Title: The Story of a Child

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Release Date: April 22, 2006 [EBook #6664]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

Produced by Dagny; John Bickers; David Widger

THE STORY OF A CHILD

By Pierre Loti

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PREFACE

There is to-day a widely spread new interest in child life, a desire to get nearer to children and understand them. To be sure child study is not new; every wise parent and every sympathetic teacher has ever been a student of children; but there is now an effort to do more consciously and systematically what has always been done in some way.

In the few years since this modern movement began much has been accomplished, yet there is among many thoughtful people a strong reaction from the hopes awakened by the enthusiastic heralding of the newer aspects of psychology. It had been supposed that our science would soon revolutionize education; indeed, taking the wish for the fact, we began to talk about the new and the old education (both mythical) and boast of our millennium. I would not underrate the real progress, the expansion of educational activities, the enormous gains made in many ways; but the millennium! The same old errors meet us in new forms, the old problems are yet unsolved, the waste is so vast that we sometimes feel thankful that we cannot do as much as we would, and that Nature protects children from our worst mistakes.

What is the source of this disappointment? Is it not that education, like all other aspects of life, can never be reduced to mere science? We need science, it must be increasingly the basis of all life; but exact science develops very slowly, and meantime we must live. Doubtless the time will come when our study of mind will have advanced so far that we can lay down certain great principles as tested laws, and thus clarify many questions. Even then the solution of the problem will not be in the enunciation of the theoretic principle, but will lie in its application to practice; and that application must always depend upon instinct, tact, appreciation, as well as upon the scientific law. Even the aid that science can contribute is given slowly; meanwhile we must work with these children and lift them to the largest life.

It is in relation to this practical work of education that our effort to study children gets its human value. There are always two points of view possible with reference to life. From the standpoint of nature and science, individuals count for little. Nature can waste a thousand acorns to raise one oak, hundreds of children may be sacrificed that a truth may be seen. But from the ethical and human point of view the meaning of all life is in each individual. That one child should be lost is a kind of ruin to the universe.

It is this second point of view which every parent and every teacher must take; and the great practical value of our new study of children is that it brings us into personal relation with the child world, and so aids in that subtle touch of life upon life which is the very heart of education.

It is therefore that certain phases of the study of child life have a high worth without giving definite scientific results. Peculiarly significant among these is the study of the autobiographies of childhood. The door to the great universe is always to the personal world. Each of us appreciates child life through his own childhood, and though the children with whom it is his blessed fortune to be associated. If then it is possible for him to know intimately another child through autobiography, one more window has been opened into the child world—one more interpretative unit is given him through which to read the lesson of the whole.

It is true, autobiographies written later in life cannot give us the absolute truth of childhood. We see our early experiences through the mists, golden or gray, of the years that lie between. It is poetry as well as truth, as Goethe recognized in the title of his own self-study. Nevertheless the individual who has lived the life can best bring us into touch with it, and the very poetry is as true as the fact because interpretative of the spirit.

It is peculiarly necessary that teachers harassed with the routine of their work, and parents distracted with the multitude of details of daily existence, should have such windows opened through which they may look across the green meadows and into the sunlit gardens of childhood. The result is not theories of child life but appreciation of children. How one who has read understandingly Sonva Kovalevsky's story of her girlhood could ever leave unanswered a child starving for love I cannot see. Mills' account of his early life is worth more than many theories in showing the deforming effect of an education that is formal discipline without an awakening of the heart and soul. Goethe's great study of his childhood and youth must give a new hold upon life to any one who will appreciatively respond to it.

A better illustration of the subtle worth of such literature, in developing appreciation of those inner deeps of child life that escape definition and evaporate from the figures of the statistician, could scarcely be found than Pierre Loti's "Story of a Child." There is hardly a fact in the book. It tells not what the child did or what was done to him, but what he felt, thought, dreamed. A record of impressions through the dim years of awakening, it reveals a peculiar and subtle type of personality most necessary to understand. All that Loti is and has been is gathered up and foreshadowed in the child. Exquisite sensitiveness to impressions whether of body or soul, the egotism of a nature much occupied with its own subjective feelings, a being atune in response to the haunting melody of the sunset, and the vague mystery of the seas, a subtle melancholy that comes from the predominance of feeling over masculine power of action, leading one to drift like Francesca with the winds of emotion, terrible or sweet, rather than to fix the tide of the universe in the centre of the forceful deed—all these qualities are in the dreams of the child as in the life of the man.

And the style?—dreamy, suggestive, melodious, flowing on and on with its exquisite music, wakening sad reveries, and hinting of gray days of wind and rain, when the gust around the house wails of broken hopes and ideals so long-deferred as to be half forgotten,—the minor sob of his music expresses the spirit of Loti as much as do the moods of the child he describes.

Such a type, like all others, has its strength and its weakness. Such a type, like all others, is implicitly in us all. Do we not know it—the haunting hunger for the permanence of impressions that come and go, which pulsates through the book till we can scarcely keep back the tears; the brooding over the two sombre mysteries—Death and Life (and which is the darker?); the sense of fate driving life on—the fate of a temperament that restlessly longs for new impressions and intense emotions, without the vigor of action that cuts the Gordian knot of fancy and speculation with the swift sword-stroke of an heroic deed.

It is fortunate that the translator has caught the subtle charm of Loti's style, so difficult to render in another speech, in an amazing degree. This is peculiarly necessary here, for accuracy of translation means giving the delicate changes of color and elusive chords of music that voice the moods and impressions of which the book is made.

Let us read the revelation of this book not primarily to condemn or praise, or even to estimate and define, but to appreciate. If it be true that no one ever looked into the Kingdom of Heaven except through the eyes of a little child, if it be true that the eyes of every unspoiled child are such a window, take the vision and be thankful. If, perchance, this window should open toward strange abysses that reach vaguely away, or upon dark meadows that lie ghost-like in the mingled light, if out of the abyss rises, undefined, the vast, dim shape of the mystery, and wakens in us the haunting memories of dead yesterdays and forgotten years, if we seem carried past the day into the gray vastness that is beyond the sunset and before the dawn, let us recognize that the mystery or mysteries, the annunciation

of the Infinite is a little child.

EDWARD HOWARD GRIGGS.

TO HER MAJESTY ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF ROUMANIA.

December, 188-

I am almost too old to undertake this book, for a sort of night is falling about me; where shall I find the words vital and young enough for the task?

To-morrow, at sea, I will commence it; at least I will endeavor to put into it all that was best of myself at a time when as yet there was nothing very bad.

So that romantic love may find no place in it, except in the illusory form of a vision, I will end it at an early age.

And to the sovereign lady whose suggestion it was that I write it, I offer it as a humble token of my respect and admiration.

PIERRE LOTI.

THE STORY OF A CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

It is with some degree of awe that I touch upon the enigma of my impressions at the commencement of my life. I am almost doubtful whether they had reality within my own experience, or whether they are not, rather, recollections mysteriously transmitted—I feel an almost sacred hesitation when I would fathom their depths.

I came forth from the darkness of unconsciousness very gradually, for my mind was illumined only fitfully, but then by outbursts of splendor that compelled and fascinated my infant gaze. When the light was extinguished, I lapsed once more into the non-consciousness of the new-born animal, of the tiny plant just germinating.

The history of my earliest years is that of a child much indulged and petted to whom nothing of moment happened; and into whose narrow, protected life no jarring came that was not foreseen, and the shock of which was not deadened with solicitous care. In my manners I was always very tractable and submissive. That I may not make my recital tedious, I will note without continuity and without the proper transitions those moments which are impressed upon my mind because of their strangeness, those moments that are still so vividly

remembered, although I have forgotten many poignant sorrows, many lands, adventures, and places.

I was at that time like a fledgling swallow living high up in a niche in the eaves, who from time to time peeps out over the top of its nest with its little bright eyes. With the eyes of imagination it sees into the deeps of space, although to the actual vision only a courtyard and street are visible; and it sees into depths which it will presently need to journey through. It was during such moments of clairvoyance that I had a vision of the infinity of which before my present life I was a part. Then, in spite of myself, my consciousness flagged, and for days together I lived the tranquil, subconscious life of early childhood.

At first my mind, altogether unimpressed and undeveloped, may be compared to a photographer's apparatus fitted with its sensitized glass. Objects insufficiently lighted up make no impression upon the virgin plates; but when a vivid splendor falls upon them, and when they are encircled by disks of light, these once dim objects now engrave themselves upon the glass. My first recollections are of bright summer days and sparkling noon times,—or more truly, are recollections of the light of wood fires burning with great ruddy flames.

CHAPTER II.

As if it were yesterday I recall the evening when I suddenly discovered that I could run and jump; and I remember that I was intoxicated by the delicious sensation almost to the point of falling.

This must have been at about the commencement of my second winter. At the sad hour of twilight I was in the dining-room of my parents' house, which room had always seemed a very vast one to me. At first, I was quiet, made so, no doubt, by the influence of the environing darkness, for the lamp was not yet lighted. But as the hour for dinner approached, a maid-servant came in and threw an armful of small wood into the fireplace to reanimate the dying fire. Immediately there was a beautiful bright light, and the leaping flames illuminated everything, and waves of light spread to the far part of the room where I sat. The flames danced and leaped with a twining motion ever higher and higher and more gayly, and the tremulous shadows along the wall ran to their hiding-places—oh! how quickly I arose overwhelmed with admiration for I recollect that I had been sitting at the feet of my great-aunt Bertha (at that time already very old) who half dozed in her chair. We were near a window through which the gray night filtered; I was seated upon one of those high, old-fashioned foot-stools with two steps, so convenient for little children who can from that vantage ground put their heads in grandmother's or grand-aunt's lap, and wheedle so effectually.

I arose in ecstasy, and approached the flames; then in the circle of light which lay upon the carpet I began to walk around and around and to turn. Ever faster and faster I went, until suddenly I felt an unwonted elasticity run through my limbs, and in a twinkling I invented a new and amusing style of motion; it was to push my feet very hard against the floor, and then to lift them up together suddenly for a half second. When I fell, up I sprang and recommenced my play. Bang! Bang! With every increasing noise I went against the floor, and at last I began to feel a singular but agreeable giddiness in my head. I knew how to

jump! I knew how to run!

I am convinced that that is my earliest distinct recollection of great joyousness.

"Dear me! What is the matter with the child this evening?" asked my great-aunt Bertha, with some anxiety. And I hear again the unexpected sound of her voice.

But I still kept on jumping. Like those tiny foolish moths which of an evening revolve about the light of a lamp, I went around in the luminous circle which widened and retracted, ever taking form from the wavering light of the flames. And I remember all of this so vividly that my eyes can still see the smallest details of the texture of the carpet which was the scene of the event. It was of durable stuff called home-spun, woven in the country by native weavers. (Our house was still furnished as it had been in my maternal grandmother's time, as she had arranged it after she had quitted the Island, and come to the mainland.—A little later I will speak of this Island which had already a mysterious attraction for my youthful imagination. —It was a simple country house, notable for its Huguenot austerity; and it was a home where immaculate cleanliness and extreme order were the sole luxuries.)

In the circle of light, which grew ever more and more narrow, I still jumped; but as I did so I had thoughts that were of an intensity not habitual with me. At the same time that my tiny limbs discovered their power, my spirit also knew itself; a burst of light overspread my mind where dawning ideas still showed forth feebly. And it is without doubt to the inner awakening that this fleeting moment of my life owes its existence, owes undoubtedly its permanency in memory. But vainly I seek for the words, that seem ever to escape me, through which to express my elusive emotions. . . . Here in the dining-room I look about and see the chairs standing the length of the wall, and I am reminded of the aged grandmother, grand-aunts and aunts who always come at a certain hour and seat themselves in them. Why are they not here now? At this moment I would like to feel their protecting presence about me. Probably they are upstairs in their rooms on the second floor; between them and me there is the dim stairway, the stairway that I people with shadowy beings the thought of which makes me tremble. . . . And my mother? I would wish most especially for her, but I know that she has gone out, gone out into the long streets which in my imagination have no end. I had myself gone to the door with her and had asked her: "When returnest thou?" And she had promised me that she would return speedily. Later they told me that when I was a child I would never permit any members of the family to leave the house to go walking or visiting without first obtaining their assurance of a speedy homecoming. "You will come back soon?" I would say, and I always asked the question anxiously, as I followed them to the door.

My mother had departed, and it gave my heart a feeling of heaviness to know that she was out. Out in the streets! I was content not to be there where it was cold and dark, where little children so easily lost their way,—how snug it was to be within doors before the fire that warmed me through and through; how nice it was to be at home! I had never realized it until this evening—doubtless it was my first distinct feeling of attachment to hearth and home, and I was sadly troubled at the thought of the immense, strange world lying beyond the door. It was then that I had, for the first time, a conscious affection for my aged aunts and grand-aunts, who cared for me in infancy, whom I longed to have seated around me at this dim, sad, twilight hour.

In the meantime the once bright and playful flames had died down, the armful of wood was consumed, and as the lamp was not lighted, the room was quite dark. I had already stumbled upon the home-spun carpet, but as I had not hurt myself, I recommenced my amusing play.

For an instant I thought to experience a new but strange joy by going into the shadowy and distant recesses of the room; but I was overtaken there by an indefinable terror of something which I cannot name, and I hastily took refuge in the dim circle of light and looked behind me with a shudder to see whether anything had followed me from out of those dark corners. Finally the flames died away entirely, and I was really afraid; aunt Bertha sat motionless upon her chair, and although I felt that her eyes were upon me I was not reassured. The very chairs, the chairs ranged about the room, began to disquiet me because their long shadows, that stretched behind them exaggerating the height of ceiling and length of wall, moved restlessly like souls in the agonies of death. And especially there was a half-open door that led into a very dark hall, which in its turn opened into a large empty parlor absolutely dark. Oh! with what intensity I fixed my eyes upon that door to which I would not for the world have turned my back!

This was the beginning of those daily winter-evening terrors which in that beloved home cast such a gloom over my childhood.

What I feared to see enter that door had no well defined form, but the fear was none the less definite to me: and it kept me standing motionless near the dead fire with wide open eyes and fluttering heart. When my mother suddenly entered the room by a different door, oh! how I clung to her and covered my face with her dress: it was a supreme protection, the sanctuary where no harm could reach me, the harbor of harbors where the storm is forgotten. . . .

At this instant the thread of recollection breaks, I can follow it no farther.

CHAPTER III.

After the ineffaceable impression left by that first fright and that first dance before the winter fire many months passed during which no other events were engraven upon my memory, and I relapsed into a twilight state similar to that at the commencement of my life. But the mental dimness was pierced now and again with a bright light; as the gray of early morning is tinged by the rose-color of dawning.

I believe that the impressions which succeeded were those of the summer time, of the great sun and nature. I recall feeling an almost delicious terror when one day I found myself alone in the midst of tall June grasses that grew high as my head. But here the secret working of self consciousness is almost too entangled with the things of the past for me to explain it.

We were visiting at a country place called Limoise, a place that at later time played a great part in my life. It belonged to neighbors and friends, the D——s, whose house in town was directly next to ours. Perhaps I had visited Limoise the preceding summer, but at that time I was very like a cocoon before it has crawled from its silken wrapping. The day that I now refer to is the one in which I was able to reflect for the first time, in which I first knew the sweetness of reverie.

I have forgotten our departure, the carriage ride and our arrival. But I remember distinctly that late one hot afternoon, as the sun was setting, I found myself alone in a remote part of a deserted garden. The gray walls overgrown with ivy and mosses separated its grove of trees from the moorland and the rocky country round about it. For me, brought up in the city, the

old and solitary garden, where even the fruit trees were dying from old age, had all the mystery and charm of a primeval forest. I crossed a border of box, and I was in the midst of a large uncultivated tract filled with climbing asparagus and great weeds. Then I cowered down, as is the fashion of little children, that I might be more effectually hidden by what hid me sufficiently already, and I remained there motionless with eyes dilated and with quickening spirit, half afraid, half enraptured. The feeling that I experienced in the presence of these unfamiliar things was one of reflection rather than of astonishment. I knew that the bright green vegetation closing in about me was every where in no less measure than in the heart of this forest, and emotions, sad and weird and vague took possession of me and affrighted but fascinated me. That I might remain hidden as long as possible I crouched lower and still lower, and I felt the joy a little Indian boy feels when he is in his beloved forest.

Suddenly I heard someone call: "Pierre! Pierre! Dear Pierre!" I did not reply, but instead lay as close as possible to the ground, and sought to hide under the weeds and the waving branches of the asparagus.

Still I heard: "Pierre, Pierre." It was Lucette; I knew her voice, and from the mockery of her tone I felt sure that she had spied me. But I could not see her although I looked about me very carefully: no one was visible!

With peals of laughter she continued to call, and her voice grew merrier and merrier. Where can she be? thought I.

Ah! At last I spied her perched upon the twisted branch of a tree that was overhung with gray moss!

I was fairly caught and I came out of my green hiding place.

As I rose I gazed over the wild and flowering things, and saw the corner of the old moss-grown wall that enclosed the garden. That wall was destined to be at a later time a very familiar haunt of mine, for on the Thursday holidays during my college life I spent many a happy hour sitting upon it contemplating the peaceful and quiet country, and there I mused, to the chirping accompaniment of the crickets, of those distant countries fairer and sunnier than my own. And upon that summer day those gray and crumbling stones, defaced by the sun and weather, and overgrown with mosses, gave me for the first time an indefinable impression of the persistence of things; a vague conception of existences antedating my own, in times long past.

Lucette D——, my elder by eight or ten years, seemed to me already a grown person. I cannot recall the time when I did not know her. Later I came to love her as a sister, and her early death in her prime was one of the first real griefs of my boyhood.

And the first recollection I have of her is as I saw her in the branches of the old pear tree. Her image doubtless begets a vividness from the two new emotions with which it is blended: the enchanting uneasiness I felt at the invasion of green nature and the melancholy reverie that took possession of me as I contemplated the old wall, type of ancient things and olden times.

CHAPTER IV.

I will now endeavor to explain the impression that the sea made upon me at our first brief and melancholy encounter, which took place at twilight upon the evening of my arrival at the Island.

Notwithstanding the fact that I could scarcely see it, it had so remarkable an effect on me that in a single moment it was engraven upon my memory forever. I feel a retrospective shudder run through me when my spirit broods upon the recollection.

We had but newly arrived at this village near St. Ongeoise where my parents had rented a fisherman's house for the bathing season. I knew that we had come here for something called the sea, but I had had no glimpse of it (a line of dunes hid it from me because of my short stature), and I was extremely impatient to become acquainted with it; therefore after dinner, as night was falling, I went alone to seek this mysterious thing.

The air was sharp and biting, and unlike any I had experienced, and from behind the hillocks of sand, along which the path led, there came a faint but majestic noise. Everything affrighted me, the unfamiliar way, the twilight falling from the overcast sky, and the loneliness of this part of the village. But inspired by one of those great and sudden resolutions, that come sometimes to the most timid, I went forward with a firm step.

Suddenly I stopped overcome and almost paralyzed by fear, for something took shape before me, something dark and surging sprang up from all sides at the same time and it seemed to stretch out endlessly. It was something so vast and full of motion that I was seized with a deadly vertigo—it was the sea of my imagining! Without a moment's hesitation, without asking how this knowledge had been wrought, without astonishment even, I recognized it and I trembled with a great emotion. It was so dark a green as to be almost black; to me it seemed unstable, perfidious, all ingulfing, always turbulent, and of a sinister, menacing aspect. Above it, in harmony with it, stretched the gray and lowering sky.

And far away, very far away, upon the immeasurable distant horizon I perceived a break between the sky and the waters, and a pale yellow light showed through this cleft.

Had I been to the sea before to recognize it thus quickly? Perhaps I had, but without being conscious of it, for when I was about five or six months old I had been brought to the Island by my great aunt, my grandmother's sister; or perhaps because it had played so great a part in my sea-faring ancestors' lives I was born with a nascent conception of it and its immensity.

