In earlier days I would not have lingered in the sacred grove which surrounded this temple, for, before going upstairs to read, I would steal into the little sitting-room which my uncle Adolphe, a brother of my grandfather and an old soldier who had retired from the service as a major, used to occupy on the ground floor, a room which, even when its opened windows let in the heat, if not actually the rays of the sun which seldom penetrated so far, would never fail to emit that vague and yet fresh odour, suggesting at once an open-air and an old-fashioned kind of existence, which sets and keeps the nostrils dreaming when one goes into a disused gun-room. But for some years now I had not gone into my uncle Adolphe's room, since he no longer came to Combray on account of a quarrel which had arisen between him and my family, by my fault, and in the following circumstances: Once or twice every month, in Paris, I used to be sent to pay him a visit, as he was finishing his luncheon, wearing a plain alpaca coat, and waited upon by his servant in a working-jacket of striped linen, purple and white. He would complain that I had not been to see him for a long time; that he was being neglected; he would offer me a marchpane or a tangerine, and we would cross a room in which no one ever sat, whose fire was never lighted, whose walls were picked out with gilded mouldings, its ceiling painted blue in imitation of the sky, and its furniture upholstered in satin, as at my grandparents', only yellow; then we would enter what he called his 'study,' a room whose walls were hung with prints which shewed, against a dark background, a plump and rosy goddess driving a car, or standing upon a globe, or wearing a star on her brow; pictures which were popular under the Second Empire because there was thought to be something about them that suggested Pompeii, which were then generally despised, and which now people are beginning to collect again for one single and consistent reason (despite any others which they may advance), namely, that they suggest the Second Empire. And there I would stay with my uncle until his man came, with a message from the coachman, to ask him at what time he would like the carriage. My uncle would then be lost in meditation, while his astonished servant stood there, not daring to disturb him by the least movement, wondering and waiting for his answer, which never varied. For in the end, after a supreme crisis of hesitation, my uncle would utter, infallibly, the words: "A quarter past two," which the servant would echo with amazement, but without disputing them: "A quarter past two! Very good, sir... I will go and tell him...."

At this date I was a lover of the theatre: a Platonic lover, of necessity, since my parents had not yet allowed me to enter one, and so incorrect was the picture I drew for myself of the pleasures to be enjoyed there that I almost believed that each of the spectators looked, as into a stereoscope, upon a stage and scenery which existed for himself

alone, though closely resembling the thousand other spectacles presented to the rest of the audience individually.

Every morning I would hasten to the Moriss column to see what new plays it announced. Nothing could be more disinterested or happier than the dreams with which these announcements filled my mind, dreams which took their form from the inevitable associations of the words forming the title of the play, and also from the colour of the bills, still damp and wrinkled with paste, on which those words stood out. Nothing, unless it were such strange titles as the *Testament de César Girodot, or Oedipe-Roi*, inscribed not on the green bills of the Opéra-Comique, but on the wine-coloured bills of the Comédie-Française, nothing seemed to me to differ more profoundly from the sparkling white plume of the *Diamants de la Couronne* than the sleek, mysterious satin of the *Domino Noir*; and since my parents had told me that, for my first visit to the theatre, I should have to choose between these two pieces, I would study exhaustively and in turn the title of one and the title of the other (for those were all that I knew of either), attempting to snatch from each a foretaste of the pleasure which it offered me, and to compare this pleasure with that latent in the other title, until in the end I had shewn myself such vivid, such compelling pictures of, on the one hand, a play of dazzling arrogance, and on the other a gentle, velvety play, that I was as little capable of deciding which play I should prefer to see as if, at the dinner-table, they had obliged me to choose between *rice à l'Impératrice* and the famous cream of chocolate.

All my conversations with my playfellows bore upon actors, whose art, although as yet I had no experience of it, was the first of all its numberless forms in which Art itself allowed me to anticipate its enjoyment. Between one actor's tricks of intonation and inflection and another's, the most trifling differences would strike me as being of an incalculable importance. And from what I had been told of them I would arrange them in the order of their talent in lists which I used to murmur to myself all day long: lists which in the end became petrified in my brain and were a source of annoyance to it, being irremovable.

And later, in my schooldays, whenever I ventured in class, when the master's head was turned, to communicate with some new friend, I would always begin by asking him whether he had begun yet to go to theatres, and if he agreed that our greatest actor was undoubtedly Got, our second Delaunay, and so on. And if, in his judgment, Febvre came below Thiron, or Delaunay below Coquelin, the sudden volatility which the name of Coquelin, forsaking its stony rigidity, would engender in my mind, in which it moved upwards to the second place, the rich vitality with which the name of

Delaunay would suddenly be furnished, to enable it to slip down to fourth, would stimulate and fertilise my brain with a sense of budding and blossoming life.

But if the thought of actors weighed so upon me, if the sight of Maubant, coming out one afternoon from the Théâtre-Français, had plunged me in the throes and sufferings of hopeless love, how much more did the name of a 'star,' blazing outside the doors of a theatre, how much more, seen through the window of a brougham which passed me in the street, the hair over her forehead abloom with roses, did the face of a woman who, I would think, was perhaps an actress, leave with me a lasting disturbance, a futile and painful effort to form a picture of her private life.

I classified, in order of talent, the most distinguished: Sarah Bernhardt, Berma, Bartet, Madeleine Brohan, Jeanne Samary; but I was interested in them all. Now my uncle knew many of them personally, and also ladies of another class, not clearly distinguished from actresses in my mind. He used to entertain them at his house. And if we went to see him on certain days only, that was because on the other days ladies might come whom his family could not very well have met. So we at least thought; as for my uncle, his fatal readiness to pay pretty widows (who had perhaps never been married) and countesses (whose high-sounding titles were probably no more than *noms de guerre*) the compliment of presenting them to my grandmother or even of presenting to them some of our family jewels, had already embroiled him more than once with my grandfather. Often, if the name of some actress were mentioned in conversation, I would hear my father say, with a smile, to my mother: "One of your uncle's friends," and I would think of the weary novitiate through which, perhaps for years on end, a grown man, even a man of real importance, might have to pass, waiting on the doorstep of some such lady, while she refused to answer his letters and made her hall-porter drive him away; and imagine that my uncle was able to dispense a little jackanapes like myself from all these sufferings by introducing me in his own home to the actress, unapproachable by all the world, but for him an intimate friend.

And so—on the pretext that some lesson, the hour of which had been altered, now came at such an awkward time that it had already more than once prevented me, and would continue to prevent me, from seeing my uncle—one day, not one of the days which he set apart for our visits, I took advantage of the fact that my parents had had luncheon earlier than usual; I slipped out and, instead of going to read the playbills on their column, for which purpose I was allowed to go out unaccompanied, I ran all the way to his house. I noticed before his door a carriage and pair, with red carnations on the horses' blinkers and in the coachman's buttonhole. As I climbed the staircase I could hear laughter and a woman's voice, and, as soon as I had rung, silence and the sound of shutting doors. The man-servant who let me in appeared embarrassed, and

said that my uncle was extremely busy and probably could not see me; he went in, however, to announce my arrival, and the same voice I had heard before said: "Oh, yes! Do let him come in; just for a moment; it will be so amusing. Is that his photograph there, on your desk? And his mother (your niece, isn't she?) beside it? The image of her, isn't he? I should so like to see the little chap, just for a second."

I could hear my uncle grumbling and growing angry; finally the manservant told me to come in.

On the table was the same plate of marchpanes that was always there; my uncle wore the same alpaca coat as on other days; but opposite to him, in a pink silk dress with a great necklace of pearls about her throat, sat a young woman who was just finishing a tangerine. My uncertainty whether I ought to address her as Madame or Mademoiselle made me blush, and not daring to look too much in her direction, in case I should be obliged to speak to her, I hurried across to kiss my uncle. She looked at me and smiled; my uncle said "My nephew!" without telling her my name or telling me hers, doubtless because, since his difficulties with my grandfather, he had endeavoured as far as possible to avoid any association of his family with this other class of acquaintance.

"How like his mother he is," said the lady.

"But you have never seen my niece, except in photographs," my uncle broke in quickly, with a note of anger.

"I beg your pardon, dear friend, I passed her on the staircase last year when you were so ill. It is true I only saw her for a moment, and your staircase is rather dark; but I saw well enough to see how lovely she was. This young gentleman has her beautiful eyes, and also this," she went on, tracing a line with one finger across the lower part of her forehead. "Tell me," she asked my uncle, "is your niece Mme.——; is her name the same as yours?"

"He takes most after his father," muttered my uncle, who was no more anxious to effect an introduction by proxy, in repeating Mamma's name aloud, than to bring the two together in the flesh. "He's his father all over, and also like my poor mother."

"I have not met his father, dear," said the lady in pink, bowing her head slightly, "and I never saw your poor mother. You will remember it was just after your great sorrow that we got to know one another."

I felt somewhat disillusioned, for this young lady was in no way different from other pretty women whom I had seen from time to time at home, especially the daughter of

one of our cousins, to whose house I went every New Year's Day. Only better dressed; otherwise my uncle's friend had the same quick and kindly glance, the same frank and friendly manner. I could find no trace in her of the theatrical appearance which I admired in photographs of actresses, nothing of the diabolical expression which would have been in keeping with the life she must lead. I had difficulty in believing that this was one of 'those women,' and certainly I should never have believed her one of the 'smart ones' had I not seen the carriage and pair, the pink dress, the pearly necklace, had I not been aware, too, that my uncle knew only the very best of them. But I asked myself how the millionaire who gave her her carriage and her flat and her jewels could find any pleasure in flinging his money away upon a woman who had so simple and respectable an appearance. And yet, when I thought of what her life must be like, its immorality disturbed me more, perhaps, than if it had stood before me in some concrete and recognisable form, by its secrecy and invisibility, like the plot of a novel, the hidden truth of a scandal which had driven out of the home of her middle-class parents and dedicated to the service of all mankind which had brought to the flowering-point of her beauty, had raised to fame or notoriety this woman, the play of whose features, the intonations of whose voice, like so many others I already knew, made me regard her, in spite of myself, as a young lady of good family, her who was no longer of a family at all.

We had gone by this time into the 'study,' and my uncle, who seemed a trifle embarrassed by my presence, offered her a cigarette.

"No, thank you, dear friend," she said. "You know I only smoke the ones the Grand Duke sends me. I tell him that they make you jealous." And she drew from a case cigarettes covered with inscriptions in gold, in a foreign language. "Why, yes," she began again suddenly. "Of course I have met this young man's father with you. Isn't he your nephew? How on earth could I have forgotten? He was so nice, so charming to me," she went on, modestly and with feeling. But when I thought to myself what must actually have been the rude greeting (which, she made out, had been so charming), I, who knew my father's coldness and reserve, was shocked, as though at some indelicacy on his part, at the contrast between the excessive recognition bestowed on it and his never adequate geniality. It has since struck me as one of the most touching aspects of the part played in life by these idle, painstaking women that they devote all their generosity, all their talent, their transferable dreams of sentimental beauty (for, like all artists, they never seek to realise the value of those dreams, or to enclose them in the four-square frame of everyday life), and their gold, which counts for little, to the fashioning of a fine and precious setting for the rubbed and scratched and ill-polished lives of men. And just as this one filled the smoking-room, where my uncle was

entertaining her in his alpaca coat, with her charming person, her dress of pink silk, her pearls, and the refinement suggested by intimacy with a Grand Duke, so, in the same way, she had taken some casual remark by my father, had worked it up delicately, given it a 'turn,' a precious title, set in it the gem of a glance from her own eyes, a gem of the first water, blended of humility and gratitude; and so had given it back transformed into a jewel, a work of art, into something altogether charming.

"Look here, my boy, it is time you went away," said my uncle.

I rose; I could scarcely resist a desire to kiss the hand of the lady in pink, but I felt that to do so would require as much audacity as a forcible abduction of her. My heart beat loud while I counted out to myself "Shall I do it, shall I not?" and then I ceased to ask myself what I ought to do so as at least to do something. Blindly, hotly, madly, flinging aside all the reasons I had just found to support such action, I seized and raised to my lips the hand she held out to me.

"Isn't he delicious! Quite a ladies' man already; he takes after his uncle. He'll be a perfect 'gentleman,'" she went on, setting her teeth so as to give the word a kind of English accentuation. "Couldn't he come to me some day for 'a cup of tea,' as our friends across the channel say; he need only send me a 'blue' in the morning?"

I had not the least idea of what a 'blue' might be. I did not understand half the words which the lady used, but my fear lest there should be concealed in them some question which it would be impolite in me not to answer kept me from withdrawing my close attention from them, and I was beginning to feel extremely tired.

"No, no; it is impossible," said my uncle, shrugging his shoulders. "He is kept busy at home all day; he has plenty of work to do. He brings back all the prizes from his school," he added in a lower tone, so that I should not hear this falsehood and interrupt with a contradiction. "You can't tell; he may turn out a little Victor Hugo, a kind of Vaulabelle, don't you know."

"Oh, I love artistic people," replied the lady in pink; "there is no one like them for understanding women. Them, and really nice men like yourself. But please forgive my ignorance. Who, what is Vaulabelle? Is it those gilt books in the little glass case in your drawing-room? You know you promised to lend them to me; I will take great care of them."

My uncle, who hated lending people books, said nothing, and ushered me out into the hall. Madly in love with the lady in pink, I covered my old uncle's tobacco-stained cheeks with passionate kisses, and while he, awkwardly enough, gave me to understand (without actually saying) that he would rather I did not tell my parents

about this visit, I assured him, with tears in my eyes, that his kindness had made so strong an impression upon me that some day I would most certainly find a way of expressing my gratitude. So strong an impression had it made upon me that two hours later, after a string of mysterious utterances which did not strike me as giving my parents a sufficiently clear idea of the new importance with which I had been invested, I found it simpler to let them have a full account, omitting no detail, of the visit I had paid that afternoon. In doing this I had no thought of causing my uncle any unpleasantness. How could I have thought such a thing, since I did not wish it? And I could not suppose that my parents would see any harm in a visit in which I myself saw none. Every day of our lives does not some friend or other ask us to make his apologies, without fail, to some woman to whom he has been prevented from writing; and do not we forget to do so, feeling that this woman cannot attach much importance to a silence which has none for ourselves? I imagined, like everyone else, that the brains of other people were lifeless and submissive receptacles with no power of specific reaction to any stimulus which might be applied to them; and I had not the least doubt that when I deposited in the minds of my parents the news of the acquaintance I had made at my uncle's I should at the same time transmit to them the kindly judgment I myself had based on the introduction. Unfortunately my parents had recourse to principles entirely different from those which I suggested they should adopt when they came to form their estimate of my uncle's conduct. My father and grandfather had 'words' with him of a violent order; as I learned indirectly. A few days later, passing my uncle in the street as he drove by in an open carriage, Î felt at once all the grief, the gratitude, the remorse which I should have liked to convey to him. Beside the immensity of these emotions I considered that merely to raise my hat to him would be incongruous and petty, and might make him think that I regarded myself as bound to shew him no more than the commonest form of courtesy. I decided to abstain from so inadequate a gesture, and turned my head away. My uncle thought that, in doing so I was obeying my parents' orders; he never forgave them; and though he did not die until many years later, not one of us ever set eyes on him again.

And so I no longer used to go into the little sitting-room (now kept shut) of my uncle Adolphe; instead, after hanging about on the outskirts of the back-kitchen until Françoise appeared on its threshold and announced: "I am going to let the kitchen-maid serve the coffee and take up the hot water; it is time I went off to Mme. Octave," I would then decide to go indoors, and would go straight upstairs to my room to read. The kitchen-maid was an abstract personality, a permanent institution to which an invariable set of attributes assured a sort of fixity and continuity and identity throughout the long series of transitory human shapes in which that personality was

incarnate; for we never found the same girl there two years running. In the year in which we ate such quantities of asparagus, the kitchen-maid whose duty it was to dress them was a poor sickly creature, some way 'gone' in pregnancy when we arrived at Combray for Easter, and it was indeed surprising that Françoise allowed her to run so many errands in the town and to do so much work in the house, for she was beginning to find a difficulty in bearing before her the mysterious casket, fuller and larger every day, whose splendid outline could be detected through the folds of her ample smocks. These last recalled the cloaks in which Giotto shrouds some of the allegorical figures in his paintings, of which M. Swann had given me photographs. He it was who pointed out the resemblance, and when he inquired after the kitchen-maid he would say: "Well, how goes it with Giotto's Charity?" And indeed the poor girl, whose pregnancy had swelled and stoutened every part of her, even to her face, and the vertical, squared outlines of her cheeks, did distinctly suggest those virgins, so strong and mannish as to seem matrons rather, in whom the Virtues are personified in the Arena Chapel. And I can see now that those Virtues and Vices of Padua resembled her in another respect as well. For just as the figure of this girl had been enlarged by the additional symbol which she carried in her body, without appearing to understand what it meant, without any rendering in her facial expression of all its beauty and spiritual significance, but carried as if it were an ordinary and rather heavy burden, so it is without any apparent suspicion of what she is about that the powerfully built housewife who is portrayed in the Arena beneath the label 'Caritas,' and a reproduction of whose portrait hung upon the wall of my schoolroom at Combray, incarnates that virtue, for it seems impossible that any thought of charity can ever have found expression in her vulgar and energetic face. By a fine stroke of the painter's invention she is tumbling all the treasures of the earth at her feet, but exactly as if she were treading grapes in a wine-press to extract their juice, or, still more, as if she had climbed on a heap of sacks to raise herself higher; and she is holding out her flaming heart to God, or shall we say 'handing' it to Him, exactly as a cook might hand up a corkscrew through the skylight of her underground kitchen to some one who had called down to ask her for it from the ground-level above. The 'Invidia,' again, should have had some look on her face of envy. But in this fresco, too, the symbol occupies so large a place and is represented with such realism; the serpent hissing between the lips of Envy is so huge, and so completely fills her wide-opened mouth that the muscles of her face are strained and contorted, like a child's who is filling a balloon with his breath, and that Envy, and we ourselves for that matter, when we look at her, since all her attention and ours are concentrated on the action of her lips, have no time, almost, to spare for envious thoughts.

