some really appalling language. In any case, to whom could he have told the story of the money order? Since he no longer sought vengeance but a sincere reconciliation, now would have been the time for him to keep silence. But he had already told the story everywhere, while still on the best of terms with his aunt, had told it without malice, as a joke, and because he was the soul of indiscretion. He had told the story, but without Mme de Villeparisis's knowledge. With the result that, having learned from his letter that he intended to disgrace her by divulging a transaction in which he had assured her personally that she had acted rightly, she concluded that he had deceived her then and had lied when he pretended to be fond of her. All this had now died down, but neither of them knew precisely what the other thought of him or her. This sort of intermittent quarrel is of course somewhat exceptional. Of a different order again were those of M. de Charlus, as we shall presently see, with people wholly unlike Mme de Villeparisis. In spite of this we must bear in mind that the opinions which we hold of one another, our relations with friends and family, far from being static, save in appearance, are as eternally fluid as the sea itself. Whence all the rumours of divorce between couples who have always seemed so perfectly united and will soon afterwards speak of one another with affection; all the terrible things said by one friend of another from whom we supposed him to be inseparable and with whom we shall find him once more reconciled before we have had time to recover from our surprise; all the reversals of alliances between nations after the briefest of spells.

"I say, things are hotting up between my uncle and

Mme Swann," remarked Saint-Loup. "And look at Mamma in the innocence of her heart going across to disturb them. To the pure all things are pure!"

I studied M. de Charlus. The tuft of his grey hair, his twinkling eye, the brow of which was raised by his monocle, the red flowers in his buttonhole, formed as it were the three mobile apexes of a convulsive and striking triangle. I had not ventured to greet him, for he had given me no sign of recognition. And yet, though he was not facing in my direction, I was convinced that he had seen me; while he sat spinning some yarn to Mme Swann, whose sumptuous, pansy-coloured cloak floated over his knee, the Baron's roving eye, like that of a street hawker who is watching all the time for the "law" to appear, had certainly explored every corner of the room and taken note of all the people who were in it. M. de Châtellerault came up to say good evening to him without there being the slightest hint on M. de Charlus's face that he had seen the young Duke until he was actually standing in front of him. In this way, in fairly numerous gatherings such as this, M. de Charlus kept almost continuously on show a smile without determinate direction or particular object, which, thereby pre-existing the greetings of new arrivals, remained, when the latter entered its zone, devoid of any amiable implication towards them. Nevertheless, I felt obliged to go across and speak to Mme Swann. But as she was not certain whether I knew Mme de Marsantes and M. de Charlus, she was distinctly cold, fearing no doubt that I might ask her to introduce me to them. I then turned to M. de Charlus, and at once regretted it, for though he could not have helped seeing me he showed no sign of having done so. As I stood before him

and bowed I found, at some distance from his body which it prevented me from approaching by the full length of his outstretched arm, a finger bereft, one would have said, of an episcopal ring, of which he appeared to be offering the consecrated site for the kiss of the faithful, and I was made to appear to have penetrated, without leave from the Baron and by an act of trespass for which he left me the entire responsibility, the unalterable, anonymous and vacant dispersion of his smile. This coldness was hardly of a kind to encourage Mme Swann to depart from hers.

"How tired and worried you look," said Mme de Marsantes to her son who had come up to greet M. de Charlus.

And indeed the expression in Robert's eyes seemed now and then to reach a depth from which it rose at once like a diver who has touched bottom. This bottom which hurt Robert so much when he touched it that he left it at once, to return to it a moment later, was the thought that he had broken with his mistress.

"Never mind," his mother went on, stroking his cheek, "never mind; it's good to see my little boy again."

This show of affection seeming to irritate Robert, Mme de Marsantes led her son away to the other end of the room where in an alcove hung with yellow silk a group of Beauvais armchairs massed their violet-hued tapestries like purple irises in a field of buttercups. Mme Swann, finding herself alone and having realised that I was a friend of Saint-Loup, beckoned me to come and sit beside her. Not having seen her for so long, I did not know what to talk to her about. I was keeping an eye on my hat among all those that littered the carpet, and I

wondered with a vague curiosity to whom could belong one that was not the Duc de Guermantes's and yet in the lining of which a capital "G" was surmounted by a ducal coronet. I knew who everyone in the room was, and could not think of anyone whose hat this could possibly be.

"What a pleasant man M. de Norpois is," I said to Mme Swann, pointing him out to her. "It's true that Robert de Saint-Loup says he's a pest, but . . ."

"He's quite right," she replied.

Seeing from her face that she was thinking of something which she was keeping from me, I plied her with questions. Pleased, perhaps, to appear to be very taken up with someone in this room where she hardly knew anyone, she took me into a corner.

"I'm sure this is what M. de Saint-Loup meant," she began, "but you must never tell him I said so, for he would think me indiscreet, and I value his esteem very highly—I'm an 'honest Injun,' you know. The other day, Charlus was dining at the Princesse de Guermantes's, and for some reason or other your name was mentioned. It appears that M. de Norpois told them—it's all too silly for words, don't go and worry yourself to death over it, nobody paid any attention, they all knew only too well the mischievous tongue that said it—that you were a hysterical little flatterer."

I have recorded a long way back my stupefaction at the discovery that a friend of my father such as M. de Norpois was could have expressed himself thus in speaking of me. I was even more astonished to learn that my emotion on that evening long ago when I had spoken about Mme Swann and Gilberte was known to the Princesse de Guermantes, whom I imagined never to have

turned to the cabman, "haven't you put the hood down? I'll do it myself. I think, too, I'd better drive, seeing the state you appear to be in."

He jumped in beside the cabman, and the cab set off at a brisk trot.

As for myself, no sooner had I turned in at our gate than I came across the pendant to the conversation which I had heard that afternoon between Bloch and M. de Norpois, but in another form, brief, inverted and cruel. This was a dispute between our butler, who was a Dreyfusard, and the Guermantes', who was an anti-Dreyfusard. The truths and counter-truths which contended on high among the intellectuals of the rival Leagues, the Patrie Française and the Droits de l'Homme, were fast spreading downwards into the subsoil of popular opinion. M. Reinach manipulated through their feelings people whom he had never seen, whereas for him the Dreyfus case simply presented itself to his reason as an irrefutable theorem which he "demonstrated" in the sequel by the most astonishing victory for rational politics (a victory against France, according to some) that the world has ever seen. In two years he replaced a Billot ministry by a Clemenceau ministry, revolutionised public opinion from top to bottom, took Picquart from his prison to install him, ungrateful, in the Ministry of War. Perhaps this rationalist crowd-manipulator was himself manipulated by his ancestry. When we find that the systems of philosophy which contain the most truths were dictated to their authors, in the last analysis, by reasons of sentiment, how are we to suppose that in a simple affair of politics like the Dreyfus case reasons of that sort may not, unbeknown to the reasoner, have ruled his reason? Bloch believed

himself to have been led by a logical chain of reasoning to choose Dreyfusism, yet he knew that his nose, his skin and his hair had been imposed on him by his race. Doubtless the reason enjoys more freedom; yet it obeys certain laws which it has not prescribed for itself. The case of the Guermantes' butler and our own was peculiar. The waves of the two currents of Dreyfusism and anti-Dreyfusism which now divided France from top to bottom were, on the whole, silent, but the occasional echoes which they emitted were sincere. When you heard anyone in the middle of a talk which was being deliberately kept off the Affair announce furtively some piece of political news, generally false but always devoutly to be wished, you could induce from the nature of his predictions where his heart lay. Thus there came into conflict on certain points, on one side a timid apostolate, on the other a righteous indignation. The two butlers whom I heard arguing as I came in furnished an exception to the rule. Ours insinuated that Dreyfus was guilty, the Guermantes' that he was innocent. This was done not to conceal their personal convictions, but from cunning and competitive ruthlessness. Our butler, being uncertain whether the retrial would be ordered, wanted in case of failure to deprive the Duke's butler in advance of the joy of seeing a just cause vanquished. The Duke's butler thought that, in the event of a refusal to grant a retrial, ours would be more indignant at the detention of an innocent man on Devil's Island. The concierge looked on. I had the impression that it was not he who was the cause of dissension in the Guermantes household.

I went upstairs, and found my grandmother not at all well. For some time past, without knowing exactly what

was wrong, she had been complaining of her health. It is in sickness that we are compelled to recognise that we do not live alone but are chained to a being from a different realm, from whom we are worlds apart, who has no knowledge of us and by whom it is impossible to make ourselves understood: our body. Were we to meet a brigand on the road, we might perhaps succeed in making him sensible of his own personal interest if not of our plight. But to ask pity of our body is like discoursing in front of an octopus, for which our words can have no more meaning than the sound of the tides, and with which we should be appalled to find ourselves condemned to live. My grandmother's ailments often passed unnoticed by her attention, which was always directed towards us. When they gave her too much pain, in the hope of curing them she tried in vain to understand them. If the morbid phenomena of which her body was the theatre remained obscure and beyond the reach of her mind, they were clear and intelligible to certain beings belonging to the same natural kingdom as themselves, beings to whom the human mind has learned gradually to have recourse in order to understand what its body is saying to it, as when a foreigner addresses us we try to find someone of his country who will act as interpreter. These can talk to our body, can tell us if its anger is serious or will soon be appeased. Cottard, who had been called in to examine my grandmother—and who had infuriated us by asking with a subtle smile, the moment we told him she was ill: "Ill? You're sure it's not what they call a diplomatic illness?"—tried to soothe his patient's restlessness by a milk diet. But incessant bowls of milk soup gave her no relief, because my grandmother sprinkled them liberally with salt,

the injurious effects of which were then unknown (Widal not yet having made his discoveries). For, medicine being a compendium of the successive and contradictory mistakes of medical practitioners, when we summon the wisest of them to our aid the chances are that we may be relying on a scientific truth the error of which will be recognised in a few years' time. So that to believe in medicine would be the height of folly, if not to believe in it were not a greater folly still, for from this mass of errors a few truths have in the long run emerged. Cottard had told us to take her temperature. A thermometer was fetched. Almost throughout its entire length the tube was empty of mercury. One could scarcely make out, nestling at the bottom of its trough, the silver salamander. It seemed dead. The little glass pipe was slipped into my grandmother's mouth. We had no need to leave it there for long; the little sorceress had not been slow in casting her horoscope. We found her motionless, perched halfway up her tower and declining to move, showing us with precision the figure that we had asked of her, a figure with which all the most careful thought that my grandmother's mind might have devoted to herself would have been incapable of furnishing her: 101°. For the first time we felt some anxiety. We shook the thermometer well, to erase the ominous sign, as though we were able thus to reduce the patient's fever simultaneously with the temperature indicated. Alas, it was only too clear that the little sibyl, bereft of reason though she was, had not pronounced judgment arbitrarily, for the next day, scarcely had the thermometer been inserted between my grandmother's lips when almost at once, as though with a single bound, exulting in her certainty and in her intuition of

a fact that to us was imperceptible, the little prophetess had come to a halt at the same point, in an implacable immobility, and pointed once again to that figure 101 with the tip of her gleaming wand. She said nothing else; in vain had we longed, wished, prayed, she was deaf to our entreaties; it seemed as though this were her final word, a warning and a threat.

Then, in an attempt to constrain her to modify her response, we had recourse to another creature of the same kingdom, but more potent, a creature not content with questioning the body but capable of commanding it, a febrifuge of the same order as the modern aspirin, which had not then come into use. We had not brought the thermometer down below 99.5, in the hope that it would not have to rise from there. We made my grandmother swallow this drug and then replaced the thermometer in her mouth. Like an implacable warder to whom one presents a permit signed by a higher authority whose patronage one enjoys, and who, finding it to be in order, replies: "All right, I've nothing to say; if that's how it is you may pass," this time the vigilant out-sister did not move. But sullenly she seemed to be saying: "What good will it do you? Since you know quinine, she may give me the order not to go up once, ten times, twenty times. And then she'll grow tired of telling me, I know her, believe me. This won't last for ever. And then where will it have got you?"

Thereupon my grandmother felt the presence within her of a being who knew the human body better than she; the presence of a contemporary of the races that have vanished from the earth, the presence of earth's first inhabitant—far earlier than the creation of thinking man;

she felt that primeval ally probing in her head, her heart, her elbow; he was reconnoitring the ground, organising everything for the prehistoric combat which began at once to be fought. In a moment, a crushed Python, the fever was vanquished by the potent chemical element to which my grandmother, across all the kingdoms, reaching out beyond all animal and vegetable life, would have liked to be able to give thanks. And she remained moved by this glimpse which she had caught, through the mists of so many centuries, of an element anterior to the creation even of plants. Meanwhile the thermometer, like one of the Parcae momentarily vanquished by a more ancient god, held its silver spindle motionless. Alas! other inferior creatures which man has trained to hunt the mysterious quarry which he himself is incapable of pursuing in the depths of his being, reported cruelly to us every day a certain quantity of albumin, not large, but constant enough for it also to appear to be related to some persistent malady which we could not detect. Bergotte had shaken that scrupulous instinct in me which made me subordinate my intellect when he spoke to me of Dr du Boulbon as of a physician who would not bore me, who would discover methods of treatment which, however strange they might appear, would adapt themselves to the singularity of my intelligence. But ideas transform themselves in us, overcome the resistance we put up to them at first, and feed upon rich intellectual reserves which were ready-made for them without our realising it. So, as happens whenever remarks we have heard made about someone we do not know have had the faculty of awakening in us the idea of great talent, of a sort of genius, in my inmost mind I now gave Dr du Boulbon the benefit of that

unlimited confidence which is inspired in us by the man who, with an eye more penetrating than other men's, perceives the truth. I knew indeed that he was more of a specialist in nervous diseases, the man to whom Charcot before his death had predicted that he would reign supreme in neurology and psychiatry. "Ah, I don't know about that. It's quite possible," put in Françoise, who was in the room and who was hearing Charcot's name, as indeed du Boulbon's, for the first time. But this in no way prevented her from saying "It's possible." Her "possibles," her "perhapses," her "I don't knows" were peculiarly irritating at such moments. One wanted to say to her: "Naturally you didn't know, since you haven't the faintest idea what we are talking about. How can you even say whether it's possible or not, since you know nothing about it? Anyhow, you can't say now that you don't know what Charcot said to du Boulbon. You do know because we've just told you, and your 'perhapses' and 'possibles' are out of place, because it's a fact."

In spite of this more special competence in cerebral and nervous matters, as I knew that du Boulbon was a great physician, a superior man with a profound and inventive intellect, I begged my mother to send for him, and the hope that, by a clear perception of the malady, he might perhaps cure it, finally prevailed over the fear that we had that by calling in a consultant we would alarm my grandmother. What decided my mother was the fact that, unwittingly encouraged by Cottard, my grandmother no longer went out of doors, and scarcely rose from her bed. In vain might she answer us in the words of Mme de Sévigné's letter on Mme de La Fayette: "Everyone said she was mad not to wish to go out. I said to these persons

so precipitate in their judgment: 'Mme de La Fayette is not mad!' and I stuck to that. It has taken her death to prove that she was quite right not to go out." Du Boulbon when he came decided against, if not Mme de Sévigné, whom we did not quote to him, at any rate my grandmother. Instead of sounding her chest, he gazed at her with his wonderful eyes, in which there was perhaps the illusion that he was making a profound scrutiny of his patient, or the desire to give her that illusion, which seemed spontaneous but must have become mechanical, or not to let her see that he was thinking of something quite different, or to establish his authority over her, and began to talk about Bergotte.

"Ah yes, indeed, Madame, he's splendid. How right you are to admire him! But which of his books do you prefer? Oh, really? Why, yes, perhaps that is the best after all. In any case it is the best composed of his novels. Claire is quite charming in it. Which of his male characters appeals to you most?"