We communed together a moment, one with the other—I was deeply fascinated. At our first encounter I am sure I had a nebulous presentiment that I would one day go to it in spite of my hesitation, in spite of all the efforts put forth to hold me back,—and the emotion that overwhelmed me in the presence of the sea was not only one of fear, but I felt also an inexpressible sadness, and I seemed to feel the anguish of desolation, bereavement and exile. With downcast mien, and with hair blown about by the wind, I turned and ran home. I was in the extreme haste to be with my mother; I wished to embrace her and to cling close to her; I desired to be with her so that she might console me for the thousand indefinite, anticipated sorrows that surged through my heart at the sight of those green waters, so vast and so deep.

CHAPTER V.

My mother!—I have already mentioned her two or three times in the course of this recital, but without stopping to speak of her at length. It seems that at first she was no more to me than a natural and instinctive refuge where I ran for shelter from all terrifying and unfamiliar things, from all the dark forebodings that had no real cause.

But I believe she took on reality and life for the first time in the burst of ineffable tenderness which I felt when one May morning she entered my room with a bouquet of pink hyacinths in her hand; she brought in with her as she came a ray of sunlight.

I was convalescing from one of the maladies peculiar to children,—measles or whooping cough, I know not which,—and I had been ordered to remain in bed and to keep warm. By the rays of light that filtered in through the closed shutters I divined the springtime warmth and brightness of the sun and air, and I felt sad that I had to remain behind the curtains of my tiny white bed; I wished to rise and go out; but most of all I had a desire to see my mother.

The door opened and she entered, smiling. Ah, I remember it so well! I recall so distinctly how she looked as she stood upon the threshold of the door. And I remember that she brought in with her some of the sunlight and balminess of the spring day.

I see again the expression of her face as she looked at me; and I hear the sound of her voice, and recall the details of her beloved dress that would look funny and old-fashioned to me now. She had returned from her morning shopping, and she wore a straw hat trimmed with yellow roses and a shawl of lilac barege (it was the period of the shawl) sprinkled with tiny bouquets of violets. Her dark curls (the poor beloved curls to-day, alas! so thin and white) were at this time without a gray hair. There was about her the fragrance of the May day, and her face as it looked that morning with its broad brimmed hat is still distinctly present with me. Besides the bouquet of pink hyacinths, she had brought me a tiny watering-pot, an exact imitation in miniature of the crockery ones so much used by the country people.

As she leaned over my bed to embrace me I felt as if every wish was gratified. I no longer had a desire to weep, nor to rise from my bed, nor to go out. She was with me and that sufficed—I was consoled, tranquillized, and re-created by her gracious presence.

I was, I think, a little more than three years old at this time, and my mother must have been about forty-two years of age; but I had not the least notion of age in regard to her, and it had never occurred to me to wonder whether she was young or old; nor did I realize until a later time that she was beautiful. No, at this period that she was her own dear self was enough; to me she was in face and form a person so apart and so unique that I would not have dreamed of comparing her with any one else. From her whole being there emanated such a joyousness, security and tenderness, and so much goodness that from thence was born my understanding of faith and prayer.

I would that I could speak hallowed words to the first blessed form that I find in the book of memory. I would it were possible that I could greet my mother with words filled with the meaning I wish to convey. They are words which cause bountiful tears to flow, but tears fraught with I know not how much of the sweetness of consolation and joy, words that are ever, and in spite of everything, filled with the hope of an immortal reunion.

And since I have touched upon this mystery that has had such an influence upon my soul, I

will here set down that my mother alone is the only person in the world of whom I have the feeling that death cannot separate me. With other human beings, those whom I have loved with all my heart and soul, I have tried to imagine a hereafter, a to-morrow in which there shall be no to-morrow; but no, I cannot! Rather I have always had a horrible consciousness of our nothingness—dust to dust, ashes to ashes. Because of my mother alone have I been able to keep intact the faith of my early days. It still seems to me that when I have finished playing my poor part in life, when I no longer run in the overgrown paths that lead to the unattainable, when I am through amusing humanity with my conceits and my sorrows, I will go there where my mother, who has gone before me, is, and she will receive me; and the smile of serenity that she now wears in my memory will have become one of triumphant realization.

True, I see that distant region only dimly, and it has no more substance than a pale gray vision; my words, however intangible and elusive, give too definite a form to my dreamy conceptions. But still (I speak as a little child, with the child's faith), but still I always think of my mother as having, in that far off place, preserved her earthly aspect. I think of her with her dear white curls and the straight lines of her beautiful profile that the years may have impaired a little, but which I still find perfect. The thought that the face of my mother shall one day disappear from my eyes forever, that it is no more than combined elements subject to disintegration, and that she will be lost in the universal abyss of nothingness, not only makes my heart bleed, but it causes me to revolt as at something unthinkable and monstrous; it cannot be! I have the feeling that there is about her something which death cannot touch.

My love for my mother (the only changeless love of my life) is so free from all material feeling that that alone gives me an inexplicable hope, almost gives me a confidence in the immortality of the soul.

I cannot very well understand why the vision of my mother near my bed of sickness should that morning have impressed me so vividly, for she was nearly always with me. It all seems very mysterious; it is as if at that particular moment she was for the first time revealed to me.

And why among the treasured playthings of my childhood has the tiny watering-pot taken on the value and sacred dignity of a relic? So much so indeed, that when I am far distant on the ocean, in hours of danger, I think of it with tenderness, and see it in the place where it has lain for years, in the little bureau, never opened, mixed in with broken toys; and should it disappear I would feel as if I had lost an amulet that could not be replaced.

And the simple shawl of lilac barege, found recently among some old clothing laid aside to be given to the poor, why have I put it away as carefully as if it were a priceless object? Because in its color (now faded), in its quaint Indian pattern and tiny bouquets of violets, I still find an emanation from my mother; I believe that I borrow therefrom a holy calm and sweet confidence that is almost a faith. And mingled in with the other feelings there is perhaps a melancholy regret for those May mornings of long ago that seemed so much brighter than are those of to-day.

Truly I fear this book, the most personal I have ever written, will weary many.

In transcribing these memories in the calm of middle life, so favorable to reverie, I had constantly present in my thought the lovely queen to whom I would dedicate this book; it is as if I were writing her a long letter with the full assurance of being understood in all those sacred matters to which words give but an inadequate expression.

Perhaps you will understand also, my dear unknown readers, who with kindly sympathy have followed me thus far; and all those who cherish, or who have been cherished by their mothers will not smile at the childish things written down here.

But this chapter will certainly seem ridiculous to those who are strangers to an all absorbing love, they will not be able to imagine that I have a deep pity to exchange for their cynical smiles.

CHAPTER VI.

Before I finish writing of the confused memories I have of the commencement of my life I wish to speak of another ray of sunshine—a sad ray this time,—that has left an ineffaceable impression upon me, and the meaning of which will never be clear to me.

Upon a Sunday, after we had returned from church, the ray appeared to me. It came through a half-open window and fell into the stairway, and as it lengthened itself upon the whiteness of the wall it took on a peculiar, weird shape.

I had returned from church with my mother and as I mounted the stairs I took her hand. The house was filled with a humming silence peculiar to the noontime of very hot summer days (it was August or September). Following the habit of our country the shutters were half closed making indoors, during the heated period of the day, a sort of twilight.

As I entered the house there came to me an appreciation of the stillness of Sunday that in the country and in peaceful byways of little towns is like the peace of death. But when I saw the ray of sunlight fall obliquely through the staircase window, I had a feeling more poignant than ordinary sorrow; I had a feeling altogether incomprehensible and absolutely new in which there seemed infused a conception of the brevity of life's summers, their rapid flight and the incomputable ages of the sun. But other elements still more mysterious, that it would be impossible for me to explain even vaguely, entered therein.

I wish to add to the history of this ray of sunshine the sequel that is intimately connected with it. Years passed; I became a man, and after having been among many people and experienced many adventures I lived for an autumn and winter in an isolated house in an unfrequented part of Stamboul. It was there that every evening at approximately the same hour, a ray of sunlight came in through the window and fell obliquely on the wall and lit up the niche (hollowed out of the stone wall) in which I had placed an Athenian vase. And I never saw that ray of sunlight without thinking of the one I had seen upon that Sunday of long ago; nor without having the same, precisely the same sad emotion, scarcely diminished by time, and always full of the same mystery. And when I had to leave Turkey, when I was obliged to quit my dangerous but adored lodgings in Stamboul, with all my busy and hurried preparations for departure there was mingled this strange regret: never more should I see the oblique ray of sunshine come into the stairway window and fall upon the niche in the wall where the Greek vase stood.

Perhaps under all of this there may have been, if not recollections of a previous personal experience, at least the reflected inchoate thoughts of ancestors which I am unable in any

clearer way to bring out of darkness. But enough! I must say no more, for I again find myself in the land of vague fancy, gliding phantoms and illusive nothings.

For this almost unintelligible chapter there is no excuse that I can offer, save that I have written it with the greatest frankness and sincerity.

CHAPTER VII.

And I now recall the impressions of springtime, all the fresh splendor of May; and I remember vividly the lonely road called the Fountain road.

(As I am endeavoring to put my recollections into some sort of order I think that at this time I must have been about five years old.)

I was old enough at any rate to take walks with my father and my sister, and I went out with them this dewy morning. I was in ecstasy to see that everything had become so green, to see the budding foliage and the tasselled shrubs and hedges. Along the sides of the road the grass was all the same length, and the flowers in the grass with their exquisite mingling of the red of the geranium and the blue of the speedwell, made the whole earth seem a great bouquet. As I plucked the flowers I scarcely knew which way to run; in my eagerness I trod upon them and my legs became wet from the dew—I marvelled at all the richness at my disposal, and I longed to take great armfuls of the flowers and carry them away with me.

My sister, who had gathered a sprig of hawthorn, one of iris and some long sheath-like grasses leaned towards me, and took my hand, and said: "You have enough for the present; you see, dear, that we could never gather all of them."

But I did not heed, so absolutely intoxicated was I with the magnificence about me, the like of which I did not recall ever to have seen before.

That was the beginning of those almost daily excursions that I took with my father and sister, and that I kept up for so long a time (almost to my boarding-school days). It is through them that I became so well acquainted with the surrounding country and with the varieties of flowers found there. Poor fields and meadows of my native country! So monotonous, so flat, one so like another; fields of hay and daisies where in childhood I would disappear from sight and hide under the green vegetation. Fields of corn and paths bordered with hawthorn, I love you all in spite of your monotony!

Toward the west, in the far distance, my eyes sought for a glimpse of the sea. Sometimes when we had gone a long way there would appear upon the horizon, among the other lines there, a straight bluish one; it was the sea; and it lured me to it finally as a great and patient lover lures, who sure of his power is willing to wait.

My sister and my brother, of whom I have not spoken before, were considerably older than I; it seemed almost as if we belonged to different generations. For that reason they petted me even more than did my father and mother, my grandmother and aunts; and as I was the only child among them I was cherished like a little hot-house plant, I was too tenderly guarded and remained all too unacquainted with thorns and brambles.

CHAPTER VIII.

Someone has advanced the theory that those persons endowed with a gift for painting (either with color or with words) probably belong to a half-blind species; accustomed to living in a partial light, in a sort of misty grayness, they turn their gaze inward; and when by chance they do look out their impressions are ten times more vivid than are those of ordinary people.

To me that seems a little paradoxical.

But it is true that sometimes an enveloping darkness aids one to clearer vision; as in a panorama building, for example, where the obscurity about the entrance prepares one better for the climax, and gives the scene depicted a more real and vivid appearance.

In the course of my life I would without doubt have been less impressed by the ever shifting phantasmagoria of existence had I not begun my journey in a place almost without distinctive color, in a tranquil corner of the most commonplace little town, receiving an education austerely pious; and where my longest journey was bounded by the forests of Limoise (as wonderful to me as a primeval forest) and by the shores of the island of Oleron, that seemed very immense when I went to it to visit my aged aunts.

But after all is said, it was in the yard about our house that I passed the happiest of my summers—it seemed to me that that was my particular kingdom, and I adored it.

It was in truth a beautiful yard, much more sunny and airy than the majority of city gardens. Its long avenue of green and flowery branches, that overtopped the heads of the neighboring fruit trees, was bordered on the south by a low and ancient wall over which grew roses and honeysuckles. The long leafy avenue gave the impression of great depth, and its perspective melted into a bower of vines and jasmine bushes that in turn became a great verdant place, which came to an end at a storehouse of ancient construction, whose gray stones were hidden under ivy vines.

Ah! How I loved that garden, and how much I still love it!

I believe the keenest, earliest memories are of the beautiful long summer evenings. Oh! the return from a walk during those long, clear twilights that certainly were more delicious than are those of to-day. What joy to re-enter that yard which the thorn-apples and the honeysuckles filled with the sweetest odor, to enter and see from the gate all the long avenue of tangled greenness. Through an opening in a bower of Virginia Creeper I could see the rosy splendor of the setting sun; and somewhat removed in the gathering shadows of the foliage, there were distinguishable three or four persons. The persons, it is true, were very quiet and they were dressed in black, but they were nevertheless very reassuring to me, very familiar and very much beloved: they were the forms of mother, grandmother and aunts. Then I would run to them hastily and throw myself upon their laps, and that was always one of the happiest moments of my day.

CHAPTER IX.

In the month of March, as the shadows of twilight gathered, two little children were seated very close together upon a low footstool—two little ones, between the ages of five and six, dressed in short trousers with white pinafores over them, as was the fashion of the time. After having played wildly they were now quietly amusing themselves with paper and pencils. The dim light seemed to fill them with a vague fear, and it troubled their spirits.

Of the two children only one was drawing—it was I. The other, a friend invited over for the day, an exceptional thing, was watching me with great attention. With some difficulty (trusting me meantime) he followed the fantastic movements of my pencil whose intention I took care to explain to him at some length. And my oral interpretation was necessary, for I was busy executing two drawings that I entitled respectively, "The Happy Duck" and "The Unhappy Duck."

The room in which we were seated must have been furnished about the year 1805, at the time of the marriage of my now-very-old grandmother, who still occupied it, and who this evening was seated in the chair of the Directory period; she was singing to herself and she took no notice of us.

My memories of my grandmother are indistinct for her death occurred shortly after this time; but as I will never again, in the course of this recital, have a more vivid impression of her, I will here insert what I know of her history.

It seems that in the stress of all sorts of troubles she had been a brave and noble mother. After reverses that were so general in those days, after losing her husband at the Battle of Trafalgar, and her elder son at the shipwreck of the Medusa, she went resolutely to work to educate her younger son, my father, until such time as he should be able to support himself. At about her eightieth year (which was not far distant when I came into the world) the senility of second childhood had set in; at that time I knew nothing about the tragedy of the loss of memory and I could not realize the vacancy of her mind and soul.

She would often stand for a long time before a mirror and talk in a most amiable way to her own reflection, which she called, "my good neighbor" or "my dear neighbor." It was also her mania to sing with a most excessive ardor the Marseillaise, the Parisiennes, the "Song of Farewell," and all the noble songs of the transition time, which had been the rage in her young womanhood.

During these exciting times she had lived quietly, and had occupied herself entirely with her household cares and her son's education. For that reason it seems the more singular that from her disordered mind, just about as it was to take its journey into complete darkness and to become disintegrated through death, there should come this tardy echo of that tempestuous time.

I enjoyed listening to her very much and often I would laugh, but without any irreverence, and I never was the least afraid of her. She was extremely lovely and had delicate and regular features, and her expression was very sweet. Her abundant hair was silver-gray, and upon her cheeks there was a color similar to that of a faded rose leaf, a color which the old people of that generation often retained into extreme old age. I remember that she usually wore a red cashmere shawl about her shoulders, and that she always had on an old-fashioned

cap trimmed with green ribbons. There was something very modest and gentle and pleasing about her still graceful little body.

Her room, where I liked to come to play because it was so large and sunny, was furnished as simply as a Presbyterian parsonage: the waxed walnut furniture was of the Directory period, the large bed had a canopy of thick, red, cotton stuff and the walls were painted an ochre yellow; and upon them in gilt frames, slightly tarnished, were hung water colors representing vases of flowers. I very soon discovered that this room was furnished in a very simple and old-fashioned way, and I thought to myself that the good old grandmother who sang so constantly must be much poorer than my other grandmother, who was younger by twenty years, and who always dressed in black—which last matter seemed an elegant distinction to me.

But to return to my drawings! I think that the pictures of those two ducks, occupying such different stations in life, were the first I ever drew.

At the bottom of the picture called "The Happy Duck" I had drawn a tiny house, and near the duck himself there was a large, kind woman who was calling him to her so that she might give him food.

"The Unhappy Duck," on the other hand, was swimming about solitary and alone on a sort of hazy sea, which I had represented by drawing two or three straight lines, and in the distance one could see the outline of a gloomy shore. The thin paper, a leaf torn from a book, had print on the reverse side, and the letters showed through in grayish flecks and gave the curious impression as of clouds in the sky. And that little drawing, with less form than a school-boy's blackboard scrawl, was completely transfigured by those gray spots, and because of them it took on for me a deep and dreadful significance. Aided by the dim light in the room the pictured scene became a vision that faded away into the distance like the pale surface of the sea. I was terrified at my own work; I was astonished to find in it those things that I had not put there; to discover in it those things which elsewhere had given me such a well remembered anguish.

"Oh!" I said with exaltation to my young companion, who did not understand anything of what was going forward, "Oh!" I exclaimed with a voice full of emotion, "you may see it; I cannot bear to look at it!" I covered the picture with my hands, but nevertheless I peeped at it very often; and it was so vividly impressed upon my mind that I can still recall it as it appeared to me transfigured: a gleam of light lay upon the horizon of that sea so awkwardly represented, the heavens appeared to be filled with rain, and it seemed to be a dreary winter evening in which there was a fierce wind blowing.

The "Unhappy Duck" solitary, far away from his family and friends was making his way toward the foggy shore over which there hung an air of extreme sadness and desolation. And certainly for one fleeting moment I had a prescience of those heartaches that I was to know later in the course of my sailor life. I seemed to have a presentiment of those stormy December evenings when my boat was to enter, to take shelter until the morning, one of those uninhabited bays upon the coast of Brittany; more particularly I had a prescience of those twilights of the Antarctic winter when, in about the latitude of Magellan, we were to go in search of protection towards those sterile shores that are as inhospitable and as absolutely deserted as the waters surrounding them.

The vision faded and I once more found myself in my grandmother's large room enveloped in the shadows of the evening. My grandmother was singing, and I was again a tiny being who had seen nothing of the large world, who had fears without knowing wherefore, and

who did not even know the cause of the tears that he shed.

Since then I have often observed that the rudimentary scrawls made by children, and which as representations are incorrect and inadequate, impress them much more than do the able and correct drawing of adults. For although theirs are incomplete they add to them a thousand things of their own seeing and imagining; and they add to them also the thousand things that grow in the deep subsoil of their consciousness—the things which no brush would be able to paint.

CHAPTER X.

Upon the second floor, above the room occupied by my poor old grandmother, who sang the Marseillaise so constantly, in that part of the house overlooking the yard and the gardens, lived my great-aunt Bertha.

From her windows, across the houses and the walls covered with roses and jasmine, one could see the ramparts of the town. They were so near to us that their old trees were visible; and beyond them lay those great plains of our country called prees (prairies) all so alike, and as monotonous as the neighboring seas. From the window one also saw the river. At full tide, when it almost overflowed its banks, it looked, as it wound along through the green meadows, like silver lace; and the large and small boats that passed in the far distance mounted upon this silver thread toward the harbor and from there sailed out into the great sea.

As this was our only glimpse of real country the windows in my aunt Bertha's room had always a great attraction for me. Especially had they in the evening at sunset, for from them I could watch the sun sink mysteriously behind the prairies. Oh! those sunsets that I saw from my aunt Bertha's windows, what ecstasy overcast with melancholy they awakened in me! The winter sunsets seen through the closed windows were a pale rose color. Those of summer time, upon stormy evenings, after a hot, bright day, I contemplated from the open window, and as I did so I would breathe in the sweet odors given out by the jasmine blossoms growing on the wall: it seems to me that there are no such sunsets now as there were then. When the sunsets were notably splendid and unusual, if I was not in the room, aunt Bertha, who never missed one, would call out hastily: "Dearie! Dearie! Come quickly!" From any corner of the house I heard that call and understood it, and I went swift as a hurricane and mounted the stairs four steps at a time. I mounted the more rapidly because the stairway had already begun to fill with dread shadows; and in the turnings and corners I saw the imaginary forms of ghosts and monsters that at nightfall always pursued me as I ran up the stairs.

