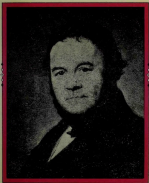


STENDHAL



MEMOIRS
OF AN EGOTIST

Translated by DAVID ELLIS

MEMOIRS OF AN EGOTIST

MEMOIRS
OF AN EGOTIST

By

STENDHAL

Souvenirs d'Egotisme

Translated with an
Introduction and Notes

By

DAVID ELLIS

1975

HORIZON PRESS

NEW YORK

First published in the United States by

Horizon Press
156 Fifth Avenue
New York 10010

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

ISBN 0-8180-0224-7

© David Ellis, 1975

Printed in Great Britain by
Cox & Wyman Ltd.
London, Fakenham and Reading

CONTENTS

Introduction	7
A Note on the Text	29
Memoirs of an Egotist	31
Notes	153

INTRODUCTION

STENDHAL began these memoirs on 20 June 1832, about a year after taking up a post as French consul in Civita-Vecchia. In addition to the explanations he himself offers in the opening pages, the desire to look back on his life was a consequence of settling down, of having finally secured, after fifteen years' exclusion, a steady job in French government service. In 1832 Stendhal was forty-nine. We might expect memoirs to be written by rather older men, men who feel that their lives are largely over and what is left is likely to be no more than a postscript to what has gone before. But Stendhal's life up to 1832 had been unusually eventful; securing a government post must have seemed like coming into port after a stormy trip at sea, and he was in a mood to take stock.

Like so many of his compatriots, Stendhal was first a beneficiary and then a victim of the extraordinary changes that took place in France between 1789 and 1815. (A prerequisite for understanding France and French literature, he would say, was the realisation that there was more change in those years than in the hundred or so years before.) As he tells us himself in what follows, he first arrived in Paris from Grenoble just after the 18 Brumaire (10 November) 1799—the day Napoleon and Sieyes took control of France from the Directory. At home, a couple of months previously, he had successfully concluded three years at the Central School by winning the first prize for mathematics; and his father had sent him to Paris to take the entrance examination

to the Polytechnic (nowadays the stress needs to be on the definite article). In the capital his passion for mathematics seems to have evaporated and he decided that, instead of being a technocrat, he would prefer to be a writer—a writer of comedies like Molière. But respectable French families do not allow even their black sheep to drift into literature without protest. In 1799 Stendhal was sixteen and still very much only Henri Beyle who spoke French with a regional accent and spelt 'cela' with two ls. When he fell ill, in the badly heated student's room he had rented, an elderly cousin called Noël Daru decided it was time to take him under his wing. Almost before he knew where he was, and despite his spelling, Stendhal found himself an assistant in a department of the War Office headed by Noël Daru's eldest son, Pierre, a man who was to become one of the most indisputably significant figures of Napoleon's régime.

In the walls of the Louvre along the rue de Rivoli there are niches for France's great men, one of which houses a statue of Pierre Daru. From his department in the War Office, through intelligent slog and superhuman efficiency, Pierre Daru rose to be one of Napoleon's most trusted administrators. And out of a family feeling typically French he seems to have been always ready to give his cousin Beyle (sixteen years younger than himself) a push up the ladder. The circumstances were unusually favourable. In the Napoleonic period the talents of anybody with a modicum of courage or intelligence were in high demand for the complicated task of defending, enlarging or administering the new French Empire. There seemed no reason why Stendhal should not take a hand. Everybody who knew him well afterwards concurred in thinking him physically courageous; and, even in conventional terms, he was obviously strikingly quick and

intelligent. He was nevertheless a hard man to help because, like Julien Sorel, he was only half-ambitious. Certainly he was anxious to get on, to earn recognition and be admired by his contemporaries. He was also tempted by the wealth associated with success in the France of Napoleon being convinced that women *must* be more attracted to a rich and successful man than to one who was neither. Above all, perhaps, he wanted power in order to reduce to a minimum the situations in which his destiny was likely to be controlled by others. But to achieve all this he was never prepared to make the full sacrifice. His nature demanded more unusual and private satisfactions than power could provide and he had none of the single-mindedness of the genuinely ambitious person. Hence the habit, highly irritating to his patron, of ruining the effect of months of conscientious service with some idiosyncratic self-indulgence. Stendhal knew that to advance his career he needed to please those more powerful than himself. He had no objection to this in principle. It was simply, I imagine, that on certain mornings he got up feeling that, all things considered, he would rather please himself. In his weaker moments, Stendhal would complain that Pierre Daru did not do enough to help him forward. But when the record is reviewed in detail (by M. Martineau for example,)¹ it sometimes seems surprising that he was prepared to do so much.

After only a few months at the War Office Stendhal was invited to follow his influential cousin to Northern Italy where the army was gathering that was to defeat the Austrians at Marengo. The effect on an impressionable seventeen year old of the journey through the Alps and Lombardy to Milan, associated as it was with hearing for the first time Cimarosa's opera, *The Secret Marriage*, in

one of the towns on the way, pervades all Stendhal's writing. In Milan, Pierre Daru had decided that his cousin was to be a 'commissaire de guerre', a position very roughly equivalent to being an officer in our Supply Corps. But it had recently been decided that no one could hold this post without competing for it with others in an examination; and that no one could take the examination who had not already spent three years in the army proper and was an officer. Daru therefore used his influence to secure for Stendhal the rank of sub-lieutenant in the sixth Dragoons and for the next fifteen months or so he was, potentially at least, a front-line soldier.

We can leave to scholarly inquiry the dispute as to whether Stendhal actually saw any action whilst he was a dragoon. Also the question whether, when he requested sick-leave in December 1801, he was suffering from an attack of boredom or venereal disease. The fact is that in January 1802 he was back in France and soon so involved in love-affairs and literature that he decided to resign from the army. He wrote his letter of resignation in Fontainebleau on 1 July, dating it the 20 from Savigliano, the town in Piedmont where his regiment was stationed. This is one of the many occasions (it would be tedious to enumerate them) when Stendhal infuriated his cousin Pierre.

For the next four years Stendhal lived the life of a man about town, thanks to a generous if irregularly paid allowance from his father. But it was still his ambition to be a second Molière and he worked hard but unsuccessfully at several different ideas for plays. Whenever he was in Paris, he tried to improve his *general* knowledge of the theatre by going there almost every evening; taking lessons in recitation from actors; and cultivating the society of actresses. To one of these,

Mélanie Guilbert (referred to in these memoirs by her stage name of Louason), he became seriously attached. When she was offered a job at the theatre in Marseilles in 1805, he decided to follow her there, much to the annoyance of his family. Not that they knew about Mélanie Guilbert, necessarily, but Stendhal gave as the reason for going to Marseilles his wanting to join a friend in a grocery export business and the Beyles must have felt that grocery was rather *infra dig*. They let the young man have his head however and after a few months, with no prospect of a quick fortune in groceries (the war with England made their export difficult) and his love for Mélanie on the wane, he was ready to return to the fold. Letters were written to Pierre Daru, now more powerful than ever; Stendhal himself made the appropriately submissive gestures and after a frosty delay he was finally taken back into favour. In October 1806 he joined Daru in Berlin, a few days after the Battle of Jena.

From this point on, thanks to Daru, Stendhal's career made rapid progress. After helping to administer areas of Northern Germany (the areas which include the town called Stendal), and taking part in the 1809 campaign in Austria (although he was ill in bed in Vienna when Wagram was fought), he reached in 1810 the dizzy heights of the State Council (*Conseil d'Etat*)—the supreme executive body by means of which Napoleon ruled the nation. He did not of course become a State Councillor like Daru himself, but to be attached to that body was honour and income enough. Or rather the income ought to have been sufficient had not Stendhal chosen this moment of his life (he was only twenty-seven) to fulfil all his dreams of living in luxury and splendour. Almost half his pay, M. Martineau tells us, went on theatre-visits, books and courtesans (I apologise for this last word,

which I use later in my translation, but the Victorians succeeded in leaving us with no other equivalent of 'filles' that doesn't sound sordid and disgusting). This pleasant existence lasted two years, years which included his liaison with Angéline Béreyter (mentioned by Stendhal in Chapter V), and a visit to Milan where he became the lover of Angela Pietragrua, a woman he had met on his first arrival in Milan eleven years previously. To offset all this pleasure there were irritating checks to his worldly ambitions, mainly the result, Stendhal felt, of Daru's disapproval of him. There were also periods when he was acutely bored. Throughout his life, Stendhal suffered from bouts of boredom and depression. His response to them may be judged by the remark (by Stendhal) which M. Martineau has used as the epigraph to his biography: 'Il faut secouer la vie, autrement elle nous ronge.' Certainly Stendhal's remedy for boredom was action and it was in fact at a time he was feeling particularly bored, in 1812, that he asked to be allowed to carry the Emperor's weekly mail (documents to be signed, official news, etc.) to Russia. This was one of the privileges of his post at the State Council, although in retrospect it must have seemed a privilege that could well have been dispensed with. He caught up with the Grand Army shortly before Smolensk, and joined it in the march on Moscow as a member of the Supply Corps controlled by his cousin. Once in Moscow he was committed, like everybody else, to coming back. There must have been a sharp contrast for Stendhal between the soft life in Paris and the rigours of the disastrous retreat.

In his obituary of Stendhal, Mérimée describes how his friend said he hadn't suffered too much from hunger in Russia but that he could not remember how and what he'd eaten, apart (that is) from a piece of tallow

which cost him 20 francs and which he ate with extraordinary relish. Mérimée also records the occasion when, in the midst of the retreat, Stendhal appeared correctly dressed before his cousin. Daru, noticing he had shaved, told him he was 'un homme de coeur', a compliment Stendhal treasured and one which extends our notions of character and courage.² He obviously distinguished himself and continued to do so in the various posts he was given during the subsequent effort to stop the Empire falling apart. But the writing was on the wall and when, in April 1814, Napoleon abdicated, Stendhal was thirty-one and out of work.

It would be wrong to imagine Stendhal as too downcast by the events of 1814. On the one hand, despite what he says in these memoirs, his attitude to Napoleon had always been ambivalent. (Whatever loyalty he felt did not prevent him soliciting from the influential Beugnot family—often renamed 'Doligny' in what follows—any respectable post in Louis XVIII's administration that would both take him to Italy and pay his debts.) On the other hand, there were advantages in being free of official duties. With no immediate prospect of a suitable post therefore, he took himself off to Milan and was soon so involved with literary projects, music at La Scala and Angela Pietragrua that he didn't bother to return to France when Napoleon escaped from Elba and re-assumed control. Waterloo thus made little difference to his life which he continued to spend in an agreeably dilettante fashion. He was short of funds of course but Milan was cheaper than Paris and there was always the prospect, in the not too distant future, of inheriting large sums from his father.

During the seven years he was based in Milan (his stays in even the towns he liked most were always

punctuated by frequent trips elsewhere), Stendhal emerged as a writer. The end of the war had allowed him to complete *Letters from Vienna in Austria concerning the celebrated composer Haydn, followed by a life of Mozart and Metastase*, all of which was published in 1815. In August 1817 his *History of Painting in Italy* appeared and in September of that same year *Rome, Naples and Florence in 1817*. Many great writers have begun their careers timidly, leaning upon others. Shortly before this period, for example, in *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen was adopting parody in a way which gave herself confidence and time to find her own voice. It is tempting to say that Stendhal adopted plagiarism, although more accurate perhaps to note (like M. Martineau) that in translating, adapting and editing an Italian's work on Haydn, Stendhal's only fault lay in not making what he was doing clear. Although it can have been no consolation to the Italian, he was always a man to recognise a good idea. The history of painting and the travel book are littered with translations of other people's comments, judgements or research, nearly all of them unacknowledged; and a few English readers may remember the curious effect, in *Racine and Shakespeare* (translated a few years ago), of Dr. Johnson's unannounced appearance in a lively section on the three unities.³ Perhaps it was the habit of writing official reports that made Stendhal such a good synthesist of other people's material.

Although these first three publications could be described as book-making, they allowed Stendhal to develop his distinctive manner. Of the three, the travel book (the first of his works to be signed 'M. de Stendhal') is the least derivative. But the most original work of the Milan period (in conception at least) is *On Love*, the one tangible result of his otherwise fruitless passion for

Métilde Dembrowski, the figure who dominates these memoirs. Stendhal begins *Memoirs of an Egotist* by implying that it was the realisation that his love for Métilde was indeed hopeless which led him to leave Milan in 1821. Although this is no doubt true, there were other, contributory factors. By 1821 the Austrian police had become deeply suspicious of his friendship with various Italian liberals (*carbonari*) and had taken to opening his mail. By that date also he was very short of money. His father had died in 1819 but instead of the expected fortune had left an estate burdened with debts. There seemed nothing for it except soliciting a job in government service. Or perhaps he could earn his living through journalism? In either case it was essential to be on the spot, in Paris.

At the beginning of *Memoirs of an Egotist* Stendhal undertakes to describe the nine years he spent in Paris between 1821 and 1830. But sometimes his memory plays him strange tricks. The meeting in Calais with the sea-captain, at the start of the description in Chapter VI of his visit to England in 1821, actually took place just before a previous trip across the Channel in 1817. This is the only rectification of Stendhal's own account I intend to offer. There is no point in catching out a man who will confess, as Stendhal does at the end of Chapter II, that he cannot remember whether it was in 1814 or 1821 that he first met a certain person. What he did remember well, however, was being miserably love-sick for Métilde Dembrowski. His cure was effected in 1824 by Clémentine Curial, the woman variously referred to in these memoirs as Mme Doligny (her mother was Countess Beugnot whom Stendhal calls Countess Doligny) or Countess Dulong, or Fanny Berthois. Stendhal obviously used so many names for gentlemanly reasons but neither

these nor his not wholly unjustifiable suspicion of Europe's secret police quite explain his fondness for codes and pseudonyms. Modern critics attach the utmost importance to the psychological implications of this fondness but there is one sense in which it does not matter very much nowadays. For most of us, there is no increase of knowledge in discovering that the man referred to as 'Maisonnette' in what follows was Joseph Lingay or that the real name of 'Lussinge' was Adolphe de Mareste. 'Gazul', of course, was the name Stendhal gave to Mérimée.⁴

The years in Paris were full of literary activity. Through his English contacts, Stendhal was able to place material with the London periodicals and in those days England was the America, the new-found-land, of journalists. Her periodicals paid their collaborators very well and whilst he was one of them Stendhal could live in comparative ease. But when supplies from England dried up, as they did in 1826 and again in 1828, he would begin anxiously looking round for a government post. He could rely, it is true, on his pension as a retired officer and on a small annuity but neither his journalism in France nor the sums publishers were prepared to give him for his books could make up the difference between what these yielded and the 6,000 francs a year he thought he needed to live decently. That he could always sell his longer work to publishers sometimes seems surprising. *On Love*, for example, after being lost in the post for over a year, didn't sell when it was published in 1822. Stendhal later claimed that it sold seventeen copies in eleven years and that the publisher had told him it must be sacrosanct since no one had dared to pick it up. Later books, the *Life of Rossini* (1824), the various parts of *Racine and Shakespeare* and a second edition of *Rome*,

Naples and Florence (1827) were more successful; but his first novel, *Armance*, published in 1827, was another flop. Its failure, coming at a time when he was particularly short of money, made him think seriously (not for the first time) of committing suicide. But he soldiered on and in 1829 managed to sell his *Walks in Rome* and, a few months later, another novel, *The Scarlet and the Black*.

The Scarlet and the Black was written before and published after the revolution which brought many of Stendhal's liberal friends to positions of power. He was too experienced not to realise that he was likely to gain more from the defeat of the Bourbons and the arrival of Louis-Philippe, than from having written a great novel. Practically all the novel brought him, in fact, was a reputation for cynicism and immorality which survived over fifty years. (In 1874 Henry James wrote of *The Scarlet and the Black* having 'an air of unredeemed corruption' amounting to 'a positive blight and dreariness'.)⁵ Since his friends had now become influential, he expected great things: a prefecture first of all, and when that was not forthcoming, a consulate in Naples, Genoa or Leghorn. They managed instead to secure for him the post of consul in Trieste at 15,000 francs a year. But Trieste was in Austrian territory and the Austrian police had a thick file on Stendhal. When he arrived to take up his post it was made clear that the authorities would refuse to ratify the appointment of such a notorious liberal and anti-Christ. He appealed once again to his friends in Paris and after a few anxious weeks was consoled with Civita-Vecchia.

In the 1830s, Civita-Vecchia was a quiet, decaying port in the Papal States. To be consul there was a far cry from the splendours of the State Council, but it meant living in Italy, and 10,000 francs a year was security

for old age. Anxieties about his future had kept Stendhal youthfully forward-looking but now, an exile from French intellectual life, he was ready to look back over his shoulder. Once he had decided to record his memories of the nine years he had just spent in Paris, he wrote them down with characteristic haste. Equally characteristic was the way in which, on 4 July 1832, he came to a dead halt and put aside his manuscript for good. *Memoirs of an Egotist* was thus written in thirteen days. Whenever Stendhal felt he had something to say he wrote with unusual speed. Seven years later he was to write nearly all the *Charterhouse of Parma* in seven weeks.

The initial problem for Stendhal in writing these memoirs is implied in the title: how to overcome the embarrassment of so many 'I's' and 'me's'. He would have sympathised with D. H. Lawrence in his criticisms of a tradition of modern literature that can be traced back to the Romantic period—'Did I feel a twinge in my little toe, or didn't I? . . . Is my aura a blend of frankincense and orange pekoe and boot-blackening, or is it myrrh and bacon-fat and shetland tweed? . . .'⁶ 'Egotisme' was a word he had borrowed from English in an attempt to rescue certain of his own inclinations from the wholly pejorative suggestions of the native 'égoïsme'. But he must often have felt that being selfish was not so very much worse than always talking about yourself. M. Martineau has recorded several examples of Stendhal's attempt to naturalise 'égotisme', before he used it in the title of the following work. But in all of them the tone is distinctly apologetic; and when Stendhal read Chateaubriand's *Journey from Paris to Jerusalem* in 1829, he noted that he had never come across anything that so stank of egotism, that was 'si puant d'égotisme'.

There was, that is, no salvation in the word itself. The only way he could distinguish his own egotism from Chateaubriand's, he decided, was by being perfectly 'sincère'.

Sincerity seems a strange word to associate with Stendhal who was notoriously *insincere* in many of his social relations, deliberately so. For the French, of course, the English are the masters of hypocrisy, but what George Eliot takes care to show about Mr. Bulstrode (for example) is that he deceives not only others but himself. Julien Sorel's model on the other hand is Tartuffe, and he is reasonably successful in understanding the difference between his private self and the masks he wears in public (even though a feeling of contradiction overpowers him in the end). We know from Stendhal's friends that, like Julien, he was always inclined to act a part in company, pretending, in particular, to be more ferociously cynical than was the case. His French commentators attribute this habit to excessive vulnerability. The English-speaking reader may find the explanation sentimental yet he will notice how, in writing *Memoirs of an Egotist*, Stendhal discovers that his social conduct during his years in Paris was principally governed by the determination not to allow his hopeless love for Métilde Dembrowski to be found out. Certainly, morbid awareness of what other people think of you will often lead a courageous man to seem the opposite of what he is. It must also be said however, that there are advantages in being thought a 'monster of immorality' (cf. Chapter V) when your only recent visit to a brothel has been as ludicrously unproductive as the one described in Chapter III.

But Stendhal was too genuinely in search of understanding and sympathy to be satisfied with the false

impressions he habitually tended to create. Apart therefore from the retrospective mood induced by settling down, one of the motives behind *Memoirs of an Egotist* was, as he himself makes clear, the need to express as sincerely as possible his own sense of his true nature, his real self. To do this he had to imagine he was addressing an ideally sympathetic audience made up of people like Mme Roland, his heroine of the Revolution, or M. Gros, the man who had taught him mathematics when he was a schoolboy in Grenoble. With his usual touching faith in posterity, he hoped that in the future this fiction would become a reality. One consequence of writing for such a small, select band is that Stendhal provides very little of what might be called 'context' for his remarks. This is half the attraction of *Memoirs of an Egotist*: the assumption of an intimacy with his cast of mind that makes the merest hint enough. But at this distance in time Stendhal's economies can also create problems for the reader. The most impeccably academic solution to these problems comes from M. Martineau. The invaluable edition of *Souvenirs d'Egotisme* he published in 1941 contains 270 pages of notes and 137 pages of text. Professionals who glance through my own notes will recognise that my 'impeccably' and 'invaluable' are not meant ironically; but since the aim of this translation is not to add to knowledge in the scholarly sense, I have tried to limit them to a sensible minimum.

A man might very well decide he will write sincerely and discover his real self, but is it as easy as it sounds? Valéry was sceptical about the whole endeavour. 'As for egotism of the Stendhal variety,' he wrote, 'it implies a belief in a *Natural Me* to which culture, civilisation and manners are hostile. This *Natural Me* is known to us, can only be known to us through those reactions which

we judge, or imagine, primitive and genuinely spontaneous. The more these reactions strike us as independent of the social context, and of its conventions or the education it has provided for us, the more precious and authentic they are for the Egotist.' This is too extreme and prejudiced a description of the method in *Memoirs of an Egotist* but it has the advantage of suggesting how much Stendhal's autobiographical writing owes to Rousseau's *Confessions*. It also puts the emphasis on spontaneity, where it belongs. Like a good Romantic, Stendhal believed that it was only by being spontaneous that he was likely to be sincere. The second thought, in his view, invariably belonged to the social man covering up for the natural self. Hence the commitment, from the beginning of these memoirs, to improvisation and the decision he later comes to that he will write each section as if it were a letter to a friend. The results will not please those who look in literature for a sense of form. It is clearly not important that although Chapter IV seems as if it is going to be about Destutt de Tracy, it turns out to be about someone else; but the most fervent of Stendhal's admirers would have to admit that Chapter II collapses rather than ends. This is the price they are willing to pay for being stimulated almost everywhere else by the quickness and variety of Stendhal's mind, its freedom from conventionality and routine.

Anyone who decides that, with sincerity as his aim, he will write spontaneously *from tomorrow*, is hardly likely to succeed; but there would be something bizarre in talking of years of dedicated application. There is a sense, nevertheless, in which all of Stendhal's previous life was a preparation for writing *Memoirs of an Egotist* and the *Life of Henry Brulard*, the autobiography he

began in 1835. To reach the stage where nearly all you write seems unpremeditated and yet free from conventionalities of feeling is a rare achievement. Perhaps it is so rare because, for most of us, the die is cast and the smallest triumph over these conventionalities necessarily involves premeditation of a rigorous kind. In Stendhal's case it was practice that made perfect although only practice where every start was new and not the repetition of an acquired knack. He was helped by having, from the first, an obsessive need to record whatever happened to him. I call it obsessive because of those eccentricities Stendhalians are so attached to. The habit, for example, of writing cryptic notes on his shirt cuffs at evening parties. The fact that when he triumphed over the not too fierce virtue of Angela Pietragnua in 1811 he was moved to celebrate his victory by scribbling a few truncated words on his braces; or that, since the news that Guizot was not going to make him a prefect came when he was correcting the proofs of *The Scarlet and the Black*, he recorded at the bottom of Chapter XIII in Book 2, 'Esprit per. pré. gui. A. 30' (Esprit perd préfecture. Guizot. 11 août 1830), a reminder to himself that, as Julien found out in the seminary in Besançon, it doesn't pay to be too clever. But what obsessive does not suggest is what Stendhal confesses to in Chapter IX of these memoirs: his sheer enjoyment, when he sat down to record in more conventional circumstances, of the writing activity. This is everywhere apparent in his voluminous diary and his many letters. In those we can watch, after early awkwardnesses and affectations, the gradual development of an extraordinarily vivid directness—the impression of a writer addressing a friend or himself in exactly the tone and manner of his speaking voice. In England we have our own examples of this directness in

(say) the letters of Keats. It is not really a question, of course, of a man writing as he speaks—a phenomenon common enough in people who, when they talk, have nothing especially interesting to say. I should be inclined to call it instead a triumph of style if in English style didn't suggest what Stendhal so disliked in Chateaubriand: the conscious search after 'literary' effect that for him was synonymous with insincerity. In one of the most admired books on Stendhal, M. Jean Prévost has referred to the 'transparency' of Stendhal's style—meaning (I suppose) that when he is writing at his best (as in parts of Chapter VI of what follows for example) the lack of literary self-consciousness directs the reader's attention away from the writer and towards the subject, or the man.

The commitment to improvisation and spontaneity nearly always results in a certain proportion of work which, even if it is published, remains essentially incomplete. In the 1830s Stendhal abandoned several projects when they were well advanced. The most important of these is *Lucien Leuwen* (1834–35), one of the world's great novels; and the second in rank, the *Life of Henry Brulard*, which is largely concerned with his childhood and youth in Grenoble. For a writer like Stendhal, so peculiarly sensitive to the natural rhythm of events, there was always an especial difficulty in deciding when an action was over. And his feeling for posterity wasn't of the kind that could lead him to spend years polishing a masterpiece that would serve as his monument after he was dead. He was not of the stuff which martyrs to art are made of: when he broke off writing it was often because he had found (if I can give the phrase its full value) something better to do. In that sense (as in many others) the suggestion of incompleteness in even

some of his most famous works is a compliment which Stendhal's art pays to life.