Despite all the admiration that M. Swann might profess for these figures of Giotto, it was a long time before I could find any pleasure in seeing in our schoolroom (where the copies he had brought me were hung) that Charity devoid of charity, that Envy who looked like nothing so much as a plate in some medical book, illustrating the compression of the glottis or uvula by a tumour in the tongue, or by the introduction of the operator's instrument, a Justice whose greyish and meanly regular features were the very same as those which adorned the faces of certain good and pious and slightly withered ladies of Combray whom I used to see at mass, many of whom had long been enrolled in the reserve forces of Injustice. But in later years I understood that the arresting strangeness, the special beauty of these frescoes lay in the great part played in each of them by its symbols, while the fact that these were depicted, not as symbols (for the thought symbolised was nowhere expressed), but as real things, actually felt or materially handled, added something more precise and more literal to their meaning, something more concrete and more striking to the lesson they imparted. And even in the case of the poor kitchen-maid, was not our attention incessantly drawn to her belly by the load which filled it; and in the same way, again, are not the thoughts of men and women in the agony of death often turned towards the practical, painful, obscure, internal, intestinal aspect, towards that 'seamy side' of death which is, as it happens, the side that death actually presents to them and forces them to feel, a side which far more closely resembles a crushing burden, a difficulty in breathing, a destroying thirst, than the abstract idea to which we are accustomed to give the name of Death?

There must have been a strong element of reality in those Virtues and Vices of Padua, since they appeared to me to be as much alive as the pregnant servant-girl, while she herself appeared scarcely less allegorical than they. And, quite possibly, this lack (or seeming lack) of participation by a person's soul in the significant marks of its own special virtue has, apart from its aesthetic meaning, a reality which, if not strictly psychological, may at least be called physiognomical. Later on, when, in the course of my life, I have had occasion to meet with, in convents for instance, literally saintly examples of practical charity, they have generally had the brisk, decided, undisturbed, and slightly brutal air of a busy surgeon, the face in which one can discern no commiseration, no tenderness at the sight of suffering humanity, and no fear of hurting it, the face devoid of gentleness or sympathy, the sublime face of true goodness.

Then while the kitchen-maid—who, all unawares, made the superior qualities of Françoise shine with added lustre, just as Error, by force of contrast, enhances the triumph of Truth—took in coffee which (according to Mamma) was nothing more than

hot water, and then carried up to our rooms hot water which was barely tepid, I would be lying stretched out on my bed, a book in my hand, in my room which trembled with the effort to defend its frail, transparent coolness against the afternoon sun, behind its almost closed shutters through which, however, a reflection of the sunlight had contrived to slip in on its golden wings, remaining motionless, between glass and woodwork, in a corner, like a butterfly poised upon a flower. It was hardly light enough for me to read, and my feeling of the day's brightness and splendour was derived solely from the blows struck down below, in the Rue de la Cure, by Camus (whom Françoise had assured that my aunt was not 'resting' and that he might therefore make a noise), upon some old packing-cases from which nothing would really be sent flying but the dust, though the din of them, in the resonant atmosphere that accompanies hot weather, seemed to scatter broadcast a rain of blood-red stars; and from the flies who performed for my benefit, in their small concert, as it might be the chamber music of summer; evoking heat and light quite differently from an air of human music which, if you happen to have heard it during a fine summer, will always bring that summer back to your mind, the flies' music is bound to the season by a closer, a more vital tie—born of sunny days, and not to be reborn but with them, containing something of their essential nature, it not merely calls up their image in our memory, but gives us a guarantee that they do really exist, that they are close around us, immediately accessible.

This dim freshness of my room was to the broad daylight of the street what the shadow is to the sunbeam, that is to say, equally luminous, and presented to my imagination the entire panorama of summer, which my senses, if I had been out walking, could have tasted and enjoyed in fragments only; and so was quite in harmony with my state of repose, which (thanks to the adventures related in my books, which had just excited it) bore, like a hand reposing motionless in a stream of running water, the shock and animation of a torrent of activity and life.

But my grandmother, even if the weather, after growing too hot, had broken, and a storm, or just a shower, had burst over us, would come up and beg me to go outside. And as I did not wish to leave off my book, I would go on with it in the garden, under the chestnut-tree, in a little sentry-box of canvas and matting, in the farthest recesses of which I used to sit and feel that I was hidden from the eyes of anyone who might be coming to call upon the family.

And then my thoughts, did not they form a similar sort of hiding-hole, in the depths of which I felt that I could bury myself and remain invisible even when I was looking at what went on outside? When I saw any external object, my consciousness that I was seeing it would remain between me and it, enclosing it in a slender, incorporeal

outline which prevented me from ever coming directly in contact with the material form; for it would volatilise itself in some way before I could touch it, just as an incandescent body which is moved towards something wet never actually touches moisture, since it is always preceded, itself, by a zone of evaporation. Upon the sort of screen, patterned with different states and impressions, which my consciousness would quietly unfold while I was reading, and which ranged from the most deeply hidden aspirations of my heart to the wholly external view of the horizon spread out before my eyes at the foot of the garden, what was from the first the most permanent and the most intimate part of me, the lever whose incessant movements controlled all the rest, was my belief in the philosophic richness and beauty of the book I was reading, and my desire to appropriate these to myself, whatever the book might be. For even if I had purchased it at Combray, having seen it outside Borange's, whose grocery lay too far from our house for Françoise to be able to deal there, as she did with Camus, but who enjoyed better custom as a stationer and bookseller; even if I had seen it, tied with string to keep it in its place in the mosaic of monthly parts and pamphlets which adorned either side of his doorway, a doorway more mysterious, more teeming with suggestion than that of a cathedral, I should have noticed and bought it there simply because I had recognised it as a book which had been well spoken of, in my hearing, by the school-master or the school-friend who, at that particular time, seemed to me to be entrusted with the secret of Truth and Beauty, things half-felt by me, half-incomprehensible, the full understanding of which was the vague but permanent object of my thoughts.

Next to this central belief, which, while I was reading, would be constantly a motion from my inner self to the outer world, towards the discovery of Truth, came the emotions aroused in me by the action in which I would be taking part, for these afternoons were crammed with more dramatic and sensational events than occur, often, in a whole lifetime. These were the events which took place in the book I was reading. It is true that the people concerned in them were not what Françoise would have called 'real people.' But none of the feelings which the joys or misfortunes of a 'real' person awaken in us can be awakened except through a mental picture of those joys or misfortunes; and the ingenuity of the first novelist lay in his understanding that, as the picture was the one essential element in the complicated structure of our emotions, so that simplification of it which consisted in the suppression, pure and simple, of 'real' people would be a decided improvement. A 'real' person, profoundly as we may sympathise with him, is in a great measure perceptible only through our senses, that is to say, he remains opaque, offers a dead weight which our sensibilities have not the strength to lift. If some misfortune comes to him, it is only in one small

section of the complete idea we have of him that we are capable of feeling any emotion; indeed it is only in one small section of the complete idea he has of himself that he is capable of feeling any emotion either. The novelist's happy discovery was to think of substituting for those opaque sections, impenetrable by the human spirit, their equivalent in immaterial sections, things, that is, which the spirit can assimilate to itself. After which it matters not that the actions, the feelings of this new order of creatures appear to us in the guise of truth, since we have made them our own, since it is in ourselves that they are happening, that they are holding in thrall, while we turn over, feverishly, the pages of the book, our quickened breath and staring eyes. And once the novelist has brought us to that state, in which, as in all purely mental states, every emotion is multiplied ten-fold, into which his book comes to disturb us as might a dream, but a dream more lucid, and of a more lasting impression than those which come to us in sleep; why, then, for the space of an hour he sets free within us all the joys and sorrows in the world, a few of which, only, we should have to spend years of our actual life in getting to know, and the keenest, the most intense of which would never have been revealed to us because the slow course of their development stops our perception of them. It is the same in life; the heart changes, and that is our worst misfortune; but we learn of it only from reading or by imagination; for in reality its alteration, like that of certain natural phenomena, is so gradual that, even if we are able to distinguish, successively, each of its different states, we are still spared the actual sensation of change.

Next to, but distinctly less intimate a part of myself than this human element, would come the view, more or less projected before my eyes, of the country in which the action of the story was taking place, which made a far stronger impression on my mind than the other, the actual landscape which would meet my eyes when I raised them from my book. In this way, for two consecutive summers I used to sit in the heat of our Combray garden, sick with a longing inspired by the book I was then reading for a land of mountains and rivers, where I could see an endless vista of sawmills, where beneath the limpid currents fragments of wood lay mouldering in beds of watercress; and nearby, rambling and clustering along low walls, purple flowers and red. And since there was always lurking in my mind the dream of a woman who would enrich me with her love, that dream in those two summers used to be quickened with the freshness and coolness of running water; and whoever she might be, the woman whose image I called to mind, purple flowers and red would at once spring up on either side of her like complementary colours.

This was not only because an image of which we dream remains for ever distinguished, is adorned and enriched by the association of colours not its own

which may happen to surround it in our mental picture; for the scenes in the books I read were to me not merely scenery more vividly portrayed by my imagination than any which Combray could spread before my eyes but otherwise of the same kind. Because of the selection that the author had made of them, because of the spirit of faith in which my mind would exceed and anticipate his printed word, as it might be interpreting a revelation, these scenes used to give me the impression—one which I hardly ever derived from any place in which I might happen to be, and never from our garden, that undistinguished product of the strictly conventional fantasy of the gardener whom my grandmother so despised—of their being actually part of Nature herself, and worthy to be studied and explored.

Had my parents allowed me, when I read a book, to pay a visit to the country it described, I should have felt that I was making an enormous advance towards the ultimate conquest of truth. For even if we have the sensation of being always enveloped in, surrounded by our own soul, still it does not seem a fixed and immovable prison; rather do we seem to be borne away with it, and perpetually struggling to pass beyond it, to break out into the world, with a perpetual discouragement as we hear endlessly, all around us, that unvarying sound which is no echo from without, but the resonance of a vibration from within. We try to discover in things, endeared to us on that account, the spiritual glamour which we ourselves have cast upon them; we are disillusioned, and learn that they are in themselves barren and devoid of the charm which they owed, in our minds, to the association of certain ideas; sometimes we mobilise all our spiritual forces in a glittering array so as to influence and subjugate other human beings who, as we very well know, are situated outside ourselves, where we can never reach them. And so, if I always imagined the woman I loved as in a setting of whatever places I most longed, at the time, to visit; if in my secret longings it was she who attracted me to them, who opened to me the gate of an unknown world, that was not by the mere hazard of a simple association of thoughts; no, it was because my dreams of travel and of love were only moments—which I isolate artificially to-day as though I were cutting sections, at different heights, in a jet of water, rainbow-flashing but seemingly without flow or motion—were only drops in a single, undeviating, irresistible outrush of all the forces of my life.

And then, as I continue to trace the outward course of these impressions from their close-packed intimate source in my consciousness, and before I come to the horizon of reality which envelops them, I discover pleasures of another kind, those of being comfortably seated, of tasting the good scent on the air, of not being disturbed by any visitor; and, when an hour chimed from the steeple of Saint-Hilaire, of watching what was already spent of the afternoon fall drop by drop until I heard the last stroke which

enabled me to add up the total sum, after which the silence that followed seemed to herald the beginning, in the blue sky above me, of that long part of the day still allowed me for reading, until the good dinner which Françoise was even now preparing should come to strengthen and refresh me after the strenuous pursuit of its hero through the pages of my book. And, as each hour struck, it would seem to me that a few seconds only had passed since the hour before; the latest would inscribe itself, close to its predecessor, on the sky's surface, and I would be unable to believe that sixty minutes could be squeezed into the tiny arc of blue which was comprised between their two golden figures. Sometimes it would even happen that this precocious hour would sound two strokes more than the last; there must then have been an hour which I had not heard strike; something which had taken place had not taken place for me; the fascination of my book, a magic as potent as the deepest slumber, had stopped my enchanted ears and had obliterated the sound of that golden bell from the azure surface of the enveloping silence. Sweet Sunday afternoons beneath the chestnut-tree in our Combray garden, from which I was careful to eliminate every commonplace incident of my actual life, replacing them by a career of strange adventures and ambitions in a land watered by living streams, you still recall those adventures and ambitions to my mind when I think of you, and you embody and preserve them by virtue of having little by little drawn round and enclosed them (while I went on with my book and the heat of the day declined) in the gradual crystallisation, slowly altering in form and dappled with a pattern of chestnut-leaves, of your silent, sonorous, fragrant, limpid hours.

Sometimes I would be torn from my book, in the middle of the afternoon, by the gardener's daughter, who came running like a mad thing, overturning an orange-tree in its tub, cutting a finger, breaking a tooth, and screaming out "They're coming, they're coming!" so that Françoise and I should run too and not miss anything of the show. That was on days when the cavalry stationed in Combray went out for some military exercise, going as a rule by the Rue Sainte-Hildegarde. While our servants, sitting in a row on their chairs outside the garden railings, stared at the people of Combray taking their Sunday walks and were stared at in return, the gardener's daughter, through the gap which there was between two houses far away in the Avenue de la Gare, would have spied the glitter of helmets. The servants then hurried in with their chairs, for when the troopers filed through the Rue Sainte-Hildegarde they filled it from side to side, and their jostling horses scraped against the walls of the houses, covering and drowning the pavements like banks which present too narrow a channel to a river in flood.

"Poor children," Françoise would exclaim, in tears almost before she had reached the railings; "poor boys, to be mown down like grass in a meadow. It's just shocking to think of," she would go on, laying a hand over her heart, where presumably she had felt the shock.

"A fine sight, isn't it, Mme. Françoise, all these young fellows not caring two straws for their lives?" the gardener would ask, just to 'draw' her. And he would not have spoken in vain.

"Not caring for their lives, is it? Why, what in the world is there that we should care for if it's not our lives, the only gift the Lord never offers us a second time? Oh dear, oh dear; you're right all the same; it's quite true, they don't care! I can remember them in '70; in those wretched wars they've no fear of death left in them; they're nothing more nor less than madmen; and then they aren't worth the price of a rope to hang them with; they're not men any more, they're lions." For by her way of thinking, to compare a man with a lion, which she used to pronounce 'lie-on,' was not at all complimentary to the man.

The Rue Sainte-Hildegarde turned too sharply for us to be able to see people approaching at any distance, and it was only through the gap between those two houses in the Avenue de la Gare that we could still make out fresh helmets racing along towards us, and flashing in the sunlight. The gardener wanted to know whether there were still many to come, and he was thirsty besides, with the sun beating down upon his head. So then, suddenly, his daughter would leap out, as though from a beleaguered city, would make a sortie, turn the street corner, and, having risked her life a hundred times over, reappear and bring us, with a jug of liquorice-water, the news that there were still at least a thousand of them, pouring along without a break from the direction of Thiberzy and Méséglise. Françoise and the gardener, having 'made up' their difference, would discuss the line to be followed in case of war.

"Don't you see, Françoise," he would say. "Revolution would be better, because then no one would need to join in unless he liked."

"Oh, yes, I can see that, certainly; it's more straightforward."

The gardener believed that, as soon as war was declared, they would stop all the railways.

"Yes, to be sure; so that we sha'n't get away," said Françoise.

And the gardener would assent, with "Ay, they're the cunning ones," for he would not allow that war was anything but a kind of trick which the state attempted to play on

the people, or that there was a man in the world who would not run away from it if he had the chance to do so.

But Françoise would hasten back to my aunt, and I would return to my book, and the servants would take their places again outside the gate to watch the dust settle on the pavement, and the excitement caused by the passage of the soldiers subside. Long after order had been restored, an abnormal tide of humanity would continue to darken the streets of Combray. And in front of every house, even of those where it was not, as a rule, 'done,' the servants, and sometimes even the masters would sit and stare, festooning their doorsteps with a dark, irregular fringe, like the border of shells and sea-weed which a stronger tide than usual leaves on the beach, as though trimming it with embroidered crape, when the sea itself has retreated.

Except on such days as these, however, I would as a rule be left to read in peace. But the interruption which a visit from Swann once made, and the commentary which he then supplied to the course of my reading, which had brought me to the work of an author quite new to me, called Bergotte, had this definite result that for a long time afterwards it was not against a wall gay with spikes of purple blossom, but on a wholly different background, the porch of a gothic cathedral, that I would see outlined the figure of one of the women of whom I dreamed.