My aunt Bertha's room, with its simple white muslin curtains, was as modest as my grandmother's. The walls, covered with an old-fashioned paper in vogue at the commencement of the century, were ornamented with water colors similar to those in my grandmother's room. The picture that I looked at most often was a pastel after Raphael of a virgin in white, blue and rose color. The rays of the setting sun always fell upon this picture (I have already said the hour of sunset was the time I preferred most to be in this room). This virgin was very much like my aunt Bertha; in spite of the great difference in their ages, one

was struck with the resemblance between the straight lines and regularity of their profiles.

On this same floor, but upon the street side, lived my other grandmother (the one who always dressed in black) and her daughter, my aunt Claire, the person in the house who petted me most.

Upon winter evenings, after I had been to my aunt Bertha's room to see the sunset, it was my custom to go to them. I usually found them together in my grandmother's room and I would seat myself near the fire in a little chair placed there for me. But the twilight hour spent with them was always a disturbing one. . . . After all the amusements, all the day's running and playing, to sit in the dusk almost motionless upon my tiny chair, with eyes wide open, uneasily watching for the least change in the shadows, especially on that side of the room where the door opened on the dim stairway, was very painful to me. . . . I am sure that if my grandmother and aunt had known of the melancholy and terrors which the twilight induced in me, they would have spared me by lighting the lamp, but they did not know my sufferings; and it was the custom of the aged persons by whom I was surrounded, to sit tranquilly at nightfall in their accustomed places without having need for a lighted lamp. As it grew darker one or the other, grandmother or aunt, would draw her chair closer to me, and when I had that protection about me I felt completely happy and reassured and would say: "Please tell me stories about the Island."

The Island, that is the Island of Oleron, was my mother's native place, my grandmother's and aunt's also, which they had quitted twenty years before my birth to establish themselves upon the main land. The Island, or the least thing that came from it, had a singular charm for me.

It was quite near us, for from a garret window at the top of the house we could, upon a very clear day, see the extreme end of its extensive plain; it appeared a little bluish line against a still paler one which was the arm of the ocean separating us from it. . . . To get to it we had to take a long journey in wretched country wagons and in sailing boats; and often our boat had to make its way there in the teeth of a strong gale. At this time in the village of St. Pierre Oleron I had three old aunts who lived very modestly upon the revenues of their salt marshes (the remains of a once great inheritance), and their annual rents which the peasants still paid with sacks of wheat. . . . When I went to visit them at St. Pierre there was for me a certain joy, mingled with many kinds of conflicting emotions, which I cannot explain, in trying to picture to myself their once great station.

The Huguenot austerity of their manners, their mode of life, their house and their furniture all belonged to a past time, to a bygone generation. The sea surrounded and isolated us, and the wind constantly swept over the moorland and over the great stretches of sandy beach.

My nurse was also from the Island, of a Huguenot family, which descending from father to son had been with us for a long time; and she would say: "At home, on the Island," in such a way that with a wave of emotion I understood her great homesickness for it.

We had about us a number of little articles that had come from there, and which had places of honor in our home. We had some black pebbles large as cannon-balls, that had been chosen from the thousands lying on the Long-Beach because centuries of washing had polished and rounded them exquisitely. These pebbles always played an important part every winter evening, for with the greatest regularity the old people would put them into the chimney-place where a wood fire blazed and crackled; afterwards they slipped them into calico bags of a flowered pattern, also brought from the Island, and took them to bed where they served to keep their feet warm during the night.

In our cellar we had wooden props and firkins, and also a number of straight elm poles for holding the washing which had been cut from the choicest young trees in my grandmother's forest. I had the greatest veneration for all these things. I knew that my grandmother no longer owned the forests, nor the salt marshes, nor the vineyards; for I had heard them say that she had sold them one at a time to put the money into investments upon the mainland; and that an incompetent notary by his bad investments had greatly reduced her income.

When I went to the Island and the old salt makers and vine dressers, who had at one time worked for our family, still loyal and respectful called me "our little master," I knew they did so out of pure politeness and altogether in deference to our past grandeur.

I regretted that I could not spend my life in tending the vineyards and the harvests, the occupations of several of my ancestors. Such a life seemed a much more desirable one to me than my own which was passed in a house in town.

The stories of the Island that my grandmother and aunt Claire related to me were generally of the happenings of their own childhood, a childhood that seemed so very far away that to me it had no more reality than a dream.

There were stories of grandfathers, long dead; of great-uncles whom I had never known, dead also for many years. When my aunt told me their names and described them to me I would abandon myself to reverie. There was in particular a grandfather Samuel who had preached at the time of the religious persecution, whom I thought an extraordinarily interesting person.

I did not care whether the stories were different or not, and I would ask for the same ones over and over. Often they told me stories of journeys they had taken on the little donkeys that played such an important part in the lives of the people of St. Pierre. They would ride upon them to visit distant properties and vineyards; to get to these it was often necessary to travel along the sands of the Long-Beach, and sometimes of an evening during these expeditions terrible storms would burst upon the travellers and compel them to take shelter for the night in the inns and farmhouses.

And as I sat in the darkness that no longer had terrors for me, my imagination busy with the things and peoples of other days, tinkle, tinkle would go the dinner bell; then I rose and jumped for joy, and we would go down to the dining-room together and find all the family gathered there in the bright gay room: then I would run to my mother and in an excess of emotion hide my face in her dress.

CHAPTER XI.

Gaspard was a little crop-eared dog who was saved from absolute homeliness by the vivacious and kindly expression of his eyes. I do not now recall how he came to domesticate himself with us, but I do know that I loved him very tenderly.

One winter afternoon, when he and I were out for a walk, he ran away from me. I consoled myself, however, by saying that he would certainly return to the house alone, and I went

home in a happy frame of mind. But when night came and he was still absent I grew very heavy of heart.

My parents had at dinner that evening an accomplished violinist and they had given me permission to remain up later than usual so that I might hear him. The first sweep of his bow which preluded I know not what slow and desolate movement, sounded to me like an invocation to those dark woodland paths in which, in the deeps of night, one feels that he is lost and abandoned; as the musician played I had a vision of Gaspard mistaking his way at the cross-roads because of the rain, and I saw him take an unfamiliar path that led forever away from friends and home. Then my tears began to flow, but no one perceived them; and as I wept the violin continued to fill the silence with its sad wailing, and it seemed to get a response from bottomless abysses inhabited by phantoms to which I could give neither a form nor name.

That was my introduction to reverie awaking music, and years passed before I again experienced such sensations, for the little piano pieces that I began to play for myself soon after this (in a remarkable way for a child of my age they said) sounded to me only like sweet, rhythmical noise.

CHAPTER XII.

I wish now to speak of the anguish caused by a story that was read to me. (I seldom read for myself, and in fact I disliked books very much.)

A very disobedient little boy who had run away from his family and his native land, years later, after the death of his parents and his sister, returned alone to visit his parental home. This took place in November, and naturally the author described the dull gray sky and spoke of the bleak wind that blew the few remaining leaves from the trees.

In a deserted garden, in an arbor stripped of all its green, the prodigal son in stooping down found among the autumn leaves a bluish bead that had lain there since the time he had played in the bower with his sister.

Oh! at that point I begged them to cease reading, for I felt the sobs coming. I could see, see vividly, that solitary garden, that leafless old arbor, and half-hidden under the reddish leaves I saw that blue bead, souvenir of the dead sister. . . . It depressed me dreadfully and gave me a conception of that inevitable fading away of everything and every one, of the great universal change that comes to all.

It is strange that my tenderly guarded infancy should have been so full of sad emotions and morbid reflections.

I am sure that the sad days and happenings were rare, and that I lived the joyous and careless life of other children; but just because the happy days were so habitual to me they made no impression upon my mind, and I can no longer recall them.

My memories of the summer time are so similar that they break with the splendor of the sun into the dark places and things of my mind.

And always the great heat, the deep blue skies, the sparkling sand of the beach and the flood of light upon the white lime walls of the cottages of the little villages upon the "Island" induced in me a melancholy and sleepiness which I afterwards experienced with even greater intensity in the land of the Turk.

CHAPTER XIII.

"And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. . . . And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

"But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

After reading these verses in a loud voice, my father closed the Bible; in the room where we were assembled there was a sound of chairs being moved and we all went down upon our knees to pray. Following the usage in old Huguenot families, it was our custom to have prayers just before retiring to our rooms for the night.

"And the door was shut. . . ." Although I still knelt I no longer heard the prayer, for the foolish virgins appeared to me. They were enveloped in white veils that billowed about them as they stood before the door holding in their hands the little lamps whose flickering flames were so soon to be extinguished, leaving them in the gloom without before that closed door, closed against them irrevocably and forever. . . . And a time could come then when it would be too late; when the Saviour weary of our trespassing would no longer listen to our supplications! I had never thought that that was possible. And a fear more terrifying and awful than any I had ever known before completely overwhelmed me at the thought of eternal damnation. . . .

For a long time, for many weeks and months, the parable of the foolish virgins haunted me. And every evening, when darkness came, I would repeat to myself the words that sounded so beautiful and yet so dismaying: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." If he should come to-night, was ever my thought, I would be awakened by a noise as of the sound of rushing waters, by the blare of the trumpet of the angel of the Lord announcing the terrifying approach of the end of the world. And I could never go to sleep until I had said a long prayer in which I commended myself to the mercy of my Saviour.

I do not believe there was ever a little child who had a more sensitive conscience than I; about everything I was so morbidly scrupulous that I was often misunderstood by those who loved me best, a thing that caused me the most poignant heartaches. I remember having been tormented for days merely because in relating something I had not reported it precisely as it had happened. And to such a point did I carry my squeamishness of conscience that when I had finished with my recital or statement I would murmur in a low voice, in the tone of one

who tells over his beads, these words: "After all, perhaps I do not remember just exactly how it was." When I think of the thousand remorses and fears which my trifling wrong doings caused me, and which from my sixth to my eighth year cast a gloom over my childhood, I feel a sort of retrospective depression.

At that period if any one asked me what I hoped to be in the future, when a man, without hesitation I would answer: "I expect to be a minister,"—and to me the religious vocation seemed the very grandest one. And those about me would smile and without doubt they thought, inasmuch as I too wished it, that it was the best career for me.

In the evening, especially at night, I meditated constantly of that hereafter which to pronounce the name of filled me with terror: eternity. And my departure from this earth,—this earth which I had scarcely seen, of which I had seen no more than the tiniest and most colorless corner—seemed to me a thing very near at hand. With a blending of impatience and mortal fear I thought of myself as soon to be clothed in a resplendent white robe, as soon to be seated in a great splendor of light among the multitude of angels and chosen ones around the throne of the Blessed Lamb; I saw myself in the midst of a great moving orb that, to the sound of music, oscillated slowly and continuously in the infinite void of heaven.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Once upon a time a little girl when she opened a large fruit that had come from the colonies, a big creature came out of it, a green creature, and it bit her and that made her die."

It was my little friend Antoinette (she was six and I seven) who was telling me the story which had been suggested to her because we were about to break and divide an apricot between us. We were at the extreme end of her garden in the lovely month of June under a branching apricot tree. We sat very close together upon the same stool in a house about as big as a bee-hive, which we had built for our exclusive use out of old planks. Our dwelling was covered with pieces of foreign matting that had come from the Antilles packed about some boxes of coffee. The sunbeams pierced the roof, which was of a coarse straw-colored material, and the warm breeze that stirred the leaves of the trees about us made the sunlight dance as it fell upon our faces and aprons. (During at least two summers it had been our favorite amusement to build, in isolated nooks, houses like the one described in Robinson Crusoe, and thus hidden away we would sit together and chat.) In the story of the little girl who was bitten by the big creature this phrase, "a very large fruit from the colonies," had suddenly plunged me into a reverie. And I had a vision of trees, of strange fruits, and of forests filled with marvelously colored birds. Ah! how much those magical but disturbing words, "the colonies" conveyed to me in my childhood. To me they meant at that time all tropical and distant countries, which I invariably thought of as filled with giant palms, exquisite flowers, strange black people and great animals. Although my ideas were so confused I had an almost true conception, amounting to an intuition, of their mournful splendor and their enervating melancholy.

I think that I saw a palm for the first time in an illustrated book called the "Young Naturalists," by Madame Ulliac-Tremadeure; the book was one of my New Year's gifts, and

I read some parts of it upon New Year's evening. (Green-house palms had not at that time been brought to our little town.)

The illustrator had placed two of these unfamiliar trees at the edge of a sea-shore along which negroes were passing. Recently I was curious enough to hunt in the little yellow, faded book for that picture, and truly I wonder how that illustration had the power to create the very least of my dreams unless it were that my immature mind was already leavened by the memory of memories.

"The colonies!" Ah! how can I give an adequate idea of all that awoke in my mind at the sound of these words? A fruit from there, a bird or a shell, had instantly the greatest charm for me.

There were a number of things from the tropics in little Antoinette's home: a parrot, birds of many colors in a cage, and collections of shells and insects. In one of her mamma's bureau drawers I had seen quaint necklaces of fragrant berries; in the garret, where we sometimes rummaged, we found skins of animals and peculiar bags and cases upon which could still be made out the names of towns in the Antilles; and a faint tropical odor scented the entire house.

Antoinette's garden, as I have said, was separated from ours by a very low wall overgrown with roses and jasmine. And the very old pomegranate tree growing there spread its branches into our yard, and at the blooming season its coral-red petals were scattered upon our grass.

Often we spoke from one house to the other:

"Can I come over and play with you?" I would ask. "Will your mamma allow me?"

"No, because I have been naughty and I am being punished." (That happened very often.)—Such an answer always grieved me a great deal; but I must confess that it was more on account of my disappointment over the parrot and the tropical things than because of her punishment.

Little Antoinette had been born in the colonies, but, curiously enough, she never seemed to value that fact, and they had very little charm for her, indeed she scarcely remembered them. I would have given everything I possessed in the world to have seen, if only for the briefest time, one of those distant countries, inaccessible to me, as I well knew.

With a regret that was almost anguish I thought, alas! that in my life as minister, live as long as I might, I would never, never see those enchanting lands.

CHAPTER XV.

I will now describe a game that gave Antoinette and me the greatest pleasure during those two delicious summers.

We pretended to be two caterpillars, and we would creep along the ground upon our stomachs and our knees and hunt for leaves to eat. After having done that for some time we

played that we were very very sleepy, and we would lie down in a corner under the trees and cover our heads with our white aprons—we had become cocoons. We remained in this condition for some time, and so thoroughly did we enter into the role of insects in a state of metamorphosis, that any one listening would have heard pass between us, in a tone of the utmost seriousness, conversations of this nature:

"Do you think that you will soon be able to fly?"

"Oh yes! I'll be flying very soon; I feel them growing in my shoulders now . . . they'll soon unfold." ("They" naturally referred to wings.)

Finally we would wake up, stretch ourselves, and without saying anything we conveyed by our manner our astonishment at the great transformation in our condition. . . .

Then suddenly we began to run lightly and very nimbly in our tiny shoes; in our hands we held the corners of our pinafores which we waved as if they were wings; we ran and ran, and chased each other, and flew about making sharp and fantastic curves as we went. We hastened from flower to flower and smelled all of them, and we continually imitated the restlessness of giddy moths; we imagined too that we were imitating their buzzing when we exclaimed: "Hou ou ou!" a noise we made by filling the cheeks with air and puffing it out quickly through the half-closed mouth.

CHAPTER XVI.

The butterflies, the poor butterflies that have gone out of fashion in these days, played, I am ashamed to say, a large part in my life during my childhood, as did also the flies, beetles and lady-bugs and all the insects that are found upon flowers and in the grass. Although it gave me a great deal of pain to kill them, I was making a collection of them, and I was almost always seen with a butterfly net in my hand. Those flying about in our yard, that had strayed our way from the country, were not very beautiful it must be confessed, but I had the garden and woods of Limoise which all the summer long was a hunting-ground ever full of surprises and wonders.

But the caricatures by Topffer upon this subject made me thoughtful; and when Lucette one day caught me with several butterflies in my hat, and in her incomparably mocking voice called me, "Mr. Cryptogram," I was much humiliated.

CHAPTER XVII.

The poor old grandmother who sang so constantly was dying.

We were all standing about her bed at nightfall one spring evening. She had been ailing scarcely more than forty-eight hours; but the doctor said that on account of her great age she

could not rally, and he pronounced her end to be very near.

Her mind had become clear; she no longer mistook our names, and in a sweet calm voice she begged us to remain near her—it was doubtless the voice of other days, the one that I had never heard before.

As I stood close to my father's side I turned my eyes from my dying grandmother, and they wandered about the room with its old-fashioned furniture. I looked especially at the pictures of bouquets in vases that hung upon the wall. Oh! those poor little water colors in my grandmother's room, how ingenuous they were! They all bore this inscription: "A Bouquet for my mother," and under this there was a little verse of four lines dedicated to her which I could now read and understand. These works of art had been painted by my father in his early boyhood, and he had presented them to his mother upon each joyful anniversary. The poor, unpretentious little pictures bore testimony to the humble life of those early days, and they spoke of the sacred intimacy of mother and son,—they had been painted during the time which followed those great ordeals, the wars, the English invasion and the burning over of the country by the enemy. For the first time I realized that my grandmother too had been young; that, without doubt, before the trouble with her head, my father had loved her as I loved my mamma, and I felt that he would sorrow greatly when he lost her; I felt sorry for him and I was also full of remorse because I had laughed at her singing, and had been amused when she spoke to her image reflected in the looking-glass.

They sent me down stairs. On different pretexts, the reason for which I did not understand, they kept me away from the room until the day was over; then they took me to the house of our friends, the D——s, where I was to have dinner with Lucette.

When, at about half past eight, I returned home with my nurse, I insisted upon going straight to my grandmother's room.

When I entered I was struck with the order and the air of profound peace that pervaded the room. My father was sitting motionless at the head of the bed—he was in the shadow, the open curtains were draped with great precision, and on the pillow, just in its middle, was the head of my sleeping grandmother; her whole position had about it something very regular—something that suggested eternal rest.

My mother and sister were seated beside a chiffonier near the door, from which place they had kept watch over my grandmother during her illness. As soon as I entered they signalled to me with their hands as if to say: "Softly, softly, make no noise; she is asleep." The shade of their lamp threw a vivid light upon the material they were busied with, a number of little silk squares, brown, yellow, gray, etc., that I recognized as pieces of their old dresses and hat ribbons.

At first I thought that they were working upon things which it is customary to prepare for people about to die; but when I, in a very low voice and with some uneasiness, questioned them about it, they explained that they were making sachets which were to be sold for charity.

I said that I wished to bid grandmother good night before retiring, and they allowed me to go towards the bed; but before I reached the middle of the room they, after glancing quickly at each other, changed their minds.

"No, no," they said in a very low voice, "come back, you might disturb her."

But before they spoke I came to a halt of myself, I was overwhelmed with terror—I understood.

Although fear kept me fixed to the spot I noted with astonishment that my grandmother was not at all disagreeable to look at; I had never before seen a dead person, and I had imagined until then, that when the spirit took its departure all that remained was a grinning, hideous skeleton. On the contrary my grandmother had upon her face an extremely sweet and tranquil smile; she was as beautiful as ever, and her face appeared to be rejuvenated and filled with a holy peace.

Then there passed through my mind one of those sad flashes which sometimes come to little children and permit them to see for a moment into hidden depths, and I reflected: How can grandmother be in heaven, how am I to understand the division of the one body into two parts, for that which was left for interment, was it not my grandmother herself, ah! was it not she even to the very expression that she bore in life?

After that I stole away with a bruised heart and downcast spirit, not daring to ask a question of any one, fearful lest what I had so unerringly divined would be confirmed, I did not wish to hear the dread and terrible word pronounced. . . .

