Meanwhile on those tea-party days, pulling myself up the staircase step by step, reason and memory already cast off like outer garments, and myself no more now than the sport of the basest reflexes, I would arrive in the zone in which the scent of Mme. Swann greeted my nostrils. I felt that I could already behold the majesty of the chocolate cake, encircled by plates heaped with little cakes, and by tiny napkins of grey damask with figures on them, as required by convention but peculiar to the Swanns. But this unalterable and governed whole seemed, like Kant's necessary universe, to depend on a supreme act of free-will. For when we were all together in Gilberte's little sitting-room, suddenly she would look at the clock and exclaim:

"I say! It's getting a long time since luncheon, and we aren't having dinner till eight. I feel as if I could eat something. What do you say?"

And she would make us go into the dining-room, as sombre as the interior of an Asiatic Temple painted by Rembrandt, in which an architectural cake, as gracious and sociable as it was imposing, seemed to be enthroned there in any event, in case the fancy seized Gilberte to discrown it of its chocolate battlements and to hew down the steep brown slopes of its ramparts, baked in the oven like the bastions of the palace of Darius. Better still, in proceeding to the demolition of that Babylonitish pastry, Gilberte did not consider only her own hunger; she inquired also after mine, while she extracted for me from the crumbling monument a whole glazed slab jewelled with scarlet fruits, in the oriental style. She asked me even at what o'clock my parents were dining, as if I still knew, as if the disturbance that governed me had allowed to persist the sensation of satiety or of hunger, the notion of dinner or the picture of my family in my empty memory and paralysed stomach. Alas, its paralysis was but momentary. The cakes that I took without noticing them, a time would come when I should have to digest them. But that time was still remote. Meanwhile Gilberte was making "my" tea. I went on drinking it indefinitely, whereas a single cup would keep me awake for twenty-four hours. Which explains why my mother used always to say: "What a nuisance it is; he can never go to the Swanns' without coming home ill." But was I aware even, when I was at the Swanns', that it was tea that I was drinking? Had I known, I should have taken it just the same, for even supposing that I had recovered for a moment the sense of the present, that would not have restored to me the memory of the past or the apprehension of the future. My imagination was incapable of reaching to the distant time in which I might have the idea of going to bed, and the need to sleep.

Gilberte's girl friends were not all plunged in that state of intoxication in which it is impossible to make up one's mind. Some of them refused tea! Then Gilberte would say, using a phrase highly fashionable that I year: "I can see I'm not having much of a success with my tea!" And to destroy more completely any idea of ceremony, she

would disarrange the chairs that were drawn up round the table, with: "We look just like a wedding breakfast. Good lord, what fools servants are!"

She nibbled her cake, perched sideways upon a cross-legged seat placed at an angle to the table. And then, just as though she could have had all those cakes at her disposal without having first asked leave of her mother, when Mme. Swann, whose "day" coincided as a rule with Gilberte's tea-parties, had shewn one of her visitors to the door, and came sweeping in, a moment later, dressed sometimes in blue velvet, more often in a black satin gown draped with white lace, she would say with an air of astonishment: "I say, that looks good, what you've got there. It makes me quite hungry to see you all eating cake."

"But, Mamma, do! We invite you!" Gilberte would answer.

"Thank you, no, my precious; what would my visitors say? I've still got Mme. Trombert and Mme. Cottard and Mme. Bontemps; you know dear Mme. Bontemps never pays very short visits, and she has only just come. What would all those good people say if I never went back to them? If no one else calls, I'll come in again and have a chat with you (which will be far more amusing) after they've all gone. I really think I've earned a little rest; I have had forty-five different people to-day, and forty-two of them told me about Gérôme's picture! But you must come along one of these days," she turned to me, "and take 'your' tea with Gilberte. She will make it for you just as you like it, as you have it in your own little 'studio'," she went on, flying off to her visitors, as if it had been something as familiar to me as my own habits (such as the habit that I should have had of taking tea, had I ever taken it; as for my "studio", I was uncertain whether I had one or not) that I had come to seek in this mysterious world. "When can you come? To-morrow? We will make you 'toast' every bit as good, as you get at Colombin's. No? You are horrid!"—for, since she also had begun to form a salon, she had borrowed Mme. Verdurin's mannerisms, and notably her tone of petulant autocracy. "Toast" being as incomprehensible to me as "Colombin's", this further promise could not add to my temptation. It will appear stranger still, now that everyone uses such expressions—and perhaps even at Combray they are creeping in—that I had not at first understood of whom Mme. Swann was speaking when I heard her sing the praises of our old "nurse". I did not know any English; I gathered, however, as she went on that the word was intended to denote Françoise. I who, in the Champs-Elysées, had been so terrified of the bad impression that she must make, I now learned from Mme. Swann that it was all the things that Gilberte had told them about my "nurse" that had attracted her husband and her to me. "One feels that she is so devoted to you; she must be nice!" (At once my opinion of Françoise was diametrically changed. By the same token, to have a governess equipped with a waterproof and a feather in her hat

no longer appeared quite so essential.) Finally I learned from some words which Mme. Swann let fall with regard to Mme. Blatin (whose good nature she recognised but dreaded her visits) that personal relations with that lady would have been of less value to me than I had supposed, and would not in any way have improved my standing with the Swanns.

If I had now begun to explore, with tremors of reverence and joy the faery domain which, against all probability, had opened to me its hitherto locked approaches, this was still only in my capacity as a friend of Gilberte. The kingdom into which I was received was itself contained within another, more mysterious still, in which Swann and his wife led their supernatural existence and towards which they made their way, after taking my hand in theirs, when they crossed the hall at the same moment as myself but in the other direction. But soon I was to penetrate also to the heart of the Sanctuary. For instance, Gilberte might be out when I called, but M. or Mme. Swann was at home. They would ask who had rung, and on being told that it was myself would send out to ask me to come in for a moment and talk to them, desiring me to use in one way or another, and with this or that object in view, my influence over their daughter. I reminded myself of that letter, so complete, so convincing, which I had written to Swann only the other day, and which he had not deigned even to acknowledge. I marvelled at the impotence of the mind, the reason and the heart to effect the least conversion, to solve a single one of those difficulties which, in the sequel, life, without one's so much as knowing what steps it has taken, so easily unravels. My new position as the friend of Gilberte, endowed with an excellent influence over her, entitling me now to enjoy the same favours as if, having had as a companion at some school where they had always put me at the head of my class the son of a king, I had owed to that accident the right of informal entry into the palace and to audiences in the throne-room, Swann, with an infinite benevolence and as though he were not overburdened with glorious occupations, would make me go into his library and there let me for an hour on end respond in stammered monosyllables, timid silences broken by brief and incoherent bursts of courage, to utterances of which my emotion prevented me from understanding a single word; would shew me works of art and books which he thought likely to interest me, things as to which I had no doubt, before seeing them, that they infinitely surpassed in beauty anything that the Louvre possessed or the National Library, but at which I found it impossible to look. At such moments I should have been grateful to Swann's butler, had he demanded from me my watch, my tie-pin, my boots, and made me sign a deed acknowledging him as my heir: in the admirable words of a popular expression of which, as of the most famous epics, we do not know who was the author, although,

like those epics, and with all deference to Wolff and his theory, it most certainly had an author, one of those inventive, modest souls such as we come across every year, who light upon such gems as "putting a name to a face", though their own names they never let us learn, I did not know what I was doing. All the greater was my astonishment, when my visit was prolonged, at finding to what a zero of realisation, to what an absence of happy ending those hours spent in the enchanted dwelling led me. But my disappointment arose neither from the inadequacy of the works of art that were shewn to me nor from the impossibility of fixing upon them my distracted gaze. For it was not the intrinsic beauty of the objects themselves that made it miraculous for me to be sitting in Swann's library, it was the attachment to those objects—which might have been the ugliest in the world—of the particular feeling, melancholy and voluptuous, which I had for so many years localised in that room and which still impregnated it; similarly the multitude of mirrors, of silver-backed brushes, of altars to Saint Anthony of Padua, carved and painted by the most eminent artists, her friends, counted for nothing in the feeling of my own unworthiness and of her regal benevolence which was aroused in me when Mme. Swann received me for a moment in her own room, in which three beautiful and impressive creatures, her principal and second and third maids, smilingly prepared for her the most marvellous toilets, and towards which, on the order conveyed to me by the footman in knee-breeches that Madame wished to say a few words to me, I would make my way along the tortuous path of a corridor all embalmed, far and near, by the precious essences which exhaled without ceasing from her dressing-room a fragrance exquisitely sweet.

When Mme. Swann had returned to her visitors, we could still hear her talking and laughing, for even with only two people in the room, and as though she had to cope with all the "good friends" at once, she would raise her voice, ejaculate her words, as she had so often in the "little clan" heard its "Mistress" do, at the moments when she "led the conversation". The expressions which we have borrowed from other people being those which, for a time at least, we are fondest of using, Mme. Swann used to select at one time those which she had learned from distinguished people whom her husband had not managed to prevent her from getting to know (it was from them that she derived the mannerism which consists in suppressing the article or demonstrative pronoun, in French, before an adjective qualifying a person's name), at another time others more plebeian (such as "It's a mere nothing!" the favourite expression of one of her friends), and used to make room for them in all the stories which, by a habit formed among the "little clan", she loved to tell about people. She would follow these up automatically with, "I do love that story!" or "Do admit, it's a very *good* story!" which came to her, through her husband, from the Guermantes, whom she did not know.

Mme. Swann had left the dining-room, but her husband, who had just returned home, made his appearance among us in turn. "Do you know if your mother is alone, Gilberte?" "No, Papa, she has still some people." "What, still? At seven o'clock! It's appalling! The poor woman must be absolutely dead. It's odious." (At home I had always heard the first syllable of this word pronounced with a long 'o', like "ode", but M. and Mme. Swann made it short, as in "odd".) "Just think of it; ever since two o'clock this afternoon!" he went on, turning to me. "And Camille tells me that between four and five he let in at least a dozen people. Did I say a dozen? I believe he told me fourteen. No, a dozen; I don't remember. When I came home I had quite forgotten it was her 'day', and when I saw all those carriages outside the door I thought there must be a wedding in the house. And just now, while I've been in the library for a minute, the bell has never stopped ringing; upon my word, it's given me quite a headache. And are there a lot of them in there still?" "No; only two." "Who are they, do you know?" "Mme. Cottard and Mme. Bontemps." "Oh! the wife of the Chief Secretary to the Minister of Posts." "I know her husband's a clerk in some Ministry or other, but I don't know what he does." Gilberte assumed a babyish manner.

"What's that? You silly child, you talk as if you were two years old. What do you mean; 'a clerk in some Ministry or other' indeed! He is nothing less than Chief Secretary, chief of the whole show, and what's more—what on earth am I thinking of? Upon my word, I'm getting as stupid as yourself; he is not the Chief Secretary, he's the Permanent Secretary."

"I don't know, I'm sure; does that mean a lot, being Permanent Secretary?" answered Gilberte, who never let slip an opportunity of displaying her own indifference to anything that gave her parents cause for vanity. (She may, of course, have considered that she only enhanced the brilliance of such an acquaintance by not seeming to attach any undue importance to it.)

"I should think it did 'mean a lot'!" exclaimed Swann, who preferred to this modesty, which might have left me in doubt, a more explicit mode of speech. "Why it means simply that he's the first man after the Minister. In fact, he's more important than the Minister, because it is he that does all the work. Besides, it appears that he has immense capacity, a man quite of the first rank, a most distinguished individual. He's an Officer of the Legion of Honour. A delightful man, he is, and very good-looking too."

(This man's wife, incidentally, had married him against everyone's wishes and advice because he was a c charming creature'. He had, what may be sufficient to constitute a rare and delicate whole, a fair, silky beard, good features, a nasal voice, powerful lungs and a glass eye.)

"I may tell you," he added, turning again to me, "that I am greatly amused to see that lot serving in the present Government, because they are Bontemps of the Bontemps-Chenut family, typical old-fashioned middle class people, reactionary, clerical, tremendously strait-laced. Your grandfather knew quite well—at least by name and by sight he must have known old Chenut, the father, who never tipped the cabmen more than a ha'penny, though he was a rich enough man for those days, and the Baron Bréau-Chenut. All their money went in the Union Générale smash—you're too young to remember that, of course—and, gad! they've had to get it back as best they could."

"He's the uncle of a little girl who used to come to my lessons, in a class a long way below mine, the famous 'Albertine'. She's certain to be dreadfully 'fast' when she's older, but just now she's the quaintest spectacle." "She is amazing, this daughter of mine. She knows everyone."

"I don't know her. I only used to see her going about, and hear them calling 'Albertine' here, and 'Albertine' there. But I do know Mme. Bontemps, and I don't like her much either."

"You are quite wrong; she is charming, pretty, intelligent. In fact, she's quite clever. I shall go in and say how d'ye do to her, and ask her if her husband thinks we're going to have war, and whether we can rely on King Theodosius. He's bound to know, don't you think, since he's in the counsels of the gods."

It was not thus that Swann used to talk in days gone by; but which of us cannot call to mind some royal princess of limited intelligence who let herself be carried off by a footman, and then, ten years later, tried to get back into society, and found that people were not very willing to call upon her; have we not found her spontaneously adopting the language of all the old bores, and, when we referred to some duchess who was at the height of fashion, heard her say: "She came to see me only yesterday," or "I live a very quiet life." So that it is superfluous to make a study of manners, since we can deduce them all from psychological laws.

The Swanns shared this eccentricity of people who have not many friends; a visit, an invitation, a mere friendly word from some one ever so little prominent were for them events to which they aspired to give full publicity. If bad luck would have it that the Verdurins were in London when Odette gave a rather smart dinner-party, arrangements were made by which some common friend was to "cable" a report to them across the Channel. Even the complimentary letters and telegrams received by Odette the Swanns were incapable of keeping to themselves. They spoke of them to their friends, passed them from hand to hand. Thus the Swanns' drawing-room

reminded one of a seaside hotel where telegrams containing the latest news are posted up on a board.

Still, people who had known the old Swann not merely Outside society, as I had known him, but in society, in that Guermantes set which, with certain concessions to Highnesses and Duchesses, was almost infinitely exacting in the matter of wit and charm, from which banishment was sternly decreed for men of real eminence whom its members found boring or vulgar,—such people might have been astonished to observe that their old Swann had ceased to be not only discreet when he spoke of his acquaintance, but difficult when he was called upon to enlarge it. How was it that Mme. Bontemps, so common, so ill-natured, failed to exasperate him? How could he possibly describe her as attractive? The memory of the Guermantes set must, one would suppose, have prevented him; as a matter of fact it encouraged him. There was certainly among the Guermantes, as compared with the great majority of groups in society, taste, indeed a refined taste, but also a snobbishness from which there arose the possibility of a momentary interruption in the exercise of that taste. If it were a question of some one who was not indispensable to their circle, of a Minister for Foreign Affairs, a Republican and inclined to be pompous, or of an Academician who talked too much, their taste would be brought to bear heavily against him, Swann would condole with Mme. de Guermantes on having had to sit next to such people at dinner at one of the Embassies, and they would a thousand times rather have a man of fashion, that is to say a man of the Guermantes kind, good for nothing, but endowed with the wit of the Guermantes, some one who was "of the same chapel" as themselves. Only, a Grand Duchess, a Princess of the Blood, should she dine often with Mme. de Guermantes, would soon find herself enrolled in that chapel also, without having any right to be there, without being at all so endowed. But with the simplicity of people in society, from the moment they had her in their houses they went out of their way to find her attractive, since they were unable to say that it was because she was attractive that they invited her. Swann, coming to the rescue of Mme. de Guermantes, would say to her after the Highness had gone: "After all, she's not such a bad woman; really, she has quite a sense of the comic. I don't suppose for a moment that she has mastered the *Critique of Pure Reason*; still, she is not unattractive." "Oh, I do so entirely agree with you!" the Duchess would respond. "Besides, she was a little frightened of us all; you will see that she can be charming." "She is certainly a great deal less devastating than Mme. X——" (the wife of the talkative Academician, and herself a remarkable woman) "who quotes twenty volumes at you." "Oh, but there isn't any comparison between them." The faculty of saying such things as these, and of saying them sincerely, Swann had acquired from

the Duchess, and had never lost. He made use of it now with reference to the people who came to his house. He forced himself to distinguish, and to admire in them the qualities that every human being will display if we examine him with a prejudice in his favour, and not with the distaste of the nice-minded; he extolled the merits of Mme. Bontemps, as he had once extolled those of the Princesse de Parme, who must have been excluded from the Guermantes set if there had not been privileged terms of admission for certain Highnesses, and if, when they presented themselves for election, no consideration had indeed been paid except to wit and charm. We have seen already, moreover, that Swann had always an inclination (which he was now putting into practice, only in a more lasting fashion) to exchange his social position for another which, in certain circumstances, might suit him better. It is only people incapable of analysing, in their perception, what at first sight appears indivisible who believe that one's position is consolidated with one's person. One and the same man, taken at successive points in his life, will be found to breathe, at different stages on the social ladder, in atmospheres that do not of necessity become more and more refined; whenever, in any period of our existence, we form or re-form associations with a certain environment, and feel that we can move at ease in it and are made comfortable, we begin quite naturally to make ourselves fast to it by putting out roots and tendrils.

In so far as Mme. Bontemps was concerned, I believe also that Swann, in speaking of her with so much emphasis, was not sorry to think that my parents would hear that she had been to see his wife. To tell the truth, in our house the names of the people whom Mme. Swann was gradually getting to know pricked our curiosity more than they aroused our admiration. At the name of Mme. Trombert, my mother exclaimed: "Ah! That's a new recruit, and one who will bring in others." And as though she found a similarity between the somewhat summary, rapid and violent manner in which Mme. Swann acquired her friends, as it were by conquest, and a Colonial expedition, Mamma went on to observe: "Now that the Tromberts have surrendered, the neighbouring tribes will not be long in coming in." If she had passed Mme. Swann in the street, she would tell us when she came home: "I saw Mme. Swann in all her war-paint; she must have been embarking on some triumphant offensive against the Massachutoes, or the Cingalese, or the Tromberts." And so with all the new people whom I told her that I had seen in that somewhat composite and artificial society, to which they had often been brought with great difficulty and from widely different surroundings, Mamma would at once divine their origin, and, speaking of them as of trophies dearly bought, would say: "Brought back from an Expedition against the so-and-so!"

As for Mme. Cottard, my father was astonished that Mme. Swann could find anything to be gained by getting so utterly undistinguished a woman to come to her house, and said: "In spite of the Professor's position, I must say that I cannot understand it." Mamma, on the other hand, understood quite well; she knew that a great deal of the pleasure which a woman finds in entering a class of society different from that in which she has previously lived would be lacking if she had no means of keeping her old associates informed of those others, relatively more brilliant, with whom she has replaced them. Therefore, she requires an eye-witness who may be allowed to penetrate this new, delicious world (as a buzzing, browsing insect bores its way into a flower) and will then, as the course of her visits may carry her, spread abroad, or so at least one hopes, with the tidings, a latent germ of envy and of wonder. Mme. Cottard, who might have been created on purpose to fill this part, belonged to that special category in a visiting list which Mamma (who inherited certain facets of her father's turn of mind) used to call the "Tell Sparta" people. Besides—apart from another reason which did not come to our knowledge until many years later—Mme. Swann, in inviting this good-natured, reserved and modest friend, had no need to fear lest she might be introducing into her drawing-room, on her brilliant "days", a traitor or a rival. She knew what a vast number of homely blossoms that busy worker, armed with her plume and card-case, could visit in a single afternoon. She knew the creature's power of dissemination, and, basing her calculations upon the law of probability, was led to believe that almost certainly some intimate of the Verdurins would be bound to hear, within two or three days, how the Governor of Paris had left cards upon her, or that M. Verdurin himself would be told how M. Le Hault de Pressagny, the President of the Horse Show, had taken them, Swann and herself, to the King Theodosius gala; she imagined the Verdurins as informed of these two events, both so flattering to herself and of these alone, because the particular materialisations in which we embody and pursue fame are but few in number, by the default of our own minds which are incapable of imagining at one time all the forms which, none the less, we hope—in a general way—that fame will not fail simultaneously to assume for our benefit.