I had heard Bergotte spoken of, for the first time, by a friend older than myself, for whom I had a strong admiration, a precious youth of the name of Bloch. Hearing me confess my love of the *Nuit d'Octobre*, he had burst out in a bray of laughter, like a bugle-call, and told me, by way of warning: "You must conquer your vile taste for A. de Musset, Esquire. He is a bad egg, one of the very worst, a pretty detestable specimen. I am bound to admit, natheless," he added graciously, "that he, and even the man Racine, did, each of them, once in his life, compose a line which is not only fairly rhythmical, but has also what is in my eyes the supreme merit of meaning absolutely nothing. One is

La blanche Oloossone et la blanche Camire,

and the other

La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaë."

They were submitted to my judgment, as evidence for the defence of the two runagates, in an article by my very dear master Father Lecomte, who is found pleasing in the sight of the immortal gods. By which token, here is a book which I have not the time, just now, to read, a book recommended, it would seem, by that colossal fellow. He regards, or so they tell me, its author, one Bergotte, Esquire, as a subtle scribe,

more subtle, indeed, than any beast of the field; and, albeit he exhibits on occasion a critical pacifism, a tenderness in suffering fools, for which it is impossible to account, and hard to make allowance, still his word has weight with me as it were the Delphic Oracle. Read you then this lyrical prose, and, if the Titanic master-builder of rhythm who composed *Bhagavat* and the *Lévrier de Magnus* speaks not falsely, then, by Apollo, you may taste, even you, my master, the ambrosial joys of Olympus." It was in an ostensible vein of sarcasm that he had asked me to call him, and that he himself called me, "my master." But, as a matter of fact, we each derived a certain amount of satisfaction from the mannerism, being still at the age in which one believes that one gives a thing real existence by giving it a name.

Unfortunately I was not able to set at rest, by further talks with Bloch, in which I might have insisted upon an explanation, the doubts he had engendered in me when he told me that fine lines of poetry (from which I, if you please, expected nothing less than the revelation of truth itself) were all the finer if they meant absolutely nothing. For, as it happened, Bloch was not invited to the house again. At first, he had been well received there. It is true that my grandfather made out that, whenever I formed a strong attachment to any one of my friends and brought him home with me, that friend was invariably a Jew; to which he would not have objected on principle—indeed his own friend Swann was of Jewish extraction—had he not found that the Jews whom I chose as friends were not usually of the best type. And so I was hardly ever able to bring a new friend home without my grandfather's humming the "O, God of our fathers" from *La Juive*, or else "Israel, break thy chain," singing the tune alone, of course, to an "um-ti-tum-ti-tum, tra-la"; but I used to be afraid of my friend's recognising the sound, and so being able to reconstruct the words.

Before seeing them, merely on hearing their names, about which, as often as not, there was nothing particularly Hebraic, he would divine not only the Jewish origin of such of my friends as might indeed be of the chosen people, but even some dark secret which was hidden in their family.

"And what do they call your friend who is coming this evening?"

"Dumont, grandpapa."

"Dumont! Oh, I'm frightened of Dumont."

And he would sing:

Archers, be on your guard!

Watch without rest, without sound,

and then, after a few adroit questions on points of detail, he would call out "On guard! on guard," or, if it were the victim himself who had already arrived, and had been obliged, unconsciously, by my grandfather's subtle examination, to admit his origin, then my grandfather, to shew us that he had no longer any doubts, would merely look at us, humming almost inaudibly the air of

What! do you hither guide the feet

Of this timid Israelite?

or of

Sweet vale of Hebron, dear paternal fields,

or, perhaps, of

Yes, I am of the chosen race.

These little eccentricities on my grandfather's part implied no ill-will whatsoever towards my friends. But Bloch had displeased my family for other reasons. He had begun by annoying my father, who, seeing him come in with wet clothes, had asked him with keen interest:

"Why, M. Bloch, is there a change in the weather; has it been raining? I can't understand it; the barometer has been 'set fair.'"

Which drew from Bloch nothing more instructive than "Sir, I am absolutely incapable of telling you whether it has rained. I live so resolutely apart from physical contingencies that my senses no longer trouble to inform me of them."

"My poor boy," said my father after Bloch had gone, "your friend is out of his mind. Why, he couldn't even tell me what the weather was like. As if there could be anything more interesting! He is an imbecile."

Next, Bloch had displeased my grandmother because, after luncheon, when she complained of not feeling very well, he had stifled a sob and wiped the tears from his eyes.

"You cannot imagine that he is sincere," she observed to me. "Why he doesn't know me. Unless he's mad, of course."

And finally he had upset the whole household when he arrived an hour and a half late for luncheon and covered with mud from head to foot, and made not the least apology, saying merely: "I never allow myself to be influenced in the smallest degree either by atmospheric disturbances or by the arbitrary divisions of what is known as

Time. I would willingly reintroduce to society the opium pipe of China or the Malayan kriss, but I am wholly and entirely without instruction in those infinitely more pernicious (besides being quite bleakly bourgeois) implements, the umbrella and the watch."

In spite of all this he would still have been received at Combray. He was, of course, hardly the friend my parents would have chosen for me; they had, in the end, decided that the tears which he had shed on hearing of my grandmother's illness were genuine enough; but they knew, either instinctively or from their own experience, that our early impulsive emotions have but little influence over our later actions and the conduct of our lives; and that regard for moral obligations, loyalty to our friends, patience in finishing our work, obedience to a rule of life, have a surer foundation in habits solidly formed and blindly followed than in these momentary transports, ardent but sterile. They would have preferred to Bloch, as companions for myself, boys who would have given me no more than it is proper, by all the laws of middle-class morality, for boys to give one another, who would not unexpectedly send me a basket of fruit because they happened, that morning, to have thought of me with affection, but who, since they were incapable of inclining in my favour, by any single impulse of their imagination and emotions, the exact balance of the duties and claims of friendship, were as incapable of loading the scales to my prejudice. Even the injuries we do them will not easily divert from the path of their duty towards us those conventional natures of which my great-aunt furnished a type: who, after quarrelling for years with a niece, to whom she never spoke again, yet made no change in the will in which she had left that niece the whole of her fortune, because she was her next-of-kin, and it was the 'proper thing' to do.

But I was fond of Bloch; my parents wished me to be happy; and the insoluble problems which I set myself on such texts as the 'absolutely meaningless' beauty of *La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaë* tired me more and made me more unwell than I should have been after further talks with him, unwholesome as those talks might seem to my mother's mind. And he would still have been received at Combray but for one thing. That same night, after dinner, having informed me (a piece of news which had a great influence on my later life, making it happier at one time and then more unhappy) that no woman ever thought of anything but love, and that there was not one of them whose resistance a man could not overcome, he had gone on to assure me that he had heard it said on unimpeachable authority that my great-aunt herself had led a 'gay' life in her younger days, and had been notoriously 'kept.' I could not refrain from passing on so important a piece of information to my parents; the next time

Bloch called he was not admitted, and afterwards, when I met him in the street, he greeted me with extreme coldness.

But in the matter of Bergotte he had spoken truly.

For the first few days, like a tune which will be running in one's head and maddening one soon enough, but of which one has not for the moment 'got hold,' the things I was to love so passionately in Bergotte's style had not yet caught my eye. I could not, it is true, lay down the novel of his which I was reading, but I fancied that I was interested in the story alone, as in the first dawn of love, when we go every day to meet a woman at some party or entertainment by the charm of which we imagine it is that we are attracted. Then I observed the rare, almost archaic phrases which he liked to employ at certain points, where a hidden flow of harmony, a prelude contained and concealed in the work itself would animate and elevate his style; and it was at such points as these, too, that he would begin to speak of the "vain dream of life," of the "inexhaustible torrent of fair forms," of the "sterile, splendid torture of understanding and loving," of the "moving effigies which ennoble for all time the charming and venerable fronts of our cathedrals"; that he would express a whole system of philosophy, new to me, by the use of marvellous imagery, to the inspiration of which I would naturally have ascribed that sound of harping which began to chime and echo in my ears, an accompaniment to which that imagery added something ethereal and sublime. One of these passages of Bergotte, the third or fourth which I had detached from the rest, filled me with a joy to which the meagre joy I had tasted in the first passage bore no comparison, a joy which I felt myself to have experienced in some innermost chamber of my soul, deep, undivided, vast, from which all obstructions and partitions seemed to have been swept away. For what had happened was that, while I recognised in this passage the same taste for uncommon phrases, the same bursts of music, the same idealist philosophy which had been present in the earlier passages without my having taken them into account as the source of my pleasure, I now no longer had the impression of being confronted by a particular passage in one of Bergotte's works, which traced a purely bi-dimensional figure in outline upon the surface of my mind, but rather of the 'ideal passage' of Bergotte, common to every one of his books, and to which all the earlier, similar passages, now becoming merged in it, had added a kind of density and volume, by which my own understanding seemed to be enlarged.

I was by no means Bergotte's sole admirer; he was the favourite writer also of a friend of my mother's, a highly literary lady; while Dr. du Boulbon had kept all his patients waiting until he finished Bergotte's latest volume; and it was from his consulting room, and from a house in a park near Combray that some of the first seeds were scattered

of that taste for Bergotte, a rare-growth in those days, but now so universally acclimatised that one finds it flowering everywhere throughout Europe and America, and even in the tiniest villages, rare still in its refinement, but in that alone. What my mother's friend, and, it would seem, what Dr. du Boulbon liked above all in the writings of Bergotte was just what I liked, the same flow of melody, the same old-fashioned phrases, and certain others, quite simple and familiar, but so placed by him, in such prominence, as to hint at a particular quality of taste on his part; and also, in the sad parts of his books, a sort of roughness, a tone that was almost harsh. And he himself, no doubt, realised that these were his principal attractions. For in his later books, if he had hit upon some great truth, or upon the name of an historic cathedral, he would break off his narrative, and in an invocation, an apostrophe, a lengthy prayer, would give a free outlet to that effluence which, in the earlier volumes, remained buried beneath the form of his prose, discernible only in a rippling of its surface, and perhaps even more delightful, more harmonious when it was thus veiled from the eye, when the reader could give no precise indication of where the murmur of the current began, or of where it died away. These passages in which he delighted were our favourites also. For my own part I knew all of them by heart. I felt even disappointed when he resumed the thread of his narrative. Whenever he spoke of something whose beauty had until then remained hidden from me, of pine-forests or of hailstorms, of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, of *Athalie*, or of *Phèdre*, by some piece of imagery he would make their beauty explode and drench me with its essence. And so, dimly realising that the universe contained innumerable elements which my feeble senses would be powerless to discern, did he not bring them within my reach, I wished that I might have his opinion, some metaphor of his, upon everything in the world, and especially upon such things as I might have an opportunity, some day, of seeing for myself; and among such things, more particularly still upon some of the historic buildings of France, upon certain views of the sea, because the emphasis with which, in his books, he referred to these shewed that he regarded them as rich in significance and beauty. But, alas, upon almost everything in the world his opinion was unknown to me. I had no doubt that it would differ entirely from my own, since his came down from an unknown sphere towards which I was striving to raise myself; convinced that my thoughts would have seemed pure foolishness to that perfected spirit, I had so completely obliterated them all that, if I happened to find in one of his books something which had already occurred to my own mind, my heart would swell with gratitude and pride as though some deity had, in his infinite bounty, restored it to me, had pronounced it to be beautiful and right. It happened now and then that a page of Bergotte would express precisely those ideas which I used often at night, when I was unable to sleep, to write to my grandmother and mother, and so concisely and well that his page had

the appearance of a collection of mottoes for me to set at the head of my letters. And so too, in later years, when I began to compose a book of my own, and the quality of some of my sentences seemed so inadequate that I could not make up my mind to go on with the undertaking, I would find the equivalent of my sentences in Bergotte's. But it was only then, when I read them in his pages, that I could enjoy them; when it was I myself who composed them, in my anxiety that they should exactly reproduce what I seemed to have detected in my mind, and in my fear of their not turning out 'true to life,' I had no time to ask myself whether what I was writing would be pleasant to read! But indeed there was no kind of language, no kind of ideas which I really liked, except these. My feverish and unsatisfactory attempts were themselves a token of my love, a love which brought me no pleasure, but was, for all that, intense and deep. And so, when I came suddenly upon similar phrases in the writings of another, that is to say stripped of their familiar accompaniment of scruples and repressions and self-tormentings, I was free to indulge to the full my own appetite for such things, just as a cook who, once in a while, has no dinner to prepare for other people, can then find time to gormandise himself. And so, when I had found, one day, in a book by Bergotte, some joke about an old family servant, to which his solemn and magnificent style added a great deal of irony, but which was in principle what I had often said to my grandmother about Françoise, and when, another time, I had discovered that he thought not unworthy of reflection in one of those mirrors of absolute Truth which were his writings, a remark similar to one which I had had occasion to make on our friend M. Legrandin (and, moreover, my remarks on Françoise and M. Legrandin were among those which I would most resolutely have sacrificed for Bergotte's sake, in the belief that he would find them quite without interest); then it was suddenly revealed to me that my own humble existence and the Realms of Truth were less widely separated than I had supposed, that at certain points they were actually in contact; and in my new-found confidence and joy I wept upon his printed page, as in the arms of a long-lost father.

From his books I had formed an impression of Bergotte as a frail and disappointed old man, who had lost his children, and had never found any consolation. And so I would read, or rather sing his sentences in my brain, with rather more *dolce*, rather more *lento* than he himself had, perhaps, intended, and his simplest phrase would strike my ears with something peculiarly gentle and loving in its intonation. More than anything else in the world I cherished his philosophy, and had pledged myself to it in lifelong devotion. It made me impatient to reach the age when I should be eligible to attend the class at school called 'Philosophy.' I did not wish to learn or do anything else there, but simply to exist and be guided entirely by the mind of Bergotte, and, if I

had been told then that the metaphysicians whom I was actually to follow there resembled him in nothing, I should have been struck down by the despair a young lover feels who has sworn lifelong fidelity, when a friend speaks to him of the other mistresses he will have in time to come.

One Sunday, while I was reading in the garden, I was interrupted by Swann, who had come to call upon my parents.

"What are you reading? May I look? Why, it's Bergotte! Who has been telling you about him?"

I replied that Bloch was responsible.

"Oh, yes, that boy I saw here once, who looks so like the Bellini portrait of Mahomet II. It's an astonishing likeness; he has the same arched eyebrows and hooked nose and prominent cheekbones. When his beard comes he'll be Mahomet himself. Anyhow he has good taste, for Bergotte is a charming creature." And seeing how much I seemed to admire Bergotte, Swann, who never spoke at all about the people he knew, made an exception in my favour and said: "I know him well; if you would like him to write a few words on the title-page of your book I could ask him for you."

I dared not accept such an offer, but bombarded Swann with questions about his friend. "Can you tell me, please, who is his favourite actor?"

"Actor? No, I can't say. But I do know this: there's not a man on the stage whom he thinks equal to Berma; he puts her above everyone. Have you seen her?"

"No, sir, my parents do not allow me to go to the theatre."

"That is a pity. You should insist. Berma in *Phèdre*, in the *Cid*; well, she's only an actress, if you like, but you know that I don't believe very much in the 'hierarchy' of the arts." As he spoke I noticed, what had often struck me before in his conversations with my grandmother's sisters, that whenever he spoke of serious matters, whenever he used an expression which seemed to imply a definite opinion upon some important subject, he would take care to isolate, to sterilise it by using a special intonation, mechanical and ironic, as though he had put the phrase or word between inverted commas, and was anxious to disclaim any personal responsibility for it; as who should say "the 'hierarchy,' don't you know, as silly people call it." But then, if it was so absurd, why did he say the 'hierarchy'? A moment later he went on: "Her acting will give you as noble an inspiration as any masterpiece of art in the world, as—oh, I don't know—" and he began to laugh, "shall we say the Queens of Chartres?" Until then I had supposed that his horror of having to give a serious opinion was something

Parisian and refined, in contrast to the provincial dogmatism of my grandmother's sisters; and I had imagined also that it was characteristic of the mental attitude towards life of the circle in which Swann moved, where, by a natural reaction from the 'lyrical' enthusiasms of earlier generations, an excessive importance was given to small and precise facts, formerly regarded as vulgar, and anything in the nature of 'phrase-making' was banned. But now I found myself slightly shocked by this attitude which Swann invariably adopted when face to face with generalities. He appeared unwilling to risk even having an opinion, and to be at his ease only when he could furnish, with meticulous accuracy, some precise but unimportant detail. But in so doing he did not take into account that even here he was giving an opinion, holding a brief (as they say) for something, that the accuracy of his details had an importance of its own. I thought again of the dinner that night, when I had been so unhappy because Mamma would not be coming up to my room, and when he had dismissed the balls given by the Princesse de Léon as being of no importance. And yet it was to just that sort of amusement that he was devoting his life. For what other kind of existence did he reserve the duties of saying in all seriousness what he thought about things, of formulating judgments which he would not put between inverted commas; and when would he cease to give himself up to occupations of which at the same time he made out that they were absurd? I noticed, too, in the manner in which Swann spoke to me of Bergotte, something which, to do him justice, was not peculiar to himself, but was shared by all that writer's admirers at that time, at least by my mother's friend and by Dr. du Boulbon. Like Swann, they would say of Bergotte: "He has a charming mind, so individual, he has a way of his own of saying things, which is a little far-fetched, but so pleasant. You never need to look for his name on the title-page, you can tell his work at once." But none of them had yet gone so far as to say "He is a great writer, he has great talent." They did not even credit him with talent at all. They did not speak, because they were not aware of it. We are very slow in recognising in the peculiar physiognomy of a new writer the type which is labelled 'great talent' in our museum of general ideas. Simply because that physiognomy is new and strange, we can find in it no resemblance to what we are accustomed to call talent. We say rather originality, charm, delicacy, strength; and then one day we add up the sum of these, and find that it amounts simply to talent.