I supposed at first that he was making her talk about literature because he himself found medicine boring, perhaps also to display his breadth of mind and even, with a more therapeutic aim, to restore confidence to his patient, to show her that he was not alarmed, to take her mind off the state of her health. But afterwards I realised that, being chiefly distinguished as an alienist and for his work on the brain, he had been seeking to ascertain by these questions whether my grandmother's memory was in good order. With seeming reluctance he began to inquire about her life, fixing her with a stern and sombre eye. Then suddenly, as though he had glimpsed the truth and was determined to reach it at all costs, with a preliminary

rubbing of his hands to shake off any lingering hesitations which he himself might feel and any objections which we might have raised, looking down at my grandmother with a lucid eye, boldly and as though he were at last upon solid ground, punctuating his words in a quietly impressive tone, every inflexion of which was instinct with intelligence (his voice, indeed, throughout his visit remained what it naturally was, caressing, and under his bushy brows his ironical eyes were full of kindness), he said:

"You will be cured, Madame, on the day, whenever it comes—and it rests entirely with you whether it comes today—on which you realise that there is nothing wrong with you and resume your ordinary life. You tell me that you have not been eating, not going out?"

"But, Doctor, I have a temperature."

"Not just now at any rate. Besides, what a splendid excuse! Don't you know that we feed up tuberculosis patients with temperatures of 102 and keep them out in the open air?"

"But I have a little albumin as well."

"You ought not to know anything about that. You have what I have had occasion to call 'mental albumin.' We have all of us had, when we have not been very well, little albuminous phases which our doctor has done his best to prolong by calling our attention to them. For one disorder that doctors cure with medicaments (as I am assured that they do occasionally succeed in doing) they produce a dozen others in healthy subjects by inoculating them with that pathogenic agent a thousand times more virulent than all the microbes in the world, the idea that one is ill. A belief of that sort, which has a potent effect on any temperature, acts with special force on neurotic

people. Tell them that a shut window is open behind their backs, and they will begin to sneeze; persuade them that you have put magnesia in their soup, and they will be seized with colic; that their coffee is stronger than usual, and they will not sleep a wink all night. Do you imagine, Madame, that I needed to do more than look you in the eyes, listen to the way in which you express yourself, observe, if I may say so, your daughter and your grandson who are so like you, to realise what was the matter with you?"

"Your grandmother might perhaps go and sit, if the doctor allows it, in some quiet path in the Champs-Elysées, near that clump of laurels where you used to play when you were little," said my mother to me, thus indirectly consulting Dr du Boulbon and her voice for that reason assuming a tone of timid deference which it would not have had if she had been addressing me alone. The doctor turned to my grandmother and, being a man of letters no less than a man of science, adjured her as follows:

"Go to the Champs-Elysées, Madame, to the clump of laurels which your grandson loves. The laurel will be beneficial to your health. It purifies. After he had exterminated the serpent Python, it was with a branch of laurel in his hand that Apollo made his entry into Delphi. He sought thus to guard himself from the deadly germs of the venomous monster. So you see that the laurel is the most ancient, the most venerable and, I may add—something that has its therapeutic as well as its prophylactic value—the most beautiful of antiseptics."

Inasmuch as a great part of what doctors know is taught them by the sick, they are easily led to believe that

this knowledge which patients exhibit is common to them all, and they fondly imagine that they can impress the patient of the moment with some remark picked up at a previous bedside. Thus it was with the superior smile of a Parisian who, in conversation with a peasant, might hope to surprise him by using a word of the local dialect, that Dr du Boulbon said to my grandmother: "Probably a windy night will help to put you to sleep when the strongest soporifics would have no effect." "On the contrary, the wind always keeps me wide awake." But doctors are touchy people. "Ach!" muttered du Boulbon with a frown, as if someone had trodden on his toe, or as if my grandmother's sleeplessness on stormy nights were a personal insult to himself. He had not, however, an undue opinion of himself, and since, in his character as a "superior" person, he felt himself bound not to put any faith in medicine, he quickly recovered his philosophic serenity.

My mother, in her passionate longing for reassurance from Bergotte's friend, added in support of his verdict that a first cousin of my grandmother's, who suffered from a nervous complaint, had remained for seven years shut up in her bedroom at Combray, without getting up more than once or twice a week.

"You see, Madame, I didn't know that, and yet I could have told you."

"But, Doctor, I'm not in the least like her; on the contrary, my doctor complains that he cannot get me to stay in bed," said my grandmother, either because she was a little irritated by the doctor's theories, or because she was anxious to submit to him all the objections that might be made to them, in the hope that he would refute these and that, once he had gone, she would no longer

have any doubts as to the accuracy of his encouraging diagnosis.

"Why, naturally, Madame, one cannot have—if you'll forgive the expression—every form of mental derangement. You have others, but not that particular one. Yesterday I visited a home for neurasthenics. In the garden, I saw a man standing on a bench, motionless as a fakir, his neck bent in a position which must have been highly uncomfortable. On my asking him what he was doing there, he replied without turning his head or moving a muscle: 'You see, Doctor, I am extremely rheumatic and catch cold very easily. I have just been taking a lot of exercise, and while I was foolishly getting too hot, my neck was touching my flannels. If I move it away from my flannels now before letting myself cool down, I'm sure to get a stiff neck and possibly bronchitis.' Which he would, in fact, have done. 'You're a real neurotic, that's what you are,' I told him. And do you know what argument he advanced to prove that I was mistaken? It was this: that while all the other patients in the establishment had a mania for testing their weight, so much so that the weighing machine had to be padlocked so that they shouldn't spend the whole day on it, he had to be lifted on to it bodily, so little did he care to be weighed. He prided himself on not sharing the mania of the others, oblivious of the fact that he had one of his own, and that it was this that saved him from another. You must not be offended by the comparison, Madame, for that man who dared not turn his neck for fear of catching a chill is the greatest poet of our day. That poor lunatic is the most lofty intellect that I know. Submit to being called a neurotic. You belong to that splendid and pitiable family which is the salt of the

earth. Everything we think of as great has come to us from neurotics. It is they and they alone who found religions and create great works of art. The world will never realise how much it owes to them, and what they have suffered in order to bestow their gifts on it. We enjoy fine music, beautiful pictures, a thousand exquisite things, but we do not know what they cost those who wrought them in insomnia, tears, spasmodic laughter, urticaria, asthma, epilepsy, a terror of death which is worse than any of these, and which you perhaps have experienced, Madame," he added with a smile at my grandmother, "for confess now, when I came, you were not feeling very confident. You thought you were ill, dangerously ill, perhaps. Heaven only knows what disease you thought you had detected the symptoms of in yourself. And you were not mistaken; they were there. Neurosis has a genius for mimicry. There is no illness which it cannot counterfeit perfectly. It will produce lifelike imitations of the dilatations of dyspepsia, the nausea of pregnancy, the arythmia of the cardiac, the feverishness of the consumptive. If it is capable of deceiving the doctor, how should it fail to deceive the patient? Ah, do not think that I am mocking your sufferings. I should not undertake to cure them unless I understood them thoroughly. And, may I say, there is no good confession that is not reciprocal. I have told you that without nervous disorder there can be no great artist. What is more," he added, raising a solemn forefinger, "there can be no great scientist either. I will go further, and say that, unless he himself is subject to nervous trouble, he is not, I won't say a good doctor, but I do say the right doctor to treat nervous troubles. In the pathology of nervous diseases, a doctor who doesn't talk too much nonsense is a half-cured patient, just as a critic is a poet who has stopped writing verse and a policeman a burglar who has retired from practice. I, Madame, I do not, like you, fancy myself to be suffering from albuminuria, I have not your neurotic fear of food, or of fresh air, but I can never go to sleep without getting out of bed at least twenty times to see if my door is shut. And yesterday I went to that nursing-home, where I came across the poet who wouldn't move his neck, for the purpose of booking a room, for, between ourselves, I spend my holidays there looking after myself when I have aggravated my own troubles by wearing myself out in the attempt to cure those of others."

"But, Doctor, ought I to take a similar cure?" asked my grandmother, aghast.

"It is not necessary, Madame. The symptoms you betray here will vanish at my bidding. Besides, you have a very efficient person whom I appoint as your doctor from now onwards. That is your malady itself, your nervous hyperactivity. Even if I knew how to cure you of it, I should take good care not to. All I need do is to control it. I see on your table there one of Bergotte's books. Cured of your nervous diathesis, you would no longer care for it. Now, how could I take it upon myself to substitute for the joys that it procures you a nervous stability which would be quite incapable of giving you those joys? But those joys themselves are a powerful remedy, the most powerful of all perhaps. No, I have nothing to say against your nervous energy. All I ask is that it should listen to me; I leave you in its charge. It must reverse its engines. The force which it has been using to prevent you from going out, from taking sufficient food, must be di-

rected towards making you eat, making you read, making you go out, and distracting you in every possible way. Don't tell me that you feel tired. Tiredness is the organic realisation of a preconceived idea. Begin by not thinking it. And if ever you have a slight indisposition, which is a thing that may happen to anyone, it will be just as if you hadn't, for your nervous energy will have endowed you with what M. de Talleyrand astutely called 'imaginary good health.' See, it has begun to cure you already. You've been sitting up in bed listening to me without once leaning back on your pillows, your eyes bright, colour in your cheeks. I've been talking to you for a good half-hour and you haven't noticed the time. Well, Madame, I shall now bid you good-day."

When, after seeing Dr du Boulbon to the door, I returned to the room in which my mother was alone, the anguish that had been weighing me down for several weeks suddenly lifted, I sensed that my mother was going to give vent to her joy and would observe mine too, and I felt that inability to endure the suspense of the coming moment when a person is about to be overcome with emotion in our presence, which *mutatis mutandis* is not unlike the thrill of fear that runs through one when one knows that somebody is going to come in and startle one by a door that is still closed. I tried to speak to Mamma but my voice broke, and, bursting into tears, I remained for a long time with my head on her shoulder, weeping, savouring, accepting, cherishing my grief, now that I knew that it had departed from my life, as we like to work ourselves up into a state of exaltation with virtuous plans which circumstances do not permit us to put into execution.

Françoise annoyed me by refusing to share in our joy. She was in a state of great excitement because there had been a terrible scene between the lovesick footman and the tale-bearing porter. It had required the Duchess herself, in her benevolence, to intervene, restore a semblance of calm, and forgive the footman. For she was a kind mistress, and it would have been the ideal "place" if only she didn't listen to "tittle-tattle."

During the last few days people had begun to hear of my grandmother's illness and to ask after her. Saint-Loup had written to me: "I do not wish to take advantage of a time when your dear grandmother is unwell to convey to you what is far more than mere reproach on a matter with which she has no concern. But I should not be speaking the truth were I to say to you, if only by preterition, that I shall ever forget the perfidy of your conduct, or that there can ever be any forgiveness for so scoundrelly a betrayal." But some other friends, supposing that my grandmother was not seriously ill, or not knowing that she was ill at all, had asked me to meet them next day in the Champs-Elysées, to go with them from there to pay a call together, ending up with a dinner in the country, the thought of which appealed to me. I had no longer any reason to forgo these two pleasures. When my grandmother had been told that it was now imperative, if she was to obey Dr du Boulbon's orders, that she should go out as much as possible, she had herself at once suggested the Champs-Elysées. It would be easy for me to escort her there; and, while she sat reading, to arrange with my friends where I should meet them later; and I should still be in time, if I made haste, to take the train with them to Ville d'Avray. When the time came, my grandmother did

not want to go out, saying that she felt tired. But my mother, acting on du Boulbon's instructions, had the strength of mind to be firm and to command obedience. She was almost in tears at the thought that my grandmother was going to relapse again into her nervous weakness and might not recover from it. Never had there been such a fine, warm day for an outing. The sun as it moved through the sky interposed here and there in the broken solidity of the balcony its insubstantial muslins, and gave to the freestone ledge a warm epidermis, an ill-defined halo of gold. As Françoise had not had time to send a "wire" to her daughter, she left us immediately after lunch. She considered it kind enough of her as it was to call first at Jupien's to get a stitch put in the cape which my grandmother was going to wear. Returning at that moment from my morning walk, I accompanied her into the shop. "Is it your young master who brings you here," Jupien asked Françoise, "is it you who have brought him to see me, or is it a fair wind and Dame Fortune that brings you both?" For all his want of education, Jupien respected the laws of syntax as instinctively as M. de Guermantes, in spite of every effort, broke them. With Françoise gone and the cape mended, it was time for my grandmother to get ready. Having obstinately refused to let Mamma stay in the room with her, left to herself she took an endlessly long time over her dressing, and now that I knew that she was not ill, with that strange indifference which we feel towards our relations so long as they are alive, and which makes us put everyone else before them, I thought it very selfish of her to take so long and to risk making me late when she knew that I had an appointment with my friends and was dining at Ville

d'Avray. In my impatience I finally went downstairs without waiting for her, after I had twice been told that she was just ready. At last she joined me, without apologising to me as she generally did for having kept me waiting, flushed and bothered like a person who has come to a place in a hurry and has forgotten half her belongings, just as I was reaching the half-opened glass door which let in the liquid, humming, tepid air from outside, as though the sluices of a reservoir had been opened between the glacial walls of the house, without warming them.

"Oh, dear, if you're going to meet your friends I ought to have put on another cape. I look rather wretched in this one."

I was startled to see her so flushed, and supposed that having begun by making herself late she had had to hurry over her dressing. When we left the cab at the corner of the Avenue Gabriel, in the Champs-Elysées, I saw my grandmother turn away without a word and make for the little old pavilion with its green trellis at the door of which I had once waited for Françoise. The same park-keeper who had been there then was still there beside the "Marquise" as, following my grandmother who, doubtless because she was feeling sick, had her hand in front of her mouth, I climbed the steps of the little rustic theatre erected there in the middle of the gardens. At the entrance, as in those travelling circuses where the clown, dressed for the ring and smothered in flour, stands at the door and takes the money himself for the seats, the "Marquise," at the receipt of custom, was still in her place with her huge, irregular face smeared with coarse paint and her little bonnet of red flowers and black lace surmounting her auburn wig. But I do not think she recog-

nised me. The park-keeper, abandoning the supervision of the greenery, with the colour of which his uniform had been designed to harmonise, was sitting beside her chatting.

"So you're still here," he was saying. "You don't think of retiring?"

"And why should I retire, Monsieur? Will you tell me where I should be better off than here, where I'd be more comfy and snug? And then there's all the coming and going, plenty of distraction. My little Paris, I call it; my customers keep me in touch with everything that's going on. Just to give you an example, there's one of them went out not five minutes ago; he's a judge, a proper high-up. Well!" she exclaimed heatedly, as though prepared to maintain the truth of this assertion by violence, should the agent of civic authority show any sign of challenging its accuracy, "for the last eight years, do you hear me, every blessed day, regular on the stroke of three he comes here, always polite, never saying one word louder than another, never making any mess; and he stays half an hour and more to read his papers while seeing to his little needs. There was one day he didn't come. I never noticed it at the time, but that evening, all of a sudden I says to myself: 'Why, that gentleman never came today; perhaps he's dead!' And I came over all queer, seeing as how I get quite fond of people when they behave nicely. And so I was very glad when I saw him come in again next day, and I said to him: 'I hope nothing happened to you yesterday, sir?' And he told me nothing had happened to *him*, it was his wife that had died, and it had given him such a turn he hadn't been able to come. He looked sad, of course—well, you know, people who've

been married five-and-twenty years—but he seemed pleased, all the same, to be back here. You could see that all his little habits had been quite upset. I did what I could to cheer him up. I said to him: 'You mustn't let go of things, sir. Just keep coming here the same as before, it will be a little distraction for you in your sorrow.' "

The "Marquise" resumed a gentler tone, for she had observed that the guardian of groves and lawns was listening to her good-naturedly and with no thought of contradiction, keeping harmlessly in its scabbard a sword which looked more like a gardening implement or some horticultural emblem.