Mme. Swann had, however, met with no success outside what was called the "official world". Smart women did not go to her house. It was not the presence there of Republican "notables" that frightened them away. In the days of my early childhood, conservative society was to the last degree worldly, and no "good" house would ever have opened its doors to a Republican. The people who lived in such an atmosphere imagined that the impossibility of ever inviting an "opportunist"—still more, a "horrid radical"—to their parties was something that would endure for ever, like oil-lamps and horse-drawn omnibuses. But, like at kaleidoscope which is every now and then given

a turn, society arranges successively in different orders elements which one would have supposed to be immovable, and composes a fresh pattern. Before I had made my first Communion, ladies on the "right side" in politics had had the stupefaction of meeting, while paying calls, a smart Jewess. These new arrangements of the kaleidoscope are produced by what a philosopher would call a "change of criterion". The Dreyfus case brought about another, at a period rather later than that in which I began to go to Mme. Swann's, and the kaleidoscope scattered once again its little scraps of colour. Everything Jewish, even the smart lady herself, fell out of the pattern, and various obscure nationalities appeared in its place. The most brilliant drawing-room in Paris was that of a Prince who was an Austrian and ultra-Catholic. If instead of the Dreyfus case there had come a war with Germany, the base of the kaleidoscope would have been turned in the other direction, and its pattern reversed. The Jews having shewn, to the general astonishment, that they were patriots also, would have kept their position, and no one would have cared to go any more, or even to admit that he had ever gone to the Austrian Prince's. All this does not, however, prevent the people who move in it from imagining, whenever society is stationary for the moment, that no further change will occur, just as in spite of having witnessed the birth of the telephone they decline to believe in the aeroplane. Meanwhile the philosophers of journalism are at work, castigating the preceding epoch, and not only the kind of pleasures in which it indulged, which seem to them to be the last word in corruption, but even the work of its artists and philosophers, which have no longer the least value in their eyes, as though they were indissolubly linked to the successive moods of fashionable frivolity. The one thing that does not change is that at any and every time it appears that there have been "great changes". At the time when I went to Mme. Swann's the Dreyfus storm had not yet broken, and some of the more prominent Jews were extremely powerful. None more so than Sir Rufus Israels, whose wife, Lady Israels, was Swann's aunt. She had not herself any intimate acquaintance so distinguished as her nephew's, while he, since he did not care for her, had never much cultivated her society, although he was, so far as was known, her heir. But she was the only one of Swann's relatives who had any idea of his social position, the others having always remained in the state of ignorance, in that respect, which had long been our own. When, from a family circle, one of its members emigrates into "high society"—which to him appears a feat without parallel until after the lapse of a decade he observes that it has been performed in other ways and for different reasons by more than one of the men whom he knew as boys—he draws round about himself a zone of shadow, a *terra incognita*, which is clearly visible in its minutest details to all those who inhabit it with him, but is darkest night and nothingness to those who may not penetrate it but touch its fringe without the least suspicion of its existence in their

midst. There being no news agency to furnish Swann's lady cousins with intelligence of the people with whom he consorted, it was (before his appalling marriage, of course) with a smile of condescension that they would tell one another, over family dinner-tables, that they had spent a "virtuous" Sunday in going to see "cousin Charles", whom (regarding him as a "poor relation" who was inclined to envy their prosperity,) they used wittily to name, playing upon the title of Balzac's story, "Le Cousin Bête". Lady Israels, however, was letter-perfect in the names and quality of the people who lavished upon Swann a friendship of which she was frankly jealous. Her husband's family, which almost equalled the Rothschilds in importance, had for several generations managed the affairs of the Orleans Princes. Lady Israels, being immensely rich, exercised a wide influence, and had employed it so as to ensure that no one whom she knew should be "at home" to Odette. One only had disobeyed her, in secret, the Comtesse de Marsantes. And then, as ill luck would have it, Odette having gone to call upon Mme. de Marsantes, Lady Israels had entered the room almost at her heels. Mme. de Marsantes was on tenter-hooks. With the craven impotence of those who are at liberty to act as they choose, she did not address a single word to Odette, who thus found little encouragement to press farther the invasion of a world which, moreover, was not at all that into which she would have liked to be welcomed. In this complete detachment of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Odette continued to be regarded as the illiterate "light woman", utterly different from the respectable ladies, "well up" in all the minutest points of genealogy, who endeavoured to quench by reading biographies and memoirs their thirst for the aristocratic relations with which real life had omitted to provide them. And Swann, for his part, continued no doubt to be the lover in whose eyes all these peculiarities of an old mistress would appear lovable or at least inoffensive, for I have often heard his wife profess what were really social heresies, without his attempting (whether from lingering affection for her, loss of regard for society or weariness of the effort to make her perfect) to correct them. It was perhaps also another form of the simplicity which for so long had misled us at Combray, and which now had the effect that, while he continued to know, on his own account at least, many highly distinguished people, he did not make a point, in conversation in his wife's drawing-room, of our seeming to feel that they were of the smallest importance. They had, indeed, less than ever for Swann, the centre of gravity of his life having been displaced. In any case, Odette's ignorance of social distinctions was so dense that if the name of the Princesse de Guermantes were mentioned in conversation after that of the Duchess, her cousin, "So those ones are Princes, are they?" she would exclaim; "Why, they've gone up a step." Were anyone to say "the Prince", in speaking of the Duc de Chartres, she would put him right with, "The Duke, you mean; he is Duc de Chartres, not Prince." As for the

Duc d'Orléans, son of the Comte de Paris: "That's funny; the son is higher than the father!" she would remark, adding, for she was afflicted with anglomania, "Those *Royalties* are so dreadfully confusing!"—while to someone who asked her from what province the Guermantes family came she replied, "From the Aisne."

But, so far as Odette was concerned, Swann was quite blind, not merely to these deficiencies in her education but to the general mediocrity of her intelligence. More than that; whenever Odette repeated a silly story Swann would sit listening to his wife with a complacency, a merriment, almost an admiration into which some survival of his desire for her must have entered; while in the same conversation, anything subtle, anything deep even that he himself might say would be listened to by Odette with an habitual lack of interest, rather curtly, with impatience, and would at times be sharply contradicted. And we must conclude that this enslavement of refinement by vulgarity is the rule in many households, when we think, conversely, of all the superior women who yield to the blandishments of a boor, merciless in his censure of their most delicate utterances, while they go into ecstasies, with the infinite indulgence of love, over the feeblest of his witticisms. To return to the reasons which prevented Odette, at this period, from making her way into the Faubourg Saint-Germain, it must be observed that the latest turn of the social kaleidoscope had been actuated by a series of scandals. Women to whose houses one had been going with entire confidence had been discovered to be common prostitutes, if not British spies. One would, therefore, for some time to come expect people (so, at least, one supposed) to be, before anything else, in a sound position, regular, settled, accountable. Odette represented simply everything with which one had just severed relations, and was incidentally to renew them at once (for men, their natures not altering from day to day, seek in every new order a continuance of the old) but to renew them by seeking it under another form which would allow one to be innocently taken in, and to believe that it was no longer the same society as before the disaster. However, the scapegoats of that society and Odette were too closely alike. People who move in society are very short-sighted; at the moment in which they cease to have any relations with the Israelite ladies whom they have known, while they are asking themselves how they are to fill the gap thus made in their lives, they perceive, thrust into it as by the windfall of a night of storm, a new lady, an Israelite also; but by virtue of her novelty she is not associated in their minds with her predecessors, with what they are convinced that they must abjure. She does not ask that they shall respect her God. They take her up. There was no question of anti-semitism at the time when I used first to visit Odette. But she was like enough to it to remind people of what they wished, for a while, to avoid.

As for Swann himself, he was still a frequent visitor of several of his former acquaintance, who, of course, were all of the very highest rank. And yet when he spoke to us of the people whom he had just been to see I noticed that, among those whom he had known in the old days, the choice that he made was dictated by the same kind of taste, partly artistic partly historic, that inspired him as a collector. And remarking that it was often some great lady or other of waning reputation, who interested him because she had been the mistress of Liszt or because one of Balzac's novels was dedicated to her grandmother (as he would purchase a drawing if Chateaubriand had written about it) I conceived a suspicion that we had, at Combray, replaced one error, that of regarding Swann as a mere stockbroker, who did not go into society, by another, when we supposed him to be one of the smartest men in Paris. To be a friend of the Comte de Paris meant nothing at all. Is not the world full of such "friends of Princes", who would not be received in any house that was at all "exclusive"? Princes know themselves to be princes, and are not snobs; besides, they believe themselves to be so far above everything that is not of their blood royal that great nobles and "business men" appear, in the depths beneath them, to be practically on a level.

But Swann went farther than this; not content with seeking in society, such as it was, when he fastened upon the names which, inscribed upon its roll by the past, were still to be read there, a simple artistic and literary pleasure, he indulged in the slightly vulgar diversion of arranging as it were social nosegays by grouping heterogeneous elements, bringing together people taken at hazard, here, there and everywhere. These experiments in the lighter side (or what was to Swann the lighter side) of sociology did not stimulate an identical reaction, with any regularity, that is to say, in each of his wife's friends. "I'm thinking of asking the Cottards to meet the Duchesse de Vendôme," he would laughingly say to Mme. Bontemps, in the appetised tone of an epicure who has thought of, and intends to try the substitution, in a sauce, of cayenne pepper for cloves. But this plan, which was, in fact, to appear quite humorous, in an archaic sense of the word, to the Cottards, had also the power of infuriating Mme. Bontemps. She herself had recently been presented by the Swanns to the Duchesse de Vendôme, and had found this as agreeable as it seemed to her natural. The thought of winning renown from it at the Cottards', when she related to them what had happened, had been by no means the least savoury ingredient of her pleasure. But like those persons recently decorated who, their investiture once accomplished, would like to see the fountain of honour turned off at the main, Mme. Bontemps would have preferred that, after herself, no one else in her own circle of friends should be made known to the Princess. She denounced (to herself, of course) the licentious taste of

Swann who, in order to gratify a wretched aesthetic whim, was obliging her to scatter to the winds, at one swoop, all the dust that she would have thrown in the eyes of the Cottards when she told them about the Duchesse de Vendôme. How was she even to dare to announce to her husband that the Professor and his wife were in their turn to partake of this pleasure, of which she had boasted to him as though it were unique. And yet, if the Cottards could only be made to know that they were being invited not seriously but for the amusement of their host! It is true that the Bontemps had been invited for the same reason, but Swann, having acquired from the aristocracy that eternal "Don Juan" spirit which, in treating with two women of no importance, makes each of them believe that it is she alone who is seriously loved, had spoken to Mme. Bontemps of the Duchesse de Vendôme as of a person whom it was clearly laid down that she must meet at dinner. "Yes, we're determined to have the Princess here with the Cottards," said Mme. Swann a few weeks later; "My husband thinks that we might get something quite amusing out of that conjunction." For if she had retained from the "little nucleus" certain habits dear to Mme. Verdurin, such as that of shouting things aloud so as to be heard by all the faithful, she made use, at the same time, of certain expressions, such as "conjunction", which were dear to the Guermantes circle, of which she thus felt unconsciously and at a distance, as the sea is swayed by the moon, the attraction, though without being drawn perceptibly closer to it. "Yes, the Cottards and the Duchesse de Vendôme. Don't you think that might be rather fun?" asked Swann. "I think they'll be exceedingly ill-assorted, and it can only lead to a lot of bother; people oughtn't to play with fire, is what I say!" snapped Mme. Bontemps, furious. She and her husband were, all the same, invited, as was the Prince d'Agrigente, to this dinner, which Mme. Bontemps and Cottard had each two alternative ways of describing, according to whom they were telling about it. To one set Mme. Bontemps for her part, and Cottard for his would say casually, when asked who else had been of the party: "Only the Prince d'Agrigente; it was all quite intimate." But there were others who might, alas, be better informed (once, indeed, some one had challenged Cottard with: "But weren't the Bontemps there too?" "Oh, I forgot them," Cottard had blushingly admitted to the tactless questioner whom he ever afterwards classified among slanderers and speakers of evil). For these the Bontemps and Cottards had each adopted, without any mutual arrangement, a version the framework of which was identical for both parties, their own names alone changing places. "Let me see;" Cottard would say, "there were our host and hostess, the Duc and Duchesse de Vendôme—" (with a satisfied smile) "Professor and Mme. Cottard, and, upon my soul, heaven only knows how they got there, for they were about as much in keeping as hairs in the soup, M. and Mme. Bontemps!" Mme. Bontemps would recite an exactly similar "piece", only it was M. and Mme. Bontemps who were

named with a satisfied emphasis between the Duchesse de Vendôme and the Prince d'Agrigente, while the "also ran", whom finally she used to accuse of having invited themselves, and who completely spoiled the party, were the Cottards.

When he had been paying calls Swann would often come home with little time to spare before dinner. At that point in the evening, six o'clock, when in the old days he had felt so wretched, he no longer asked himself what Odette might be about, and was hardly at all concerned to hear that she had people still with her, or had gone out. He recalled at times that he had once, years ago, tried to read through its envelope a letter addressed by Odette to Forcheville. But this memory was not pleasing to him, and rather than plumb the depth of shame that he felt in it he preferred to indulge in a little grimace, twisting up the corners of his mouth and adding, if need be, a shake of the head which signified "What does it all matter?" In truth, he considered now that the hypothesis by which he had often been brought to a standstill in days gone by, according to which it was his jealous imagination alone that blackened what was in reality the innocent life of Odette—that this hypothesis (which after all was beneficent, since, so long as his amorous malady had lasted, it had diminished his sufferings by making them seem imaginary) was not the truth, that it was his jealousy that had seen things in the right light, and that if Odette had loved him better than he supposed, she had deceived him more as well. Formerly, while his sufferings were still keen, he had vowed that, as soon as he should have ceased to love Odette, and so to be afraid either of vexing her or of making her believe that he loved her more than he did, he would afford himself the satisfaction of elucidating with her, simply from his love of truth and as a historical point, whether or not she had had Forcheville in her room that day when he had rung her bell and rapped on her window without being let in, and she had written to Forcheville that it was an uncle of hers who had called. But this so interesting problem, of which he was waiting to attempt the solution only until his jealousy should have subsided, had precisely lost all interest in Swann's eyes when he had ceased to be jealous. Not immediately, however. He felt no other jealousy now with regard to Odette than what the memory of that day, that afternoon spent in knocking vainly at the little house in the Rue Lapérouse, had continued to excite in him; as though his jealousy, not dissimilar in that respect from those maladies which appear to have their seat, their centre of contagion less in certain persons than in certain places, in certain houses, had had for its object not so much Odette herself as that day, that hour in the irrevocable past when Swann had beaten at every entrance to her house in turn. You would have said that that day, that hour alone had caught and preserved a few last fragments of the amorous personality which had once been Swann's, and that there alone could he now recapture them. For

a long time now it had made no matter to him that Odette had been false to him, and was false still. And yet he had continued for some years to seek out old servants of Odette, so strongly in him persisted the painful curiosity to know whether on that day, so long ago, at six o'clock, Odette had been in bed with Forcheville. Then that curiosity itself had disappeared, without, however, his abandoning his investigations. He continued the attempt to discover what no longer interested him, because his old ego though it had shrivelled to the extreme of decrepitude still acted mechanically, following the course of preoccupations so utterly abandoned that Swann could not now succeed even in forming an idea of that anguish—so compelling once that he had been unable to foresee his ever being delivered from it, that only the death of her whom he loved (death which, as will be shewn later on in this story, by a cruel example, in no way diminishes the sufferings caused by jealousy) seemed to him capable of making smooth the road, then insurmountably barred to him, of his life.

But to bring to light, some day, those passages in the life of Odette to which he owed his sufferings had not been Swann's only ambition; he had in reserve that also of wreaking vengeance for his sufferings when, being no longer in love with Odette, he should no longer be afraid of her; and the opportunity of gratifying this second ambition had just occurred, for Swann was in love with another woman, a woman who gave him—grounds for jealousy, no, but who did all the same make him jealous, because he was not capable, now, of altering his way of making love, and it was the way he had used with Odette that must serve him now for another. To make Swann's jealousy revive it was not essential that this woman should be unfaithful, it sufficed that for any reason she was separated from him, at a party for instance, where she was presumably enjoying herself. That was enough to reawaken in him the old anguish, that lamentable and inconsistent excrescence of his love, which held Swann ever at a distance from what she really was, like a yearning to attain the impossible (what this young woman really felt for him, the hidden longing that absorbed her days, the secret places of her heart), for between Swann and her whom he loved this anguish piled up an unyielding mass of already existing suspicions, having their cause in Odette, or in some other perhaps who had preceded Odette, allowing this now ageing lover to know his mistress of the moment only in the traditional and collective phantasm of the "woman who made him jealous", in which he had arbitrarily incarnated his new love. Often, however, Swann would charge his jealousy with the offence of making him believe in imaginary infidelities; but then he would remember that he had given Odette the benefit of the same argument and had in that been wrong. And so everything that the young woman whom he loved did in those hours when he was not with her appeared spoiled of its innocence in his eyes. But whereas

at that other time he had made a vow that if ever he ceased to love her whom he did not then imagine to be his future wife, he would implacably exhibit to her an indifference that would at length be sincere, so as to avenge his pride that had so long been trampled upon by her—of those reprisals which he might now enforce without risk to himself (for what harm could it do him to be taken at his word and deprived of those intimate moments with Odette that had been so necessary to him once), of those reprisals he took no more thought; with his love had vanished the desire to shew that he was in love no longer. And he who, when he was suffering at the hands of Odette, would have looked forward so keenly to letting her see one day that he had fallen to a rival, now that he was in a position to do so took infinite precautions lest his wife should suspect the existence of this new love.

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It was not only in those tea-parties, on account of which I had formerly had the sorrow of seeing Gilberte leave me and go home earlier than usual, that I was henceforth to take part, but the engagements that she had with her mother, to go for a walk or to some afternoon party, which by preventing her from coming to the Champs-Elysées had deprived me of her, on those days when I loitered alone upon the lawn or stood before the wooden horses,—to these outings M. and Mme. Swann henceforth admitted me, I had a seat in their landau, and indeed it was me that they asked if I would rather go to the theatre, to a dancing lesson at the house of one of Gilberte's friends, to some social gathering given by friends of her parents (what Odette called "a little meeting") or to visit the tombs at Saint-Denis.

On days when I was going anywhere with the Swanns I would arrive at the house in time for *déjeuner*, which Mme. Swann called "le lunch"; as one was not expected before half-past twelve, while my parents in those days had their meal at a quarter past eleven, it was not until they had risen from the table that I made my way towards that sumptuous quarter, deserted enough at any hour, but more particularly just then, when everyone had gone indoors. Even on winter days of frost, if the weather held, tightening every few minutes the knot of a gorgeous necktie from Charvet's and looking to see that my varnished boots were not getting dirty, I would roam to and fro among the avenues, waiting until twenty-seven minutes past the hour. I could see from afar in the Swanns' little garden-plot the sunlight glittering like hoar frost from the bare-boughed trees. It is true that the garden boasted but a pair of them. The unusual hour presented the scene in a new light. Into these pleasures of nature (intensified by the suppression of habit and indeed by my physical hunger) the thrilling prospect of sitting down to luncheon with Mme. Swann was infused; it did not diminish them, but

taking command of them trained them to its service; so that if, at this hour when ordinarily I did not perceive them, I seemed now to be discovering the fine weather, the cold, the wintry sunlight, it was all as a sort of preface to the creamed eggs, as a patina, a cool and coloured glaze applied to the decoration of that mystic chapel which was the habitation of Mme. Swann, and in the heart of which there were, by contrast, so much warmth, so many scents and flowers.

At half-past twelve I would finally make up my mind to enter that house which, like an immense Christmas stocking, seemed ready to bestow upon me supernatural delights. (The French name "Noël" was, by the way, unknown to Mme. Swann and Gilberte, who had substituted for it the English "Christmas", and would speak of nothing but "Christmas pudding", what people had given them as "Christmas presents" and of going away—the thought of which maddened me with grief—"for Christmas". At home even, I should have thought it degrading to use the word "Noël", and always said "Christmas", which my father considered extremely silly.)

I encountered no one at first but a footman who after leading me through several large drawing-rooms shewed me into one that was quite small, empty, its windows beginning to dream already in the blue light of afternoon; I was left alone there in the company of orchids, roses and violets, which, like people who are kept waiting in a room beside you but do not know you, preserved a silence which their individuality as living things made all the more impressive, and received coldly the warmth of a glowing fire of coals, preciously displayed behind a screen of crystal, in a basin of white marble over which it spilled, now and again, its perilous rubies.