"Are there any books in which Bergotte has written about Berma?" I asked M. Swann.

"I think he has, in that little essay on Racine, but it must be out of print. Still, there has perhaps been a second impression. I will find out. Anyhow, I can ask Bergotte himself all that you want to know next time he comes to dine with us. He never misses a week,

from one year's end to another. He is my daughter's greatest friend. They go about together, and look at old towns and cathedrals and castles."

As I was still completely ignorant of the different grades in the social hierarchy, the fact that my father found it impossible for us to see anything of Swann's wife and daughter had, for a long time, had the contrary effect of making me imagine them as separated from us by an enormous gulf, which greatly enhanced their dignity and importance in my eyes. I was sorry that my mother did not dye her hair and redden her lips, as I had heard our neighbour, Mme. Sazerat, say that Mme. Swann did, to gratify not her husband but M. de Charlus; and I felt that, to her, we must be an object of scorn, which distressed me particularly on account of the daughter, such a pretty little girl, as I had heard, and one of whom I used often to dream, always imagining her with the same features and appearance, which I bestowed upon her quite arbitrarily, but with a charming effect. But from this afternoon, when I had learned that Mlle. Swann was a creature living in such rare and fortunate circumstances, bathed, as in her natural element, in such a sea of privilege that, if she should ask her parents whether anyone were coming to dinner, she would be answered in those two syllables, radiant with celestial light, would hear the name of that golden guest who was to her no more than an old friend of her family, Bergotte; that for her the intimate conversation at table, corresponding to what my great-aunt's conversation was for me, would be the words of Bergotte upon all those subjects which he had not been able to take up in his writings, and on which I would fain have heard him utter oracles; and that, above all, when she went to visit other towns, he would be walking by her side, unrecognised and glorious, like the gods who came down, of old, from heaven to dwell among mortal men: then I realised both the rare worth of a creature such as Mlle. Swann, and, at the same time, how coarse and ignorant I should appear to her; and I felt so keenly how pleasant and yet how impossible it would be for me to become her friend that I was filled at once with longing and with despair. And usually, from this time forth, when I thought of her, I would see her standing before the porch of a cathedral, explaining to me what each of the statues meant, and, with a smile which was my highest commendation, presenting me, as her friend, to Bergotte. And invariably the charm of all the fancies which the thought of cathedrals used to inspire in me, the charm of the hills and valleys of the Ile-de-France and of the plains of Normandy, would radiate brightness and beauty over the picture I had formed in my mind of Mlle. Swann; nothing more remained but to know and to love her. Once we believe that a fellow-creature has a share in some unknown existence to which that creature's love for ourselves can win us admission, that is, of all the preliminary conditions which Love exacts, the one to which he attaches most importance, the one which makes

him generous or indifferent as to the rest. Even those women who pretend that they judge a man by his exterior only, see in that exterior an emanation from some special way of life. And that is why they fall in love with a soldier or a fireman, whose uniform makes them less particular about his face; they kiss and believe that beneath the crushing breastplate there beats a heart different from the rest, more gallant, more adventurous, more tender; and so it is that a young king or a crown prince may travel in foreign countries and make the most gratifying conquests, and yet lack entirely that regular and classic profile which would be indispensable, I dare say, in an outside-broker.

While I was reading in the garden, a thing my great-aunt would never have understood my doing save on a Sunday, that being the day on which it was unlawful to indulge in any serious occupation, and on which she herself would lay aside her sewing (on a week-day she would have said, "How you can go on amusing yourself with a book; it isn't Sunday, you know!" putting into the word 'amusing' an implication of childishness and waste of time), my aunt Léonie would be gossiping with Françoise until it was time for Eulalie to arrive. She would tell her that she had just seen Mme. Goupil go by "without an umbrella, in the silk dress she had made for her the other day at Châteaudun. If she has far to go before vespers, she may get it properly soaked."

"Very likely" (which meant also "very likely not") was the answer, for Françoise did not wish definitely to exclude the possibility of a happier alternative.

"There, now," went on my aunt, beating her brow, "that reminds me that I never heard if she got to church this morning before the Elevation. I must remember to ask Eulalie... Françoise, just look at that black cloud behind the steeple, and how poor the light is on the slates, you may be certain it will rain before the day is out. It couldn't possibly keep on like this, it's been too hot. And the sooner the better, for until the storm breaks my Vichy water won't 'go down,'" she concluded, since, in her mind, the desire to accelerate the digestion of her Vichy water was of infinitely greater importance than her fear of seeing Mme. Goupil's new dress ruined.

"Very likely."

"And you know that when it rains in the Square there's none too much shelter." Suddenly my aunt turned pale. "What, three o'clock!" she exclaimed. "But vespers will have begun already, and I've forgotten my pepsin! Now I know why that Vichy water has been lying on my stomach." And falling precipitately upon a prayer-book bound in purple velvet, with gilt clasps, out of which in her haste she let fall a shower of the little pictures, each in a lace fringe of yellowish paper, which she used to mark the places of the greater feasts of the church, my aunt, while she swallowed her drops,

began at full speed to mutter the words of the sacred text, its meaning being slightly clouded in her brain by the uncertainty whether the pepsin, when taken so long after the Vichy, would still be able to overtake it and to 'send it down.' "Three o'clock! It's unbelievable how time flies."

A little tap at the window, as though some missile had struck it, followed by a plentiful, falling sound, as light, though, as if a shower of sand were being sprinkled from a window overhead; then the fall spread, took on an order, a rhythm, became liquid, loud, drumming, musical, innumerable, universal. It was the rain.

"There, Françoise, what did I tell you? How it's coming down! But I think I heard the bell at the garden gate: go along and see who can be outside in this weather."

Françoise went and returned. "It's Mme. Amédée" (my grandmother). "She said she was going for a walk. It's raining hard, all the same."

"I'm not at all surprised," said my aunt, looking up towards the sky. "I've always said that she was not in the least like other people. Well, I'm glad it's she and not myself who's outside in all this."

"Mme. Amédée is always the exact opposite of the rest," said Françoise, not unkindly, refraining until she should be alone with the other servants from stating her belief that my grandmother was 'a bit off her head.'

"There's Benediction over! Eulalie will never come now," sighed my aunt. "It will be the weather that's frightened her away."

"But it's not five o'clock yet, Mme. Octave, it's only half-past four."

"Only half-past four! And here am I, obliged to draw back the small curtains, just to get a tiny streak of daylight. At half-past four! Only a week before the Rogation-days. Ah, my poor Françoise, the dear Lord must be sorely vexed with us. The world is going too far in these days. As my poor Octave used to say, we have forgotten God too often, and He is taking vengeance upon us."

A bright flush animated my aunt's cheeks; it was Eulalie. As ill luck would have it, scarcely had she been admitted to the presence when Françoise reappeared and, with a smile which was meant to indicate her full participation in the pleasure which, she had no doubt, her tidings would give my aunt, articulating each syllable so as to shew that, in spite of her having to translate them into indirect speech, she was repeating, as a good servant should, the very words which the new visitor had condescended to use, said: "His reverence the Curé would be delighted, enchanted, if

Mme. Octave is not resting just now, and could see him. His reverence does not wish to disturb Mme. Octave. His reverence is downstairs; I told him to go into the parlour."

Had the truth been known, the Curé's visits gave my aunt no such ecstatic pleasure as Françoise supposed, and the air of jubilation with which she felt bound to illuminate her face whenever she had to announce his arrival, did not altogether correspond to what was felt by her invalid. The Curé (an excellent man, with whom I am sorry now that I did not converse more often, for, even if he cared nothing for the arts, he knew a great many etymologies), being in the habit of shewing distinguished visitors over his church (he had even planned to compile a history of the Parish of Combray), used to weary her with his endless explanations, which, incidentally, never varied in the least degree. But when his visit synchronized exactly with Eulalie's it became frankly distasteful to my aunt. She would have preferred to make the most of Eulalie, and not to have had the whole of her circle about her at one time. But she dared not send the Curé away, and had to content herself with making a sign to Eulalie not to leave when he did, so that she might have her to herself for a little after he had gone.

"What is this I have been hearing, Father, that a painter has set up his easel in your church, and is copying one of the windows? Old as I am, I can safely say that I have never even heard of such a thing in all my life! What is the world coming to next, I wonder! And the ugliest thing in the whole church, too."

"I will not go so far as to say that it is quite the ugliest, for, although there are certain things in Saint-Hilaire which are well worth a visit, there are others that are very old now, in my poor basilica, the only one in all the diocese that has never even been restored. The Lord knows, our porch is dirty and out of date; still, it is of a majestic character; take, for instance, the Esther tapestries, though personally I would not give a brass farthing for the pair of them, but experts put them next after the ones at Sens. I can quite see, too, that apart from certain details which are—well, a trifle realistic, they shew features which testify to a genuine power of observation. But don't talk to me about the windows. Is it common sense, I ask you, to leave up windows which shut out all the daylight, and even confuse the eyes by throwing patches of colour, to which I should be hard put to it to give a name, on a floor in which there are not two slabs on the same level? And yet they refuse to renew the floor for me because, if you please, those are the tombstones of the Abbots of Combray and the Lords of Guermantes, the old Counts, you know, of Brabant, direct ancestors of the present Duc de Guermantes, and of his Duchesse also, since she was a lady of the Guermantes family, and married her cousin." (My grandmother, whose steady refusal to take any interest in 'persons' had ended in her confusing all their names and titles, whenever anyone mentioned the Duchesse de Guermantes used to make out that she

must be related to Mme. de Villeparisis. The whole family would then burst out laughing; and she would attempt to justify herself by harking back to some invitation to a christening or funeral: "I feel sure that there was a Guermantes in it somewhere." And for once I would side with the others, and against her, refusing to admit that there could be any connection between her school-friend and the descendant of Geneviève de Brabant.)

"Look at Roussainville," the Curé went on. "It is nothing more nowadays than a parish of farmers, though in olden times the place must have had a considerable importance from its trade in felt hats and clocks. (I am not certain, by the way, of the etymology of Roussainville. I should dearly like to think that the name was originally Rouville, from *Radulfi villa*, analogous, don't you see, to Châteauroux, *Castrum Radulfi*, but we will talk about that some other time.) Very well; the church there has superb windows, almost all quite modern, including that most imposing 'Entry of Louis-Philippe into Combray' which would be more in keeping, surely, at Combray itself, and which is every bit as good, I understand, as the famous windows at Chartres. Only yesterday I met Dr. Percepied's brother, who goes in for these things, and he told me that he looked upon it as a most beautiful piece of work. But, as I said to this artist, who, by the way, seems to be a most civil fellow, and is a regular virtuoso, it appears, with his brush; what on earth, I said to him, do you find so extraordinary in this window, which is, if anything, a little dingier than the rest?"

"I am sure that if you were to ask his Lordship," said my aunt in a resigned tone, for she had begun to feel that she was going to be 'tired,' "he would never refuse you a new window."

"You may depend upon it, Mme. Octave," replied the Curé. "Why, it was just his Lordship himself who started the outcry about the window, by proving that it represented Gilbert the Bad, a Lord of Guermantes and a direct descendant of Geneviève de Brabant, who was a daughter of the House of Guermantes, receiving absolution from Saint Hilaire."

"But I don't see where Saint Hilaire comes in."

"Why yes, have you never noticed, in the corner of the window, a lady in a yellow robe? Very well, that is Saint Hilaire, who is also known, you will remember, in certain parts of the country as Saint Illiers, Saint Hèlier, and even, in the Jura, Saint Ylie. But these various corruptions of *Sanctus Hilarius* are by no means the most curious that have occurred in the names of the blessed Saints. Take, for example, my good Eulalie, the case of your own patron, *Sancta Eulalia*; do you know what she has become in

Burgundy? Saint Eloi, nothing more nor less! The lady has become a gentleman. Do you hear that, Eulalie, after you are dead they will make a man of you!"

"Father will always have his joke."

"Gilbert's brother, Charles the Stammerer, was a pious prince, but, having early in life lost his father, Pepin the Mad, who died as a result of his mental infirmity, he wielded the supreme power with all the arrogance of a man who has not been subjected to discipline in his youth, so much so that, whenever he saw a man in a town whose face he did not remember, he would massacre the whole place, to the last inhabitant. Gilbert, wishing to be avenged on Charles, caused the church at Combray to be burned down, the original church, that was, which Théodebert, when he and his court left the country residence he had near here, at Thiberzy (which is, of course, *Theodeberiacus*), to go out and fight the Burgundians, had promised to build over the tomb of Saint Hilaire if the Saint brought him victory. Nothing remains of it now but the crypt, into which Théodore has probably taken you, for Gilbert burned all the rest. Finally, he defeated the unlucky Charles with the aid of William" which the Curé pronounced "Will'am" "the Conqueror, which is why so many English still come to visit the place. But he does not appear to have managed to win the affection of the people of Combray, for they fell upon him as he was coming out from mass, and cut off his head. Théodore has a little book, that he lends people, which tells you the whole story.

"But what is unquestionably the most remarkable thing about our church is the view from the belfry, which is full of grandeur. Certainly in your case, since you are not very strong, I should never recommend you to climb our seven and ninety steps, just half the number they have in the famous cathedral at Milan. It is quite tiring enough for the most active person, especially as you have to go on your hands and knees, if you don't wish to crack your skull, and you collect all the cobwebs off the staircase upon your clothes. In any case you should be well wrapped up," he went on, without noticing my aunt's fury at the mere suggestion that she could ever, possibly, be capable of climbing into his belfry, "for there's a strong breeze there, once you get to the top. Some people even assure me that they have felt the chill of death up there. No matter, on Sundays there are always clubs and societies, who come, some of them, long distances to admire our beautiful panorama, and they always go home charmed. Wait now, next Sunday, if the weather holds, you will be sure to find a lot of people there, for Rogation-tide. You must admit, certainly, that the view from up there is like a fairy-tale, with what you might call vistas along the plain, which have quite a special charm of their own. On a clear day you can see as far as Verneuil. And then another thing; you can see at the same time places which you are in the habit of seeing one without the

other, as, for instance, the course of the Vivonne and the ditches at Saint-Assise-lès-Combray, which are separated, really, by a screen of tall trees; or, to take another example, there are all the canals at Jouy-le-Vicomte, which is *Gaudiacus vicecomitis*, as of course you know. Each time that I have been to Jouy I have seen a bit of a canal in one place, and then I have turned a corner and seen another, but when I saw the second I could no longer see the first. I tried in vain to imagine how they lay by one another; it was no good. But, from the top of Saint-Hilaire, it's quite another matter; the whole countryside is spread out before you like a map. Only, you cannot make out the water; you would say that there were great rifts in the town, slicing it up so neatly that it looks like a loaf of bread which still holds together after it has been cut up. To get it all quite perfect you would have to be in both places at once; up here on the top of Saint-Hilaire and down there at Jouy-le-Vicomte."

The Curé had so much exhausted my aunt that no sooner had he gone than she was obliged to send away Eulalie also.

"Here, my poor Eulalie," she said in a feeble voice, drawing a coin from a small purse which lay ready to her hand. "This is just something so that you shall not forget me in your prayers."

"Oh, but, Mme. Octave, I don't think I ought to; you know very well that I don't come here for that!" So Eulalie would answer, with the same hesitation and the same embarrassment, every Sunday, as though each temptation were the first, and with a look of displeasure which enlivened my aunt and never offended her, for if it so happened that Eulalie, when she took the money, looked a little less sulky than usual, my aunt would remark afterwards, "I cannot think what has come over Eulalie; I gave her just the trifle I always give, and she did not look at all pleased."