For a long time thereafter little silken sachet bags were always associated in my mind with the idea of death.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I still have in my memory, almost agonizing impressions of a serious illness which I had when I was about eight years old. Those about me called it scarlet fever, and its very name seemed to have a diabolical quality.

I had the fever in March, which was cold and blustering and dreary that year, and every evening as night fell, if by chance my mother was not near me, a great sadness would overwhelm my soul. (It was an oppression coming on at twilight, from which animals, and beings with a temperament like mine suffer almost equally.)

My curtains were kept open, and I always had a view of the pathetic looking little table with its cups of gruel and bottles of medicines. And as I gazed at these things, so suggestive of sickness, they took on strange shapes in the darkness of the silent room,—and at such times there passed through my head a procession of grotesque, hideous and alarming images.

Upon two successive evenings at dusk there appeared to me, in the half delirium of fever, two persons who caused me the most extreme terror.

The first one was an old woman, hump-backed and very ugly, but with a fascinating ugliness, who without my hearing her open the door, without my seeing any one rise to meet her, stole noiselessly to my side. She departed, however, without speaking to me; but as she turned to go her hump became visible, and I saw that there was an opening in it, and there popped out from this hole the green head of a parrot which the old woman carried in her hump. This

creature called out, "Cuckoo," in a thin, squeaking, far-away voice, and then withdrew again into the frightful old hag's hump. Oh! when I heard that "Cuckoo!" a cold perspiration formed on my forehead; but suddenly the woman disappeared and then I realized that it was only a dream.

The next evening a tall thin man, clothed in the black dress of a minister, appeared to me. He did not come near me, but kept close to the wall and whirled, with body all bent over, rapidly and noiselessly about the room. His miserable, thin legs and the gown of his dress stood out stiff and straight as he turned quickly. And—most horrible of all—he had for a head the skull of a large white bird with a long beak, which was a monstrous exaggeration of a sea-mew's skull, bleached by the sun and wind and waves, that I had the previous summer found upon the beach at the Island. (I believe this old man's visit coincided with the time when I was worst, almost in danger.) After he had made one or two revolutions about the room, he quickly and silently began to rise from the floor. Ever moving his thin legs he reached the cornice, then higher and higher still he rose, above the pictures and the looking-glasses, until he was lost to sight in the twilight shadows that lay near the ceiling.

And for two or three years after this event the faces of those visions haunted me. On winter evenings I thought of them with a shudder as I mounted the stairway, which at that period it was not customary to light. "If they should be there," I would say to myself; "suppose one of them is lying in wait to pursue me, and stretch out their hands and try to catch me by the legs."

And truly I will not be sure that I would not now feel, should I encourage myself, some of the old-time fear which that woman and man inspired in me; they were for some time at the head of the list of my childhood terrors, and for very long they led the procession of visions and bad dreams.

Many gloomy apparitions haunted the first years of my life which otherwise were so uncommonly sweet. I was especially addicted to indulging in sad reflections at nightfall; I had impressions of my career being cut short by an early death. Too carefully sheltered and protected at this period, and yet in some measure forced mentally, I may be likened to a flower that lacks color and vitality because it has been raised in an unwholesome atmosphere. I should have been surrounded by hardy, mischievous, noisy playmates of my own age and sex, but instead of that I played only with gentle little girls. I was always careful and precise in my manners, and my curled hair and sedate bearing gave me the appearance of a little eighteenth century nobleman.

CHAPTER XIX.

After that long fever, the very name of which has a sinister sound, I recall the delight I felt when they allowed me to go out into the air, when I was permitted to go down into our beloved yard. The day chosen for my first airing was a radiantly beautiful and clear morning in April. Seated under the bower of jasmine and honeysuckle I felt as if I were experiencing the enchantment of paradise, of another Eden. Everything was budding and blossoming; without my knowledge, during the time that I was confined to my bed, this wonderful drama of the spring had enacted itself upon the earth. I had not often seen this wonderful and

magical renewal which has delighted man through all the ages, and to which only the very aged seem indifferent; it ravished me and I allowed my joy to take possession of me almost to the point of intoxication.—Oh! that pure, warm, soft air; the glorious sunlight and the tender, fresh green of the young plants and the budding trees that already cast a little shade. And in myself there was an unwonted strength that bespoke recovery, and I rejoiced mightily when I breathed in the sweet air and felt the flood of new life.

My brother was a tall fellow of twenty-one who had the freedom of the house and grounds in which to work out any of his fancies. During my convalescence I entertained myself greatly speculating about something he was busy with in the garden, which something I was dying of impatience to see. At the end of the yard, in a lovely nook under an old plum tree, my brother was making a tiny lake; he had dug it out and cemented it like a cistern, and from the country round about he procured stones and quantities of moss with which to make the banks about the lake romantic looking; he also constructed rocky elevations and grottoes out of stones and mosses.

And this work was finished the day that I went out for the first time; they had even put little gold fish into the water, and they turned on the tiny fountain and it played in my honor.

I approached it with ecstasy, and I found that it greatly surpassed in beauty anything that my imagination had been able to conjure up. And when my brother told me it was mine, I felt a joy so intense that it seemed to me it must last forever. Oh! what unexpected joy to possess it for my very own! And what happiness to know that I could enjoy it every single day during the warm and beautiful months that were to come. And the thought of being able to live out of doors again, the prospect of playing in every nook of that lovely garden, as I had done the previous summer, was rapture to me.

I remained at the edge of the pond a long time, looking at it and admiring it unceasingly, and I breathed in the sweet, mild spring air, and warmed myself in the radiant sunlight so long denied to me. The old plum tree above my head, planted so long ago by one of my ancestors, and now almost at the end of its usefulness, spread its lacy curtain of new leaves to the tender blue of the sky, and the tiny fountain in its shade continued its tuneful melody as if it were a little hurdy-gurdy celebrating my return to health.

To-day that old plum tree is dead and its trunk the only thing left of it, and spared out of respect, is covered, like a ruin, with ivy vines.

But the pond, with its grottoes and islets, still remains intact; time has given it the appearance of genuine nature herself. Its greenish stones look old and decayed; the mosses, the delicate little plants brought from the river, and the rushes and wild iris have acclimated themselves, and dragon flies that stray through the town take refuge there—a bit of wild nature has established itself in that little corner and I hope it will never be disturbed.

I am more loyally attached to that spot than to any other, although I have loved many places; in no other one have I found so much peace; there I feel tranquil, there I refresh myself and acquire youth and new life. That little corner is my sacred Mecca, so much indeed is it to me that should any one destroy it I would feel as if some vital thing in my life had lost balance, would feel that I had missed my footing, or almost imagine that it presaged the beginning of my end.

The reverent feeling that I have for the place has been born, I believe, from my sea-faring life, with its long voyages to distant places and its dreary exiles during which I thought and dreamed of it constantly.

There is in particular one little grotto for which I have an especial affection: the memory of it has often, in times of depression and melancholy, during the years of weary exile heartened me.

After the angel Azrael had so cruelly passed our way, after reverses of many sorts, and during that sad term when I was a wanderer on the face of the earth, and my widowed mother and my aunt Claire were left alone in the beloved but deserted home that was almost as silent as a tomb, I experienced many a heartache as I thought of the dear hearthstone and of the things so familiar to my childhood that were doubtless going to ruin through neglect. I felt especially anxious to know if the storms of winter and the hands of time had destroyed the delicate arch of that grotto; and strange as it may seem, if those little moss-covered rocks had fallen in I would have felt that an almost irreparable breach had been made in my own life.

At the side of the pond there is an old gray wall which is an integral part of the corner that I call my Holy Mecca; I think it is the very centre of the sacred place, and I recall the tiniest details of it. I can picture to myself the scarcely visible mosses that grow there, and the gaps made by time, which the spiders now inhabit. Growing up at the back of the wall there is an arbor of ivy and honeysuckles whose shade I sought daily every beautiful summer day for the purpose of studying my lessons. But I lounged there lazily, as a school-boy will, and allowed all my attention to be absorbed by those gray stones with their teeming world of insects. Not only do I love and venerate that old wall as the Moslems love their holiest mosque, but I regard it also as something which actually protects me; as something which conserves my life and prolongs my youth. I would not suffer any one to change it in the least, and should it be demolished I would feel as if the very supports under my life were insecure. May it not be because certain things persist, and are known to us throughout our lives, that we borrow from thence delusions in regard to our own stability and our own continuance. Seeing that they abide we suppose that we cannot change nor cease to be.

Personally I cannot explain these sentiments of mine in any other way than to regard them as some sort of fetich worship.

And when I consider that those stones are very like other stones, that they have been brought from I know not where, by whom I care not, to be built into a wall by workmen who lived and died a century before I was even thought of, I realize the childishness of the illusion, which I indulge in spite of myself, that it can extend any sort of spiritual protection to me; I comprehend only too well what a frail and unstable base has that that symbolizes for me the permanency of life.

Those who have never had a permanent home, but who have from infancy been taken from place to place, living in lodgings meantime, may not be able to appreciate these sentiments.

But among those who have daily gathered about the same hearthstone, there are, I am sure, many who, without confessing it, are susceptible in varying degrees to impressions of this sort. And do not such people often, because of an old stone wall, a garden known and loved since childhood, an old terrace which has become in indestructible part of their memory, or an old tree that has not changed form within their lives, seek a warrant for their own hope of immortality?

And doubtless, alas! before their birth these objects lent the same delusive countenance to others, to those unknown now turned to dust and gone to nothingness, who may not even have been of their blood and race.

CHAPTER XX.

It was about the middle of the summer, after my severe illness, that I went to the Island for a long visit. I was taken there by my brother and my sister, the latter was like a second mother to me. After a sojourn of several weeks with our relatives at St. Pierre Oleron (my good Aunt Claire and her two old unmarried daughters) we went alone, we three, to a fishing village upon the Long-Beach, which at that time was entirely off the line of travel. The Long-Beach is that portion of the Island commanding a view of the ocean over which the west winds blow ceaselessly. Upon this coast, which extends without a curve straight and seemingly limitless, with the majestic sweep of the desert of Sahara, the waves roll and break with a mighty noise. Here there are to be seen many uneven waste spaces; it is a region of sand where stunted trees and dwarfish evergreen oaks shelter themselves behind the dunes. A curious kind of wild flower, a pink and fragrant carnation, blooms there profusely all summer long. Two or three villages, composed of humble little cottages, whitewashed like the bungalows of Algeria, break the loneliness of this region. These homes have planted about them such flowers as can best resist the sea-winds. Dark skinned fishermen and their families, a hardy honest people, still very primitive at the time of which I write, live here; even sea-bathers had not found their way to these shores.

In an old forgotten copy-book where my sister had written down (in a stilted manner) the impressions of that summer I find this description of our lodgings.

"We dwell in the centre of the village, in the square, at the Mayor's house.

"This house has two ells, which are spacious beyond measure.

"Its dazzling whitewashed surfaces sparkle in the sun, its window shutters are fastened with large iron hooks and painted a dark green as is the custom here. The flower bed that is planted in the form of a wreath all around the house grows vigorously in the sand. The day-lilies, one surpassing the other in beauty, open their yellow, pink and red blossoms, and the mignonette beds which at noon-time are fully abloom waft on the air an odor that is sweet as the scent of orange blossoms.

"Opposite us a little path hollowed out of the sand descends rapidly to the edge of the sea."

My first really intimate acquaintance with the sea-wrack, crabs, sea-nettles, jelly-fish, and the thousand and one other small creatures that inhabit the ocean, dates from this visit to the Long-Beach.

And during this same summer I fell in love for the first time—my beloved was a little village girl. But here, so that the story may be related more accurately, I will allow my sister, through the medium of the old copy-book, to speak again—I merely copy:

"Dozens of the children (fishermen's boys and girls), tanned and brown and with little legs all bare, followed Pierre, or audaciously hurried before him, and from time to time turned and looked at him wonderingly with their beautiful dark eyes. At that time a little gentleman was a rare enough spectacle in that part of the country to be worth the trouble of running

after.

"Every day Pierre, accompanied by this crowd, would descend to the beach by means of the little footpath scooped out of the sand. There he would run and pick up the shells that, upon that coast, are so exquisitely beautiful. They are yellow, pink, purple and many other bright colors, and they have the most delicate and varied forms. Pierre admired them greatly, and the little ones who always followed him would silently offer him hands full.

"Veronica was the most attentive of all. She was about his own age, perhaps a little younger, six or seven years of age. She had a sweet, dreamy little face, a rather pale complexion and lovely gray eyes. She was protected from the heat by a large white sunbonnet; a kichenote, as they call it in that part of the country, is a very old word, and means a large bonnet made of linen and cardboard, which projects over the face like the head-dress of a nun. Veronica would slip near Pierre, take possession of his hand, and keep it in hers. Thus they walked along contentedly without saying a word. They stopped from time to time to kiss each other. 'I wish to kiss you,' Veronica would say, and as she did so she embraced him tenderly with her little arms. Then after Pierre had allowed her the caress he would, in his turn, kiss her vehemently on her pretty, little, plump cheeks. . . ."

"Little Veronica used to run and seat herself upon our doorstep as soon as she was up; and there she remained like a faithful, loyal spaniel. As soon as Pierre woke he thought of her being there, and he would immediately get out of bed, have himself quickly washed, and stand quietly to have his blond curls combed out, and then run to find his little friend. They embraced each other and prattled of the events of the day before; sometimes Veronica, before coming to our house to wait for Pierre, made a trip to the seashore and gathered an apron full of the beautiful shells as a love offering to her sweetheart.

"One day, at about the end of August, after a long reverie, during which Pierre had perhaps weighed and considered the difficult question of the social difference between them, he said; 'Veronica you and I must get married some day; I will ask permission of my parents when the time comes.'"

Then my sister speaks of our departure:

"Upon the 15th of September it was necessary for us to leave the village. Pierre had made a collection of shells, sea-weeds, star-fish and pebbles; he was insatiable and wished to carry all of them away with him, and with Veronica's aid he packed a great many into his boxes.

"One morning a large carriage arrived at St. Pierre to take us away. The peace of the village was broken by the noise of the little bells and the cracking of the driver's whip. Pierre with the greatest care placed his own packets into the carriage and then we three quickly took our places. With eyes full of sadness Pierre gazed out of the carriage window towards the sandy path that led down to the beach—and at his little friend who stood there weeping."

In conclusion I will copy word for word the reflection found at the end of the faded book which was written down by my sister during that same summer.

"Then, and not for the first time, I fell into an uneasy reverie that had to do with Pierre, and I asked myself: 'What will become of the little boy? And what will become of his little friend whose figure we could still see outlined at the now far distant end of the road. How much despair does that little heart feel; how much anguish at being thus abandoned?'"

"What will become of that boy?" Alas! what indeed! His whole life was to be similar to that summer of his childhood. To know the sorrow of many farewells; to desire to take with me a thousand trifles of no appreciable value, to hunger to have about me a world of beloved souvenirs,—but especially to say good bye to wild little creatures (loved perhaps just because they were ingenuous children of nature),—these things were to make up the sum of my life.

The two or three days' journey home (broken into by a visit to our old aunts) seemed to me very nearly endless. My impatience to see and embrace mamma kept me from sleeping. I had not seen her for almost two months! My sister was the only person in the world who, at that time, could have made such a long separation from my mamma endurable to me.

We reached the continent safely, and after a three-hours ride in the carriage that we found awaiting us at the boat-landing, we passed through the ramparts of our town. Ah! at last I saw my mother; I once more saw her dear face and sweet smile.—And now at this distant time I find that one of my clearest and most persistent memories is her beloved and still youthful face and her beautiful dark hair.

When we arrived at the house I ran to visit my little lake and its grottoes, and I hurried to the arbor that grew against the old wall. But my eyes had become so accustomed to the immensity of the sandy beach and the ocean that all of these things appeared shrunken, diminished, walled-in and mean. The leaves were turning yellow, and although it was still warm there was a promise of early autumn in the air. With fear and dread I thought of the dull and cold days which would soon be upon us; and when, with a heavy heart, I began to unpack my boxes of sea-weed and shells, I was overcome with grief because I was not still upon the Island. I felt disquieted too about Veronica who would have to be there without me during the winter, and suddenly my eyes overflowed with tears at the thought that I might never again hold her dear little sun-burned hands in mine.

CHAPTER XXI.

The time now arrived for me to begin regular lessons and to write exercises in copy-books, which I invariably smeared with ink—ah! what gloom and dreariness suddenly came into my life.

I remember that I performed my tasks spiritlessly and sulkily, and that my lessons bored me inexpressibly. And since I wish to be very sincere, it is necessary for me to add that my teachers also were well-nigh intolerable to me.

Alas! well do I remember the one who first taught me Latin (rosa, the rose; cornu, the horn; tonitru, the thunder). This tutor was very old and bent, and as sad of face as a rainy November day. He is dead now, the poor old fellow—sweet peace to his soul! He was exactly like that "Mr. Ratin" hit off in caricature so neatly by Topffer; he had all the marks, even to the wart with the three hairs, and fine wrinkles beyond number at the end of his old nose; to me his face was the personification of all that was hideous and disgusting.

He arrived every day precisely at noon; and a chill would pass through me when I heard his knock which I would have recognized among a thousand.

Always after his departure, I attempted to purify that part of my table where his elbow had rested by rubbing it hard with the napkin which I had taken clandestinely from the linen-closet. And the repulsion extended itself to the very books, already unattractive enough to me, which he touched; I even tore certain leaves out of them because I suspected that he had handled them a great deal.

My books were always full of ink blots, always stained and covered with smeared sketches and pictures, which one draws idly when his attention wanders from his task. I who was usually so careful and proper a child had such a detestation for the books which I was obliged to learn from, that I abused them in the commonest fashion; altogether I was a miserable pupil. I found—and this is the astonishing part—that all my scruples of conscience deserted me when my teacher questioned me in regard to the time I had spent upon my lessons (I usually studied them in a mad hurry at the last moment); my aversion for study was the first thing that caused me to temporize with my conscience.

In spite, however, of a pricking conscience, I still continued to give only a passing glance at my lessons at the very last moment. But generally "Mr. Ratin" would write "good" or "very good" upon the paper which it was my duty each evening to show to my father.

I believe that if he, or the other professors who succeeded him, could have suspected the truth, could have guessed that out of their presence my mind did not dwell for more than five minutes a day upon what they had taught me, their honest heads would have split with indignation.

CHAPTER XXII.

During the course of the winter which followed my visit to the Long-Beach a great change took place in our family—my brother departed for his first campaign.

He was, as I have said, about fourteen years older than I. I had had very little time to become acquainted with him, to attach myself to him, for his preparation for his vocation made it necessary for him to be away from home a great deal. I scarcely ever went into his room where, scattered upon the table, there was an appalling number of large books. This room was pervaded with the strong odor of tobacco; and I dared not go near it for fear that I would meet his comrades, young officers, or students like himself. I had heard, also, that he was not always well-behaved, that sometimes he did not come in until very late at night, and that often my father had found it necessary to give him a serious talking to; secretly I greatly disapproved of his conduct.

But his approaching departure strengthened my affection, and caused me extreme sorrow.

He was going to Polynesia, to Tahiti, almost to the end of the world, and he expected to be away four years. To me that seemed an almost endless absence, for it represented half of my own age.

I watched, with the greatest interest, the preparations that he made for his voyage. The iron-bound trunks were packed with care. He wrapped the gilt-embroidered uniform and his sword in a quantity of tissue paper, and put them away with the same care one bestows upon

a mummy when it is relaid in its metal case. All of these things augmented the impression that I had of the distance and dangers of the long voyage about to be undertaken by my brother.

A sort of melancholy rested upon every one in the house, which became deeper and more and more noticeable as the day for the separation drew near. At our meals we were more silent; advice from my father and assurances from my brother was the substance of most of the conversations, and I listened meditatively without saying a word.

The day before my brother left he confided to my care—and I was greatly honored to have him do so—the many fragile little things that he had upon his mantel-piece; these he bade me guard faithfully until his return.