All this is not to say that, in *Memoirs of an Egotist*, the method of the *improvisatore* does not have its drawbacks. Stendhal's thought zig-zags, but sometimes (a friend complains) it just zigs. Very occasionally he hints at his meaning in a manner which one feels his closest associates would not have understood; and he also has a tantalising habit of alluding to an anecdote which he himself knows too well to bother to repeat. More important is the fact that Stendhal's language is not everywhere as fresh and vivid as it might be. Like Byron (although much less so), he is in such a hurry that he will sometimes use clichés to bridge a gap or keep up the pace. There are slacknesses, equivalent to the use in conversations amongst friends of words or phrases which imply, 'you know what I mean'. Readers may tend to feel therefore that too many of Stendhal's acquaintances are agreeable ('aimable') or charming, and that it is not possible for more than one woman to be the most beautiful he ever met.

On the question of women there may also be a drawback for English and American readers which has nothing to do with improvisation or spontaneity. To Anglo-Saxon eyes the spectacle of a forty-year-old falling in and out of love so regularly may seem ridiculous. Especially if we know that he was short and fat, that the mercury he took for his ailments had made him quite bald and that, as A. A. Paton pointed out in the first book in English on Stendhal (much to Henry James's annoyance), he wore stays. Mérimée says that he never knew a time when Stendhal wasn't, or didn't think himself in love. He recalls seeing him in 1836 and being told that he had just met the forty-seven-year-old

Clémentine Curial again, and felt himself as much in love as ever. How can you still love me at my age? she had said but Stendhal had convinced her that he could. 'I'd never seen him so moved,' Mérimée reported, 'there were tears in his eyes as he spoke to me.' The spectacle of a young almost adolescent heart in an ageing body may be incongruous, but it takes confidence to find it ridiculous. There is no wholly dignified solution to the problem age and death pose for the man who is fervently attached to life alone. The deaths of great writers usually make sad reading. But that after fifty-nine very full years Stendhal should have collapsed one morning in 1842 in a Paris street (he died seven hours later without recovering consciousness) is not wholly depressing.

So much talk of the drawbacks of *Memoirs of an Egotist* may make a reader wonder why anyone should think it worth translating. One reply might be that it was, after all, written by one of the world's greatest novelists. But although it is perhaps right that everything written by such an important figure should be published, there is no reason for believing that everything he wrote should be translated! We have enough on our hands with the scraps, orts, and fragments of our own great men. *Memoirs of an Egotist* is worth translating only if it can be called (as I think it can) a minor classic of autobiographical writing. The reader will decide the issue for himself; Wordsworth wrote well of the foolishness of trying to reason a reader into approbation and the attractions of this text are not, in any case, of the kind that would be well served by a long literary-critical presentation. Yet it would be wrong to have raised the question of Stendhal's 'egotism' and not want to stress also how engagingly disinterested his curiosity about himself is. We can establish our own sense of the difference between

his egotism and Chateaubriand's by trying to imagine a version of *Memoirs from Beyond the Tomb*—or for that matter, since its author has been mentioned, of *The Prelude*—which began with the narrator wondering whether he was good or bad, clever or stupid (cf. Chapter I). In the first chapter of the *Life of Henry Brulard* there are variations on the same theme. 'I sat down on the steps of St. Peter's and pondered the following idea for an hour or two: I'll soon be fifty, it's about time I knew myself. What kind of man am I? Actually, these are questions I'd find it very awkward to answer.' The same open-mindedness extends to Stendhal's sense of himself as a writer. 'Whenever I read a hostile critic of my work,' he says in Chapter VI, 'I decide afresh which of us is right'; and in *Henry Brulard* we find, 'If there's another world, I shan't fail to go and see Montesquieu. If he says, 'My poor friend, you haven't any talent whatsoever,' I'll be annoyed but not at all surprised.' Wordsworth is a great writer but we can make an important qualification about his genius by visualising the expression on his face if he received the same news.

The essentially non-egotistical disinterestedness of Stendhal's curiosity about himself (so different from Rousseau's self-justifying fervour in the *Confessions*) is also apparent in his curiosity about other people. Mérimée complained that Stendhal could not distinguish a boring man from one who was thoroughly unpleasant, and it is true that he dismisses certain categories of men and women out of hand. Like Jane Austen, he practised strict emotional economies; but his portraits in these memoirs of the people who did interest and attract him are strikingly vivid. What is noticeable is how appreciative he is of those qualities in his friends and acquaintances which made them different from himself. Even

with men he didn't like, Micheroux, for instance, or Pierre Daru, he can strike a balance. A great deal of introspection leads to different results in different men. In Stendhal it developed a liking for what was distinctive and special about others, and a peculiarly non-English capacity for being tolerant without sounding pious.

It is precisely because Stendhal is so un-English (and so un-American for that matter) that he is important for English-speaking people. If an admirer were asked to explain in a few words why he values so highly such an apparently slight work as *Memoirs of an Egotist*, he might wriggle out of it by saying it was because it seemed, nearly everywhere, to be written by 'un homme d'esprit'. 'Esprit' is a word I have not been able to translate at all adequately. When Stendhal describes how he gained a reputation for 'esprit' in the 1820s, he means of course that he became known in the salons as a brilliant and witty talker. But our idea of 'a wit' only feebly conveys the qualities he needed to impose himself in that way. Elsewhere, where it is a question (for instance) of someone having 'nul esprit', I have leaned on our notion of the lively mind. But the true definition of 'esprit' is only to be found in *Memoirs of an Egotist* as a whole: in its rapidity and the assumption of an equal quickness in the reader; in its lightness of touch, an untrammelled feeling and the wholly new and surprising sense it gives to Arnold's concept of 'the free play of the mind'. The tone of all this is difficult to catch in translation but the effort is worthwhile because of the lack, in England and America, of any convincing equivalent. Those of our writers (in the nineteenth century at least) whose prose aspires towards an ideal of epigrammatic pointedness too often tend to sound either flippant or thin-blooded. Many of our novelists, it is true, have a psychological

STENDHAL

shrewdness similar to Stendhal's. But looking through the records of our literature from Jane Austen onwards, it is difficult to find a writer who strikes one immediately as being serious without being moralistic. At the end of the review from which I've already quoted, Henry James rather disdainfully recommends Stendhal's books to those 'persons of sensibility whose moral convictions have somewhat solidified'. In our day and age it would be dangerous to assume there were any such persons left. But perhaps emancipation is only the reverse side of the coin of our puritanical past. Part of the value of *Souvenirs d'Egotisme* is that it allows us to feel what it is like to belong to another culture—and perhaps it is only when we have had such a feeling that we can be properly appreciative of our own.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

STENDHAL was rather sanguine in expecting this work to be published ten years after his death (cf. p. 31). The first edition did not in fact appear until 1892. Since then there have been many others, at least three of them edited by M. Henri Martineau. The reason for the proliferation becomes evident to anyone who has spent time in the public library at Grenoble scrutinising Stendhal's manuscript. The bad handwriting and the idiosyncratic system of abbreviations ensure that any translator must owe a special debt of gratitude to those French scholars—M. Martineau and M. Del Litto in particular of course—who, with every new edition, bring us closer and closer to what Stendhal wrote and meant.

Souvenirs d'Egotisme has been translated into English before. In 1949, different versions appeared simultaneously on opposite sides of the Atlantic. The translation published in England is poor in every respect. The American translation (by Hannah and Matthew Josephson) has never, so far as I can discover, been available in England. I saw this translation after my own was completed and was able to establish that, although one person may not translate better than another, he will always translate differently: he will always hear, and try to reproduce, a different voice.

MEMOIRS OF AN EGOTIST

Not to be published until at least ten years after my death out of consideration for the people I have mentioned—though two-thirds of them are already dead.

CHAPTER I

TO pass my spare time here abroad, I feel like recalling a few of the things that happened to me during my last stay in Paris, from 21 June 1821 to November 1830—nine and a half years. Since I recovered from the novelty of my situation two months ago, I've been scolding myself into undertaking some kind of work. Without work, the ship of human life hasn't any ballast. I admit that I shouldn't have the courage to write if I didn't believe that one day these pages will be printed and read by the kind of person I'm fond of, by someone like Mme Roland or M. Gros, the geometrician. But the eyes that will read this have hardly got used to the light: I calculate that my future readers are ten or twelve years old.

Have I derived all the advantages possible for my happiness from the situation in which I accidentally found myself during the nine years I've just spent in Paris? What kind of man am I? Do I possess good sense? Good sense of a profound kind?

Do I have a remarkable mind? To tell the truth, I've no idea. What's more, I become so involved in day-to-day happenings that I rarely think about such fundamental

questions and, when I do, my judgements vary with my mood. My judgements are only glimpses of the truth.

Let's see if, analysing myself pen in hand, I shall come to some *positive* conclusions which remain true for me *for a long time*. What shall I think of what I feel inclined to write when I re-read it about 1835—if I live till then? Shall I feel as I feel about my published works—profoundly sad when, for lack of other reading matter, I re-read them?

For the month I've been considering it, I have felt a genuine repugnance to write solely in order to talk about myself—the number of my shirts, the misfortunes of my ego. On the other hand, I'm a long way from France and have read all the entertaining books that have found their way into this country. My one heartfelt wish was to write a creative work about a love intrigue which took place in Dresden in August 1813 in the house next to mine; but I'm interrupted fairly often by the trivial duties connected with my post. To put it another and better way, I can never be sure, when I get out my paper, of spending an hour without interruption. This minor irritation completely disables my imagination. When I take up my story again I'm disgusted by what I've been thinking. A wise man will say that I need to learn self-control. My reply is that it's too late. I'm forty-nine and after such an eventful existence it's time to think about living out my life in as unobjectionable a manner as possible.

My principal objection wasn't the *vanity* involved in writing one's autobiography. Such books are like all others: quickly forgotten if boring. What I was frightened of was de-flowering the happy moments I've experienced by describing and dissecting them. Now that's what I certainly will *not* do—I'll skip them instead.

Poetic genius is dead but a genius for *distrust* has come into the world. I am profoundly convinced that the only antidote which can make the reader forget the everlasting 'I's' the author is going to write, is perfect sincerity. Will I have the courage to recount what is humiliating without salvaging my self-esteem with an infinite series of prefatory remarks? I hope so.

In spite of the mishaps that have frustrated my ambition, I don't believe men are evil; nor do I think of myself as at all persecuted by them. I regard them as machines motivated—in France—by *vanity*, and elsewhere, by all the passions, vanity included.

I don't know myself and it's this which distresses me sometimes when I think about it at night. Am I good or bad, clever or stupid? Have I known how to take advantage of the situations into which I happen to have been thrown by the complete domination of Napoleon (whom I always adored) in 1810; by our tumble into the mud in 1814; and by our effort to get out again in 1830? I'm very much afraid not. I've acted according to my mood, blindly. But if someone had asked me for advice on my own situation I would have offered something important and significant: friends who were equals in intellect have often complimented me on this ability.

In 1814, Count Beugnot, the prefect of police, offered me the control of Paris's food-supply. I wasn't soliciting this post and was in an admirable position to accept, yet I replied so as not to encourage M. Beugnot, a man with enough vanity for two Frenchmen. He must have been very shocked. The man who got this job gave it up after four or five years, tired of making money—and without stealing, they say. The extreme contempt I felt for the Bourbons—they seemed to me then like fetid slime—made me leave Paris a few days after not

accepting M. Beugnot's proposition. The triumph of all I despised and couldn't hate made me sick at heart and my only consolation was the inclination I began to feel for Countess Du Long whom I saw every day at M. Beugnot's and who, ten years later, played a big part in my life. She singled me out then, not for my amiability, but because I was unusual. She saw that I was the friend of a very ugly woman of great character: Countess Beugnot. I've always been sorry I didn't fall in love with the Countess. What a pleasure it would have been to talk intimately to someone of such distinction!

For three pages now, I have been feeling that this preface is very long; but I need to start with such a sad and difficult subject that laziness has already taken charge and I almost feel like throwing down my pen. But the next time I'm alone I would regret it.

On 13 June 1821 I left Milan for Paris with 3,500 francs, I believe it was, considering that my only happiness would be to blow my brains out when this sum was spent. After three years of intimacy I was leaving a woman whom I adored, and who had loved me without ever yielding to my insistence.

After an interval of so many years I'm still puzzled by the motives of her behaviour. She was thoroughly dishonoured, although she had only ever had one lover. But the society women in Milan made her pay for her superiority. Poor Mélite never knew how to manoeuvre against this enemy or how to despise it. Perhaps one day when I'm really old and desiccated, I'll have the courage to talk about the years 1818, 1819, 1820 and 1821.

In 1821 I had great difficulty in resisting the temptation to blow my brains out. I drew a pistol in the margin of a bad play about love I was scribbling then (living in the *casa* Acerbi). It seems to me it was political curiosity

that stopped me doing away with myself; perhaps also, without suspecting it, I was frightened of the pain involved.

I finally said goodbye to Métilde.

— When are you coming back? she asked me.

— Never, I hope.

There was a final hour of beating-about-the-bush and useless talk—one word might have changed my future life—not, alas, for very long. That angelic spirit housed in such a beautiful body passed away in 1825. Finally, one day in June, I set off in a state which can be imagined. I went from Milan to Como, fearing at each moment, and even believing, I would turn back.

I couldn't leave the town which I thought would—if I stayed—be the death of me, without feeling myself torn apart; it seemed as if I was leaving my life there, but then, what was life compared to Métilde? I was dying with each step I took that led away from her.

My every breath was a sigh, as Shelley says.¹

Soon I was in a stupor, sufficiently so to be making conversation with the postillions and replying seriously to the reflections of those folk on the price of wine. I gravely considered with them the reasons which ought to make it go up a farthing; what was most appalling was to turn my attention on myself. I passed through Airolo, Bellinzona, Lugano (the sound of these names still makes me tremble even now—20 June 1832).

I arrived at the Saint Gothard Pass, which was in an abominable state then (exactly like the mountains in Cumberland in the North of England, with precipices added). I wanted to cross it on horseback, rather hoping I would have a fall and take so much skin off I would be distracted from other matters. Although I was once

a cavalry officer and have spent my life falling off horses, I have a horror of falling on stones which are loose and give way under the horse's hoofs.

The courier I was with finally stopped me and said that although my life meant little to him, my death would reduce his earnings and no one would want to employ him again when it was known that one of his charges had slipped down the precipice.

—But haven't you guessed, I told him, that I've got the pox and can't walk.

I went as far as Altdorf with this courier, who was cursing his luck. There I gazed stupidly at everything. Although government writers in every country claim he never existed, I'm a great admirer of William Tell. At Altdorf, I think, a bad statue of Tell wearing a stone kilt moved me precisely because it was bad.

Here then, I said to myself, as arid despair was succeeded for the first time by a gentle melancholy, here is what the most beautiful things become in the eyes of coarse men. This is how you appear, *Métilde*, in the middle of *Mme Traversi's salon!*

The sight of the statue soothed me a little. I inquired where Tell's chapel was to be found.

—You'll see it tomorrow.

But the next day I was off on my travels again in very bad company—Swiss officers of Louis XVIII's Guard on their way to Paris.

(Here four pages of description of Altdorf to Gersau, Lucerne, Bâle, Belfort, Langres, Paris. Occupied as I am with moral questions, physical description bores me. I haven't written twelve pages of this kind in two years.)

I have always disliked France and above all the country around Paris—which proves that I'm a bad Frenchman and an unpleasant man, as Mlle Sophie — (Cuvier's daughter-in-law) used to say.

I lost heart completely on going from Bâle to Belfort and leaving the high if not beautiful Swiss mountains for the awful flat meanness of Champagne.

How ugly the women are at —, the village where I saw them in blue stockings and clogs. But later I said to myself: what courtesy, what affability, what a feeling for justice in their village conversations!

Langres was situated like Volterra, a town I adored then. It had been the scene of one of my most daring exploits in my war against Métilde.

I thought of Diderot (who, as every one knows, was the son of a cutler from Langres). I recalled *Jacques le Fataliste*, the only one of his works I admire, but I value it a great deal, more than the *Voyage d'Anacharsis*, the *Traité des Etudes* and a hundred other books pedants admire.

My worst misfortune, I exclaimed, would be that my friends, the dried-up men I'm going to live amongst, should guess the extent of my passion, and for a woman I didn't sleep with!

I said that to myself in June 1821 and I realise in June 1832 for the first time, writing this, that it was this fear, a thousand times repeated, which was in fact the principle directing my life for ten years. It's because of it that I became *a wit*—something that was the object and target of my scorn in Milan when I was in love with Métilde.

I arrived in Paris, which I found worse than ugly—an insult to my misery, with one idea: *not to be found out*. After a week, noticing the political void, I said to myself:

make something of your misery [by killing Louis XVIII].²

I lived on this for several months which I hardly remember. I showered letters on my Milan friends in order to obtain indirectly some slight word of Métilde. But they disapproved of my foolishness and never mentioned her.

In Paris I stayed in the Brussels Hotel, number 47 in the rue de Richelieu, run by a M. Petit, a former valet of one of the de Damas family. The courtesy, graciousness and tact of this M. Petit, his lack of any kind of feeling, his horror of any workings of the soul at all profound, his lively memory for the ways in which his vanity had been flattered thirty years before, his perfect integrity in money matters, made him in my view the perfect model of the old-fashioned Frenchman. I very quickly entrusted to him the 3,000 francs I had left, for which he gave me, against my will, a receipt that I speedily contrived to lose. This upset him a lot when I took back my money some months or weeks later to go to England, driven there by the intense disgust I was experiencing in Paris.

I've very few memories of these passionate times, things slipped by me unnoticed or despised when they were glimpsed. In spirit I was in the Piazza Belgioioso in Milan. I'm going to collect my thoughts and try to recall the homes in Paris where I was a regular visitor.

CHAPTER II

HERE is the portrait of an able man with whom I spent all my mornings for eight years. We respected each other without being friends.

I had put up at the Brussels Hotel because a Piedmontese was staying there who was drier, tougher and more like Rancour—in the *Roman comique*—than any other I've met. Baron Lussinge was my intimate companion from 1821 until 1831; born around 1785, he was thirty-six in 1821. He began to put an end to our intimacy and be rude in conversation only when my reputation as a wit sprang up, after my dreadful misfortune on 15 September 1826.¹

M. de Lussinge was small, squat and thickset, and couldn't see three feet in front of him. His meanness always made him dress badly and he took advantage of our strolls together to work out reckonings of personal expense for a bachelor living alone in Paris. Yet he had a rare sagacity. Whilst I, with my brilliant romantic illusions, estimated at 30 the genius, kindness, fame or happiness of men we happened to see, when these qualities were in fact only worth 15; he accorded them 6 or 7.

This difference provided the basis for our conversations for eight years, whilst we sounded each other out from one end of Paris to the other.

Lussinge, who was then thirty-six or thirty-seven, had the heart and head of a fifty-five year old. He was profoundly moved only by the things that touched him personally; then he became demented, as at the time of

his marriage. Apart from this, feeling was always the target of his irony. Lussinge had one religion only: respect for high birth. His family is in fact from the Bugey district² and held a high rank there in 1500, following the Dukes of Savoy to Turin when they became Kings of Sardinia. Lussinge had been brought up in Turin at the same academy as Alfieri; and had acquired there that profound spitefulness of the Piedmontese which is without parallel anywhere but which is nevertheless no more than mistrust of fate and other men. I find several signs of this in Rome; but in addition people here have passions, and since the field of action is bigger, there is less bourgeois pettiness.

I didn't like Lussinge any the less however until he became rich, then miserly, frightened and finally, in January 1830, disagreeable in what he said and almost boorish.

He had a mother who was miserly but, above all, mad and capable of giving all she had to the priests. He thought of getting married; that would be an opportunity for his mother to commit herself through documents which would stop her giving all her property to her confessor. The intrigues and goings-on whilst he was hunting for a wife amused us a great deal. Lussinge was on the point of asking for a charming girl who would have made him happy and our friendship eternal: I mean the daughter of General Gilly (now Mme Doin, wife of a lawyer, I believe). But the general had been condemned to death after 1815 and that could have terrified the noble baroness, Lussinge's mother. By the merest chance he avoided marrying a coquette, now Mme Varambon. Finally he married a perfect ninny, tall and quite beautiful had she had more of a nose. This foolish person confessed directly to M. de Quélen, the Archbishop of Paris,

and used to go to his own *salon* to do it. I happened to have acquired some information about the love-life of this Archbishop who was then perhaps the lover of Mme de Podenas, lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Berry and, since then, or before, mistress of the notorious Duke of Ragusa. One day, with an indiscretion which constitutes—unless I'm mistaken—--one of many defects, I was teasing Mme de Lussinge a little about the Archbishop. It was at the Countess d'Avelles's.

—Cousin, Mme de Lussinge called out to her furiously, make M. Beyle be quiet.

From this moment on she has been my enemy although with very strange reversals to coquetry. But here I've embarked on a very long episode; I'll move on because I saw Lussinge twice a day for eight years. But I must come back later to this tall and flourishing baroness who is almost five feet six inches tall.

With her dowry, his remuneration as head of a department in the Ministry of Police and presents from his mother, Lussinge had an income of 22,000 or 23,000 francs around 1828. From then on, he was dominated by one sentiment: the fear of being dispossessed. Despising the Bourbons, not as much as I did with my high principles in politics, but despising them for their clumsiness, he got to the point of no longer being able to bear an account of their blunders without a sharp burst of temper. (He then saw vividly and unexpectedly that what he owned was in danger.) Every day there was something new of this kind, as can be seen from the newspapers between 1826 and 1830. Lussinge went to the theatre every evening and never into society since he felt a little humiliated by the post he held. Every morning we used to meet in the café and I would tell him what I had learnt the

night before; normally we joked about our political differences. On 3 January 1830, I think it was, he refused to believe some anti-Bourbon fact or other that I had heard at M. Cuvier's, who was then a member of the State Council and very much a government man. This foolishness was followed by a very long silence; we crossed the Louvre without speaking. I had then just enough to live on whereas he, as I said, had 22,000 francs. I thought I'd noticed that for a year he had been wanting to adopt a tone of superiority towards me. During our political discussions, he used to say:

— But you of course are not a man of means.

At any rate I resolved to make a very painful sacrifice and change cafés without telling him. For nine years I'd been going every day at half-past-ten to the café de Rouen, run by the respectable M. Pique, and Mme Pique who was then pretty and from whom I think Maisonnette, one of our mutual friends, obtained rendezvous at 500 francs a time. I withdrew to the café Lemblin, the famous Liberal café in the Palais Royal. I then saw Lussinge no more than once a fortnight; since that time our intimacy, which I think had become a necessity for both of us, has often wanted to redevelop but has never had the strength to do so. On several occasions afterwards, music or painting, both of which he knew about, became for us neutral territory; but all the rudeness of his manners returned with a vengeance as soon as we talked politics and he was frightened for his 22,000 francs. There was no way of going on. His good sense had stopped me from straying too far in the direction of my poetical illusions. My cheerfulness, for I became cheerful or rather acquired the art of seeming so, stopped him giving way to his sombre and spiteful

temperament and distracted him from his terrible fear of losing what he had.

When I took up my modest appointment in 1830, I think he found the salary too high. But anyway from 1821 to 1828, I saw Lussinge twice a day, and apart from love and literary enterprises—which he didn't understand at all—we chatted at length about each of my doings, in the Tuileries and on the quay by the Louvre that led to his office. From eleven to half-noon we were together and very often he succeeded in distracting me completely from my grief, which he knew nothing about.

Now at last this long episode is over, but it was a question of the chief character in these memoirs and the one whom I later inoculated, in such an amusing way, with my frantic love for Mme Azur. He has been her faithful lover for the last two years and, what's more comic, has made her faithful also. She is one of the least doll-like French women I have ever met.³

But let's on no account anticipate. Nothing is more difficult in this solemn tale than to continue to respect chronology.

We have reached, then, the month of August 1821 with myself staying with Lussinge at the Brussels Hotel and joining him at five o'clock at the excellent *table d'hôte* well looked after by that most polite of Frenchmen, M. Petit, and by his wife, a chambermaid in the grand manner but a woman who was always in a huff. There, Lussinge, who as I now see in 1832, was always frightened of introducing me to his friends, couldn't stop me getting to know:

1. M. Barot, a delightfully agreeable young man, good-looking and without any liveliness of mind whatsoever;

a banker from Charleville he was then busy amassing an income of 80,000 francs a year.

2. An officer on half-pay, decorated at Waterloo, absolutely devoid of mental agility and with still less imagination if that is possible, stupid but perfectly well-bred and having had so many women that he had become sincere as far as they were concerned.

The conversation of M. Poitevin, his good sense absolutely free from all the exaggeration induced by imagination, his ideas on women, his advice on dressing—all these were very useful to me. I believe that poor Poitevin had a pension of 1,200 francs and a post worth 1,500 francs. On that he was one of the best dressed young men in Paris. It's true that he never went out without taking two hours to get ready, sometimes two-and-a-half hours. But at any rate one of his passing fancies had been the Marquise de Rosine⁴ with whom he had had a two-month affair. She was the woman to whom I later owed so many obligations and with whom I promised myself ten times over that I'd have an affair. I was wrong never to make the attempt. She used to forgive me my ugliness and I certainly owed it to her to become her lover. I'll see that I settle this debt on my next trip to Paris; she will perhaps be all the more responsive to my attentions in that we are neither of us young any longer. However it may be that I am boasting; she's been extremely circumspect during the last ten years but not through choice in my opinion.

Anyway, abandoned by Mme Dar, upon whom I ought to have been able to rely so much, I feel the liveliest gratitude towards the Marquise.

It's only the reflection necessary for being in a state to write this which allows me to decipher what was happen-

ing in my heart in 1821. I've always lived, and still do live, from day to day without at all thinking what I'll do tomorrow. For me the passage of time is only marked by Sunday when I am usually bored and take everything amiss. I've never been able to discover why. In 1821, in Paris, my Sundays were really horrible. The big chestnut trees in the Tuileries were majestic at that particular time of year. Lost amongst them I used to think of Métilde who was likely to spend her Sundays especially at the opulent Mme Traversi's. This fatal friend hated me, was jealous of her cousin and had persuaded her, with the help of friends, that she would be completely dishonoured if she took me for a lover.