"And besides," she went on, "I choose my customers, I don't let everyone into my parlours, as I call them. Doesn't it just look like a parlour with all my flowers? Such friendly customers I have; there's always someone or other brings me a spray of nice lilac, or jasmine or roses; my favourite flowers, roses are."

The thought that we were perhaps viewed with disfavour by this lady because we never brought any sprays of lilac or fine roses to her bower made me blush, and in the hope of escaping physically (or of being condemned only *in absentia*) from an adverse judgment, I moved towards the exit. But it is not always in this world the people who bring us fine roses to whom we are most friendly, for the "Marquise," thinking that I was bored, turned to me:

"You wouldn't like me to open a little cabin for you?"

And, on my declining:

"No? You're sure you won't?" she persisted, smiling. "You're welcome to it, but of course, not having to pay

for a thing won't make you want to do it if you've got nothing to do."

At this moment a shabbily dressed woman hurried into the place who seemed to be feeling precisely the want in question. But she did not belong to the "Marquise's" world, for the latter, with the ferocity of a snob, said to her curtly:

"I've nothing vacant, Madame."

"Will they be long?" asked the poor lady, flushed beneath the yellow flowers in her hat.

"Well, ma'am, if you want my advice you'd better try somewhere else. You see, there's still these two gentlemen waiting, and I've only one closet; the others are out of order."

"Looked like a bad payer to me," she explained when the other had gone. "That's not the sort we want here, either; they're not clean, don't treat the place with respect. It'd be me who'd have to spend the next hour cleaning up after her ladyship. I'm not sorry to lose her couple of sous."

At last, after a good half-hour, my grandmother emerged, and fearing that she might not seek to atone by a lavish gratuity for the indiscretion she had shown by remaining so long inside, I beat a retreat so as not to have to share in the scorn which the "Marquise" would no doubt heap on her, and strolled down a path, but slowly, so that my grandmother should not have to hurry to overtake me, as presently she did. I expected her to begin: "I'm afraid I've kept you waiting; I hope you'll still be in time for your friends," but she did not utter a single word, so much so that, feeling a little hurt, I was disinclined to speak first. Finally, looking up at her I noticed

that as she walked beside me she kept her face turned the other way. I was afraid that she might be feeling sick again. I looked at her more closely and was struck by the disjointedness of her gait. Her hat was crooked, her cloak stained; she had the dishevelled and disgruntled appearance, the flushed, slightly dazed look of a person who has just been knocked down by a carriage or pulled out of a ditch.

"I was afraid you were feeling sick, Grandmamma; are you feeling better now?" I asked her.

Doubtless she thought that it would be impossible for her not to make some answer without alarming me.

"I heard the whole of the 'Marquise's' conversation with the keeper," she told me. "Could anything have been more typical of the Guermantes, or the Verdurins and their little clan? 'Ah! in what courtly terms those things were put!' "[18] And she added, with deliberate application, this from her own special Marquise, Mme de Sévigné: "As I listened to them I thought that they were preparing for me the delights of a farewell."

Such were the remarks that she addressed to me, remarks into which she had put all her critical delicacy, her love of quotation, her memory of the classics, more thoroughly even than she would normally have done, and as though to prove that she retained possession of all these faculties. But I guessed rather than heard what she said, so inaudible was the voice in which she mumbled her sentences, clenching her teeth more than could be accounted for by the fear of vomiting.

"Come!" I said lightly enough not to seem to be taking her illness too seriously, "since you're feeling a little sick I suggest we go home. I don't want to trundle a

grandmother with indigestion about the Champs-Elysées."

"I didn't like to suggest it because of your friends," she replied. "Poor pet! But if you don't mind, I think it would be wiser."

I was afraid of her noticing the strange way in which she uttered these words.

"Come," I said to her brusquely, "you mustn't tire yourself talking when you're feeling sick—it's silly; wait till we get home."

She smiled at me sorrowfully and gripped my hand. She had realised that there was no need to hide from me what I had at once guessed, that she had had a slight stroke.

PART TWO

Chapter One

We made our way back along the Avenue Gabriel through the strolling crowds. I left my grandmother to rest on a bench and went in search of a cab. She, in whose heart I always placed myself in order to form an opinion of the most insignificant person, she was now closed to me, had become part of the external world, and, more than from any casual passer-by, I was obliged to keep from her what I thought of her condition, to betray no sign of my anxiety. I could not have spoken of it to her with any more confidence than to a stranger. She had suddenly returned to me the thoughts, the griefs which, from my earliest childhood, I had entrusted to her for all time. She was not yet dead. But I was already alone. And even those allusions which she had made to the Guermantes, to Molière, to our conversations about the little clan, assumed a baseless, adventitious, fantastical air, because they sprang from this same being who tomorrow perhaps would have ceased to exist, for whom they would no longer have any meaning, from the non-being—incapable of conceiving them—which my grandmother would shortly be.

"Monsieur, I don't like to say no, but you have not made an appointment, you haven't a number. Besides, this is not my day for seeing patients. You surely have a doctor of your own. I cannot stand in for him, unless he

calls me in for consultation. It's a question of professional etiquette . . ."

Just as I was signalling to a cabman, I had caught sight of the famous Professor E——, almost a friend of my father and grandfather, acquainted at any rate with them both, who lived in the Avenue Gabriel, and, on a sudden inspiration, had stopped him just as he was entering his house, thinking that he would perhaps be the very person to examine my grandmother. But, being evidently in a hurry, after collecting his letters he seemed anxious to get rid of me, and I could only speak to him by going up with him in the lift, of which he begged me to allow him to press the buttons himself, this being an idiosyncrasy of his.

"But Doctor, I'm not asking you to see my grandmother here; you will realise when I've explained to you that she isn't in a fit state; what I'm asking is that you should call at our house in half an hour's time, when I've taken her home."

"Call at your house! Really, Monsieur, you can't mean such a thing. I'm dining with the Minister of Commerce. I have a call to pay first. I must change at once, and to make matters worse my tail-coat is torn and the other one has no buttonhole for my decorations. Would you please oblige me by not touching the lift-buttons. You don't know how the lift works; one can't be too careful. Getting that buttonhole made means more delay. However, out of friendship for your family, if your grandmother comes here at once I'll see her. But I warn you I shan't be able to give her more than a quarter of an hour."

I had set off again at once, without even getting out

of the lift, which Professor E—— had himself set in motion to take me down again, eyeing me distrustfully as he did so.

We may, indeed, say that the hour of death is uncertain, but when we say this we think of that hour as situated in a vague and remote expanse of time; it does not occur to us that it can have any connexion with the day that has already dawned and can mean that death—or its first assault and partial possession of us, after which it will never leave hold of us again—may occur this very afternoon, so far from uncertain, this afternoon whose timetable, hour by hour, has been settled in advance. One insists on one's daily outing so that in a month's time one will have had the necessary ration of fresh air; one has hesitated over which coat to take, which cabman to call; one is in the cab, the whole day lies before one, short because one must be back home early, as a friend is coming to see one; one hopes that it will be as fine again tomorrow; and one has no suspicion that death, which has been advancing within one on another plane, has chosen precisely this particular day to make its appearance, in a few minutes' time, more or less at the moment when the carriage reaches the Champs-Elysées. Perhaps those who are habitually haunted by the fear of the utter strangeness of death will find something reassuring in this kind of death—in this kind of first contact with death—because death thus assumes a known, familiar, everyday guise. A good lunch has preceded it, and the same outing that people take who are in perfect health. A drive home in an open carriage comes on top of its first onslaught; ill as my grandmother was, there were, after all, several people who could testify that at six o'clock, as we came home from

the Champs-Elysées, they had bowed to her as she drove past in an open carriage, in perfect weather. Legrandin, making his way towards the Place de la Concorde, raised his hat to us, stopping to look after us with an air of surprise. I, who was not yet detached from life, asked my grandmother if she had acknowledged his greeting, reminding her of his touchiness. My grandmother, thinking me no doubt very frivolous, raised her hand in the air as though to say: "What does it matter? It's of no importance."

Yes, it might have been said that a few minutes earlier, while I was looking for a cab, my grandmother was resting on a bench in the Avenue Gabriel, and that a little later she had driven past in an open carriage. But would it have been really true? A bench, in order to maintain its position at the side of an avenue—although it may also be subject to certain conditions of equilibrium—has no need of energy. But in order for a living being to be stable, even when supported by a bench or in a carriage, there must be a tension of forces which we do not ordinarily perceive, any more than we perceive (because its action is multi-dimensional) atmospheric pressure. Perhaps if a vacuum were created within us and we were left to bear the pressure of the air, we should feel, in the moment that preceded our extinction, the terrible weight which there was now nothing else to neutralise. Similarly, when the abyss of sickness and death opens up within us, and we have nothing left to oppose to the tumult with which the world and our own body rush upon us, then to sustain even the thought of our muscles, even the shudder that pierces us to the marrow, then even to keep ourselves still, in what we ordinarily regard as no more than the

simple negative position of a thing, demands, if one wants one's head to remain erect and one's demeanour calm, an expense of vital energy and becomes the object of an exhausting struggle.

And if Legrandin had looked back at us with that air of astonishment, it was because to him, as to the other people who passed us then, in the cab in which my grandmother was apparently sitting on the back seat, she had seemed to be foundering, slithering into the abyss, clinging desperately to the cushions which could scarcely hold back the headlong plunge of her body, her hair dishevelled, her eyes wild, no longer capable of facing the assault of the images which their pupils no longer had the strength to bear. She had appeared, although I was beside her, to be plunged in that unknown world in the heart of which she had already received the blows of which she bore the marks when I had looked up at her in the Champs-Elysées, her hat, her face, her coat deranged by the hand of the invisible angel with whom she had wrestled.

I have thought, since, that this moment of her stroke cannot have altogether surprised my grandmother, that indeed she had perhaps foreseen it a long time back, had lived in expectation of it. She had not known, naturally, when this fatal moment would come, had never been certain, any more than those lovers whom a similar doubt leads alternately to found unreasonable hopes and unjustified suspicions on the fidelity of their mistresses. But it is rare for these grave illnesses, such as that which now at last had struck her full in the face, not to take up residence in a sick person a long time before killing him, during which period they hasten, like a "sociable" neighbour

or tenant, to make themselves known to him. A terrible acquaintance, not so much for the sufferings that it causes as for the strange novelty of the terminal restrictions which it imposes upon life. We see ourselves dying, in these cases, not at the actual moment of death but months, sometimes years before, when death has hideously come to dwell in us. We make the acquaintance of the Stranger whom we hear coming and going in our brain. True, we do not know him by sight, but from the sounds we hear him regularly make we can form an idea of his habits. Is he a malefactor? One morning, we can no longer hear him. He has gone. Ah! if only it were for ever! In the evening he has returned. What are his plans? The consultant, put to the question, like an adored mistress, replies with avowals that one day are believed, another day questioned. Or rather it is not the mistress's role but that of interrogated servants that the doctor plays. They are only third parties. The person whom we press for an answer, whom we suspect of being about to play us false, is Life itself, and although we feel it to be no longer the same, we believe in it still, or at least remain undecided until the day on which it finally abandons us.

I helped my grandmother into Professor E——'s lift and a moment later he came to us and took us into his consulting room. But there, pressed for time though he was, his offensive manner changed, such is the force of habit, and his habit was to be friendly, not to say playful, with his patients. Since he knew that my grandmother was a great reader, and was himself one, he devoted the first few minutes to quoting various favourite passages of poetry appropriate to the glorious summer weather. He

had placed her in an armchair and himself with his back to the light so as to have a good view of her. His examination was minute and thorough, even obliging me to leave the room for a moment. He continued it after my return, then, having finished, went on, although the quarter of an hour was almost at an end, repeating various quotations to my grandmother. He even made a few jokes, which were witty enough, though I should have preferred to hear them on some other occasion, but which completely reassured me by the tone of amusement in which he uttered them. I then remembered that M. Fallières, the President of the Senate, had, many years earlier, had a false seizure, and that to the consternation of his political rivals he had taken up his duties again a few days later and had begun, it was said, to prepare an eventual candidature for the Presidency of the Republic. My confidence in my grandmother's prompt recovery was all the more complete in that, just as I was recalling the example of M. Falliéres, I was distracted from pursuing the parallel by a shout of laughter which served as conclusion to one of the Professor's jokes. After which he took out his watch, frowned feverishly on seeing that he was five minutes late, and while he bade us good-bye rang for his dress clothes to be brought to him at once. I waited until my grandmother had left the room, closed the door and asked him to tell me the truth.

"Your grandmother is doomed," he said to me. "It is a stroke brought on by uraemia. In itself, uraemia is not necessarily fatal, but this case seems to me hopeless. I need not tell you that I hope I am mistaken. At all events, with Cottard you're in excellent hands. Excuse me," he broke off as a maid came into the room with his

tail-coat over her arm. "As I told you, I'm dining with the Minister of Commerce, and I have a call to pay first. Ah! life is not all a bed of roses, as one is apt to think at your age."

And he graciously offered me his hand. I had shut the door behind me, and a footman was ushering us into the hall, when my grandmother and I heard a great shout of rage. The maid had forgotten to cut and hem the buttonhole for the decorations. This would take another ten minutes. The Professor continued to storm while I stood on the landing gazing at my grandmother who was doomed. Each of us is indeed alone. We set off homewards.

The sun was sinking; it burnished an interminable wall along which our cab had to pass before reaching the street in which we lived, a wall against which the shadow of horse and carriage cast by the setting sun stood out in black on a ruddy background, like a hearse on some Pompeian terra-cotta. At length we arrived at the house. I sat the invalid down at the foot of the staircase in the hall, and went up to warn my mother. I told her that my grandmother had come home feeling slightly unwell, after an attack of giddiness. As soon as I began to speak, my mother's face was convulsed by a paroxysm of despair, a despair which was yet already so resigned that I realised that for many years she had been holding herself quietly in readiness for an indeterminate but inexorable day. She asked me no questions; it seemed that, just as malevolence likes to exaggerate the sufferings of others, she in her loving tenderness did not want to admit that her mother was seriously ill, especially with a disease which might have affected the brain. Mamma shuddered, her

eyes wept without tears, she ran to give orders for the doctor to be fetched at once; but when Françoise asked who was ill she could not reply, her voice stuck in her throat. She came running downstairs with me, struggling to banish from her face the sob that crumpled it. My grandmother was waiting below on the settee in the hall, but as soon as she heard us coming she drew herself up, rose to her feet, and waved her hand cheerfully at Mamma. I had partially wrapped her head in a white lace shawl, telling her that this was to prevent her from catching cold on the stairs. I had hoped that my mother might not immediately notice the alteration in the face, the distortion of the mouth. My precaution proved unnecessary: my mother went up to my grandmother, kissed her hand as though it were that of her God, raised her up and supported her to the lift with an infinite care which reflected, together with the fear of being clumsy and hurting her, the humility of one who felt herself unworthy to touch what was for her the most precious thing in the world, but not once did she raise her eyes and look at the sufferer's face. Perhaps this was in order that my grandmother should not be saddened by the thought that the sight of her might have alarmed her daughter. Perhaps from fear of a grief so piercing that she dared not face it. Perhaps from respect, because she did not feel it permissible for her without impiety to notice the trace of any mental enfeeblement on those revered features. Perhaps to be better able to preserve intact in her memory the image of the true face of my grandmother, radiant with wisdom and goodness. So they went up side by side, my grandmother half-hidden in her shawl, my mother averting her eyes.