I had sat down, but I rose hurriedly on hearing the door opened; it was only another footman, and then a third, and the minute result that their vainly alarming entrances and exits achieved was to put a little more coal on the fire or water in the vases. They departed, I found myself alone, once that door was shut which Mme. Swann was surely soon going to open. Of a truth, I should have been less ill at ease in a magician's cave than in this little waiting-room where the fire appeared to me to be performing alchemical transmutations as in Klingsor's laboratory. Footsteps sounded afresh, I did not rise, it was sure to be just another footman; it was M. Swann. "What! All by yourself? What is one to do; that poor wife of mine has never been able to remember what time means! Ten minutes to one. She gets later every day. And you'll see, she will come sailing in without the least hurry, and imagine she's in heaps of time." And as he was still subject to neuritis, and as he was becoming a trifle ridiculous, the fact of possessing so unpunctual a wife, who came in so late from the Bois, forgot everything at her dressmaker's and was never in time for luncheon made Swann anxious for his digestion but flattered his self-esteem.

He shewed me his latest acquisitions and explained their interest to me, but my emotion, added to the unfamiliarity of being still without food at this hour, sweeping through my mind left it void, so that while able to speak I was incapable of hearing. Anyhow, so far as the works of art in Swann's possession were concerned, it was enough for me that they were contained in his house, formed a part there of the delicious hour that preceded luncheon. The Gioconda herself might have appeared there without giving me any more pleasure than one of Mme. Swann's indoor gowns, or her scent bottles.

I continued to wait, alone or with Swann, and often with Gilberte, come in to keep us company. The arrival of Mme. Swann, prepared for me by all those majestic apparitions, must (so it seemed to me) be something truly immense. I strained my ears to catch the slightest sound. But one never finds quite as high as one has been expecting a cathedral, a wave in a storm, a dancer's leap in the air; after those liveried footmen, suggesting the chorus whose processional entry upon the stage leads up to and at the same time diminishes the final appearance of the queen, Mme. Swann, creeping furtively in, with a little otter-skin coat, her veil lowered to cover a nose pink-tipped by the cold, did not fulfil the promises lavished, while I had been waiting, upon my imagination.

But if she had stayed at home all morning, when she arrived in the drawing-room it would be clad in a wrapper of *crêpe-de-Chine*, brightly coloured, which seemed to me more exquisite than any of her dresses.

Sometimes the Swanns decided to remain in the house all afternoon, and then, as we had had luncheon so late, very soon I must watch setting, beyond the garden-wall, the sun of that day which had seemed to me bound to be different from other days; then in vain might the servants bring in lamps of every size and shape, burning each upon the consecrated altar of a console, a card-table, a corner-cupboard, a bracket, as though for the celebration of some strange and secret rite; nothing extraordinary transpired in the conversation, and I went home disappointed, as one often is in one's childhood after the midnight mass.

But my disappointment was scarcely more than mental. I was radiant with happiness in this house where Gilberte, when she was still not with us, was about to appear and would bestow on me in a moment, and for hours to come, her speech, her smiling and attentive gaze, just as I had caught it, that first time, at Combray. At the most I was a trifle jealous when I saw her so often disappear into vast rooms above, reached by a private staircase. Obliged myself to remain in the drawing-room, like a man in love with an actress who is confined to his stall "in front" and wonders anxiously what is

going on behind the scenes, in the green-room, I put to Swann, with regard to this other part of the house questions artfully veiled, but in a tone from which I could not quite succeed in banishing the note of uneasiness. He explained to me that the place to which Gilberte had gone was the linen-room, offered himself to shew it to me, and promised me that whenever Gilberte had occasion to go there again he would insist upon her taking me with her. By these last words and the relief which they brought me Swann at once annihilated for me one of those terrifying interior perspectives at the end of which a woman with whom we are in love appears so remote. At that moment I felt for him an affection which I believed to be deeper than my affection for Gilberte. For he, being the master over his daughter, was giving her to me, whereas she, she withheld herself now and then, I had not the same direct control over her as I had indirectly through Swann. Besides, it was she whom I loved and could not, therefore look upon without that disturbance, without that desire for something more which destroys in us, in the presence of one whom we love, the sensation of loving.

As a rule, however, we did not stay indoors, we went out. Sometimes, before going to dress, Mme. Swann would sit down at the piano. Her lovely hands, escaping from the pink, or white, or, often, vividly coloured sleeves of her *crêpe-de-Chine* wrapper, drooped over the keys with that same melancholy which was in her eyes but was not in her heart. It was on one of those days that she happened to play me the part of Vinteuil's sonata that contained the little phrase of which Swann had been so fond. But often one listens and hears nothing, if it is a piece of music at all complicated to which one is listening for the first time. And yet when, later on, this sonata had been played over to me two or three times I found that I knew it quite well. And so it is not wrong to speak of hearing a thing for the first time. If one had indeed, as one supposes, received no impression from the first hearing, the second, the third would be equally "first hearings" and there would be no reason why one should understand it any better after the tenth. Probably what is wanting, the first time, is not comprehension but memory. For our memory, compared to the complexity of the impressions which it has to face while we are listening, is infinitesimal, as brief as the memory of a man who in his sleep thinks of a thousand things and at once forgets them, or as that of a man in his second childhood who cannot recall, a minute afterwards, what one has just been saying to him. Of these multiple impressions our memory is not capable of furnishing us with an immediate picture. But that picture gradually takes shape, and, with regard to works which we have heard more than once, we are like the schoolboy who has read several times over before going to sleep a lesson which he supposed himself not to know, and finds that he can repeat it by heart next morning. It was only that I had not, until then, heard a note of the sonata,

and where Swann and his wife could make out a distinct phrase that was as far beyond the range of my perception as a name which one endeavours to recall and in place of which one discovers only a void, a void from which, an hour later, when one is not thinking about them, will spring of their own accord, in one continuous flight, the syllables that one has solicited in vain. And not only does one not seize at once and retain an impression of works that are really great, but even in the content of any such work (as befell me in the case of Vinteuil's sonata) it is the least valuable parts that one at first perceives. Thus it was that I was mistaken not only in thinking that this work held nothing further in store for me (so that for a long time I made no effort to hear it again) from the moment in which Mme. Swann had played over to me its most famous passage; I was in this respect as stupid as people are who expect to feel no astonishment when they stand in Venice before the front of Saint Mark's, because photography has already acquainted them with the outline of its domes. Far more than that, even when I had heard the sonata played from beginning to end, it remained almost wholly invisible to me, like a monument of which its distance or a haze in the atmosphere allows us to catch but a faint and fragmentary glimpse. Hence the depression inseparable from one's knowledge of such works, as of everything that acquires reality in time. When the least obvious beauties of Vinteuil's sonata were revealed to me, already, borne by the force of habit beyond the reach of my sensibility, those that I had from die first distinguished and preferred in it were beginning to escape, to avoid me. Since I was able only in successive moments to enjoy all the pleasures that this sonata gave me, I never possessed it in its entirety: it was like life itself. But, less disappointing than life is, great works of art do not begin by giving us all their best. In Vinteuil's sonata the beauties that one discovers at once are those also of which one most soon grows tired, and for the same reason, no doubt, namely that they are less different from what one already knows. But when those first apparitions have withdrawn, there is left for our enjoyment some passage which its composition too new and strange to offer anything but confusion to our mind, had made indistinguishable and so preserved intact; and this, which we have been meeting every day and have not guessed it, which has thus been held in reserve for us, which by the sheer force of its beauty has become invisible and has remained unknown, this comes to us last of all. But this also must be the last that we shall relinquish. And we shall love it longer than the rest because we have taken longer to get to love it. The time, moreover, that a person requires—as I required in the matter of this sonata—to penetrate a work of any depth is merely an epitome, a symbol, one might say, of the years, the centuries even that must elapse before the public can begin to cherish a masterpiece that is really new. So that the man of genius, to shelter himself from the ignorant contempt of the world, may say to himself that, since one's contemporaries

are incapable of the necessary detachment, works written for posterity should be read by posterity alone, like certain pictures which one cannot appreciate when one stands too close to them. But, as it happens, any such cowardly precaution to avoid false judgments is doomed to failure; they are inevitable. The reason for which a work of genius is not easily admired from the first is that the man who has created it is extraordinary, that few other men resemble him. It was Beethoven's Quartets themselves (the Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth) that devoted half-a-century to forming, fashioning and enlarging a public for Beethoven's Quartets, marking in this way, like every great work of art, an advance if not in artistic merit at least in intellectual society, largely composed to-day of what was not to be found when the work first appeared, that is to say of persons capable of enjoying it. What artists call posterity is the posterity of the work of art. It is essential that the work (leaving out of account, for brevity's sake, the contingency that several men of genius may at the same time be working along parallel lines to create a more instructed public in the future, a public from which other men of genius shall reap the benefit) shall create its own posterity. For if the work were held in reserve, were revealed only to posterity, that audience, for that particular work, would be not posterity but a group of contemporaries who were merely living half-a-century later in time. And so it is essential that the artist (and this is what Vinteuil had done), if he wishes his work to be free to follow its own course, shall launch it, wherever he may find sufficient depth, confidently outward bound towards the future. And yet this interval of time, the true perspective in which to behold a work of art, if leaving it out of account is the mistake made by bad judges, taking it into account is at times a dangerous precaution of the good. No doubt one can easily imagine, by an illusion similar to that which makes everything on the horizon appear equidistant, that all the revolutions which have hitherto occurred in painting or in music did at least shew respect for certain rules, whereas that which immediately confronts us, be it impressionism, a striving after discord, an exclusive use of the Chinese scale, cubism, futurism or what you will, differs outrageously from all that have occurred before. Simply because those that have occurred before we are apt to regard as a whole, forgetting that a long process of assimilation has melted them into a continuous substance, varied of course but, taking it as a whole, homogeneous, in which Hugo blends with Molière. Let us try to imagine the shocking incoherence that we should find, if we did not take into account the future, and the changes that it must bring about, in a horoscope of our own riper years, drawn and presented to us in our youth. Only horoscopes are not always accurate, and the necessity, when judging a work of art, of including the temporal factor in the sum total of its beauty introduces, to our way of thinking, something as hazardous, and consequently as barren of interest, as every prophecy the non-

fulfilment of which will not at all imply any inadequacy on the prophet's part, for the power to summon possibilities into existence or to exclude them from it is not necessarily within the competence of genius; one may have had genius and yet not have believed in the future of railways or of flight, or, although a brilliant psychologist, in the infidelity of a mistress or of a friend whose treachery persons far less gifted would have foreseen.

If I did not understand the sonata, it enchanted me to hear Mme. Swann play. Her touch appeared to me (like her wrappers, like the scent of her staircase, her cloaks, her chrysanthemums) to form part of an individual and mysterious whole, in a world infinitely superior to that in which the mind is capable of analysing talent. "Attractive, isn't it, that Vinteuil sonata?" Swann asked me. "The moment when night is darkening among the trees, when the arpeggios of the violin call down a cooling dew upon the earth. You must admit that it is rather charming; it shews all the static side of moonlight, which is the essential part. It is not surprising that a course of radiant heat such as my wife is taking, should act on the muscles, since moonlight can prevent the leaves from stirring. That is what he expresses so well in that little phrase, the Bois de Boulogne plunged in a cataleptic trance. By the sea it is even more striking, because you have there the faint response of the waves, which, of course, you can hear quite distinctly, since nothing else dares to move. In Paris it is the other way; at the most, you may notice unfamiliar lights among the old buildings, the sky brightened as though by a colourless and harmless conflagration, that sort of vast variety show of which you get a hint here and there. But in Vinteuil's little phrase, and in the whole sonata for that matter, it is not like that; the scene is laid in the Bois; in the *gruppetto* you can distinctly hear a voice saying: 'I can almost see to read the paper!'" These words from Swann might have falsified, later on, my impression of the sonata, music being too little exclusive to inhibit absolutely what other people suggest that we should find in it. But I understood from other words which he let fall that this nocturnal foliage was simply that beneath whose shade in many a restaurant on the outskirts of Paris he had listened on many an evening to the little phrase. In place of the profound significance that he had so often sought in it, what it recalled now to Swann were the leafy boughs, arranged, wreathed, painted round about it (which it gave him the desire to see again because it seemed to him to be their inner, their hidden self, as it were their soul); was the whole of one spring season which he had not been able to enjoy before, not having had—feverish and moody as he then was—enough strength of body and mind for its enjoyment, which, as one puts by for an invalid the dainties that he has not been able to eat, it had kept in store for him. The charm that he had been made to feel by certain evenings in the Bois, a charm of which

Vinteul's sonata served to remind him, he could not have recaptured by questioning Odette, although she, as well as the little phrase, had been his companion there. But Odette had been merely his companion, by his side, not (as the phrase had been) within him, and so had seen nothing—nor would she, had she been a thousand times as comprehending, have seen anything of that vision which for no one among us (or at least I was long under the impression that this rule admitted no exception) can be made externally visible. "It is rather charming, don't you think," Swann continued, "that sound can give a reflection, like water, or glass. It is curious, too, that Vinteul's phrase now shews me only the things to which I paid no attention then. Of my troubles, my loves of those days it recalls nothing, it has altered all my values." "Charles, I don't think that's very polite to me, what you're saying." "Not polite? Really, you women are superb! I was simply trying to explain to this young man that what the music shews—to me, at least—is not for a moment 'Free-will' or 'In Tune with the Infinite', but shall we say old Verdurin in his frock coat in the palm-house at the Jardin d'Acclimatation. Hundreds of times, without my leaving this room, the little phrase has carried me off to dine with it at Armenonville. Gad, it is less boring, anyhow, than having to go there with Mme. de Cambremer." Mme. Swann laughed. "That is a lady who is supposed to have been violently in love with Charles," she explained, in the same tone in which, shortly before, when we were speaking of Vermeer of Delft, of whose existence I had been surprised to find her conscious, she had answered me with: "I ought to explain that M. Swann was very much taken up with that painter at the time he was courting me. Isn't that so, Charles dear?" "You're not to start saying things about Mme. de Cambremer!" Swann checked her, secretly flattered. "But I'm only repeating what I've been told. Besides, it seems that she's an extremely clever woman; I don't know her myself. I believe she's very pushing, which surprises me rather in a clever woman. But everyone says that she was quite mad about you; there's no harm in repeating that." Swann remained silent as a deaf-mute which was in a way a confirmation of what she had said, and a proof of his own fatuity. "Since what I'm playing reminds you of the Jardin d'Acclimatation," his wife went on, with a playful semblance of being offended, "we might take him there some day in the carriage, if it would amuse him. It's lovely there just now, and you can recapture your fond impressions! Which reminds me, talking of the Jardin d'Acclimatation, do you know, this young man thought that we were devotedly attached to a person whom I cut, as a matter of fact, whenever I possibly can, Mme. Blatin! I think it is rather crushing for us, that she should be taken for a friend of ours. Just fancy, dear Dr. Cottard, who never says a harsh word about anyone, declares that she's positively contagious." "A frightful woman! The one thing to be said for her is that she is exactly like Savonarola. She is the very image of that portrait of Savonarola, by Fra Bartolomeo." This mania which

Swann had for finding likenesses to people in pictures was defensible, for even what we call individual expression is—as we so painfully discover when we are in love and would fain believe in the unique reality of the beloved—something diffused and general, which can be found existing at different periods. But if one had listened to Swann, the processions of the Kings of the East, already so anachronistic when Benozzo Gozzoli introduced in their midst various Medici, would have been even more so, since they would have included the portraits of a whole crowd of men, contemporaries not of Gozzoli but of Swann, subsequent, that is to say not only by fifteen centuries to the Nativity but by four more to the painter himself. There was not missing from those trains, according to Swann, a single living Parisian of any note, any more than there was from that act in one of Sardou's plays, in which, out of friendship for the author and for the leading lady, and also because it was the fashion, all the best known men in Paris, famous doctors, politicians, barristers, amused themselves, each on a different evening, by "walking on". "But what has she got to do with the Jardin d'Acclimatation?" "Everything!" "What? You don't suggest that she's got a sky-blue behind, like the monkeys?" "Charles, you really are too dreadful! I was thinking of what the Cingalese said to her. Do tell him, Charles; it really is a gem." "Oh, it's too silly. You know, Mme. Blatin loves asking people questions, in a tone which she thinks friendly, but which is really overpowering." "What our good friends on the Thames call 'patronising'," interrupted Odette. "Exactly. Well, she went the other day to the Jardin d'Acclimatation, where they have some blackamoors—Cingalese, I think I heard my wife say; she is much 'better up' in ethnology than I am." "Now, Charles, you're not to make fun of poor me." "I've no intention of making fun, I assure you. Well, to continue, she went up to one of these black fellows with 'Good morning, nigger!' . . ." "Oh, it's too absurd!" "Anyhow, this classification seems to have displeased the black. 'Me nigger,' he shouted, (quite furious, don't you know), to Mme. Blatin, 'me nigger; you, old cow!'" "I do think that's so delightful! I adore that story. Do say it's a good one. Can't you see old Blatin standing there, and hearing him: 'Me nigger; you, old cow'?" I expressed an intense desire to go there and see these Cingalese, one of whom had called Mme. Blatin an old cow. They did not interest me in the least. But I reflected that in going to the Jardin d'Acclimatation, and again on our way home, we should pass along that Allée des Acacias in which I had loved so, once, to gaze on Mme. Swann, and that perhaps Coquelin's mulatto friend, to whom I had never managed to exhibit myself in the act of saluting her, would see me there, seated at her side, as the victoria swept by.

During those minutes in which Gilberte, having gone to "get ready", was not in the room with us, M. and Mme. Swann would take delight in revealing to me all the rare

virtues of their child. And everything that I myself observed seemed to prove the truth of what they said. I remarked that, as her mother had told me, she had not only for her friends but for the servants, for the poor, the most delicate attentions carefully thought out, a desire to give pleasure, a fear of causing annoyance, translated into all sorts of trifling actions which must often have meant great inconvenience to her. She had done some "work" for our stall-keeper in the Champs-Elysées, and went out in the snow to give it to her with her own hands, so as not to lose a day. "You have no idea how kind-hearted she is, she won't let it be seen," her father assured me. Young as she was, she appeared far more sensible already than her parents. When Swann boasted of his wife's grand friends Gilberte would turn away, and remain silent, but without any air of reproaching him, for it seemed inconceivable to her that her father could be subjected to the slightest criticism. One day, when I had spoken to her of Mlle. Vinteuil, she said to me:

"I shall never know her, for a very good reason, and that is that she was not nice to her father, by what one hears, she gave him a lot of trouble. You can't understand that any more than I, can you; I'm sure you could no more live without your papa than I could, which is quite natural after all. How can one ever forget a person one has loved all one's life?"

And once when she was making herself particularly endearing to Swann, as I mentioned this to her when he was out of the room:

"Yes, poor Papa, it is the anniversary of his father's death, just now. You can understand what he must be feeling; you do understand, don't you; you and I feel the same about things like that. So I just try to be a little less naughty than usual." "But he doesn't ever think you naughty. He thinks you're quite perfect." "Poor Papa, that's because he's far too good himself."

But her parents were not content with singing the praises of Gilberte—that same Gilberte, who, even before I had set eyes on her, used to appear to me standing before a church, in a landscape of the Ile-de-France, and later, awakening in me not dreams now but memories, was embowered always in a hedge of pink hawthorn, in the little lane that I took when I was going the Méséglise way. Once when I had asked Mme. Swann (and had made an effort to assume the indifferent tone of a friend of the family, curious to know the preferences of a child), which among all her playmates Gilberte liked the best, Mme. Swann replied: "But you ought to know a great deal better than I do. You are in her confidence, her great favourite, her 'chum' as the English say."