Sunk in sombre reverie all the time I wasn't with my three friends, Lussinge, Barot and Poitevin, I accepted their company for distraction's sake only. All my actions were dictated by either the pleasure of being distracted momentarily or a repugnance to having my sorrow disturbed. When one of these gentlemen suspected me of being sad, I used to talk a lot, and would say the most stupid things, especially those things you must never say in France because they wound the vanity of the other speaker. M. Poitevin would make me pay a hundred times over for what I said.

I've always talked heedlessly and far too much at random; at that time, when I talked only to relieve my painful feelings for a moment and concentrated above all on avoiding the reproach of being attached to someone in Milan and being sad in consequence—all of which would have occasioned jokes about my supposed mistress not to be borne—I must really have seemed mad to those three people so completely devoid of imagination. Several years later, I learnt that they had merely thought me extremely affected. I realise in writing this that if

luck, or a little prudence, had led me to cultivate the society of women, I would have had some success and perhaps some consolation in spite of my age, my ugliness, etc. Only by accident did I have a mistress in 1824, three years later. Only then was the memory of Métilde no longer heart-rending. She became for me like a tender and profoundly sad ghost whose apparition inclined me irresistibly towards ideas of tenderness, goodness, justice and indulgence.

I found it a hard task in 1821 to start calling again at those houses where I had been well treated when I was at the court of Napoleon ('there' details of these people).⁵ I kept on postponing the first visit, putting it off. Finally, since I couldn't avoid shaking hands with the friends I met in the street, my presence in Paris became known and my conduct was complained of.

Count d'Argout, my colleague and friend when we were State Councillors, a very worthy man and a ruthless worker but a person without any liveliness of mind whatsoever, was a peer in 1821; he gave me a ticket for the House of Peers where the trial of a number of careless and irrational poor fools was taking place. I think their business was called the 19th (or 29th) of August Conspiracy. It was really a stroke of luck that they didn't lose their heads. There I saw M. Odilon Barot⁶ for the first time, a little man looking as if he needed a shave. He was counsel for the defence for one of those poor simpletons who had got mixed up in the conspiracy without having two-thirds or three-quarters of the courage such an absurd affair requires. I was struck by M. Odilon Barot's logic. Usually I was a foot or two behind the seat of the Chancellor, M. d'Ambray. It seemed to me that, for a nobleman, he conducted the debates with a fair degree of decency. (Here a description of the House of Peers.)

His tone and manners were like those of M. Petit, the owner of the Brussels Hotel and M. de Damas's former valet, but with the difference that M. d'Ambray's manners were less aristocratic. The next day I praised his decency at the Countess Doligny's. M. d'Ambray's mistress happened to be there, a stout woman of thirty-six with a very fresh complexion and the assurance and figure of Mlle Contat in her last years. (She was an inimitable actress whom I saw a lot, in 1803 I think it was.)

I was wrong not to become associated with M. d'Ambray's mistress; she had found my mad gaiety one of my advantages. Moreover she believed me to be the lover, or one of the lovers of Mme Doligny. I would have found a remedy for my troubles there, but I was blind.

Coming out of the House of Peers one day I met my cousin, Baron Martial Daru. He set a value on his title but apart from that was a splendid person and my benefactor, the master who taught me, in Milan in 1800 and in Brunswick in 1807, the little I know about the art of how to behave with women. He had twenty-two of the prettiest of them in his life, always the best available wherever he happened to be. I burnt their portraits, letters, hair, etc.⁷

—What! You in Paris! How long have you been here?

—Three days.

—Come along tomorrow, my brother will be delighted to see you.

What was my reply to this most pleasant and friendly welcome? I went to see these excellent relations only six or eight years later. And the shame of not having put in an appearance at my benefactors meant that I hardly went there ten times before their early deaths. The

charming Martial Daru died about 1829. Aphrodisiac brews, about which I'd had one or two scenes with him, had made him heavy and uninteresting. A few months afterwards I was struck motionless in the café de Rouen, then at the corner of the rue du Rempart, when I found in my newspaper the announcement of Count Daru's death.⁸ With tears in my eyes, I jumped into a cab and rushed to number 81 rue de Grenelle. There I found a lackey in tears and cried bitterly myself. I felt I had been very ungrateful; yet I crowned my ingratitude by leaving that very evening, for Italy I think. I put forward the date of my departure; I would have died of sorrow had I entered his house. There again there was a little of that wild extravagance which made me so eccentric in 1821.

The son of M. Doligny was also defending one of the unfortunate boobies involved in the conspiracy. From where he sat as defending counsel he saw me and there was no way of avoiding going to see his mother. She was a person of great character and a true woman: I don't know why I didn't take advantage of the admirable and obliging civility of her welcome to tell her of my troubles and ask for her advice. There again I was very near to happiness, for good sense pronounced by a woman could have had an influence over me quite other than any I was bringing to bear myself.

I often dined at Mme Doligny's. The second or third time she invited me to lunch with the mistress of M. d'Ambray, then the Chancellor. I was a success and foolish enough not to plunge into this friendly society. As a lover—favoured or rejected—I might have found a little of that *oblivion* I was searching for everywhere—in long solitary rambles in Montmartre and the Bois de Boulogne for example. I was so unhappy in those pleasant places that I have had a horror of them since. But I

was blind then, it was only in 1824, when I happened to have a mistress, that I discovered the remedy for my troubles.

What I am writing seems very boring; if it carries on like this it won't be a book but an examination of conscience. I've hardly any precise memories of this stormy, passionate period.

Seeing my conspirators every day at the House of Peers I was profoundly struck by this idea: killing someone you have never talked to is only like an ordinary duel. Why hadn't it occurred to one of those simpletons to imitate Louvel?⁹

My ideas about this period are so vague that I really don't know whether it was in 1821 or in 1814 that I met M. d'Ambray's mistress at Mme Doligny's.

It seems to me that in 1821 I only saw M. Doligny in his country-house in Corbeil and that, what's more, I only made up my mind to go there after two or three invitations.

CHAPTER III

IN 1821 my being in love resulted in a highly comical virtue: chastity.

In August 1821, in spite of my efforts, Lussinge, Barot and Poitevin, who thought I looked depressed, arranged a delightful evening out. Barot, as I've realised since, is one of the most gifted men in Paris for organising a particular and quite difficult kind of entertainment. A woman is only a woman for him the first time he sleeps with her. He spends 30,000 of his 80,000 francs a year, and of these 30,000 at least 20,000 on courtesans.

Barot, then, arranged an evening with Mme Petit, one of his former mistresses to whom I think he'd just lent some money to open premises (i.e. 'to raise a brothel') in the rue du Cadran, at the corner of the rue Montmartre, on the fourth storey.

We were expecting Alexandrine who, six months later, was being kept by the richest kind of Englishman but who'd then joined the ranks only two months before. At eight o'clock in the evening we were in a *salon* which was charming in spite of being on the fourth storey and where there was iced champagne, hot punch, etc. Alexandrine finally appeared led by a chambermaid commissioned to keep an eye on her; commissioned by whom? I've forgotten. But it must have been a woman of great authority because I saw in the bill for the evening that she had been given 20 francs. Alexandrine appeared and surpassed all expectations. She was a tall and slim girl of seventeen or eighteen, already mature and with the black eyes which I've since found in

Titian's portrait of the Duchess of Urbino in the Florence Gallery. Apart from the colour of the hair, Titian's portrait is her. She was quiet and gentle but not at all shy, fairly gay but not unseemly in her behaviour. My friends' eyes goggled at the sight of her. Lussinge offered a glass of champagne, which she refused, and disappeared with her. Mme Petit introduced us to the two other girls who weren't bad but we told her that she herself was prettier. She had an admirably shaped foot. Poitevin took her off. After a dreadfully long interval, a very pale Lussinge returned.

—Your turn, Beyle, they cried. You've just come home; it's your privilege.

I found Alexandrine on a bed, a little wan, almost in the costume and in the exact position of Titian's Duchess of Urbino.

—Let's just talk for ten minutes, she said in a lively way. I'm a bit tired, let's chat. My young blood will flare up again soon.

She was adorable, I perhaps had never seen anyone prettier. There wasn't too much licentiousness about her except in the eyes which gradually became suggestively animated again and full (you could say) of passion.

I failed entirely with her; it was a complete *fasco*. So I had to rely on a substitute which she submitted to. Not quite knowing what to do, I wanted to try this manual expedient again but she refused. She seemed astonished. Considering my situation, I said several quite good things and then went out.

Hardly had Barot taken my place when we heard bursts of laughter although there were three rooms separating him from us. Suddenly Mme Petit dismissed the other girls and Barot brought in Alexandrine:

‘In modest beauty, simple, unadorn’d,
As from her peaceful slumbers newly wak’d.’¹

—My admiration for Beyle, he said, roaring with laughter, will make me imitate him. I’ve come to fortify myself with some champagne. The laughter lasted twenty minutes: Poitevin rolled about on the carpet. Alexandrine’s naïve astonishment was priceless: it was the first time the poor girl had been let down.

Those fellows wanted to persuade me I was dying of shame and that that moment was the unhappiest of my life. I was astonished but nothing more. I don’t know why the idea of Métilde had seized hold of me when I entered that room so attractively graced by Alexandrine.

At any rate, in ten years I only paid a couple of visits to a brothel. And the first visit after the one involving the charming Alexandrine was in October or November 1826 when I was in despair.

I met Alexandrine a dozen times in the brilliant turn-out she had a month afterwards and she always glanced my way. Finally, after five or six years, she came to look coarse like her colleagues.

From that moment, I was considered impotent by the three men who had accidentally become my intimate companions. This fine reputation spread in society and I retained it to a greater or lesser extent until Mme Azur had given an account of my powers and acts. That evening strengthened a great deal my friendship with Barot whom I’m still fond of and who is fond of me. He’s perhaps the only Frenchman in whose country-house I’d go to spend a fortnight with pleasure. He is more open-hearted, has a franker nature and is at the same time less knowledgeable and witty than any man I know. But in

two things—making money without playing the Stock Exchange and striking up an acquaintance with women he sees out walking or in the theatre—he is without equal, especially in the latter.

That's because it's a necessity. His attitude to any woman who has once yielded to him is the same as to a man.

One evening *Métilde* was talking to me about her friend *Mme Bignami*. She described a very well-known episode in the love life of that woman and then added: 'Imagine her position: every evening her lover, when he left her house, went to a courtesan's.'

Now, when I'd left Milan, I realised this phrase wasn't at all relevant to the episode concerning *Mme Bignami* but was meant for me, as a moral warning.

In fact, every evening after having escorted *Métilde* as far as the house of her cousin, *Mme Traversi*—to whom I'd gauchely refused to be introduced—I would finish the evening at the charming and divine *Countess Cassera's*. And through more foolishness, closely related to that I showed with *Alexandrine*, I once refused to be the lover of this young woman, who was perhaps the most agreeable I had ever met. All this so that I should deserve, in the eyes of God, *Métilde's* love. I was in the same spirit and for the same reason that I refused the celebrated *Vigano* who, one day, as all the people who paid her court were coming down the stairs—amongst them the brilliant *Count de Saurau*—let everybody go by in order to say to me:

—Beyle, they say you are in love with me?

—They're wrong, I replied with great coolness, without even kissing her hand.

This shameful behaviour, with a woman who was all

head and no heart, earned me her implacable hatred. She no longer acknowledged me when we used to meet face to face in one of those narrow streets in Milan.

There then are three examples of great stupidity. I'll never forgive myself for the one involving the Countess Cassera (today the most virtuous and respected woman in the country).

CHAPTER IV

HERE'S another group of people in contrast to the one in the previous chapter.

In 1817 the man whose writings I most admired, the only person who had revolutionised my thinking, Count Tracy, came to see me in the Hôtel d'Italie, in Favart Square. I've never been so surprised. For twelve years I'd adored this man's *Ideology*, which will be famous one day. A complimentary copy of my *History of Painting in Italy* had been sent to him.

He spent an hour with me. I admired him so much that my inordinate love probably resulted in another *fiasco*. I've never given less regard to being lively and agreeable. I approached that vast intelligence and contemplated it with astonishment, seeking enlightenment. Besides, at that time, I didn't yet know how to be lively and witty.

The improvisation open to a mind at peace with itself was something I was only capable of in 1827.

M. Destutt de Tracy, a peer and a member of the Academy, was a little old man of remarkably good proportions and an appearance that was both elegant and unusual. He adduces his failing sight to justify the green eyeshade he regularly wears. I had seen him received at the Academy by M. de Ségur who said some foolish things on behalf of imperial despotism: that was in 1811, I think. Although I was attached to the Court, I was profoundly disgusted. We're going to succumb to military barbarism, I told myself, we'll all become like General Grosse. This general, whom I used to see at the Countess

Daru's, was one of the Imperial Guards' stupidest swashbuckling cavalry men, which is saying a lot. He spoke with a Provençal accent and was especially keen to cut down those Frenchmen hostile to the man who provided his bread and butter. I developed a special dislike for this kind of personality, so much so that, on the evening after the Battle of the Moskva,¹ when I saw a few feet away the remains of two or three generals from the Guard, I let slip, 'There are a few overbearing fools who won't bother us again'—a remark that nearly brought my ruin, and was cruel into the bargain.

M. de Tracy has never wanted to let anyone paint his portrait. I think he looks like Pope Clement, of the Corsini family, as he's shown on the left of the entrance to the beautiful chapel in the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.²

His manners are perfect when he's not in one of his abominable black moods. It wasn't until 1822 that I understood this kind of person: a Don Juan (see Mozart's opera, Molière, etc.) grown old. He takes offence at everything: that in his *salon* M. de la Fayette was a greater man than himself (even in 1821), for example; then that the French hadn't appreciated his *Ideology* and *Logic*. Those little affected prattlers only invited him to join the Academy because he'd written a good grammar book and then to be duly insulted by the feeble Ségur, father of a son even more feeble, the Philippe who wrote about our misfortunes in Russia so as to be decorated by Louis XVIII.³ The infamous Philippe de Ségur provides me with an example of the kind of person I loathe most in Paris: the government supporter who always behaves honourably except when it comes to the decisive actions in life. Recently, this same Philippe has fulfilled for Casimir Perier (see the *Débats*⁴ for May 1832), the func-

tion which won him the favour of Napoleon, whom he deserted in such a cowardly way, and then that of Louis XVIII who delighted in this type of contemptible person. He understood perfectly how contemptible they were and would subtly remind them of the fact just as they were doing something noble. Perhaps the friend of Favras who waited to hear he'd been hanged before saying to one of his retinue: 'Let them start serving', understood how contemptible they were only too well. He was certainly the man to admit he was infamous and laugh at his own infamy.⁵

I realise that the word infamous isn't the right one but I have always had a pet aversion for abjectness of the Philippe de Ségur variety. I respect and like a hundred times more a straightforward convict, a murderer who had a moment of weakness and was, in any case, regularly on the point of starving to death. In 1828 or 1826, the worthy Philippe was busy making pregnant a millionaire widow he'd seduced and who had to marry him (Mme Grefulhe, the widow of a peer). I'd sometimes been with Philippe de Ségur, when he was a general, at the dinners for the Emperor's household. Then he only talked about his thirteen wounds, for he's a brave enough beast.

He would be a hero in a half-civilised country like Russia. In France people are beginning to understand how contemptible he is. The Garnett ladies (number 12 in the rue Duphot) wanted to take me to his brother's house next to theirs—number 14, I think—but I've always refused because of the historian of the Russian campaign.

Count Ségur, Grand Master of Ceremonies at Saint-Cloud in 1811, when I was there, was deeply mortified because he wasn't a duke. In his view this was worse

than a misfortune, it was an *impropriety*. All his ideas were pigmy-like but he had a lot of them, on every subject. He found coarseness everywhere and in everybody, but how elegantly he expressed this feeling!

What I liked about this poor man was the passionate love his wife had for him. Otherwise, when I spoke to him, I felt I was dealing with a Lilliputian. I used to meet M. de Ségur, Grand Master of Ceremonies from 1810 to 1814, in the houses of Napoleon's ministers. I haven't seen him since the fall of the great man, one of whose weaknesses and misfortunes he was.

Even the Dangeaus⁶ of the Emperor's Court, and there were a lot of them, my friend Baron Martial Daru for example, even those people couldn't help laughing at the ceremonials Count Ségur invented for Napoleon's marriage to Marie-Louise of Austria, especially those for the first meeting between the two. However infatuated Napoleon might have been with his new kingly apparel, he couldn't control himself and made fun of the business with Duroc, who told me so himself. I don't think that anything in this labyrinth of petty procedures was put into effect. If I had my Paris papers here, I'd add the programme to this present twaddle about my life. It makes admirable reading; you'd think it was a practical joke.

It's with a sigh that I say to myself in 1832: 'Yet this is the level to which petty Parisian vanity had made an Italian sink; and that Italian Napoleon!'

Where was I? . . . Good God, how badly written this is!

Count Ségur was especially sublime in the State Council. This Council was worthy of respect; it wasn't, in 1810, a collection of ill-bred pedants, of Cousins, Jacqueminots, etc. . . . and others even more undistinguished (1832).

Apart from his greatest enemies, those who were manic in their opposition, Napoleon had brought together in his State Council the fifty least stupid men in France. There were various departments. Sometimes the War Department (to which, as a beginner, I was attached under the admirable Gouvion de Saint-Cyr) had dealings with the department for Home Affairs which M. de Ségur sometimes presided over; I don't know why; I think it was during the absence or illness of the energetic Regnault (de Saint-Jean-d'Angély).

In difficult matters, such as the raising of Guards of Honour in Piedmont for example—for which I was one of the minor people writing reports—the elegant, irreproachable M. de Ségur, finding that he had no ideas, used to move his chair forward a little; yet his movements when he did this were incredibly comic as, with his legs apart, he grasped the chair between his thighs.

After laughing at his impotence, I'd say to myself: 'But am I not the one who is wrong? This is the famous ambassador to Catherine the Great, the man who stole the English ambassador's pen. This is the historian of William II, or III' (I no longer remember which—the lover of the Countess Lichtenau for whom Benjamin Constant fought a duel).⁷

In my youth I tended to be *too respectful*. When my imagination seized hold of a man, I'd be mindless in his presence: I'd *cherish his faults*.

But it seems that the ridiculousness of M. de Ségur advising Napoleon proved too much for my 'gallibility'.

Otherwise Count Ségur, the Grand Master of Ceremonies (and in this he was very different from Philippe) could be relied upon in all matters requiring delicate tact, and when they were of a feminine nature his behaviour even became heroic. He was also capable of

refined and charming witticisms but they hadn't to rise above the Lilliputian level of his ideas.

It was the greatest of mistakes on my part not to cultivate the society of this agreeable old man from 1821 to 1830; I think he passed away at the same time as his respected wife. But I was crazy, my horror for what was mean and low had become a passion. This was instead of being amused by it, as I am today by behaviour at the Court of . . .

On my return from England in 1817 Count Ségur had conveyed to me his appreciation of *Rome, Naples and Florence*, a copy of which I'd had sent to him.

Morally speaking, I've always felt a deep-seated contempt for Paris. In order to be a success there, you needed to be like the Grand Master, M. de Ségur.

From the point of view of its physical aspect, I've never liked Paris. Even around 1803 I abhorred it because it wasn't surrounded by mountains. The mountains of my own region (the Dauphiné), witnesses to the passionate movements of my heart for the first sixteen years of my life, have led to a 'byas' (as they say in English) on that subject which I was never able to rectify.

I began to respect Paris on 28 July 1830 only. Even then, at eleven o'clock in the evening on the day of the Ordinances,⁸ I made fun at Count Réal's of the courage of the Parisians and the resistance expected of them. I think that he, who is such a gay person, and his heroic daughter, Baroness Lacuée, haven't yet forgiven me.

Today I respect Paris. I admit that as far as courage is concerned it ought to be placed in the first rank, as it ought for cooking and wit. But it doesn't win me over any the more for that. It strikes me its good qualities are always accompanied by *play-acting*. The young people

born in Paris whose fathers came from the provinces and had the *masculine energy* to make their fortunes, seem to me etiolated beings, only attentive to the appearance of their clothes, the good taste of their grey hats, the arrangement of their cravats—like MM. Féburier, Viollet-le-Duc, etc. For me a man is not a man without a little *masculine energy*, persistence and depth in his ideas, etc. All things as rare in Paris as a manner which is coarse or even rugged.

But I must finish this chapter here. To try not to lie and hide my faults I've decided to make myself write twenty pages of these memoirs at each sitting, like a letter. After my death, they will be printed from the original manuscript. Perhaps in this way I'll manage to be *truthful*, but I must beg the reader also (perhaps he was born this morning in the house next door) to forgive me for some terrible digressions.

CHAPTER V

I NOW realise, in 1832 (as I was very far from realising in 1821 since, in general, my philosophy dates from the day I write it down), I see, then, I was half-way between the energetic coarseness of General Grosse or Count Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angély and the rather Lilliputian and restricted elegance of Count Ségur, M. Petit, the owner of the Brussels Hotel, etc.

Not being mean and abject was in itself sufficient to keep me from these two extremes.

My lack of worldly know-how and my laziness, as M. Delécluzc¹ of the *Débats* told me about my books and the Institute, have meant that on five or six occasions I've let slip the highest degree of success in politics, finance and literature. As luck would have it, opportunities in each of these fields have arisen one after the other.

Reveries, which were of a tender nature in 1821 and later philosophical and melancholy (all vanity apart, exactly like those of Jacques in *As You Like It*), have become such a great pleasure for me that when a friend approaches in the street I'd give a sixpence to stop him saying a word. The mere sight of someone I know upsets me. When I see such a person a long way off and have to think about greeting him, it puts me out fifty yards before we meet. On the other hand, I love to meet friends in the evening in society, at M. Cuvier's on Saturdays, M. de Tracy's on Sundays, Mme Ancelot's on Tuesdays, Baron Gérard's on Wednesdays, etc.

A man gifted with a little tact easily sees that he puts me out by speaking to me in the street. 'There's some-

one who doesn't appreciate me much', that man's vanity tells him, wrongly.

From all this stems my delight in strolling freely about in a foreign town, Lancaster, Torre del Greco, etc. where I have only been an hour and where I am sure nobody knows me. This is a pleasure which has become rarer in the last few years. But for seasickness I'd love to go travelling in America. Will I be believed if I say I'd wear a mask with pleasure and be delighted to change my name? More than a quarter of my mind is filled with the *Thousand and One Nights*, which I adore. Often I think of Angelica's ring;² for me the supreme happiness would be to change into a lanky, blonde German and to walk about like that in Paris.

I've just seen, looking back, that I'd got to M. de Tracy. This old man who was so well proportioned, always dressed in black and who, with his huge green eyeshade, used to stand in front of his fireplace sometimes on one foot and sometimes on the other, had a way of speaking that was at the opposite extreme from his writing. His conversation was entirely composed of subtle and elegant insights; a vigorous word would have appalled him as much as an oath, and yet he writes like a country mayor. The vigorous simplicity which it seems to me I had at that time could hardly have suited him. I had enormous black sideboards which Mme Doligny only made me ashamed of a year later. The man who had been a colonel in Louis XVI's reign didn't appear to be too pleased by my resemblance to an Italian butcher.

M. de Tracy, a widow's son, was born about 1765 with an income of 300,000 francs. His town house was in the rue de Tracy, near the rue Saint-Martin.

Like lots of rich people around 1780 he went into business without being aware of what he was doing. M. de

Tracy built his own street, lost 200,000 or 300,000 francs on it and soldiered on in the same manner. So much so that I'm pretty sure that this man (so charming when, about 1790, he was Mme de Praslin's lover), that this profound logician has reduced his 300,000 francs a year to 30,000 at the very most.

His mother, a woman of rare good sense, was entirely devoted to the life of the Court; her son was therefore a colonel at twenty-two and colonel of a regiment, one of whose captains was a Tracy, his cousin, as much a nobleman as himself apparently. It never occurred to the cousin to be shocked at seeing this little twenty-two-year-old tailor's dummy coming to command the regiment in which he served.

Concealed inside this dummy who, as Mme de Tracy told me later, was so admirably co-ordinated, there was nevertheless a core of good sense. His mother, an exceptional woman, having heard that there was a philosopher in Strasbourg (and remember this was perhaps in 1780, not therefore a philosopher like Voltaire, Diderot, Raynal) having heard, as I said, that there was in Strasbourg a philosopher who analysed men's thoughts, the images or signs of all they saw or felt, realised that the science of manipulating these images, if her son learnt it, would develop his mind.

Imagine what kind of mind an extremely good looking and very aristocratic young man must have had in 1785 when he was totally committed to the Court and had an income of 300,000 francs a year.

The Marquise de Tracy had her son put in the artillery as a result of which, two years in succession, he found himself in Strasbourg. If I ever pass through there, I shall ask for the name of the German philosopher who was famous in those parts around 1780.

Two years later I think M. de Tracy was at Rethel with his regiment—of Dragoons, I believe it was—a fact to be verified in the Court Calendar of the time.

The lemons . . .

M. de Tracy never told me about the lemons; I learnt their story from another misanthropist, a M. Jacquemont who'd been a monk and what's more important was the ablest of men. But M. de Tracy told me many anecdotes about the first army of revolutionary France whose commander-in-chief was M. de La Fayette.

His lieutenant-colonel wanted to kidnap the regiment and make it emigrate with him . . .

Furlough and duel . . .