He then made me a present of a handsome gilt edged, illustrated book entitled, "A Voyage in Polynesia." It was the only book that in my early childhood I had an affection for, and I constantly turned its pages with eager pleasure. In the front of it there was an engraving of a very pretty dark woman who, crowned with reeds, was sitting gracefully under a palm tree. Under this picture was printed: "Portrait of her Majesty, Pomare IV., Queen of Tahiti." Further over in the book there was a picture of two beautiful maidens, with naked shoulders and crowned heads, standing at the edge of the sea, and this was entitled: "Two Young Tahitian Girls upon the Beach."

Upon the day of my brother's departure, at the last hour, the preparations being over, and the large trunks closed and locked, we gathered in the parlor as solemnly as if we had come together for a funeral. A chapter of the Bible was read and then we had family prayers. . . . Four years! and during that time the width of the earth between us and our loved one!

I recall particularly my mother's face during the farewell scene; she was seated in an arm chair beside my brother. After the prayer she had upon her face an infinitely sweet, but wistful smile, and an expression of submissive trust; but suddenly an unexpected change came over her features, and in spite of her efforts at self-control her tears flowed. I had never before seen my mother weep, and it caused me the greatest anguish.

The first few days after his departure I had a feeling of sadness, and I missed him greatly; often and often I went into his room, and the little treasures which he had confided to my care were as sacred as holy relics.

Upon a map of the world I had my parents point out to me the route of his journey, a journey which would take about five months. To me his return belonged to an inconceivable and unreal future; and, most strange of all, what spoiled for me the pleasure of his home-coming, was that I at that time would be twelve or thirteen years of age—almost a big boy in fact.

Unlike most other children,—especially unlike those of to-day—who are eager to become men and women as speedily as possible, I had a terror of growing up, which became more and more accentuated as I grew older. I argued about it to myself, and I wrote about it, and when any one asked me why I had such a feeling I answered, since I could not think of a better reason: "It seems to me that it will be very wearisome to be a man." I believe that it is an extremely singular state of mind, an altogether unique one perhaps, this shrinking away from life at its very beginning; I was not able to see a horizon before me: I could not picture my future to myself as so many can; before me there was nothing but impenetrable darkness, a great leaden curtain shut off my view.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Cakes, cakes, my good hot cakes!" Thus, in a plaintive voice, sang the old woman peddler who regularly, upon winter evenings, during the first ten or twelve years of my life, passed under our window.—When I think of those bygone days I hear again her insistent refrain.

It is with the memory of Sundays that the song of the "good hot cakes" is most closely associated; for upon that evening, having no duties to perform in the way of lessons, I sat with my parents in the parlor upon the ground floor which overlooked the street; therefore, when almost upon the stroke of nine, the poor old woman passed along the sidewalk, and her sonorous chant broke into the stillness of the frosty night I was near enough to hear her distinctly.

She presaged the coming of cold weather as swallows announce the advent of the spring. After a succession of cool autumnal days, the first time we heard her song we would say: "Well, we may conclude that winter is really here."

This parlor where we sat together seemed a very immense room to me. It was simply and tastefully furnished and arranged: the walls and the woodwork were brown, decorated with strips of gold: the furniture, dating from the time of Louis Philippe, was upholstered in red velvet; the family portraits were in severe black and gold frames; in the centre of the table, in the place of honor, there was a large Bible that had been printed in the sixteenth century. This was a precious heirloom that had come down to us from our Huguenot ancestors who had, at that time, been persecuted for their faith. We had baskets and vases of flowers disposed about the room, a custom which then was not so usual as it is now.

It was always a delicious moment for me when we left the dining-room and went into the parlor, for the latter room had an air of great peace and comfort; and when all the family were seated there in a circle, mother, grandmother and aunts, I began to skip about noisily in their midst from very joy at being surrounded by so many loved ones; and I waited impatiently for them to begin the little games which they were in the habit of playing with me early in the evening. Our neighbors, the D——'s, came to see us every Sunday; it was a time-honored custom in our two families, between whom there existed a friendship that had its inception in the country generations before our time; it was a friendship which had been handed down to us as a precious heritage. At about eight o'clock, when I recognized their ring, I jumped for joy, and I could not restrain myself from running to the street door to meet them, for Lucette, my dear friend, always came with her parents.

Alas! how sad is my reverie when I think of the beloved and venerated forms of those who surrounded me upon those happy Sunday evenings; the majority of them have passed away, and their faces, when I seek to recall them, are dim and misty—some are altogether lost from memory.

Then friends and relatives would begin to play, for the purpose of giving me pleasure, the little games of which I was so fond; they played "Marriage," "My Lady's Toilet," "The Horned Knight," and "The Lovely Shepherdess." Everybody took part in them, even the old people, and my grand aunt Bertha, the eldest of all, was irresistibly droll.

The refrain became louder rapidly, for the singer trotted along with short, quick steps, and very soon she was under our window, where she kept repeating her song in a shrill, cracked voice.

When they would allow me to do so, it was my greatest pleasure to run to the door, followed by an indulgent aunt, not so much for the purpose of buying the cakes, however, for they were coarse and unpalatable, as to stop the old woman and talk with her.

The poor old peddler would approach with a courtesy, proud of being called, and standing with one foot upon the threshold she would present her basket for our inspection. Her neat dress was set off by the white linen sleeves that she always wore. While she uncovered her basket I would look longingly, like a caged wild-bird, far down the cold and deserted streets.

I liked to breathe in great draughts of the icy air, to look hastily into the black night lying beyond the door, and then to run back into the warm and comfortable parlor,—meantime, the monotonous refrain grew fainter and fainter as it died away into the mean streets that lay close to the ramparts and the harbor. The old woman's route was always the same, and my thoughts followed her with a singular interest as long as the song continued.

I felt a great pity for the poor old woman still wandering about in the cold night, while we were snug and warm at home; but mingled with that feeling there was another sentiment so confused and vague that I give it too much importance, even though I touch upon it never so lightly. It was this: I had a sort of restless curiosity to see those squalid streets through which the old peddler went so bravely, and to which I had never been taken. These streets, that I saw from the distance, were deserted in the day time, but there in the evening, from time immemorial, sailors made merry; sometimes the sound of their singing was so loud that we could hear it as we sat in our parlor.

What could be going on there? What was the nature of that fun, the echo of whose din we heard so distinctly? How did they amuse themselves, these sailors, who had but newly come over the sea from distant countries where the sun was always hot? What life was careless and simple and free as theirs!

My emotions lose their force when I endeavor to interpret them, and my words seem very inept. But I know that seeds of trouble, and seeds of hope (to develop how I could not guess) were at about this time planted in my little being. When, with my cakes in my hand, I re-entered the parlor where the family sat talking together quietly, I felt for a quick, almost inappreciable, moment suffocated and imprisoned.

At half-past nine, because of me seldom later, tea was served, and with it we had thin slices of bread, spread with the most delicious butter, and cut with the care one gives to very few things in these days.

Then at about eleven o'clock, after a reading from the Bible and a prayer, we retired.

As I lay in my little white bed I was always more restless Sunday nights than at any other time. Immediately ahead of me there was the prospect of Mr. Ratin whom morning would surely bring, and he was always a most painful sight to me after a respite; also I was full of regret because Sunday was over, always over so quickly!—and I felt a great weariness when I thought of the many lessons it would be necessary for me to prepare before Sunday came again. Sometimes, as I lay there, I would hear the songs the sailors sung as they passed in the distant lands and noble ships; and a sort of dull and indefinite longing took possession of me and I felt as if I would like to be out of doors myself in search of pleasurable and exciting

adventure. I hungered to be in the bracing wintry night air, or in one of those foreign lands where the sun beats down with tropical warmth; I yearned to be out and singing like them, as loud as possible, just for the joy of being alive.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth!"

Besides reading the Bible with the family every evening, I read a chapter from it each morning before rising.

My Bible was a very small one, with exceedingly fine print. Pressed between its pages were some flowers that I was very fond of; especially was I of the spray of pink larkspur, which had the power of bringing very distinctly before my mind's eye the stubble fields (gleux) of the Island of Oleron where I had gathered it.

I do not know exactly how to explain the word gleux, but it means the stubble which remains after the grain is harvested, and those fields of short pale yellow stalks that the autumn sun dries and turns a bright golden. In these fields upon the Island, overrun by chirping grasshoppers, late corn-flowers and white and pink larkspur come up, grow very high, and blossom.

And upon winter mornings, before beginning to read, I always looked at the spray of flowers which still retained its delicate color, and there appeared to me a vision of the Island, and I longed for the summer time and for the warm and sunny fields of Oleron.

"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth!

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven upon the earth; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit."

When I read my Bible for myself, having then my choice of passages, I either selected that grand portion of Genesis wherein the light is separated from the darkness, or the visions and the marvels of Revelation. I was fascinated by its imaginative poetry, so splendid and yet so terrible, which has, in my opinion, never been equalled in any other book of mankind. . . . The beasts with seven heads, the signs in the heavens, the sound of the last trumpet were well-known terrors that haunted and enchanted my imagination.

In a book, a relic of my Huguenot ancestors, printed in the last century, I had seen pictures of these things. It was a "History of the Bible," and the weird pictures illustrating the visions of the Book of Revelation, invariably, had dark backgrounds. My maternal grandmother kept this precious book, which she had brought from the Island, under lock and key in a cupboard in her room; and as it was still my habit to go there at the sad hour of dusk, it was then that I usually asked her to lend me the book, so that I might turn over its leaves as it lay upon her lap. In the dim twilight until it was too dark to see, I gazed at the multitude of winged angels who were flying rapidly under the curtain of blackness which presaged the

end of the world. The heavens were darker than the earth, and in the midst of the great cloud masses, there was visible the simple and terrifying triangle that signified Jehovah.

CHAPTER XXV.

Egypt, the Egypt of antiquity, at a later time, exercised a mysterious fascination over me. I recognized a picture of it immediately, without hesitation and astonishment, in an illustrated magazine. I saluted as old acquaintances two gods with hawk heads that were cut in profile upon a stone and placed at each end of a strangely depicted Zodiac, and although I saw the picture for the first time upon an overcast day, there came to me, and of that I am sure, a sudden impression of great heat given out by a pitiless sun.

CHAPTER XXVI.

During the winter following the departure of my brother, I passed many of my leisure hours in his room painting the pictures in the "Voyage to Polynesia" which he had given me. With great care I first colored the flowers and the groups of birds. After that I painted the men. When I came to color the two young Tahitian girls who were standing at the edge of the sea (the illustrator had been inspired to depict them as nymphs) I made them white, all white and pink like a pretty little doll—I thought them very beautiful done so.

It was reserved for me to learn later than their color is different, and their charms quite otherwise.

My ideas of beauty have changed a great deal since that time, and it would have astonished me very much if I had then been told what faces I was to find most charming in the strange course of my later life. But almost all children are under the dominion of some fancy which dies out when they become men and women.

The majority of people, during the period of their innocence and youth, similarly admire the same type; sweet, regular features, and the fresh pink and white tints. Only at a later time does their estimate of what constitutes beauty vary, then it accords with the culture of their spirit, and especially does it follow in the wake of their developing intelligence.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I do not exactly remember at what period I started my museum which absorbed so much of my time. Just above my Aunt Bertha's room there was a tiny garret-chamber that I had

taken possession of; the chief charm of the place was the window that opened to the west, and commanded a view of the ramparts and its old trees. The reddish spots in the distance, that broke the uniform green of the meadows, were herds of wandering oxen and cows. I had persuaded my mother to paper this attic room, and she had covered its walls with a pinkish chamois paper which is still there; she also put a what-not and some glass cases there. In these latter I placed my butterflies which I looked upon as rare specimens; I also arranged therein the birds'-nests that I had found in the woods of Limoise; the shells I had gathered upon the shores of the Island, and those others (brought from the colonies at an early time by unknown ancestors) that I had found in the garret at the bottom of old chests where they had lain for years and years, given over to dust and darkness.

I spent many tranquil hours in this retreat contemplating the tropical mother-of-pearl shells, and trying to image to myself the strange coasts from which they had come.

A good old great uncle of mine, who was very fond of me, encouraged me in these diversions. He was a physician, and in his youth he had lived for a long time upon the coast of Africa; he had a collection of natural history specimens almost as valuable and varied as any found in a city museum. His wonderful things captivated me: the rare and exquisite shells, amulets and wooden weapons that still retained their exotic odor, with which I became so surfeited later, and indescribably beautiful butterflies under glass enchanted me.

He lived in our neighborhood and I visited him often. To get to his cabinets, it was necessary to go through his garden where thorn-apples and cacti grew abundantly, and where they kept a gray parrot, brought from Gaboon, whose vocabulary consisted of words learnt from the negroes.

And when my old uncle spoke of Senegal, of Goree, and of Guinea, the music of these names intoxicated me, and conveyed to me vaguely something of the sad languor of the dark continent. My uncle predicted that I would become a great naturalist,—but he was as mistaken as were all those others who foretold my future; indeed he struck farther from the centre than any one else; he did not understand that my liking for natural history was no more than a temporary and erratic excursion of my unformed mind; he could not know that the cold glass and the formal, rigid arrangements of dead science had not power to hold me for long.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In the meantime, alas! I had to spend many long and wearisome hours in going through the form of studying my lessons.

Topffer, who is the only real poet of school-boys, that genus so misunderstood, divides us into three groups: first, those who are in boarding schools; second, those who do all their studying at home at a window which overlooks a gloomy courtyard containing a twisted old fig tree; third, those who also study at home in a bright little room whose window commands a view of the street.

I belonged to that third class whom Topffer considers extraordinarily privileged, and as likely, in consequence, to grow up into happy men. My room was upon the first floor, and it

opened into the street; it had white curtains, and its green paper was embellished with bouquets of white roses. Near the window was my work desk, and above it, upon a book-shelf, was my very much neglected library.

In fine weather I always opened this window, but I kept my venetian blinds half-closed, so that I might look out without having my idleness seen, and reported by a meddlesome neighbor. Morning and evening I glanced to the end of the quiet street that stretched its sunny length between the white country houses and lost itself among the old trees growing beyond the ramparts. I could see from there the occasional passers-by, all well known to me, the neighborhood cats that prowled within doorways or upon house-tops, the swifts darting about in the warm air, and the swallows skimming along the dusty street. . . . Oh! how many hours have I spent at that window feeling like a caged sparrow, my spirit filled with vague reverie; and meantime my ink-blotted copy-book lay open before me, but no inspiration would come, and the composition that I was engaged upon got itself finished very laboriously, —often not at all.

And before long I began to play tricks upon the pedestrians, a fatal result of my idleness over which I often felt remorseful.

I am bound to confess that my great friend Lucette was usually a willing assistant in these pranks. Although now almost a young lady sixteen or seventeen years of age, she was at times almost as much of a child as I. "You must never tell any one!" she would say with an irrepressible smile of mischief in her merry eyes (but I may tell now after so many years have passed, now that the flowers of twenty summers have bloomed upon her grave).

Our pranks consisted of taking cherry stems, plum stones and any sort of trash, and wrapping them neatly into white or pink paper parcels that looked very attractive to the eye; we then threw these bundles into the street and hid ourselves behind the shutters to see who picked them up.

Sometimes we would write letters, impertinent or incoherent ones, with accompanying drawings to illustrate the text; these we addressed to the different eccentric people in our neighborhood, and, with the aid of a thread, we lowered them to the sidewalk at about the same time these persons were in the habit of passing. . . .

Oh! how merrily we laughed as we composed these hodge-podges of style! With no one else have I ever laughed so heartily as with Lucette,—and we usually roared over things that no one except ourselves could possibly have considered funny. Over and above the bond of little brother and grown sister there was between us a sympathy springing from our appreciation of the ridiculous, and our notions of what constituted fun were in complete accord. She was the sprightliest person I ever knew, and sometimes a single word would start us to laughing at our own or our neighbors' expense, until our sides ached and we almost fell upon the floor.

This part of my nature was not, I must confess, in harmony with the gloomy reveries evoked by the pictures of the Book of Revelation, and with my ascetic religious convictions. But I was already full of strange contradictions.

Poor little Lucette or Lucon (Lucon was the masculine for Lucette, and I used to call her "My dear Lucon"); poor little Lucette was also one of my professors, but one who caused me neither fear nor disgust. Like "Mr. Ratin" she also kept a book wherein she would inscribe "good" or "very good," and I showed it to my parents every evening. Until now I have neglected to say that it had been one of her amusements to teach me to play upon the piano; she taught me by stealth so that I might surprise my parents by playing for them, upon the

occasion of a family celebration, the "Little Swiss Boy" or the "Rocks of St. Malo." The result was she had been requested to go on with lessons that had had such a favorable beginning, and my musical education was entrusted to her until it came time for me to play the music of Chopin and Liszt.

Painting and music were the only things I worked at industriously and faithfully.

My sister taught me painting; I do not, however, remember when I commenced it, but it must have been very early in my life; it seems to me that there was never a time when I was not able, with my pencil or my brush, to express in some measure the odd fancies of my imaginations.

CHAPTER XXIX.

In my grandmother's room, at the bottom of the cupboard where she kept "The History of the Bible," with the terrible pictures illustrating the visions of Revelation, she had also several other precious relics. In particular there was an old silver-clasped psalm book. It was extremely tiny, like a toy-book, and in its day it must have been a marvel of the printer's skill. It had been made in miniature thus they told me, so that it could be easily hidden; at the time of the persecutions our ancestors had often carried it about with them, concealed in their clothing. There was also, in a paste-board box, a bundle of letters written on parchment and marked Leyden or Amsterdam. Those written between the years 1702 and 1710 were secured by a large wax seal stamped with a count's coronet.

They were letters of our Huguenot ancestors, who, at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, had quitted their country, their home and their dear ones, rather than abjure their faith. The letters had been written to an old grandfather, a man too aged to go the way of the exile, who was able, for some inexplicable reason, to remain unmolested in his retreat upon the Island of Oleron. The letters testified to the fact that the exiles had been submissive and respectful towards him to a degree unknown in our day; the wanderers wrote asking his advice or his consent before undertaking anything,—they even asked whether they might wear a certain wig which was fashionable in Amsterdam at that time. They spoke of their troubles, but without murmuring over them, with a truly Christian resignation; their goods had been confiscated; they were obliged to follow uncongenial trades in order to maintain themselves; and they hoped, they said, with the aid of God always to make enough to keep their children from starving.

Together with the respect that these letters inspired, they had also the charm of age; it was a novel experience to enter into the life of a bygone time, to know the inmost thoughts of those who had lived a century and a half before me. And as I read them I was filled with indignation against the Roman Church and Papal Rome, sovereign during the many past centuries.—Surely it was she who was designated, in my opinion at any rate, in that wonderful prophecy contained in Revelation: "And the beast is a City, and its seven heads are Seven Hills on which the woman sitteth."

My grandmother, always so austere and upright looking in her black clothes, a type of a Huguenot woman, had been fearful for her own safety during the Restoration, and although she never spoke of it, we felt that she must have very depressing memories of that time.

And upon the Island, in the shade of a bit of woodland that was encircled by a wall, I had seen the place where slept those of my ancestors who had been excluded from the cemeteries because they had died in the Protestant faith.

How could I be anything but faithful with such a past? And it is certain that had the Inquisition been revived in my childhood, I would have suffered martyrdom joyfully, like one filled to overflowing with the spirit of God.

My faith was a faith that kept watch upon the theological errors of the time, and I did not know the resignation felt by my ancestors; in spite of my distaste for reading I often plunged into books of religious controversy; I knew by heart the many passages from the Fathers and the decisions of the first councils; I could have discussed the dogmas of the church like a doctor of divinity, and I considered my arguments against the papacy very shrewd.

But notwithstanding my fervor a distaste for all of these religious things would often take possession of me; sometimes at church especially where the gray light fell upon me and chilled me I felt it most. The awful tediousness of some of the Sunday sermons; the emptiness of the prayers, written in advance and spoken with conventional unctuous voice, and gestures to suit; and the apathy of the people who, dressed out in their best, came to listen,—how early I divined its hollowness,—and how deep was my disappointment, and how cruel the disillusionment—oh! the disheartening formalism of it all! The very appearance of the church disconcerted me: it was a new cityfied one, meant to be pretty without, however, meaning to be too much so; I especially recall certain little efforts at wall decoration which I held in the greatest abomination, and shuddered when I looked at. It was that disgust in little which I experienced in so great a degree when later I attended those Paris churches that strive so for elegance, where one is met at the door by ushers whose shoulders are tricked out with knots of ribbon. . . . Oh! for the congregation of Cevennes! Oh! for the preachers of the wilderness!