Meanwhile there was one person who never took hers from what could be discerned of my grandmother's altered features at which her daughter dared not look, a person who fastened on them a dumbfounded, indiscreet and ominous look: this was Françoise. Not that she was not sincerely attached to my grandmother (indeed she had been disappointed and almost scandalised by the coldness shown by Mamma, whom she would have liked to see fling herself weeping into her mother's arms), but she had a certain tendency always to look at the worse side of things, and had retained from her childhood two characteristics which would seem to be mutually exclusive, but which, when combined, reinforce one another: the lack of restraint common among uneducated people who make no attempt to conceal the impression, indeed the painful alarm aroused in them by the sight of a physical change which it would be more tactful to appear not to notice, and the unfeeling roughness of the peasant who tears the wings off dragon-flies until she gets a chance to wring the necks of chickens, and lacks that sense of shame which would make her conceal the interest that she feels in the sight of suffering flesh.

When, thanks to the faultless ministrations of Françoise, my grandmother had been put to bed, she discovered that she could speak much more easily, the little rupture or obstruction of a blood-vessel which had produced the uraemia having apparently been quite slight. And at once she was anxious not to fail Mamma in her hour of need, to assist her in the most cruel moments through which she had yet to pass.

"Well, my child," she began, taking my mother's hand in one of hers, and keeping the other in front of her

lips, in order thus to account for the slight difficulty which she still found in pronouncing certain words. "So this is all the pity you show your mother! You look as if you thought that indigestion was quite a pleasant thing!"

Then for the first time my mother's eyes gazed passionately into those of my grandmother, not wishing to see the rest of her face, and she replied, beginning the list of those false promises which we swear but are unable to keep:

"Mamma, you'll soon be quite well again, your daughter will see to that."

And gathering up all her most ardent love, all her determination that her mother should recover, she entrusted them to a kiss which she accompanied with her whole mind, with her whole being until it flowered upon her lips, and bent down to lay it humbly, reverently, on the beloved forehead.

My grandmother complained of a sort of alluvial deposit of bedclothes which kept gathering all the time in the same place, over her left leg, and which she could never manage to lift off. But she did not realise that she was herself the cause of this (so that day after day she accused Françoise unjustly of not "doing" her bed properly). By a convulsive movement she kept flinging to that side the whole flood of those billowing blankets of fine wool, which gathered there like the sand in a bay which is very soon transformed into a beach (unless a breakwater is built) by the successive deposits of the tide.

My mother and I (whose mendacity was exposed before we spoke by the obnoxious perspicaciousness of Françoise) would not even admit that my grandmother was seriously ill, as though such an admission might give

pleasure to her enemies (not that she had any) and it was more loving to feel that she was not so bad as all that, in short from the same instinctive sentiment which had led me to suppose that Andrée pitied Albertine too much to be really fond of her. The same individual phenomena are reproduced in the mass, in great crises. In a war, the man who does not love his country says nothing against it, but regards it as doomed, pities it, sees everything in the blackest colours.

Françoise was infinitely helpful to us owing to her faculty of doing without sleep, of performing the most arduous tasks. And if, when she had gone to bed after several nights spent in the sickroom, we were obliged to call her a quarter of an hour after she had fallen asleep, she was so happy to be able to perform painful duties as if they had been the simplest things in the world that, far from baulking, she would show signs of satisfaction tinged with modesty. Only when the time came for mass, or for breakfast, even if my grandmother had been in her death throes, Françoise would have slipped away in order not to be late. She neither could nor would let her place be taken by her young footman. It was true that she had brought from Combray an extremely exalted idea of everyone's duty towards ourselves; she would not have tolerated that any of our servants should "fail" us. This doctrine had made her so noble, so imperious, so efficient an instructor that we had never had in our house any servants, however corrupt, who had not speedily modified and purified their conception of life so far as to refuse to touch the usual commissions from tradesmen and to come rushing—however little they might previously have

sought to oblige—to take from my hands and not let me tire myself by carrying the smallest parcel. But at Combray Françoise had contracted also—and had brought with her to Paris—the habit of not being able to put up with any assistance in her work. The sight of anyone coming to help her seemed to her like a deadly insult, and servants had remained for weeks without receiving from her any response to their morning greeting, had even gone off on their holidays without her bidding them good-bye or their guessing her reason, which was simply and solely that they had offered to do a share of her work on some day when she had not been well. And at this moment when my grandmother was so ill, Françoise's duties seemed to her peculiarly her own. She would not allow herself, as the official incumbent, to be done out of her role in the ritual of these gala days. And so her young footman, discarded by her, did not know what to do with himself, and not content with having copied the butler's example and supplied himself with note-paper from my desk, had begun as well to borrow volumes of poetry from my bookshelves. He sat reading them for a good half of the day, out of admiration for the poets who had written them, but also in order, during the rest of his time, to sprinkle with quotations the letters which he wrote to his friends in his native village. True, his intention was to dazzle them. But since he was somewhat lacking in logic he had formed the notion that these poems, picked out at random from my shelves, were things of common currency to which it was customary to refer. So much so that in writing to these peasants whom he expected to impress, he interspersed his own reflexions with

lines from Lamartine, just as he might have said "Who laughs last, laughs longest!" or merely "How are you keeping?"

Because of her acute pain my grandmother was given morphine. Unfortunately, if this relieved the pain it also increased the quantity of albumin. The blows which we aimed at the evil which had settled inside her were always wide of the mark, and it was she, it was her poor interposed body that had to bear them, without her ever uttering more than a faint groan by way of complaint. And the pain that we caused her found no compensation in any benefit that we were able to give her. The ferocious beast we were anxious to exterminate we barely succeeded in grazing; we merely enraged it even more, hastening perhaps the moment when the captive would be devoured. On certain days when the discharge of albumin had been excessive Cottard, after some hesitation, stopped the morphine. During these brief moments in which he deliberated, in which the relative dangers of one and another course of treatment fought it out between them in his mind until he arrived at a decision, this man who was so insignificant and so commonplace had something of the greatness of a general who, vulgar in all things else, moves us by his decisiveness when the fate of the country is at stake and, after a moment's reflexion, he decides upon what is from the military point of view the wisest course, and gives the order: "Advance eastwards." Medically, however little hope there might be of bringing this attack of uraemia to an end, it was important not to put a strain on the kidneys. But, on the other hand, when my grandmother was given no morphine, her pain became unbearable; she would perpetually attempt a certain

movement which it was difficult for her to perform without groaning: to a great extent, pain is a sort of need on the part of the organism to take cognisance of a new state which is troubling it, to adapt its sensibility to that state. We can discern this origin of pain in the case of certain discomforts which are not such for everyone. Into a room filled with pungent smoke two men of coarse fibre will come and attend to their business; a third, more sensitively constituted, will betray an incessant discomfort. His nostrils will continue to sniff anxiously the odour which he ought, one would think, to try not to notice but which he will keep on attempting to accommodate, by a more exact apprehension of it, to his troubled sense of smell. Hence the fact that an intense preoccupation will prevent one from complaining of a toothache. When my grandmother was suffering thus the sweat trickled over the mauve expanse of her forehead, glueing her white locks to it, and if she thought that none of us was in the room she would cry out: "Oh, it's dreadful!"—but if she caught sight of my mother, at once she devoted all her energy to banishing from her face every sign of pain, or alternatively repeated the same plaints accompanying them with explanations which gave a different sense retrospectively to those which my mother might have overheard:

"Ah! my dear, it's dreadful to have to stay in bed on a beautiful sunny day like this when one wants to be out in the fresh air—I've been weeping with rage against your instructions."

But she could not get rid of the anguish in her eyes, the sweat on her forehead, the convulsive start, checked at once, of her limbs.

"I'm not in pain, I'm complaining because I'm not

lying very comfortably, I feel my hair is untidy, I feel sick, I knocked my head against the wall."

And my mother, at the foot of the bed, riveted to that suffering as though, by dint of piercing with her gaze that pain-racked forehead, that body which contained the evil thing, she must ultimately succeed in reaching and removing it, my mother said:

"No, no, Mamma dear, we won't let you suffer like that, we'll find something to take it away, have patience just for a moment; let me give you a kiss, darling—no, you're not to move."

And stooping over the bed, with her knees bent, almost kneeling on the ground, as though by an exercise of humility she would have a better chance of making acceptable the impassioned gift of herself, she lowered towards my grandmother her whole life contained in her face as in a ciborium which she was holding out to her, adorned with dimples and folds so passionate, so sorrowful, so sweet that one could not have said whether they had been engraved on it by a kiss, a sob or a smile. My grandmother too tried to lift up her face to Mamma's. It was so altered that probably, had she been strong enough to go out, she would have been recognised only by the feather in her hat. Her features, as though during a modelling session, seemed to be straining, with an effort which distracted her from everything else, to conform to some particular model which we failed to identify. The work of the sculptor was nearing its end, and if my grandmother's face had shrunk in the process, it had at the same time hardened. The veins that traversed it seemed those not of marble, but of some more rugged stone. Permanently thrust forward by the difficulty that

she found in breathing, and as permanently withdrawn into itself by exhaustion, her face, worn, diminished, terrifyingly expressive, seemed like the rude, flushed, purplish, desperate face of some wild guardian of a tomb in a primitive, almost prehistoric sculpture. But the work was not yet completed. Afterwards, the sculpture would have to be broken, and into that tomb—so painfully and tensely guarded—be lowered.

At one of those moments when, as the saying goes, we did not know which way to turn, since my grandmother was coughing and sneezing a good deal, we took the advice of a relative who assured us that if we sent for the specialist X——the trouble would be over in a couple of days. Society people say that sort of thing about their own doctors, and their friends believe them just as Françoise always believed the advertisements in the newspapers. The specialist came with his bag packed with all the colds and coughs of his other patients, like Aeolus's goatskin. My grandmother refused point-blank to let herself be examined. And we, out of consideration for this doctor who had been put to trouble for nothing, deferred to the desire that he expressed to inspect each of our noses in turn, although there was nothing the matter with any of them. According to him, however, there was; everything, whether headache or colic, heart-disease or diabetes, was a disease of the nose that had been wrongly diagnosed. To each of us he said: "I should like to have another look at that little nozzle. Don't put it off too long. I'll soon clear it for you with a hot needle." Of course we paid no attention whatsoever. And yet we asked ourselves: "Clear it of what?" In a word, every one of our noses was infected; his mistake lay only in his use

which his knowledge, his physical endowments, his distinguished manners made him supreme exists no longer, for want of any successor capable of taking his place.

Mamma had not even noticed M. Dieulafoy: everything that was not my grandmother no longer existed. I remember (and here I anticipate) that at the cemetery, where we saw her, like a supernatural apparition, tremulously approach the grave, her eyes seeming to gaze after a being that had taken wing and was already far away, my father having remarked to her: "Old Norpois came to the house and to the church and on here; he gave up a most important committee meeting to come; you ought really to say a word to him, he'd be very touched," my mother, when the Ambassador bowed to her, could do no more than gently lower her face, which showed no sign of tears. A couple of days earlier—to anticipate still before returning to the bedside of the dying woman—while we were watching over her dead body, Françoise, who, not disbelieving entirely in ghosts, was terrified by the least sound, had said: "I believe that's her." But instead of fear, it was an ineffable sweetness that her words aroused in my mother, who would have dearly wished that the dead could return, so as to have her mother with her sometimes still.

To return now to those last hours, "You heard about the telegram her sisters sent us?" my grandfather asked the cousin.

"Yes, Beethoven, I've been told. It's worth framing. Still, I'm not surprised."

"And my poor wife was so fond of them, too," said my grandfather, wiping away a tear. "We mustn't blame them. They're stark mad, both of them, as I've always

said. What's the matter now? Aren't you going on with the oxygen?"

My mother spoke: "Oh, but then Mamma will be having trouble with her breathing again."

The doctor reassured her: "Oh, no! The effect of the oxygen will last a good while yet. We can begin it again presently."

It seemed to me that he would not have said this of a dying woman, that if this good effect was going to last it meant that it was still possible to do something to keep her alive. The hiss of the oxygen ceased for a few moments. But the happy plaint of her breathing still poured forth, light, troubled, unfinished, ceaselessly recommencing. Now and then it seemed that all was over; her breath stopped, whether owing to one of those transpositions to another octave that occur in the respiration of a sleeper, or else from a natural intermittence, an effect of anaesthesia, the progress of asphyxia, some failure of the heart. The doctor stooped to feel my grandmother's pulse, but already, as if a tributary had come to irrigate the dried-up river-bed, a new chant had taken up the interrupted phrase, which resumed in another key with the same inexhaustible momentum. Who knows whether, without my grandmother's even being conscious of them, countless happy and tender memories compressed by suffering were not escaping from her now, like those lighter gases which had long been compressed in the cylinders? It was as though everything that she had to tell us was pouring out, that it was us that she was addressing with this prolixity, this eagerness, this effusion. At the foot of the bed, convulsed by every gasp of this agony, not weeping but at moments drenched with tears, my mother stood with the

unheeding desolation of a tree lashed by the rain and shaken by the wind. I was made to dry my eyes before I went up to kiss my grandmother.

"But I thought she could no longer see," said my father.

"One can never be sure," replied the doctor.

When my lips touched her face, my grandmother's hands quivered, and a long shudder ran through her whole body—a reflex, perhaps, or perhaps it is that certain forms of tenderness have, so to speak, a hyperaesthesia which recognises through the veil of unconsciousness what they scarcely need senses to enable them to love. Suddenly my grandmother half rose, made a violent effort, like someone struggling to resist an attempt on his life. Françoise could not withstand this sight and burst out sobbing. Remembering what the doctor had just said I tried to make her leave the room. At that moment my grandmother opened her eyes. I thrust myself hurriedly in front of Françoise to hide her tears, while my parents were speaking to the patient. The hiss of the oxygen had ceased; the doctor moved away from the bedside. My grandmother was dead.

An hour or two later Françoise was able for the last time, and without causing it any pain, to comb that beautiful hair which was only tinged with grey and hitherto had seemed less old than my grandmother herself. But now, on the contrary, it alone set the crown of age on a face grown young again, from which had vanished the wrinkles, the contractions, the swellings, the strains, the hollows which pain had carved on it over the years. As in the far-off days when her parents had chosen for her a bridegroom, she had the features, delicately traced by pu-

rity and submission, the cheeks glowing with a chaste expectation, with a dream of happiness, with an innocent gaiety even, which the years had gradually destroyed. Life in withdrawing from her had taken with it the disillusionments of life. A smile seemed to be hovering on my grandmother's lips. On that funeral couch, death, like a sculptor of the Middle Ages, had laid her down in the form of a young girl.

that she should not see, because, for instance, it referred to her with a malevolence which afforded a presumption of the same feeling towards her in the recipient as in the writer, that evening, if I came home with a feeling of uneasiness and went straight to my room, there on top of my letters, neatly arranged in a symmetrical pile, the compromising document caught my eye as it could not possibly have failed to catch the eye of Françoise, placed by her right at the top, almost apart from the rest, in a prominence that was a form of speech, that had an eloquence all its own, and, as soon as I crossed the threshold, made me start as I would at a cry. She excelled in the preparation of these stage effects, intended to so enlighten the spectator, in her absence, that he already knew that she knew everything when in due course she made her entry. She possessed, for thus making an inanimate object speak, the art, at once inspired and painstaking, of an Irving or a Frédérick Lemaître. On this occasion, holding over Albertine and myself the lighted lamp whose searching beams missed none of the still visible depressions which the girl's body had made in the counterpane, Françoise conjured up a picture of "Justice shedding light upon Crime." Albertine's face did not suffer by this illumination. It revealed on her cheeks the same sunny burnish that had charmed me at Balbec. This face of hers, which sometimes, out of doors, made a general effect of livid pallor, now showed, in the light of the lamp, surfaces so glowingly, so uniformly coloured, so firm and so smooth, that one might have compared them to the sustained flesh tints of certain flowers. Taken aback meanwhile by Françoise's unexpected entry, I exclaimed:

"What, the lamp already? Heavens, how bright it is!"