"I don't think she has very much to complain of, all the same," Françoise would sigh grimly, for she had a tendency to regard as petty cash all that my aunt might give her for herself or her children, and as treasure riotously squandered on a pampered and ungrateful darling the little coins slipped, Sunday by Sunday, into Eulalie's hand, but so discreetly passed that Françoise never managed to see them. It was not that she wanted to have for herself the money my aunt bestowed on Eulalie. She already enjoyed a sufficiency of all that my aunt possessed, in the knowledge that the wealth of the mistress automatically ennobled and glorified the maid in the eyes of the world; and that she herself was conspicuous and worthy to be praised throughout Combray, Jouy-le-Vicomte, and other cities of men, on account of my aunt's many farms, her frequent and prolonged visits from the Curé, and the astonishing number of bottles of Vichy water which she consumed. Françoise was avaricious only for my aunt; had she

had control over my aunt's fortune (which would have more than satisfied her highest ambition) she would have guarded it from the assaults of strangers with a maternal ferocity. She would, however, have seen no great harm in what my aunt, whom she knew to be incurably generous, allowed herself to give away, had she given only to those who were already rich. Perhaps she felt that such persons, not being actually in need of my aunt's presents, could not be suspected of simulating affection for her on that account. Besides, presents offered to persons of great wealth and position, such as Mme. Sazerat, M. Swann, M. Legrandin and Mme. Goupil, to persons of the 'same class' as my aunt, and who would naturally 'mix with her,' seemed to Françoise to be included among the ornamental customs of that strange and brilliant life led by rich people, who hunted and shot, gave balls and paid visits, a life which she would contemplate with an admiring smile. But it was by no means the same thing if, for this princely exchange of courtesies, my aunt substituted mere charity, if her beneficiaries were of the class which Françoise would label "people like myself," or "people no better than myself," people whom she despised even more if they did not address her always as "Mme. Françoise," just to shew that they considered themselves to be 'not as good.' And when she saw that, despite all her warnings, my aunt continued to do exactly as she pleased, and to fling money away with both hands (or so, at least, Françoise believed) on undeserving objects, she began to find that the presents she herself received from my aunt were very tiny compared to the imaginary riches squandered upon Eulalie, There was not, in the neighbourhood of Combray, a farm of such prosperity and importance that Françoise doubted Eulalie's ability to buy it, without thinking twice, out of the capital which her visits to my aunt had 'brought in.' It must be added that Eulalie had formed an exactly similar estimate of the vast and secret hoards of Françoise. So, every Sunday, after Eulalie had gone, Françoise would mercilessly prophesy her coming downfall. She hated Eulalie, but was at the same time afraid of her, and so felt bound, when Eulalie was there, to 'look pleasant.' But she would make up for that after the other's departure; never, it is true, alluding to her by name, but hinting at her in Sibylline oracles, or in utterances of a comprehensive character, like those of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher, but so worded that their special application could not escape my aunt. After peering out at the side of the curtain to see whether Eulalie had shut the front-door behind her; "Flatterers know how to make themselves welcome, and to gather up the crumbs; but have patience, have patience; our God is a jealous God, and one fine day He will be avenged upon them!" she would declaim, with the sidelong, insinuating glance of Joash, thinking of Athaliah alone when he says that the

....prosperity

Of wicked men runs like a torrent past,

And soon is spent.

But on this memorable afternoon, when the Curé had come as well, and by his interminable visit had drained my aunt's strength, Françoise followed Eulalie from the room, saying: "Mme. Octave, I will leave you to rest; you look utterly tired out."

And my aunt answered her not a word, breathing a sigh so faint that it seemed it must prove her last, and lying there with closed eyes, as though already dead. But hardly had Françoise arrived downstairs, when four peals of a bell, pulled with the utmost violence, reverberated through the house, and my aunt, sitting erect upon her bed, called out: "Has Eulalie gone yet? Would you believe it; I forgot to ask her whether Mme. Goupil arrived in church before the Elevation. Run after her, quick!"

But Françoise returned alone, having failed to overtake Eulalie. "It is most provoking," said my aunt, shaking her head. "The one important thing that I had to ask her."

In this way life went by for my aunt Léonie, always the same, in the gentle uniformity of what she called, with a pretence of deprecation but with a deep tenderness, her 'little jog-trot.' Respected by all and sundry, not merely in her own house, where every one of us, having learned the futility of recommending any healthier mode of life, had become gradually resigned to its observance, but in the village as well, where, three streets away, a tradesman who had to hammer nails into a packing-case would send first to Françoise to make sure that my aunt was not 'resting'—her 'little jog-trot' was, none the less, brutally disturbed on one occasion in this same year. Like a fruit hidden among its leaves, which has grown and ripened unobserved by man, until it falls of its own accord, there came upon us one night the kitchen-maid's confinement. Her pains were unbearable, and, as there was no midwife in Combray, Françoise had to set off before dawn to fetch one from Thiberzy. My aunt was unable to 'rest,' owing to the cries of the girl, and as Françoise, though the distance was nothing, was very late in returning, her services were greatly missed. And so, in the course of the morning, my mother said to me: "Run upstairs, and see if your aunt wants anything."

I went into the first of her two rooms, and through the open door of the other saw my aunt lying on her side, asleep. I could hear her breathing, in what was almost distinguishable as a snore. I was just going to slip away when something, probably the sound of my entry, interrupted her sleep, and made it 'change speed,' as they say of motorcars nowadays, for the music of her snore broke off for a second and began again on a lower note; then she awoke, and half turned her face, which I could see for the first time; a kind of horror was imprinted on it; plainly she had just escaped from

some terrifying dream. She could not see me from where she was lying, and I stood there not knowing whether I ought to go forward or to retire; but all at once she seemed to return to a sense of reality, and to grasp the falsehood of the visions that had terrified her; a smile of joy, a pious act of thanksgiving to God, Who is pleased to grant that life shall be less cruel than our dreams, feebly illumined her face, and, with the habit she had formed of speaking to herself, half-aloud, when she thought herself alone, she murmured: "The Lord be praised! We have nothing to disturb us here but the kitchen-maid's baby. And I've been dreaming that my poor Octave had come back to life, and was trying to make me take a walk every day!" She stretched out a hand towards her rosary, which was lying on the small table, but sleep was once again getting the mastery, and did not leave her the strength to reach it; she fell asleep, calm and contented, and I crept out of the room on tiptoe, without either her or anyone's else ever knowing, from that day to this, what I had seen and heard.

When I say that, apart from such rare happenings as this confinement, my aunt's 'little jog-trot' never underwent any variation, I do not include those variations which, repeated at regular intervals and in identical form, did no more, really, than print a sort of uniform pattern upon the greater uniformity of her life. So, for instance, every Saturday, as Françoise had to go in the afternoon to market at Roussainville-le-Pin, the whole household would have to have luncheon an hour earlier. And my aunt had so thoroughly acquired the habit of this weekly exception to her general habits, that she clung to it as much as to the rest. She was so well 'routined' to it, as Françoise would say, that if, on a Saturday, she had had to wait for her luncheon until the regular hour, it would have 'upset' her as much as if she had had, on an ordinary day, to put her luncheon forward to its Saturday time. Incidentally this acceleration of luncheon gave Saturday, for all of us, an individual character, kindly and rather attractive. At the moment when, ordinarily, there was still an hour to be lived through before meal-time sounded, we would all know that in a few seconds we should see the endives make their precocious appearance, followed by the special favour of an omelette, an unmerited steak. The return of this asymmetrical Saturday was one of those petty occurrences, intra-mural, localised, almost civic, which, in uneventful lives and stable orders of society, create a kind of national unity, and become the favourite theme for conversation, for pleasantries, for anecdotes which can be embroidered as the narrator pleases; it would have provided a nucleus, ready-made, for a legendary cycle, if any of us had had the epic mind. At daybreak, before we were dressed, without rhyme or reason, save for the pleasure of proving the strength of our solidarity, we would call to one another good-humoredly, cordially, patriotically, "Hurry up; there's no time to be lost; don't forget, it's Saturday!" while my aunt, gossiping with Françoise,

and reflecting that the day would be even longer than usual, would say, "You might cook them a nice bit of veal, seeing that it's Saturday." If, at half-past ten, some one absent-mindedly pulled out a watch and said, "I say, an hour-and-a-half still before luncheon," everyone else would be in ecstasies over being able to retort at once: "Why, what are you thinking about? Have you for-gotten that it's Saturday?" And a quarter of an hour later we would still be laughing, and reminding ourselves to go up and tell aunt Léonie about this absurd mistake, to amuse her. The very face of the sky appeared to undergo a change. After luncheon the sun, conscious that it was Saturday, would blaze an hour longer in the zenith, and when some one, thinking that we were late in starting for our walk, said, "What, only two o'clock!" feeling the heavy throb go by him of the twin strokes from the steeple of Saint-Hilaire (which as a rule passed no one at that hour upon the highways, deserted for the midday meal or for the nap which follows it, or on the banks of the bright and ever-flowing stream, which even the angler had abandoned, and so slipped unaccompanied into the vacant sky, where only a few loitering clouds remained to greet them) the whole family would respond in chorus: "Why, you're forgetting; we had luncheon an hour earlier; you know very well it's Saturday."

The surprise of a 'barbarian' (for so we termed everyone who was not acquainted with Saturday's special customs) who had called at eleven o'clock to speak to my father, and had found us at table, was an event which used to cause Françoise as much merriment as, perhaps, anything that had ever happened in her life. And if she found it amusing that the nonplussed visitor should not have known, beforehand, that we had our luncheon an hour earlier on Saturday, it was still more irresistibly funny that my father himself (fully as she sympathised, from the bottom of her heart, with the rigid chauvinism which prompted him) should never have dreamed that the barbarian could fail to be aware of so simple a matter, and so had replied, with no further enlightenment of the other's surprise at seeing us already in the dining-room: "You see, it's Saturday." On reaching this point in the story, Françoise would pause to wipe the tears of merriment from her eyes, and then, to add to her own enjoyment, would prolong the dialogue, inventing a further reply for the visitor to whom the word 'Saturday' had conveyed nothing. And so far from our objecting to these interpolations, we would feel that the story was not yet long enough, and would rally her with: "Oh, but surely he said something else as well. There was more than that, the first time you told it."

My great-aunt herself would lay aside her work, and raise her head and look on at us over her glasses.

The day had yet another characteristic feature, namely, that during May we used to go out on Saturday evenings after dinner to the 'Month of Mary' devotions.

As we were liable, there, to meet M. Vinteuil, who held very strict views on "the deplorable untidiness of young people, which seems to be encouraged in these days," my mother would first see that there was nothing out of order in my appearance, and then we would set out for the church. It was in these 'Month of Mary' services that I can remember having first fallen in love with hawthorn-blossom. The hawthorn was not merely in the church, for there, holy ground as it was, we had all of us a right of entry; but, arranged upon the altar itself, inseparable from the mysteries in whose celebration it was playing a part, it thrust in among the tapers and the sacred vessels its rows of branches, tied to one another horizontally in a stiff, festal scheme of decoration; and they were made more lovely still by the scalloped outline of the dark leaves, over which were scattered in profusion, as over a bridal train, little clusters of buds of a dazzling whiteness. Though I dared not look at them save through my fingers, I could feel that the formal scheme was composed of living things, and that it was Nature herself who, by trimming the shape of the foliage, and by adding the crowning ornament of those snowy buds, had made the decorations worthy of what was at once a public rejoicing and a solemn mystery. Higher up on the altar, a flower had opened here and there with a careless grace, holding so unconcernedly, like a final, almost vaporous bedizening, its bunch of stamens, slender as gossamer, which clouded the flower itself in a white mist, that in following these with my eyes, in trying to imitate, somewhere inside myself, the action of their blossoming, I imagined it as a swift and thoughtless movement of the head with an enticing glance from her contracted pupils, by a young girl in white, careless and alive.

M. Vinteuil had come in with his daughter and had sat down beside us. He belonged to a good family, and had once been music-master to my grandmother's sisters; so that when, after losing his wife and inheriting some property, he had retired to the neighbourhood of Combray, we used often to invite him to our house. But with his intense prudishness he had given up coming, so as not to be obliged to meet Swann, who had made what he called "a most unsuitable marriage, as seems to be the fashion in these days." My mother, on hearing that he 'composed,' told him by way of a compliment that, when she came to see him, he must play her something of his own. M. Vinteuil would have liked nothing better, but he carried politeness and consideration for others to so fine a point, always putting himself in their place, that he was afraid of boring them, or of appearing egotistical, if he carried out, or even allowed them to suspect what were his own desires. On the day when my parents had gone to pay him a visit, I had accompanied them, but they had allowed me to remain

outside, and as M. Vinteuil's house, Montjouvain, stood on a site actually hollowed out from a steep hill covered with shrubs, among which I took cover, I had found myself on a level with his drawing-room, upstairs, and only a few feet away from its window. When a servant came in to tell him that my parents had arrived, I had seen M. Vinteuil run to the piano and lay out a sheet of music so as to catch the eye. But as soon as they entered the room he had snatched it away and hidden it in a corner. He was afraid, no doubt, of letting them suppose that he was glad to see them only because it gave him a chance of playing them some of his compositions. And every time that my mother, in the course of her visit, had returned to the subject of his playing, he had hurriedly protested: "I cannot think who put that on the piano; it is not the proper place for it at all," and had turned the conversation aside to other topics, simply because those were of less interest to himself.

His one and only passion was for his daughter, and she, with her somewhat boyish appearance, looked so robust that it was hard to restrain a smile when one saw the precautions her father used to take for her health, with spare shawls always in readiness to wrap around her shoulders. My grandmother had drawn our attention to the gentle, delicate, almost timid expression which might often be caught flitting across the face, dusted all over with freckles, of this otherwise stolid child. When she had spoken, she would at once take her own words in the sense in which her audience must have heard them, she would be alarmed at the possibility of a misunderstanding, and one would see, in clear outline, as though in a transparency, beneath the mannish face of the 'good sort' that she was, the finer features of a young woman in tears.

When, before turning to leave the church, I made a genuflection before the altar, I felt suddenly, as I rose again, a bitter-sweet fragrance of almonds steal towards me from the hawthorn-blossom, and I then noticed that on the flowers themselves were little spots of a creamier colour, in which I imagined that this fragrance must lie concealed, as the taste of an almond cake lay in the burned parts, or the sweetness of Mlle. Vinteuil's cheeks beneath their freckles. Despite the heavy, motionless silence of the hawthorns, these gusts of fragrance came to me like the murmuring of an intense vitality, with which the whole altar was quivering like a roadside hedge explored by living antennae, of which I was reminded by seeing some stamens, almost red in colour, which seemed to have kept the springtime virulence, the irritant power of stinging insects now transmuted into flowers.

Outside the church we would stand talking for a moment with M. Vinteuil, in the porch. Boys would be chevying one another in the Square, and he would interfere, taking the side of the little ones and lecturing the big. If his daughter said, in her thick,

comfortable voice, how glad she had been to see us, immediately it would seem as though some elder and more sensitive sister, latent in her, had blushed at this thoughtless, schoolboyish utterance, which had, perhaps, made us think that she was angling for an invitation to the house. Her father would then arrange a cloak over her shoulders, they would clamber into a little dog-cart which she herself drove, and home they would both go to Montjouvain. As for ourselves, the next day being Sunday, with no need to be up and stirring before high mass, if it was a moonlight night and warm, then, instead of taking us home at once, my father, in his thirst for personal distinction, would lead us on a long walk round by the Calvary, which my mother's utter incapacity for taking her bearings, or even for knowing which road she might be on, made her regard as a triumph of his strategic genius. Sometimes we would go as far as the viaduct, which began to stride on its long legs of stone at the railway station, and to me typified all the wretchedness of exile beyond the last outposts of civilisation, because every year, as we came down from Paris, we would be warned to take special care, when we got to Combray, not to miss the station, to be ready before the train stopped, since it would start again in two minutes and proceed across the viaduct, out of the lands of Christendom, of which Combray, to me, represented the farthest limit. We would return by the Boulevard de la Gare, which contained the most attractive villas in the town. In each of their gardens the moonlight, copying the art of Hubert Robert, had scattered its broken staircases of white marble, its fountains of water and gates temptingly ajar. Its beams had swept away the telegraph office. All that was left of it was a column, half shattered, but preserving the beauty of a ruin which endures for all time. I would by now be dragging my weary limbs, and ready to drop with sleep; the balmy scent of the lime-trees seemed a consolation which I could obtain only at the price of great suffering and exhaustion, and not worthy of the effort. From gates far apart the watchdogs, awakened by our steps in the silence, would set up an antiphonal barking, as I still hear them bark, at times, in the evenings, and it is in their custody (when the public gardens of Combray were constructed on its site) that the Boulevard de la Gare must have taken refuge, for wherever I may be, as soon as they begin their alternate challenge and acceptance, I can see it again with all its lime-trees, and its pavement glistening beneath the moon.

Suddenly my father would bring us to a standstill and ask my mother—"Where are we?" Utterly worn out by the walk but still proud of her husband, she would lovingly confess that she had not the least idea. He would shrug his shoulders and laugh. And then, as though it had slipped, with his latchkey, from his waistcoat pocket, he would point out to us, when it stood before our eyes, the back-gate of our own garden, which had come hand-in-hand with the familiar corner of the Rue du Saint-Esprit, to await

us, to greet us at the end of our wanderings over paths unknown. My mother would murmur admiringly "You really are wonderful!" And from that instant I had not to take another step; the ground moved forward under my feet in that garden where, for so long, my actions had ceased to require any control, or even attention, from my will. Custom came to take me in her arms, carried me all the way up to my bed, and laid me down there like a little child.