It appears that in a coincidence as perfect as this was, when reality is folded over to cover the ideal of which we have so long been dreaming, it completely hides that

ideal, absorbing it in itself, as when two geometrical figures that are congruent are made to coincide, so that there is but one, whereas we would rather, so as to give its full significance to our enjoyment, preserve for all those separate points of our desire, at the very moment in which we succeed in touching them, and so as to be quite certain that they are indeed themselves, the distinction of being intangible. And our thought cannot even reconstruct the old state so as to confront the new with it, for it has no longer a clear field: the acquaintance that we have made, the memory of those first, unhoped-for moments, the talk to which we have listened are there now to block the passage of our consciousness, and as they control the outlets of our memory far more than those of our imagination, they react more forcibly upon our past, which we are no longer able to visualise without taking them into account, than upon the form, still unshaped, of our future. I had been able to believe, year after year, that the right to visit Mme. Swann was a vague and fantastic privilege to which I should never attain; after I had spent a quarter of an hour in her drawing-room, it was the period in which I did not yet know her that was become fantastic and vague like a possibility which the realisation of an alternative possibility has made impossible. How was I ever to dream again of her dining-room as of an inconceivable place, when I could not make the least movement in my mind without crossing the path of that inextinguishable ray cast backwards to infinity, even into my own most distant past, by the lobster *à l'Américaine* which I had just been eating. And Swann must have observed in his own case a similar phenomenon; for this house in which he entertained me might be regarded as the place into which had flowed, to coincide and be lost in one another, not only the ideal dwelling that my imagination had constructed, but another still, that which his jealous love, as inventive as any fantasy of mine, had so often depicted to him, that dwelling common to Odette and himself which had appeared so inaccessible once, on evenings when Odette had taken him home with Forcheville to drink orangeade with her; and what had flowed in to be absorbed, for him, in the walls and furniture of the dining-room in which we now sat down to luncheon was that unhoped-for paradise in which, in the old days, he could not without a pang imagine that he would one day be saying to *their* butler those very words, "Is Madame ready yet?" which I now heard him utter with a touch of impatience mingled with self-satisfaction. No more than, probably, Swann himself could I succeed in knowing my own happiness, and when Gilberte once broke out: "Who would ever have said that the little girl you watched playing prisoners' base, without daring to speak to her, would one day be your greatest friend, and you would go to her house whenever you liked?" she spoke of a change the occurrence of which I could verify only by observing it from without, finding no trace of it within myself, for it was composed of two

separate states on both of which I could not, without their ceasing to be distinct from one another, succeed in keeping my thoughts fixed at one and the same time.

And yet this house, because it had been so passionately desired by Swann, must have kept for him some of its attraction, if I was to judge by myself for whom it had not lost all its mystery. That singular charm in which I had for so long supposed the life of the Swanns to be bathed I had not completely exorcised from their house on making my own way into it; I had made it, that charm, recoil, overpowered as it must be by the sight of the stranger, the pariah that I had been, to whom now Mme. Swann pushed forward graciously for him to sit in it an armchair exquisite, hostile, scandalised; but all round me that charm, in my memory, I can still distinguish. Is it because, on those days on which M. and Mme. Swann invited me to luncheon, to go out afterwards with them and Gilberte, I imprinted with my gaze,—while I sat waiting for them there alone—on the carpet, the sofas, the tables, the screens, the pictures, the idea engraved upon my mind that Mme. Swann, or her husband, or Gilberte was about to enter the room? Is it because those objects have dwelt ever since in my memory side by side with the Swanns, and have gradually acquired something of their personal character? Is it because, knowing that the Swanns passed their existence among all those things, I made of all of them as it were emblems of the private lives, of those habits of the Swanns from which I had too long been excluded for them not to continue to appear strange to me, even when I was allowed the privilege of sharing in them? However it may be, always when I think of that drawing-room which Swann (not that the criticism implied on his part any intention to find fault with his wife's taste) found so incongruous—because, while it was still planned and carried out in the style, half conservatory half studio, which had been that of the rooms in which he had first known Odette, she had, none the less, begun to replace in its medley a quantity of the Chinese ornaments, which she now felt to be rather gimcrack, a trifle dowdy, by a swarm of little chairs and stools and things upholstered in old Louis XIV silks; not to mention the works of art brought by Swann himself from his house on the Quai d'Orléans—it has kept in my memory, on the contrary, that composite, heterogeneous room, a cohesion, a unity, an individual charm never possessed even by the most complete, the least spoiled of such collections that the past has bequeathed to us, or the most modern, alive and stamped with the imprint of a living personality; for we alone can, by our belief that they have an existence of their own, give to certain of the things that we see a soul which they afterwards keep, which they develop in our minds. All the ideas that I had formed of the hours, different from those that exist for other men, passed by the Swanns in that house which was to their life what the body is to the soul, and must give expression to its singularity, all those ideas were

rearranged, amalgamated—equally disturbing and indefinite throughout—in the arrangement of the furniture, the thickness of the carpets, the position of the windows, the ministrations of the servants. When, after luncheon, we went in the sunshine to drink our coffee in the great bay window of the drawing-room, while Mme. Swann was asking me how many lumps of sugar I took, it was not only the silk-covered stool which she pushed towards me that emitted, with the agonising charm that I had long ago felt—first among the pink hawthorn and then beside the clump of laurels—in the name of Gilberte, the hostility that her parents had shewn to me, which this little piece of furniture seemed to have so well understood, to have so completely shared that I felt myself unworthy, and found myself almost reluctant to set my feet on its defenceless cushion; a personality, a soul was latent there which linked it secretly to the light of two o'clock in the afternoon, so different from any other light, in the gulf in which there played about our feet its sparkling tide of gold out of which the bluish crags of sofas and vaporous carpet beaches emerged like enchanted islands; and there was nothing, even to the painting by Rubens hung above the chimneypiece, that was not endowed with the same quality and almost the same intensity of charm as the laced boots of M. Swann, and that hooded cape, the like of which I had so dearly longed to wear, whereas now Odette would beg her husband to go and put on another, so as to appear more smart, whenever I did them the honour of driving out with them. She too went away to change her dress—not heeding my protestations that no "outdoor" clothes could be nearly so becoming as the marvellous garment of *crêpe-de-Chine* or silk, old rose, cherry-coloured, Tiepolo pink, white, mauve, green, red or yellow, plain or patterned, in which Mme. Swann had sat down to luncheon and which she was now going to take off. When I assured her that she ought to go out in that costume, she laughed, either in scorn of my ignorance or from delight in my compliment. She apologised for having so many wrappers, explaining that they were the only kind of dress in which she felt comfortable, and left us, to go and array herself in one of those regal toilets which imposed their majesty on all beholders, and yet among which I was sometimes summoned to decide which of them I preferred that she should put on.

In the Jardin d'Acclimatation, how proud I was when we had left the carriage to be walking by the side of Mme. Swann! While she strolled carelessly on, letting her cloak stream on the air behind her, I kept eyeing her with an admiring gaze to which she coquettishly responded in a lingering smile. And now, were we to meet one or other of Gilberte's friends, boy or girl, who saluted us from afar, I would in my turn be looked upon by them as one of those happy creatures whose lot I had envied, one of those

friends of Gilberte who knew her family and had a share in that other part of her life, the part which was not spent in the Champs-Elysées.

Often upon the paths of the Bois or the Jardin we passed, we were greeted by some great lady who was Swann's friend, whom he perchance did not see, so that his wife must rally him with a "Charles! Don't you see Mme. de Montmorency?" And Swann, with that amicable smile, bred of a long and intimate friendship, bared his head, but with a slow sweeping gesture, with a grace peculiarly his own. Sometimes the lady would stop, glad of an opportunity to shew Mme. Swann a courtesy which would involve no tiresome consequences, by which they all knew that she would never seek to profit, so thoroughly had Swann trained her in reserve. She had none the less acquired all the manners of polite society, and however smart, however stately the lady might be, Mme. Swann was invariably a match for her; halting for a moment before the friend whom her husband had recognised and was addressing, she would introduce us, Gilberte and myself, with so much ease of manner, would remain so free, so tranquil in her exercise of courtesy, that it would have been hard to say, looking at them both, which of the two was the aristocrat. The day on which we went to inspect the Cingalese, on our way home we saw coming in our direction, and followed by two others who seemed to be acting as her escort, an elderly but still attractive woman cloaked in a dark mantle and capped with a little bonnet tied beneath her chin with a pair of ribbons. "Ah! Here is someone who will interest you!" said Swann. The old lady, who had come within a few yards of us, now smiled at us with a caressing sweetness. Swann doffed his hat. Mme. Swann swept to the ground in a curtsey and made as if to kiss the hand of the lady, who, standing there like a Winterhalter portrait, drew her up again and kissed her cheek. "There, there; will you put your hat on, you!" she scolded Swann in a thick and almost growling voice, speaking like an old and familiar friend. "I am going to present you to Her Imperial Highness," Mme. Swann whispered. Swann drew me aside for a moment while his wife talked of the weather and of the animals recently added to the Jardin d'Acclimatation, with the Princess. "That is the Princesse Mathilde;" he told me, "you know who' I mean, the friend of Flaubert, Sainte-Beuve, Dumas. Just fancy, she's the niece of Napoleon I. She had offers of marriage from Napoleon III and the Emperor of Russia. Isn't that interesting? Talk to her a little. But I hope she won't keep us standing here for an hour!. . . I met Taine the other day," he went on, addressing the Princess, "and he told me that your Highness was vexed with him." "He's behaved like a perfect peeg!" she said gruffly, pronouncing the word *cochon* as though she referred to Joan of Arc's contemporary, Bishop Cauchon. "After his article on the Emperor I left my card on him with p. p. c. on it." I felt the surprise that one feels on opening the Correspondence of

that Duchesse d'Orléans who was by birth a Princess Palatine. And indeed Princesse Mathilde, animated by sentiments so entirely French, expressed them with a straightforward bluntness that recalled the Germany of an older generation, and was inherited, doubtless, from her Wurtemberg mother. This somewhat rude and almost masculine frankness she softened, as soon as she began to smile, with an Italian languor. And the whole person was clothed in a dress so typically "Second Empire" that—for all that the Princess wore it simply and solely, no doubt, from attachment to the fashions that she had loved when she was young—she seemed to have deliberately planned to avoid the slightest discrepancy in historic colour, and to be satisfying the expectations of those who looked to her to evoke the memory of another age. I whispered to Swann to ask her whether she had known Musset. "Very slightly, sir," was the answer, given in a tone which seemed to feign annoyance at the question, and of course it was by way of a joke that she called Swann "Sir", since they were intimate friends. "I had him to dine once. I had invited him for seven o'clock. At half-past seven, as he had not appeared, we sat down to dinner. He arrived at eight, bowed to me, took his seat, never opened his lips, went off after dinner without letting me hear the sound of his voice. Of course, he was dead drunk. That hardly encouraged me to make another attempt." We were standing a little way off, Swann and I. "I hope this little audience is not going to last much longer," he muttered, "the soles of my feet are hurting. I cannot think why my wife keeps on making conversation. When we get home it will be she that complains of being tired, and she knows I simply cannot go on standing like this." For Mme. Swann, who had had the news from Mme. Bontemps, was in the course of telling the Princess that the Government, having at last begun to realise the depth of its depravity, had decided to send her an invitation to be present on the platform in a few days' time, when the Tsar Nicholas was to visit the Invalides. But the Princess who, in spite of appearances, in spite of the character of her circle, which consisted mainly of artists and literary people, had remained at heart and shewed herself, whenever she had to take action, the niece of Napoleon, replied: "Yes, Madame, I received it this morning, and I sent it back to the Minister, who must have had it by now. I told him that I had no need of an invitation to go to the Invalides. If the Government desires my presence there, it will not be on the platform, it will be in our vault, where the Emperor's tomb is. I have no need of a card to admit me there. I have my keys. I go in and out when I choose. The Government has only to let me know whether it wishes, me to be present or not. But if I do go to the Invalides, it will be down below there or nowhere at all." At that moment we were saluted, Mme. Swann and I, by a young man who greeted her without stopping, and whom I was not aware that she knew; it was Bloch. I inquired about him, and was told that he had been introduced to her by Mme. Bontemps, and that he was employed in the Minister's

secretariat, which was news to me. Anyhow, she could not have seen him often—or perhaps she had not cared to utter the name, hardly "smart" enough for her liking, of Bloch, for she told me that he was called M. Moreul. I assured her that she was mistaken, that his name was Bloch. The Princess gathered up the train that flowed out behind her, while Mme. Swann gazed at it with admiring eyes. "It is only a fur that the Emperor of Russia sent me," she explained, "and as I have just been to see him I put it on, so as to shew him that I'd managed to have it made up as a mantle." "I hear that Prince Louis has joined the Russian Army; the Princess will be very sad at losing him," went on Mme. Swann, not noticing her husband's signals of distress. "That was a fine thing to do. As I said to him, 'Just because there's been a. soldier, before, in the family, that's no reason!'" replied the Princess, alluding with this abrupt simplicity to Napoleon the Great. But Swann could hold out no longer. "Ma'am, it is I that am going to play the Prince, and ask your permission to retire; but, you see, my wife has not been so well, and I do not like her to stand still for any time." Mme. Swann curtseyed again, and the Princess conferred upon us all a celestial smile, which she seemed to have summoned out of the past, from among the graces of her girlhood, from the evenings at Compiègne, a smile which glided, sweet and unbroken, over her hitherto so sullen face; then she went on her way, followed by the two ladies in waiting, who had confined themselves, in the manner of interpreters, of children's or invalids' nurses, to punctuating our conversation with insignificant sentences and superfluous explanations. "You should go and write your name in her book, one day this week," Mme. Swann counselled me. "One doesn't leave cards upon these 'Royalties', as the English call them, but she will invite you to her house if you put your name down."

Sometimes in those last days of winter we would go, before proceeding on our expedition, into one of the small picture-shows that were being given at that time, where Swann, as a collector of mark, was greeted with special deference by the dealers in whose galleries they were held. And in that still wintry weather the old longing to set out for the South of France and Venice would be reawakened in me by those rooms in which a springtime, already well advanced, and a blazing sun cast violet shadows upon the roseate Alpilles and gave the intense transparency of emeralds to the Grand Canal. If the weather were inclement, we would go to a concert or a theatre, and afterwards to one of the fashionable tea-rooms. There, whenever Mme. Swann had anything to say to me which she did not wish the people at the next table, or even the waiters who brought our tea to understand, she would say it in English, as though that had been a secret language known to our two selves alone. As it happened everyone in the place knew English—I only had not yet learned the language, and was obliged to say so to Mme. Swann in order that she might cease to

make, on the people who were drinking tea or were serving us with it, remarks which I guessed to be uncomplimentary without either my understanding or the person referred to losing a single word.

Once, in the matter of an afternoon at the theatre, Gilberte gave me a great surprise. It was precisely the day of which she had spoken to me some time back, on which fell the anniversary of her grandfather's death. We were to go, she and I, with her governess, to hear selections from an opera, and Gilberte had dressed with a view to attending this performance, and wore the air of indifference with which she was in the habit of treating whatever we might be going to do, with the comment that it might be anything in the world, no matter what, provided that it amused me and had her parents' approval. Before luncheon, her mother drew us aside to tell us that her father was vexed at the thought of our going to a theatre on that day. This seemed to me only natural. Gilberte remained impassive, but grew pale with an anger which she was unable to conceal; still she uttered not a word. When M. Swann joined us his wife took him to the other end of the room and said something in his ear. He called Gilberte, and they went together into the next room. We could hear their raised voices. And yet I could not bring myself to believe that Gilberte, so submissive, so loving, so thoughtful, would resist her father's appeal, on such a day and for so trifling a matter. At length Swann reappeared with her, saying: "You heard what I said. Now you may do as you like."

Gilberte's features remained compressed in a frown throughout luncheon, after which we retired to her room. Then suddenly, without hesitating and as though she had never at any point hesitated over her course of action: "Two o'clock!" she exclaimed, "You know the concert begins at half-past." And she told her governess to make haste.

"But," I reminded her, "won't your father be cross with you?"

"Not the least little bit!"

"Surely, he was afraid it would look odd, because of the anniversary."

"What difference can it make to me what people think? I think it's perfectly absurd to worry about other people in matters of sentiment. We feel things for ourselves, not for the public. Mademoiselle has very few pleasures; she's been looking forward to going to this concert. I am not going to deprive her of it just to satisfy public opinion."

"But, Gilberte," I protested, taking her by the arm, "it is not to satisfy public opinion, it is to please your father."

"You are not going to pass remarks upon my conduct, I hope," she said sharply, plucking her arm away.

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A favour still more precious than their taking me with them to the Jardin d'Acclimatation, the Swanns did not exclude me even from their friendship with Bergotte, which had been at the root of the attraction that I had found in them when, before I had even seen Gilberte, I reflected that her intimacy with that god-like elder would have made her, for me, the most passionately enthralling of friends, had not the disdain that I was bound to inspire in her forbidden me to hope that she would ever take me, in his company, to visit the towns that he loved. And lo, one day, came an invitation from Mme. Swann to a big luncheon-party. I did not know who else were to be the guests. On my arrival I was disconcerted, as I crossed the hall, by an alarming incident. Mme. Swann seldom missed an opportunity of adopting any of those customs which pass as fashionable for a season, and then, failing to find support, are speedily abandoned (as, for instance, many years before, she had had her "private hansom", or now had, printed in English upon a card inviting you to luncheon, the words, "To meet", followed by the name of some more or less important personage). Often enough these usages implied nothing mysterious and required no initiation. Take, for instance, a minute innovation of those days, imported from England; Odette had made her husband have some visiting cards printed on which the name Charles Swann was preceded by "Mr.". After the first visit that I paid her, Mme. Swann had left at my door one of these "pasteboards", as she called them. No one had ever left a card on me before; I felt at once so much pride, emotion, gratitude that, scraping together all the money I possessed, I ordered a superb basket of camellias and had it sent to Mme. Swann. I implored my father to go and leave a card on her, but first, quickly, to have some printed on which his name should bear the prefix "Mr.". He vouchsafed neither of my prayers; I was in despair for some days, and then asked myself whether he might not after all have been right. But this use of "Mr.", if it meant nothing, was at least intelligible. Not so with another that was revealed to me on the occasion of this luncheon-party, but revealed without any indication of its purport. At the moment when I was about to step from the hall into the drawing-room the butler handed me a thin, oblong envelope upon which my name was inscribed. In my surprise I thanked him; but I eyed the envelope with misgivings. I no more knew what I was expected to do with it than a foreigner knows what to do with one of those little utensils that they lay by his place at a Chinese banquet. I noticed that it was gummed down; I was afraid of appearing indiscreet, were I to open it then and there; and so I thrust it into my

pocket with an air of knowing all about it. Mme. Swann had written to me a few days before, asking me to come to luncheon with "just a few people". There were, however, sixteen of us, among whom I never suspected for a moment that I was to find Bergotte. Mme. Swann, who had already "named" me, as she called it, to several of her guests, suddenly, after my name, in the same tone that she had used in uttering it (in fact, as though we were merely two of the guests at her party, who ought each to feel equally flattered on meeting the other), pronounced that of the sweet Singer with the snowy locks. The name Bergotte made me jump like the sound of a revolver fired at me point blank, but instinctively, for appearance's sake, I bowed; there, straight in front of me, as by one of those conjurers whom we see standing whole and unharmed, in their frock coats, in the smoke of a pistol shot out of which a pigeon has just fluttered, my salute was returned by a young common little thick-set peering person, with a red nose curled like a snail-shell and a black tuft on his chin. I was cruelly disappointed, for what had just vanished in the dust of the explosion was not only the feeble old man, of whom no vestige now remained; there was also the beauty of an immense work which I had contrived to enshrine in the frail and hallowed organism that I had constructed, like a temple, expressly for itself, but for which no room was to be found in the squat figure, packed tight with blood-vessels, bones, muscles, sinews, of the little man with the snub nose and black beard who stood before me. All the Bergotte whom I had slowly and delicately elaborated for myself, drop by drop, like a stalactite, out of the transparent beauty of his books, ceased (I could see at once) to be of any use, the moment I was obliged to include in him the snail-shell nose and to utilise the little black beard; just as we must reject as worthless the solution of a problem the terms of which we have not read in full, having failed to observe that the total must amount to a specified figure. The nose and beard were elements similarly ineluctable, and all the more aggravating in that, while forcing me to reconstruct entirely the personage of Bergotte, they seemed further to imply, to produce, to secrete incessantly a certain quality of mind, alert and self-satisfied, which was not in the picture, for such a mind had no connexion whatever with the sort of intelligence that was diffused throughout those books, so intimately familiar to me, which were permeated by a gentle and god-like wisdom. Starting from them, I should never have arrived at that snail-shell nose; but starting from the nose, which did not appear to be in the slightest degree ashamed of itself, but stood out alone there like a grotesque ornament fastened on his face, I must proceed in a diametrically opposite direction from the work of Bergotte, I must arrive, it would seem, at the mentality of a busy and preoccupied engineer, of the sort who when you accost them in the street think it correct to say: "Thanks, and you?" before you have actually inquired of them how they are, or else, if you assure them that you have been charmed to make their

acquaintance, respond with an abbreviation which they imagine to be effective, intelligent and up-to-date, inasmuch as it avoids any waste of precious time on vain formalities: "Same here!" Names are, no doubt, but whimsical draughtsmen, giving us of people as well as of places sketches so little like the reality that we often experience a kind of stupor when we have before our eyes, in place of the imagined, the visible world (which, for that matter, is not the true world, our senses being little more endowed than our imagination with the art of portraiture, so little, indeed, that the final and approximately lifelike pictures which we manage to obtain of reality are at least as different from the visible world as that was from the imagined). But in Bergotte's case, my preconceived idea of him from his name troubled me far less than my familiarity with his work, to which I was obliged to attach, as to the cord of a balloon, the man with the little beard, without knowing whether it would still have the strength to raise him from the ground. It seemed quite clear, however, that it really was he who had written the books that I had so greatly enjoyed, for Mme. Swann having thought it incumbent upon her to tell him of my admiration for one of these, he shewed no surprise that she should have mentioned this to him rather than to any other of the party, nor did he seem to regard her action as due to a misapprehension, but, swelling out the frock coat which he had put on in honour of all these distinguished guests with a body distended in anticipation of the coming meal, while his mind was completely occupied by other, more real and more important considerations, it was only as at some finished episode in his early life, as though one had made an allusion to a costume of the Duc de Guise which he had worn, one season, at a fancy dress ball, that he smiled as he bore his mind back to the idea of his books; which at once began to fall in my estimation (dragging down with them the whole value of Beauty, of the world, of life itself), until they seemed to have been merely the casual amusement of a man with a little beard. I told myself that he must have taken great pains over them, but that, if he had lived upon an island surrounded by beds of pearl-oysters, he would instead have devoted himself to, and would have made a fortune out of the pearling trade. His work no longer appeared to me so inevitable. And then I asked myself whether originality did indeed prove that great writers were gods, ruling each one over a kingdom that was his alone, or whether all that was not rather make-believe, whether the differences between one man's book and another's were not the result of their respective labours rather than the expression of a radical and essential difference between two contrasted personalities.