My object, as may be imagined, was by the second of these ejaculations to dissimulate my confusion, by the first to excuse my lateness in rising. Françoise replied with cruel ambiguity:

"Do you want me to extinglish it?"

"Guish?" Albertine murmured in my ear, leaving me charmed by the familiar quick-wittedness with which, taking me at once for master and accomplice, she insinuated this psychological affirmation in the interrogative tone of a grammatical question.[20]

When Françoise had left the room and Albertine was seated once again on my bed:

"Do you know what I'm afraid of?" I asked her. "It is that if we go on like this I may not be able to resist the temptation to kiss you."

"That would be a happy misfortune."

I did not respond at once to this invitation. Another man might even have found it superfluous, for Albertine's way of pronouncing her words was so carnal, so seductive that merely in speaking to you she seemed to be caressing you. A word from her was a favour, and her conversation covered you with kisses. And yet it was highly gratifying to me, this invitation. It would have been so, indeed, coming from any pretty girl of Albertine's age; but that Albertine should be now so accessible to me gave me more than pleasure, brought before my eyes a series of images fraught with beauty. I remembered Albertine first of all on the beach, almost painted upon a background of sea, having for me no more real an existence than those theatrical tableaux in which one does not know whether one is looking at the actress herself who is supposed to appear, at an understudy who for the moment is taking

her principal's part, or simply at a projection. Then the real woman had detached herself from the beam of light and had come towards me, but only for me to perceive that in the real world she had none of the amorous facility with which one had credited her in the magic tableau. I had learned that it was not possible to touch her, to kiss her, that one might only talk to her, that for me she was no more a woman than jade grapes, an inedible decoration at one time in fashion on dinner tables, are really fruit. And now she was appearing to me on a third plane, real as in the second experience that I had had of her but available as in the first; available, and all the more deliciously so in that I had long imagined that she was not. My surplus of knowledge of life (life as being less uniform, less simple than I had at first supposed it to be) inclined me provisionally towards agnosticism. What can one positively affirm, when the thing that one thought probable at first has then shown itself to be false and in the third instance turns out true? (And alas, I was not yet at the end of my discoveries with regard to Albertine.) In any case, even if there had not been the romantic attraction of this disclosure of a greater wealth of planes revealed one after another by life (an attraction the opposite of that which Saint-Loup had felt during our dinners at Rivebelle on recognising, beneath the masks which life had superimposed on a calm face, features to which his lips had once been pressed), the knowledge that to kiss Albertine's cheeks was a possible thing was a pleasure perhaps greater even than that of kissing them. What a difference there is between possessing a woman to whom one applies one's body alone, because she is no more than a piece of flesh, and possessing the girl whom one used to

see on the beach with her friends on certain days without even knowing why one saw her on those days and not on others, so that one trembled at the thought that one might not see her again! Life had obligingly revealed to one in its whole extent the novel of this little girl's life, had lent one, for the study of her, first one optical instrument, then another, and had added to carnal desire the accompaniment, which multiplies and diversifies it, of those other desires, more spiritual and less easily assuaged, which do not emerge from their torpor but leave it to carry on alone when it aims only at the conquest of a piece of flesh, but which, to gain possession of a whole tract of memories from which they have felt nostalgically exiled, come surging round it, enlarge and extend it, are unable to follow it to the fulfilment, to the assimilation, impossible in the form in which it is looked for, of an immaterial reality, but wait for this desire half-way and at the moment of return, provide it once more with their escort; to kiss, instead of the cheeks of the first comer, anonymous, without mystery or glamour, however cool and fresh they may be, those of which I had so long been dreaming, would be to know the taste, the savour, of a colour on which I had endlessly gazed. One has seen a woman, a mere image in the decorative setting of life, like Albertine silhouetted against the sea, and then one has been able to take that image, to detach it, to bring it close to oneself, gradually to discern its volume, its colours, as though one had placed it behind the lens of a stereoscope. It is for this reason that women who are to some extent resistant, whom one cannot possess at once, of whom one does not indeed know at first whether one will ever possess them, are alone interesting. For to know them, to ap-

proach them, to conquer them, is to make the human image vary in shape, in dimension, in relief, is a lesson in relativity in the appreciation of a woman's body, a woman's life, so delightful to see afresh when it has resumed the slender proportions of a silhouette against the back-drop of life. The women one meets first of all in a brothel are of no interest because they remain invariable.

At the same time, Albertine preserved, inseparably attached to her, all my impressions of a series of seascapes of which I was particularly fond. I felt that in kissing her cheeks I should be kissing the whole of Balbec beach.

"If you really don't mind my kissing you, I'd rather put it off for a while and choose a good moment. Only you mustn't forget that you've said I may. I want a voucher: 'Valid for one kiss.' "

"Do I have to sign it?"

"But if I took it now, should I be entitled to another later on?"

"You do make me laugh with your vouchers: I shall issue a new one every now and then."

"Tell me, just one thing more. You know, at Balbec, before I got to know you, you used often to have a hard, calculating look. You couldn't tell me what you were thinking about when you looked like that?"

"No, I don't remember at all."

"Wait, this may remind you: one day your friend Gisèle jumped with her feet together over the chair an old gentleman was sitting in. Try to remember what was in your mind at that moment."

"Gisèle was the one we saw least of. She did belong to the group, I suppose, but not properly. I expect I thought that she was very ill-bred and common."

"Oh, is that all?"

I should have liked, before kissing her, to be able to breathe into her anew the mystery which she had had for me on the beach before I knew her, to discover in her the place where she had lived earlier still; in its stead at least, if I knew nothing of it, I could insinuate all the memories of our life at Balbec, the sound of the waves breaking beneath my window, the shouts of the children. But when I let my eyes glide over the charming pink globe of her cheeks, the gently curving surfaces of which expired beneath the first foothills of her beautiful black hair which ran in undulating ridges, thrust out its escarpments, and moulded the hollows and ripples of its valleys, I could not help saying to myself: "Now at last, after failing at Balbec, I am going to discover the fragrance of the secret rose that blooms in Albertine's cheeks. And, since the cycles through which we are able to make things and people pass in the course of our existence are comparatively few, perhaps I shall be able to consider mine in a certain sense fulfilled when, having taken out of its distant frame the blossoming face that I had chosen from among all others, I shall have brought it onto this new plane, where I shall at last have knowledge of it through my lips." I told myself this because I believed that there was such a thing as knowledge acquired by the lips; I told myself that I was going to know the taste of this fleshly rose, because I had not stopped to think that man, a creature obviously less rudimentary than the sea-urchin or even the whale, nevertheless lacks a certain number of essential organs, and notably possesses none that will serve for kissing. For this absent organ he substitutes his lips, and thereby arrives perhaps at a slightly more satisfying result than if he were

reduced to caressing the beloved with a horny tusk. But a pair of lips, designed to convey to the palate the taste of whatever whets their appetite, must be content, without understanding their mistake or admitting their disappointment, with roaming over the surface and with coming to a halt at the barrier of the impenetrable but irresistible cheek. Moreover at the moment of actual contact with the flesh, the lips, even on the assumption that they might become more expert and better endowed, would doubtless be unable to enjoy any more fully the savour which nature prevents their ever actually grasping, for in that desolate zone in which they are unable to find their proper nourishment they are alone, the sense of sight, then that of smell, having long since deserted them. At first, as my mouth began gradually to approach the cheeks which my eyes had recommended it to kiss, my eyes, in changing position, saw a different pair of cheeks; the neck, observed at closer range and as though through a magnifying-glass, showed in its coarser grain a robustness which modified the character of the face.

Apart from the most recent applications of photography—which huddle at the foot of a cathedral all the houses that so often, from close to, appeared to us to reach almost to the height of the towers, which drill and deploy like a regiment, in file, in extended order, in serried masses, the same monuments, bring together the two columns on the Piazzetta which a moment ago were so far apart, thrust away the adjoining dome of the Salute and in a pale and toneless background manage to include a whole immense horizon within the span of a bridge, in the embrasure of a window, among the leaves of a tree that stands in the foreground and is more vigorous in

tone, or frame a single church successively in the arcades of all the others—I can think of nothing that can to so great a degree as a kiss evoke out of what we believed to be a thing with one definite aspect the hundred other things which it may equally well be, since each is related to a no less legitimate perspective. In short, just as at Balbec Albertine had often appeared different to me, so now—as if, prodigiously accelerating the speed of the changes of perspective and changes of colouring which a person presents to us in the course of our various encounters, I had sought to contain them all in the space of a few seconds so as to reproduce experimentally the phenomenon which diversifies the individuality of a fellow-creature, and to draw out one from another, like a nest of boxes, all the possibilities that it contains—so now, during this brief journey of my lips towards her cheek, it was ten Albertines that I saw; this one girl being like a many-headed goddess, the head I had seen last, when I tried to approach it, gave way to another. At least so long as I had not touched that head, I could still see it, and a faint perfume came to me from it. But alas—for in this matter of kissing our nostrils and eyes are as ill-placed as our lips are ill-made—suddenly my eyes ceased to see, then my nose, crushed by the collision, no longer perceived any odour, and, without thereby gaining any clearer idea of the taste of the rose of my desire, I learned, from these obnoxious signs, that at last I was in the act of kissing Albertine's cheek.

Was it because we were enacting (represented by the rotation of a solid body) the converse of our scene together at Balbec, because it was I who was lying in bed and she who was up, capable of evading a brutal attack

and of controlling the course of events, that she allowed me to take so easily now what she had refused me on the former occasion with so forbidding a look? (No doubt from that earlier look the voluptuous expression which her face assumed now at the approach of my lips differed only by an infinitesimal deviation of its lines but one in which may be contained all the disparity that there is between the gesture of finishing off a wounded man and that of giving him succour, between a sublime and a hideous portrait.) Not knowing whether I had to give credit and thanks for this change of attitude to some unwitting benefactor who in these last months, in Paris or at Balbec, had been working on my behalf, I supposed that the respective positions in which we were now placed was the principal cause of it. It was quite another explanation, however, that Albertine offered me; precisely this: "Oh, well, you see, that time at Balbec I didn't know you properly. For all I knew, you might have meant mischief." This argument left me perplexed. Albertine was no doubt sincere in advancing it—so difficult is it for a woman to recognise in the movements of her limbs, in the sensations felt by her body, during a tête-à-tête with a male friend, the unknown sin into which she trembled to think that a stranger might be planning her fall!

In any case, whatever the modifications that had occurred recently in her life and that might perhaps have explained why it was that she now so readily accorded to my momentary and purely physical desire what at Balbec she had refused with horror to allow to my love, an even more surprising one manifested itself in Albertine that same evening as soon as her caresses had procured in me

the satisfaction which she could not fail to notice and which, indeed, I had been afraid might provoke in her the instinctive movement of revulsion and offended modesty which Gilberte had made at a similar moment behind the laurel shrubbery in the Champs-Elysées.

The exact opposite happened. Already, when I had first made her lie on my bed and had begun to fondle her, Albertine had assumed an air which I did not remember in her, of docile good will, of an almost childish simplicity. Obliterating every trace of her customary preoccupations and pretensions, the moment preceding pleasure, similar in this respect to the moment that follows death, had restored to her rejuvenated features what seemed like the innocence of earliest childhood. And no doubt everyone whose special talent is suddenly brought into play becomes modest, diligent and charming; especially if by this talent such persons know that they are giving us a great pleasure, are themselves made happy by it, and want us to enjoy it to the full. But in this new expression on Albertine's face there was more than disinterestedness and professional conscientiousness and generosity, there was a sort of conventional and unexpected zeal; and it was further than to her own childhood, it was to the infancy of her race that she had reverted. Very different from myself, who had looked for nothing more than a physical alleviation, which I had finally secured, Albertine seemed to feel that it would indicate a certain coarseness on her part were she to think that this material pleasure could be unaccompanied by a moral sentiment or was to be regarded as terminating anything. She, who had earlier been in so great a hurry, now, doubtless because she felt

that kisses implied love and that love took precedence over all other duties, said when I reminded her of her dinner:

"Oh, but that doesn't matter in the least. I've got plenty of time."

She seemed embarrassed at the idea of getting up and going immediately after what had happened, embarrassed from a sense of propriety, just as Françoise when, without feeling thirsty, she had felt herself bound to accept with a seemly gaiety the glass of wine which Jupien offered her, would never have dared to leave him as soon as the last drops were drained, however urgent the call of duty. Albertine—and this was perhaps, with another which the reader will learn in due course, one of the reasons which had made me unconsciously desire her—was one of the incarnations of the little French peasant whose type may be seen in stone at Saint-André-des-Champs. As in Françoise, who presently, however, was to become her deadly enemy, I recognised in her a courtesy towards the host and the stranger, a sense of propriety, a respect for the bedside.

Françoise, who after the death of my aunt felt obliged to speak only in a doleful tone, would, in the months that preceded her daughter's marriage, have been quite shocked if the girl had not taken her lover's arm when the young couple walked out together. Albertine lying motionless beside me said:

"What nice hair you have; what nice eyes—you're sweet."

When, after pointing out to her that it was getting late, I added: "You don't believe me?", she replied, what

was perhaps true, but only since the minute before and for the next few hours:

"I always believe you."

She spoke to me of myself, my family, my social background. She said: "Oh, I know your parents know some very nice people. You're a friend of Robert Forestier and Suzanne Delage." For a moment these names conveyed absolutely nothing to me. But suddenly I remembered that I had indeed played as a child in the Champs-Elysées with Robert Forestier, whom I had never seen since. As for Suzanne Delage, she was the great-niece of Mme Blandais, and I had once been due to go to a dancing lesson, and even to take a small part in a play in her parents' house. But the fear of getting a fit of giggles and a nose-bleed had at the last moment prevented me, so that I had never set eyes on her. I had at the most a vague idea that I had once heard that the Swanns' feather-hatted governess had at one time been with the Delages, but perhaps it was only a sister of this governess, or a friend. I protested to Albertine that Robert Forestier and Suzanne Delage occupied a very small place in my life. "That may be; but your mothers are friends, I can place you by that. I often pass Suzanne Delage in the Avenue de Messine. I admire her style." Our mothers were acquainted only in the imagination of Mme Bontemps, who having heard that I had at one time played with Robert Forestier, to whom, it appeared, I used to recite poetry, had concluded from that that we were bound by family ties. She could never, I gathered, hear my mother's name mentioned without observing: "Oh yes, she belongs to the Delage-Forestier set," giving my par-

This imagined remoteness of the past is perhaps one of the things that may enable us to understand how even great writers have found an inspired beauty in the works of mediocre mystifiers such as Ossian. We are so astonished that bards long dead should have modern ideas that we marvel if in what we believe to be an ancient Gaelic epic we come across one which we should have thought as most ingenious in a contemporary. A translator of talent has only to add to an ancient writer whom he is reconstructing more or less faithfully a few passages which, signed with a contemporary name and published separately, would seem agreeable merely; at once he imparts a moving grandeur to his poet, who is thus made to play upon the keyboards of several ages at once. The translator was capable only of a mediocre book, if that book had been published as his original work. Offered as a translation, it seems a masterpiece. The past is not fugitive, it stays put. It is not only months after the outbreak of a war that laws passed without haste can effectively influence its course, it is not only fifteen years after a crime which has remained obscure that a magistrate can still find the vital evidence which will throw light on it; after hundreds and thousands of years the scholar who has been studying the place-names and the customs of the inhabitants of some remote region may still extract from them some legend long anterior to Christianity, already unintelligible, if not actually forgotten, at the time of Herodotus, which in the name given to a rock, in a religious rite, still dwells in the midst of the present, like a denser emanation, immemorial and stable. There was an emanation too, though far less ancient, of the life of the court, if not in the manners of M. de Guermantes, which

were often vulgar, at least in the mind that controlled them. I was to experience it again, like an ancient odour, when I rejoined him a little later in the drawing-room. For I did not go there at once.