Although Saturday, by beginning an hour earlier, and by depriving her of the services of Françoise, passed more slowly than other days for my aunt, yet, the moment it was past, and a new week begun, she would look forward with impatience to its return, as something that embodied all the novelty and distraction which her frail and disordered body was still able to endure. This was not to say, however, that she did not long, at times, for some even greater variation, that she did not pass through those abnormal hours in which one thirsts for something different from what one has, when those people who, through lack of energy or imagination, are unable to generate any motive power in themselves, cry out, as the clock strikes or the postman knocks, in their eagerness for news (even if it be bad news), for some emotion (even that of grief); when the heartstrings, which prosperity has silenced, like a harp laid by, yearn to be plucked and sounded again by some hand, even a brutal hand, even if it shall break them; when the will, which has with such difficulty brought itself to subdue its impulse, to renounce its right to abandon itself to its own uncontrolled desires, and consequent sufferings, would fain cast its guiding reins into the hands of circumstances, coercive and, it may be, cruel. Of course, since my aunt's strength, which was completely drained by the slightest exertion, returned but drop by drop into the pool of her repose, the reservoir was very slow in filling, and months would go by before she reached that surplus which other people use up in their daily activities, but which she had no idea—and could never decide how to employ. And I have no doubt that then—just as a desire to have her potatoes served with béchamel sauce, for a change, would be formed, ultimately, from the pleasure she found in the daily reappearance of those mashed potatoes of which she was never 'tired'—she would extract from the accumulation of those monotonous days (on which she so much depended) a keen expectation of some domestic cataclysm, instantaneous in its happening, but violent enough to compel her to put into effect, once for all, one of those changes which she knew would be beneficial to her health, but to which she could never make up her mind without some such stimulus. She was genuinely fond of us; she would have enjoyed the long luxury of weeping for our untimely decease; coming at a moment when she felt 'well' and was not in a perspiration, the news that the house was being destroyed by a fire, in which all the rest of us had already

perished, a fire which, in a little while, would not leave one stone standing upon another, but from which she herself would still have plenty of time to escape without undue haste, provided that she rose at once from her bed, must often have haunted her dreams, as a prospect which combined with the two minor advantages of letting her taste the full savour of her affection for us in long years of mourning, and of causing universal stupefaction in the village when she should sally forth to conduct our obsequies, crushed but courageous, moribund but erect, the paramount and priceless boon of forcing her at the right moment, with no time to be lost, no room for weakening hesitations, to go off and spend the summer at her charming farm of Mirougrain, where there was a waterfall. Inasmuch as nothing of this sort had ever occurred, though indeed she must often have pondered the success of such a manoeuvre as she lay alone absorbed in her interminable games of patience (and though it must have plunged her in despair from the first moment of its realisation, from the first of those little unforeseen facts, the first word of calamitous news, whose accents can never afterwards be expunged from the memory, everything that bears upon it the imprint of actual, physical death, so terribly different from the logical abstraction of its possibility) she would fall back from time to time, to add an interest to her life, upon imagining other, minor catastrophes, which she would follow up with passion. She would beguile herself with a sudden suspicion that Françoise had been robbing her, that she had set a trap to make certain, and had caught her betrayer red-handed; and being in the habit, when she made up a game of cards by herself, of playing her own and her adversary's hands at once, she would first stammer out Françoise's awkward apologies, and then reply to them with such a fiery indignation that any of us who happened to intrude upon her at one of these moments would find her bathed in perspiration, her eyes blazing, her false hair pushed awry and exposing the baldness of her brows. Françoise must often, from the next room, have heard these mordant sarcasms levelled at herself, the mere framing of which in words would not have relieved my aunt's feelings sufficiently, had they been allowed to remain in a purely immaterial form, without the degree of substance and reality which she added to them by murmuring them half-aloud. Sometimes, however, even these counterpane dramas would not satisfy my aunt; she must see her work staged. And so, on a Sunday, with all the doors mysteriously closed, she would confide in Eulalie her doubts of Françoise's integrity and her determination to be rid of her, and on another day she would confide in Françoise her suspicions of the disloyalty of Eulalie, to whom the front-door would very soon be closed for good. A few days more, and, disgusted with her latest confidant, she would again be 'as thick as thieves' with the traitor, while, before the next performance, the two would once more have changed their parts. But the suspicions which Eulalie might occasionally breed in her were no

more than a fire of straw, which must soon subside for lack of fuel, since Eulalie was not living with her in the house. It was a very different matter when the suspect was Françoise, of whose presence under the same roof as herself my aunt was perpetually conscious, while for fear of catching cold, were she to leave her bed, she would never dare go downstairs to the kitchen to see for herself whether there was, indeed, any foundation for her suspicions. And so on by degrees, until her mind had no other occupation than to attempt, at every hour of the day, to discover what was being done, what was being concealed from her by Françoise. She would detect the most furtive movement of Françoise's features, something contradictory in what she was saying, some desire which she appeared to be screening. And she would shew her that she was unmasked, by, a single word, which made Françoise turn pale, and which my aunt seemed to find a cruel satisfaction in driving into her unhappy servant's heart. And the very next Sunday a disclosure by Eulalie—like one of those discoveries which suddenly open up an unsuspected field for exploration to some new science which has hitherto followed only the beaten paths—proved to my aunt that her own worst suspicions fell a long way short of the appalling truth. "But Françoise ought to know that," said Eulalie, "now that you have given her a carriage."

"Now that I have given her a carriage!" gasped my aunt.

"Oh, but I didn't know; I only thought so; I saw her go by yesterday in her open coach, as proud as Artaban, on her way to Roussainville market. I supposed that it must be Mme. Octave who had given it to her."

So on by degrees, until Françoise and my aunt, the quarry and the hunter, could never cease from trying to forestall each other's devices. My mother was afraid lest Françoise should develop a genuine hatred of my aunt, who was doing everything in her power to annoy her. However that might be, Françoise had come, more and more, to pay an infinitely scrupulous attention to my aunt's least word and gesture. When she had to ask her for anything she would hesitate, first, for a long time, making up her mind how best to begin. And when she had uttered her request, she would watch my aunt covertly, trying to guess from the expression on her face what she thought of it, and how she would reply. And in this way—whereas an artist who had been reading memoirs of the seventeenth century, and wished to bring himself nearer to the great Louis, would consider that he was making progress in that direction when he constructed a pedigree that traced his own descent from some historic family, or when he engaged in correspondence with one of the reigning Sovereigns of Europe, and so would shut his eyes to the mistake he was making in seeking to establish a similarity by an exact and therefore lifeless copy of mere outward forms—a middle-aged lady in a small country town, by doing no more than yield whole-hearted

obedience to her own irresistible eccentricities, and to a spirit of mischief engendered by the utter idleness of her existence, could see, without ever having given a thought to Louis XIV, the most trivial occupations of her daily life, her morning toilet, her luncheon, her afternoon nap, assume, by virtue of their despotic singularity, something of the interest that was to be found in what Saint-Simon used to call the 'machinery' of life at Versailles; and was able, too, to persuade herself that her silence, a shade of good humour or of arrogance on her features would provide Françoise with matter for a mental commentary as tense with passion and terror, as did the silence, the good humour or the arrogance of the King when a courtier, or even his greatest nobles, had presented a petition to him, at the turning of an avenue, at Versailles.

One Sunday, when my aunt had received simultaneous visits from the Curé and from Eulalie, and had been left alone, afterwards, to rest, the whole family went upstairs to bid her good night, and Mamma ventured to condole with her on the unlucky coincidence that always brought both visitors to her door at the same time.

"I hear that things went wrong again to-day, Léonie," she said kindly, "you have had all your friends here at once."

And my great-aunt interrupted with: "Too many good things..." for, since her daughter's illness, she felt herself in duty bound to revive her as far as possible by always drawing her attention to the brighter side of things. But my father had begun to speak.

"I should like to take advantage," he said, "of the whole family's being here together, to tell you a story, so as not to have to begin all over again to each of you separately. I am afraid we are in M. Legrandin's bad books; he would hardly say 'How d'ye do' to me this morning."

I did not wait to hear the end of my father's story, for I had been with him myself after mass when we had passed M. Legrandin; instead, I went downstairs to the kitchen to ask for the bill of fare for our dinner, which was of fresh interest to me daily, like the news in a paper, and excited me as might the programme of a coming festivity.

As M. Legrandin had passed close by us on our way from church, walking by the side of a lady, the owner of a country house in the neighbourhood, whom we knew only by sight, my father had saluted him in a manner at once friendly and reserved, without stopping in his walk; M. Legrandin had barely acknowledged the courtesy, and then with an air of surprise, as though he had not recognised us, and with that distant look characteristic of people who do not wish to be agreeable, and who from the suddenly receding depths of their eyes seem to have caught sight of you at the far end of an

interminably straight road, and at so great a distance that they content themselves with directing towards you an almost imperceptible movement of the head, in proportion to your doll-like dimensions.

Now, the lady who was walking with Legrandin was a model of virtue, known and highly respected; there could be no question of his being out for amorous adventure, and annoyed at being detected; and my father asked himself how he could possibly have displeased our friend.

"I should be all the more sorry to feel that he was angry with us," he said, "because among all those people in their Sunday clothes there is something about him, with his little cut-away coat and his soft neckties, so little 'dressed-up,' so genuinely simple; an air of innocence, almost, which is really attractive."

But the vote of the family council was unanimous, that my father had imagined the whole thing, or that Legrandin, at the moment in question, had been preoccupied in thinking about something else. Anyhow, my father's fears were dissipated no later than the following evening. As we returned from a long walk we saw, near the Pont-Vieux, Legrandin himself, who, on account of the holidays, was spending a few days more in Combray. He came up to us with outstretched hand: "Do you know, master book-lover," he asked me, "this line of Paul Desjardins?

Now are the woods all black, but still the sky is blue.

Is not that a fine rendering of a moment like this? Perhaps you have never read Paul Desjardins. Read him, my boy, read him; in these days he is converted, they tell me, into a preaching friar, but he used to have the most charming water-colour touch—

Now are the woods all black, but still the sky is blue.

May you always see a blue sky overhead, my young friend; and then, even when the time comes, which is coming now for me, when the woods are all black, when night is fast falling, you will be able to console yourself, as I am doing, by looking up to the sky." He took a cigarette from his pocket and stood for a long time, his eyes fixed on the horizon. "Goodbye, friends!" he suddenly exclaimed, and left us.

At the hour when I usually went downstairs to find out what there was for dinner, its preparation would already have begun, and Françoise, a colonel with all the forces of nature for her subalterns, as in the fairy-tales where giants hire themselves out as scullions, would be stirring the coals, putting the potatoes to steam, and, at the right moment, finishing over the fire those culinary masterpieces which had been first got ready in some of the great array of vessels, triumphs of the potter's craft, which ranged

from tubs and boilers and cauldrons and fish kettles down to jars for game, moulds for pastry, and tiny pannikins for cream, and included an entire collection of pots and pans of every shape and size. I would stop by the table, where the kitchen-maid had shelled them, to inspect the platoons of peas, drawn up in ranks and numbered, like little green marbles, ready for a game; but what fascinated me would be the asparagus, tinged with ultramarine and rosy pink which ran from their heads, finely stippled in mauve and azure, through a series of imperceptible changes to their white feet, still stained a little by the soil of their garden-bed: a rainbow-loveliness that was not of this world. I felt that these celestial hues indicated the presence of exquisite creatures who had been pleased to assume vegetable form, who, through the disguise which covered their firm and edible flesh, allowed me to discern in this radiance of earliest dawn, these hinted rainbows, these blue evening shades, that precious quality which I should recognise again when, all night long after a dinner at which I had partaken of them, they played (lyrical and coarse in their jesting as the fairies in Shakespeare's *Dream*) at transforming my humble chamber into a bower of aromatic perfume.

Poor Giotto's Charity, as Swann had named her, charged by Françoise with the task of preparing them for the table, would have them lying beside her in a basket; sitting with a mournful air, as though all the sorrows of the world were heaped upon her; and the light crowns of azure which capped the asparagus shoots above their pink jackets would be finely and separately outlined, star by star, as in Giotto's fresco are the flowers banded about the brows, or patterning the basket of his Virtue at Padua. And, meanwhile, Françoise would be turning on the spit one of those chickens, such as she alone knew how to roast, chickens which had wafted far abroad from Combray the sweet savour of her merits, and which, while she was serving them to us at table, would make the quality of kindness predominate for the moment in my private conception of her character; the aroma of that cooked flesh, which she knew how to make so unctuous and so tender, seeming to me no more than the proper perfume of one of her many virtues.

But the day on which, while my father took counsel with his family upon our strange meeting with Legrandin, I went down to the kitchen, was one of those days when Giotto's Charity, still very weak and ill after her recent confinement, had been unable to rise from her bed; Françoise, being without assistance, had fallen into arrears. When I went in, I saw her in the back-kitchen which opened on to the courtyard, in process of killing a chicken; by its desperate and quite natural resistance, which Françoise, beside herself with rage as she attempted to slit its throat beneath the ear, accompanied with shrill cries of "Filthy creature! Filthy creature!" it made the saintly

kindness and unction of our servant rather less prominent than it would do, next day at dinner, when it made its appearance in a skin gold-embroidered like a chasuble, and its precious juice was poured out drop by drop as from a pyx. When it was dead Françoise mopped up its streaming blood, in which, however, she did not let her rancour drown, for she gave vent to another burst of rage, and, gazing down at the carcass of her enemy, uttered a final "Filthy creature!"

I crept out of the kitchen and upstairs, trembling all over; I could have prayed, then, for the instant dismissal of Françoise. But who would have baked me such hot rolls, boiled me such fragrant coffee, and even—roasted me such chickens? And, as it happened, everyone else had already had to make the same cowardly reckoning. For my aunt Léonie knew (though I was still in ignorance of this) that Françoise, who, for her own daughter or for her nephews, would have given her life without a murmur, shewed a singular implacability in her dealings with the rest of the world. In spite of which my aunt still retained her, for, while conscious of her cruelty, she could appreciate her services. I began gradually to realise that Françoise's kindness, her compunction, the sum total of her virtues concealed many of these back-kitchen tragedies, just as history reveals to us that the reigns of the kings and queens who are portrayed as kneeling with clasped hands in the windows of churches, were stained by oppression and bloodshed. I had taken note of the fact that, apart from her own kinsfolk, the sufferings of humanity inspired in her a pity which increased in direct ratio to the distance separating the sufferers from herself. The tears which flowed from her in torrents when she read of the misfortunes of persons unknown to her, in a newspaper, were quickly stemmed once she had been able to form a more accurate mental picture of the victims. One night, shortly after her confinement, the kitchen-maid was seized with the most appalling pains; Mamma heard her groans, and rose and awakened Françoise, who, quite unmoved, declared that all the outcry was mere malingering, that the girl wanted to 'play the mistress' in the house. The doctor, who had been afraid of some such attack, had left a marker in a medical dictionary which we had, at the page on which the symptoms were described, and had told us to turn up this passage, where we would find the measures of 'first aid' to be adopted. My mother sent Françoise to fetch the book, warning her not to let the marker drop out. An hour elapsed, and Françoise had not returned; my mother, supposing that she had gone back to bed, grew vexed, and told me to go myself to the bookcase and fetch the volume. I did so, and there found Françoise who, in her curiosity to know what the marker indicated, had begun to read the clinical account of these after-pains, and was violently sobbing, now that it was a question of a type of illness with which she was not familiar. At each painful symptom mentioned by the writer she would exclaim:

"Oh, oh, Holy Virgin, is it possible that God wishes any wretched human creature to suffer so? Oh, the poor girl!"

But when I had called her, and she had returned to the bedside of Giotto's Charity, her tears at once ceased to flow; she could find no stimulus for that pleasant sensation of tenderness and pity which she very well knew, having been moved to it often enough by the perusal of newspapers; nor any other pleasure of the same kind in her sense of weariness and irritation at being pulled out of bed in the middle of the night for the kitchen-maid; so that at the sight of those very sufferings, the printed account of which had moved her to tears, she had nothing to offer but ill-tempered mutterings, mingled with bitter sarcasm, saying, when she thought that we had gone out of earshot: "Well, she need never have done what she must have done to bring all this about! She found that pleasant enough, I dare say! She had better not put on any airs now. All the same, he must have been a god-forsaken young man to go after *that*. Dear, dear, it's just as they used to say in my poor mother's country:

Snaps and snails and puppy-dogs' tails,

And dirty sluts in plenty,

Smell sweeter than roses in young men's noses

When the heart is one-and-twenty."

Although, when her grandson had a slight cold in his head, she would set off at night, even if she were ill also, instead of going to bed, to see whether he had everything that he wanted, covering ten miles on foot before daybreak so as to be in time to begin her work, this same love for her own people, and her desire to establish the future greatness of her house on a solid foundation reacted, in her policy with regard to the other servants, in one unvarying maxim, which was never to let any of them set foot in my aunt's room; indeed she shewed a sort of pride in not allowing anyone else to come near my aunt, preferring, when she herself was ill, to get out of bed and to administer the Vichy water in person, rather than to concede to the kitchen-maid the right of entry into her mistress's presence. There is a species of hymenoptera, observed by Fabre, the burrowing wasp, which in order to provide a supply of fresh meat for her offspring after her own decease, calls in the science of anatomy to amplify the resources of her instinctive cruelty, and, having made a collection of weevils and spiders, proceeds with marvellous knowledge and skill to pierce the nerve-centre on which their power of locomotion (but none of their other vital functions) depends, so that the paralysed insect, beside which her egg is laid, will furnish the larva, when it is hatched, with a tamed and inoffensive quarry, incapable

either of flight or of resistance, but perfectly fresh for the larder: in the same way Françoise had adopted, to minister to her permanent and unfaltering resolution to render the house uninhabitable to any other servant, a series of crafty and pitiless stratagems. Many years later we discovered that, if we had been fed on asparagus day after day throughout that whole season, it was because the smell of the plants gave the poor kitchen-maid, who had to prepare them, such violent attacks of asthma that she was finally obliged to leave my aunt's service.