Such little things as I have mentioned did not shake my faith which seemed as solid as a house built upon a rock; but doubtless they made the first imperceptible crevice through which, drop by drop, oozed the melting ice-cold water.

Where I still knew true meditation, and felt the deep sweet peace one should feel in the house of God was in an old church in the village of St. Pierre Oleron; my great grandfather Samuel had, at the time of the persecutions, worshipped and prayed there, and my mother had also attended it during her girlhood days. . . . I also loved those little country churches to which we sometimes went on Sunday in the summer time: they were generally old and had simple whitewashed walls. They were built any where and every where, in a corner of a wheat field with wild flowers growing all about them; or in more retired places, in the centre of some enclosure at the far end of an avenue of old trees. The Catholics have nothing, in my opinion, which surpasses in religious charm these humble little sanctuaries of our Protestant ancestors —not even do their most exquisite stone chapels hidden away in the depth of the Breton woods, that at a later time I learned to admire so much, touch me so deeply.

I still held fast to my determination to become a minister; it still seemed to me that that was my duty. I had pledged myself, in my prayers I had given my word to God. How could I therefore break my vow?

But when my young mind busied itself with thoughts of the future, more and more veiled from me by an impenetrable darkness, my preference was for a church which should be a little isolated from the noisy world, for one where the faith of my congregation should ever

remain simple, for one receiving its consecration from a long past of prayers and sincerest worship.

It would be in the Island of Oleron perhaps!

Yes; there, surrounded upon every side by the memories of my Huguenot ancestors, I could look forward without dread, indeed with much contentment, to a life dedicated to the service of the Lord.

CHAPTER XXX.

My brother had arrived at the Delightful Island. His first letter dated from there was a very long one, it was written on thin paper that had been stained a light yellow by the sea, for it had been upon its way four months.

It was a great event in our family, and I still recall that as my father and mother broke its seal, I sprang joyously up the stairs, two steps at a time, in my haste to reach the second floor and call my grandmother and aunts from their rooms.

Inside the plump-feeling envelope, which was covered over with South American stamps, there was a note for me, and enclosed in this I found a pressed flower, a sort of five-petalled star which, though somewhat faded, was still pink. The flower, my brother wrote, was from a shrub that had taken root and blossomed beside his window, almost within his Tahitian hut, which was actually invaded by the luxuriant vegetation of the region. Oh! with what deep emotion;—with what avidity, if I may express it thus, did I gaze at and touch the periwinkle which was almost a fresh and living part of that unknown and distant land, of that voluptuous nature.

Then I pressed it again with so much care that I possess it intact to this day.

And after many years, when I made a pilgrimage to the humble dwelling in which my brother lived during his stay in Tahiti, I saw that the shady garden surrounding it was rosy with these periwinkles; they had even pushed their way over the threshold of the door to blossom within the deserted cabin.

CHAPTER XXXI.

After my ninth birthday my parents, for a time, spoke of putting me into boarding-school, so that I might become habituated to the harder ways of life, and since the matter was talked over by all the members of the family, I went about for several days feeling as if I were on the eve of being sent to prison, for I imagined that a boarding-school had high walls and windows guarded by iron bars.

But, upon reflection, they considered that I was too frail and delicate a human plant to be

thrown in contact with those others of my kind who, in all probability, would play roughly, and have bad manners; they concluded, therefore, to keep me at home a little longer.

At any rate I was delivered from "Mr. Ratin." The old professor, rotund of figure and kind of manner, who succeeded him, was less distasteful to me, but I made just as little progress under his care. In the afternoon, at about the time for his arrival, I would hastily begin to prepare my lessons. I was then usually to be found at my window, hidden behind the venetian blinds, with my book open at the page containing the lesson; and when I saw him come into view at the turning near the bottom of the street I commenced to study it.

And generally by the time he arrived I knew enough to receive, if not to merit, a "pretty good," a mark over which I did not grumble.

I had also my English professor who came to me every morning,—and whom I nicknamed Aristogiton (I do not now recall why). Following the Robertson method, he had me paraphrase the history of Sultan Mahmoud. Outside of that, the only thing that I am sure of is that I accomplished nothing, absolutely nothing, less than nothing; but he had the good taste not to growl at me, and in consequence I have an almost affectionate remembrance of him.

During the extreme heat of the summer days it was my custom to study in the yard; I took my ink-stained copy and lesson books and spread them upon a table that stood in the summer house made shady by the vines and honeysuckles that grew over it. And when I was nicely settled there I felt that I might idle to my heart's content. From behind the lattice-work, green with trellised vines, I kept a lookout in order to see any danger that threatened in the distance. . . . I was always careful to bring with me to this retreat a quantity of cherries and grapes, whichever happened to be in season, and truly I could have passed there hours of the most delicious reverie but for the remorse that tormented me almost every moment, a remorse born of the fact that I was not busying myself with my lessons.

Through the foliage I saw, close to me, the cool-looking pond with its tiny grottoes which, since my brother's departure, I almost worshipped. The little fountain in the centre stirred the waters and made the sunlight that fell on its surface dance joyously; and the sun's rays pierced the green verdure surrounding me—I seemed to be in the midst of luminous water that quivered all about me with a ceaseless motion.

My arbor was a shady little retreat that gave me a complete illusion of country; from the far side of the old wall came the song of the tropical birds belonging to Antoinette's mother, and I heard the rollicking warble and twitter of the swallows perched on the house-top, and the chirp of the common sparrows as they flew about among the trees in the garden.

Sometimes I would throw myself face-upward full length upon the green bench that was there, and through the tasselled honeysuckle I had a view of the white clouds as they sailed across the blue of the sky. There, too, I was initiated into the habits of the mosquitos who all day long poised themselves tremblingly, by means of their long legs, upon the leaves. And often I concentrated all my attention upon the old wall where the insects acted out their tragical drama: the cunning spider would come suddenly from his nook and ensnare in his web the heedless little insects,—with the aid of a straw, I was usually able to deliver them from their peril.

I have forgotten to mention that I had, for companion, an old cat called Suprematie, who had been my faithful and beloved friend since infancy.

Suprematie knew at what hour he would find me there, and he used to slip in quietly upon the tips of his velvet paws; he never stretched himself beside me without first looking at me questioningly.

The poor creature was very homely; he was marked queerly upon only one side of his body; moreover, in a cruel accident he had twisted his tail, and it hung down at a right angle. He was the subject of Lucette's continual mockery, for she had a lovely Angora cat that had usurped Suprematie's place in her affections. It was my habit to run out to see her when she came to inquire after the members of my family; she rarely failed to add, with a funny air of concern, which made me burst out laughing in spite of myself: "And your horror of a cat, is he in good health, my dear?"

CHAPTER XXXII.

During all this time my museum made great progress, and it soon became necessary for me to have some new shelves put up.

My great uncle continued to take a very deep interest in my taste for natural history, and among his shells he found a number of duplicates, and these he presented to me. With indefatigable patience he taught me the scientific classifications of Cuvier, Linne, Lamarck or Bruguieres, and I was astonished at the attention with which I listened to him.

In a very old little desk, that was a part of the furniture of my museum, I had a copy-book into which I copied, from uncle's notes, and numbered with the greatest care, the name of the species, genus, family and class of each shell,—also the place of its origin. And there by the dim light that fell upon the desk, in the silence of that little retreat so high above the street, surrounded with objects what had come from distant corners of the earth and from the depths of the sea, when my mind wandered, and I became fatigued because of the mysterious differences in the forms of animals, and because of the infinite variety of shells, with what emotion I wrote down in my book, opposite the name of a Spirifer or a Terebratula, such enchanting words as these: "Eastern coast of Africa," "coast of Guinea," "Indian Ocean."

I recall that in this same museum I experienced, one afternoon in March, a peculiar feeling indicative of my tendency towards reaction, that later, at certain periods of self-abandonment, caused me to seek the rough and uncouth society of sailors, and made me revel in noise and change and gayety.

It was Mardi-Gras time. At sundown I had gone out with my father to see the masqueraders who were in the streets; and having returned rather early I went immediately to my attic-room to classify some shells. But the noise of the revellers and the clashing of their tambourines reached even to the retreat where I was occupying myself with scientific matters, and the sounds awakened in me a feeling of inexpressible sadness. It was the same emotion, greatly intensified, that I had when I listened, of winter evenings, to the old cake vendor, and heard her voice die away into those far-off squalid streets near the harbor. I experienced an unexpected anguish very difficult to define in words. I had a vague impression, which was the cause of my suffering, that I was imprisoned; and for the moment, I thought that my liking for dry classifications and nature study shut me away from the little boys of every age who were in the streets below mingling with the sailors, more childish than

they, who tricked out in dreadful masks ran and frollicked and sang coarse songs. It goes without saying that I had no desire to be one of them; the very idea of jostling against them filled me with distaste, and I disdained their rude sport. And I sincerely felt that it was better for me to be where I was, occupied with putting the many-colored family of the Purpura and the twenty-three varieties of the Gastropoda in order.

But nevertheless the gay and merry people in the street troubled me strangely. And, as was usual with me when I felt distressed, I went down to look for my mother for the purpose of begging her to come up to keep me company. Astonished at my request (for I scarcely ever asked any one into my den), astonished especially by my anxious manner, she said with an air of pleasantry that it was silly for a boy of ten to be afraid to stay alone; but she consented to return with me, and when there she seated herself close to me and occupied herself with a piece of embroidery. Oh! how reassuring was her sweet and darling presence! I returned to my task without concerning myself further about the noise of the maskers, and as I worked I glanced up now and again to look at her beautiful profile cut in silhouette, because of the darkness without, upon my tiny window pane.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

I am surprised that I cannot recall whether my desire to become a minister transformed itself into a wish to lead the more militant life of missionary, by a slow process or suddenly.

It seems to me that the change must have come at a very early period. For a long time I had taken an interest in Protestant missions, especially in those established in Southern Africa, among the Bassoutos. During my childhood we subscribed for the "Messenger," a monthly journal that had for frontispiece an interesting picture which, very early in my life, made a forcible impression upon me.

This picture held a higher place in my regard than those of which I have already spoken, but by no means because of its execution, its color or background. It represented an impossible pine tree growing at the edge of a sea, behind which a resplendent sun was setting, and, at the foot of the tree, there was a young savage who was watching the approach of a ship, from a distant point upon the horizon, that was bringing to him the glad tidings of Salvation.

Early in my life, when from the warm depths of my soft and downy nest, I looked out upon a yet formless world, that picture evoked many dreams; later when I was more capable of appreciating the extreme crudity of the design, that huge sun, half-engulfed in the sea, and that tiny mission boat sailing towards the unknown shores still had a very great charm for me.

Now when they questioned me I replied: "I expect to be a missionary." But I spoke in a low voice, in the voice of one not sure of himself, and I felt that they no longer believed in my asseverations. Even my mother, when she heard my response, smiled sadly.

Doubtless my answer exceeded what she expected from my faith;—probably she said to herself that it was never to be; no doubt she thought that I would become something very different, in all probability something less desirable, that it was impossible at this time to foresee.

This determination of mine to become a missionary seemed to solve my every problem. It would mean long voyages and an adventurous, perilous life,—but journeys would be undertaken in the service of the Lord, and the dangers endured for His blessed cause. That solution brought me great tranquillity for a long time.

After having thus won peace for my religious conscience, I feared to dwell upon the thought lest it should disclose some unexpected weaknesses. But still the chill waters of commonplace sermons, with their endless repetitions and stock phrases, continued to flow over and wash away my early faith. My shrinking from life increased rather than diminished. There seemed to hang between me and the years to come a great curtain whose heavy folds it was impossible for me to lift.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

In preceding chapters I have not said much about that Limoise which was the scene of my initiation into nature and its wonders. My entire childhood is intimately connected with that little corner of the world, with its ancient forests of oak trees, and its rocky moorlands covered here and there with a carpet of wild thyme and heather.

For ten or twelve glorious summers I went there to spend my Thursday holidays, and I dreamed of it during the dreary intervening days of study.

In May our friends the D——-s and Lucette went to their country home and remained until vintage time, usually until after the first October frost,—and regularly every Wednesday evening I was taken there.

Nothing in my estimation was so delightful as that journey to Limoise. We scarcely ever went in a carriage, for it was not more than three and a half miles distant; to me, however, it seemed very far, almost lost in the woods. It lay toward the south, in the direction of those distant, sunny lands I loved to think of. (I would have found it less charming had it been towards the north.)

Every Wednesday evening, at sunset, the hour therefore varying with the month, I left home accompanied by Lucette's elder brother, a grown boy of eighteen or twenty, who seemed to me a man of mature age. As far as I was able I tried to keep pace with him, and, in consequence, I was obliged to go more rapidly than when I walked with my father and sister; we went through the quiet streets lying near the ramparts, and passed the sailors' old barracks, the sounds of whose bugles and drums reached as far as my attic museum when the south wind blew; then we passed through the fortifications by the most ancient of its gray gates,—a gate almost abandoned, and used now principally by peasants with flocks of sheep and droves of cattle,—and finally we arrived at the road that led to the river.

A mile and a half of straight road stretched before us, and this path lay between stunted old trees yellow with lichens whose branches were blown to the left by the force of the sea-winds that almost constantly came from the west, sweeping over the broad and level meadows that lay between us and the ocean.

To those who have a conventionalized idea of country beauty, and to whom a charming landscape means a river winding its way between poplars, or a mountain crowned by an old castle, this level road would look very ugly.

But I found it exquisite in spite of its straight lines. Upon the left there was nothing to be seen but grassy meadow land over which herds of cattle strayed. And before us, in the distance, something that resembled a line of ramparts shut in the plains sadly: it was the edge of a rocky plateau at whose base flowed the river. The far bank of this river was higher than the side that we were on, and was, in some respects, of a different character, but for the most part it was as flat and monotonous. And it is just this sameness that has so much charm for me, an attraction appreciated seemingly by few others. The great level plains with their calm and tranquil straight lines are deeply and profoundly inspiring.

There is nothing in our vicinity that I love any better than the old road; perhaps I have an affection for it because during my school-boy days I built so many castles-in-Spain upon those flat plains where, from time to time, I find them again. It is one of the few spots that has not been disfigured by factories, docks and railways. It seems a spot that belongs peculiarly to me, and certainly no one has the power to contest my spiritual right to it.

The sum of the charm of the sensuous world dwells in us, is an emanation from ourselves; it is we who diffuse it, each person for himself according to his power, and we have it back again in the measure of our out-giving. But I did not comprehend early enough the deep meaning of this well-known truth. . . . During my childhood and youth the charm seemed to reside in the thing itself, to have its habitation in the old walls and the honeysuckle of my garden; I thought it lay along the sandy shores of the Island and upon the grassy meadows and rocky moorland about me. Later on, in pouring out my admiration every where, as I did, I drew too heavily upon the well-spring—I exhausted it at the source. And, alas! I find the land of my childhood, to which I will no doubt return to die, changed and shrunken, and only for a moment, in certain spots, am I able to recreate the illusions I have lost;—there I am for the most part weighed down by the crushing memories of bygone days. . . .

As I was saying before my digression, every Wednesday evening I walked with a light and joyous step along the road that led towards those distant rocks lying at the boundary of the plains, I went gayly towards that region of oak trees and mossy stones in which Limoise was situated,—my imagination greatly magnified it in those days.

The river we had to cross was at the end of the straight avenue of lichened trees so harried by the west winds. The river was very changeable, being subject to the tides and to all the moods of the neighboring ocean. We crossed in a ferry-boat or a yawl, always having for our oarsmen old sailors with bleached beards and sunburnt faces whom we had known from earliest childhood.

When we reached the other bank, the rocky one, I always had a curious optical illusion: it seemed to me that the town from which we had come, and whose gray ramparts we still could see, suddenly drew very far away from us, for in my young head distances exaggerated themselves strangely. Upon this side all was different, the soil, the grass, the wild flowers and even the butterflies that hovered over them; nothing here was like those approaches to our town in whose fens and meadows I took my daily walk. And the differences, which perhaps others would not have noticed, thrilled and charmed me, for it had been my habit to spend, perhaps to waste, my time in observing the infinitesimally small things in nature, and I had often lost myself in contemplation of the lowliest mosses. Even the twilights of these Wednesday evenings had about them something distinctive and peculiar which I cannot

express; generally we reached the far shore just as the sun was setting, and we watched it, from the height of the lonely plateau, disappear behind the tall meadow-grass through which we had but newly come, and as it sunk its great ruddy dish seemed uncommonly large.

After crossing the river we turned off the high-road and took an unfrequented way that led through a region called "Chaumes," a very beautiful place at that time but horribly profaned to-day.

"Chaumes" lay at the entrance of a village whose ancient church we saw in the distance. As it was public property it had kept intact its native wildness. This "Chaumes" was a sort of table-land composed of a single stone, and this rock, which undulated slightly, was covered with a carpet of short, dry fragrant plants that snapped under our feet; and a whole world of tiny gayly-colored butterflies and tinier moths fluttered among the rare and delicate flowers growing there.

Sometimes we passed a flock of sheep guarded by a shepherd much more countrified looking and tanned than those seen in the meadows about our town. Lonely and sun-scorched, Chaumes seemed to me the very threshold of Limoise: it had its very odor, the mingled scent of wild thyme and sweet marjoram.

At the end of the rocky moor was the hamlet of Frelin. I love this name of Frelin, for I think of it as being derived from those large and fierce hornets (frelons) that build their nests in the heart of a certain species of oak tree found in the forests of Limoise; to get rid of these pests it is necessary, in the springtime, to build great fires around the infested trees. This hamlet was composed of three or four cottages. They were all low, as is the custom of our country, and they were old, very old and gray; above the little rounded doorways were half-effaced ornamental Gothic scrolls and blazonments. I scarcely ever saw them except at dusk, as twilight was falling, and the hour and the quaint little houses themselves awoke in me an appreciation of the mystery of their past; above all these humble dwellings attested to the antiquity of this rocky ground, so much older than the meadows of our town which had been won from the sea, and where nothing that dates before the time to Louis XIV is to be found.

As soon as we left Frelin I commenced to look eagerly along the path ahead of me, for after that we usually spied Lucette, either afoot or in a carriage, coming to meet us. As soon as I caught a glimpse of her I would run ahead to embrace her.

On our way through the village we passed the tiny church, a wonder of the twelfth century, built in the rarest and most ancient Romanesque style;—and then as the shadows of evening deepened we saw, in the semi-darkness before us, something that had the form of tall dark legions: it was the forest of Limoise, composed almost wholly of evergreen oaks, whose foliage is very dark and sombre. We then came into the road leading directly to the house; on our way we passed the well where the patient, thirsty cattle awaited their turn to drink. And finally we opened the little old gate, and traversed the first grassy courtyard which the shadowing trees, a century old, plunged into almost total darkness.

The house lay between this courtyard and a large uncultivated garden that extended to the edge of the oak forest. As we entered the ancient dwelling, with its whitewashed walls and old-fashioned wainscoting, I always looked eagerly for my butterfly-net that was usually to be found hanging in the place where I had left it, ready for the next day's chase.

After dinner it was our custom to go to the foot of the garden, and there we sat in an arbor that was built against the old wall encircling the yard,—this bower faced away from the unfriendly darkness of the woods where the owls hooted. And while we were seated in the

beautiful, mild, star-bespangled night, suddenly upon the air, musical with the chirping of myriad crickets, there was heard the tolling of a bell,—heard very clearly by us although it came from afar off,—it was the church bell in the village announcing the evening service.

Oh! the vesper bell of Enchillais heard in that beautiful garden long ago! Oh! the sound of that bell, a little cracked but still silvery, like the once beautiful voices of very old people which still retain something of their sweetness. What charm of past times, and half sad meditations of peaceful death, were awakened by that music which spread itself into the limpid darkness of the surrounding country! And we heard the bell chiming for a long time, but its sound reached us fitfully; one while it seemed to be near, and then again it seemed far away, as it obeyed the will of the soft night wind that was stirring. I bethought me of all those who, on their lonely farms, were listening to it; I bethought me, too, of all the unpeopled places round about where it would be heard by no one, and a shudder passed through me at the thought of the near-by forest, where the sweet vibrations of the bell would die.