Meanwhile we had taken our places at the table. By the side of my plate I found a carnation, the stalk of which was wrapped in silver paper. It embarrassed me less than the envelope that had been handed to me in the hall, which, however, I had

completely forgotten. This custom, strange as it was to me, became more intelligible when I saw all the male guests take up the similar carnations that were lying by their plates and slip them into the buttonholes of their coats. I did as they had done, with the air of spontaneity that a free-thinker assumes in church, who is not familiar with the order of service but rises when everyone else rises and kneels a moment after everyone else is on his knees. Another usage, equally strange to me but less ephemeral, disquieted me more. On the other side of my plate was a smaller plate, on which was heaped a blackish substance which I did not then know to be caviare. I was ignorant of what was to be done with it but firmly determined not to let it enter my mouth.

Bergotte was sitting not far from me and I could hear quite well everything that he said. I understood then the impression that M. de Norpois had formed of him. He had indeed a peculiar "organ"; there is nothing that so much alters the material qualities of the voice as the presence of thought behind what one is saying; the resonance of one's diphthongs, the energy of one's labials are profoundly affected—in fact, one's whole way of speaking. His seemed to me to differ entirely from his way of writing, and even the things that he said from those with which he filled his books. But the voice issues from behind a mask through which it is not powerful enough to make us recognise, at first sight, a face which we have seen uncovered in the speaker's literary style. At certain points in the conversation, when Bergotte, by force of habit, began to talk in a way which no one but M. de Norpois would have thought affected or unpleasant, it was a long time before I discovered an exact correspondence with the parts of his books in which his form became so poetic and so musical. At those points he could see in what he was saying a plastic beauty independent of whatever his sentences might mean, and as human speech reflects the human soul, though without expressing it as does literary style, Bergotte appeared almost to be talking nonsense, intoning certain words and, if he were secretly pursuing, beneath them, a single image, stringing them together uninterruptedly on one continuous note, with a wearisome monotony. So that a pretentious, emphatic and monotonous opening was a sign of the rare aesthetic value of what he was saying, and an effect, in his conversation, of the same power which, in his books, produced that harmonious flow of imagery. I had had all the more difficulty in discovering this at first since what he said at such moments, precisely because it was the authentic utterance of Bergotte, had not the appearance of being Bergotte's. It was an abundant crop of clearly defined ideas, not included in that "Bergotte manner" which so many story-tellers had appropriated to themselves; and this dissimilarity was probably but another aspect—made out with difficulty through the stream of conversation, as an eclipse is seen

through a smoked glass—of the fact that when one read a page of Bergotte it was never just what would have been written by any of those lifeless imitators who, nevertheless, in newspapers and in books, adorned their prose with so many "Bergottish" images and ideas. This difference in style arose from the fact that what was meant by "Bergottism" was, first and foremost, a priceless element of truth hidden in the heart of everything, whence it was extracted by that great writer, by virtue of his genius, and that this extraction, and not simply the perpetration of "Bergottisms", was my sweet Singer's aim in writing. Though, it must be added, he continued to perpetrate them in spite of himself, and because he was Bergotte, so that, in one sense, every fresh beauty in his work was the little drop of Bergotte buried at the heart of a thing which he had distilled from it. But if, for that reason, each of those beauties was related to all the rest, and had a "family likeness", yet each remained separate and individual, as was the act of discovery that had brought it to the light of day; new, and consequently different from what was called the Bergotte manner, which was a loose synthesis of all the "Bergottisms" already invented and set forth by him in writing, with no indication by which men who lacked genius might forecast what would be his next discovery. So it is with all great writers, the beauty of their language is as incalculable as that of a woman whom we have never seen; it is creative, because it is applied to an external object of which, and not of their language or its beauty, they are thinking, to which they have not yet given expression. An author of memorials of our time, wishing to write without too obviously seeming to be writing like Saint-Simon, might, on occasion, give us the first line of his portrait of Villars: "He was a rather tall man, dark . . . with an alert, open, expressive physiognomy," but what law of determinism could bring him to the discovery of Saint-Simon's next line, which begins with "and, to tell the truth, a trifle mad"? The true variety is in this abundance of real and unexpected elements, in the branch loaded with blue flowers which thrusts itself forward, against all reason, from the spring hedgerow that seemed already overcharged with blossoms, whereas the purely formal imitation of variety (and one might advance the same argument for all the other qualities of style) is but a barren uniformity, that is to say the very antithesis of variety, and cannot, in the work of imitators, give the illusion or recall other examples of variety save to a reader who has not acquired the sense of it from the masters themselves.

And so—just as Bergotte's way of speaking would no doubt have been charming if he himself had been merely an amateur repeating imitations of Bergotte, whereas it was attached to the mind of Bergotte, at work and in action, by essential ties which the ear did not at once distinguish—so it was because Bergotte applied that mind with precision to the reality which pleased him that his language had in it something

positive, something over-rich, disappointing those who expected to hear him speak only of the "eternal torrent of forms," and of the "mystic thrills of beauty". Moreover the quality, always rare and new, of what he wrote was expressed in his conversation by so subtle a manner of approaching a question, ignoring every aspect of it that was already familiar, that he appeared to be seizing hold of an unimportant detail, to be quite wrong about it, to be speaking in paradox, so that his ideas seemed as often as not to be in confusion, for each of us finds lucidity only in those ideas which are in the same state of confusion as his own. Besides, as all novelty depends upon the elimination, first, of the stereotyped attitude to which we have grown accustomed, and which has seemed to us to be reality itself, every new conversation, as well as all original painting and music, must always appear laboured and tedious. It is founded upon figures of speech with which we are not familiar, the speaker appears to us to be talking entirely in metaphors; and this wearies us, and gives us the impression of a want of truth. (After all, the old forms of speech must in their time have been images difficult to follow when the listener was not yet cognisant of the universe which they depicted. But he has long since decided that this must be the real universe, and so relies confidently upon it.) So when Bergotte—and his figures appear simple enough to-day—said of Cottard that he was a mannikin in a bottle, always trying to rise to the surface, and of Brichot that "to him even more than to Mme. Swann the arrangement of his hair was a matter for anxious deliberation, because, in his twofold preoccupation over his profile and his reputation, he had always to make sure that it was so brushed as to give him the air at once of a lion and of a philosopher," one immediately felt the strain, and sought a foothold upon something which one called more concrete, meaning by that more ordinary. These unintelligible words, issuing from the mask that I had before my eyes, it was indeed to the writer whom I admired that they must be attributed, and yet they could not have been inserted among his books, in the form of a puzzle set in a series of different puzzles, they occupied another plane and required a transposition by means of which, one day, when I was repeating to myself certain phrases that I had heard Bergotte use, I discovered in them the whole machinery of his literary style, the different elements of which I was able to recognise and to name in this spoken discourse which had struck me as being so different.

From a less immediate point of view the special way, a little too meticulous, too intense, that he had of pronouncing certain words, certain adjectives which were constantly recurring in his conversation, and which he never uttered without a certain emphasis, giving to each of their syllables a separate force and intoning the last syllable (as for instance the word *visage*, which he always used in preference to figure,

and enriched with a number of superfluous v's and s's and g's, which seemed all to explode from his outstretched palm at such moments) corresponded exactly to the fine passages in which, in his prose, he brought those favourite words into the light, preceded by a sort of margin and composed in such a way in the metrical whole of the phrase that the reader was obliged, if he were not to make a false quantity, to give to each of them its full value. And yet one did not find in the speech of Bergotte a certain luminosity which in his books, as in those of some other writers, often modified in the written phrase the appearance of its words. This was doubtless because that light issues from so profound a depth that its rays do not penetrate to our spoken words in the hours in which, thrown open to others by the act of conversation, we are to a certain extent closed against ourselves. In this respect, there were more intonations, there was more accent in his books than in his talk; an accent independent of the beauty of style, which the author himself has possibly not perceived, for it is not separable from his most intimate personality. It was this accent which, at the moments when, in his books, Bergotte was entirely natural, gave a rhythm to the words—often at such times quite insignificant—that he wrote. This accent is not marked on the printed page, there is nothing there to indicate it, and yet it comes of its own accord to his phrases, one cannot pronounce them in any other way, it is what was most ephemeral and at the same time most profound in the writer, and it is what will bear witness to his true nature, what will say whether, despite all the austerity that he has expressed he was gentle, despite all his sensuality sentimental.

Certain peculiarities of elocution, faint traces of which were to be found in Bergotte's conversation, were not exclusively his own; for when, later on, I came to know his brothers and sisters, I found those peculiarities much more accentuated in their speech. There was something abrupt and harsh in the closing words of a light and spirited utterance, something faint and dying at the end of a sad one. Swann, who had known the Master as a boy, told me that in those days one used to hear on his lips, just as much as on his brothers' and sisters', those inflexions, almost a family type, shouts of violent merriment interspersed with murmurings of a long-drawn melancholy, and that in the room in which they all played together he used to perform his part, better than any of them, in their symphonies, alternately deafening and subdued. However characteristic it may be, the sound that escapes from human lips is fugitive and does not survive the speaker. But it was not so with the pronunciation of the Bergotte family. For if it is difficult ever to understand, even in the *Meistersinger* how an artist can invent music by listening to the twittering of birds, yet Bergotte had transposed and fixed in his written language that manner of dwelling on words which repeat themselves in shouts of joy, or fall, drop by drop, in melancholy sighs. There are in his

books just such closing phrases where the accumulated sounds are prolonged (as in the last chords of the overture of an opera which cannot come to an end, and repeats several times over its supreme cadence before the conductor finally lays down his baton), in which, later on, I was to find a musical equivalent for those phonetic 'brasses' of the Bergotte family. But in his own case, from the moment in which he transferred them to his books, he ceased instinctively to make use of them in his speech. From the day on which he had begun to write—all the more markedly, therefore, in the later years in which I first knew him—his voice had lost this orchestration for ever.

These young Bergottes—the future writer and his brothers and sisters—were doubtless in no way superior, far from it, to other young people, more refined, more intellectual than themselves, who found the Bergottes rather "loud", that is to say a trifle vulgar, irritating one by the witticisms which characterised the tone, at once pretentious and puerile, of their household. But genius, and even what is only great talent, spring less from seeds of intellect and social refinement superior to those of other people than from the faculty of transposing, and so transforming them. To heat a liquid over an electric lamp one requires to have not the strongest lamp possible, but one of which the current can cease to illuminate, can be diverted so as instead of light to give heat. To mount the skies it is not necessary to have the most powerful of motors, one must have a motor which, instead of continuing to run along the earth's surface, intersecting with a vertical line the horizontal which it began by following, is capable of converting its speed into ascending force. Similarly the men who produce works of genius are not those who live in the most delicate atmosphere, whose conversation is most brilliant or their culture broadest, but those who have had the power, ceasing in a moment to live only for themselves, to make use of their personality as of a mirror, in such a way that their life, however unimportant it may be socially, and even, in a sense, intellectually speaking, is reflected by it, genius consisting in the reflective power of the writer and not in the intrinsic quality of the scene reflected. The day on which young Bergotte succeeded in shewing to the world of his readers the tasteless household in which he had passed his childhood, and the not very amusing conversations between himself and his brothers, on that day he climbed far above the friends of his family, more intellectual and more distinguished than himself; they in their fine Rolls Royces might return home expressing due contempt for the vulgarity of the Bergottes; but he, with his modest engine which had at last left the ground, he soared above their heads.

But there were other characteristics of his elocution which it was not with the members of his family, but with certain contemporary writers that he must share.

Younger men, who were beginning to repudiate him as a master and disclaimed any intellectual affinity to him in themselves, displayed their affinity without knowing it when they made use of the same adverbs, the same prepositions that he incessantly repeated, when they constructed their sentences in the same way, spoke in the same quiescent, lingering tone, by a reaction from the eloquent, easy language of an earlier generation. Perhaps these young men—we shall come across some of whom this may be said—had never known Bergotte. But his way of thinking, inoculated into them, had led them to those alterations of syntax and of accent which bear a necessary relation to originality of mind. A relation which, incidentally, requires to be traced. Thus Bergotte, if he owed nothing to any man for his manner of writing, derived his manner of speaking from one of his early associates, a marvellous talker to whose ascendancy he had succumbed, whom he imitated, unconsciously, in his conversation, but who himself, being less gifted, had never written any really outstanding book. So that if one had been in quest of originality in speech, Bergotte must have been labelled a disciple, a writer at second-hand, whereas, influenced by his friend only so far as talk went, he had been original and creative in his writings. Doubtless again, so as to distinguish himself from the previous generation, too fond as it had been of abstractions, of weighty commonplaces, when Bergotte wished to speak favourably of a book, what he would bring into prominence, what he would quote with approval would always be some scene that furnished the reader with an image, some picture that had no rational significance. "Ah, yes!" he would exclaim, "it is quite admirable! There is a little girl in an orange shawl. It is excellent!" or again, "Oh, yes, there is a passage in which there is a regiment marching along the street; yes, it is excellent!" As for style, he was not altogether of his time (though he remained quite exclusively of his race, abominating Tolstoy, George Eliot, Ibsen and Dostoievsky), for the word that always came to his lips when he wished to praise the style of any writer was "mild". "Yes, you know I like Chateaubriand better in *Atala* than in *René*; he seems to me to be 'milder'." He said the word like a doctor who, when his patient assures him that milk will give him indigestion, answers, "But, you know, it's very 'mild'." And it is true that there was in Bergotte's style a kind of harmony similar to that for which the ancients used to praise certain of their orators in terms which we now find it hard to understand, accustomed as we are to our own modern tongues in which effects of that kind are not sought.

He would say also, with a shy smile, of pages of his own for which some one had expressed admiration: "I think it is more or less true, more or less accurate; it may be of some value perhaps," but he would say this simply from modesty, as a woman to whom one has said that her dress, or her daughter is charming replies, "It is

comfortable," or "She is a good girl." But the constructive instinct was too deeply implanted in Bergotte for him not to be aware that the sole proof that he had built usefully and on the lines of truth lay in the pleasure that his work had given, to himself first of all and afterwards to his readers. Only many years later, when he no longer had any talent, whenever he wrote anything with which he was not satisfied, so as not to have to suppress it, as he ought to have done, so as to be able to publish it with a clear conscience he would repeat, but to himself this time: "After all, it is more or less accurate, it must be of some value to the country." So that the phrase murmured long ago among his admirers by the insincere voice of modesty came in the end to be whispered in the secrecy of his heart by the uneasy tongue of pride. And the same words which had served Bergotte as an unwanted excuse for the excellence of his earliest works became as it were an ineffective consolation to him for the hopeless mediocrity of the latest.

A kind of austerity of taste which he had, a kind of determination to write nothing of which he could not say that it was "mild", which had made people for so many years regard him as a sterile and precious artist, a chiseller of exquisite trifles, was on the contrary the secret of his strength, for habit forms the style of the writer just as much as the character of the man, and the author who has more than once been patient to attain, in the expression of his thoughts, to a certain kind of attractiveness, in so doing lays down unalterably the boundaries of his talent, just as if he yields too often to pleasure, to laziness, to the fear of being put to trouble, he will find himself describing in terms which no amount of revision can modify, the forms of his own vices and the limits of his virtue.

If, however, despite all the analogies which I was to perceive later on between the writer and the man, I had not at first sight, in Mme. Swann's drawing-room, believed that this could be Bergotte, the author of so many divine books, who stood before me, perhaps I was not altogether wrong, for he himself did not, in the strict sense of the word, "believe" it either. He did not believe it because he shewed a great assiduity in the presence of fashionable people (and yet he was not a snob), of literary men and journalists who were vastly inferior to himself. Of course he had long since learned, from the suffrage of his readers, that he had genius, compared to which social position and official rank were as nothing. He had learned that he had genius, but he did not believe it because he continued to simulate deference towards mediocre writers in order to succeed, shortly, in becoming an Academician, whereas the Academy and the Faubourg Saint-Germain have no more to do with that part of the Eternal Mind which is the author of the works of Bergotte than with the law of causality or the idea of God. That also he knew, but as a kleptomaniac knows, without profiting

by the knowledge, that it is wrong to steal. And the man with the little beard and snail-shell nose knew and used all the tricks of the gentleman who pockets your spoons, in his efforts to reach the coveted academic chair, I or some duchess or other who could dispose of several votes at the election, but while on his way to them he would endeavour to make sure that no one who would consider the pursuit of such an object a vice in him should see what he was doing. He was only half-successful; one could hear, alternating with the speech of the true Bergotte, that of the other Bergotte, ambitious, utterly selfish, who thought it not worth his while to speak of any but his powerful, rich or noble friends, so as to enhance his own position, he who in his books, when he was really himself, had so well portrayed the charm, pure as a mountain spring, of poverty.

As for those other vices to which M. de Norpois had alluded, that almost incestuous love, which was made still worse, people said, by a want of delicacy in the matter of money, if they contradicted, in a shocking manner, the tendency of his latest novels, in which he shewed everywhere a regard for what was right and proper so painfully rigid that the most innocent pleasures of their heroes were poisoned by it, and that even the reader found himself turning their pages with a sense of acute discomfort, and asked himself whether it was possible to go y on living even the quietest of lives, those vices did not at I all prove, supposing that they were fairly imputed to Bergotte, that his literature was a lie and all his sensitiveness mere play-acting. Just as in pathology certain conditions similar in appearance are due, some to an excess others to an insufficiency of tension, of secretion and so forth, so there may be vice arising from supersensitiveness just as much as from the lack of it. Perhaps it is only in really vicious lives that the moral problem can arise in all its disquieting strength. And of this problem the artist finds a solution in the terms not of his own personal life but of what is for him the true life, a general, a literary solution. As the great Doctors of the Church began often, without losing their virtue, by acquainting themselves with the sins of all mankind, out of which they extracted their own personal sanctity, so great artists often, while being thoroughly wicked, make use of their vices in order to arrive at a conception of the moral law that is binding upon us all. It is the vices (or merely the weaknesses and follies) of the circle in which they live, the meaningless conversation, the frivolous or shocking lives of their daughters, the infidelity of their wives, or their own misdeeds that writers have most often castigated in their books, without, however, thinking it necessary to alter their domestic economy or to improve the tone of their households. And this contrast had never before been so striking as it was in Bergotte's time, because, on the one hand, in proportion as society grew more corrupt, our notions of morality were increasingly exalted, while on the other hand the

public were now told far more than they had ever hitherto known about the private lives of literary men; and on certain evenings in the theatre people would point out the author whom I had so greatly admired at Combray, sitting at the back of a box the mere composition of which seemed an oddly humorous, or perhaps keenly ironical commentary upon—a brazen-faced denial of the thesis which he had just been maintaining in his latest book. Not that anything which this or that casual informant could tell me was of much use in helping me to settle the question of the goodness or wickedness of Bergotte. An intimate friend would furnish proofs of his hardheartedness; then a stranger would cite some instance (touching, since he had evidently wished it to remain hidden) of his real depth of feeling. He had behaved cruelly to his wife. But in a village inn, where he had gone to spend the night, he had stayed on to watch over a poor woman who had tried to drown herself, and when he was obliged to continue his journey had left a large sum of money with the landlord, so that he should not turn the poor creature out, but see that she got proper attention. Perhaps the more the great writer was developed in Bergotte at the expense of the little man with the beard, so much the more his own personal life was drowned in the flood of all the lives that he imagined, until he no longer felt himself obliged to perform certain practical duties, for which he had substituted the duty of imagining those other lives. But at the same time, because he imagined the feelings of others as completely as if they had been his own, whenever he was obliged, for any reason, to talk to some person who had been unfortunate (that is to say in a casual encounter) he would, in doing so, take up not his own personal standpoint but that of the sufferer himself, a standpoint in which he would have been horrified by the speech of those who continued to think of their own petty concerns in the presence of another's grief. With the result that he gave rise everywhere to justifiable rancour and to undying gratitude.