Alas! we had definitely to alter our opinion of M. Legrandin. On one of the Sundays following our meeting with him on the Pont-Vieux, after which my father had been forced to confess himself mistaken, as mass drew to an end, and, with the sunshine and the noise of the outer world, something else invaded the church, an atmosphere so far from sacred that Mme. Goupil, Mme. Percepied (all those, in fact, who a moment ago, when I arrived a little late, had been sitting motionless, their eyes fixed on their prayer-books; who, I might even have thought, had not seen me come in, had not their feet moved slightly to push away the little kneeling-desk which was preventing me from getting to my chair) began in loud voices to discuss with us all manner of utterly mundane topics, as though we were already outside in the Square, we saw, standing on the sun-baked steps of the porch, dominating the many-coloured tumult of the market, Legrandin himself, whom the husband of the lady we had seen with him, on the previous occasion, was just going to introduce to the wife of another large landed proprietor of the district. Legrandin's face shewed an extraordinary zeal and animation; he made a profound bow, with a subsidiary backward movement which brought his spine sharply up into a position behind its starting-point, a gesture in which he must have been trained by the husband of his sister, Mme. de Cambremer. This rapid recovery caused a sort of tense muscular wave to ripple over Legrandin's hips, which I had not supposed to be so fleshy; I cannot say why, but this undulation of pure matter, this wholly carnal fluency, with not the least hint in it of spiritual significance, this wave lashed to a fury by the wind of an assiduity, an obsequiousness of the basest sort, awoke my mind suddenly to the possibility of a Legrandin altogether different from the one whom we knew. The lady gave him some message for her coachman, and while he was stepping down to her carriage the impression of joy, timid and devout, which the introduction had stamped there, still lingered on his face. Carried away in a sort of dream, he smiled, then he began to hurry back towards the lady; he was walking faster than usual, and his shoulders swayed backwards and forwards, right and left, in the most absurd fashion; altogether he looked, so utterly had he abandoned himself to it, ignoring all other considerations, as though he were the lifeless and wire-pulled puppet of his own happiness. Meanwhile we were coming

out through the porch; we were passing close beside him; he was too well bred to turn his head away; but he fixed his eyes, which had suddenly changed to those of a seer, lost in the profundity of his vision, on so distant a point of the horizon that he could not see us, and so had not to acknowledge our presence. His face emerged, still with an air of innocence, from his straight and pliant coat, which looked as though conscious of having been led astray, in spite of itself, and plunged into surroundings of a detested splendour. And a spotted necktie, stirred by the breezes of the Square, continued to float in front of Legrandin, like the standard of his proud isolation, of his noble independence. Just as we reached the house my mother discovered that we had forgotten the 'Saint-Honoré,' and asked my father to go back with me and tell them to send it up at once. Near the church we met Legrandin, coming towards us with the same lady, whom he was escorting to her carriage. He brushed past us, and did not interrupt what he was saying to her, but gave us, out of the corner of his blue eye, a little sign, which began and ended, so to speak, inside his eyelids, and as it did not involve the least movement of his facial muscles, managed to pass quite unperceived by the lady; but, striving to compensate by the intensity of his feelings for the somewhat restricted field in which they had to find expression, he made that blue chink, which was set apart for us, sparkle with all the animation of cordiality, which went far beyond mere playfulness, and almost touched the border-line of roguery; he subtilised the refinements of good-fellowship into a wink of connivance, a hint, a hidden meaning, a secret understanding, all the mysteries of complicity in a plot, and finally exalted his assurances of friendship to the level of protestations of affection, even of a declaration of love, lighting up for us, and for us alone, with a secret and languid flame invisible by the great lady upon his other side, an enamoured pupil in a countenance of ice.

Only the day before he had asked my parents to send me to dine with him on this same Sunday evening. "Come and bear your aged friend company," he had said to me. "Like the nosegay which a traveller sends us from some land to which we shall never go again, come and let me breathe from the far country of your adolescence the scent of those flowers of spring among which I also used to wander, many years ago. Come with the primrose, with the canon's beard, with the gold-cup; come with the stone-crop, whereof are posies made, pledges of love, in the Balzacian flora, come with that flower of the Resurrection morning, the Easter daisy, come with the snowballs of the guelder-rose, which begin to embalm with their fragrance the alleys of your great-aunt's garden ere the last snows of Lent are melted from its soil. Come with the glorious silken raiment of the lily, apparel fit for Solomon, and with the many-coloured enamel of the pansies, but come, above all, with the spring breeze, still cooled by the

last frosts of winter, wafting apart, for the two butterflies' sake, that have waited outside all morning, the closed portals of the first Jerusalem rose."

The question was raised at home whether, all things considered, I ought still to be sent to dine with M. Legrandin. But my grandmother refused to believe that he could have been impolite.

"You admit yourself that he appears at church there, quite simply dressed, and all that; he hardly looks like a man of fashion." She added that; in any event, even if, at the worst, he had been intentionally rude, it was far better for us to pretend that we had noticed nothing. And indeed my father himself, though more annoyed than any of us by the attitude which Legrandin had adopted, may still have held in reserve a final uncertainty as to its true meaning. It was like every attitude or action which reveals a man's deep and hidden character; they bear no relation to what he has previously said, and we cannot confirm our suspicions by the culprit's evidence, for he will admit nothing; we are reduced to the evidence of our own senses, and we ask ourselves, in the face of this detached and incoherent fragment of recollection, whether indeed our senses have not been the victims of a hallucination; with the result that such attitudes, and these alone are of importance in indicating character, are the most apt to leave us in perplexity.

I dined with Legrandin on the terrace of his house, by moonlight. "There is a charming quality, is there not," he said to me, "in this silence; for hearts that are wounded, as mine is, a novelist, whom you will read in time to come, claims that there is no remedy but silence and shadow. And see you this, my boy, there comes in all lives a time, towards which you still have far to go, when the weary eyes can endure but one kind of light, the light which a fine evening like this prepares for us in the stillroom of darkness, when the ears can listen to no music save what the moonlight breathes through the flute of silence."

I could hear what M. Legrandin was saying; like everything that he said, it sounded attractive; but I was disturbed by the memory of a lady whom I had seen recently for the first time; and thinking, now that I knew that Legrandin was on friendly terms with several of the local aristocracy, that perhaps she also was among his acquaintance, I summoned up all my courage and said to him: "Tell me, sir, do you, by any chance, know the lady—the ladies of Guermantes?" and I felt glad because, in pronouncing the name, I had secured a sort of power over it, by the mere act of drawing it up out of my dreams and giving it an objective existence in the world of spoken things.

But, at the sound of the word Guermantes, I saw in the middle of each of our friend's blue eyes a little brown dimple appear, as though they had been stabbed by some

invisible pin-point, while the rest of his pupils, reacting from the shock, received and secreted the azure overflow. His fringed eyelids darkened, and drooped. His mouth, which had been stiffened and seared with bitter lines, was the first to recover, and smiled, while his eyes still seemed full of pain, like the eyes of a good-looking martyr whose body bristles with arrows.

"No, I do not know them," he said, but instead of uttering so simple a piece of information, a reply in which there was so little that could astonish me, in the natural and conversational tone which would have befitted it, he recited it with a separate stress upon each word, leaning forward, bowing his head, with at once the vehemence which a man gives, so as to be believed, to a highly improbable statement (as though the fact that he did not know the Guermantes could be due only to some strange accident of fortune) and with the emphasis of a man who, finding himself unable to keep silence about what is to him a painful situation, chooses to proclaim it aloud, so as to convince his hearers that the confession he is making is one that causes him no embarrassment, but is easy, agreeable, spontaneous, that the situation in question, in this case the absence of relations with the Guermantes family, might very well have been not forced upon, but actually designed by Legrandin himself, might arise from some family tradition, some moral principle or mystical vow which expressly forbade his seeking their society.

"No," he resumed, explaining by his words the tone in which they were uttered. "No, I do not know them; I have never wished to know them; I have always made a point of preserving complete independence; at heart, as you know, I am a bit of a Radical. People are always coming to me about it, telling me I am mistaken in not going to Guermantes, that I make myself seem ill-bred, uncivilised, an old bear. But that's not the sort of reputation that can frighten me; it's too true! In my heart of hearts I care for nothing in the world now but a few churches, books—two or three, pictures—rather more, perhaps, and the light of the moon when the fresh breeze of youth (such as yours) wafts to my nostrils the scent of gardens whose flowers my old eyes are not sharp enough, now, to distinguish."

I did not understand very clearly why, in order to refrain from going to the houses of people whom one did not know, it should be necessary to cling to one's independence, nor how that could give one the appearance of a savage or a bear. But what I did understand was this, that Legrandin was not altogether truthful when he said that he cared only for churches, moonlight, and youth; he cared also, he cared a very great deal, for people who lived in country houses, and would be so much afraid, when in their company, of incurring their displeasure that he would never dare to let them see that he numbered, as well, among his friends middle-class people, the

families of solicitors and stockbrokers, preferring, if the truth must be known, that it should be revealed in his absence, when he was out of earshot, that judgment should go against him (if so it must) by default: in a word, he was a snob. Of course he would never have admitted all or any of this in the poetical language which my family and I so much admired. And if I asked him, "Do you know the Guermantes family?" Legrandin the talker would reply, "No, I have never cared to know them." But unfortunately the talker was now subordinated to another Legrandin, whom he kept carefully hidden in his breast, whom he would never consciously exhibit, because this other could tell stories about our own Legrandin and about his snobbishness which would have ruined his reputation for ever; and this other Legrandin had replied to me already in that wounded look, that stiffened smile, the undue gravity of his tone in uttering those few words, in the thousand arrows by which our own Legrandin had instantaneously been stabbed and sickened, like a Saint Sebastian of snobbery:

"Oh, how you hurt me! No, I do not know the Guermantes family. Do not remind me of the great sorrow of my life." And since this other, this irrepressible, dominant, despotic Legrandin, if he lacked our Legrandin's charming vocabulary, shewed an infinitely greater promptness in expressing himself, by means of what are called 'reflexes,' it followed that, when Legrandin the talker attempted to silence him, he would already have spoken, and it would be useless for our friend to deplore the bad impression which the revelations of his *alter ego* must have caused, since he could do no more now than endeavour to mitigate them.

This was not to say that M. Legrandin was anything but sincere when he inveighed against snobs. He could not (from his own knowledge, at least) be aware that he was one also, since it is only with the passions of others that we are ever really familiar, and what we come to find out about our own can be no more than what other people have shewn us. Upon ourselves they react but indirectly, through our imagination, which substitutes for our actual, primary motives other, secondary motives, less stark and therefore more decent. Never had Legrandin's snobbishness impelled him to make a habit of visiting a duchess as such. Instead, it would set his imagination to make that duchess appear, in Legrandin's eyes, endowed with all the graces. He would be drawn towards the duchess, assuring himself the while that he was yielding to the attractions of her mind, and her other virtues, which the vile race of snobs could never understand. Only his fellow-snobs knew that he was of their number, for, owing to their inability to appreciate the intervening efforts of his imagination, they saw in close juxtaposition the social activities of Legrandin and their primary cause.

At home, meanwhile, we had no longer any illusions as to M. Legrandin, and our relations with him had become much more distant. Mamma would be greatly

delighted whenever she caught him red-handed in the sin, which he continued to call the unpardonable sin, of snobbery. As for my father, he found it difficult to take Legrandin's airs in so light, in so detached a spirit; and when there was some talk, one year, of sending me to spend the long summer holidays at Balbec with my grandmother, he said: "I must, most certainly, tell Legrandin that you are going to Balbec, to see whether he will offer you an introduction to his sister. He probably doesn't remember telling us that she lived within a mile of the place."

My grandmother, who held that, when one went to the seaside, one ought to be on the beach from morning to night, to taste the salt breezes, and that one should not know anyone in the place, because calls and parties and excursions were so much time stolen from what belonged, by rights, to the sea-air, begged him on no account to speak to Legrandin of our plans; for already, in her mind's eye, she could see his sister, Mme. de Cambremer, alighting from her carriage at the door of our hotel just as we were on the point of going out fishing, and obliging us to remain indoors all afternoon to entertain her. But Mamma laughed her fears to scorn, for she herself felt that the danger was not so threatening, and that Legrandin would shew no undue anxiety to make us acquainted with his sister. And, as it happened, there was no need for any of us to introduce the subject of Balbec, for it was Legrandin himself who, without the least suspicion that we had ever had any intention of visiting those parts, walked into the trap uninvited one evening, when we met him strolling on the banks of the Vivonne.

"There are tints in the clouds this evening, violets and blues, which are very beautiful, are they not, my friend?" he said to my father. "Especially a blue which is far more floral than atmospheric, a cineraria blue, which it is surprising to see in the sky. And that little pink cloud there, has it not just the tint of some flower, a carnation or hydrangea? Nowhere, perhaps, except on the shores of the English Channel, where Normandy merges into Brittany, have I been able to find such copious examples of what you might call a vegetable kingdom in the clouds. Down there, close to Balbec, among all those places which are still so uncivilised, there is a little bay, charmingly quiet, where the sunsets of the Auge Valley, those red-and-gold sunsets (which, all the same, I am very far from despising) seem commonplace and insignificant; for in that moist and gentle atmosphere these heavenly flower-beds will break into blossom, in a few moments, in the evenings, incomparably lovely, and often lasting for hours before they fade. Others shed their leaves at once, and then it is more beautiful still to see the sky strewn with the scattering of their innumerable petals, sulphurous yellow and rosy red. In that bay, which they call the Opal Bay, the golden sands appear more charming still from being fastened, like fair Andromeda, to those terrible rocks of the

surrounding coast, to that funereal shore, famed for the number of its wrecks, where every winter many a brave vessel falls a victim to the perils of the sea. Balbec! the oldest bone in the geological skeleton that underlies our soil, the true Armor, the sea, the land's end, the accursed region which Anatole France—an enchanter whose works our young friend ought to read—has so well depicted, beneath its eternal fogs, as though it were indeed the land of the Cimmerians in the Odyssey. Balbec; yes, they are building hotels there now, superimposing them upon its ancient and charming soil, which they are powerless to alter; how delightful it is, down there, to be able to step out at once into regions so primitive and so entrancing."

"Indeed! And do you know anyone at Balbec?" inquired my father. "This young man is just going to spend a couple of months there with his grandmother, and my wife too, perhaps."

Legrandin, taken unawares by the question at a moment when he was looking directly at my father, was unable to turn aside his gaze, and so concentrated it with steadily increasing intensity—smiling mournfully the while—upon the eyes of his questioner, with an air of friendliness and frankness and of not being afraid to look him in the face, until he seemed to have penetrated my father's skull, as it had been a ball of glass, and to be seeing, at the moment, a long way beyond and behind it, a brightly coloured cloud, which provided him with a mental alibi, and would enable him to establish the theory that, just when he was being asked whether he knew anyone at Balbec, he had been thinking of something else, and so had not heard the question. As a rule these tactics make the questioner proceed to ask, "Why, what are you thinking about?" But my father, inquisitive, annoyed, and cruel, repeated: "Have you friends, then, in that neighbourhood, that you know Balbec so well?"

In a final and desperate effort the smiling gaze of Legrandin struggled to the extreme limits of its tenderness, vagueness, candour, and distraction; then feeling, no doubt, that there was nothing left for it now but to answer, he said to us: "I have friends all the world over, wherever there are companies of trees, stricken but not defeated, which have come together to offer a common supplication, with pathetic obstinacy, to an inclement sky which has no mercy upon them."

"That is not quite what I meant," interrupted my father, obstinate as a tree and merciless as the sky. "I asked you, in case anything should happen to my mother-in-law and she wanted to feel that she was not all alone down there, at the ends of the earth, whether you knew any of the people."