The municipal council, composed of very superior spirits, after having first put its everlasting tri-colored flag upon the steeple of the little Roman Catholic Church, then suppressed its vesper bell. Its day is done; and we shall never again, upon summer evenings, hear that call to prayers.

Going to bed there was always a very enlivening proceeding, especially when there was the prospect of a whole Thursday of play before me. I would, I am sure, have been very much afraid in the guest chamber, which was on the ground floor of the great, isolated house; but until my twelfth year I slept on the floor above, in the spacious room occupied by Lucette's mother;—with the aid of screens they had made for me a little room of my own. In this retreat there was a book-case with glass doors that belonged to the time of Louis XIV; this was filled with treatises, a century old, upon navigation, and with sailors' log-books that had not been opened for a hundred years. Tiny, scarce visible butterflies, that entered by the open windows, were to be found here all summer long, sleeping with extended wings upon the whitewashed walls. And often the most exciting incident of the day happened just as I was falling asleep; sometimes then an unwelcome bat found his way into the room and circled wildly about the lighted candles; or an enormous moth buzzed in and we would chase him with a cobweb-broom. Or again a storm descended upon us and the great trees lashed their branches against the house, and the old shutters slammed back and forth, and we waked with a start.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Now comes the apparition of another little friend who stood very high in my childish favor. As nearly as I can remember I became acquainted with her when I was eleven; Antoinette had left the country; Veronica was forgotten.

Her name was Jeanne, and she was the youngest member of a naval officer's family, that like the D——-s had been bound up in friendship with ours for more than a century. As she was two or three years younger than I, I had at first taken but little notice of her—probably I thought her too babyish.

Her face was as droll as a little kitten's, and it was impossible to tell from the pinched up

features whether she would become pretty or ugly; but she had a certain grace, and when she was eight or nine years old her face became very sweet and charming. She was very roguish, and as friendly as I was diffident; and as she darted about in those childish dances we sometimes had in the evenings, and from which I held myself aloof, she seemed to me the extreme of worldly elegance and coquetry.

But in spite of the great intimacy between our families, it was evident that her parents looked upon our friendship with disfavor, they probably thought it unseemly that she had chosen a boy for her companion. This knowledge caused me much suffering, and the impressions of my childhood were so vivid and persistent that I did not, until many years had passed, until I became quite a grown youth, pardon her father and mother the humiliation they had caused me.

It therefore resulted that my desire to play with her increased greatly. And she, knowing this, was as perverse as a princess in a fairy tale; she laughed mercilessly at my timid ways, at my awkward manners and my ungraceful fashion of entering the parlor; there was kept up between us a constant interchange of playful raillery, an oral stream of inimitable pleasantry.

When I was invited to spend the day with her the prospect gave me the greatest joy, but the aftertaste of the visit was generally bitter, for usually I committed some mortifying blunder in that family where I felt myself so misunderstood. Every time I wished to have Jeanne at my house for dinner it was necessary for my aunt Bertha, who was a person of authority in the eyes of Jeanne's parents, to arrange the matter for me.

Upon one occasion when little Jeanne returned from Paris she related to me the story of the "Donkey's Skin," which she had seen acted at the theatre in the city.

Her time so spent was not lost, for the "Donkey's Skin" was destined to occupy a prominent place in my life during the next four or five years, the hours that I wasted upon it were more preciously squandered than were any others in my life.

Together we conceived the idea of mounting the piece upon the stage of my miniature theatre. That play of the "Donkey's Skin" brought us together very often. And little by little the project assumed gigantic proportions; it grew as the months sped, and amused us in ever increasing measure; indeed, in proportion to the degree of perfection to which we were able to bring our conception did we enjoy it. We manufactured fantastic decorations; we dressed, so that they might take part in the processions, innumerable little dolls. It will be necessary for me to speak often of that fairy spectacle which was one of the important things of my childhood.

And even after Jeanne tired of it I worked over it alone, and I fairly outdid myself by undertaking enterprises that seemed grand to me, such, for instance, as my efforts to represent moonlight, great conflagrations and storms. I also made marvellous palaces and gardens wonderful as Aladdin's. All my dreams of enchanted regions, of strange tropical luxuries, which I later found in the distant corners of the world, took form in the little play of the "Donkey's Skin." Leaving out the mystical experiences at the commencement of my life, I can affirm that almost all my fancies had their essay on that tiny stage. I was nearly fifteen when the last decorations, unfinished ones, were laid away forever in the cardboard box that served them for a peaceful tomb.

And since I have anticipated their future I will say in conclusion that in later years, when Jeanne had grown into a beautiful woman, upon numerous occasions we have planned to

open the box where our little dolls are sleeping. But we live our life so rapidly that we seem never to find the time, nor will we, I fear, ever find it.

Later our children may,—or who can tell, perhaps our grandchildren! Upon some future day, when we are forgotten, our unknown descendants in ferreting to the bottom of old cupboards will be astonished to find there numberless little creatures, nymphs, fairies and genii, all dressed by our hands.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It is said that many children who live in the central provinces, away from the ocean, have a great longing to see it. I who had never been away from the monotonous country surrounding us looked forward eagerly to seeing the mountains.

I tried to imagine them; I had seen pictures of several, and I had even painted them for the "Donkey's Skin." My sister, when she visited Lake Lucerne, sent me a description of the mountains, and wrote me long letters about them, such as are seldom addressed to a child of my age. And my ideas were further extended by some photographs of glaciers that my sister brought me for my magic-lantern. I desired with all my heart to see the mountains themselves.

One day, as if in answer to my wish, there came a letter that created quite a stir in our house. It was from a first cousin of my father, who had at one time regarded my father with a brotherly love, but for thirty years, for some reason unknown to me, this cousin had not written or given any sign of life.

At the time of my birth, all talk of him had ceased in our family, and I was ignorant of his existence. And now he wrote and begged that the old bond might be renewed; he was living, he said, in a little southern village in the heart of the Swiss Mountains. He announced that he had two sons and a daughter about the age of my brother and sister. His letter was very affectionate, and my father responded to it in like manner and told his cousin all about us, his three children.

The correspondence having continued, it was arranged that I should spend my next vacation with my relatives; my sister was to take me there and play the part of mother as she had done during our visit to the Island.

The south, the mountains, this sudden extension of my horizon, the cousins who seemed literally to have fallen from the sky, became the subject of my constant reveries until the month of August, the time set for our departure.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Little Jeanne had come over to spend the day at our house; it was at the end of May during that spring in which my expectations were so great—I was twelve years old at the time. All the afternoon we rehearsed with our tiny jointed china dolls, and painted scenery, we had in fact been busy with the "Donkey's Skin,"—but with a revised and grand version of it, and we had about us a great confusion of paints, brushes, pieces of cardboard, gilt paper and bits of gauze. When it came time for us to go down into the dining-room we stored our precious work away in a large box that was consecrated to it from that day forth—the box was a new one made of pine, and it had a penetrating, resinous odor.

After our dinner, at dusk, we were taken out for a walk. But, to my surprise and sorrow, we found it chilly and the sky was overcast, and every where there was a sort of mist that recalled winter to my mind. Instead of going beyond the town, to the places usually frequented by pedestrians, we went towards the Marine Garden, a much prettier and more suitable walk, but one usually deserted after sunset.

We went down the long straight street without meeting any one; as we drew near the "Chapel of the Orphans" we heard those within chanting a psalm. When that was finished a procession of little girls filed out. They were dressed in white, and they looked very cold in their spring muslins. After making a circuit of the lonely quarter, chanting meanwhile a melancholy hymn, they noiselessly re-entered the chapel. There was no one in the street to see them save ourselves, and the thought came to me that neither was there any one in the gray heavens above to see them; the overcast sky seemed as lonely as the solitary street. That little band of orphaned children intensified my feeling of sorrow and added to the disenchantment of the May night, and I had a consciousness of the vanity of prayer, of the emptiness of all things.

In the Marine Garden my sadness increased. It was extremely cold, and we shivered in our light spring wraps. There was not a single promenader to be seen. The large chestnut trees all abloom and the foliage, in the glory of its tender hue, formed a feathery green and white avenue—emptiness was here too; all of this intertwined magnificence of branch and flower, seen of no one, unfolded itself to the indifferent sky that stretched above it cold and gray. And in the long flower beds there was a profusion of roses, peonies and lilies that seemed also to have mistaken the season, for they appeared to shiver, as we did, in the chill twilight.

I have found that the melancholy one sometimes feels in the springtime usually transcends that felt in autumn, for the reason, doubtless, that the former is so out of harmony with the promise of the season.

The demoralized state into which I was thrown by everything about me gave me a longing to play a boyish trick upon Jeanne. There came to me a desire (one that I frequently felt) to have some sort of revenge upon her, because her disposition was so much more mature and yet more sprightly than mine. I induced her to lean over and smell the lovely lilies, and while she was doing so I, by giving her head a very slight push, buried her nose deep in the flowers and it became covered with yellow pollen. She was indignant! And the thought that I had acted so rudely tended to make the walk home a very painful one.

The beautiful evenings of May! Had I not cherished memories of those of preceding years, or had they in truth been like this one? Like this one in the cold and lonely garden? Had they ended so miserably as did this play-day with Jeanne? With a feeling of mortal weariness I said to myself: "And is this all!" an exclamation which soon afterwards became one of my most frequent unspoken reflections, a phrase indeed that I might well have taken for my motto.

When we returned I went to the wooden box to inspect our afternoon's work, and as I did so I inhaled the balsamic odor that had impregnated everything belonging to our theatre. For a long time after that, for a year or two, perhaps longer, the odor of the pine box containing the properties of the "Donkey's Skin" recalled vividly that May evening so filled with poignant sorrow, which was one of the most singular feelings of my childhood. Since I have come to man's estate I no longer suffer from anguish that has no known cause, doubly hard to endure because mysterious, I no longer feel as if my feet are treading unfathomable depths in search of a firm bottom. I no longer suffer without knowing why. No, such emotions belonged peculiarly to my childhood, and this book could properly bear the title (a dangerous one I well know): "A Journal of my extreme and inexplicable sorrows, and some of the boyish pranks by which I diverted my mind from them."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was about this time that I installed myself in my aunt Claire's room for the purpose of study, and there too I busied myself manufacturing wonders for the "Donkey's Skin." I took possession of the place as entirely as an army occupies a conquered country—I would not admit the possibility of being in the way.

My aunt Claire was the person who petted me most. And it was she who was always so careful of my little things. She always looked after my finery or anything uncommonly fragile, things that the least breath of air would have blown away—such exquisitely delicate trifles, for example, as the wings of a butterfly, or the bright scale of a beetle, intended for the costumes of our nymphs and fairies—when I said to her: "Will you please take care of this, dear auntie?" I felt that I could be easy about it, for I knew that no one would be allowed to touch it.

One of the great attractions in her room was a bear that was used for holding burnt-almonds; and I often visited the place for the sole purpose of paying my respects to this animal. He was made of china and he sat upon his hind legs in the corner of the mantelpiece. According to a compact that I had with my aunt, every time that his head was turned to the side (and I found it so several times during a day) it meant that there was an almond or some other kind of candy for me. When I had eaten this I straightened his head to indicate that I had been there, and then I departed.

Aunt Claire enjoyed helping us with the "Donkey's Skin"; she worked enthusiastically over the costumes and each day I gave her some task. She was especially skilful in devising hair for the fairies and nymphs; she managed to fix upon their tiny heads, about as big as the end of a little finger, blond wigs made of light silk thread, this thread she twined upon the finest wires and thus she was able to twist it into beautiful ringlets.

Then when it became absolutely necessary for me to study my lessons, in the feverish haste of the last half hour that I reserved for my task, after having wasted my time in idleness of every sort, it was aunt Claire who came to my rescue; she would open the large dictionary and hunt up for me the unfamiliar words in the exercises and lessons. She also took up the study of Greek in order to assist me with my lessons in that language. When I studied my Greek I always led my aunt Claire to the stairway and I sprawled there upon the steps, my

feet higher than my head; for two or three years that was the classic pose I took for the study of the Iliad, or Xenophon's Cyropedia.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Thursday evening was a time of great rejoicing with me whenever a terrible storm descended upon Limoise, and thus made it impossible for me to return home that night.

It happened occasionally; and since I had had the experience, I used to hope that it might occur often, and especially did I wish for a storm when I had failed to prepare my lessons. One inhuman professor had instituted Thursday tasks, and it was necessary for me to drag my text and copy-books with me to Limoise; my beloved holidays, spent in the sweet open air, were overcast by their dark shadow.

One evening at about eight o'clock the much desired storm broke upon us with superb fury. Lucette and I were in the large drawing-room that resounded with the noise of the thunder, and we felt none too safe there. Its great wall-spaces were broken by only two or three old engravings in ancient frames. Lucette, under her mother's direction, was putting the finishing touches to a piece of needle work, and, on the rather worn-out piano, I was playing, with the soft pedal down, one of Rameau's dances; the old-fashioned music sounded exquisite to me as it mingled with the noise of the great thunder claps.

When Lucette's work was completed, she turned over the leaves of my copy-book lying on the table. After she had examined it she gave me a meaning look, intended only for my eyes, that said as plainly as a look can that she knew I had neglected my task. Suddenly she asked: "where did you leave your Duruy's 'History'?"

My Duruy's "History"! Where indeed had I left it? It was a new book with scarcely a blot in it. Great heavens! I had forgotten it and left it out of doors at the far end of the garden in the most removed asparagus bed. For my historical studies I had selected the asparagus bed which was like a bit of copse, for the feathery green plants, past their season, grew high and luxuriant; a hazel glen, leafy and impenetrable, and as shady as a verdant grotto, was the spot I had chosen for the more exacting and laborious work of Latin versification. As this time I was scolded by Lucette's mother for my great carelessness, we decided to go immediately and rescue the book.

We organized a search party, and at the head of it went a servant who carried a stable-lantern; Lucette and I walked behind him. Our feet were protected from the wet ground by wooden shoes, and with much difficulty we held over us a large umbrella that the wind constantly turned inside out.

Once outside I was no longer afraid; I opened my eyes wide and listened with all my ears. Oh! how wonderful, and yet how sinister, the end of the garden looked seen by those sudden and great flashes of green light that shimmered and trembled about us from time to time, and then left us blind in the blackness of the stormy night. And I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the continual crashing of the branches of the trees in the near-by oak forest.

We found Duruy's "History" in the asparagus bed all water soaked and mud bespattered. Before the storm the snails, exhilarated no doubt by the promise of rain, had crawled over the book and they had left their slimy, glistening traces upon it.

Those small tracks remained on the book for a long time, preserved, doubtless, by the paper cover that I put over them. They had the power to recall a thousand things to me, thanks to that peculiarity of my mind that associates the most dissimilar and incongruous images if only once, for a single favorable moment, they have been accidentally joined.

And therefore the little, shining, zig-zag marks on the cover of Duruy always brought to my mind Rameau's gay dance that I played on the shrill old piano, only to have it drowned by the noise of the raging storm; and the same little blotches also recall to me a vision that I had that night (one, no doubt, born of an engraving by Teniers that hung on the wall); there seemed to pass before my eyes little people belonging to a bygone age who danced in the shade of a wood like that of Limoise; the apparition awakened in me an appreciation of the pastoral gayety of that time, a conception of the abandon and joyousness of the picnickers who were dancing so merrily under the spreading branches of the oak trees.

CHAPTER XL.

And yet the return home from Limoise Thursday evenings would have had a great charm but for the remorse I almost always felt because of neglected duties.

My friends took me as far as the river in the carriage, or I rode on a donkey, or we walked. Once past the stony plateau on the south bank of the river, and once over it and upon the home side I found my father and sister awaiting me; I walked gayly beside them in the straight path lying between the extensive meadows that led to our house. I went at a brisk pace in my eagerness to see mamma, my aunts and our dear home.

When we entered the town, by the old disused gate, it was always dusk, the dusk of a spring or summer night; as we passed the barracks we heard the familiar drums and bugles sounding the hour for the sailors' all-too-early bed.

And when we arrived at the house I usually spied my beloved ones (clothed in their black dresses) seated in the honeysuckle arbor at the end of the yard, or they were sitting out under the stars.

Or, if the others had gone in, I was sure to find aunt Bertha there alone; she was a very independent person, and she dared defy even the dew and evening chill. After kissing and embracing me she pretended to smell of my clothes, and after sniffing a minute, to make me laugh, she would say: "Ah! you smell of Limoise, my darling."

And indeed I did have something of the fragrance of Limoise about me. When I came from there I was always impregnated with the odor of wild thyme and the other aromatic plants peculiar to that part of the country.

CHAPTER XLI.

Speaking of Limoise I will be vain enough to speak here of an act of mine that I consider as brave as it was obedient, for it fell in with a promise that I had given.

It happened a short time before my departure for the south, before that journey to the mountains with which my imagination was ever busy; it occurred in the month of July following my twelfth birthday.

One Wednesday, having started earlier than usual, so that I might arrive at Limoise before nightfall, I begged those accompanying me to go no farther than just beyond the town; I entreated them, for this once, to allow me to make the journey alone as if I were a grown boy.

As I was being ferried across the river I compelled myself to take from my pocket the white silk handkerchief that I had promised to wear about my neck to protect it from the cool breezes on the water; the old weather-beaten sailors were looking at me and I felt unspeakably ashamed as I tied the muffler around my neck.

And at Chaumes, in that shadeless spot, a place always baked by the sun, I fulfilled the pledge that had been exacted from me at my departure. I opened a large sunshade!—oh! how my cheeks reddened and how humiliated I felt when I was ridiculed by a little shepherd-boy who, with head bared to the sun's rays, guarded his sheep. And my agony increased when I arrived at the village and I saw four boys, who had doubtless just come from school, look at me with astonishment. My God! I felt as if I would faint. It was true courage which enabled me to keep my promise at that moment.

As they passed they stared hard as if to mock me for being afraid of the sun. One muttered something that had little enough meaning, but which I regarded as a mortal insult: "It is the Marquis of Carabas!" he said, and then all began to laugh heartily. But notwithstanding, I continued on my way with my parasol still open. I did not flinch nor answer them, but the blood surged to my cheeks and hummed in my ears.

In the time that followed there were many occasions when it was necessary for me to pass upon my way without noticing the insults cast at me by ignorant people; but I do not recall that their taunts caused me any suffering. But my experience with the parasol! No, I am sure that I have never accomplished any braver act that that.

But I am convinced that it is unnecessary for me to seek any other cause for my aversion to umbrellas, an aversion that followed me into mature age. And I attribute to handkerchiefs and such things, and to the excessive care my family took to stop up every chink through which air might reach me, my later habit, in line with my tendency to reactions, of exposing my breast to the burning rays of the sun, of exposing myself to every kind of wind and weather.

CHAPTER XLII.

With my head pressed against the glass in the door of the railway coach that was going rapidly I continually asked my sister, who sat opposite:

"Are we in the mountains yet?"

"Not yet," she would answer, still remembering the Alps vividly. "Not yet, dear. Those are only high hills."

The August day was warm and radiantly bright. We were in an express train going south, on our way to visit those cousins whom we had never seen.

"Oh! but that one! See! See!" I exclaimed triumphantly, as my eyes spied an elevation towering above others; it was one whose blue height pierced the clear horizon.

She leaned forward.

"Ah!" she said, "that is a little more like a mountain, I must confess,—but it isn't a very high one, only wait!"

At the hotel, where we were obliged to remain until the following day, everything interested us. I remember that night came suddenly, a night of splendor, as we leaned upon the railing of the balcony leading from our rooms, watching the shadows gather about the blue mountains and listening to the chirping of the crickets.

The next day, the third of our frequently interrupted journey, we hired a funny little carriage to take us to the town, one much out of the line of travel at that time, where our cousins lived.