A tall figure whose big body ended in a cold, imperturbable face as vacuous as an old family portrait, the head surmounted by a badly made short-haired wig; a man dressed in an ill-cut grey costume, limping slightly and leaning on a stick as he entered the *salon* of Mme de Tracy who'd address him as 'my dear sir' in an enchanting tone of voice—this was General La Fayette in 1821. And this is how the Gascon, Sheffer,³ has shown us him in his portrait, which is very like.

I believe that this 'dear sir' of Mme de Tracy, said in that tone, made M. de Tracy miserable. It wasn't that M. de La Fayette had enjoyed his wife's favours or that he cared, at his age, about that kind of misfortune; it was quite simply that Mme de Tracy's admiration for M. de La Fayette, which was sincere and never exaggerated or put on, made it too evident that he was the most important person in the *salon*.

However raw I was in 1821 (I'd always lived amidst the illusions resulting from enthusiasm and passion) I found that out *on my own*.

I felt also, without anyone drawing my attention to it,

that M. de La Fayette was quite simply a hero out of Plutarch. He lived from day to day, without too much mental vivacity, quite simply doing great deeds as the opportunities arose, like Epaminondas. In the meantime, in spite of his age (he was born in 1757, like the friend with whom he used to play royal tennis in his youth, Charles X) he was entirely occupied in grabbing the petticoats of some pretty girl from behind (in vulgar parlance, feeling her bottom). He did this often and without too much restraint.

Whilst waiting for the chance to do great deeds, which doesn't present itself every day, and the opportunity to grab hold of young women's petticoats, and this hardly arises except at half-past midnight when they're leaving, M. de La Fayette would expound without too much elegance the commonplaces of the National Guard. The one and only good government is that which guarantees the citizen safety on the highway, equality before a judge (a reasonably enlightened judge), a reliable currency, well-kept roads, fair protection abroad . . . thus conceived, things are not very complicated.

But it must be admitted that it's a far cry from such a man to M. de Ségur, the Grand Master; France, and Paris above all, will therefore be execrated by posterity for not having recognised his greatness.

As for me, accustomed as I was to Napoleon and Lord Byron—I may add, to Lord Brougham, Monti, Canova and Rossini also—I recognised M. de La Fayette's greatness immediately and that was that. I saw him during the July revolution with his shirt full of holes; he was welcoming to all the schemers, all the fools, everybody who wanted to show off and be pompous. He welcomed *me* less warmly and asked for my leavings (for a coarse secretary, M. Levasseur).⁴ It no more occurred

to me to be angry or to venerate him less than it would to blaspheme against the sun when it is covered by a cloud.

At the tender age of seventy-five, M. de La Fayette has the same failing as I. He has become passionately fond of a young eighteen-year-old Portuguese girl who has begun to frequent M. de Tracy's *salon*, where she is a friend of his granddaughters, Mlles Georges La Fayette, de Lasteyrie and de Maubourg; he imagines, as far as this young Portuguese girl, and any other young woman, is concerned—he imagines that he is singled out for special attention, he thinks only of her, and what is amusing is that often he is right in his imaginings. His European fame, the fundamental elegance of his talk—despite its apparent simplicity, his eyes, which light up as soon as they are a foot away from a pretty bosom, all help him to spend his last years gaily. The ladies of thirty-five who frequent this *salon* (Mme la Marquise de Marmier (Choiseul), Mme de Perey and others) are shocked. They can't conceive of a man being agreeable other than by virtue of M. de Ségur's subtle little witticisms or M. Benjamin Constant's scintillating observations.

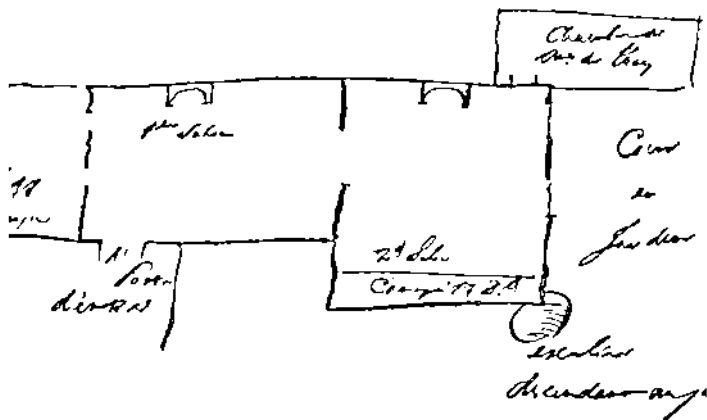
M. de La Fayette is extremely polite and even affectionate towards everybody but *polite as a king is*. This is what I said one day to Mme de Tracy who was annoyed, as far as gracefulness incarnate can be annoyed; but perhaps she understood from that day on that the vigorous simplicity of my talk wasn't like the stupidity of M. Dunoyer, for example. He was a worthy liberal, now the virtuous Prefect of Moulins, the best intentioned, perhaps the most heroic and stupidest of liberal writers. I hope I'll be believed when, as one of their party, I note that this is saying a great deal. M. Dunoyer, the editor of *Le Censeur*, and two or three other men of

the same calibre, ceaselessly surrounded the chair of the general, gaping with admiration. To their shocked amazement he would leave them in the lurch as soon as he could in order to admire at very close quarters and with eyes aflame the pretty shoulders of some young woman who had just come in. I used to make fun of the comical expressions these poor *virtuous* men (all of whom have since sold out to Perier like . . .—1832) had on their faces when they were abandoned. My new friend was shocked but it was understood that she had a soft-spot for me. 'He has a spark of something in him,' she said one day to a lady, one of those made for admiring little Lilliputian witticisms of the Ségur variety and who was complaining about the severe and frank simplicity with which I'd told her that the lofty virtue of the ultra-liberals doubtless made them very respectable but that otherwise they were incapable of understanding that two and two make four. The heaviness and slowness, the virtue which takes fright at the slightest home truth addressed to the 'American party', of a Dunoyer, a . . . etc. is really quite beyond belief, as is the absence of any ideas that aren't familiar in a Ludovic Vitet, a Mortimer Ternaux, the new generation which brought fresh blood to the Tracy *salon* around 1828. In the middle of all that M. de la Fayette was, and no doubt still is, a *party leader*.

He must have contracted this habit in 1789. The important thing is not to upset anybody and to remember all the names, which he is very good at. The practical and urgent interests of a party leader distracted him from all *literary ideas*, which I believe him fairly incapable of anyway. This is the mechanism that I think stops him feeling how heavy and boring the writings of M. Dunoyer and company are.

MEMOIRS OF AN EGOTIST

I have forgotten to describe this *salon*. Sir Walter Scott and his imitators would have been prudent and begun with the kind of description of physical surroundings I loathe. I find them so tedious to do, it stops me writing novels.



Door A leads into a long drawing-room at one end of which is a big double door both of whose sections are always wide open. You enter a fairly big square drawing-room with a fine lamp in the form of a chandelier, and a frightful little clock on the mantelpiece. On the right, as you come into this drawing-room, there is a beautiful blue divan on which are sat fifteen young girls between twelve and eighteen years old and their suitors: M. Charles de Rémusat who is very lively and even more affected—he's the double of the famous actor, Fleury; M. François de Corcelles who is full of Republican frankness and asperity. In 1831 he probably allowed himself to be bought; in 1820 he was already busy publishing a pamphlet which had the misfortune to be praised by

M. Dupin, the lawyer (a known scoundrel whom I first recognised as such in 1827). In 1821 M. de Rémusat and de Corcelles were very prominent and, since then, they have both married granddaughters of M. de La Fayette. Next to them would be a cold Gascon, M. Sheffer, the painter. He strikes me as the most shameless liar and the most ignoble-looking person I know. In the past I was assured that he'd paid court to the heavenly . . . [Virginie], the oldest of M. de La Fayette's granddaughters. She has since married the eldest son of M. Augustin Perier, the most important and the least unbending of the people from my part of the world. Mlle Virginie was, I believe, Mme de Tracy's favourite.

Next to the elegant M. de Rémusat you'd see two Jesuitical figures who both had an untrustworthy, shifty look. These two were brothers and had the privilege of talking hours on end to Count Tracy. In 1821 I adored them with all the fervour of my time of life (as far as the deceptions of the heart are concerned I was hardly twenty-one then). I soon found them out and my enthusiasm for M. de Tracy suffered a marked decline.

The elder of these two brothers has published a sentimental history of William the Conqueror's triumph in England. This is M. Thierry of the Academy of Inscriptions. He has had the distinction of discovering the true spelling of Clovis, Chilpéric, Thierry and other phantom figures from the beginnings of our history. He has published a less sentimental volume on the organisation of the communes in France in 1200. A schoolboy vice has made him blind. His brother, much more Jesuitical (in heart and behaviour), although an ultra-liberal also, became the Prefect of Vesoul in 1830 and has probably swapped his principles for his salary like his backer, M. Guizot.

In perfect contrast to these two Jesuitical brothers, the heavy Dunoyer and the affected Rémusat was young Victor Jacquemont who has since travelled in India. Victor was then very thin. He is almost six feet tall; at that time he was without the least show of logic, and consequently misanthropic. On the pretext of being very intelligent, M. Jacquemont didn't care to take the trouble to engage in reasonable discussion. As a true Frenchman he literally considered the invitation to discuss something reasonably as an insult. Travelling was really the only door to the truth which his vanity left open. But perhaps I am mistaken. Victor seems to me a man of the highest distinction—just as a connoisseur (forgive the word) sees a beautiful horse in a four-month-old foal whose legs are still swollen. He became my friend; this morning (1832) I received one of his letters, written from Kashmir, in India.

His heart had one fault only: a mean and unworthy envy of Napoleon. This envy was moreover the only passion I've ever seen Count Tracy gripped by. It was with indescribable pleasure that the old metaphysician and young Victor told the story of the rabbit hunt offered by M. de Talleyrand to Napoleon who had then been First Consul for six weeks and was already thinking of himself as a Louis XIV.

Domesticated rabbits and hogs in the Bois de Boulogne.⁵

It was a failing of Victor's to be very much in love with Mme Lavenelle, the wife of a police spy who has 40,000 francs a year and had the job of carrying to the Tuileries an account of all the actions and talk of General La Fayette. What is comic is that the General, Benjamin Constant and M. Bignon made this M. de Lavenelle a party to all their liberal ideas. As you would

guess, this spy, who had been a terrorist in 1793, spoke of nothing else but marching on the palace and massacring all the Bourbons. His wife was so licentious, so in love with men's physique, that she put the finishing touches to my disgust with 'free' conversation in French. In Italian I love this kind of talk; but even in my early youth, as a sub-lieutenant in the Sixth Dragoons, it repelled me in the mouth of the captain's wife, Mme Henriet. This Mme Lavenelle is as dry as parchment, and without any liveliness of mind either; but above all incapable of *passion*, the possibility of being moved other than by the beautiful thighs of a company of grenadiers marching through the Tuileries gardens in their white kerseymere breeches.

Mme Baraguey d'Hilliers, whom I was soon to get to know at Mme Beugnot's, was the same type of woman but wasn't like this. Nor were Mme Ruga and Mme Aresi in Milan. In a word, I am repelled by licentious talk in French, the mixture of wit and feeling shocks my innermost self just as my ears are shocked by the sound of a knife cutting through cork.

My description of the moral landscape in this *salon* is perhaps very long, but there are only two or three more figures.

The charming Louise Letort is one, daughter of General Letort of the Dragoons, a man I knew well in Vienna in 1809. Mlle Louise, who has since become so beautiful and whose character shows, up to now, so little affectation and at the same time so much nobility, was born the day before, or the day after Waterloo. Her mother, the charming Sarah Newton, married M. Victor de Tracy, the son of the peer, who was then a major in the infantry.

We used to call him 'ramrod', which is a definition of his character. Courageous, wounded several times in

Spain under Napoleon, he has the misfortune to see the bad side of everything.

Eight days ago (June 1832) King Louis-Philippe abolished the National Guard's artillery regiment whose colonel M. Victor de Tracy was. As a member of the House of Deputies, he speaks often and is unfortunate enough to be urbane at the rostrum. It's as if he didn't dare speak his mind. Like his father, he has been meanly jealous of Napoleon. Now that the hero is well and truly dead, he is relenting a little but the hero was still living when I first began to frequent the *salon* in the rue d'Anjou. I saw the joy his death occasioned there. Their looks indicated: we always said that a bourgeois turned king was bound to come to a bad end.

Ten years of my life were spent in this *salon* where I was respected and politely received but every day less *attached*, except to my friends. This is one of the defects of my character. It's the defect that stops me blaming other men for my relative failure to get on. Thus, in spite of course of what General Duroc said to me two or three times about my talent for military matters, I'm happy in an inferior position. Perfectly happy, especially when I am hundreds of miles away from my employer, as I am today.

I hope, then, that if boredom doesn't prevent people reading this book they won't find any rancour in it against other men. To seize hold of their favour you need a particular kind of hook. When I'm willing to make use of it, I fish up a good opinion or two, but the rod soon grows heavy in my hand. Nevertheless, in 1814, when Napoleon sent me to the Seventh Division, Countess Daru, whose husband was a minister, told me: 'But for this confounded invasion, you were going to be the Prefect of a big town.' I had some grounds for thinking that the town in question was Toulouse.

I was forgetting a woman with a strange personality whom I neglected to please and who became my enemy. Mme de Montcertin, who was tall and well-formed, very shy, lazy and entirely dominated by habit, had two lovers: one for the town and another for the country, each as unprepossessing as the other. This arrangement lasted I don't know how many years. I think that the painter Scheffer was the country lover; the town lover was Colonel (now General) Carbonel, who had appointed himself General La Fayette's bodyguard.

One day Mme Montcertin's eight or ten nieces asked what love was; she replied: 'It's a nasty, dirty thing which chambermaids are sometimes accused of, and, if the case is proved, they're sacked.'

I ought to have paid court to Mme Montcertin. It wasn't dangerous. I would never have got anywhere because she was fond of her two men and terribly afraid of becoming pregnant. But I regarded her as a *thing*, not a human being. She got her own back by repeating three or four times a week that I was a frivolous creature, almost mad. She used to make the tea and it's quite true that very often I wouldn't speak to her all evening except when she was offering me tea.

The number of people you'd have to pass the time of day with when you went into this *salon* quite discouraged me.

Apart from M. de La Fayette's fifteen or twenty granddaughters and their friends almost all of whom were blonde with brilliant complexions and commonplace faces (it's true I'd just come back from Italy) and who were ranged in battle order on the blue divan, you had to pay your respects to:

Countess Tracy, sixty-three years old;

Count Tracy, sixty ;

General La Fayette;

his son Georges Washington La Fayette (a real citizen of the United States of America, perfectly free of all aristocratic notions).

Mme de Tracy, my friend, and her son:

M. Victor de Tracy, born about 1785;

Mme Sarah de Tracy, his wife, young and radiant, a model of delicate English beauty, a little too thin, and two daughters, Mmes Georges de La Fayette and de Laubespain.

You also had to pay your respects to the great M. de Laubespain, the author, along with a monk whose meals he provides, of the *Memorial*.⁶ Always there, he said eight or ten words in an evening.

For a long time I took Mme Georges de La Fayette for a nun whom Mme de Tracy had had the charity to harbour in her house. But that appearance is accompanied by dogmatic ideas and the asperity of a Jansenist. Now, she has four or five daughters at least. Mme de Maubourg, M. La Fayette's daughter, has five or six. It took me ten years to tell them one from the other, all those blonde figures saying things which were *perfectly proper* but made me nod off standing up, accustomed as I was to the expressive eyes and determined character of the beautiful Milanese women, and before that, to the adorable simplicity of those from Germany. (I was an intendant in Sagan in Silesia, and in Brunswick.)

M. de Tracy had been the intimate friend of the celebrated Cabanis, the father of materialism, whose book: *Relations between the Physical and the Moral* had been my bible when I was sixteen. Mme Cabanis and her

daughter, six feet tall and very agreeable in spite of it, used to appear in this *salon*. M. de Tracy took me to their house in the rue des Vieilles-Tuileries, miles away. I was driven out by the heat. In those days my nervous sensibility was wholly *Italian*. A closed room with ten people sat inside was enough to give me a frightful feeling and almost make me faint. You can imagine what a well closed room with a roaring fire must have been like.

I didn't insist enough on this physical shortcoming—it was the fire that drove me from Mme Cabanis's. M. de Tracy never forgave me. I could have said a word to Countess Tracy, but in those days I was as gauche as they come, as I still am a little now.

In spite of being six feet tall, Mlle Cabanis wanted to get married; she chose a little man with a well-groomed wig who was fond of dancing—M. Dupaty, the would-be sculptor who did the statue in the Place Royale of Louis XIII astride a sort of mule.

This mule is an Arab horse I used to see a lot at M. Dupaty's. The poor animal moped about in a corner of the studio. M. Dupaty welcomed me warmly as a writer on Italy and the author of a history of painting. It was difficult to be more *proper* and emptier of enthusiasm, spontaneity, impulse, etc. than this good fellow. The last occupation such well-groomed, natty and *proper* Parisians ought to take up is sculpture.

M. Dupaty, who was so urbane, was also very courageous; he ought to have stayed a soldier.

I met at Mme Cabanis's a decent man who nevertheless had very narrow, middle-class ideas and was very meticulous in all his petty household affairs. The unique aim of M. Thurot, a professor of Greek, was to become a member of the Academy of Inscriptions. By an awful contradiction this man, who didn't blow his nose without

thinking how to gratify the vanity of someone who might, at the *nth* remove, have an influence on his nomination for the Academy, was *ultra-liberal*. At first this brought us together but soon his wife, a middle-class woman to whom I never spoke if I could help it, decided I was lacking in circumspection.

One day M. de Tracy and M. Thurot asked me about my politics and I alienated them both by replying:

‘As soon as I was in power, I’d reprint the list of *émigrés* and announce that Napoleon had usurped a right that wasn’t his when he crossed their names out.’⁷ Three quarters of them are dead; I’d exile the rest to the Pyrenean departments and two or three others in that region. I’d surround these four or five departments with two or three little armies which, for moral effect, would camp in the open at least six months of the year. Any *émigré* who came out of this area would be treated without mercy and shot.

‘When the land that Napoleon gave them back had been sold in pieces not bigger than two acres each, the *émigrés* would have pensions of one, two, three thousand francs a year. They could opt for a period in a foreign country. But if they travelled abroad to stir up plots—no more pension.’

The faces of MM. Thurot and de Tracy grew longer as I explained this plan: to these poor souls, etiolated by Parisian urbanity, I seemed a dreadful person. A young woman who was present admired my ideas and above all the excessive imprudence with which I let fly; for her I was like the Huron (in Voltaire’s story).⁸

The extreme kindness of this young woman consoled me for many failures. I was never quite her lover. She

was extremely coquettish, extremely concerned with dress, always talking about handsome men and associated with all the dazzling people in the boxes at the *Opéra Comique*.

I alter things a little so that she shan't be recognised. If I'd had the good sense to make her realise I loved her, she'd probably have been very pleased. The fact is that I didn't love her enough to forget that I'm not good looking. She'd forgotten. On one of the occasions when I was leaving Paris, she said to me in the middle of her *salon*: 'I've something to say to you,' and, in a corridor leading to an antechamber which was fortunately empty, she kissed me on the mouth; I kissed her back passionately. I left the next day and that was the end of that.

But before getting to that point, we had 'parleyed' (as they say in Champagne) for several years. At my request, she faithfully repeated all the criticisms people made of me.

She had a charming tone, seeming neither to approve nor disapprove. To have a Police Chief in these circumstances is what I find most comforting about love-affairs in Paris, which are otherwise so cold-blooded.

It's unimaginable the dreadful things you learn. One day she said:

—M.—, the spy, said at M. de Tracy's. 'Ah! Here's M. Beyle in a new outfit; it's clear that Mme Pasta has just had a benefit night.'

This idiocy was a success: M. de Tracy never forgave me my public liaison with a famous actress, although it was innocent.

The piquancy of the thing is that Céline,⁹ who told me what the spy said, was perhaps herself jealous of the regularity of my visits to Mme Pasta.

At whatever time my evenings elsewhere finished, I used to go to Mme Pasta's (the Hôtel des Lillois, number 63 in the rue Richelieu, opposite the library). I was staying a hundred yards from there, at number 47. Tired of the porter's anger—he was very annoyed at having to open up for me, often at three o'clock in the morning—I ended up by staying in the same building as Mme Pasta. A fortnight later I discovered that my credit was down by 70 per cent in Mme de Tracy's *salon*. It was a capital error not to consult my friend Mme de Tracy. My behaviour at this period was made up of one caprice after another. Had I been a marquis—or colonel—with 40,000 francs a year, I'd have brought about my own downfall.

I passionately loved, not music, but the music of Cimarosa and Mozart only. Mme Pasta's salon was the meeting place for all the Milanese who came to Paris. Through them, I sometimes happened to hear Métilde's name pronounced.

In Milan, Métilde learnt that I was spending all my time with an actress. It was perhaps this idea which completed her cure.

I was perfectly blind to all this. All one summer, I played faro till daybreak at Mme Pasta's, saying nothing, overjoyed at hearing Milanese spoken and absorbing the idea of Métilde through all my senses. I would go up to my charming room on the third floor and correct the proofs of *On Love*, with tears in my eyes. This was a book I wrote in pencil in Milan, in my periods of lucidity. To work on it in Paris was painful; I never wanted to tidy it up.

Men of letters say: 'Abroad, a man can have ingenious thoughts, but only in France do people know how to write a *book*.' Yes, if the only aim of a book is to

communicate ideas successfully; not if it is hoped to communicate emotion also, to transmit some fine shade of feeling.

The French rule only holds good for a history, the *History of the Regency* for example, by M. Lemontey whose truly academic style I was admiring this morning. M. Lemontey's preface—he was a miserly chap I met often at Count Beugnot's—can pass for a model of the academic style.

I'd almost certainly please the world's fools, if I took the trouble to tidy up a few bits of my present chatter in that way. But perhaps, writing this like a letter, at thirty pages a sitting, I produce a *lifelike* effect *without realising it*.

Now, above all, I want to describe things truthfully. What a miracle that would be in this century of play-acting, when three-quarters of the people in the public eye are charlatans as shameless as M. Magendie, or Count Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angély, or Baron Gérard!

One of the characteristics of this century of revolution (1789–1832) is that no great success is possible without a certain degree of shamelessness and even of determined charlatanism. M. de La Fayette alone is above this charlatanism, which mustn't be confused here with a welcoming civility—the *indispensable tool* of a party leader.

I'd met at Madame Cabanis's a man who is certainly not a charlatan, M. Fauriel (Mme Condorcet's former lover). He, along with M. Mérimée and myself, is the only example known to me of non-charlatanism amongst those who dabble in writing.

M. Fauriel is not therefore well known. One day Bossange, the bookseller, had fifty copies of one of his

works offered me if I would not only advertise it in a full article but also get the article published in some newspaper or other where at that time I was in favour (for a fortnight). I was scandalised and insisted on writing the article for one copy only. Soon, disgusted at paying court to dirty scoundrels, I stopped seeing these journalists; and I must admit to not having written the article.

But this happened in 1826 or 1827. Let's get back to 1821. M. Fauriel, treated with disdain by Mme Condorcet at her death (she was a woman given to physical pleasures only), saw a lot of Mlle Clarke, a little almost humpbacked shrew.

Mlle Clarke was an English woman with a lively mind—that was undeniable—but a mind like the horns of a chamois; dry, hard and twisted. M. Fauriel, who appreciated me a great deal at that time, very soon took me to Mlle Clarke's, where I once again came across my friend Augustin Thierry, author of the history of William the Conqueror. There, he ruled the roost. I was struck by the superb features of Mme Belloc (wife of the painter). She was astonishingly like Lord Byron whom I then liked a lot. A shrewd man, who took me for a Machiavellian because I had just come back from Italy, said to me: 'Don't you see you're wasting your time with Mme Belloc? She makes love with Mlle Montgolfier' (a little horrible monster with beautiful eyes).

I was dumbfounded, both by my Machiavellianism and my supposed love for Mme Belloc, and still more by this lady's loves. Perhaps there is something in it.

At the end of a year or two, Mlle Clarke picked a quarrel with me for no reason at all, after which I stopped seeing her, and M. Fauriel, to my great annoyance, took her part.

M. Fauriel and Victor Jacquemont rise immeasurably

above all my acquaintances of these first months after my return to Paris. Countess Tracy was on at least the same level. Basically, I surprised and scandalised all my acquaintances. I was a monster or a god. Even today all Mlle Clarke's group still firmly believe I'm a monster: a monster of immorality especially. The reader can form his own opinions: I'd only visited the courtesans once and he perhaps remembers how successful I was with the divinely beautiful Alexandrine.

Here's how I lived at this time:

Up at ten o'clock, I'd be at the café de Rouen at half-past where I'd meet Baron Lussinge and my cousin Colomb (a just, reasonable, upright man, my friend from childhood). The trouble was that these two understood absolutely nothing about the theory of the human heart or its depiction in literature or music. Endless discussion of this subject, the conclusions to be drawn from every anecdote which is new and *well authenticated*, constitutes for me by far the most interesting of conversations. Subsequently it turned out that M. Mérimée, whom I respect so much, didn't have a taste for this kind of conversation either.

Someone who excelled in it is my childhood friend Crozet (chief engineer for the Isère district), an excellent chap. But his wife was jealous of our friendship and took him away from me many years ago. What a pity it is! What a superior person M. Crozet would have been had he lived in Paris. Marriage and, above all, the provinces age a man astonishingly; the mind gets lazy and because mental activity is rare, it becomes laborious and, soon, impossible.