"There as elsewhere, I know everyone and I know no one," replied Legrandin, who was by no means ready yet to surrender; "places I know well, people very slightly. But,

down there, the places themselves seem to me just like people, rare and wonderful people, of a delicate quality which would have been corrupted and ruined by the gift of life. Perhaps it is a castle which you encounter upon the cliff's edge; standing there by the roadside, where it has halted to contemplate its sorrows before an evening sky, still rosy, through which a golden moon is climbing; while the fishing-boats, homeward bound, creasing the watered silk of the Channel, hoist its pennant at their mastheads and carry its colours. Or perhaps it is a simple dwelling-house that stands alone, ugly, if anything, timid-seeming but full of romance, hiding from every eye some imperishable secret of happiness and disenchantment. That land which knows not truth," he continued with Machiavellian subtlety, "that land of infinite fiction makes bad reading for any boy; and is certainly not what I should choose or recommend for my young friend here, who is already so much inclined to melancholy, for a heart already predisposed to receive its impressions. Climates that breathe amorous secrets and futile regrets may agree with an old and disillusioned man like myself; but they must always prove fatal to a temperament which is still unformed. Believe me," he went on with emphasis, "the waters of that bay—more Breton than Norman—may exert a sedative influence, though even that is of questionable value, upon a heart which, like mine, is no longer unbroken, a heart for whose wounds there is no longer anything to compensate. But at your age, my boy, those waters are contra-indicated.... Good night to you, neighbours," he added, moving away from us with that evasive abruptness to which we were accustomed; and then, turning towards us, with a physicianly finger raised in warning, he resumed the consultation: "No Balbec before you are fifty!" he called out to me, "and even then it must depend on the state of the heart."

My father spoke to him of it again, as often as we met him, and tortured him with questions, but it was labour in vain: like that scholarly swindler who devoted to the fabrication of forged palimpsests a wealth of skill and knowledge and industry the hundredth part of which would have sufficed to establish him in a more lucrative—but an honourable occupation, M. Legrandin, had we insisted further, would in the end have constructed a whole system of ethics, and a celestial geography of Lower Normandy, sooner than admit to us that, within a mile of Balbec, his own sister was living in her own house; sooner than find himself obliged to offer us a letter of introduction, the prospect of which would never have inspired him with such terror had he been absolutely certain—as, from his knowledge of my grandmother's character, he really ought to have been certain—that in no circumstances whatsoever would we have dreamed of making use of it.

* * *

We used always to return from our walks in good time to pay aunt Léonie a visit before dinner. In the first weeks of our Combray holidays, when the days ended early, we would still be able to see, as we turned into the Rue du Saint-Esprit, a reflection of the western sky from the windows of the house and a band of purple at the foot of the Calvary, which was mirrored further on in the pond; a fiery glow which, accompanied often by a cold that burned and stung, would associate itself in my mind with the glow of the fire over which, at that very moment, was roasting the chicken that was to furnish me, in place of the poetic pleasure I had found in my walk, with the sensual pleasures of good feeding, warmth and rest. But in summer, when we came back to the house, the sun would not have set; and while we were upstairs paying our visit to aunt Léonie its rays, sinking until they touched and lay along her window-sill, would there be caught and held by the large inner curtains and the bands which tied them back to the wall, and split and scattered and filtered; and then, at last, would fall upon and inlay with tiny flakes of gold the lemonwood of her chest-of-drawers, illuminating the room in their passage with the same delicate, slanting, shadowed beams that fall among the boles of forest trees. But on some days, though very rarely, the chest-of-drawers would long since have shed its momentary adornments, there would no longer, as we turned into the Rue du Saint-Esprit, be any reflection from the western sky burning along the line of window-panes; the pond beneath the Calvary would have lost its fiery glow, sometimes indeed had changed already to an opalescent pallor, while a long ribbon of moonlight, bent and broken and broadened by every ripple upon the water's surface, would be lying across it, from end to end. Then, as we drew near the house, we would make out a figure standing upon the doorstep, and Mamma would say to me: "Good heavens! There is Françoise looking out for us; your aunt must be anxious; that means we are late."

And without wasting time by stopping to take off our 'things' we would fly upstairs to my aunt Léonie's room to reassure her, to prove to her by our bodily presence that all her gloomy imaginings were false, that, on the contrary, nothing had happened to us, but that we had gone the 'Guermantes way,' and, good lord, when one took that walk, my aunt knew well enough that one could never say at what time one would be home.

"There, Françoise," my aunt would say, "didn't I tell you that they must have gone the Guermantes way? Good gracious! They must be hungry! And your nice leg of mutton will be quite dried up now, after all the hours it's been waiting. What a time to come in! Well, and so you went the Guermantes way?"

"But, Leonie, I supposed you knew," Mamma would answer. "I thought that Françoise had seen us go out by the little gate, through the kitchen-garden."

For there were, in the environs of Combray, two 'ways' which we used to take for our walks, and so diametrically opposed that we would actually leave the house by a different door, according to the way we had chosen: the way towards Méséglise-la-Vineuse, which we called also 'Swann's way,' because, to get there, one had to pass along the boundary of M. Swann's estate, and the 'Guermantes way.' Of Méséglise-la-Vineuse, to tell the truth, I never knew anything more than the way there, and the strange people who would come over on Sundays to take the air in Combray, people whom, this time, neither my aunt nor any of us would 'know at all,' and whom we would therefore assume to be 'people who must have come over from Méséglise.' As for Guermantes, I was to know it well enough one day, but that day had still to come; and, during the whole of my boyhood, if Méséglise was to me something as inaccessible as the horizon, which remained hidden from sight, however far one went, by the folds of a country which no longer bore the least resemblance to the country round Combray; Guermantes, on the other hand, meant no more than the ultimate goal, ideal rather than real, of the 'Guermantes way,' a sort of abstract geographical term like the North Pole or the Equator. And so to 'take the Guermantes way' in order to get to Méséglise, or vice versa, would have seemed to me as nonsensical a proceeding as to turn to the east in order to reach the west. Since my father used always to speak of the 'Méséglise way' as comprising the finest view of a plain that he knew anywhere, and of the 'Guermantes way' as typical of river scenery, I had invested each of them, by conceiving them in this way as two distinct entities, with that cohesion, that unity which belongs only to the figments of the mind; the smallest detail of either of them appeared to me as a precious thing, which exhibited the special excellence of the whole, while, immediately beside them, in the first stages of our walk, before we had reached the sacred soil of one or the other, the purely material roads, at definite points on which they were set down as the ideal view over a plain and the ideal scenery of a river, were no more worth the trouble of looking at them than, to a keen playgoer and lover of dramatic art, are the little streets which may happen to run past the walls of a theatre. But, above all, I set between them, far more distinctly than the mere distance in miles and yards and inches which separated one from the other, the distance that there was between the two parts of my brain in which I used to think of them, one of those distances of the mind which time serves only to lengthen, which separate things irremediably from one another, keeping them for ever upon different planes. And this distinction was rendered still more absolute because the habit we had of never going both ways on the same day, or in the course of the same walk, but the 'Méséglise way' one time and the 'Guermantes way' another, shut them up, so to speak, far apart and unaware of each other's existence, in the

sealed vessels—between which there could be no communication—of separate afternoons.

When we had decided to go the 'Méséglise way' we would start (without undue haste, and even if the sky were clouded over, since the walk was not very long, and did not take us too far from home), as though we were not going anywhere in particular, by the front-door of my aunt's house, which opened on to the Rue du Saint-Esprit. We would be greeted by the gunsmith, we would drop our letters into the box, we would tell Théodore, from Françoise, as we passed, that she had run out of oil or coffee, and we would leave the town by the road which ran along the white fence of M. Swann's park. Before reaching it we would be met on our way by the scent of his lilac-trees, come out to welcome strangers. Out of the fresh little green hearts of their foliage the lilacs raised inquisitively over the fence of the park their plumes of white or purple blossom, which glowed, even in the shade, with the sunlight in which they had been bathed. Some of them, half-concealed by the little tiled house, called the Archers' Lodge, in which Swann's keeper lived, overtopped its gothic gable with their rosy minaret. The nymphs of spring would have seemed coarse and vulgar in comparison with these young houris, who retained, in this French garden, the pure and vivid colouring of a Persian miniature. Despite my desire to throw my arms about their pliant forms and to draw down towards me the starry locks that crowned their fragrant heads, we would pass them by without stopping, for my parents had ceased to visit Tansonville since Swann's marriage, and, so as not to appear to be looking into his park, we would, instead of taking the road which ran beside its boundary and then climbed straight up to the open fields, choose another way, which led in the same direction, but circuitously, and brought us out rather too far from home.

One day my grandfather said to my 'father: "Don't you remember Swann's telling us yesterday that his wife and daughter had gone off to Rheims and that he was taking the opportunity of spending a day or two in Paris? We might go along by the park, since the ladies are not at home; that will make it a little shorter."

We stopped for a moment by the fence. Lilac-time was nearly over; some of the trees still thrust aloft, in tall purple chandeliers, their tiny balls of blossom, but in many places among their foliage where, only a week before, they had still been breaking in waves of fragrant foam, these were now spent and shrivelled and discoloured, a hollow scum, dry and scentless. My grandfather pointed out to my father in what respects the appearance of the place was still the same, and how far it had altered since the walk that he had taken with old M. Swann, on the day of his wife's death; and he seized the opportunity to tell us, once again, the story of that walk.

In front of us a path bordered with nasturtiums rose in the full glare of the sun towards the house. But to our right the park stretched away into the distance, on level ground. Overshadowed by the tall trees which stood close around it, an 'ornamental water' had been constructed by Swann's parents but, even in his most artificial creations, nature is the material upon which man has to work; certain spots will persist in remaining surrounded by the vassals of their own especial sovereignty, and will raise their immemorial standards among all the 'laid-out' scenery of a park, just as they would have done far from any human interference, in a solitude which must everywhere return to engulf them, springing up out of the necessities of their exposed position, and superimposing itself upon the work of man's hands. And so it was that, at the foot of the path which led down to this artificial lake, there might be seen, in its two tiers woven of trailing forget-me-nots below and of periwinkle flowers above, the natural, delicate, blue garland which binds the luminous, shadowed brows of water-nymphs; while the iris, its swords sweeping every way in regal profusion, stretched out over agrimony and water-growing king-cups the lilied sceptres, tattered glories of yellow and purple, of the kingdom of the lake.

The absence of Mlle. Swann, which—since it preserved me from the terrible risk of seeing her appear on one of the paths, and of being identified and scorned by this so privileged little girl who had Bergotte for a friend and used to go with him to visit cathedrals—made the exploration of Tansonville, now for the first time permitted me, a matter of indifference to myself, seemed however to invest the property, in my grandfather's and father's eyes, with a fresh and transient charm, and (like an entirely cloudless sky when one is going mountaineering) to make the day extraordinarily propitious for a walk in this direction; I should have liked to see their reckoning proved false, to see, by a miracle, Mlle. Swann appear, with her father, so close to us that we should not have time to escape, and should therefore be obliged to make her acquaintance. And so, when I suddenly noticed a straw basket lying forgotten on the grass by the side of a line whose float was bobbing in the water, I made a great effort to keep my father and grandfather looking in another direction, away from this sign that she might, after all, be in residence. Still, as Swann had told us that he ought not, really, to go away just then, as he had some people staying in the house, the line might equally belong to one of these guests. Not a footstep was to be heard on any of the paths. Somewhere in one of the tall trees, making a stage in its height, an invisible bird, desperately attempting to make the day seem shorter, was exploring with a long, continuous note the solitude that pressed it on every side, but it received at once so unanimous an answer, so powerful a repercussion of silence and of immobility that, one would have said, it had arrested for all eternity the moment which it had been

trying to make pass more quickly. The sunlight fell so implacably from a fixed sky that one was naturally inclined to slip away out of the reach of its attentions, and even the slumbering water, whose repose was perpetually being invaded by the insects that swarmed above its surface, while it dreamed, no doubt, of some imaginary maelstrom, intensified the uneasiness which the sight of that floating cork had wrought in me, by appearing to draw it at full speed across the silent reaches of a mirrored firmament; now almost vertical, it seemed on the point of plunging down out of sight, and I had begun to ask myself whether, setting aside the longing and the terror that I had of making her acquaintance, it was not actually my duty to warn Mlle. Swann that the fish was biting—when I was obliged to run after my father and grandfather, who were calling me, and were surprised that I had not followed them along the little path, climbing up hill towards the open fields, into which they had already turned. I found the whole path throbbing with the fragrance of hawthorn-blossom. The hedge resembled a series of chapels, whose walls were no longer visible under the mountains of flowers that were heaped upon their altars; while underneath, the sun cast a square of light upon the ground, as though it had shone in upon them through a window; the scent that swept out over me from them was as rich, and as circumscribed in its range, as though I had been standing before the Lady-altar, and the flowers, themselves adorned also, held out each its little bunch of glittering stamens with an air of inattention, fine, radiating 'nerves' in the flamboyant style of architecture, like those which, in church, framed the stair to the rood-loft or closed the perpendicular tracery of the windows, but here spread out into pools of fleshy white, like strawberry-beds in spring. How simple and rustic, in comparison with these, would seem the dog-roses which, in a few weeks' time, would be climbing the same hillside path in the heat of the sun, dressed in the smooth silk of their blushing pink bodices, which would be undone and scattered by the first breath of wind.

But it was in vain that I lingered before the hawthorns, to breathe in, to marshal before my mind (which knew not what to make of it), to lose in order to rediscover their invisible and unchanging odour, to absorb myself in the rhythm which disposed their flowers here and there with the light-heartedness of youth, and at intervals as unexpected as certain intervals of music; they offered me an indefinite continuation of the same charm, in an inexhaustible profusion, but without letting me delve into it any more deeply, like those melodies which one can play over a hundred times in succession without coming any nearer to their secret. I turned away from them for a moment so as to be able to return to them with renewed strength. My eyes followed up the slope which, outside the hedge, rose steeply to the fields, a poppy that had

strayed and been lost by its fellows, or a few cornflowers that had fallen lazily behind, and decorated the ground here and there with their flowers like the border of a tapestry, in which may be seen at intervals hints of the rustic theme which appears triumphant in the panel itself; infrequent still, spaced apart as the scattered houses which warn us that we are approaching a village, they betokened to me the vast expanse of waving corn beneath the fleecy clouds, and the sight of a single poppy hoisting upon its slender rigging and holding against the breeze its scarlet ensign, over the buoy of rich black earth from which it sprang, made my heart beat as does a wayfarer's when he perceives, upon some low-lying ground, an old and broken boat which is being caulked and made seaworthy, and cries out, although he has not yet caught sight of it, "The Sea!"

And then I returned to my hawthorns, and stood before them as one stands before those masterpieces of painting which, one imagines, one will be better able to 'take in' when one has looked away, for a moment, at something else; but in vain did I shape my fingers into a frame, so as to have nothing but the hawthorns before my eyes; the sentiment which they aroused in me remained obscure and vague, struggling and failing to free itself, to float across and become one with the flowers. They themselves offered me no enlightenment, and I could not call upon any other flowers to satisfy this mysterious longing. And then, inspiring me with that rapture which we feel on seeing a work by our favourite painter quite different from any of those that we already know, or, better still, when some one has taken us and set us down in front of a picture of which we have hitherto seen no more than a pencilled sketch, or when a piece of music which we have heard played over on the piano bursts out again in our ears with all the splendour and fullness of an orchestra, my grandfather called me to him, and, pointing to the hedge of Tansonville, said: "You are fond of hawthorns; just look at this pink one; isn't it pretty?"

And it was indeed a hawthorn, but one whose flowers were pink, and lovelier even than the white. It, too, was in holiday attire, for one of those days which are the only true holidays, the holy days of religion, because they are not appointed by any capricious accident, as secular holidays are appointed, upon days which are not specially ordained for such observances, which have nothing about them that is essentially festal—but it was attired even more richly than the rest, for the flowers which clung to its branches, one above another, so thickly as to leave no part of the tree undecorated, like the tassels wreathed about the crook of a rococo shepherdess, were every one of them 'in colour,' and consequently of a superior quality, by the aesthetic standards of Combray, to the 'plain,' if one was to judge by the scale of prices at the 'stores' in the Square, or at Camus's, where the most expensive biscuits

were those whose sugar was pink. And for my own part I set a higher value on cream cheese when it was pink, when I had been allowed to tinge it with crushed strawberries. And these flowers had chosen precisely the colour of some edible and delicious thing, or of some exquisite addition to one's costume for a great festival, which colours, inasmuch as they make plain the reason for their superiority, are those whose beauty is most evident to the eyes of children, and for that reason must always seem more vivid and more natural than any other tints, even after the child's mind has realised that they offer no gratification to the appetite, and have not been selected by the dressmaker. And, indeed, I had felt at once, as I had felt before the white blossom, but now still more marvelling, that it was in no artificial manner, by no device of human construction, that the festal intention of these flowers was revealed, but that it was Nature herself who had spontaneously expressed it (with the simplicity of a woman from a village shop, labouring at the decoration of a street altar for some procession) by burying the bush in these little rosettes, almost too ravishing in colour, this rustic 'pompadour.' High up on the branches, like so many of those tiny rose-trees, their pots concealed in jackets of paper lace, whose slender stems rise in a forest from the altar on the greater festivals, a thousand buds were swelling and opening, paler in colour, but each disclosing as it burst, as at the bottom of a cup of pink marble, its blood-red stain, and suggesting even more strongly than the full-blown flowers the special, irresistible quality of the hawthorn-tree, which, wherever it budded, wherever it was about to blossom, could bud and blossom in pink flowers alone. Taking its place in the hedge, but as different from the rest as a young girl in holiday attire among a crowd of dowdy women in everyday clothes, who are staying at home, equipped and ready for the 'Month of Mary,' of which it seemed already to form a part, it shone and smiled in its cool, rosy garments, a Catholic bush indeed, and altogether delightful.