Above all, he was a man who in his heart of hearts loved nothing really except certain images and (like a miniature set in the floor of a casket) the composing and painting of them in words. For a trifle that some one had sent him, if that trifle gave him the opportunity of introducing one or two of these images, he would be prodigal in the expression of his gratitude, while shewing none whatever for an expensive present. And if he had had to plead before a tribunal, he would inevitably have chosen his words not for the effect that they might have on the judge but with an eye to certain images which the judge would certainly never have perceived.

That first day on which I met him with Gilberte's parents, I mentioned to Bergotte that I had recently been to hear Berma in *Phèdre*; and he told me that in the scene in which she stood with her arm raised to the level of her shoulder—one of those very scenes

that had been greeted with such applause—she had managed to suggest with great nobility of art certain classical figures which, quite possibly, she had never even seen, a Hesperid carved in the same attitude upon a metope at Olympia, and also the beautiful primitive virgins on the Erechtheum.

"It may be sheer divination, and yet I fancy that she visits the museums. It would be interesting to 'establish' that." ("Establish" was one of those regular Bergotte expressions, and one which various young men who had never met him had caught from him, speaking like him by some sort of telepathic suggestion.)

"Do you mean the Cariatides?" asked Swann.

"No, no," said Bergotte, "except in the scene where she confesses her passion to Œnone, where she moves her hand exactly like Hegeso on the stele in the Ceramic, it is a far more primitive art that she revives. I was referring to the Korai of the old Erechtheum, and I admit that there is perhaps nothing quite so remote from the art of Racine, but there are so many things already in *Phèdre*, . . . that one more . . . Oh, and then, yes, she is really charming, that little sixth century Phaedra, the rigidity of the arm, the lock of hair 'frozen into marble', yes, you know, it is wonderful of her to have discovered all that. There is a great deal more antiquity in it than in most of the books they are labelling 'antique' this year."

As Bergotte had in one of his volumes addressed a famous invocation to these archaic statues, the words that he was now uttering were quite intelligible to me and gave me a fresh reason for taking an interest in Berma's acting. I tried to picture her again in my mind, as she had looked in that scene in which I remembered that she had raised her arm to the level of her shoulder. And I said to myself, "There we have the Hesperid of Olympia; there we have the sister of those adorable suppliants on the Acropolis; there is indeed nobility in art!" But if these considerations were to enhance for me the beauty of Berma's gesture, Bergotte should have put them into my head before the performance. Then, while that attitude of the actress was actually existing in flesh and blood before my eyes, at that moment in which the thing that was happening had still the substance of reality, I might have tried to extract from it the idea of archaic sculpture. But of Berma in that scene all that I retained was a memory which was no longer liable to modification, slender as a picture which lacks that abundant perspective of the present tense where one is free to delve and can always discover something new, a picture to which one cannot retrospectively give a meaning that is not subject to verification and correction from without. At this point Mme. Swann joined in the conversation, asking me whether Gilberte had remembered to give me what Bergotte had written about *Phèdre*, and adding, "My daughter is such a scatter-

brain!" Bergotte smiled modestly and protested that they were only a few pages, of no importance. "But it is perfectly charming, that little pamphlet, that little 'tract' of yours!" Mme. Swann assured him, to shew that she was a good hostess, to make the rest of us think that she had read Bergotte's essay, and also because she liked not merely to flatter Bergotte, but to make a selection for herself out of what he wrote, to control his writing. And it must be admitted that she did inspire him, though not in the way that she supposed. But when all is said there is, between what constituted the smartness of Mme. Swann's drawing-room and a whole side of Bergotte's work, so close a correspondence that either of them might serve, among elderly men to-day, as a commentary upon the other.

I let myself go in telling him what my impressions had been. Often Bergotte disagreed, but he allowed me to go on talking. I told him that I had liked the green light which was turned on when Phèdre raised her arm. "Ah! The designer will be glad to hear that; he is a real artist. I shall tell him you liked it, because he is very proud of that effect. I must say, myself, that I do not care for it very much, it drowns everything in a sort of aqueous vapour, little Phèdre standing there looks too like a branch of coral on the floor of an aquarium. You will tell me, of course, that it brings out the cosmic aspect of the play. That is quite true. All the same, it would be more appropriate if the scene were laid in the Court of Neptune. Oh yes, of course, I know the Vengeance of Neptune does come into the play. I don't suggest for a moment that we should think only of Port-Royal, but after all the story that Racine tells us is not the 'Loves of the Sea-Urchins'. Still, it is what my friend wished to have, and it is very well done, right or wrong, and it's really quite pretty when you come to look at it. Yes, so you liked that, did you; you understood what it meant, of course; we feel the same about it, don't we, really; it is a trifle unbalanced, what he's done, you agree with me, but on the whole it is very clever of him." And so, when Bergotte had to express an opinion which was the opposite of my own, he in no way reduced me to silence, to the impossibility of framing any reply, as M. de Norpois would have done. This does not prove that Bergotte's opinions were of less value than the Ambassador's; far from it. A powerful idea communicates some of its strength to him who challenges it. Being itself a part of the riches of the universal Mind, it makes its way into, grafts itself upon the mind of him whom it is employed to refute, slips in among the ideas already there, with the help of which, gaining a little ground, he completes and corrects it; so that the final utterance is always to some extent the work of both parties to a discussion. It is to ideas which are not, properly speaking, ideas at all, to ideas which, founded upon nothing, can find no support, no kindred spirit among the ideas of the adversary, that he, grappling with something which, is not there, can find no word to say in answer.

The arguments of M. de Norpois (in the matter of art) were unanswerable simply because they were without reality.

Since Bergotte did not sweep aside my objections, I confessed to him that they had won the scorn of M. de Norpois. "But he's an old parrot!" was the answer. "He keeps on pecking you because he imagines all the time that you're a piece of cake, or a slice of cuttle-fish." "What's that?" asked Swann. "Are you a friend of Norpois?" "He's as dull as a wet Sunday," interrupted his wife, who had great faith in Bergotte's judgment, and was no doubt afraid that M. de Norpois might have spoken ill of her to us. "I tried to make him talk after dinner; I don't know if it's his age or his indigestion, but I found him too sticky for words. I really thought I should have to 'dope' him." "Yes, isn't he?" Bergotte chimed in. "You see, he has to keep his mouth shut half the time so as not to use up all the stock of inanities that hold his shirt-front down and his white waistcoat up." "I think that Bergotte and my wife are both very hard on him," came from Swann, who took the "line", in his own house, of a plain, sensible man. "I quite see that Norpois cannot interest you very much, but from another point of view," (for Swann made a hobby of collecting scraps of "real life") "he is quite remarkable, quite a remarkable instance of a lover. When he was Secretary at Rome," he went on, after making sure that Gilberte could not hear him, "he had, here in Paris, a mistress with whom he was madly in love, and he found time to make the double journey every week, so as to see her for a couple of hours. She was, as it happens, a most intelligent woman, and is quite attractive to this day; she is a dowager now. And he has had any number of others since then. I'm sure I should have gone stark mad if the woman I was in love with lived in Paris and I was kept shut up in Rome. Nervous men ought always to love, as the lower orders say, 'beneath' them, so that their women have a material inducement to do what they tell them." As he spoke, Swann realised that I might be applying this maxim to himself and Odette, and as, even among superior beings, at the moment when you and they seem to be soaring together above the plane of life, their personal pride is still basely human, he was seized by a violent ill-will towards me. But this was made manifest only in the uneasiness of his glance. He said nothing more to me at the time. Not that this need surprise us. When Racine (according to a story the truth of which has been exploded, though the theme of it may be found recurring every day in Parisian life) made an illusion to Scarron in front of Louis XIV, the most powerful monarch on earth said nothing to the poet that evening. It was on the following day, only, that he fell.

But as a theory requires to be stated as a whole, Swann, after this momentary irritation, and after wiping his eyeglass, finished saying what was in his mind in these words, words which were to assume later on in my memory the importance of a

prophetic warning, which I had not had the sense to take: "The danger of that kind of love, however, is that the woman's subjection calms the man's jealousy for a time but also makes it more exacting. After a little he will force his mistress to live like one of those prisoners whose cells they keep lighted day and night, to prevent their escaping. And that generally ends in trouble."

I reverted to M. de Norpois. "You must never trust him; he has the most wicked tongue!" said Mme. Swann in an accent which seemed to me to indicate that M. de Norpois had been "saying things" about her, especially as Swann looked across at his wife with an air of rebuke, as though to stop her before she went too far.

Meanwhile Gilberte, who had been told to go and get ready for our drive, stayed to listen to the conversation, and hovered between her mother and her father, leaning affectionately against his shoulder. Nothing, at first sight, could be in greater contrast to Mme. Swann, who was dark, than this child with her red hair and golden skin. But after looking at them both for a moment one saw in Gilberte many of the features—for instance, the nose cut short with a sharp, unfaltering decision by the unseen sculptor whose chisel repeats its work upon successive generations—the expression, the movements of her mother; to take an illustration from another form of art, she made one think of a portrait that was not a good likeness of Mme. Swann, whom the painter, to carry out some whim of colouring, had posed in a partial disguise, dressed to go out to a party in Venetian "character". And as not merely was she wearing a fair wig, but every atom of a swarthier complexion had been discharged from her flesh which, stripped of its veil of brownness, seemed more naked, covered simply in rays of light shed by an internal sun, this "make-up" was not just superficial but was incarnate in her; Gilberte had the appearance of embodying some fabulous animal or of having assumed a mythological disguise. This reddish skin was so exactly that of her father that nature seemed to have had, when Gilberte was being created, to solve the problem of how to reconstruct Mme. Swann piecemeal, without any material at her disposal save the skin of M. Swann. And nature had utilised this to perfection, like a master carver who makes a point of leaving the grain, the knots of his wood in evidence. On Gilberte's face, at the corner of a perfect reproduction of Odette's nose, the skin was raised so as to preserve intact the two beauty spots of M. Swann. It was a new variety of Mme. Swann that was thus obtained, growing there by her side like a white lilac-tree beside a purple. At the same time it did not do to imagine the boundary line between these two likenesses as definitely fixed. Now and then, when Gilberte smiled, one could distinguish the oval of her father's cheek upon her mother's face, as though some one had mixed them together to see what would result from the blend; this oval grew distinct, as an embryo grows into a living shape, it

lengthened obliquely, expanded, and a moment later had disappeared. In Gilberte's eyes there was the frank and honest gaze of her father; this was how she had looked at me when she gave me the agate marble and said "Keep it, to remind yourself of our friendship." But were one to put a question to Gilberte, to ask her what she had been doing, then one saw in those same eyes the embarrassment, the uncertainty, the prevarication, the misery that Odette used in the old days to shew, when Swann asked her where she had been and she gave him one of those lying answers which, in those days, drove the lover to despair and now made him abruptly change the conversation, as an incurious and prudent husband. Often in the Champs-Elysées I was disturbed by seeing this look on Gilberte's face. But as a rule my fears were unfounded. For in her, a purely physical survival of her mother, this look (if nothing else) had ceased to have any meaning. It was when she had been to her classes, when she must go home for some lesson that Gilberte's pupils executed that movement which, in time past, in the eyes of Odette, had been caused by the fear of disclosing that she had, during the day, opened the door to one of her lovers, or was at that moment in a hurry to be at some trysting-place. So one could see the two natures of M. and Mme. Swann ebb and flow, encroaching alternately one upon the other in the body of this Melusine.

It is, of course, common knowledge that a child takes after both its father and its mother. And yet the distribution of the merits and defects which it inherits is so oddly planned that, of two good qualities which seemed inseparable in one of the parents you will find but one in the child, and allied to that very fault in the other parent which seemed most irreconcilable with it. Indeed, the incarnation of a good moral quality in an incompatible physical blemish is often one of the laws of filial resemblance. Of two sisters, one will combine with the proud bearing of her father the mean little soul of her mother; the other, abundantly endowed with the paternal intelligence, will present it to the world in the aspect which her mother has made familiar; her mother's shapeless nose and scraggy bosom are become the bodily covering of talents which you had learned to distinguish beneath a superb presence. With the result that of each of the sisters one can say with equal justification that it is she who takes more after one or other of her parents. It is true that Gilberte was an only child, but there were, at the least, two Gilbertes. The two natures, her father's and her mother's, did more than just blend themselves in her; they disputed the possession of her—and yet one cannot exactly say that, which would let it be thought that a third Gilberte was in the meantime suffering by being the prey of the two others. Whereas Gilberte was alternately one and the other, and at any given moment no more than one of the two, that is to say incapable, when she was not being good, of suffering accordingly, the better Gilberte not being able at the time, on account of her momentary absence, to

detect the other's lapse from virtue. And so the less good of the two was free to enjoy pleasures of an ignoble kind. When the other spoke to you from the heart of her father, she held broad views, you would have liked to engage with her upon a fine and beneficent enterprise; you told her so, but, just as your arrangements were being completed, her mother's heart would already have resumed its control; hers was the voice that answered; and you were disappointed and vexed—almost baffled, as in the face of a substitution of one person for another—by an unworthy thought, an in sincere laugh, in which Gilberte saw no harm, for they sprang from what she herself at that moment was. Indeed, the disparity was at times so great between these two Gilbertes that you asked yourself, though without finding an answer, what on earth you could have said or done to her, last time, to find her now so different. When she herself had arranged to meet you somewhere, not only did she fail to appear, and offer no excuse afterwards, but, whatever the influence might have been that had made her change her mind, she shewed herself in so different a character when you did meet her that you might well have supposed that, taken in by a likeness such as forms the plot of the *Menaechmi*, you were now talking to some one not the person who had so politely expressed her desire to see you, had she not shewn signs of an ill-humour which revealed that she felt herself to be in the wrong, and wished to avoid the necessity of an explanation.

"Now then, run along and get ready; you're keeping us waiting," her mother reminded her.

"I'm so happy here with my little Papa; I want to stay just for a minute," replied Gilberte, burying her head beneath the arm of her father, who passed his fingers lovingly through her bright hair.

Swann was one of those men who, having lived for a long time amid the illusions of love, have seen the prosperity that they themselves brought to numberless women increase the happiness of those women without exciting in them any gratitude, any tenderness towards their benefactors; but in their child they believe that they can feel an affection which, being incarnate in their own name, will enable them to remain in the world after their death. When there should no longer be any Charles Swann, there would still be a Mlle. Swann, or a Mme. something else, née Swann, who would continue to love the vanished father. Indeed, to love him too well, perhaps, Swann may have been thinking, for he acknowledged Gilberte's caress with a "Good girl!" in that tone, made tender by our apprehension, to which, when we think of the future, we are prompted by the too passionate affection of a creature who is destined to survive us. To conceal his emotion, he joined in our talk about Berma. He pointed out to me, but in a detached, a listless tone, as though he wished to remain to some extent

unconcerned in what he was saying, with what intelligence, with what an astonishing fitness the actress said to Œnone, "You knew it!" He was right. That intonation at least had a value that was really intelligible, and might therefore have satisfied my desire to find incontestable reasons for admiring Berma. But it was by the very fact of its clarity that it did not at all content me. Her intonation was so ingenious so definite in intention and in its meaning, that it seemed to exist by itself, so that any intelligent actress might have learned to use it. It was a fine idea; but whoever else should conceive it as fully must possess it equally. It remained to Berma's credit that she had discovered it, but is one entitled to use the word "discover" when the object in question is something that would not be different if one had been given it, something that does not belong essentially to one's own nature seeing that some one else may afterwards reproduce it?

"Upon my soul, your presence among us does raise the tone of the conversation!" Swann observed to me, as though to excuse himself to Bergotte; for he had formed the habit, in the Guermantes set, of entertaining great artists as if they were just ordinary friends whom one seeks only to make eat the dishes that they like, play the games, or, in the country, indulge in whatever form of sport they please. "It seems to me that we're talking a great deal of art," he went on. "But it's so nice, I do love it!" said Mme. Swann, throwing me a look of gratitude, as well from good nature as because she had not abandoned her old aspirations towards a more intellectual form of conversation. After this it was to others of the party, and principally to Gilberte that Bergotte addressed himself. I had told him everything that I felt with a freedom which had astonished me, and was due to the fact that, having acquired with him, years before (in the course of all those hours of solitary reading, in which he was to me merely the better part of myself), the habit of sincerity, of frankness, of confidence, I was less frightened by him than by a person with whom I should have been talking for the first time. And yet, for the same reason, I was greatly disturbed by the thought of the impression that I must have been making on him, the contempt that I had supposed he would feel for my ideas dating not from that afternoon but from the already distant time in which I had begun to read his books in our garden at Combray. And yet I ought perhaps to have reminded myself that, since it was in all sincerity, abandoning myself to the train of my thoughts, that I had felt, on the one hand, so intensely in sympathy with the work of Bergotte and on the other hand, in the theatre, a disappointment the reason of which I did not know, those two instinctive movements which had both carried me away could not be so very different from one another, but must be obedient to the same laws; and that that mind of Bergotte which I had loved in his books could not be anything entirely foreign and hostile to my disappointment and to

my inability to express it. For my intelligence must be a uniform thing, perhaps indeed there exists but a single intelligence, in which everyone in the world participates, towards which each of us from the position of his own separate body turns his eyes, as in a theatre where, if everyone has his own separate seat, there is on the other hand but a single stage. Of course, the ideas which I was tempted to seek to disentangle were probably not those whose depths Bergotte usually sounded in his books. But if it were one and the same intelligence which we had, he and I, at our disposal, he must, when he heard me express those ideas, be reminded of them, cherish them, smile upon them, keeping probably, in spite of what I supposed, before his mind's eye a whole world of intelligence other than that an excerpt of which had passed into his books, an excerpt upon which I had based my imagination of his whole mental universe. Just as priests, having the widest experience of the human heart, are best able to pardon the sins which they do not themselves commit, so genius, having the widest experience of the human intelligence, can best understand the ideas most directly in opposition to those which form the foundation of its own writings. I ought to have told myself all this (though, for that matter, it was none too consoling a thought, for the benevolent condescension of great minds has as a corollary the incomprehension and hostility of small; and one derives far less happiness from the friendliness of a great writer, which one finds expressed, failing a more intimate association, in his books, than suffering from the hostility of a woman whom one did not choose for her intelligence but cannot help loving). I ought to have told myself all this, but I did not; I was convinced that I had appeared a fool to Bergotte, when Gilberte whispered in my ear:

"You can't think how delighted I am, because you have made a conquest of my great friend Bergotte. He's been telling Mamma that he found you extremely intelligent."

"Where are we going?" I asked her. "Oh, wherever you like; you know, it's all the same to me." But since the incident that had occurred on the anniversary of her grandfather's death I had begun to ask myself whether Gilberte's character was not other than I had supposed, whether that indifference to what was to be done, that wisdom, that calm, that gentle and constant submission did not indeed conceal passionate longings which her self-esteem would not allow to be visible and which she disclosed only by her sudden resistance whenever by any chance they were frustrated.