After having enjoyed an excellent cup of coffee and two *brioche*s at the café de Rouen, I used to accompany Lussinge to his office. We used to go through the Tuileries

and along the banks of the Seine, stopping in front of every print seller. It was when I left Lussinge that the dreadful period of the day began for me. It was very hot that year and I used to go under the big chestnut trees in the Tuileries, looking for shade and a little freshness. Since I can't forget her, I used to say to myself, wouldn't it be better to kill myself? I found everything burdensome. In 1821 I still had that passion for Italian painting which had made me write on the subject in 1816 and 1817. I used to go to the Louvre with a ticket Lussinge had procured me. The sight of those masterpieces only made me remember more vividly the Brera Gallery and *Métilde*. When I came across the corresponding French name in a book, I changed colour.

I've very few memories of those days, each one of which was like another. I was repelled by everything that pleases others in Paris. A liberal myself, I found the liberals outrageously foolish. I realise in fact that I've retained sad and, as far as I'm concerned, offensive memories of all I saw then.

I was particularly repelled by Louis XVIII, a fat man with cow-like eyes, whom I ran into all the time as he was being pulled slowly along by his six fat horses.

I bought several of Shakespeare's plays in the English edition at thirty sous each and I used to read them in the Tuileries. Often I would lower the book in order to think about *Métilde*. I found the inside of my lonely bedroom frightful.

When five o'clock finally came, I rushed to the *table d'hôte* in the Brussels Hotel. There I met up with a gloomy, tired and bored Lussinge again, the worthy Barot, the elegant Poitevin and five or six *table d'hôte* 'characters', a category of people stretching from swindlers on one side to second-rate conspirators on the

other. At this *table d'hôte* I recognised M. Alpy, who was formerly aide-de-camp to General Michaud and used to fetch the general's boots. I was amazed to see that he was now a colonel and the son-in-law of M. Kentzinger who is rich, stupid, for-the-government, and the Mayor of Strasbourg. I didn't speak to the colonel or his father-in-law. I was struck by a thin, fairly tall and talkative man with a yellowish complexion. There was a little of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's sacred fervour in phrases of his in favour of the Bourbons which the whole table thought banal and ridiculous. This man looked like an Austrian officer, the reverse of elegant. Later he became famous; he's M. Courvoisier, the Keeper of the Seals. Lussinge had known him in Besançon.

After dinner, coffee was still a good time for me—in direct contrast to the after-dinner stroll along the Boulevard de Gand, which was very much in fashion and very dusty. It was agonising to be there in that meeting place for elegant subalterns, officers of the Guard, first-class courtesans and their rivals—the fashionable women of the middle classes.

There I met one of my childhood friends, Count Barral, a splendid, kind-hearted chap, who, as the grandson of a famous miser, was beginning at thirty to feel the evil effects of this dismal affliction.

The Marquis de Barral, his grandfather . . .

In 1810, I think it was, I lent M. de Barral some money, after he'd gambled away all he had, and made him leave for Naples. His father, a gentleman through and through, allocated him 6,000 francs a year.

After several years Barral was back from Naples and found me living with an opera singer who at half-past-eleven every evening would settle down in my bed. I used to get back at one, and we'd have a supper of cold

partridge and champagne. This liaison lasted two or three years. Mlle Béreyter had a friend, a daughter of the celebrated Rose, the leather breeches merchant. Molé, the famous actor, had seduced all three sisters, charming girls. One of them is today the Marquise de —. Annette, falling lower and lower, was then living with a stockbroker. I sang her praises to Barral so much that he fell in love with her. I persuaded the pretty Annette to leave her sordid speculator. Barral didn't even have 5 francs on the second of every month. On the first, coming back from his bankers with 500 francs, he'd take his watch out of pawn and gamble away the 400 francs he then had left. I took some trouble and threw two dinners for the opposing camps at Véry's in the Tuileries, finally persuading Annette to become the count's steward and live sensibly with him on his father's 500 francs. This arrangement has now (1832) lasted ten years. Unfortunately Barral has become rich; he has at least 20,000 francs a year, and with all this money he's become atrociously mean.

In 1817 I was very much in love with Annette for a fortnight; after which, I found her ideas *narrow and Parisian*. For me, this is the greatest cure for love. In the evening, amidst the dust in the Boulevard de Gand, I used to come across this childhood friend and the kind-hearted Annette. I didn't know what to say to them. I was wasting away from boredom and sadness; the courtesans didn't cheer me up at all. Finally, about half-past ten I'd go to Mme Pasta's to play faro and have the misfortune to arrive first and be reduced to the kitchen gossip of Rachele, Guiditta's mother. But she spoke to me in Milanese; sometimes I'd find her with some booby who had just arrived from Milan and to whom she'd given dinner. I would shyly ask these fools for news of

all the pretty women in Milan. I'd have died rather than mention Métilde by name. But sometimes they spoke about her of their own accord. Those evenings marked an epoch in my life. Faro would begin at last. Sunk in deep reverie, I'd win or lose 40 francs in four hours.

I'd abandoned all concern for my honour, to such an extent that, when I lost more than I had in my pocket, I'd say to the person who had won: 'Would you like me to run upstairs for it?' He'd reply: '*Non, si figuri?*'¹⁰ and I wouldn't pay up until the next day. Frequent repetitions of this foolishness gave me a reputation for being poor. I realised this subsequently because of the lamentations of Pasta—Judith's splendid husband—when he saw me lose 30 or 35 francs. Even after having become aware of this detail, I didn't alter my behaviour.

CHAPTER VI

SOMETIMES I would write the date in a book I bought and an indication of the feeling then dominating me. Perhaps I'll find some of these dates in my books. I don't remember very well how I had the idea of going to England. I wrote to M.—, my banker, asking him to give me a letter of credit for 1,000 crowns in London; he replied that he only had 126 francs of mine left. I had some money somewhere, in Grenoble perhaps. I sent for it and set off.

The idea of going to London in 1821 first came to me in the following way. One day in Milan, around 1816 I think, I had been discussing suicide with the famous Brougham (now Lord Brougham, the Lord Chancellor of England and a man who will soon have worked himself to death).

—What is more disagreeable, Brougham said to me, than the idea that all the newspapers are going to announce you've blown your brains out and then inquire into your private life to discover the motive? . . . That's enough to put one off the idea of killing oneself.

—What's more simple, I replied, than getting into the habit of taking sea-trips in fishing boats. One day when the weather's bad, you fall into the sea by accident.

This idea of taking a sea-trip charmed me. The only writer I found readable was Shakespeare; I promised myself the treat of seeing him acted. I hadn't seen any Shakespeare in 1817 on my first trip to England.

STENDHAL

During my life I have passionately loved,

Cimarosa

Mozart

and Shakespeare, only.

In Milan, in 1820, I wanted to put that on my tombstone. Every day I thought of this inscription, really believing that the grave was the only place I could be at peace. I wanted a marble plaque in the form of a playing card.

ERRICO BEYLE
MILANESE
VISSE, SCRISSE, AMO
QUEST' ANIMA
ADORAVA
CIMAROSA, MOZART E SHAKESPEARE
MORI DI ANNI . . .
IL . . . 18 . . . *

I didn't want any nasty symbol to be added, or any conventional ornamentation, but to have the inscription carved in capital letters. I hate Grenoble; I arrived in Milan in May 1800, and love it. There I have known the greatest pleasures and the greatest sorrows; there I found—and it's this above all that makes a country your own—my earliest pleasures. I want to spend my old age in Milan and to die there.

* Henry Beyle, of Milan, lived, wrote and loved. He admired Cimarosa, Mozart and Shakespeare and died at the age of . . . in . . . 18 . . .

How many times, rocking in a solitary boat on the waves of Lake Como, have I said to myself with delight:

*Hic . . . captabis frigus opacum.*¹

If I leave enough for this plaque, I should like to have it put in the Andilly Cemetery near Montmorency, facing the rising sun. But above all I don't want any other memorial, nothing Parisian or of the vaudeville variety—I detest that kind of thing. I detested it much more in 1821. The manifestations of the French mind I found in the Paris theatres almost made me cry out loud: Scum! . . . Scum! . . . I used to leave after the first act. When French music was joined to these manifestations the horror of it was enough to cause me to pull faces and make a spectacle of myself. One day Mme de Longueville gave me her box in the Feydeau Theatre. Fortunately I didn't take anyone with me. I fled after a quarter-of-an-hour, pulling ridiculous faces and vowing not to return to the Feydeau for two years; I kept my word.

I found everything which resembles Mme de Genlis's novels and the poetry of Legouv e, Jouy, Campenon, Treneuil, equally horrible.

Nothing is more platitudinous than writing this in 1832 since everybody thinks the same. In 1821 Lussinge would make fun of my unbearable pride when I let him see me convulsed with hatred. He concluded that Jouy or Campenon had no doubt written a ferocious review of one of my works. A critic who has made fun of me gives me a different feeling altogether. Everytime I re-read his criticism I decide afresh which of us is right.

I think it was in September 1821 that I set off for London, feeling nothing but disgust for Paris. I was blind: I ought to have asked Countess Tracy for advice. This

adorable woman whom I loved like a mother, no, like a once-attractive woman but without any thought of love in the way we normally understand it, was then sixty-three. I had repelled her friendship because of my lack of trust. I ought to have been the friend of Céline, no, her lover. I don't know if I would have succeeded as a lover then but I see clearly now that I was on the brink of an intimate friendship. I oughtn't to have rejected a renewal of acquaintance with Countess Berthois.²

I was in despair or rather, profoundly disgusted with life, Paris and (above all) myself. I felt I was full of faults and should have liked to have been somebody else. I went to London to look for remedies for my 'spleen', and found them to a certain extent. I needed to put a hill between me and the sight of the Duomo in Milan: Shakespeare's plays and the actor Kean (pronounced *Kîne*) did the trick.

Quite often in society I used to come across people who would congratulate me on one of my works: I'd written very few then. The compliment and my reply done with, we didn't know what to say to each other. These Parisians, who expected some frivolously pat reply must have thought me very gauche, and perhaps very proud. I'm accustomed to seeming the opposite of what I am. I regard, and have always regarded my works as lottery tickets. I don't expect to be reprinted before 1900. Petrarch used to pin his faith on his latin poem *Africa* and hardly thought about his sonnets.

I was flattered by the approval of two of these authors of compliments. One of them, fifty years old, was a tall and very handsome man astonishingly like the 'Jupiter Mansuetus'.³ In 1821, I was still obsessed by the feelings which made me write (four years earlier) the beginning of the second volume of *The History of Painting*. This

very good-looking purveyor of compliments talked with the kind of pretentiousness to be found in Voltaire's letters; he'd been condemned to death in Naples in 1800 or 1799. He was called di Fiori and is now my dearest friend. For ten years we didn't understand each other; I didn't then know how to respond to his little Voltaire-like affectations.

My second admirer had an Englishman's superb blond hair, with curls. He was about thirty and was called Edward Edwards. A former ne'er-do-well from the London streets, he'd been an officer of the Supply Corps, I think, in the Duke of Wellington's army of occupation. Afterwards, when I learned that he'd been a ne'er-do-well of the London streets, working for the newspapers trying to come up with some celebrated pun, I was very surprised that he wasn't a swindler. Poor Edward Edwards had another quality: he was naturally and perfectly brave. So naturally that although he boasted about everything, with a vanity more than French—if that's possible—and without French reserve, he never spoke about his bravery.

I lighted on Edwards in the Calais coach. Finding himself with a French writer he felt himself obliged to talk and made my day. I had been relying on the landscape for my enjoyment. There's nothing duller (for me at least) than the road through Abbeville, Montreuil-sur-Mer, etc. Those long white roads standing out in the distance on a feebly undulating terrain would have made me miserable without Edward's chatter.

But the walls of Montreuil and the crockery at lunch quite brought back the thought of England.

We were travelling with a man called Schmidt, a former secretary of the most meanly devious of men, M. Fréville, the State Councillor whom I'd known at

Mme Narbot's, number 4, rue de Ménars. This poor Schmidt, honest enough at first, had ended up a political spy. M. Decazes used to send him to the congresses at the spa in Aix-la-Chapelle. Always devious and in the end, I think, a thief, Schmidt's circumstances would change at six monthly intervals. One day he met me and said how, as a marriage of convenience and not because he cared for her, he was going to marry the daughter of Marshal Oudinot, the Duke of Reggio, who, as a matter of fact, has a regiment of daughters and used to beg money off Louis XVIII every six months.

I was very surprised but said, 'My dear friend, marry her this evening.'

But a fortnight later I learnt that M. le duc Decazes had unfortunately discovered Schmidt's circumstances and felt himself obliged to drop a line to the father-in-law. But Schmidt was a good fellow and pleasant company.

In Calais I did something very silly. I spoke at the *table d'hôte* like a man who hasn't spoken for a year. I was very gay and almost drunk on English beer. An English sea-captain in the inshore trade who was something of a yokel, made a few objections to my stories and I replied in a cheerful and good-natured fashion. That night I had terrible indigestion, for the first time in my life. A few days later Edwards spoke to me gravely—such a rare thing for him—and said that in Calais I ought to have replied to the English captain sharply and not cheerfully.

This horrible mistake was one I made on another occasion—in Dresden in 1813 with M.—, who's gone mad since. I'm not short of courage and such a thing wouldn't happen to me now. But in my youth when I improvised I was as mad as a hatter. All my attention

was on the beauty of the images I was trying to convey. For me Edwards's warning was like the crowing of the cock for St Peter. We looked for the English captain for two days in all the squalid taverns that sort of person frequents, near the Tower, I believe it was.

The second day, I think, Edwards said to me gravely, politely and with elegance even: 'Each nation, you see, has special conventions about duelling; our English ones are quaint, etc., etc., etc.'

The final result of all this philosophising was a request to allow him to talk to the captain; it was ten to one that in spite of the national antipathy to the French, he would say he had had no earthly intention of offending me, etc., etc., etc., but if in fact there was a duel, Edwards begged to be allowed to stand in for me.

—Are you trying to make a fool of me, I asked.

We exchanged some harsh words but he finally convinced me that his only fault was excess zeal. We began to look for the captain once again. Two or three times, thinking I recognised him, I felt all the hairs on my arms bristle. I've since thought that the thing would have been difficult for me without Edwards—I was drunk with gaiety, chat and beer in Calais. It was the first time I'd been unfaithful to my memories of Milan.

I found London very moving because of the walks along the Thames towards 'Little Chelsea'. There were little houses there decorated with rose trees that had for me a genuinely elegiac quality. It was the first time I'd been moved by this insipid style of architecture.*

* In five days, from 20 to 24 June, I have reached this point, *id est*, the 148th page. Yesterday I received a letter from Kashmir from Victor Jacquemont. It was dated June 1831.

I realise now that I was still very sick at heart. I had an almost hydrophobic horror of the sight of any coarse person. The conversation of a fat, coarse businessman from the provinces would stupify me and make me miserable for the rest of the day—Charles Durand, the rich banker from Grenoble who used to talk to me in a friendly fashion is an example. This childhood disposition which so often made me gloomy between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five reasserted itself with force.

I was so unhappy that I liked familiar faces. New faces, which entertain me when I'm well, were a bother to me then.

Luck led me to Tavistock Hotel in Covent Garden. It's the kind of place for well-off provincials visiting London. My bedroom, which I always left open with impunity, even though thieving is common in that country, was eight feet wide and ten feet long. But on the other hand, breakfast was served in a room which must have been about one hundred feet long, thirty feet wide, and twenty feet high. There we could eat everything we fancied, and as much of it as we liked, for two shillings. They offered us an infinite number of steaks or placed in front of us a forty-pound piece of roast beef along with a very sharp knife. Then came the tea for all this meat to stew in. The room opened out into arcades in the square in Covent Garden. Every morning I'd find there about thirty solid Englishmen who walked with grave deliberation. Many of them looked unhappy. There was no noisy French affectation or fatuity. That suited me, I was less unhappy in that room. The one or two hours I spent at breakfast were not diverting but they always passed by very satisfactorily. I learnt to read the English newspapers mechanically, although in fact they didn't interest me at all. Later, in 1826, I was very

unhappy in this same square in Covent Garden in the Ouxkum Hotel (or some name equally uncouth) on the corner opposite the Tavistock.⁴ From 1826 to 1832, nothing disastrous happened to me.

There wasn't yet any Shakespeare showing the day I arrived in London; I went to the Haymarket which, if I remember correctly, was open. In spite of its gloomy appearance inside, I had a fairly good time.

I was extremely amused by [Goldsmith's] comedy *She Stoops to Conquer* because of the way the actor who played the husband of Miss Hardcastle—she's the one who was stooping to conquer—manipulated his cheeks: it's a little like the subject of Marivaux's [*Fausse Confidences*]. A marriageable young girl disguises herself as a chambermaid. *The Beaux Stratagem* amused me a great deal.

During the day I used to wander about the outskirts of London, often going to Richmond.

This famous terrace offers the same sweep of countryside as Saint-Germain-en-Laye. But you look down from less of a height perhaps, and on to meadows of a charming green scattered with big trees made venerable by age. From the top of the terrace at Saint-Germain on the other hand, you see only what is dry and rocky. There is nothing to equal this fresh green colour you find in England and the beauty of her trees: to cut them down would be a crime and a dishonour whereas, when the need for money becomes in the smallest degree pressing, the French landowner sells the five or six big oaks on his land. The sight of Richmond and Windsor reminded me of my dear Lombardy, the mountains of Brianza, Desio, Como, Cadenabbia, and the sanctuary at Varesa, beautiful regions where my happiest days were spent. I was so unhinged in those moments of happiness that

I've almost no precise memory of them: at the most some date to indicate, in a book just bought, the place where I'd read it. The smallest comment in the margin means that if I ever re-read this book I pick up the thread of my ideas again and start dreaming. If my re-reading of a book doesn't bring back any memories, I have to start the business of recalling the past over again.

One evening I was sitting on the bridge which is at the bottom of Richmond terrace, reading Mrs Hutchinson's *Memoirs*—one of my passions.

—Mister Bell! a man said, stopping right in front of me.

It was M. B—— whom I'd seen in Italy, at Lady Jersey's in Milan. A very subtle-minded man of about fifty, M. B——, without exactly being a member of good society, was admitted into it (in England the divisions between classes are as distinct as they are in India, the country of pariahs—see *La Chaumière indienne*).⁵

—Have you seen Lady Jersey?

—No; I didn't know her well enough in Milan; and they say you English tourists are a little inclined to forgetfulness once you get back across the Channel.

—What an idea! Go and see her.

—To be received coldly or simply not to be recognised would pain me much more than the most eager reception could please me.

—You haven't seen Mr. Hobhouse or Mr. Brougham?
Same reply.

Mr. B——, who had all the bustling activity of a diplomat, asked me for a great deal of news from France.

—The young people from the lower-middle-classes, well educated, and not knowing where to find em-

ployment, will discover the *protégés* of the Congregation everywhere barring their way. They'll overthrow the Congregation and the Bourbons too perhaps.⁶

(Since this seems like a prediction, the well-disposed reader is quite free not to believe it.) I've repeated what I said to show how my extreme disgust for everything I spoke of apparently gave me the unhappy look without which one isn't respected in England.

When M. B—— realised I knew M. de La Fayette, M. de Tracy:

—*and*, he said with the air of a man profoundly surprised, *you haven't given more scope to your visit!* It was in your power to dine twice a week at Lord Holland's, at Lady N's, Lady . . .

—I didn't even mention in Paris that I was coming to London. I had one aim only: to see Shakespeare's plays acted.

When M. B—— had understood me properly, he thought I'd gone mad.

The first time I went to Almack's,⁷ my banker, seeing my invitation, said to me with a sigh:

—Sir, for twenty-two years I have been working to go where you'll be in an hour.

Since society is divided into layers like the rings of a bamboo, a man's major business is to rise into the class superior to his own whilst all the effort of that class is directed towards preventing him climbing up.

I've only ever found the same thing in France on one occasion: when the men who had been generals in Napoleon's army, and had sold themselves to Louis XVIII, were trying in contemptible ways to get themselves

admitted to Mme de Talaru's *salon*, or others in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. The humiliations these vile creatures endured every day would fill fifty pages. Poor Amédée de Pastoret, if he ever wrote his memoirs, would have some nice things to say about it! Ah well! I don't believe the young men doing their Law degrees in 1832 have it in them to put up with such humiliations. They'll do something mean or iniquitous, if you like, over and done with in a day, but to let yourself be murdered by the pin-pricks of contempt like that, is unnatural for someone not born in the *salons* of 1780—those which were revived between 1804 and 1830.

The abjectness which puts up with anything from the wife of a man who has the Order of St. Louis (Mme de Talaru) won't be seen any longer except amongst young people born in Paris. And Louis-Philippe isn't sufficiently well established for such *salons* to re-appear in Paris for a long time to come.

The Reform Bill (June 1832) will probably put an end to the manufacture in England of people like M. B—— who never forgave me for not having given more 'scope' to my visit. In 1821, I wasn't aware of an objection I understood during my trip in 1826: that the dinners and balls of the aristocracy cost a fantastic amount of money which couldn't be worse spent.

I was obliged to M. B—— in one way: he taught me how to get back to London from Richmond by water—it's a delightful trip.

Finally, on [19 November] 1821, they advertised Kean in *Othello*. I was nearly crushed to death before getting my ticket for the pit. Waiting in the queue reminded me vividly of the happy days of my youth when we were in the crush for the first night of *Pinto* in 1800 (in Germinal, year eight).

Anyone unfortunate enough to want a ticket at Covent Garden is led into twisting passages that are three feet wide and lined with planks rubbed perfectly smooth by the clothes of long-suffering men.

With my head full of literary ideas it was not until I was in these awful passages and anger had given me a strength superior to my neighbours' that I said to myself: there's no pleasure possible for me this evening. What a fool I am not to have bought a ticket for a box in advance!

Fortunately, hardly was I in the pit when the people I'd been elbowing looked at me in a kind, frank manner. We said a few pleasant words to each other about our previous hardships whereupon I was no longer angry and became absorbed in my admiration for Kean whom I only knew through the exaggerated talk of my fellow traveller, Edward Edwards. It appears Kean is a tap-room hero, courageous but ill-bred.

It was easy to excuse him: if he'd been born rich or into an upper-class family, he wouldn't be Kean but some cold-blooded fop. The civility of the upper-classes in France, and probably in England, *proscribes energy*, and exhausts it if by chance it existed. Perfectly polite and perfectly devoid of energy—that's the kind of person I expect to see at M. de Tracy's when M. de Syon or any other young man from the Faubourg Saint-Germain is announced. And what's more I wasn't well placed in 1821 to judge the extent of the insignificance of these etiolated beings. M. de Syon, who is a regular visitor at General La Fayette's and followed him to America, I think, must be a monster of energy in Mme de La Tremoille's *salon*.

Good God! How is it possible to be so null? How are such people to be depicted? These are questions I asked

myself during the winter of 1830 when I was studying these young people. Their great concern then was the fear that their hair, arranged so as to form a coil from one side of the forehead to the other, might fall down.*

My pleasure in seeing Kean was mixed with a great deal of surprise. The English, an irritable people, have gestures very different from ours for expressing the same deep feelings.

Baron Lussinge and that splendid man Barot came to join me in London; or perhaps Lussinge had come with me. I've an unfortunate talent for communicating my likings; the result of talking about one of my mistresses to a friend has often been to make him fall in love with her, or what's much worse, I've made my mistress fall in love with the friend I really liked. This is what happened to me with Mme Azur and Mérimée. I was in despair for four days. When I'd become less desperate, I went to beg Mérimée to defer making me miserable for a couple of weeks.

—A couple of years, he replied, I don't fancy her at all. I've seen wrinkles in the stockings she was wearing.

Barot who does everything reasonably and according to rule, like a businessman, committed us to taking on a courier. He was a little English fop. I despise these more than the others; as far as they're concerned, fashion isn't a pleasure but a serious duty that must not be neglected. I was commonsensical about everything which had no relation to certain memories, and felt immediately the absurdity of the English labourer's eighteen hour work-day. The poor Italian, covered in rags, is very

* I'm discouraged by the complete absence of dates. My imagination exhausts itself searching after dates instead of conjuring up objects.

much nearer being happy. He has time to make love; from eighty to a hundred days a year he devotes himself to a religion all the more entertaining in that it frightens him a little; etc., etc.

My companions certainly made fun of me, but the truth of my paradox is becoming visibly evident. It will be a commonplace in 1840. My companions thought me *quite* mad when I added: 'the excessive, overwhelming workload of the English worker is our revenge for Waterloo and the four coalitions. As for us, we've buried our dead and those who've survived are happier than the English.'

All their lives Barot and Lussinge will think me an irresponsible character. Ten years later I try to make them feel ashamed of themselves with: 'Nowadays you'd think as I did in London in 1821.' They deny it and my reputation as an irresponsible character remains. Take what used to happen when I had the misfortune to talk about literature. For a long period my cousin Colomb actually thought I was *envious* because I told him M. Villemain's *Lascaris* was boring enough to send you to sleep standing up. What a business it was then, for God's sake, when I embarked on general principles!

One day when I was talking about work in England the little fop who acted as our courier claimed his national honour was offended.

—You are right, I told him, but we're unhappy: we haven't any agreeable acquaintances.

—Sir, I'll look after the business for you. I'll do the bargaining myself. Don't approach anyone else, you'd be robbed, etc., etc.

My friends laughed. So, for having made fun of the fop's honour, I found myself involved with harlots.

Nothing could be more cheerless and repellent than the details of the transaction our fellow made us go through the next day in showing us round London.