As we left the outer hall, I had mentioned to M. de Guermantes that I was extremely anxious to see his Elstirs. "I am at your service. Is M. Elstir a friend of yours, then? I'm mortified not to have known that you were so interested in him. I know him slightly, he's an amiable man, what our fathers used to call an 'honest fellow.' I might have asked him to honour us with his company at dinner tonight. I'm sure he would have been highly flattered at being invited to spend the evening in your company." Very untrue to the old world when he tried thus to assume its manner, the Duke then relapsed into it unconsciously. After inquiring whether I wished him to show me the pictures, he conducted me to them, gracefully standing aside for me at each door, apologising when, to show me the way, he was obliged to precede me, a little scene which (since the time when Saint-Simon relates that an ancestor of the Guermantes did him the honours of his house with the same punctilious exactitude in the performance of the frivolous duties of a gentleman) before reaching our day must have been enacted by many another Guermantes for many another visitor. And as I had said to the Duke that I would like very much to be left alone for a few minutes with the pictures, he discreetly withdrew, telling me that I should find him in the drawing-room when I had finished.

However, once I was face to face with the Elstirs, I completely forgot about dinner and the time; here again as at Balbec I had before me fragments of that world of

new and strange colours which was no more than the projection of that great painter's peculiar vision, which his speech in no way expressed. The parts of the walls that were covered by paintings of his, all homogeneous with one another, were like the luminous images of a magic lantern which in this instance was the brain of the artist, and the strangeness of which one could never have suspected so long as one had known only the man, in other words so long as one had only seen the lantern boxing its lamp before any coloured slide had been slid into its groove. Among these pictures, some of those that seemed most absurd to people in fashionable society interested me more than the rest because they re-created those optical illusions which prove to us that we should never succeed in identifying objects if we did not bring some process of reasoning to bear on them. How often, when driving, do we not come upon a bright street beginning a few feet away from us, when what we have actually before our eyes is merely a patch of wall glaringly lit which has given us the mirage of depth. This being the case, it is surely logical, not from any artifice of symbolism but from a sincere desire to return to the very root of the impression, to represent one thing by that other for which, in the flash of a first illusion, we mistook it. Surfaces and volumes are in reality independent of the names of objects which our memory imposes on them after we have recognised them. Elstir sought to wrest from what he had just felt what he already knew; he had often been at pains to break up that medley of impressions which we call vision.

The people who detested these "horrors" were astonished to find that Elstir admired Chardin, Perronneau, and many other painters whom they, the ordinary men

and women of society, liked. They did not realise that Elstir for his own part, in striving to reproduce reality (with the particular trademark of his taste for certain experiments), had made the same effort as a Chardin or a Perronneau and that consequently, when he ceased to work for himself, he admired in them attempts of the same kind, anticipatory fragments, so to speak, of works of his own. Nor did these society people add to Elstir's work in their mind's eye that temporal perspective which enabled them to like, or at least to look without discomfort at, Chardin's painting. And yet the older among them might have reminded themselves that in the course of their lives they had gradually seen, as the years bore them away from it, the unbridgeable gulf between what they considered a masterpiece by Ingres and what they had supposed must for ever remain a "horror" (Manet's *Olympia*, for example) shrink until the two canvases seemed like twins. But we never learn, because we lack the wisdom to work backwards from the particular to the general, and imagine ourselves always to be faced with an experience which has no precedents in the past.

I was moved by the discovery in two of the pictures (more realistic, these, and in an earlier manner) of the same person, in one of them in evening dress in his own drawing-room, in the other wearing a frock-coat and tall hat at some popular seaside festival where he had evidently no business to be, which proved that for Elstir he was not only a regular sitter but a friend, perhaps a patron, whom he liked to introduce into his paintings, as Carpaccio introduced—and in the most speaking likenesses—prominent Venetian noblemen into his; in the same way as Beethoven, too, found pleasure in inscribing

at the top of a favourite work the beloved name of the Archduke Rudolph. There was something enchanting about this waterside carnival. The river, the women's dresses, the sails of the boats, the innumerable reflexions of one thing and another jostled together enchantingly in this little square panel of beauty which Elstir had cut out of a marvellous afternoon. What delighted one in the dress of a woman who had stopped dancing for a moment because she was hot and out of breath shimmered too, and in the same way, in the cloth of a motionless sail, in the water of the little harbour, in the wooden landing-stage, in the leaves of the trees and in the sky. Just as, in one of the pictures that I had seen at Balbec, the hospital, as beautiful beneath its lapis lazuli sky as the cathedral itself, seemed (more daring than Elstir the theorist, than Elstir the man of taste, the lover of things mediaeval) to be intoning: "There is no such thing as Gothic, there is no such thing as a masterpiece, a hospital with no style is just as good as the glorious porch," so I now heard: "The slightly vulgar lady whom a man of discernment wouldn't bother to look at as he passed her by, whom he would exclude from the poetical composition which nature has set before him—she is beautiful too; her dress is receiving the same light as the sail of that boat, everything is equally precious; the commonplace dress and the sail that is beautiful in itself are two mirrors reflecting the same image; their virtue is all in the painter's eye." This eye had succeeded in arresting for all time the motion of the hours at this luminous instant when the lady had felt hot and had stopped dancing, when the tree was encircled with a perimeter of shadow, when the sails seemed to be gliding over a golden glaze. But precisely because that instant impressed itself on one with such force, this unchanging canvas gave the most fleeting impression: one felt that the lady would presently go home, the boats drift away, the shadow change place, night begin to fall; that pleasure comes to an end, that life passes and that instants, illuminated by the convergence at one and the same time of so many lights, cannot be recaptured. I recognised yet another aspect, quite different it is true, of what the Moment means, in a series of water-colours of mythological subjects, dating from Elstir's first period, which also adorned this room. Society people who held "advanced" views on art went "as far as" this earliest manner, but no further. It was certainly not the best work he had done, but already the sincerity with which the subject had been thought out took away its coldness. Thus the Muses, for instance, were represented as though they were creatures belonging to a species now fossilised, but creatures it would not have been surprising in mythological times to see pass by in the evening, in twos or threes, along some mountain path. Here and there a poet, of a race that would also have been of peculiar interest to a zoologist (characterised by a certain sexlessness), strolled with a Muse, as one sees in nature creatures of different but of kindred species consort together. In one of these water-colours one saw a poet exhausted by a long journey in the mountains, whom a Centaur, meeting him and moved to pity by his weakness, has taken on his back and is carrying home. In others, the vast landscape (in which the mythical scene, the fabulous heroes occupied a minute place and seemed almost lost) was rendered, from the mountain tops to the sea, with an exactitude which told one more than the hour, told one to the very minute what

time of day it was, thanks to the precise angle of the setting sun and the fleeting fidelity of the shadows. In this way the artist had managed, by making it instantaneous, to give a sort of lived historical reality to the fable, painted it and related it in the past tense.*

While I was examining Elstir's paintings, the bell, rung by arriving guests, had been pealing uninterruptedly and had lulled me into a pleasing unawareness. But the silence which followed its clangour and had already lasted for some time finally succeeded—less rapidly, it is true—in awakening me from my reverie as the silence that follows Lindor's music arouses Bartolo from his sleep. I was afraid that I might have been forgotten, that they might already have sat down to dinner, and I hurried to the drawing-room. At the door of the Elstir gallery I found a servant waiting for me, white-haired, though whether with age or powder I could not say, and reminiscent of a Spanish minister, though he treated me with the same respect that he would have shown to a king. I felt from his manner that he would have waited for me for another hour, and I thought with alarm of the delay I had caused in the service of dinner, especially as I had promised to be at M. de Charlus's by eleven.

It was the Spanish minister (though I also met on the way the footman persecuted by the porter, who, radiant with delight when I inquired after his fiancée, told me that tomorrow was a "day off" for both of them, so that he would be able to spend the whole day with her, and extolled the kindness of Madame la Duchesse) who conducted me to the drawing-room, where I was afraid of finding M. de Guermantes in a bad humour. He welcomed me, on the contrary, with a joy that was obviously

to some extent factitious and dictated by politeness, but was in other respects sincere, prompted both by his stomach which so long a delay had begun to famish, and his consciousness of a similar impatience in all his other guests, who completely filled the room. Indeed I learned afterwards that I had kept them waiting for nearly three quarters of an hour. The Duc de Guermantes probably thought that to prolong the general torment for two minutes more would make it no worse and that, politeness having driven him to postpone for so long the moment of moving into the dining-room, this politeness would be more complete if, by not having dinner announced immediately, he could succeed in persuading me that I was not late and they had not been waiting for me. And so he asked me, as if we still had an hour before dinner and some of the party had not yet arrived, what I thought of his Elstirs. But at the same time, and without letting the cravings of his stomach become too apparent, in order not to lose another moment he proceeded in concert with the Duchess to the ceremony of introduction. It was only then that I perceived that, having until this evening—save for my novitiate in Mme Swann's salon—been accustomed in my mother's drawing-room, in Combray and in Paris, to the patronising or defensive attitudes of prim bourgeois ladies who treated me as a child, I was now witnessing a change of surroundings comparable to that which introduces Parsifal suddenly into the midst of the flower-maidens. Those who surrounded me now, their necks and shoulders entirely bare (the naked flesh appearing on either side of a sinuous spray of mimosa or the petals of a full-blown rose), accompanied their salutations with long, caressing glances, as though shyness alone re-

would be taken ill at the mere thought of such a thing. Wait now, you're fond of painting, I must show you a superb picture I bought from my cousin, partly in exchange for the Elstirs, which frankly didn't appeal to us. It was sold to me as a Philippe de Champaigne, but I believe myself that it's by someone even greater. Would you like to know what I think? I think it's a Velázquez, and of the best period," said the Duke, looking me boldly in the eyes, either to ascertain my impression or in the hope of enhancing it. A footman came in.

"Mme la Duchesse wishes to know if M. le Duc will be so good as to see M. Swann, as Mme la Duchesse is not quite ready."

"Show M. Swann in," said the Duke, after looking at his watch and seeing that he himself still had a few minutes before he need go to dress. "Naturally my wife, who told him to come, isn't ready. No point in saying anything in front of Swann about Marie-Gilbert's party," said the Duke. "I don't know whether he's been invited. Gilbert likes him immensely, because he believes him to be the natural grandson of the Duc de Berry, but that's a long story. (Otherwise you can imagine!—my cousin, who has a fit if he sees a Jew a mile off.) But now of course the Dreyfus case has made things more serious. Swann ought to have realised that he more than anyone must drop all connexion with those fellows, instead of which he says the most regrettable things."

The Duke called back the footman to know whether the man who had been sent to inquire at cousin Osmond's had returned. His plan was as follows: since he rightly believed that his cousin was dying, he was anxious to obtain news of him before his death, that is to say before he was obliged to go into mourning. Once covered by the official certainty that Amanien was still alive, he would sneak off to his dinner, to the Prince's reception, to the midnight revel where he was to appear as Louis XI and where he had a most tantalising assignation with a new mistress, and would make no more inquiries until the following day, when his pleasures would be over. Then he would put on mourning if the cousin had passed away in the night. "No, M. le Duc, he is not back yet." "Hell and damnation! Nothing is ever done in this house till the last minute," cried the Duke, at the thought that Amanien might still be in time to "croak" for an evening paper, and to make him miss his revel. He sent for *Le Temps*, in which there was nothing.

I had not seen Swann for a long time, and found myself wondering momentarily whether in the old days he used to clip his moustache, or whether his hair had not been *en brosse*, for I found him somehow changed. It was simply that he was indeed greatly "changed" because he was very ill, and illness produces in the face modifications as profound as are created by growing a beard or by changing one's parting. (Swann's illness was the same that had killed his mother, who had been struck down by it at precisely the age which he had now reached. Our lives are in truth, owing to heredity, as full of cabalistic ciphers, of horoscopic castings as if sorcerers really existed. And just as there is a certain duration of life for humanity in general, so there is one for families in particular, that is to say, in any one family, for the members of it who resemble one another.) Swann was dressed with an elegance which, like that of his wife, associated with what he now was what he once had been. Buttoned up in a pearl-grey

frock-coat which emphasised his tall, slim figure, his white gloves stitched in black, he had a grey topper of a flared shape which Delion no longer made except for him, the Prince de Sagan, M. de Charlus, the Marquis de Modène, M. Charles Haas and Comte Louis de Turenne. I was surprised at the charming smile and affectionate handclasp with which he replied to my greeting for I had imagined that after so long an interval he would not recognise me at once; I told him of my astonishment; he received it with a shout of laughter, a trace of indignation and a further squeeze of my hand, as if it were to throw doubt on the soundness of his brain or the sincerity of his affection to suppose that he did not recognise me. And yet that was in fact the case; he did not identify me, as I learned long afterwards, until several minutes later when he heard my name mentioned. But no change in his face, in his speech, in the things he said to me betrayed the discovery which a chance word from M. de Guermantes had enabled him to make, with such mastery, with such absolute sureness did he play the social game. He brought to it, moreover, that spontaneity in manners and that personal enterprise, even in matters of dress, which characterised the Guermantes style. Thus it was that the greeting which the old clubman had given me without recognising me was not the cold, stiff greeting of the purely formalist man of the world, but a greeting full of real friendliness, genuine charm, such as the Duchesse de Guermantes, for instance, possessed (carrying it so far as to smile at you first, before you had bowed to her, if she met you in the street), in contrast to the more mechanical greeting customary among the ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In the same way, the hat which, in conformity with a custom that was beginning to disappear, he laid on the floor by his feet, was lined with green leather, a thing not usually done, because (he said) it showed the dirt far less, in reality because (but this he did not say) it was highly becoming.

"Now, Charles, you're a great expert, come and see what I've got to show you, after which, my boys, I'm going to ask your permission to leave you together for a moment while I go and change my clothes. Besides, I expect Oriane won't be long now." And he showed his "Velázquez" to Swann. "But it seems to me that I know this," said Swann with the grimace of a sick man for whom the mere act of speaking requires an effort.

"Yes," said the Duke, perturbed by the time which the expert was taking to express his admiration. "You've probably seen it at Gilbert's."

"Oh, yes, of course, I remember."

"What do you suppose it is?"

"Oh, well, if it comes from Gilbert's house it's probably one of your *ancestors*," said Swann with a blend of irony and deference towards a grandeur which he would have felt it impolite and absurd to belittle, but to which for reasons of good taste he preferred to make only a playful reference.

"Of course it is," said the Duke bluntly. "It's Boson, the I forget how manyeth de Guermantes. Not that I care a damn about that. You know I'm not as feudal as my cousin. I've heard the names of Rigaud, Mignard, even Velázquez mentioned," he went on, fastening on Swann the look of both an inquisitor and a torturer in an attempt at once to read into his mind and to influence his response. "Well," he concluded (for when he was led to

provoke artificially an opinion which he desired to hear, he had the faculty, after a few moments, of believing that it had been spontaneously uttered), "come, now, none of your flattery. Do you think it's by one of those big guns I've mentioned?"