As Bergotte lived in the same neighbourhood as my parents, we left the house together; in the carriage he spoke to me of my health. "Our friends were telling me that you had been ill. I am very sorry. And yet, after all, I am not too sorry, because I can

see quite well that you are able to enjoy the pleasures of the mind, and they are probably what mean most to you, as to everyone who has known them."

Alas, what he was saying, how little, I felt, did it apply to myself, whom all reasoning, however exalted it might be, left cold, who was happy only in moments of pure idleness, when I was comfortable and well; I felt how purely material was everything that I desired in life, and how easily I could dispense with the intellect. As I made no distinction among my pleasures between those that came to me from different sources, of varying depth and permanence, I was thinking, when the moment came to answer him, that I should have liked an existence in which I was on intimate terms with the Duchesse de Guermantes, and often came across, as in the old toll-house in the Champs-Elysées, a chilly smell that would remind me of Combray. But in this ideal existence which I dared not confide to him the pleasures of the mind found no place.

"No, sir, the pleasures of the mind count for very little with me; it is not them that I seek after; indeed I don't even know that I have ever tasted them."

"You really think not?" he replied. "Well, it may be, no, wait a minute now, yes, after all that must be what you like best, I can see it now dearly, I am certain of it."

As certainly, he did not succeed in convincing me; and yet I was already feeling happier, less restricted. After what M. de Norpois had said to me, I had regarded my moments of dreaming, of enthusiasm, of self-confidence as purely subjective and barren of truth. But according to Bergotte, who appeared to understand my case, it seemed that it was quite the contrary, that the symptom I ought to disregard was, in fact, my doubts, my disgust with myself. Moreover, what he had said about M. de Norpois took most of the sting out of a sentence from which I had supposed that no appeal was possible.

"Are you being properly looked after?" Bergotte asked me. "Who is treating you?" I told him that I had seen, and should probably go on seeing Cottard. "But that's not at all the sort of man you want!" he told me. "I know nothing about him as a doctor. But I've met him at Mme. Swann's. The man's an imbecile. Even supposing that that doesn't prevent his being a good doctor, which I hesitate to believe, it does prevent his being a good doctor for artists, for men of intelligence. People like you must have suitable doctors, I would almost go so far as to say treatment and medicines specially adapted to themselves. Cottard will bore you, and that alone will prevent his treatment from having any effect. Besides, the proper course of treatment cannot possibly be the same for you as for any Tom, Dick or Harry. Nine tenths of the ills from which intelligent people suffer spring from their intellect. They need at least a doctor who understands their disease. How do you expect that Cottard should be able to treat

you; he has made allowances for the difficulty of digesting sauces, for gastric trouble, but he has made no allowance for the effect of reading Shakespeare. So that his calculations are inaccurate in your case, the balance is upset; you see, always the little bottle-imp bobbing up again. He will find that you have a dilated stomach; he has no need to examine you for it, since he has it already in his eye. You can see it there, reflected in his glasses." This manner of speaking tired me greatly; I said to myself, with the stupidity of common sense: "There is no more any dilated stomach reflected in Professor Cottard's glasses than there are inanities stored behind the white waistcoat of M. de Norpois." "I should recommend you, instead," went on Bergotte, "to consult Dr. du Boulbon, who is quite an intelligent man." "He is a great admirer of your books," I replied. I saw that Bergotte knew this, and I decided that kindred spirits soon come together, that one has few really "unknown friends". What Bergotte had said to me with respect to Cottard impressed me, While running contrary to everything that I myself believed. I was in no way disturbed by finding my doctor a bore; I expected of him that, thanks to an art the laws of which were beyond me, he should pronounce on the subject of my health an infallible oracle, after consultation of my entrails. And I did not at all require that, with the aid of an intellect, in which I easily outstripped him, he should seek to understand my intellect, which I pictured to myself merely as a means, of no importance in itself, of trying to attain to certain external verities. I doubted greatly whether intellectual people required a different form of hygiene from imbeciles, and I was quite prepared to submit myself to the latter kind. "I'll tell you who does need a good doctor, and that is our friend Swann," said Bergotte. And on my asking whether he was ill, "Well, don't you see, he's typical of the man who has married a whore, and has to swallow a hundred serpents every day, from women who refuse to meet his wife, or men who were there before him. You can see them in his mouth, writhing. Just look, any day you're there, at the way he lifts his eyebrows when he comes in, to see who's in the room." The malice with which Bergotte spoke thus to a stranger of the friends in whose house he had so long been received as a welcome guest was as new to me as the almost amorous tone which, in that house, he had constantly been adopting to speak to them. Certainly a person like my great-aunt, for instance, would have been incapable of treating any of us with that politeness which I had heard Bergotte lavishing upon Swann. Even to the people whom she liked, she enjoyed saying disagreeable things. But behind their backs she would never have uttered a word to which they might not have listened. There was nothing less like the social "world" than our society at Combray. The Swanns' house marked a stage on the way towards it, towards its inconstant tide. If they had not yet reached the open sea, they were certainly in the lagoon. "This is all between ourselves," said Bergotte as he left me outside my own door. A few years later I should have answered: "I never repeat

things." That is the ritual phrase of society, from which the slanderer always derives a false reassurance. It is what I should have said then and there to Bergotte, for one does not invent all one's speeches, especially when, one is acting merely as a card in the social pack. But I did not yet know the formula. What my great-aunt, on the other hand, would have said on a similar occasion was: "If you don't wish it to be repeated, why do you say it?" That is the answer of the unsociable, of the quarrelsome. I was nothing of that sort: I bowed my head in silence.

Men of letters who were in my eyes persons of considerable importance had had to plot for years before they succeeded in forming with Bergotte relations which continued to the end to be but dimly literary, and never emerged beyond the four walls of his study, whereas I, I had now been installed among the friends of the great writer, at the first attempt and without any effort, like a man who, instead of standing outside in a crowd for hours in order to secure a bad seat in a theatre, is shown in at once to the best, having entered by a door that is closed to the public. If Swann had thus opened such a door to me, it was doubtless because, just as a king finds himself naturally inviting his children's friends into the royal box, or on board the royal yacht, so Gilberte's parents received their daughter's friends among all the precious things that they had in their house, and the even more precious intimacies that were enshrined there. But at that time I thought, and perhaps was right in thinking that this friendliness on Swann's part was aimed indirectly at my parents. I seemed to remember having heard once at Combray that he had suggested to them that, in view of my admiration for Bergotte, he should take me to dine with him, and that my parents had declined, saying that I was too young, and too easily excited to "go out" yet. My parents, no doubt, represented to certain other people (precisely those who seemed to me the most marvellous) something quite different from what they were to me, so that, just as when the lady in pink had paid my father a tribute of which he had shewn himself so unworthy, I should have wished them to understand what an inestimable present I had just received, and to testify their gratitude to that generous and courteous Swann who had offered it to me, or to them rather, without seeming any more to be conscious of its value than is, in Luini's fresco, the charming Mage with the arched nose and fair hair, to whom, it appeared, Swann had at one time been thought to bear a striking resemblance.

Unfortunately, this favour that Swann had done me, which, as I entered the house, before I had even taken off my greatcoat, I reported to my parents, in the hope that it would awaken in their hearts an emotion equal to my own, and would determine them upon some immense and decisive act of politeness towards the Swanns, did not appear to be greatly appreciated by them. "Swann introduced you to Bergotte? An

excellent friend for you, charming society!" cried my father, ironically. "It only wanted that!" Alas, when I had gone on to say that Bergotte was by no means inclined to admire M. de Norpois:

"I dare say!" retorted my father. "That simply proves that he's a foolish and evil-minded fellow. My poor boy, you never had much common sense, still, I'm sorry to see you fall among a set that will finish you off altogether."

Already the mere fact of my frequenting the Swanns had been far from delighting my parents. This introduction to Bergotte seemed to them a fatal but natural consequence of an original mistake, namely their own weakness in controlling me, which my grandfather would have called a "want of circumspection". I felt that I had only, in order to complete their ill-humour, to tell them that this perverse fellow who did not appreciate M. de Norpois had found me extremely intelligent. For I had observed that whenever my father decided that anyone, one of my school friends for instance, was going astray—as I was at that moment—if that person had the approval of somebody whom my father did not rate high, he would see in this testimony the confirmation of his own stern judgment. The evil merely seemed to him more pronounced. I could hear him already exclaiming, "Of course, it all hangs together," an expression that terrified me by the vagueness and vastness of the reforms the introduction of which into my quiet life it seemed to threaten. But since, were I not to tell them what Bergotte had said of me, even then nothing could efface the impression my parents had formed, that this should be made slightly worse mattered little. Besides, they seemed to me so unfair, so completely mistaken, that not only had I not any hope, I had scarcely any desire to bring them to a more equitable point of view. At the same time, feeling, as the words came from my lips, how alarmed they would be by the thought that I had found favour in the sight of a person who dismissed clever men as fools and had earned the contempt of all decent people, praise from whom, since it seemed to me a thing to be desired, would only encourage me in wrongdoing, it was in faltering tones and with a slightly shamefaced air that, coming to the end of my story, I flung them the bouquet of: "He told the Swanns that he had found me extremely intelligent." Just as a poisoned dog, in a field, rushes, without knowing why, straight to the grass which is the precise antidote to the toxin that he has swallowed, so I, without in the least suspecting it, had said the one thing in the world that was capable of overcoming in my parents this prejudice with respect to Bergotte, a prejudice which all the best reasons that I could have urged, all the tributes that I could have paid him must have proved powerless to defeat. Instantly the situation changed.

"Oh! He said that he found you intelligent," repeated my mother. "I am glad to hear that, because he is a man of talent."

"What! He said that, did he?" my father joined in. "I don't for a moment deny his literary distinction, before which the whole world bows; only it is a pity that he should lead that scarcely reputable existence to which old Norpois made a guarded allusion, when he was here," he went on, not seeing that against the sovran virtue of the magic words which I had just repeated the depravity of Bergotte's morals was little more able to contend than the falsity of his judgment.

"But, my dear," Mamma interrupted, "we've no proof that it's true. People say all sorts of things. Besides, M. de Norpois may have the most perfect manners in the world, but he's not always very good-natured, especially about people who are not exactly his sort."

"That's quite true; I've noticed it myself," my father admitted.

"And then, too, a great deal ought to be forgiven Bergotte, since he thinks well of my little son," Mamma went on, stroking my hair with her fingers and fastening upon me a long and pensive gaze.

My mother had not, indeed, awaited this verdict from Bergotte before telling me that I might ask Gilberte to tea whenever I had friends coming. But I dared not do so for two reasons. The first was that at Gilberte's there was never anything else to drink but tea. Whereas at home Mamma insisted on there being a pot of chocolate as well. I was afraid that Gilberte might regard this as "common"; and so conceive a great contempt for us. The other reason was a formal difficulty, a question of procedure which I could never succeed in settling. When I arrived at Mme. Swann's she used to ask me: "And how is your mother?" I had made several overtures to Mamma to find out whether she would do the same when Gilberte came to us, a point which seemed to me more serious that, at the Court of Louis XIV, the use of "Monseigneur." But Mamma would not hear of it for a moment.

"Certainly not. I do not know Mme. Swann."

"But neither does she know you."

"I never said she did, but we are not obliged to behave in exactly the same way about everything. I shall find other ways of being civil to Gilberte than Mme. Swann has with you."

But I was unconvinced, and preferred not to invite Gilberte.

Leaving my parents, I went upstairs to change my clothes and on emptying my pockets came suddenly upon the envelope which the Swanns' butler had handed me before shewing me into the drawing-room. I was now alone. I opened it; inside was a card on which I was told the name of the lady whom I ought to have "taken in" to luncheon.

It was about this period that Bloch overthrew my conception of the world and opened for me fresh possibilities of happiness (which, for that matter, were to change later on into possibilities of suffering), by assuring me that, in contradiction of all that I had believed at the time of my walks along the Méséglise way, women never asked for anything better than to make love. He added to this service a second, the value of which I was not to appreciate until much later; it was he who took me for the first time into a disorderly house. He had indeed told me that there were any number of pretty women whom one might enjoy. But I could see them only in a vague outline for which those houses were to enable me to substitute actual human features. So that if I owed to Bloch—for his "good tidings" that beauty and the enjoyment of beauty were not inaccessible things, and that we have acted foolishly in renouncing them for all time—a debt of gratitude of the same kind that we owe to an optimistic physician or philosopher who has given us reason to hope for length of days in this world and not to be entirely cut off from it when we shall have passed beyond the veil, the houses of assignation which I began to frequent some years later—by furnishing me with specimens of beauty, by allowing me to add to the beauty of women that element which we are powerless to invent, which is something more than a mere summary of former beauties, that present indeed divine, the one present that we cannot bestow upon ourselves, before which faint and fail all the logical creations of our intellect, and which we can seek from reality alone: an individual charm—deserved to be ranked by me with those other benefactors more recent in origin but of comparable utility (before finding which we used to imagine without any warmth the seductive charms of Mantegna, of Wagner, of Siena, by studying other painters, hearing other composers, visiting other cities): namely illustrated editions of the history of painting, symphonic concerts and handbooks to 'Mediaeval Towns'. But the house to which Bloch led me, (and which he himself, for that matter, had long ceased to visit) was of too humble a grade, its denizens were too inconspicuous and too little varied to be able to satisfy my old or to stimulate new curiosities. The mistress of this house knew none of the women with whom one asked her to negotiate, and was always suggesting others whom, one did not want. She boasted to me of one in particular, one of whom, with a smile full of promise (as though this; had been a great rarity and a special treat) she would whisper: "She is a Jewess! Doesn't that make you want to?" (That, by the way,

was probably why the girl's name was Rachel.) And with a silly and affected excitement which, she hoped, would prove contagious, and which ended in a hoarse gurgle, almost of sensual satisfaction: "Think of that, my boy, a Jewess! Wouldn't that be lovely? Rrrr!" This Rachel, of whom I caught a glimpse without her seeing me, was dark and not good-looking, but had an air of intelligence, and would pass the tip of her tongue over her lips as she smiled, with a look of boundless impertinence at the "boys" who were introduced to her and whom I could hear making conversation. Her small and narrow face was framed in short curls of black hair, irregular as though they were outlined in pen-strokes upon a wash-drawing in Indian ink. Every evening I promised the old woman who offered her to me with a special insistence, boasting of her superior intelligence and her education, that I would not fail to come some day on purpose to make the acquaintance of Rachel, whom I had nicknamed "Rachel when from the Lord". But the first evening I had heard her, as she was leaving the house, say to the mistress: "That's settled then; I shall be free to-morrow, if you have anyone you won't forget to send for me."

And these words had prevented me from recognising her as a person because they had made me classify her at once in a general category of women whose habit, common to all of them, was to come there in the evening to see whether there might not be a louis or two to be earned. She would simply vary her formula, saying indifferently: "If you want me" or "If you want anybody."

The mistress, who was not familiar with Halévy's opera, did not know why I always called the girl "Rachel when from the Lord." But failure to understand a joke has never yet made anyone find it less amusing, and it was always with a whole-hearted laugh that she would say to me:

"Then there's nothing doing to-night? When am I going to fix you up with 'Rachel when from the Lord'? Why do you always say that, 'Rachel when from the Lord'? Oh, that's very smart, that is. I'm going to make a match of you two. You won't be sorry for it, you'll see."

Once I was just making up my mind, but she was "in the press", another time in the hands of the hairdresser, an elderly gentleman who never did anything for the women except pour oil on their loosened hair and then comb it. And I grew tired of waiting, even though several of the humbler frequenters of the place (working girls, they called themselves, but they always seemed to be out of work), had come to mix drinks for me and to hold long conversations to which, despite the gravity of the subjects discussed, the partial or total nudity of the speakers gave an attractive simplicity. I ceased moreover to go to this house because, anxious to present a token of my good-

will to the woman who kept it and was in need of furniture, I had given her several pieces, notably a big sofa, which I had inherited from my aunt Léonie. I used never to see them, for want of space had prevented my parents from taking them in at home, and they were stored in a warehouse. But as soon as I discovered them again in the house where these women were putting them to their own uses, all the virtues that one had imbibed in the air of my aunt's room at Combray became apparent to me, tortured by the cruel contact to which I had abandoned them in their helplessness! Had I outraged the dead, I should not have suffered such remorse. I returned no more to visit their new mistress, for they seemed to me to be alive, and to be appealing to me, like those objects, apparently inanimate, in a Persian fairy tale, in which are embodied human souls that are undergoing martyrdom and plead for deliverance. Besides, as our memory presents things to us, as a rule, not in their chronological sequence but as it were by a reflexion in which the order of the parts is reversed, I remembered only long afterwards that it was upon that same sofa that, many years before, I had tasted for the first time the sweets of love with one of my girl cousins, with whom I had not known where to go until she somewhat rashly suggested our taking advantage of a moment in which aunt Léonie had left her room.

A whole lot more of my aunt Léonie's things, and notably a magnificent set of old silver plate, I sold, in spite of my parents' warnings, so as to have more money to spend, and to be able to send more flowers to Mme. Swann who would greet me, after receiving an immense basket of orchids, with: "If I were your father, I should have you up before the magistrate for this." How was I to suppose that one day I might regret more than anything the loss of my silver plate, and rank certain other pleasures more highly than that (which would have shrunk perhaps into none at all) of bestowing favours upon Gilberte's parents. Similarly, it was with Gilberte in my mind, and so as not to be separated from her, that I had decided not to enter a career of diplomacy abroad. It is always thus, impelled by a state of mind which is destined not to last, that we make our irrevocable decisions. I could scarcely imagine that that strange substance which was housed in Gilberte, and from her permeated her parents and her home, leaving me indifferent to all things else, could be liberated from her, could migrate into another person. The same substance, unquestionable, and yet one that would have a wholly different effect on me. For a single malady goes through various evolutions, and a delicious poison can no longer be taken with the same impunity when, with the passing of the years, the heart's power of resistance has diminished.

My parents meanwhile would have liked to see the intelligence that Bergotte had discerned in me made manifest in some remarkable achievement. When I still did not know the Swanns I thought that I was prevented from working by the state of agitation

into which I was thrown by the impossibility of seeing Gilberte when I chose. But, now that their door stood open to me, scarcely had I sat down at my desk than I would rise and run to them. And after I had left them and was at home again, my isolation was apparent only, my mind was powerless to swim against the stream of words on which I had allowed myself mechanically to be borne for hours on end. Sitting alone, I continued to fashion remarks such as might have pleased or amused the Swanns, and to make this pastime more entertaining I myself took the parts of those absent players, I put to myself imagined questions, so chosen that my brilliant epigrams served merely as happy answers to them. Though conducted in silence, this exercise was none the less a conversation and not a meditation, my solitude a mental society in which it was not I myself but other imaginary speakers who controlled my choice of words, and in which I felt as I formulated, in place of the thoughts that I believed to be true, those that came easily to my mind, and involved no introspection from without, that kind of pleasure, entirely passive, which sitting still affords to anyone who is burdened with a sluggish digestion.

Had I been less firmly resolved upon setting myself definitely to work, I should perhaps have made an effort to begin at once. But since my resolution was explicit, since within twenty-four hours, in the empty frame of that long morrow in which everything was so well arranged because I myself had not yet entered it, my good intentions would be realised without difficulty, it was better not to select an evening on which I was ill-disposed for a beginning for which the following days were not, alas, to shew themselves any more propitious. But I was reasonable. It would have been puerile, on the part of one who had waited now for years, not to put up with a postponement of two or three days. Confident that by the day after next I should have written several pages, I said not a word more to my parents of my decision; I preferred to remain patient for a few hours and then to bring to a convinced and comforted grandmother a sample of work that was already under way. Unfortunately the morrow was not that vast, external day to which I in my fever had looked forward. When it drew to a close, my laziness and my painful struggle to overcome certain internal obstacles had simply lasted twenty-four hours longer. And at the end of several days, my plans not having matured, I had no longer the same hope that they would be realised at once, no longer the courage, therefore, to subordinate everything else to their realisation: I began again to keep late hours, having no longer, to oblige me to go to bed early on any evening, the certain hope of seeing my work begun next morning. I needed, before I could recover my creative energy, several days of relaxation, and the only time that my grandmother ventured, in a gentle and disillusioned tone, to frame the reproach: "Well, and that work of yours; aren't we even to speak of it now?" I

resented her intrusion, convinced that in her inability to see that my mind was irrevocably made up, she had further and perhaps for a long time postponed the execution of my task, by the shock which her denial of justice to me had given my nerves, since until I had recovered from that shock I should not feel inclined to begin my work. She felt that her scepticism had charged blindly into my intention. She apologised, kissing me: "I am sorry; I shall not say anything again," and, so that I should not be discouraged, assured me that, from the day on which I should be quite well again, the work would come of its own accord from my superfluity of strength.