In the first place, our girls lived in an out-of-the-way district, in Westminster Road, an admirable place for Frenchmen to be beaten up by three or four sailor pimps. When we mentioned it to an English friend he said:

—It's an ambush! Keep well away!

The fop added that he'd bargained for a long time to get us tea in the morning when we got up. The girls didn't want to accord us their good graces and their tea for twenty-one shillings. But finally they'd agreed. Two or three English people told us:

—You'd never find an Englishman falling into such a trap. Do you know you'll be taken more than two miles from London?

We were completely agreed we wouldn't go. But when evening came Barot gave me a look I understood.

—We're strong, I said, and we have weapons.

Lussinge didn't dare come.

Barot and I took a cab and went over Westminster Bridge. Then the cab went down streets without houses, between some gardens. Barot laughed.

—If you were so brilliant with Alexandrine in a charming house in the middle of Paris, what won't you be here!

I felt profoundly disgusted; without the boredom of the period after dinner in London when there's nothing on at the theatre, as was the case that day, and without the

slight stimulus of danger, I should never have been seen in Westminster Road. I seem to remember that finally, after having been on the point of overturning two or three times in unpaved tracks masquerading as roads, the swearing cabman stopped in front of a three-storied house which must have been about twenty-five feet high. I've never seen anything so small in my life.

Without the thought of the danger involved, I should certainly never have gone in. I expected to see three horrible sluts. The three girls were small and slight with beautiful chestnut hair: a little shy, very anxious to please, very pale.

The furniture was quite ridiculously small. Barot is big and fat; I'm fat, so that we literally couldn't find anywhere to sit down: the furniture seemed to be made for dolls, we were frightened of smashing it. Our diminutive girls saw our embarrassment and their own increased. We had no idea what to say. Fortunately Barot thought of mentioning the garden.

'Oh! We have a garden,' they said, not with pride, but with some joy at having an object of luxury to show us. We went down to see the garden with candles: it was twenty-five feet long and ten feet wide. Barot and I burst out laughing. All the poor girls' domestic equipment was there: their little wash-tub, their little vat with an elliptical contraption for brewing their own beer.

I was touched and Barot disgusted. He said to me in French:

—Let's pay them and be off.

—They'll feel so humiliated, I said.

—Bah! Humiliated! You know them well enough! They'll send for other clients, if it's not too late, or their lovers if this is anything like France.

These truths made no impression on me. I found their poverty, all those very clean, very old pieces of furniture, touching. We hadn't finished drinking before I was sufficiently intimate with them to confess, in broken English, to our fear of being assassinated. This disconcerted them a great deal.

—But look, I added, the proof that we don't misjudge you is that I'm telling you all this.

We sent the fop away. Then it seemed as if I was with dear friends whom I was seeing again after a year's absence.

There wasn't a door which shut—another subject for suspicion when we went to bed. But what good would doors and strong locks have been? The thin brick partitions could everywhere be knocked in with a blow of the fist. You could hear everything in this house. Barot, who had gone up to the second floor in the room above mine, cried out:

—If they come to murder you, call me!

I wanted to keep the light burning but the modesty of my new friend, who was otherwise so docile and obliging, would never permit it. She made a movement of obvious terror when she saw me laying out pistols and a dagger on the little table by the side of the bed opposite the door. She was charming: small, pale and with a good figure.

No one assassinated us. The next day we let them off providing tea and sent the courier for Lussinge, suggesting he come with cold meats and wine. He appeared very quickly, together with an excellent breakfast, thoroughly surprised by our enthusiasm.

The two sisters sent for one of their friends. We left them wine and some cold meat whose appetising appearance seemed to surprise these poor girls.

They thought we were making fun of them when we told them we'd come back. Miss——, my friend, said to me privately:

—I wouldn't go out if I could hope you'd come back this evening. But our house is too poor for people like you.

All day I thought only of the nice, quiet, calm evening ('full of snugness'), which was waiting for me. I found the play long. Barot and Lussinge wanted to see all the brazen young women who filled the foyer at Covent Garden. Finally Barot and I arrived at our little house. When the girls saw bottles of claret and champagne unpacked, the poor things were wide-eyed. I rather think they'd never before found themselves in front of an unopened bottle of 'real champaign'.⁸

Fortunately our cork popped; they were completely happy; but in a quiet and seemly way. Nothing could be more seemly than their behaviour in general. We already knew that.

This was the first real, intimate consolation for the misery which poisoned all my moments of solitude. It's clear that I was only twenty years old in 1821. If I'd been thirty-eight, as my birth certificate seemed to prove, I should have been able to try to find this consolation with respectable Parisian women who were sympathetic towards me. But I sometimes doubt whether I could have succeeded. What is called the high society look, which makes Mme de Marnier seem different from Mme Edwards, often strikes me as detestable affectation and momentarily inhibits my feelings completely. Here's one of my great misfortunes—is your experience like mine? I'm mortally shocked by the slightest nuance.

A little more or less of upper-class ways make me mentally denounce a woman as either *bourgeoise* or aristocratically doll-like and immediately I've only disgust or *irony* for the next person I meet.

A man can know everything, except himself. 'I'm very far from thinking I know everything,' a polite man from the aristocratic part of town would add, careful to close up all avenues against ridicule. My doctors, when I've been ill, have always taken pleasure in treating me as a monster of *nervous irritability*. An open window in the adjoining room whose door was shut, once made me feel cold. The slightest smell (even when it's not a bad one) weakens my left arm and leg and makes me want to fall over on that side.

—But these details are abominably egotistical!

—No doubt, but is this book anything other than abominably egotistical? What's the good of making a show of your elegant pedantry as M. Villemain did yesterday in an article on the arrest of M. de Chateaubriand?

If this book is boring, after two years it will be wrapping up butter at the grocer's; if it isn't boring it will show that egotism, *so long as it's sincere*, represents a way of depicting the human heart—in the knowledge of which we've made giant strides since 1721 when Montesquieu—a great man I've studied deeply—published his *Lettres Persanes*.

The progress is sometimes so astonishing that Montesquieu appears crude as a result.*

* I'm happy in writing this. In one way or another official work has occupied me night and day for the last three days (June 1832). I could only take up imaginative work again at four o'clock, when my letters to the ministers were sealed. I do this easily without any difficulty or plan other than that involved in *remembering*.

Since I'd been able to be good-natured all evening, despite my bad English, I was enjoying my stay in London so much that I let the Baron and Barot go back to Paris, the former summoned there by his department and the latter by his glass and nail business.⁹ Yet their company had been very agreeable. We never spoke about the fine arts which have always proved a stumbling-block between me and my friends.

The English are, I think, the most obtuse and barbaric people in the world. To such an extent that I forgive them the infamous goings-on in Saint Helena. They didn't feel the infamy of them. Certainly a Spaniard, an Italian, even a German, would have been able to imagine what Napoleon's martyrdom involved. These honest Englishmen, ceaselessly threatened by the danger of dying of hunger if they forget to work for a moment, dismissed the idea of Saint Helena—as they do that of Raphael—as one liable to lead to their *wasting time*, and that's all there is to it.

We three: myself for dreaming and knowing about Say and Smith (Adam), Baron Lussinge for seeing the bad side of everything, and Barot for work (the kind which changes a pound of steel worth 12 francs into three-quarters of a pound of watch-springs worth 10,000)—together we more or less constituted the perfect tourist.

Once I was alone, there was a conflict in my heart between the honesty of the English family with an income of 10,000 francs and the complete demoralisation of the Englishman who has expensive tastes and has realised he must sell himself to the government to satisfy them. For me the English version of Philippe de Ségur is both the most contemptible of beings and the most absurd to listen to.

Because of the conflict between these two ideas I left

England without knowing whether one ought to hope for a *Reign of Terror* which would clean out her Augean stables.

The impecunious young girl at whose house I spent my evenings assured me she would eat apples and not cost me anything if I'd take her to France.

I'd been severely punished for having advised one of my sisters to come to Milan—in 1816 I think. Mme Perier latched on to me like an oyster, burdening me for ever with the responsibility for her fate. Mme Perier had all the virtues and quite a bit of sense and amiability. I was forced to quarrel with her to get rid of this barnacle boringly stuck to my hull and making me responsible, whether I liked it or not, for all its future happiness. A frightful thing!

It was this frightening idea that stopped me taking Miss Appleby to Paris.

I would have avoided many moments of fiendish misery. It's my misfortune to find affectation so antipathetic that it's very difficult for me to be simple, sincere, kind—perfectly German in a word—with a French woman.

(I'll fill out this article on London in 1821 when I've found my copies of the English plays which I marked with the dates I saw them acted.)

One day it was announced they were going to hang eight poor devils. In my view, when a thief or a murderer is hanged in England it's the aristocracy which is sacrificing a victim to its security since it's the aristocracy which made him a scoundrel, etc., etc. This truth paradoxical as it is now, will perhaps be a commonplace when my chat comes to be read.

I spent the night telling myself that it's the tourist's duty to see these sights and the effect they produce on a

people which has kept its national character ('who has raciness'). The next day, when they woke me up at eight o'clock, it was pouring down. The thing I wanted to force myself to do was so painful I still remember the conflict. I *didn't* witness the horrible spectacle.

CHAPTER VII

ON my return to Paris, about December, I found that I took a little more interest in men and things. This, as I now realise, was because I knew that, quite apart from what I had left behind in Milan, I was able to find a little happiness, or at least amusement, elsewhere. This elsewhere was Miss Appleby's tiny house.

But I didn't have enough common sense to order my life systematically. Chance was always the guiding force in my relations. For example:

There was once a Minister for War in Naples whose name was Micheroux. This unhappy soldier of fortune was, I think, from Liège. He left Court pensions to his two sons; in Naples people rely on the King's favours as they do on an inheritance.

One of these sons, Alexandre Micheroux, used to eat at the *table d'hôte* at number 47, rue de Richelieu. He was a good-looking young man with the phlegmatic appearance of a Dutchman. Yet he was pining away. At the time of the 1820 Revolution, he was a Royalist living quietly in Naples.

Francesco, the Crown Prince and since that time the most despised of 'Kings', was the regent and Micheroux's special protector. He sent for him and begged him, in an intimate fashion, to accept a post as ambassador in Dresden—all of which the apathetic Micheroux didn't appreciate at all. However, as he didn't have the courage to displease a royal highness and a prince of the blood, he went to Dresden. Soon Francesco exiled him, condemned him to death, I think, or at least confiscated his pension.

Without any liveliness of mind or particular gifts, Micheroux has been his own worst enemy: for a long time he worked eighteen hours a day, like an Englishman, in order to become a painter, a musician, a metaphysician, and I don't know what. This education was organised as if it were a joke against logic.

I know about these astonishing labours from an actress friend who, from her window, saw this handsome young man working at his painting from five in the morning until five in the afternoon, and then reading all the evening. The result of these dreadful labours was the ability to accompany at the piano in a superior fashion and enough good sense or, if you prefer, good taste in music not to be completely deceived by the whipped cream and swagger of Rossini. As soon as he wanted to argue reasonably, his weak mind, laden with false learning, would succumb to the most comical absurdities. On politics he was especially curious. But then I've never known anything more poetical and absurd than the Italian liberals (or *carbonari*) who, from 1821 to 1830, filled the liberal *salons* in Paris.

One evening after dinner Micheroux went to his room. Two hours later, since he hadn't come to the *café de Foy*, where the loser of our game of cards or dice used to pay for the coffee, we went up to see him. We found that he'd fainted away from pain. He had blennorrhoea; the pain was localised and, after dinner, it had become twice as bad; his sad and phlegmatic spirit had begun contemplating all his misfortunes, including those involving money. The pain had borne him down. Another person would have killed himself; he, for his part, would have been happy to die whilst he was unconscious if—with great difficulty—we hadn't brought him round.

I was moved by his plight. Perhaps a little by the

thought: here's someone who is nevertheless more unhappy than I am. Barot lent him 500 francs, which he got back. The next day either Lussinge or I introduced him to Mme Pasta.

A week later we realised he was the favourite. Nothing could be colder and more reasonable than these two beings in their behaviour towards each other. I saw them every day for four or five years, and I wouldn't have been surprised if, after all that time, a magician who'd given me the power to make myself invisible had allowed me to see that they didn't make love together but simply talked about music. I'm sure that Mme Pasta, who not only lived in Paris for eight or ten years but was in fashion for three-quarters of that time, never had a French lover.*

About the time Micheroux was introduced, the handsome Lagrange came every evening to spend three hours boring us, as he sat next to Mme Pasta on the sofa. This is the general who played the part of Apollo, or the handsome Spaniard who is rescued, in the ballets at the Imperial Court. I've seen Queen Caroline Murat and the heavenly Princess Borghese dance with him, dressed as savages. He's one of good society's most vacuous members, which is really saying a lot.

Since saying something improper is much more fatal to a young man than it is to his advantage to say something well, posterity—less inane than the present probably—won't be able to conceive how insipid good society was.

[Micheroux's]¹ manners were distinguished, almost elegant. In this respect, he was in perfect contrast to Lussinge, and even Barot, who is only a good, honest lad

* 30 June 1832, 'written' twelve pages in the fag-end of an evening, after having completed my official duties. I couldn't have worked like this at fiction.

from the provinces who happens to have made a few millions. [Micheroux's] elegant behaviour attached me to him. I soon realised that he was perfectly cold-hearted.

He had learnt music as a scholar from the Academy of Inscriptions learns, or pretends to learn, Persian. He had *learnt* to admire such a piece; the first thing he always demanded of a note was that it should be the right one; of a phrase, that it should be correct.

In my view, by far the most important thing is to be *expressive*.

For me, in all questions concerning black marks on white paper, the important thing is to be able to say with Boileau:

‘And my verse, good or bad, always has something to say’.²

As the liaison between [Micheroux] and Mme Pasta grew in strength, I went to stay on the third floor of the Hotel des Lillois where that charming woman occupied, first the second and then the first floor.

She was in my view without vices or faults, a simple, consistent, just, natural person with the greatest talent for acting tragedy I’ve ever known.

With a young man’s habitual expectations (you remember that I was only twenty in 1821), I first of all wished that she, for whom I had so much admiration, would feel some love for me. I see now that she was too cold and reasonable, not sufficiently exuberant, unpredictable or affectionate for our liaison, had it been based on love, to continue. On my side, it would only have been a passing fancy; she would have been legitimately indignant and broken off our relations completely. It’s better therefore that the thing was limited to the most sacred and devoted friendship on my side and, on her’s,

a similar feeling which nevertheless had its ups-and-downs.

Since [Micheroux] was a little frightened of me, he made me the hero of two or three scandalous stories whose credit I *wore out* by taking no notice of them. After six or eight months I imagine Mme Pasta said to herself: 'But that doesn't make sense!'

Yet something still remains: after six or eight years these scandalous stories have meant that our friendship has become extremely placid. I never felt a moment's anger against [Micheroux]. After Francesco's so eminently regal behaviour, he could say at that time, along with one of Voltaire's heroes (I don't know which):

'A noble poverty is all that I have left.'³

and I imagine that *la Guiditta*, as we called her in Italian, lent him several small sums to blunt the sharpest edges of this poverty.

I was no great wit then but was nevertheless the object of some jealousy. M. de Perrey,⁴ the spy in M. de Tracy's group, knew about my close friendship with Mme Pasta; those kind of people know everything through their friends in the same line. He made it seem as odious as possible to the ladies in the rue d'Anjou. The most virtuous women, whose minds are at the farthest removed from the idea of any liaison, don't forgive the idea of one with an actress. This had already happened to me in Marseilles in 1805; but at that time, Mme Seraphie T. was right not to want to see me every evening when she learnt of my liaison with Mlle Louason (such a lively minded woman—now Mme de Barkoff.)

In the rue d'Anjou, which represented basically the most respectable kind of company with which I was

associated, not even old M. de Tracy, the philosopher, forgave me for my liaison with an actress.

I'm impetuous, passionate, unpredictable, excessively devoted in friendship and love until the first signs of coolness. Then, from the madness of a sixteen year old I move, in a twinkling, to the Machiavellianism of a man of fifty and, after a week, there's nothing left but *melting ice*, a perfect coolness. (This has just happened to me again in the last few days 'with Lady' Angelica, May 1832).

I was going to give all the friendship my heart possessed to the company in the Tracy household when I noticed there was a hoar frost in the air. From 1821 to 1830, my conduct there was no longer anything but cool and Machiavellian, that's to say perfectly circumspect. I still see the broken stalks of several friendships which were about to spring up in the rue d'Anjou. The splendid Countess Tracy, whom I bitterly blame myself for not having loved more, didn't treat me with the same fine shade of coolness. However when I came back from England for her sake, with an open heart and a need to be her sincere friend, the fact that I resolved to be cool and calculating with the rest of the *salon*, made me alter my behaviour towards her also.

In Italy I adored opera. Incomparably the most pleasant moments of my life have been spent in theatres. By being happy at La Scala (the theatre in Milan), I'd become a sort of connoisseur.

When I was ten, my father, who'd all the prejudices of his religion and of the aristocracy, vehemently prevented me studying music. At sixteen I learnt first to play the violin, then to sing, then to play the clarinet. Only with the last did I manage to produce sounds that pleased me. My master, a kind, good-looking German

called Hermann, made me play moving cantilenas. Who knows? Perhaps he had known Mozart? This was in 1797 and Mozart had just died.

But this great name wasn't revealed to me then. A great passion for mathematics swept me off my feet; for two years, I thought of nothing else. I left for Paris, where I arrived the day after the 18th of Brumaire (10 November 1799).

Since then, when I have wanted to study music, I've known it was too late by the fact that my passion grew less as I acquired a little knowledge. I was horrified by the sounds I made, unlike so many fourth-rate performers who owe their modicum of talent—which people living in the country nevertheless find it pleasant to be able to call on in the evening—solely to the fearlessness with which, in the morning, they offend their own ears. But they don't offend them, because . . . This line of reasoning is endless.

Anyway, I've adored music and it has brought me the greatest happiness, in Germany from 1806 to 1810 and in Italy from 1814 to 1821. In Italy I was able to discuss music with old Mayer and young Pacini, with composers. Performers, the Marquis Carafa, Viscontini of Milan, thought on the contrary that I had no common sense. It's the same today if I talk politics with a sub-prefect.

A thing which astonished Count Daru, a real man of letters from top to toe, worthy of the mental torpor that characterised the Academy of Inscriptions in 1828, was that I could write a page which could please anybody. One day he bought from Delaunay, who told me about it, a little work of mine which was selling at 40 francs because the edition was out of print. According to the bookseller, his astonishment was desperately comic.

—What, 40 francs!

—Yes, Count, and as a special favour. You'd please the trade if you didn't take it at that price.

—Is it possible! said the academician, raising his eyes to Heaven; that child! He's an ignoramus!

He was perfectly sincere. People in the antipodes, looking at the moon when it's only a slender crescent for us, say: How splendidly bright it is! The moon is almost full! Count Daru, a member of the French Academy, honorary member of the Academy of Sciences etc., etc., and I, look at the human heart, nature, etc., from opposite sides.

[Micheroux], whose attractive room was near mine, on the second floor of the Hotel des Lillois, was in admiration of the fact that people existed who could listen to me when I talked about music. He didn't recover from his surprise when he learnt that it was I who'd written a pamphlet on Haydn. He quite approved of the book, though he used to say it was too metaphysical; but that I could have written it, that I was the author, incapable as I was of playing a diminished seventh on the piano—this was what made him open his eyes in astonishment. And his eyes were very attractive, when they happened to have some expression.

I found that this astonishment, which I've just described a trifle lengthily, was shared to a greater or lesser extent by all the people I spoke to until the time (1827) when I put my mind to being witty.

I'm like a respectable woman turned courtesan, at every moment I need to overcome the modesty of a decent man who hates to talk about himself. Yet this book is nothing but that. I didn't foresee this accident; perhaps it will make me give the whole thing up. I fore-

saw no difficulty other than that of having sufficient courage to tell the truth about everything. That's the least one can do.

I tend to lack details about these distant times: I'll become less laconic and even verbose as I approach the time between 1826 and 1830. Then, my misfortunes forced me to be lively; I remember everything as if it were yesterday.

Because of an unfortunate disposition, which has meant that I've been taken for a liar, an eccentric and above all an unpatriotic Frenchman, it's very difficult for me to enjoy singing in a French theatre.

My major preoccupation like that of all my friends in 1821, was none the less the *Opéra-Bouffe*.

Mme Pasta performed there *Tancred*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*⁵ . . . in a way which has not only never been equalled but had certainly never been foreseen by the composers of those operas.

Talma, who will perhaps be ranked so high by posterity, had a feeling for tragedy but was so stupid that he succumbed to the most ridiculous affectations. I suspect that, apart from his total mental sluggishness, he also had the servility indispensable for a first success and which, to my great sorrow, I even recognised in the admirable and agreeable Béranger.

Talma, then, was horribly servile, mean, crawling, sycophantic, etc., and perhaps something more, towards Mme de Staël who, so continually and stupidly pre-occupied by her ugliness (if such a word as stupid can be written about that admirable woman), needed to be reassured in ways which were palpable and perpetually recurrent.

Mme de Staël, who, like one of her lovers—Talleyrand, had a masterly sense of *how to succeed in Paris*, realised

that she would have everything to gain in setting her seal of approval on Talma's success, which was beginning to be widespread and sufficiently durable to lose the hardly respectable appearance of a *fashion*.

Talma's success was initially the result of boldness: he had the courage to innovate, the only kind of courage which it is surprising to find in France. He was original in Voltaire's *Brutus* and soon after in M. de Chénier's poor, inflated *Charles IX*.

An old and very bad actor I knew, the boring Naudet, a Royalist, was so shocked by young Talma's originality that he challenged him to a duel several times. I don't in fact know where Talma got the idea or courage to innovate; when I knew him he was far from being up to it.

In spite of his loud, artificial voice and the almost equally tiresome affectation of his wrists, which he held as if they were dislocated, the French person capable of being moved by the fine tragic feelings in the third act of Ducis's adaptation of *Hamlet* or the beautiful scenes in the last act of *Andromaque* had no option but to go and see Talma.

He had, to an astonishing extent, a feeling for tragedy. If this had been associated with a straightforward character and the courage to ask for advice, he could have gone very far, have been, for example, as sublime as Monvel was as Augustus (in *Cinna*). I am speaking here entirely of things that I saw and saw properly, or at least at very close quarters, since I was a passionate lover of the *Théâtre Français*.

Fortunately for Talma, before a gifted writer with a regular reading public (the abbé Geoffrey) amused himself by trying to destroy his reputation, it had been one of Mme de Staël's conventions to praise him to the skies.

This eloquent woman took it upon herself to teach fools the terms in which they had to speak of Talma. Needless to say, there was no lack of bombast. Talma's name became European.

The French, a race of sheep, became increasingly blind to his abominable affectations. I am not sheep-like, which means that I am a nobody.

No actor will ever equal Talma in the representation of a vague melancholy, induced by Fate, as in Oedipus. As Manlius, he was properly Roman: 'Take it and read,' and: 'Knowest thou the hand of Rutilius?' were superb.⁶ That was because they didn't allow the introduction of the abominable sing-song of the alexandrine. How bold I needed to be to think that in 1805? I almost tremble to write such blasphemies today (1832) when the two idols have fallen. Yet, in 1805, I foresaw 1832, and my success astonishes me and 'leaves me stupefied' (*Cinna*).

Will I have the same success with the *ti . . .*?

When I watched Talma, his continual sing-song, his loud voice, his trembling wrists and affected way of walking prevented me from having five consecutive minutes of pure pleasure. I was continually forced to make a choice—an unpleasant activity for the imagination, or rather, in that case, imagination is destroyed by mental activity. The only perfect thing about Talma was his *abstracted look*. I shall come back to this crucial quality when dealing with Raphael's Madonnas and Mlle Virginie de La Fayette (Mme Adolphe Perier), who had this kind of beauty to a superior degree, a fact which made her grandmother, Countess Tracy, very proud.

I found the tragic style which suited me in Kean and adored it. What I saw and felt satisfied me completely. I still see there, in front of me, his *Richard III* and *Othello*.

The gift for tragedy in a woman moves me most; I've

only ever found it in Mme Pasta; and in her it was pure, perfect, without alloy. At home she was silent and impassive. For two hours in the evening she was . . . When she got home, she'd spend two hours on her sofa crying from nervous exhaustion.

Yet this gift was associated with a talent for singing. The ear brought to fruition feelings first stimulated through the eyes. Mme Pasta would remain for a long time—two or three seconds for example—in the same pose. Did this facilitate things or was it one more obstacle she had to overcome? I've often pondered over that. I tend to think that the business of having to stay for a long time in the same position neither facilitates things nor creates new difficulties. The difficulty for Mme Pasta's innermost being was still to concentrate on singing well.

[Micheroux], Lussinge, Di Fiori, Sutton Sharpe and several others were united in their admiration for *la gran donna* and we had a perpetual subject for discussion in the way she played Romeo in the last performance and in the foolish things which had been said on that occasion by French men of letters—poor folk obliged to have an opinion on a thing so antipathetic to the French character as *music*.

The abbé Geoffrey, by far the wittiest and most knowledgeable of the journalists, made no bones about calling Mozart's work a cacophonous disturbance of the peace; he was sincere and only appreciated Grétry and Monsigny, whom he'd *learnt* to like.

I hope the reader will be kind enough to pay close attention to my last phrase. It's the history of music in France.

The idiocies for which the great herd of writers, so inferior to M. Geoffrey as journalists, were responsible

in 1822 can be imagined. They say the articles of this witty school teacher have been collected and that the collection is dull. As extempore performances, twice a week, they were heavenly, and a thousand times superior to the heavy articles of a M. Hoffman or a M. Feletz which, collected, perhaps show to greater advantage than Geoffrey's delightful pieces. At that period, I used to eat a lunch of delicious broiled kidneys at the café Hardy, which was in fashion. Well; on the day there wasn't a piece by Geoffrey in the paper I'd lunch badly.