"Nnnnno," said Swann.

"Well anyway, I know nothing about these things, it's not for me to decide who daubed the canvas. But you're a dilettante, a master of the subject, what would you say it was?"

Swann hesitated for a moment in front of the picture, which obviously he thought atrocious.

"A bad joke!" he replied with a smile at the Duke who could not restrain an impulse of rage. When this had subsided: "Be good fellows, both of you, wait a moment for Oriane, I must go and put on my swallow-tails and then I'll be back. I shall send word to the missus that you're both waiting for her."

I chatted for a minute or two with Swann about the Dreyfus case and asked him how it was that all the Guermantes were anti-Dreyfusards. "In the first place because at heart all these people are anti-semites," replied Swann, who nevertheless knew very well from experience that certain of them were not, but, like everyone who holds a strong opinion, preferred to explain the fact that other people did not share it by imputing to them preconceptions and prejudices against which there was nothing to be done, rather than reasons which might permit of discussion. Besides, having come to the premature term of his life, like a weary animal that is being tormented, he cried out against these persecutions and was returning to the spiritual fold of his fathers.

"Yes, it's true I've been told that the Prince de Guermantes is anti-semitic."

"Oh, that fellow! I don't even bother to consider him. He carries it to such a point that when he was in the army and had a frightful toothache he preferred to grin and bear it rather than go to the only dentist in the district, who happened to be a Jew, and later on he allowed a wing of his castle to be burned to the ground because he would have had to send for extinguishers to the place next door, which belongs to the Rothschilds."

"Are you going to be there this evening, by any chance?"

"Yes," Swann replied, "although I don't really feel up to it. But he sent me a wire to tell me that he has something to say to me. I feel that I shall soon be too unwell to go there or to receive him at my house, it will be too agitating, so I prefer to get it over at once."

"But the Duc de Guermantes is not anti-semitic?"

"You can see quite well that he is, since he's an anti-Dreyfusard," replied Swann, without noticing that he was begging the question. "All the same I'm sorry to have disappointed the fellow—His Grace I should say!—by not admiring his Mignard or whatever he calls it."

"But at any rate," I went on, reverting to the Dreyfus case, "the Duchess, now, is intelligent."

"Yes, she is charming. To my mind, however, she was even more charming when she was still known as the Princesse des Laumes. Her mind has become somehow more angular—it was all much softer in the juvenile great lady. But after all, young or old, men or women, when all's said and done these people belong to a different race, one can't have a thousand years of feudalism in one's

blood with impunity. Naturally they imagine that it counts for nothing in their opinions."

"All the same, Robert de Saint-Loup is a Dreyfusard."

"Ah! So much the better, especially as his mother is extremely anti. I had heard that he was, but I wasn't certain of it. That gives me a great deal of pleasure. It doesn't surprise me, he's highly intelligent. It's a great thing, that is."

Swann's Dreyfusism had brought out in him an extraordinary naïvety and imparted to his way of looking at things an impulsiveness, an inconsistency more noticeable even than had been the similar effects of his marriage to Odette; this new "declassing" would have been better described as a "reclassing" and was entirely to his credit, since it made him return to the paths which his forebears had trodden and from which he had been deflected by his aristocratic associations. But precisely at the moment when, with all his clear-sightedness, and thanks to the principles he had inherited from his ancestors, he was in a position to perceive a truth that was still hidden from people of fashion, Swann showed himself nevertheless quite comically blind. He subjected all his admirations and all his contempts to the test of a new criterion, Dreyfusism. That the anti-Dreyfusism of Mme Bontemps should make him think her a fool was no more astonishing than that, when he had got married, he should have thought her intelligent. It was not very serious, either, that the new wave should also affect his political judgments and make him lose all memory of having denounced Clemenceau—whom, he now declared, he had always regarded as a voice of conscience, a man of steel,

like Cornély—as a man with a price, a British spy (this latter was an absurdity of the Guermantes set). "No, no, I never told you anything of the sort. You're thinking of someone else." But, sweeping past his political judgments, the wave overturned Swann's literary judgments too, down to his way of expressing them. Barrès was now devoid of talent, and even his early books were feeble, could scarcely bear re-reading. "You try, you'll find you can't struggle to the end. What a difference from Clemenceau! Personally I'm not anti-clerical, but when you compare them together you must see that Barrès is invertebrate. He's a very great man, is old Clemenceau. How he knows the language!" However, the anti-Dreyfusards were in no position to criticise these follies. They explained that one was only a Dreyfusard because one was of Jewish origin. If a practising Catholic like Saniette was also in favour of reconsideration, that was because he was cornered by Mme Verdurin, who behaved like a wild radical. She was first and foremost against the "frocks." Saniette was more fool than knave, and had no idea of the harm that the Mistress was doing him. If you pointed out that Brichot was equally a friend of Mme Verdurin and was a member of the "Patrie Française," that was because he was more intelligent.

"You see him occasionally?" I asked Swann, referring to Saint-Loup.

"No, never. He wrote to me the other day asking me to persuade the Duc de Mouchy and various other people to vote for him at the Jockey, where for that matter he got through like a letter through the post."

"In spite of the Affair!"

"The question was never raised. However I must tell

you that since all this business began I never set foot in the place."

M. de Guermantes returned and was presently joined by his wife, all ready now for the evening, tall and proud in a gown of red satin the skirt of which was bordered with sequins. She had in her hair a long ostrich feather dyed purple, and over her shoulders a tulle scarf of the same red as her dress. "How nice it is to have one's hat lined in green," said the Duchess, who missed nothing. "However, with you, Charles, everything is always charming, whether it's what you wear or what you say, what you read or what you do." Swann meanwhile, without apparently listening, was considering the Duchess as he would have studied the canvas of a master, and then sought her eyes, making a face which implied the exclamation "Gosh!" Mme de Guermantes rippled with laughter. "So my clothes please you? I'm delighted. But I must say they don't please me much," she went on with a sulky air. "God, what a bore it is to have to dress up and go out when one would ever so much rather stay at home!"

"What magnificent rubies!"

"Ah! my dear Charles, at least one can see that you know what you're talking about, you're not like that brute Monserfeuil who asked me if they were real. I must say I've never seen anything quite like them. They were a present from the Grand Duchess. They're a little too big for my liking, a little too like claret glasses filled to the brim, but I've put them on because we shall be seeing the Grand Duchess this evening at Marie-Gilbert's," added Mme de Guermantes, never suspecting that this assertion

destroyed the force of those previously made by the Duke.

"What's on at the Princess's?" inquired Swann.

"Practically nothing," the Duke hastened to reply, the question having made him think that Swann was not invited.

"What do you mean, Basin? The whole world has been invited. It will be a deathly crush. What will be pretty, though," she went on, looking soulfully at Swann, "if the storm I can feel in the air now doesn't break, will be those marvellous gardens. You know them, of course. I was there a month ago, when the lilacs were in flower. You can't imagine how lovely they were. And then the fountain—really, it's Versailles in Paris."

"What sort of person is the Princess?" I asked.

"Why, you know quite well, since you've seen her here, that she's as beautiful as the day, and also a bit of a fool, but very nice, in spite of all her Germanic high-and-mightiness, full of good nature and gaffes."

Swann was too shrewd not to perceive that the Duchess was trying to show off the "Guermantes wit," and at no great cost to herself, for she was only serving up in a less perfect form a few of her old quips. Nevertheless, to prove to the Duchess that he appreciated her intention to be funny, and as though she had really succeeded in being funny, he gave a somewhat forced smile, causing me by this particular form of insincerity the same embarrassment as I used to feel long ago when I heard my parents discussing with M. Vinteuil the corruption of certain sections of society (when they knew very well that a corruption far greater reigned at Montjouvain), or sim-

ply on hearing Legrandin embellishing his utterances for the benefit of fools, choosing delicate epithets which he knew perfectly well would not be understood by a rich or smart but illiterate audience.

"Come now, Oriane, what on earth are you saying?" broke in M. de Guermantes. "Marie a fool? Why, she's read everything, and she's as musical as a fiddle."

"But, my poor little Basin, you're as innocent as a new-born babe. As if one couldn't be all that, and rather an idiot as well. Idiot is too strong a word; no, she's in the clouds, she's Hesse-Darmstadt, Holy Roman Empire, and wa-wa-wa. Even her pronunciation gets on my nerves. But I quite admit that she's a charming loony. In the first place, the very idea of stepping down from her German throne to go and marry, in the most bourgeois way, a private individual. It's true that she chose him! Ah, but of course," she went on, turning to me, "you don't know Gilbert. Let me give you an idea of him: he took to his bed once because I had left a card on Mme Carnot . . . But, my dear Charles" (the Duchess changed the subject when she saw that the story of the card left on the Carnots appeared to irritate M. de Guermantes), "you know, you've never sent me that photograph of our Knights of Rhodes, whom I've learned to love through you and with whom I'm so anxious to become acquainted." The Duke meanwhile had not taken his eyes from his wife's face: "Oriane, you might at least tell the story properly and not cut out half. I ought to explain," he corrected, addressing Swann, "that the British Ambassadress at that time, who was a very worthy woman but lived rather in the moon and was in the habit of making

up these odd combinations, conceived the distinctly quaint idea of inviting us with the President and his wife. Even Oriane was rather surprised, especially as the Ambassadress knew quite enough of the same sort of people as us not to invite us to such an ill-assorted gathering. There was a minister there who's a swindler . . . however I'll draw a veil over all that—the fact was that we hadn't been warned, we were trapped, and to be honest I'm bound to admit that all these people behaved most civilly. Still, that was quite enough of a good thing. But Mme de Guermantes, who does not often do me the honour of consulting me, felt it incumbent upon her to leave a card in the course of the following week at the Elysée. Gilbert may perhaps have gone rather far in regarding it as a stain upon our name. But it must not be forgotten that, politics apart, M. Carnot, who incidentally filled his post quite respectably, was the grandson of a member of the revolutionary tribunal which slaughtered eleven of our people in a single day."

"In that case, Basin, why used you to go every week to dine at Chantilly? The Duc d'Aumale was just as much the grandson of a member of the revolutionary tribunal, with this difference, that Carnot was a decent man and Philippe-Egalité a frightful scoundrel."

"Excuse my interrupting you to explain that I did send the photograph," said Swann. "I can't understand how it hasn't reached you."

"It doesn't altogether surprise me," said the Duchess, "my servants tell me only what they think fit. They probably don't approve of the Order of St John." And she rang the bell.

"You know, Oriane, that when I used to go to Chantilly it was without much enthusiasm."

"Without much enthusiasm, but with a nightshirt in case the Prince asked you to stay the night, which in fact he very rarely did, being a perfect boor like all the Orléans lot . . . Do you know who else we're dining with at Mme de Saint-Euverte's?" Mme de Guermantes asked her husband.

"Besides the people you know already, she's asked King Theodosius's brother at the last moment."

At these tidings the Duchess's features exuded contentment and her speech boredom: "Oh, God, more princes!"

"But that one is amiable and intelligent," Swann remarked.

"Not altogether, though," replied the Duchess, apparently seeking for words that would give more novelty to her thought. "Have you ever noticed with princes that the nicest of them are never entirely nice? They must always have an opinion about everything. And as they have no opinions of their own, they spend the first half of their lives asking us ours and the second half serving them up to us again. They positively must be able to say that this has been well played and that not so well. When there's no difference. Do you know, this little Theodosius junior (I forget his name) asked me once what an orchestral motif was called. I answered" (the Duchess's eyes sparkled and a laugh exploded from her beautiful red lips) "'It's called an orchestral motif.' I don't think he was any too well pleased, really. Oh, my dear Charles," she went on with a languishing air, "what a bore it can be, dining out. There are evenings when one would sooner die! It's true

that dying may be perhaps just as great a bore, because we don't know what it's like."

A servant appeared. It was the young lover who had had a quarrel with the concierge, until the Duchess, out of the kindness of her heart, had brought about an apparent peace between them.

"Am I to go round this evening to inquire after M. le Marquis d'Osmond?" he asked.

"Most certainly not, nothing before tomorrow morning. In fact I don't want you to remain in the house tonight. His footman, whom you know, might very well come and bring you the latest report and send you out after us. Be off with you, go anywhere you like, have a spree, sleep out, but I don't want to see you here before tomorrow morning."

The footman's face glowed with happiness. At last he would be able to spend long hours with his betrothed, whom he had practically ceased to see ever since, after a final scene with the concierge, the Duchess had considerately explained to him that it would be better, to avoid further conflicts, if he did not go out at all. He floated, at the thought of having an evening free at last, on a tide of happiness which the Duchess saw and the reason for which she guessed. She felt a sort of pang and as it were an itching in all her limbs at the thought of this happiness being snatched behind her back, unbeknown to her, and it made her irritated and jealous.

"No, Basin, he must stay here; he's not to stir out of the house."

"But Oriane, that's absurd, the house is crammed with servants, and you have the costumier's people coming as well at twelve to dress us for our ball. There's ab-

solutely nothing for him to do, and he's the only one who's a friend of Mama's footman; I'd much sooner get him right away from the house."

"Listen, Basin, let me do what I want. I shall have a message for him during the evening, as it happens—I'm not yet sure at what time. In any case you're not to budge from here for a single instant, do you hear?" she said to the despairing footman.

If there were continual quarrels, and if servants did not stay long with the Duchess, the person to whose charge this guerrilla warfare was to be laid was indeed irremovable, but it was not the concierge. No doubt for the heavy work, for the martyrdoms it was particularly tiring to inflict, for the quarrels which ended in blows, the Duchess entrusted the blunter instruments to him; but even then he played his role without the least suspicion that he had been cast for it. Like the household servants, he was impressed by the Duchess's kindness, and the imperceptive footmen who came back, after leaving her service, to visit Françoise used to say that the Duke's house would have been the finest "place" in Paris if it had not been for the porter's lodge. The Duchess made use of the lodge in the same way as at different times clericalism, freemasonry, the Jewish peril and so on have been made use of. Another footman came into the room.

"Why haven't they brought up the package M. Swann sent here? And, by the way (you've heard, Charles, that Mama is seriously ill?), Jules went round to inquire for news of M. le Marquis d'Osmond: has he come back yet?"

"He's just arrived this instant, M. le Duc. They're expecting M. le Marquis to pass away at any moment."

"Ah, he's alive!" exclaimed the Duke with a sigh of relief. "They're expecting, are they? Well, they can go on expecting. While there's life there's hope," he added cheerfully for our benefit. "They've been talking to me about him as though he were dead and buried. In a week from now he'll be fitter than I am."

"It's the doctors who said that he wouldn't last out the evening. One of them wanted to call again during the night. The head one said it was no use. M. le Marquis would be dead by then; they've only kept him alive by injecting him with camphorated oil."

"Hold your tongue, you damned fool," cried the Duke in a paroxysm of rage. "Who the devil asked you for your opinion? You haven't understood a word of what they told you."

"It wasn't me they told, it was Jules."

"Will you hold your tongue!" roared the Duke, and, turning to Swann: "What a blessing he's still alive! He'll regain his strength gradually, don't you know. Still alive, after being in such a critical state—that in itself is an excellent sign. One mustn't expect everything at once. It can't be at all unpleasant, a little injection of camphorated oil." He rubbed his hands. "He's alive; what more could anyone want? After all that he's gone through, it's a great step forward. Upon my word, I envy him having such a constitution. Ah! these invalids, you know, people do all sorts of little things for them that they don't do for us. For instance, today some beggar of a chef sent me up a leg of mutton with *béarnaise* sauce—it was done to a turn, I must admit, but just for that very reason I took so much of it that it's still lying on my stomach. However, that doesn't make people come to inquire after me as they

do after dear Amanien. We do too much inquiring. It only tires him. We must leave him room to breathe. They're killing the poor fellow by sending round to him all the time."