Besides, I said to myself, in spending all my time with the Swanns, am I not doing exactly what Bergotte does? To my parents it seemed almost as though, idle as I was, I was leading, since it was spent in the same drawing-room with a great writer, the life most favourable to the growth of talent. And yet the assumption that anyone can be dispensed from having to create that talent for himself, from within himself, and can acquire it from some one else, is as impossible as it would be to suppose that a man can keep himself in good health, in spite of neglecting all the rules of hygiene and of indulging in the worst excesses, merely by dining out often in the company of a physician. The person, by the way, who was most completely taken in by this illusion, which misled me as well as my parents, was Mme. Swann. When I explained to her that I was unable to come, that I must stay at home and work, she looked as though she were thinking that I made a great fuss about nothing, that there was something foolish as well as ostentatious in what I had said.

"But Bergotte is coming, isn't he? Do you mean that you don't think it good, what he writes? It will be better still, very soon," she went on, "for he is more pointed, he concentrates more in newspaper articles than in his books, where he is apt to spread out too much. I've arranged that in future he's to do the leading articles in the *Figaro*. He'll be distinctly the 'right man in the right place' there." And, finally, "Come! He will tell you, better than anyone, what you ought to do."

And so, just as one invites a gentleman ranker to meet his colonel, it was in the interests of my career, and as though masterpieces of literature arose out of "getting to know" people, that she told me not to fail to come to dinner with her next day, to meet Bergotte.

And so there was not from the Swanns any more than from my parents, that is to say from those who, at different times, had seemed bound to place obstacles in my way, any further opposition to that pleasant existence in which I might see Gilberte as often as I chose, with enjoyment if not with peace of mind. There can be no peace of mind in love, since the advantage one has secured is never anything but a fresh starting-point

for further desires. So long as I had not been free to go to her, having my eyes fixed upon that inaccessible goal of happiness, I could not so much as imagine the fresh grounds for anxiety that lay in wait for me there. Once the resistance of her parents was broken, and the problem solved at last, it began to set itself anew, and always in different terms. Each evening, on arriving home, I reminded myself that I had things to say to Gilberte of prime importance, things upon which our whole friendship hung, and these things were never the same. But at least I was happy, and no further menace arose to threaten my happiness. One was to appear, alas, from a quarter in which I had never detected any peril, namely from Gilberte and myself. And yet I ought to have been tormented by what, on the contrary, reassured me, by what I mistook for happiness. We are, when we love, in an abnormal state, capable of giving at once to an accident, the most simple to all appearance and one that may at any moment occur, a serious aspect which that accident by itself would not bear. What makes us so happy is the presence in our heart of an unstable element which we are perpetually arranging to keep in position, and of which we cease almost to be aware so long as it is not displaced. Actually, there is in love a permanent strain of suffering which happiness neutralises, makes conditional only, procrastinates, but which may at any moment become what it would long since have been had we not obtained what we were seeking, sheer agony.

On several occasions I felt that Gilberte was anxious to put off my visits. It is true that when I was at all anxious to see her I had only to get myself invited by her parents who were increasingly persuaded of my excellent influence over her. "Thanks to them," I used to think, "my love is running no risk; the moment I have them on my side, I can set my mind at rest; they have full authority over Gilberte." Until, alas, I detected certain signs of impatience which she allowed to escape her when her father made me come to the house, almost against her will, and asked myself whether what I had regarded as a protection for my happiness was not in fact the secret reason why that happiness could not endure.

The last time that I called to see Gilberte, it was raining; she had been asked to a dancing lesson in the house of some people whom she knew too slightly to be able to take me there with her. In view of the dampness of the air I had taken rather more caffeine than usual. Perhaps on account of the weather, or because she had some objection to the house in which this party was being given, Mme. Swann, as her daughter was leaving the room, called her back in the sharpest of tones: "Gilberte!" and pointed to me, to indicate that I had come there to see her and that she ought to stay with me. This "Gilberte!" had been uttered, or shouted rather, with the best of intentions towards myself, but from the way in which Gilberte shrugged her shoulders

as she took off her outdoor clothes I divined that her mother had unwittingly hastened the gradual evolution, which until then it had perhaps been possible to arrest, which was gradually drawing away from me my friend. "You don't need to go out dancing every day," Odette told her daughter, with a sagacity acquired, no doubt, in earlier days, from Swann. Then, becoming once more Odette, she began speaking to her daughter in English. At once it was as though a wall had sprung up to hide from me a part of the life of Gilberte, as though an evil genius had spirited my friend far away. In a language that we know, we have substituted for the opacity of sounds, the perspicuity of ideas. But a language which we do not know is a fortress sealed, within whose walls she whom we love is free to play us false, while we, standing without, desperately alert in our impotence, can see, can prevent nothing. So this conversation in English, at which, a month earlier, I should merely have smiled, interspersed with a few proper names in French which did not fail to accentuate, to give a point to my uneasiness, had, when conducted within a few feet of me by two motionless persons, the same degree of cruelty, left me as much abandoned and alone as the forcible abduction of my companion. At length Mme. Swann left us. That day, perhaps from resentment against myself, the unwilling cause of her not going out to enjoy herself, perhaps also because, guessing her to be angry with me, I was precautionally colder than usual with her, the face of Gilberte, divested of every sign of joy, bleak, bare, pillaged, seemed all afternoon to be devoting a melancholy regret to the pas-de-quatre in which my arrival had prevented her from going to take part, and to be defying every living creature, beginning with myself, to understand the subtle reasons that had determined in her a sentimental attachment to the boston. She confined herself to exchanging with me, now and again, on the weather, the increasing violence of the rain, the fastness of the clock, a conversation punctuated with silences and monosyllables, in which I lashed myself on, with a sort of desperate rage, to the destruction of those moments which we might have devoted to friendship and happiness. And on each of our remarks was stamped, as it were, a supreme harshness, by the paroxysm of their stupefying unimportance, which at the same time consoled me, for it prevented Gilberte from being taken in by the banality of my observations and the indifference of my tone. In vain was my polite: "I thought, the other day, that the clock was slow, if anything;" she evidently understood me to mean: "How tiresome you are being!" Obstinately as I might protract, over the whole length of that rain-sodden afternoon, the dull cloud of words through which no fitful ray shone, I knew that my coldness was not so unalterably fixed as I pretended, and that Gilberte must be fully aware that if, after already saying it to her three times, I had hazarded a fourth repetition of the statement that the evenings were drawing in, I should have had difficulty in restraining myself from bursting into tears. When she was like that, when

no smile filled her eyes or unveiled her face, I cannot describe the devastating monotony that stamped her melancholy eyes and sullen features. Her face, grown almost livid, reminded me then of those dreary beaches where the sea, ebbing far out, wearies one with its faint shimmering, everywhere the same, fixed in an immutable and low horizon. At length, as I saw no sign in Gilberte of the happy change for which I had been waiting now for some hours, I told her that she was not being nice. "It is you that are not being nice," was her answer. "Oh, but surely—-" I asked myself what I could have done, and, finding no answer, put the question to her. "Naturally, you think yourself nice!" she said to me with a laugh, and went on laughing. Whereupon I felt all the anguish that there was for me in not being able to attain to that other, less perceptible plane of her mind which her laughter indicated. It seemed, that laughter, to mean: "No, no, I'm not going to let myself be moved by anything that you say, I know you're madly in love with me, but that leaves me neither hot nor cold, for I don't care a rap for you." But I told myself that, after all, laughter was not a language so well defined that I could be certain of understanding what this laugh really meant. And Gilberte's words were affectionate. "But how am I not being nice," I asked her, "tell me; I will do anything you want." "No; that wouldn't be any good. I can't explain." For a moment I was afraid that she thought that I did not love her, and this was for me a fresh agony, no less keen, but one that required treatment by a different conversational method. "If you knew how much you were hurting me you would tell me." But this pain which, had she doubted my love for her, must have rejoiced her, seemed instead to make her more angry. Then, realising my mistake, making up my mind to pay no more attention to what she said, letting her (without bothering to believe her) assure me: "I do love you, indeed I do; you will see one day," (that day on which the guilty are convinced that their innocence will be made clear, and which, for some mysterious reason, never happens to be the day on which their evidence is taken), I had the courage to make a sudden resolution not to see her again, and without telling her of it yet since she would not have believed me.

Grief that is caused one by a person with whom one is in love can be bitter, even when it is interpolated among preoccupations, occupations, pleasures in which that person is not directly involved and from which our attention is diverted only now and again to return to it. But when such a grief has its birth—as was now happening—at a moment when the happiness of seeing that person fills us to the exclusion of all else, the sharp depression that then affects our spirits, sunny hitherto, sustained and calm, lets loose in us a raging tempest against which we know not whether we are capable of struggling to the end. The tempest that was blowing in my heart was so violent that I made my way home baffled, battered, feeling that I could recover my breath only by

retracing my steps, by returning, upon whatever pretext, into Gilberte's presence. But she would have said to herself: "Back again! Evidently I can go to any length with him; he will come back every time, and the more wretched he is when he leaves me the more docile he'll be." Besides, I was irresistibly drawn towards her in thought, and those alternative orientations, that mad careering between them of the compass-needle within me persisted after I had reached home, and expressed themselves in the mutually contradictory letters to Gilberte which I began to draft. I was about to pass through one of those difficult crises which we generally find that we have to face at various stages in life, and which, for all that there has been no change in our character, in our nature (that nature which itself creates our loves, and almost creates the women whom we love, even to their faults), we do not face in the same way on each occasion, that is to say at every age. At such moments our life is divided, and so to speak distributed over a pair of scales, in two counterpoised pans which between them contain it all. In one there is our desire not to displease, not to appear too humble to the creature whom we love without managing to understand her, but whom we find it more convenient at times to appear almost to disregard, so that she shall not have that sense of her own indispensability which may turn her from us; in the other scale there is a feeling of pain—and one that is not localised and partial only—which cannot be set at rest unless, abandoning every thought of pleasing the woman and of making her believe that we can dispense with her, we go at once to find her. When we withdraw from the pan in which our pride lies a small quantity of the will-power which we have weakly allowed to exhaust itself with increasing age, when we add to the pan that holds our suffering a physical pain which we have acquired and have let grow, then, instead of the courageous solution that would have carried the day at one-and-twenty, it is the other, grown too heavy and insufficiently balanced, that crushes us down at fifty. All the more because situations, while repeating themselves, tend to alter, and there is every likelihood that, in middle life or in old age, we shall have had the grim satisfaction of complicating our love by an intrusion of habit which adolescence, repressed by other demands upon it, less master of itself, has never known.

I had just written Gilberte a letter in which I allowed the tempest of my wrath to thunder, not however without throwing her the lifebuoy of a few words disposed as though by accident on the page, by clinging to which my friend might be brought to a reconciliation; a moment later, the wind having changed, they were phrases full of love that I addressed to her, chosen for the sweetness of certain forlorn expressions, those "nevermores" so touching to those who pen them, so wearisome to her who will have to read them, whether she believe them to be false and translate "nevermore" by

"this very evening, if you want me," or believe them to be true and so to be breaking the news to her of one of those final separations which make so little difference to our lives when the other person is one with whom we are not in love. But since we are incapable, while we are in love, of acting as fit predecessors of the next persons whom we shall presently have become, and who will then be in love no longer, how are we to imagine the actual state of mind of a woman whom, even when we are conscious that we are of no account to her, we have perpetually represented in our musings as uttering, so as to lull us into a happy dream or to console us for a great sorrow, the same speeches that she would make if she loved us. When we come to examine the thoughts, the actions of a woman whom we love, we are as completely at a loss as must have been, face to face with the phenomena of nature, the world's first natural philosophers, before their science had been elaborated and had cast a ray of light over the unknown. Or, worse still, we are like a person in whose mind the law of causality barely exists, a person who would be incapable, therefore, of establishing any connexion between one phenomenon and another, to whose eyes the spectacle of the world would appear unstable as a dream. Of course I made efforts to emerge from this incoherence, to find reasons for things. I tried even to be "objective" and, to that end, to bear well in mind the disproportion that existed between the importance which Gilberte had in my eyes and that, not only which I had in hers, but which she herself had in the eyes of other people, a disproportion which, had I failed to remark it, would have involved my mistaking mere friendliness on my friend's part for a passionate avowal, and a grotesque and debasing display on my own for the simple and graceful movement with which we are attracted towards a pretty face. But I was afraid also of falling into the contrary error, in which I should have seen in Gilberte's unpunctuality in keeping an appointment an irremediable hostility. I tried to discover between these two perspectives, equally distorting, a third which would enable me to see things as they really were; the calculations I was obliged to make with that object helped to take my mind off my sufferings; and whether in obedience to the laws of arithmetic or because I had made them give me the answer that I desired, I made up my mind that next day I would go to the Swanns', happy, but happy in the same way as people who, having long been tormented by the thought of a journey which they have not wished to make, go no farther than to the Station and return home to unpack their boxes. And since, while one is hesitating, the bare idea of a possible resolution (unless one has rendered that idea sterile by deciding that one will make no resolution) develops, like a seed in the ground, the lineaments, every detail of the emotions that will be born from the performance of the action, I told myself that it had been quite absurd of me to be as much hurt by the suggestion that I should not see Gilberte again as if I had really been about to put that suggestion into practice, and

that since, on the contrary, I was to end by returning to her side, I might have saved myself the expense of all those vain longings and painful acceptances. But this resumption of friendly relations lasted only so long as it took me to reach the Swanns'; not because their butler, who was really fond of me, told me that Gilberte had gone out (a statement the truth of which was confirmed, as it happened, the same evening, by people who had seen her somewhere), but because of the manner in which he said it. "Sir, the young lady is not at home; I can assure you, sir, that I am speaking the truth. If you wish to make any inquiries I can fetch the young lady's maid. You know very well, sir, that I would do everything in my power to oblige you, and that if the young lady was at home I would take you to her at once." These words being of the only kind that is really important, that is to say spontaneous, the kind that gives us a radiograph shewing the main points, at any rate, of the unimaginable reality which would be wholly concealed beneath a prepared speech, proved that in Gilberte's household there was an impression that I bothered her with my visits; and so, scarcely had the man uttered them before they had aroused in me a hatred of which I preferred to make him rather than Gilberte the victim; he drew upon his own head all the angry feelings that I might have had for my friend; freed from these complications, thanks to his words, my love subsisted alone; but his words had, at the same time, shewn me that I must cease for the present to attempt to see Gilberte. She would be certain to write to me, to apologise. In spite of which, I should not return at once to see her, so as to prove to her that I was capable of living without her. Besides, once I had received her letter, Gilberte's society was a thing with which I should be more easily able to dispense for a time, since I should be certain of finding her ready to receive me whenever I chose. All that I needed in order to support with less pain the burden of a voluntary separation was to feel that my heart was rid of the terrible uncertainty whether we were not irreconcilably sundered, whether she had not promised herself to another, left Paris, been taken away by force. The days that followed resembled the first week of that old New Year which I had had to spend alone, without Gilberte. But when that week had dragged to its end, then for one thing my friend would be coming again to the Champs-Elysées, I should be seeing her as before; I had been sure of that; for another thing, I had known with no less certainty that so long as the New Year holidays lasted it would not be worth my while to go to the Champs-Elysées, which meant that during that miserable week, which was already ancient history, I had endured my wretchedness with a quiet mind because there was blended in it neither fear nor hope. Now, on the other hand, it was the latter of these which, almost as much as my fear of what might happen, rendered intolerable the burden of my grief. Not having had any letter from Gilberte that evening, I had attributed this to her carelessness, to her other occupations, I did not doubt that I should find something

from her in the morning's post. This I awaited, every day, with a beating heart which subsided, leaving me utterly prostrate, when I had found in it only letters from people who were not Gilberte, or else nothing at all, which was no worse, the proofs of another's friendship making all the more cruel those of her indifference. I transferred my hopes to the afternoon post. Even between the times at which letters were delivered I dared not leave the house, for she might be sending hers by a messenger. Then, the time coming at last when neither the postman nor a footman from the Swanns' could possibly appear that night, I must procrastinate my hope of being set at rest, and thus, because I believed that my sufferings were not destined to last, I was obliged, so to speak, incessantly to renew them. My disappointment was perhaps the same, but instead of just uniformly prolonging, as in the old days, an initial emotion, it began again several times daily, starting each time with an emotion so frequently renewed that it ended—it, so purely physical, so instantaneous a state—by becoming stabilised, so consistently that the strain of waiting having hardly time to relax before a fresh reason for waiting supervened, there was no longer a single minute in the day in which I was not in that state of anxiety which it is so difficult to bear even for an hour. So my punishment was infinitely more cruel than in those New Year holidays long ago, because this time there was in me, instead of the acceptance, pure and simple, of that punishment, the hope, at every moment, of seeing it come to an end. And yet at this state of acceptance I ultimately arrived; then I understood that it must be final, and I renounced Gilberte for ever, in the interests of my love itself and because I hoped above all that she would not retain any contemptuous memory of me. Indeed, from that moment, so that she should not be led to suppose any sort of lover's spite on my part, when she made appointments for me to see her I used often to accept them and then, at the last moment, write to her that I was prevented from coming, but with the same protestations of my disappointment that I should have made to anyone whom I had not wished to see. These expressions of regret, which we keep as a rule for people who do not matter, would do more, I imagined, to persuade Gilberte of my indifference than would the tone of indifference which we affect only to those whom we love. When, better than by mere words, by a course of action indefinitely repeated, I should have proved to her that I had no appetite for seeing her, perhaps she would discover once again an appetite for seeing me. Alas! I was doomed to failure; to attempt, by ceasing to see her, to reawaken in her that inclination to see me was to lose her for ever; first of all, because, when it began to revive, if I wished it to last I must not give way to it at once; besides, the most agonising hours would then have passed; it was at this very moment that she was indispensable to me, and I should have liked to be able to warn her that what presently she would have to assuage, by the act of seeing me again, would be a grief so far diminished as to be no longer (what

a moment ago it would still have been), nor the thought of putting an end to it, a motive towards surrender, reconciliation, further meetings. And then again, later on, when I should at last be able safely to confess to Gilberte (so far would her liking for me have regained its strength) my liking for her, the latter, not having been able to resist the strain of so long a separation, would have ceased to exist; Gilberte would have become immaterial to me. I knew this, but I could not explain it to her; she would have assumed that if I was pretending that I should cease to love her if I remained for too long without seeing her, that was solely in order that she might summon me back to her at once. In the meantime, what made it easier for me to sentence myself to this separation was the fact that (in order to make it quite clear to her that despite my protestations to the contrary it was my own free-will and not any conflicting engagement, not the state of my health that prevented me from seeing her), whenever I knew beforehand that Gilberte would not be in the house, was going out somewhere with a friend and would not be home for dinner, I went to see Mme. Swann who had once more become to me what she had been at the time when I had such difficulty in seeing her daughter and (on days when the latter was not coming to the Champs-Elysées) used to repair to the Allée des Acacias. In this way I should be hearing about Gilberte, and could be certain that she would in due course hear about me, and in terms which would shew her that I was not interested in her. And I found, as all those who suffer find, that my melancholy condition might have been worse. For being free at any time to enter the habitation in which Gilberte dwelt, I constantly reminded myself, for all that I was firmly resolved to make no use of that privilege, that if ever my pain grew too sharp there was a way of making it cease. I was not unhappy, save only from day to day. And even that is an exaggeration. How many times in an hour (but now without that anxious expectancy which had strained every nerve of me in the first weeks after our quarrel, before I had gone again to the Swanns') did I not repeat to myself the words of the letter which, one day soon, Gilberte would surely send, would perhaps even bring to me herself. The perpetual vision of that imagined happiness helped me to endure the desolation of my real happiness. With women who do not love us, as with the "missing", the knowledge that there is no hope left does not prevent our continuing to wait for news. We live on tenter-hooks, starting at the slightest sound; the mother whose son has gone to sea on some perilous voyage of discovery sees him in imagination every moment, long after the fact of his having perished has been established, striding into the room, saved by a miracle and in the best of health. And this strain of waiting, according to the strength of her memory and the resistance of her bodily organs, either helps her on her journey through the years, at the end of which she will be able to endure the knowledge that her son is no more, to forget gradually and to survive his loss, or else it kills her.