He wrote them whilst listening to his pupils at the boarding school, where he was a teacher, read out their Latin proses. One day, when he was taking his pupils into a café near the Bastille for some beer, they were delighted to come across a newspaper which informed them what their teacher was up to when they saw him, as they often did, writing away with his nose glued to the paper, because of his extreme short-sightedness.

It's to short-sightedness also that Talma owed his beautiful abstracted look which suggests so much inner feeling (like a half concentration on the inner self as soon as something interesting doesn't compel him to attend to outside things).

I find there's one drawback to Mme Pasta's talent. She had no great difficulty in interpreting noble characters realistically since she was one herself.

For example, she was mean, or if you like, she had reason to be careful since her husband was extravagant. Well, in one month alone she's had distributed 200 francs amongst poor Italian refugees. And some of them weren't pretty sights, were just the types to discourage charity—M. Gianonni, the poet from Modena for example. May Heaven forgive him! What a look he had!

M. di Fiori, who's the spitting image of Jupiter Man-

suetus and was condemned to death at twenty-three in Naples in 1799, took upon himself the judicious distribution of Mme Pasta's aid. He alone was in the secret and told it me a long time afterwards in confidence. The Queen of France has had recorded in today's paper a gift of 70 francs to an old lady (June 1832)!

CHAPTER VIII

APART from the indecency involved in continually talking about oneself, this work has another drawback; how many daring remarks which I can't make without trembling will be miserable commonplaces ten years after my death, if only the Heavens are reasonable and let me live till I'm eighty or ninety!

On the other hand, it's enjoyable to talk about General Foy, Mme Pasta, Lord Byron, Napoleon, etc., all these great, or at least very distinguished people, whom it has been my good fortune to know and who have condescended to talk with me!

But if the reader is envious, like my contemporaries, let him console himself with the thought that few of the great men I've loved so much have divined my true character. I even think that they found me more boring than the next man: perhaps they only saw in me an *extravagant sentimentalist*.

It's true that there's nothing worse. It's only since I became a wit that I've been appreciated, and far beyond my deserts. General Foy, Mme Pasta, Mme de Tracy, Canova didn't *divine* in me (I've got this stupid word *divine* on the brain) a soul full of rare generosity—I have the appropriate bump on my head (Gall's system)¹—and a fiery mind, capable of understanding them.

One of the men who didn't understand me and who is perhaps, all things considered, the one I loved above any other (he fulfilled my ideal, as some pompous idiot or other has said) is Andréa Corner from Venice, the former aide-de-camp to Prince Eugene in Milan.

In 1811 I was the intimate friend of Count Widmann, captain of the company of Guards in Venice (I was his mistress's lover). I saw the charming Widmann again in Moscow where he asked me, quite straightforwardly, to make him a senator of the kingdom of Italy. I was then believed to be the favourite of my cousin, Count Daru, who has never liked me, quite the contrary. In 1811 Widmann introduced me to Corner who, for me, was strikingly like one of Paul Veronese's beautiful figures.

It's said that Count Corner has run through five millions. He has bursts of the rarest generosity, of a kind at the opposite extreme from the character of a man in French society. As for his courage, he's received two Crosses from the hand of Napoleon himself (the Iron Cross and the Legion of Honour).

It's he who said so naïvely at four o'clock on the afternoon of the Battle of the Moskva (7 September 1812): 'Is this damn battle never going to finish!' Widmann, or Migliorini, told me about it the next day.

None of the brave but affected Frenchmen I knew in the army then, General Caulaincourt for example, General Montbrun, etc., would have dared to say such a thing, not even the Duke of Frioul (Michel Duroc). And yet his character had a very rare quality of spontaneity: but in this, as in the ability to amuse others, he was well below Andréa Corner.

This charming man was then in Paris, without any money and beginning to go bald. At thirty-eight, the age when, if one is disillusioned, boredom begins to appear on the horizon, he had nothing. Sometimes in the evening therefore, and this is the only failing I've ever noted in him, he would stroll about alone in the gloom of the Palais Royal gardens, slightly drunk. This is how all unhappy men of mark finish up: deposed princes, M.

Pitt seeing Napoleon's success and learning of the Battle of Austerlitz . . .

Lussinge was the most prudent man I've known and since he wanted to make sure he'd a walking companion every morning, he had the greatest repugnance for introducing me to other people.

He nevertheless took me to visit M. de Maisonnette, one of the most unusual people I've seen in Paris. He was dark complexioned, thin, very small like a Spaniard, with the same lively eyes and easily roused courage.

That he could write in an evening before going to dinner, on a brief hint sent to him by the minister at 6 p.m., thirty elegant and verbose pages proving a political theory, is what he has in common with the——, the Vitets, the Léon Pillets, the Saint-Marc-Girardins and other writers paid by the government. What is curious and incredible is that Maisonnette believes what he writes. He has been in love—sufficiently so to sacrifice his life—first with M. Decazes, then with M. de Villèle, and then, I think, with M. de Martignac. At least the latter was a likeable person.

I've tried to understand Maisonnette many times. I thought I noticed a total absence of logic and sometimes a capitulation of the conscience, a stifling at birth of an infant remorse. All that based on the great axiom: I must earn my living somehow.

Maisonnette has no idea of a citizen's duties; he considers them as I do the relations between men and angels, so firmly believed in by M. Frédéric Ancillon, now Foreign Minister in Berlin (I knew him well in 1806 and 1807). Maisonnette is as devoid of a sense of a citizen's duties as Dominique is of religion.² If sometimes, from writing the words 'honour' and 'loyalty' so often, he

suffers a little remorse, he makes peace with himself in his conscience by his chivalrous devotion to his friends. If I'd wanted, after having found him boring and neglecting him for six months, I could have made him get up at five in the morning to go canvassing for a job for me. He would have gone to the North Pole to search out and fight a man who'd cast doubts on his honour as a society gentleman.

Never losing his way amidst utopian plans for public well-being, he had a wise head on his shoulders and was admirable in his grasp of detail. One evening Lussinge, Gazul and I were talking about M. de Jouy, the author then in fashion, the so-called successor to Voltaire; he got up and went to look in one of his bulky files for the original letter in which M. de Jouy asked the Bourbons for the Cross of St. Louis.

It didn't take him two minutes to find this document which contrasted in such a comic manner with the fierce virtue of M. de Jouy's liberalism.

Maisonnette didn't have the profound and cowardly knavery, the perfect Jesuitism of the editors of the *Journal des Débats*. On the *Débats*, they were therefore scandalised by the 15,000 or 20,000 francs M. de Villèle, a true realist, gave to Maisonnette.

The people from the rue des Prêtres considered him a ninny, yet his emoluments were as effective in stopping them sleeping as the laurels of Miltiades.³

When we had admired the letter of Adjutant-General de Jouy, Maisonnette said:

It's strange that the two principal figures of today's literature and liberalism are both called Etienne.⁴

M. de Jouy was born at Jouy in a family called Etienne. Blessed with that French effrontery which the

poor Germans can't imagine, little Etienne left Jouy, near Versailles, at fourteen, to go to India. There he called himself Etienne de Jouy, E. de Jouy and finally, quite simply, de Jouy. It is true he became a captain and later a French official (I think) made him a colonel. Although he was courageous, he hardly saw active service, if at all. He was a very attractive man.

One day in India he and two or three friends entered a temple to escape the frightful heat. They came across a priestess, a kind of vestal virgin. M. de Jouy thought it amusing to make her unfaithful to Brahma on the altar of her god itself.

The Indians noticed what was happening, came rushing in armed, cut off the hands and then the head of the vestal and hacked in two the officer who was the colleague of the author of *Sylla*. But he, after the death of his friend, was able to mount a horse and gallops to this present day.

Before M. de Jouy applied his talents for intrigue to literature, he was general-secretary at the Prefecture in Brussels around 1810. There, I think, he was the lover of the Prefect's wife and the factotum of the Prefect, M. de Pontécoulant, a man of real ability. Between them, M. de Jouy and he put an end to begging—which is rife everywhere but more especially in Belgium, an eminently Catholic country.

When the great man fell, M. de Jouy asked for the Cross of St. Louis; since the imbeciles who were in charge refused it him, he began making fun of them in his writings and did them more harm than all the writers on the *Débats*, who were so liberally paid, did them good. See the fury of the *Débats* against the *Minerva* in 1820.

With his *Hermit of the Chaussée d'Antin*, a book so well adapted to the middle-class spirit in France and the

stupid curiosity of the Germans, M. de Jouy found himself and *believed himself*, for five or six years, the successor to Voltaire, whose bust he consequently kept in the garden of his house.

Since 1829 the Romantic writers, who haven't as much talent as M. de Jouy even, have made him seem the Cotin⁵ of the period (see Boileau), and because his fame in his maturity was exaggerated he is unhappy (*amaregito*)⁶ in his old age.

When I returned to Paris in 1821, he was sharing the literary dictatorship with another but much coarser fool, M. A.-V. Arnault, of the Institute, Mme Brac's lover. I saw a lot of this man at the house of Mme Cuvier, his mistress's sister. He had the talent of a drunken navvy. Yet he wrote these pretty lines:

Où vas-tu, feuille de chêne?
—Je vais où le vent me mène.⁷

He wrote them the night before he went into exile. Personal misfortune had given some life to his corky soul. When I used to meet him at the house of Count Daru, whom he welcomed to the French Academy, he was extremely abject and sycophantic. M. de Jouy was much pleasanter and sold the remains of his masculine beauty to Mme Davillier, the oldest and most boring of the coquettes at that time. She was, or still is, much more ridiculous than Countess Baraguey-d'Hilliers who, at that period, at the tender age of fifty-seven, used to recruit her lovers amongst the intelligentsia. I don't know whether it's because of this that I was forced to flee from her at Mme Dubignon's. She chose that block-head Masson (the Master of Petitions)⁸ and when one of my women friends said to her: 'What! Such an ugly person!' she replied, 'I chose him for his intelligence.'

The joke is that Masson, M. Beugnot's miserable secretary, is as intelligent as he's good-looking. And yet you can't deny him a certain social sense, the art of getting on by being patient and pocketing insults, and what's more, knowledge, not of finance but of the art of following the financial operations of the State. Simpletons confuse the two things. When I was looking at Mme d'Hilliers' arms, which were still splendid, she said to me:

—I'll teach you the way your talents can make your fortune. Alone, you'll come to grief.

I wasn't bright enough to understand what she meant. I often looked at this old countess because she wore charming dresses, designed by Victorine. I'm wildly fond of well made dresses; for me, they're voluptuous. In the past, it was Mme N. C. D. who developed this taste in me, associated as it was with delightful memories of Cideville.

It was, I think, from Mme Baraguey-d'Hilliers that I learnt that the author of a delightful song I adored and had in my pocket, wrote little verse pieces for the birthdays of those two old monkeys: MM. de Jouy and Arnault, and the frightful Mme Davillier. That's the kind of thing I've never written, but then I didn't write *The King of Yvetot*, *The Senator* or *The Grandmother* either.

M. de Béranger, content to have acquired the title of a great poet (which he nevertheless thoroughly deserved) by flattering those two little apes, has scorned to flatter Louis-Philippe's government to which so many liberals have sold themselves.

CHAPTER IX

BUT I must get back to the little garden of Maisonnette's house in the rue Caumartin. There, every evening in summer, we'd find good bottles of fresh beer, poured out for us by a tall, beautiful woman, Mme Romance, the estranged wife of a dishonest printer and the mistress of M. de Maisonnette who'd bought her from the said husband for 2,000 or 3,000 francs.

Lussinge and I went there often. In the evening, on the boulevard, we used to meet M. de Darbelles, a man six feet tall who'd been our friend from childhood and was very boring. He'd talk to us about Court de Gebelin¹ and wanted to get on in the sciences. He's been more fortunate in other fields since he's now a Minister. He used to go to see his mother in the rue Caumartin; to get rid of him, we'd go to Maisonnette's.

That particular summer I was once again beginning to take a little interest in the things of this world. I managed not to think of Milan for five or six hours in succession, although waking up in the morning remained a bitter experience. Sometimes I stayed in bed until midday, bitterly brooding over my misfortunes. Then I'd listen to Maisonnette's description of the way *power*—the only reality—was distributed in Paris at that time (in 1821).

When I arrive in a town I always ask:

1. Who are the twelve prettiest women?
2. Who are the twelve richest men?
3. Which man could have me hanged?

Maisonnette answered my questions quite well. What

astonished me was that he was sincere in his love for the word *King*.

—What a word for a Frenchman! he used to say enthusiastically, raising his little, dark wild eyes to the sky, what a word is this word *King*!

Maisonnette was a teacher of rhetoric in 1811; on the day of the King of Rome's birth² he acted on his own initiative and gave his pupils a holiday. In 1815 he wrote a pamphlet in favour of the Bourbons. M. Decazes read it, sent for him, and made him a political journalist at 8,000 francs a year. Today Maisonnette is very useful to a prime minister: he's as accurate and reliable as a dictionary in his knowledge of all the little facts, all the secret background to political intrigue between 1815 and 1832.

I didn't realise he had this virtue: you have to question him to find out. All I noticed was his incredible way of reasoning.

I used to say to myself: which of us here is he making fun of? Is it me? But what would be the use of that? Is it Lussinge? Is it that poor young man in the grey frock-coat who has a turned-up nose and is so ugly? This young man had something bare-faced and extremely unpleasant about him. His small and expressionless eyes always had the same, nasty, look.

Such was my first impression of the best of my present friends. I'm not too sure of his heart but I'm certain of his abilities. This is Count Gazul who is so well known today and one of whose letters (received last week) made me happy for two days.* He must have been eighteen

* 'Made' fourteen pages on 2 July from five to seven. I couldn't have worked like this on an imaginative work like *The Scarlet and the Black*.

then, having been born, I think, in 1804. Like Buffon, I'm quite ready to believe we get a lot from our mothers, all joking about the uncertainties of fatherhood apart, uncertainties which are very rare in the case of a first child.

This theory seems to me confirmed by Count Gazul. His mother has a very lively mind in the French manner and she argues exceptionally well. Like her son, she seems to me capable of having tender feelings once a year. I'm aware of a certain *dryness* in several of M. Gazul's works, but I'm relying on the future.

At the time of the pretty little garden in the rue Caumartin, Gazul was studying rhetoric under the most abominable teacher. It's very surprising to find the word *abominable* coupled with the name of Maisonnette, the best of creatures. But such was his taste in the arts: he prized the false, the showy, the cheap and vulgar above all.

He'd been a pupil of M. Luce de Lancival whom I met in my early youth at M. de Maisonneuve's, the Maisonneuve who didn't publish his tragedies, although they had '*met with success*' on the stage . . . This man had the decency to do me a great service and say I would have a distinguished mind.

You mean he'll be distinguished for his *conceit*, laughed Martial Daru, who thought me almost stupid. But I forgave *him* everything since he took me to Clotilde's (then the principal dancer at the Opera). Sometimes, what days they were for me! I'd find myself in her dressing-room at the Opera and she'd dress and undress in front of me. What moments these were for a provincial!

Luce de Lancival had a wooden leg and a pleasant disposition; but he would have slipped a pun into a tragedy. I imagine that that's how Dorat³ must have

thought about the arts. I've found the right word: he was like one of Boucher's shepherds. Perhaps there will still be paintings by Boucher in the Louvre in 1860.

Maisonnette had been Luce's pupil and Gazul was a pupil of Maisonnette. In the same way Annibal Carrache was a pupil of the Flemish painter Calvart.

Apart from his passion, prodigious as it was sincere, for the minister in power, and his courage, Maisonnette had another quality which I like: he used to receive 22,000 francs from the minister to prove to the French that the Bourbons were adorable, and he ran through 30,000.

After having laboured to persuade the French for what was sometimes twelve hours in succession, Maisonnette would go to see a respectable working-class woman and offer her 500 francs. He was ugly and small but had so much Spanish fervour that after three visits these ladies would forget his unusual appearance and see only the sublimity of the 500 francs.

I must add something for the attention of all respectable and virtuous women, if ever the eye of such a person is caught by these pages. First, 500 francs in 1822 is the equivalent of 1,000 in 1872. Next, a charming seller of wax seals confessed to me that, before Maisonnette's 500 franc note, she'd never had a double napoleon of her own.

Rich people are very unjust and comic when they scornfully condemn all the sins and crimes committed for money. Look how frightfully abject they are and the dozen troublesome years they endure at court, all for a portfolio. Look at Duke Decazes's life, since his downfall in 1820, after the Louvel affair, until now.

There I was then in 1822, spending three evenings a week at the *Opéra-Bouffe* and one or two at Maisonnette's

in the rue Caumartin. Whenever I've been unhappy, the evening has been the difficult time of my day. On the days I went to the Opera, I was at Mme Pasta's from midnight to 2 a.m. with Lussinge, [Micheroux], Fiori, etc.

I almost had a duel with a very gay and courageous man who wanted me to introduce him to Mme Pasta. This was the charming Edward Edwards, an Englishman, the only member of his race who was accustomed to promoting gaiety, my travelling companion in England, and the man who in London wanted to fight a duel for me.

You won't have forgotten that he'd made me aware of a disgraceful mistake: not having paid sufficient attention to an offensive suggestion made by a loutish sea-captain in Calais.

I refused to introduce him. It was in the evening and already at that period poor Edward wasn't, at nine o'clock, the man he'd been in the morning.

—Do you realise, my dear B . . . , he said, that if I felt like it, I could consider myself insulted?

—Do you realise, my dear Edwards, that I am as proud as you are and that your bad temper leaves me cold, etc., etc.

This business reached an advanced stage. I shoot very well; I can hit nine clay pipes out of twelve. (M. Prosper Mérimée has seen this at the Luxembourg shooting-range.) Edwards shoots quite well too, perhaps a little less well.

In the end, this quarrel strengthened our friendship. I remember it because, with a thoughtlessness very typical of me, I asked him, the next day or the day after that at the very latest, to introduce me to his brother, the famous Dr Edwards who was talked about a lot in 1822.

It was said he killed a thousand frogs a month and was going to discover both how we breathe and a cure for the chest ailments of pretty women. You know that each year in Paris eleven hundred young women die from the cold they catch coming out of balls. I've seen the official figure.

Now the learned, wise, placid, industrious Dr Edwards held very little brief for the friends of his brother Edward. In the first place the Doctor had sixteen brothers and my friend was the most ne'er-do-well of them all. It was because of his over-ebullient manner and his passionate love for the worst jokes, which he didn't like to let slip once they'd occurred to him, that I hadn't wanted to take him to Mme Pasta's. He had a large head, beautiful drunkard's eyes and the prettiest blond hair I've seen. Without his damned mania for wanting to be as witty as a Frenchman, he would have been very agreeable; and it was entirely in his power to have the most striking success with women as I'll make clear when I talk about *Eugeny*. But she's still so young that perhaps it's wrong to talk about her in this chitchat that might be printed ten years after my death. If I say twenty years, *all life's nuances* will have changed and the reader will only be aware of the broad effects. But where on earth are the *broad effects* in these games my pen is playing? I must give some thought to this.

I believe that in order to get his own back magnanimously, because his character was magnanimous when it wasn't affected by the fifty glasses of hard liquor he'd drunk, Edwards worked hard to obtain permission to introduce me to the Doctor.

What I discovered was a little *salon*, excessively middle-class in character; a woman of the highest ability who talked about morality and whom I took for a

'Quakeress' and finally, in the Doctor, a man whose equally high ability lurked in a puny body which seemed to be losing the little life it held. You couldn't see properly in this *salon* (rue du Helver, number 12). I was coolly received.

What a damnable idea to get myself introduced! It was a sudden impulse, sheer madness. Basically, if I wanted something, it was to know mankind. Every month, perhaps, this idea re-emerged, but the tastes and passions, the hundred acts of madness which filled my life, needed to let the surface of the water grow still for its shape to appear. Then I'd say to myself: I'm not like —, or —, two conceited fops I knew. I don't choose my friends.

I accept whatever fate happens to place in my path.

This phrase was my pride and joy for ten years.

It took me three years of effort to overcome the repugnance and dread I inspired in Mme Edwards's *salon*. They took me for a Don Juan (see Mozart and Molière), for a monster of seduction and diabolical schemes. Certainly it wouldn't have cost me more to get them to put up with me in Mme de Talaru's *salon*, or in that of Mme de Duras, of Mme de Broglie, who admitted middle-class people quite readily, or of Mme Guizot whom I liked (I'm talking about Mlle Pauline de Meulan as was), or even in that of Mme Récamier.

But in 1822 I hadn't grasped the full importance of the reply to the following question about a man who has published a book that people read: What kind of man is he?

I was saved from being held in contempt by this reply: He goes a great deal to Mme de Tracy's. Members of society of the 1829 vintage have to despise a man whom they think, rightly or wrongly, has shown some talent in his

books. They're frightened, their judgement is no longer impartial. What would have happened had the reply been: He goes a great deal to Mme de Duras's (Mlle de Kersaint)'.

Well, even today, when I know the importance of these replies, precisely because of their importance, I'd desert a fashionable *salon*. (I have just deserted 'Lady Hoyle's'—1832.)⁴

I'd submit to anything on the spur of the moment; but if someone said to me the night before: tomorrow you must put up with this or that boring experience, my imagination makes a monster of it and I'd throw myself out of the window rather than let myself be taken to a boring *salon*.

At Mme Edwards's I met M. Strich, a sad, impassive and perfectly honourable Englishman, who was a victim of the aristocracy, being Irish and a lawyer, and who nevertheless defended, as a matter of honour, the prejudices sown and cultivated in English minds by the aristocracy.

I found this remarkable absurdity, associated with the highest rectitude and the most perfect refinement, in Mr Rogers also (in whose house, near Birmingham, I spent some time in August 1826). This kind of person is very common in England. As far as the ideas sown and cultivated in the interest of the aristocracy are concerned, it could be said that the English are almost as illogical as the Germans, which is no small matter.

The logic of the English, so admirable in finance and all that pertains to an art that yields money at the end of each week, becomes confused and at a loss as soon as the level of discussion is raised and slightly abstract subjects are introduced—ones which don't directly involve *making money*. They have become idiotic in their reasoning about serious literature by the same mechanism

which supplies the diplomatic service 'of the King of French'⁵ with idiots: the choice is made from a very small number of men. The kind of man fitted for discussing the genius of Shakespeare and Cervantes (great men who died on the same day, on 16 April 1616, I think) is perhaps a cotton merchant in Manchester. He'd reproach himself for wasting time if he opened a book not directly related to cotton and its export to Germany when it's spun, etc., etc.

In the same way the 'King of French' chooses his diplomats from young people of high birth and large fortune only. Talent must be sought where M. Thiers (who sold his in 1830) grew up. He is from the lower middle-class of Aix-en-Provence.

By the summer of 1822, more or less a year after leaving Milan, I thought only rarely of deliberately escaping from this world. My life was gradually filled up, not agreeably but at any rate with indifferent matters that came between me and the last happy experience which had been the object of my cult.

I had two extremely innocent pleasures:

1. To chat after breakfast while strolling with Lussinge or one of my acquaintances; I had eight or ten, all of them, as usual, formed by chance;
2. When it was hot to go and read the English papers in Galignani's garden.⁶

There I re-read with delight four or five novels by Walter Scott. The first, the one in which Henry Morton and Sergeant Boswell appear (*Old Mortality*, I think) recalled memories of Volterra still so very much alive for me. I'd often happened to open it, waiting for Mélite in Florence, in Molini's reading room on the Arno. I read it to remind me of 1818.

I had long arguments with Lussinge. I maintained that a good third of Sir Walter Scott's talent was attributable to a secretary who went to the country and roughed out for him descriptions of countryside on the spot. I found him then, as I find him now, weak in his depiction of passion, in knowledge of the human heart. Will posterity confirm the judgement of contemporaries who place the Tory baronet immediately after Shakespeare?

As for me, I'm repelled by the idea of his presence and have several times refused to see him, (in Paris through M. de Mirbel, in Naples and Rome in 1832).

Fox gave him a post worth 50,000 or 100,000 francs and, from there, he went on to calumniate Lord Byron, who profited from this lesson in the superior forms of hypocrisy: see the letter Lord Byron wrote to me in 1823.⁷

Have you ever seen, kind reader, a silkworm who has eaten his fill of mulberry leaves? The comparison isn't noble, but it is so accurate! No longer wanting to eat, this ugly creature has to climb upwards and construct its prison of silk.

Such are the creatures we call writers. For anyone who has tried his hand at the profound activity of writing, reading is a secondary pleasure only. Many times I've thought it was two, looked at my clock and found it was six-thirty. This is my only excuse for having used up so much paper.

As my moral health improved in the summer of 1822, I thought of publishing a book called *On Love*, written in pencil in Milan whilst I walked about and thought of Métilde.

I intended to rewrite it in Paris, still a very necessary task. But thinking at all deeply of these kinds of things made me too sad. It was like a violent knock on the

wound that had scarcely healed. I copied in ink what was already there in pencil.

My friend Edwards found me a publisher (M. Mongie) who gave me nothing for my manuscript and promised me half the profits, if ever there were any.

Nowadays, when I've accidentally acquired an official position, I receive letters from booksellers I don't know (June 1832—from M. Thierry, I think) who offer to pay cash for my manuscripts. I had no suspicion of all the goings-on in the lower reaches of literature; they repelled me and would have put me off writing—M. Hugo's intrigues for example (see the *Gazette des Tribunaux* for 1831, I think, for the action brought against the publishers Bossange, or Plassan), M. de Chateaubriand's manoeuvres, M. de Béranger's to-and-froing. Yet this last was justifiable. This great poet had a post worth 1,800 francs at the Ministry of the Interior which the Bourbons deprived him of.