"Well," said the Duchess to the footman as he was leaving the room, "I gave orders for the envelope containing a photograph which M. Swann sent me to be brought up here."

"Madame la Duchesse, it's so large that I didn't know if I could get it through the door. We've left it in the hall. Does Madame la Duchesse wish me to bring it up?"

"Oh, in that case, no; they ought to have told me, but if it's so big I shall see it in a moment when I come downstairs."

"I forgot to tell Mme la Duchesse that Mme la Comtesse Molé left a card this morning for Mme la Duchesse."

"What, this morning?" said the Duchess with an air of disapproval, feeling that so young a woman ought not to take the liberty of leaving cards in the morning.

"About ten o'clock, Madame la Duchesse."

"Show me the cards."

"In any case, Oriane, when you say that it was a funny idea on Marie's part to marry Gilbert," went on the Duke, reverting to the original topic of conversation, "it's you who have an odd way of writing history. If either of them was a fool, it was Gilbert, for having married of all people a woman so closely related to the King of the Belgians, who has usurped the name of Brabant which belongs to us. To put it briefly, we are of the same blood as the Hesses, and of the elder branch. It's always

stupid to talk about oneself," he apologised to me, "but after all, whenever we've been not only to Darmstadt, but even to Cassel and all over electoral Hesse, all the landgraves have always been most courteous in giving us precedence as being of the elder branch."

"But really, Basin, you don't mean to tell me that a person who was honorary commandant of every regiment in her country, who people thought would become engaged to the King of Sweden . . ."

"Oh, Oriane, that's too much; anyone would think you didn't know that the King of Sweden's grandfather was tilling the soil at Pau when we had been ruling the roost for nine hundred years throughout the whole of Europe."

"That doesn't alter the fact that if somebody were to say in the street: 'Hallo, there's the King of Sweden,' everyone would at once rush to see him as far as the Place de la Concorde, and if he said: 'There's M. de Guermantes,' nobody would know who it was."

"What an argument!"

"Besides, I can't understand how, once the title of Duke of Brabant has passed to the Belgian royal family, you can continue to claim it."

The footman returned with the Comtesse Molé's card, or rather what she had left in place of a card. On the pretext that she did not have one with her, she had taken from her pocket a letter addressed to herself, and keeping the contents had handed in the envelope which bore the inscription: "La Comtesse Molé." As the envelope was rather large, following the fashion in note-paper which prevailed that year, this "card" was almost twice the size of an ordinary visiting card.

"That's what people call Mme Molé's 'simplicity,' " said the Duchess sarcastically. "She wants to make us think that she had no cards on her to show her originality. But we know all about that, don't we, my little Charles, we're quite old enough and quite original enough ourselves to see through the tricks of a little lady who has only been going about for four years. She is charming, but she doesn't seem to me, all the same, to have the weight to imagine that she can stun the world with so little effort as merely by leaving an envelope instead of a card and leaving it at ten o'clock in the morning. Her old mother mouse will show her that she knows a thing or two about that."

Swann could not help smiling at the thought that the Duchess, who was, as it happened, a trifle jealous of Mme Molé's success, would find it quite in accordance with the "Guermantes wit" to make some insolent retort to her visitor.

"So far as the title of Duc de Brabant is concerned, I've told you a hundred times, Oriane . . ." the Duke continued, but the Duchess, without listening, cut him short.

"But, my dear Charles, I'm longing to see your photograph."

"Ah! *Extinctor draconis latrator Anubis,*" said Swann.

"Yes, it was so charming what you said about that apropos of San Giorgio at Venice. But I don't understand why Anubis?"

"What's the one like who was an ancestor of Babal?" asked M. de Guermantes.

"You want to see his bauble," said his wife drily, to

show that she herself despised the pun. "I want to see them all," she added.

"I'll tell you what, Charles, let's go downstairs till the carriage comes," said the Duke. "You can pay your call on us in the hall, because my wife won't let us have any peace until she's seen your photograph. I'm less impatient, I must say," he added complacently. "I'm not easily stirred myself, but she would see us all dead rather than miss it."

"I entirely agree with you, Basin," said the Duchess, "let's go into the hall; we shall at least know why we have come down from your study, whereas we shall never know how we have come down from the Counts of Brabant."

"I've told you a hundred times how the title came into the House of Hesse," said the Duke (while we were going downstairs to look at the photograph, and I thought of those that Swann used to bring me at Combray), "through the marriage of a Brabant in 1241 with the daughter of the last Landgrave of Thuringia and Hesse, so that really it's the title of Prince of Hesse that came to the House of Brabant rather than that of Duke of Brabant to the House of Hesse. You will remember that our battle-cry was that of the Dukes of Brabant: 'Limbourg to her conqueror!' until we exchanged the arms of Brabant for those of Guermantes, in which I think myself that we were wrong, and the example of the Gramonts will not make me change my opinion."

"But," replied Mme de Guermantes, "as it's the King of the Belgians who is the conqueror . . . Besides, the Belgian Crown Prince calls himself Duc de Brabant."

"But, my dear child, your argument will not hold water for a moment. You know as well as I do that there are titles of pretension which can perfectly well survive even if the territory is occupied by usurpers. For instance, the King of Spain describes himself equally as Duke of Brabant, claiming in virtue of a possession less ancient than ours, but more ancient than that of the King of the Belgians. He also calls himself Duke of Burgundy, King of the West and East Indies, and Duke of Milan. Well, he's no more in possession of Burgundy, the Indies or Brabant than I possess Brabant myself, or the Prince of Hesse either, for that matter. The King of Spain likewise proclaims himself King of Jerusalem, as does the Austrian Emperor, and Jerusalem belongs to neither one nor the other."

He stopped for a moment, perturbed by the thought that the mention of Jerusalem might have embarrassed Swann, in view of "current events," but only went on more rapidly: "What you said just now might be said of anyone. We were at one time Dukes of Aumale, a duchy that has passed as regularly to the House of France as Joinville and Chevreuse have to the House of Albert. We make no more claim to those titles than to that of Marquis de Noirmoutiers, which was at one time ours, and became perfectly regularly the appanage of the House of La Trémoïlle, but because certain cessions are valid, it does not follow that they all are. For instance," he went on, turning to me, "my sister-in-law's son bears the title of Prince d'Agrigente, which comes to us from Joan the Mad, as that of Prince de Tarente comes to the La Trémoïlles. Well, Napoleon went and gave this title of Tarente to a soldier, who may have been an excellent

campaigner, but in doing so the Emperor was disposing of what belonged to him even less than Napoleon III when he created a Duc de Montmorency, since Périgord had at least a mother who was a Montmorency, while the Tarente of Napoleon I had no more Tarente about him than Napoleon's wish that he should become so. That didn't prevent Chaix d'Est-Ange, alluding to our uncle Condé, from asking the Imperial Attorney if he had picked up the title of Duc de Montmorency in the moat at Vincennes."

"Look, Basin, I ask for nothing better than to follow you to the moat of Vincennes, or even to Taranto. And that reminds me, Charles, of what I was going to say to you when you were telling me about your San Giorgio of Venice. We have a plan, Basin and I, to spend next spring in Italy and Sicily. If you were to come with us, just think what a difference it would make! I'm not thinking only of the pleasure of seeing you, but imagine, after all you've told me about the remains of the Norman Conquest and of antiquity, imagine what a trip like that would become if you were with us! I mean to say that even Basin—what am I saying, Gilbert!—would benefit by it, because I feel that even his claims to the throne of Naples and all that sort of thing would interest me if they were explained by you in old Romanesque churches in little villages perched on hills as in primitive paintings. But now we're going to look at your photograph. Open the envelope," she said to a footman.

"Please, Oriane, not this evening; you can look at it tomorrow," implored the Duke, who had already been making signs of alarm to me on seeing the enormous size of the photograph.

"But I want to look at it with Charles," said the Duchess, with a smile at once spuriously concupiscent and subtly psychological, for in her desire to be amiable to Swann she spoke of the pleasure which she would derive from looking at the photograph as of the kind an invalid feels he would derive from eating an orange, or as though she had simultaneously contrived an escapade with some friends and informed a biographer of tastes flattering to herself.

"Well, he'll come and see you specially," declared the Duke, to whom his wife was obliged to yield. "You can spend three hours in front of it, if that amuses you," he added sarcastically. "But where are you going to stick a toy that size?"

"In my room, of course. I want to have it before my eyes."

"Oh, just as you please; if it's in your room, there's a chance I shall never see it," said the Duke, oblivious of the revelation he was thus blindly making of the negative character of his conjugal relations.

"Make sure you undo it with the greatest care," Mme de Guermantes told the servant, underlining her instructions out of deference to Swann. "And don't crumple the envelope, either."

"Even the envelope has to be respected!" the Duke murmured to me, raising his eyes to the ceiling. "But, Swann," he added, "what amazes me, a poor prosaic husband, is how you managed to find an envelope that size. Where on earth did you dig it up?"

"Oh, at the photographer's; they're always sending out things like that. But the man is an oaf, for I see he's

written on it 'La Duchesse de Guermantes,' without putting 'Madame.' "

"I forgive him," said the Duchess carelessly; then, seeming to be struck by a sudden idea which amused her, repressed a faint smile; but at once returning to Swann: "Well, you don't say whether you're coming to Italy with us?"

"Madame, I'm very much afraid that it won't be possible."

"Indeed! Mme de Montmorency is more fortunate. You went with her to Venice and Vicenza. She told me that with you one saw things one would never see otherwise, things no one had ever thought of mentioning before, that you showed her things she'd never dreamed of, and that even in the well-known things she was able to appreciate details which without you she might have passed by a dozen times without ever noticing. She's certainly been more highly favoured than we are to be . . . You will take the big envelope which contained M. Swann's photograph," she said to the servant, "and you will hand it in, from me, the corner turned down, this evening at half past ten at Mme la Comtesse Molé's."

Swann burst out laughing.

"I should like to know, all the same," Mme de Guermantes asked him, "how you can tell ten months in advance that a thing will be impossible."

"My dear Duchess, I'll tell you if you insist, but, first of all, you can see that I'm very ill."

"Yes, my little Charles, I don't think you look at all well. I'm not pleased with your colour. But I'm not ask-

ing you to come with us next week, I'm asking you to come in ten months' time. In ten months one has time to get oneself cured, you know."

At this point a footman came in to say that the carriage was at the door. "Come, Oriane, to horse," said the Duke, already pawing the ground with impatience as though he were himself one of the horses that stood waiting outside.

"Very well, give me in one word the reason why you can't come to Italy," the Duchess put it to Swann as she rose to say good-bye to us.

"But, my dear lady, it's because I shall then have been dead for several months. According to the doctors I've consulted, by the end of the year the thing I've got—which may, for that matter, carry me off at any moment—won't in any case leave me more than three or four months to live, and even that is a generous estimate," replied Swann with a smile, while the footman opened the glazed door of the hall to let the Duchess out.

"What's that you say?" cried the Duchess, stopping for a moment on her way to the carriage and raising her beautiful, melancholy blue eyes, now clouded by uncertainty. Placed for the first time in her life between two duties as incompatible as getting into her carriage to go out to dinner and showing compassion for a man who was about to die, she could find nothing in the code of conventions that indicated the right line to follow; not knowing which to choose, she felt obliged to pretend not to believe that the latter alternative need be seriously considered, in order to comply with the first, which at the moment demanded less effort, and thought that the best way

of settling the conflict would be to deny that any existed. "You're joking," she said to Swann.

"It would be a joke in charming taste," he replied ironically. "I don't know why I'm telling you this. I've never said a word to you about my illness before. But since you asked me, and since now I may die at any moment . . . But whatever I do I mustn't make you late; you're dining out, remember," he added, because he knew that for other people their own social obligations took precedence over the death of a friend, and he put himself in their place thanks to his instinctive politeness. But that of the Duchess enabled her also to perceive in a vague way that the dinner-party to which she was going must count for less to Swann than his own death. And so, while continuing on her way towards the carriage, she let her shoulders droop, saying: "Don't worry about our dinner. It's not of any importance!" But this put the Duke in a bad humour and he exclaimed: "Come, Oriane, don't stop there chattering like that and exchanging your jeremiads with Swann; you know very well that Mme de Saint-Euverte insists on sitting down to table at eight o'clock sharp. We must know what you propose to do; the horses have been waiting for a good five minutes. Forgive me, Charles," he went on, turning to Swann, "but it's ten minutes to eight already. Oriane is always late, and it will take us more than five minutes to get to old Saint-Euverte's."

Mme de Guermantes advanced resolutely towards the carriage and uttered a last farewell to Swann. "You know, we'll talk about that another time; I don't believe a word you've been saying, but we must discuss it quietly. I ex-

pect they've frightened you quite unnecessarily. Come to luncheon, any day you like" (with Mme de Guermantes things always resolved themselves into luncheons), "just let me know the day and the time," and, lifting her red skirt, she set her foot on the step. She was just getting into the carriage when, seeing this foot exposed, the Duke cried out in a terrifying voice: "Oriane, what have you been thinking of, you wretch? You've kept on your black shoes! With a red dress! Go upstairs quick and put on red shoes, or rather," he said to the footman, "tell Mme la Duchesse's lady's-maid at once to bring down a pair of red shoes."

"But, my dear," replied the Duchess gently, embarrassed to see that Swann, who was leaving the house with me but had stood back to allow the carriage to pass out in front of us, had heard, "seeing that we're late . . ."

"No, no, we have plenty of time. It's only ten to; it won't take us ten minutes to get to the Parc Monceau. And after all, what does it matter? Even if we turn up at half past eight they'll wait for us, but you can't possibly go there in a red dress and black shoes. Besides, we shan't be the last, I can tell you; the Sassenages are coming, and you know they never arrive before twenty to nine."

The Duchess went up to her room.

"Well," said M. de Guermantes to Swann and myself, "people laugh at us poor downtrodden husbands, but we have our uses. But for me, Oriane would have gone out to dinner in black shoes."

"It's not unbecoming," said Swann, "I noticed the black shoes and they didn't offend me in the least."

"I don't say you're wrong," replied the Duke, "but it looks better to have them to match the dress. Besides, you

needn't worry, no sooner had she got there than she'd have noticed them, and I should have been obliged to come home and fetch the others. I should have had my dinner at nine o'clock. Good-bye, my boys," he said, thrusting us gently from the door, "off you go before Oriane comes down again. It's not that she doesn't like seeing you both. On the contrary, she's too fond of your company. If she finds you still here she'll start talking again. She's already very tired, and she'll reach the dinner-table quite dead. Besides, I tell you frankly, I'm dying of hunger. I had a wretched luncheon this morning when I came from the train. There was the devil of a *béarnaise* sauce, I admit, but in spite of that I shan't be sorry, not at all sorry to sit down to dinner. Five minutes to eight! Ah, women! She'll give us both indigestion before tomorrow. She's not nearly as strong as people think."

The Duke felt no compunction in speaking thus of his wife's ailments and his own to a dying man, for the former interested him more and therefore appeared to him more important. And so, after gently showing us out, it was simply from breeding and jollity that in a stentorian voice, as if addressing someone off-stage, he shouted from the gate to Swann, who was already in the courtyard: "You, now, don't let yourself be alarmed by the nonsense of those damned doctors. They're fools. You're as sound as a bell. You'll bury us all!"