'Re sciocchi, re. . . .'*

The stupidity of the Bourbons is there for all to see. If they hadn't meanly deprived a poor clerk of his job, because of a song which was far more amusing than malicious, a great poet wouldn't have cultivated his talents and become one of the most powerful agents of their downfall. He cast in a cheerful form the contempt of Frenchmen for that *decayed dynasty*. This is what they were called by the Queen of Spain who died at Rome and was the friend of the Prince of Peace.⁹

I accidentally got to know this Court circle but to write anything apart from the analysis of the human heart bores me. If it had been my lot to have a secretary, I'd have been another kind of writer.

* Three lines by Monti.⁸

—We have quite enough of those, says the devil's advocate.

This old Queen had brought from Spain to Rome an old confessor, who kept the daughter-in-law of the French Academy's cook. This Spaniard who was very old and still a gay spark had the imprudence to say (I can't give all the comic details here, the actors are still living), anyway to say that Ferdinand VII was the son of a certain other person not Charles IV; this was one of the old Queen's greatest sins. After her death, a spy learnt of the priest's remark. Ferdinand had him kidnapped in Rome and yet, instead of having him poisoned, a counter plot which I'm ignorant of has had the old man deported to North Africa.

Dare I mention the illness which this old Queen, who was full of common sense, suffered from? (I found out in Rome in 1817 or 1824.) The results of a series of affairs were so badly treated that she couldn't fall down without breaking a bone. The poor woman, being a queen, was ashamed of these frequent accidents and didn't dare to get proper treatment. I discovered the same kind of misfortune at Napoleon's Court in 1811. I knew well, alas! the splendid Dr. Cuillerier (the uncle or the father, in short the *old* man—the young one strikes me as a fop). I took three ladies to see him, two of whom I blindfolded (number 26, rue de l'Odéon).

He told me two days later that they were feverish (as a result of shame not of any illness). This perfect gentleman never raised his eyes to look at them.

To be rid of a monster like Ferdinand VII is a piece of luck for the whole Bourbon family. The Duke Laval, who is a perfect gentleman but an aristocrat and a duke (two ways of being mentally ill) considered himself

honoured when he told me about Ferdinand VII's friendship for him. And yet for three years he was ambassador at his Court.

I am reminded of Louis XVI's profound hatred of Franklin. This prince discovered a truly Bourbonic way of getting his own back: he had the venerable old man's face painted on the bottom of a porcelain chamber pot.

Mme Campan told us that at Mme Cardon's (in the rue de Lille at the corner of the rue Bellechasse), after the eighteenth of Brumaire. Her memoirs used to be read at Mme Cardon's at that time and were very different from the tearful rhapsody which the most distinguished young women of the Faubourg St. Honoré found touching (that they did so made me disillusioned with one of them—for what that's worth—around 1827).¹⁰

CHAPTER X

THERE I was then with an occupation during the summer of 1822: correcting the proofs of *On Love* printed in duodecimo on poor paper. M. Mongie indignantly swore he had been deceived about the quality of the paper. I wasn't familiar with the book trade in 1822. I'd only ever dealt with M. Firmin Didot and I paid him for all the paper used at the rate he set. M. Mongie gloated over my imbecility.

—Ah! He's not a wily one! he'd say, tickled to death and comparing me with the Ancelots, the Vitets, the . . . and other professional writers.

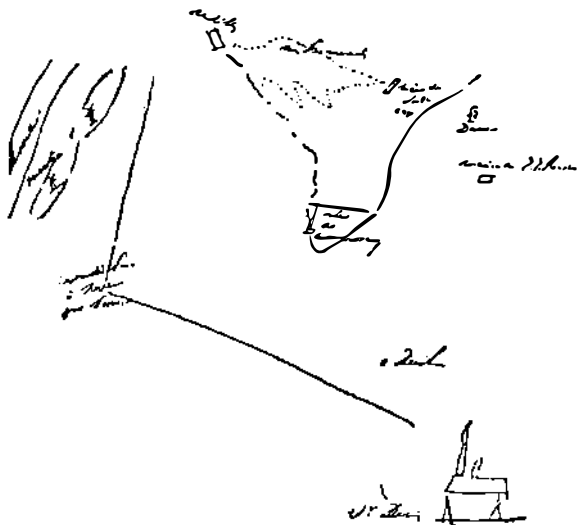
Well, I subsequently discovered that M. Mongie was by far the most gentlemanly of the publishers. What shall I say of my friend M. Sautelet, the young lawyer, my friend before he became a publisher?

But the poor devil was distressed enough to kill himself when a rich widow called Mme Bonnet or Bourdet, or some other name similarly aristocratic, left him for a young French peer (a title that was beginning to have a very attractive ring in 1828). The fortunate peer was, I think, M. Pérignon who had been the lover of my friend, Mme Vigano, the daughter of the great Vigano (in 1820, I think).¹

It was very dangerous for me to correct the proofs of a book that recalled so many of the fine shades of feeling I'd experienced in Italy. I was weak enough to take a room in Montmorency. In the evening I'd make the two-hour journey there in the coach that left from the

rue St. Denis. In the middle of the woods, especially on the left of the sandpit as you climb up, I used to correct my proofs. I nearly went mad.

My crazy schemes for returning to Milan, which I'd so often rejected, came back with surprising force. I don't know how I managed to resist them. The kind of intensity of passionate feeling which makes you concentrate on one thing only, deprives me of all recollection at the distance I now am from those events. The only distinct memory I have is of the shape of the trees in that part of the woods at Montmorency.



What people call the valley of Montmorency is no more than a promontory that projects towards the Seine valley in a direct line with the dome of the *Invalides*.

When Lanfranco painted a cupola which was 150 feet high, he exaggerated certain features. *L'aria dipinge* (the atmosphere does the painting for you), he used to say.

Similarly, as people will be much less deceived by 'Kings', noblemen and priests around 1870 than they are now, I'm tempted to exaggerate certain features of this vermin of the human race. But I resist, it would be a case of *infidelity to the truth*,

'False to his bed' (*Cymbeline*).

If only I had a secretary to whom I could dictate facts, anecdotes and not arguments about these three sets of people. But having written twenty-seven pages today, I'm too tired to relate in detail the reliable anecdotes which I can vouch for and which flood into my mind.

Quite often, I'd go to correct the proofs of *On Love* in Mme Doligny's park at Corbeil. There I could avoid melancholy brooding; I'd go to her *salon* almost as soon as my work was finished.

I was very near to finding happiness in 1824. When I used to think of France during the six or seven years I spent in Milan, with high hopes of never seeing again a Paris soiled by the Bourbons, nor a France either, I'd say to myself: there is only one woman who could make me forgive that country—Countess Fanny Bertois. In 1824 I was in love with her. We had been in each other's minds ever since I'd seen her in 1814, on the day after the Battle of Montmirail or Champaubert, coming bare-footed at six in the morning into her mother's room (the Marquise de N.) to ask how things had gone.²

Well, Mme Bertois was in the country, staying with her friend Mme Doligny. When I finally decided to parade my sullenness at Mme Doligny's she said:

—Mme Bertois has been waiting for you. She left me the day before yesterday only, because of something frightful: she has just lost one of her charming daughters.

In the mouth of a woman as sensible as Mme Doligny these words were of great significance. In 1814 she'd said to me: Mme Bertois has a proper sense of your worth.

In 1823 or 1822 Mme Bertois was kind enough to be slightly in love with me. One day Mme Doligny said to her: You have your eye on Beyle; if he were taller and less stocky, he would have said he loved you a long time ago.

That wasn't so. My melancholy made me look with pleasure at Mme Bertois' beautiful eyes. I was stupid enough not to go further. I didn't ask myself: why is this young woman looking at me? I quite forgot the excellent lessons in love-making I'd formerly received from my Uncle Gagnon and my friend and patron, Martial Daru.

My Uncle Gagnon, born in Grenoble around 1765, was a truly charming man. His conversation which for men was like a polished, grandiloquent novel, was delightful for women. He was always agreeable and refined, full of those phrases which can mean everything, if one chooses to understand them properly. He was quite free of that gaiety which frightens people and which has fallen to my lot. It was difficult to be more attractive and less judicious than my Uncle Gagnon. As a result he didn't make much progress in his dealings with men. The young people envied without being able to imitate him. *Mature* folk, as they say in Grenoble, thought he was frivolous. This word was enough to destroy a reputation. Although my uncle was an extremely fervent Royalist, like all my family in 1815, and had even emigrated around 1792, he was never able, under Louis XVIII, to be a counsellor at the Royal Court of Grenoble; and this at a time when that Court was filled with scoundrels like the lawyer Faure, etc., etc., who boasted that they'd never even

read the abominable Civil Code which resulted from the Revolution. On the other hand, my uncle had affairs with precisely all the pretty women who, around 1788, made Grenoble one of the most agreeable of the provincial towns. The celebrated Laclos, whom I met when he was an old artillery general in the general staff's box in Milan, and to whom I paid court because of the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, was moved when I told him I came from Grenoble.

My uncle then, when he saw me leaving for the Polytechnic School in November 1799, took me aside to give me two louis. I refused them which no doubt pleased him since he always maintained two or three flats in town and hadn't much money. After this, adopting the paternal air which moved me because he had wonderful eyes, the kind of big eyes which squint a little at the least emotion:

—My boy, he said, you think you're very intelligent and you are filled with insufferable pride because of your successes in mathematics, but all that is nothing. One only gets on in the world through women. Now, you are ugly but that will never be brought up against you because you have an expressive face. Your mistresses will leave you, but remember this: whenever one is left in the lurch nothing is easier than to become a target for ridicule. After which a man is good for nothing in the eyes of the other women in the region. Within twenty-four hours of being abandoned, make a declaration of love to a woman; if you can't do better, declare your love for a chambermaid.

Whereupon he kissed me and I climbed into the Lyon mail coach. What a good thing it would have been had I remembered the advice of this great tactician! The

triumphs I've failed to achieve and the humiliation I've had to endure! But if I had been clever, I'd be sick to death of women and consequently of music and painting like my two contemporaries, MM. de la Rosière and Perrochin. They are dried-up, sick of the world, philosophical. Instead of that, in anything involving women, I am fortunate enough to be as easily deceived as I was at twenty-five.

Which means I will never blow my brains out because I am sick of everything, bored with life. In the literary field, I still see a mass of things to do. I've enough work in view to occupy ten lives. My difficulty at the present moment (1832) is to get used to not being distracted from them by having to cash bills for 20,000 francs through the chief cashier at the Treasury in Paris.

CHAPTER XI

I don't know who took me to M. de L'Etang's. I think he'd persuaded my publishers to give him a copy of the *History of Painting in Italy* on the pretext of wanting to review it for the *Lycée*, one of those ephemeral periodicals which the success of the *Edinburgh Review* gave rise to in Paris. He wanted to meet me.

In England, the aristocracy despises literature. In Paris it's too important a matter. It's impossible for Frenchmen living in Paris to speak truthfully about the works of other Frenchmen living in Paris. I made eight or ten mortal enemies for having said to the *Globe's* contributors, as a piece of advice amongst ourselves, that the *Globe's* tone was a little too puritanical, that it could perhaps be a little more lively.

A literary periodical as conscientious as the *Edinburgh Review* was, would only be possible if it were printed in Geneva and run there by a man with a business mind who was capable of keeping a secret. The editor would make a trip to Paris every year, and have sent to him in Geneva the articles for each month's number. He would do the choosing, pay well (200 francs a sheet) and never name his contributors.

I was taken then, to M. de l'Etang's on Sunday at two o'clock. It was at this inconvenient hour that he was at home. You had to climb ninety-five stairs because he presided over his academy on the sixth floor of a house belonging to himself and his sisters, in the rue Gaillon. From his little window you could see only a forest of chimneys in blackish plaster. For me this is one of the

ugliest of views, but the four little rooms M. de l'Etang lived in were decorated with prints and artistic ornaments that were curious and agreeable.

He had a marvellous portrait of Cardinal Richelieu which I often used to look at. Next to this was the fat, heavy, unwieldy, inane face of Racine. It was before he got so fat that this great poet experienced the feelings the memory of which is indispensable for writing *Andromaque* and *Phèdre*.

I found at M. de l'Etang's, in front of a paltry little fire, for it was I think in February 1822 that I was taken there, eight or ten people who were talking about every kind of subject. I was struck by their good sense, their liveliness of mind and above all the subtle tact of the master of the house who, without making it obvious, directed the discussion so that there were never three people talking at once nor gloomy periods of silence.

I could scarcely say too much in praise of this group of people. I've never met anything, I won't say superior, but even comparable. I was favourably impressed the first day and twenty times perhaps during the three or four years it lasted, I caught myself admiring it in the same way.

Such a group is only possible in the country of Voltaire, Molière, Courier.

It isn't possible in England because at M. de l'Etang's a duke would have been laughed at as much as the next man, more so if he had been ridiculous.

Germany couldn't have provided it because there people are used to believing enthusiastically in the philosophical idiocies in fashion (M. Ancillon's angels). Moreover, apart from their enthusiasm, the Germans are too stupid.

The Italians would have held forth, each of them

occupying the floor for twenty minutes and remaining the mortal enemy of his antagonist in the discussion. At the third meeting they would have composed satirical sonnets against one another.

For discussion was vigorous and frank about everything and with everybody. People were polite at M. de l'Etang's but because of him. Often he had to cover the retreat of some rash person who in his search for new ideas, had suggested something too patently absurd.

I found there M. de l'Etang, MM. Albert Stapfer, J.-J. Ampère, Sautelet, de Lussinge. . . .

M. de l'Etang* is cast in the mould of the good vicar of Wakefield. To give an idea of him you'd need all the shading of Goldsmith or Addison.

First of all, he is very ugly, having above all what is rare in Paris, an ignobly narrow forehead; he is well built and quite big.

He has all the small mindedness of the middle-classes. If he buys a dozen handkerchiefs for 36 francs at the corner shop, two hours later he believes his handkerchiefs are a rarity and that you couldn't find similar ones in Paris at any price.†

* 4 July 1832. The heat wave has begun.

† Half-past one — it's become too hot to think.

NOTES

Introduction

1. See Henri Martineau, *Le Coeur de Stendhal* (Paris 1952), the book from which I have taken most of my biographical information.
2. The original edition of Mérimée's *H.B.*, published in 1850, was limited to twenty-five copies. My references are to the edition prepared by M. C. Bellanger in 1948.
3. Stendhal's borrowings from Johnson's 'Preface to Shakespeare' are best described in Doris Gunnell's *Stendhal et l'Angleterre* (Paris 1909).
4. It was because Lingay worked for le duc Decazes (de *casa*) that Stendhal called him 'Maisonnette'; 'Lussinge', or rather Lucinge, is the name of a village in Savoy, the region Mareste came from; and *Le Théâtre de Clara Gazul* was Mérimée's first success.
5. James's review of A. A. Paton's *Henry Beyle: A Critical and Biographical Study* was published in *The Nation* on 17 September 1874. It is reprinted in Albert Mordell's *Literary Reviews and Essays by Henry James* (New Haven 1957).
6. See 'Surgery for the Novel—or a Bomb', in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence* (London 1961).
7. Valéry's essay on Stendhal first appeared in 1927 and is reprinted in the first volume of the Pléiade edition of his complete works (Paris 1957), pp. 553–82.

Chapter I

1. No one has succeeded in finding the literal equivalent of these words in Shelley. In an article in the *Stendhal Club* (October 1968), M. Del Litto has established that

STENDHAL

Stendhal was in fact remembering phrases from Mari-vaux's *Vie de Marianne*.

2. Stendhal wrote 't L 18' which M. Louis Royer has convincingly interpreted as 'tuer Louis XVIII'.

Chapter II

1. The misfortune Stendhal refers to was Clémentine Curial's decision to bring her affair with him to an end.
2. Bugey is enclosed in a loop of the River Rhône downstream from Bellegarde.
3. Mme Azur is Stendhal's pseudonym for Alberthe de Rubempré who became his mistress in 1829.
4. i.e., Mme Victor de Tracy whose friendliness towards Stendhal is mentioned later.
5. Stendhal is reminding himself that when he rewrites his memoirs he ought to say more about the people he met when he was attached to the State Council; 'there' is in inverted commas because it is in English in the original text. Stendhal was fond of displaying his knowledge of English; whenever he does so I have tried to indicate the fact with inverted commas.
6. Odilon Barot is the real name of a prominent lawyer and politician of the Restoration period. There is no connection between him and the friend Stendhal calls Barot (whose real name was Nicolas-Rémy Lolot).
7. Stendhal had the job of burning the relics of his cousin's love affairs when Martial Daru married in September 1806.
8. i.e., Pierre Daru, Martial's eldest brother.
9. Louvel was the journeyman saddler who assassinated the Duke of Berry in September 1820. The Duke of Berry was the only member of the royal family who—as Louvel explained at his trial—could provide future descendants. In fact, the Duchess of Berry had a baby boy seven months after her husband's death.

Chapter III

1. Racine, *Britannicus*, Act II, Scene 2 (tr. Sir Brooke Boothby, 1803).

Chapter IV

1. i.e., the battle known in England (and Russia) as the Battle of Borodino.
2. Stendhal is misremembering. The chapel in question is in the basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano which he himself describes in *Walks in Rome*.
3. Philippe de Ségur's *History of Napoleon and the Grand Army in 1812* was published in 1824.
4. The *Journal des Débats*, one of the most influential newspapers in French history, fought for a more constitutional monarchy during the Restoration, and was a strong supporter of Louis Philippe after 1830.
5. The Marquis of Favras, accused of plotting to seize control of the country, was hanged in 1790. Rumour had it that the future Louis XVIII was behind the plot and was frightened, until the very last moment, that Favras would give the game away.
6. Philippe de Courcillon Dangeau (1638–1720), author of copious and detailed memoirs of Louis XIV's Court. Saint-Simon is supposed to have begun his memoirs because he found Dangeau's altogether too courtier-like.
7. In his memoirs Ségur describes how, when he was French Ambassador in Russia, he borrowed the English Ambassador's pen in order to write a dispatch designed to frustrate English interests. The history he published in 1800 was of Frederick William II of Prussia. Countess Lichtenau was his mistress but it was not Benjamin Constant but his cousin Auguste who once defended the Countess at a dinner table (there is no record of a duel).
8. The 'Ordinances', which led directly to the July Revolution, were a series of measures by means of which

STENDHAL

Charles X hoped to return to a more authoritarian system of government.

Chapter V

1. Etienne-Jean Delécluze (1781–1863), whom Stendhal refers to in his last chapter as M. de l'Étang, was the art critic of the *Journal des Débats*.
2. The Angelica whose magic ring allows her to become invisible whenever she likes, is a character in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.
3. Ary Scheffer (1796–1858) was in fact born in Holland. It is because of the unpleasant characteristics traditionally associated in France with people from Gascony that Stendhal calls him a Gascon.
4. When the Austrian authorities refused to ratify Stendhal's appointment as consul in Trieste, La Fayette requested the post for André-Nicolas Levasseur, his aide-de-camp.
5. The reference is to an anecdote very popular amongst the enemies of Napoleon. When Napoleon was First Consul, Talleyrand invited him to his country-house in Auteuil, near the Bois de Boulogne. Napoleon is supposed to have naïvely inquired whether there were wild boars in the Bois. To make a fool of him, Talleyrand sent to the Paris markets for two black pigs and all the tame rabbits available. When they arrived, he let them loose in the Bois for Napoleon to shoot at.
Stendhal himself recounts the anecdote at great length in one of the 'Sketches of Parisian Society' he wrote for the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1827 (see the number for April).
6. i.e. a pocket encyclopedia of historical and economic information. Laubespain was the husband of the lady Stendhal has just previously referred to as Mme de Montcertin.
7. The list of *émigrés* included 145,000 names in 1799. From then on Napoleon began crossing names out until,

in 1802, he granted an amnesty to all but 1,000 of the previously proscribed people.

8. The Huron is the plain-speaking red Indian who figures in Voltaire's *L'Ingénu* (1767).
9. i.e. Mme Victor de Tracy.
10. *Non si figuri*—an idiomatic expression roughly equivalent to 'Please don't bother'.

Chapter VI

1. Virgil, Eclogue I, II. 51.2—'hic . . . frigus captabis opacum (here . . . you'll enjoy the cooling shade).
2. Countess Berthois, as I mentioned in the introduction, is one of Stendhal's names for Clémentine Curial.
3. Jupiter Mansuetus—a classical bust from the fourth century B.C. which Stendhal greatly admired and which is usually known as the Otricoli Jupiter.
4. Probably Hummums Hotel. It was while he was in London in 1826 that Stendhal seems to have received a letter from Clémentine Curial breaking off their affair.
5. *La Chaumière Indienne* (The Indian Cottage) is a novel by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre.
6. The Congregation was a secret society founded during the Consulate to promote the interests of the Catholic religion. During the Restoration (1815–30) it became very powerful and was felt by liberals to be a hidden monster of reaction.
7. Almack's—the venue of receptions held in London every Wednesday and presided over by six ladies from the most aristocratic section of London society.
8. This expression, like the earlier 'full of snugness', is in English in the text.
9. Stendhal wrote that Barot (i.e. Nicolas-Rémy Lolot) was recalled to Paris by his 'affaires de Baccarat et de cardes'. Lolot manufactured nails, which were presumably used for carding in textile factories. He was also

co-proprietor of a famous glass works in Baccarat, in the north-east of France. French people still speak of Baccarat crystal.

Chapter VII

1. At this point Stendhal adopts 'Missirini' as a pseudonym for Micheroux. I have retained Micheroux to avoid confusion.
2. 'Et mon vers, bien ou mal, dit toujours quelque chose', *Épître IX*, vers 60.
3. 'Une pauvreté noble est tout ce qui me reste', *Zaïre*, Act I, Scene 4.
4. This is the real name of the person Stendhal has previously referred to as Lavenelle.
5. The *Romeo and Juliet* Stendhal refers to is by Zingarelli. *Tancred* and *Othello* are operas by Rossini.
6. Stendhal is alluding to a scene in Lafosse d'Aubigny's *Manlius Capitolinus* which was first performed in 1698 and remained in the repertoire of the *Comédie Française* throughout the eighteenth century.
7. No one knows what Stendhal meant to write here. 'Tyranny' and 'tirade' have both been suggested.

Chapter VIII

1. Franz Joseph Gall (1758–1828) the German founder of the pseudo-science of phrenology.
2. Dominique is one of Stendhal's names for himself.
3. The office of the *Journal des Débats* was in the rue des Prêtres.
After the Battle of Marathon, in which he took part under Miltiades, Themistocles is supposed to have said that Miltiades's laurels stopped him sleeping.
4. The Christian names of the second Etienne, a playwright and journalist of Stendhal's time, are Charles-Guillaume (1778–1845).

MEMOIRS OF AN EGOTIST

5. Charles Cotin (1604–82) poet and member of the French Academy who was satirized by both Boileau and Molière.
6. *amaregiato*—embittered, grieved, chagrined.
7. ‘Where are you going oak-leaf?
—I’m going where the wind leads me.’
8. i.e. ‘maître des requêtes’—a title given in Stendhal’s time to certain members of the ‘Conseil d’Etat’.

Chapter IX

1. Court de Gebelin (1725–84)—author of a monumental, *The primitive world analysed and compared with the modern world* (1773–84).
2. The King of Rome was the title of Napoleon’s first son by Marie-Louise of Austria.
3. Claude-Joseph Dorat was a minor French poet of the eighteenth century whose work Stendhal found insipid and affected.
4. ‘Lady Hoyle’ is a pseudonym for Mme de Sainte-Aulaire, the wife of the French Ambassador in Rome. While he was French Consul in Civita-Vecchia, Stendhal spent as much time as he possibly could in Rome.
5. Yet another example of Stendhal’s uncertain grip on English.
6. Galignani’s reading-room was chiefly frequented by English-speaking tourists in Paris. The Galignani brothers published a newspaper in English (the *Messenger*) for this same class of people.
7. On 29 May 1823 Byron wrote to Stendhal thanking him for ‘a very flattering mention’ of himself in *Rome, Naples, and Florence* and reminding him that they had met in Milan in 1816. At the same time he protested against Stendhal’s description—in *Racine and Shakespeare*—of Walter Scott’s character as ‘little worthy of enthusiasm’. ‘I have known Walter Scott long and

STENDHAL

well,' Byron wrote, 'and in occasional situations which call forth the *real* character—and I can assure you that his character *is* worthy of admiration—that of all men he is the most *open*, the most *honourable*, the most *amiable* . . .' etc. In his reply, Stendhal respectfully reaffirmed his contempt for Scott's character.

8. Stendhal is remembering a poem by Monti in which the word 'king' is repeated several times and followed on each occasion by injurious epithets (*Per l'anniversario della caduta dell'ultimo Re dei Francesi—1800*).
9. The Prince of Peace was the title of Manuel Godoy, the favourite of Charles IV of Spain (1748–1819) whose widow Stendhal is discussing in this passage.
10. Mme Campan's memoirs were not published until 1823 (a year after her death) when they were suitably edited to suit the more prudish tone of Restoration society. Stendhal must have heard parts of the original version.

Chapter X

1. Salvatore Vigano (1769–1821) was a choreographer whom Stendhal regularly included in his pantheon along with Canova, Monti and Rossini.
2. The Marquise de N. is (like Mme Doligny) a pseudonym for Countess Beugnot, the mother of Clémentine Curial, here referred to as Fanny Bertois.