For five hours we rode through passes and defiles—for me they were enchanted hours. Not only was there the novelty of the mountains, but everything here was unlike our home surroundings. The soil and the rocks were a bright red instead of, as in our village, a dazzling white because of the underlying chalk beds. And at home everything was flat and low, it seemed as if nothing there dared lift itself above the dead level and break the uniformity of the plains. Here the dwellings, of reddish hue like the rocks, and built with old gabled ends and ancient turrets, were perched high up on the hill; the peasants were very tanned, and they spoke a language I did not understand; I noticed particularly that the women walked with a free movement of the hips, unknown to the peasants of our country, as they strode along carrying upon their heads sheaves of grain and great shining copper vessels. My whole being vibrated to the charm of the unfamiliar beauty about me, and I was fascinated by the strange aspect of nature.

Toward evening we reached the little town that marked the end of our journey. It was situated on the bank of one of those southern rivers that rush noisily over their shallow beds of white pebbles. The place still retained its ancient arched gateway and high, pierced ramparts; the prevailing color of the gothic houses lining its streets was bright red.

A little perplexed and agitated our eyes sought for the cousins whose faces were not even known to us through photographs; but since they had been apprised of our coming they would, no doubt, be at the station to meet us. Suddenly we saw approaching us a tall young man, and he had upon his arm a young lady dressed in white muslin. Without the least hesitation we exchanged glances of recognition: we had found each other.

At their house, on the ground floor, our uncle and aunt welcomed us; both of them in their

old age preserved traces of a once-remarkable beauty. They lived in an ancient house of the time of Louis XIII; it was built in an angle, and was surrounded by those porches that are so frequently seen in small, southern mountain towns.

When we entered we found ourselves in a vestibule flagged with pinkish stones and ornamented with a large fountain of burnished copper. A staircase of the same stones, as imposing as a castle staircase, with a curious balustrade of wrought-iron, led to the old-fashioned wainscoted bedrooms on the second floor. And these things evoked a past very different from that I had brooded over upon the Island, at St. Ongeoise, the only past with which I was at this time familiar.

After dinner we went out and sat together upon the bank of the noisy river; we sat in a meadow overgrown with centauries and sweet marjoram, recognizable in the darkness because of their penetrating odor. It was a very still, warm evening and innumerable crickets chirped in the grass. It seemed to me that I had never before seen so many stars in the heavens. The difference in latitude was not so great, but the sea air that tempers our winters also makes our summer evenings hazy; in consequence we could see more stars here in this southern country with its clear atmosphere, than at our home.

The majestic mountains surrounding us, from which I could not take my eyes, looked like great blue silhouettes: the mountains, never seen until now, gave me the feeling, so much longed for, of being in a distant country, they gave me the assurance that one of the dreams of my childhood had come true.

I spent several summers in this village, and I made myself enough at home to learn the southern dialect spoken by the people there. Indeed the two provinces I became best acquainted with in my childhood was this southern one and that of St. Ongeoise, both of them lands of sunshine.

Brittany, which so many take to be my native place, I did not see until a later time, not until I was seventeen, and I did not learn to love it until long after that,—doubtless that is why I loved it so ardently. At first it oppressed me and induced a feeling of extreme sadness; my brother Ives initiated me into its charm, a charm tinged with melancholy, and it was he who persuaded me to explore its thatched cottages and wooden chapels. And following this, the influence that a young girl of Treguier exercised over my imagination, when I was about twenty-seven, strengthened my love for Brittany, the land of my adoption.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The day after my arrival at my uncle's I met some children named Peyrals who became my playmates. According to the fashion of that part of the country their baptismal names were spoken preceded by the definite article. The two little girls respectively ten and twelve years old were called "the Marciette" and "the Titi," and their younger brother, still a little chap, who did not, therefore, figure so largely in our plays, was called "the Medon."

As I was younger in my ways than most boys of twelve,—in spite of my understanding of some things usually beyond the comprehension of children,—we immediately became a congenial little band, and for several summers we came together and enjoyed each other's

companionship.

The father of the little Peyrals owned all the forests and vineyards upon the hillsides about us. We had the freedom of them, were absolutely our own masters, and no one controlled or restrained us in any way, no matter how absurd we were.

In that mountain village our relatives were so esteemed by the peasants living around them, that it was perfectly proper for us to wander any where and every where in search of adventures. We would start out very early in the morning upon mysterious expeditions, or we went to distant vineyards to have picnics or to chase butterflies that we never caught. Sometimes a little peasant would enlist in our ranks and follow submissively wherever we led. After the espionage to which I had been accustomed I found this liberty a delicious change. An altogether novel and independent life in the mountains; I might with some show of reason call it a continuation of my solitude, for I was the senior of these children who merely participated in my fantastic plays: between us there were abysmal differences springing from the quality of our minds and imaginations.

I was always the undisputed chief of the band; Titi, the only one who ever revolted, was easily brought to terms; the children seemed to wish to please me in everything, and that made it very easy for me to manage them.

That was the first little band I led. Later, other ones, less easy to cope with, came under my dominion; but I always preferred to have them composed of persons younger than myself, younger in mental development especially, and more simple in every way than I, so that they would not interfere with my whims, nor laugh at my childishness.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The only task required of me during my vacation was that I should read from Fenelon's Telemaque (my education, you see, was a little out of date). My copy of the work was composed of several small volumes. Strangely enough, it was not irksome to me. I could image to myself distinctly the land of Greece with its white marble temples and its bright sky, and I had a conception of pagan antiquity that was almost as vivid (if not so correct) as Fenelon's: Calypso and her nymphs enchanted me.

Every day, in order to read, I hid myself from the Peyrals, either in my uncle's garden or in the garret of his house, my two favorite hiding-places.

This garret, under the high Louis XIII roof, extended the full length of the house. The shutters of the place were seldom opened, and there was here, in consequence, almost perpetual twilight. The old things, belonging to a bygone century, lying there under the dust and cobwebs attracted me from the first day; and, little by little, the habit of slipping up there with my Telemaque had grown upon me. I usually stole up after the noon dinner, secure in the thought that no one would dream of looking for me there. At this noon hour of hot and radiant sunshine, the garret, by contrast, was almost as dark as night. Noiselessly I would throw open a shutter of one of the dormer windows and a flood of sunshine poured in; then I climbed out on the roof, and with elbows resting upon the sun-warmed old slate tiles overgrown with golden mosses, I would read my book.

Around me, on this same roof, thousands of Agen plums were drying. This fruit, intended for winter use, was spread out on mats made of reeds; warmed through and through by the sun and thoroughly dried they were delicious; their fragrance, too, was exquisite and it impregnated the whole garret. The bees and the wasps who, like me, ate them at their pleasure, tumbled on their backs and extended their legs in the air, overcome seemingly by the cloying sweetness of the fruit and the heat of the day. And on the neighboring roofs, between the old gothic gables, there were similar reed mats covered with these same plums, all visited by myriads of buzzing wasps and bees.

One could also see from here the two streets that came together in front of my uncle's house; they were lined with mediaeval dwellings, and each terminated at an arched door that was cut in the high red stone wall that had formerly served as a fortification. The village was hot and drowsy and silent, the heat of the mid-summer sun made it torpid; but one could hear innumerable chickens and ducks scratching and pecking at the sun-baked dirt in the streets. And far away in the distance the mountains pierced the cloudless blue of the heavens with their sunny heights.

I read Telemaque in very small doses; two or three pages a day was generally enough to satisfy my curiosity and to ease my conscience for the day; that task over, I went down hurriedly to find my little friends, and we would set out on a trip to the woods and vineyards.

My uncle's garden, my other place of retreat, was not attached to the house, but was situated, as were all the other ones in the village, beyond the ramparts of the town. It was surrounded by very high walls, and one had entrance to it through an old arched gate that was unlocked with an enormous key. Upon certain days, armed with my Telemaque and my butterfly-net, I isolated myself there.

In the garden there were several plum trees, and from them there fell, onto the warm earth, over-ripe plums of the same variety as those drying on the ancient roofs. The old arbor was trellised with grape vines, and legions of flies and bees feasted upon the musky, fragrant grapes. The extreme end of the garden, for it was a very large one, was overgrown like an ordinary field with alfalfa.

The charm of this old orchard lay in the feeling it gave one of being greatly secluded, of being absolutely alone in a wilderness of space and silence.

I must not forget to speak of the old arbor that two summers later was the scene of the most momentous act of my childhood. It backed against the surrounding wall, and its lattice-work was overspread with muscadine vines that the sun scorched and withered.

In this garden, for some inexplicable reason, I had the impression of being in the tropics, in the colonies of my fancy. And in truth the tropical gardens that I saw later were filled with the same heavy fragrance and had much the same appearance. From time to time rare butterflies, such as are not often seen elsewhere, flitted through the garden. From a front view they looked like common yellow and black butterflies, but a side view showed them to be as glistening and as beautiful a blue as the exotic ones from Guinea that I had seen under glass in my uncle's museum. They were very wary and difficult to ensnare, for they rested only for a second at a time upon the fragrant muscadel grapes before fluttering away over the wall. Sometimes I would place my foot in a crevice of the stone wall, and scramble up to the top to look after them as they flew across the hot and silent fields; and often I remained there on the coping for a long time, propped upon my elbows, and contemplated the distant landscape. Every where upon the horizon there were wooded mountains surrounded here

and there by the ruins of feudal castles. Before me, in the midst of fields of corn and buckwheat, was the Bories estate. Its old arched porch, the only one in the neighborhood that was whitewashed, looked like one of those entry-ways that are so common in African villages. This estate, I had been told, belonged to the St. Hermangarde children, who were destined to become my future comrades. They were expected almost daily, but I dreaded to have them come, for my little band composed of the Peyrals seemed all sufficient and extremely well chosen.

CHAPTER XLV.

Castelnau! This ancient name brings to me visions of glorious sunshine and of clear light shining upon noble heights; it evokes the gentle melancholy that I felt among its ruins, and recalls to me my dreams before the dead splendors buried there for so many centuries.

The old ruin of Castelnau was perched on one of the most heavily wooded mountains in the neighborhood, and its reddish stone turrets and towers stood out boldly against the sky.

By looking over and beyond the wall surrounding my uncle's garden I could see the ancient castle. Indeed, it was a conspicuous point in the landscape, and one immediately saw its rough red stones emerging from the interlaced trees; one instantly noted the ancient ruin crowning the mountain all overgrown with the beautiful verdure of chestnut and oak trees.

Upon the day of my arrival I had caught a glimpse of it, and I was attracted by this old eagle's nest which must have been a superb place of refuge during the stormy middle ages. It was a common custom in my uncle's family to go up there two or three times a month to dine and pass the afternoon with the proprietor, an old clergyman, who lived in a comfortable house built against one side of the ruin.

For me those days were like a revel in fairy land.

We started very early in the morning so that we should be beyond the plains before the hottest period of the day. When we arrived at the foot of the mountain we were refreshed by the cool shade of the forest, enveloped in its mantle of beautiful green. As we went up and up, by zig-zag paths, afoot, and in single file, under lofty arching oaks and intertwined foliage our line of march resembled a huge serpent. I was reminded of Gustave Dore's engravings of mediaeval pilgrims making their way to isolated abbeys perched on mountain heights. Tiny springs oozed out here and there and trickled across the red earth; between the trees we had momentary glimpses of beautiful and extensive vistas. At last we reached the summit, and after passing through the very quaint village that had perched on this height for many centuries, we rang the bell at the priest's tiny door. The castle overhung his miniature garden and house; both were built under the shadow of the crumbling walls and the sinking, almost tottering, red stone towers. A great peace seemed to emanate from those aerie ruins, and a deep silence reigned there.

The dinners given by the old priest, to which several of the notabilities of the neighborhood were invited, always lasted very long. The ten or fifteen courses had an accompaniment of the ripest fruits and the choicest wines of that country so excelling in exquisite vintages.

For several hours we remained at the table afflicted by the August or September midday heat, and I, the only child in the company, became very restless; I was disturbed by the thought of the crushing nearness of the castle, and after the second course I would ask to be permitted to leave the table. An old serving-woman used always to go with me and open the outer door in the wall of the feudal ramparts of Castelnau; then she confided the keys of the stately ruin to me, and I plunged alone, with a delicious feeling of fear, into the familiar path, and passed through the gate of the drawbridge superposed on the ramparts.

There I might remain for an hour or two sure of not being disturbed; I was at liberty to wander about in that labyrinth, and I was master in the majestic but sad domain. Oh! the sweet memory of the reveries that I have had there! . . . First I would make a tour about the terraces overhanging the forest lying below; a panorama infinitely beautiful unrolled itself to my sight; rivers winding here and there in the distance looked like streams of silver; and, aided by the clear and limpid summer atmosphere, I could see almost as far as the neighboring provinces. A great calm pervaded this sequestered corner of France; no line of railway penetrated it; and in consequence, it led a life entirely apart from the big world, a life such as it had known in the good old time.

After visiting the terraces I would go into the ruined interior, into the courts, up the stairways and through the empty galleries. I climbed to the old towers and put to flight flocks of pigeons, and disturbed the sleep of bats and owls. On the first floor there was a suite of spacious rooms, still roofed over, and very dark because of the shuttered windows. I penetrated into these chambers, and I felt an almost delicious terror when I heard my footsteps echoing through the sepulchral stillness of the place. Then I would pass in review before the strange Gothic paintings and the half-effaced frescoes that still retained traces of gilt ornamentation; the fabled monsters and garlands of impossible flowers had been added at the time of the Renaissance. This magnificent, pictured past, fantastic and barbarous to the point of being terrible, seemed to me, at that time, very vague and dim and distant; I could not realize that it had been lighted up by the same midday sunshine that warmed the red stones of the ruins about me. And now that I am better able to estimate Castelnau, when I recall it to my memory, after having seen most of the splendors of this earth, I still think the enchanted castle of my childhood, as it stands upon its glorious height, one of the most superb ruins of mediaeval France.

In one of the towers there was a room whose ceiling was painted a royal blue over-strewn with exquisite gold tracery and blazonry. In no place have I realized feudalism so well as in that tower. There alone, in the silence as of a city of the dead, I would lean out of the little window cut in the thick wall and contemplate the green verdure lying below me, and I tried to imagine that I saw coming along the paths, given over to the flight of birds, a cavalcade of soldiers, or a procession of noble knights and ladies. . . . And, for me, reared in a level country, one of the greatest charms of the place was the view I had of blue distances visible from every loophole and crevice, every gap and opening in the rooms and towers of Castelnau, for then I realized its extraordinary height.

CHAPTER XLVI.

My brother's letters, written close on very fine paper, continued to reach us from time to

time; he could only send them to us by sailing vessels bound in our direction which lay-to in that part of the world where he was stationed. Some of them were written particularly for me, and these were long, and filled with never-to-be-forgotten descriptions. I already knew several words of the sweet and liquid language of Oceanica, and often in my dreams I saw the exquisite island he described and roamed over it; it haunted my imagination as does a chimerical realm, ardently desired, but as inaccessible as if situated upon another planet.

During my visit to my cousins my father forwarded me a letter from my brother addressed to me. I went up to the garret roof, on the side where the plums were drying, to read it. He wrote of a place called Fataua which was situated in a deep valley and surrounded by steep mountains. "A perpetual twilight," he wrote, "reigns here under the great exotic trees, and the spray of the cascade keeps the carpet of rare ferns fresh." Yes; I could picture that scene to myself very well, now that I had about me mountains and moist glens luxuriant with ferns. . . . He described everything fully and vividly: my brother could not know that his letters exercised a dangerous spell over the child who, at his departure, appeared to be so tranquil and so attached to the home fireside.

"The only pity," he wrote at the end, "is that this delightful island has not a door opening into the home-yard, into the beautiful arbor overgrown with honeysuckle, for instance, that lies behind the grottoes and the little pond."

This idea of a door in the wall at the foot of our garden, and especially the association between the little lake constructed by my brother and distant Oceanica, struck me as very singular, and the following night I had this dream:

I went into the yard and found it enveloped in a sort of deadly twilight that gave me the impression that the sun had been extinguished forever. Every where there seemed to be an inexpressible desolation that is known only in dreams, and which it is almost impossible to conceive of in the waking state. When I arrived at the bottom of the garden near the beloved little lake, I felt myself rising from the ground like a bird about to take flight. At first I floated aimlessly as thistledown, then I passed over the wall and took a south-west direction, the direction of Oceanica; I had no trace of wings, and I lay on my back in an agony of dizziness and nausea as I travelled with frightful rapidity, with the swiftness of a stone shot from a sling. The stars whirled madly in space; beneath me oceans and seas faded into the pallid and indistinguishable distance, and as I journeyed I was ever enwrapped in that twilight bespeaking a dead world. . . . After a few minutes I suddenly found myself encompassed by the darkness of the noble trees in the valley of Fataua.

There in the valley my dream continued, for I ceased to believe in it,—the utter impossibility of really being there impressed itself upon my mind,—for very often I had been duped by such illusions which always vanished when I awoke. My main concern was lest I should wake wholly, for the vision, incomplete as it was, enchanted me. At least the carpet of rare ferns was really there. As I groped in the night air and plucked them I said to myself: "Surely these plants are real, for I can touch them and I have them in my hand; surely they will not disappear when the dream vanishes." And I grasped them with all my strength to be sure of keeping them.

I awoke. A beautiful summer day had dawned, and in the village was heard the noise of recommencing life. The continual clucking of the hens as they roamed about in the streets, and the click-clack of the weaver's loom caused me to realize where I was. My empty hand was still shut tight, and the nails were pressed almost into the flesh, the better to guard that imaginary bouquet of Fataua, composed of the impalpable stuff of dreams.

CHAPTER XLVII.

I had very quickly attached myself to my grown cousins, and I felt as well acquainted with them as if I had always known them. I believe it is necessary that there should be the bond of blood for the creation of those intimate relations between people, who but the day before were almost ignorant of each other's existence. I also loved my uncle and aunt; my aunt especially, who spoiled me a little, and who was so good and still so beautiful in spite of her sixty years, her gray hair and her grandmotherly way of dressing herself. In these levelling days, wherein one person is so like another, people of my aunt's type no longer exist. Born in the neighborhood, of a very ancient family, she had never been away from this province of France, and her manners, her hospitality, and her exquisite courtesy had a local stamp, every detail of which pleased me greatly.

In direct contrast to my sheltered home life, here I lived almost entirely out of doors. I roamed about in the streets and highways, and often I went beyond the gates of the town. The narrow streets paved with black pebbles like those in the Orient, and bordered with gothic dwellings of the time of Louis XIII, had a singular charm for me. I already knew all the nooks and corners, public highways and the byways of the village, and I was well acquainted with many of the kind country people who lived about us.

The women, peasant women with goitres, who passed my uncle's house on their way to and from the surrounding fields and vineyards, carried baskets of fruit on their heads, and they always paused to offer me luscious grapes and delicious peaches. I was delighted with the southern dialect, and with the songs of the mountaineers; and, best of all, my unfamiliar surroundings ever reminded me that I was in a strange country.

And now when I see any of the little things that I brought from there for my museum, or when I look over the brief letters that I wrote to my mother every day, I suddenly feel the warm sunshine, I experience again the strange newness, I smell the fragrance of ripe southern fruits, and I feel the keen freshness of the mountain air; and at such times I realize that in spite of the long descriptions in these dead pages they inadequately express all I felt.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The little St. Hermangardes, of whom every one spoke so often, arrived about the middle of September. Their castle was situated in the north upon the bank of the Carreze, but they came every year to pass the autumn in their very old and dilapidated mansion near my uncle's house.

Two boys, both a little older than I, came this time, and contrary to my expectation I took a fancy to them immediately. As they were in the habit of spending a part of each year at their country place they had guns and powder and often went hunting. Thus they brought an entirely new element into our games. Their estate of Bories became one of the centres of our

operations. Everything there was at our disposal, the servants and all the animals in the stables. One of our favorite amusements was the construction of enormous balloons, nine or ten feet high, and these we inflated by burning under them sheaves of hay; we then watched them rise and sail away and away, until they were lost to our sight high above the distant fields and woods.

The little St. Hermangardes were unlike other children; they had had all their instruction from a tutor, and their ideas were different from those one imbibes at boarding schools. When there was any disagreement between us in regard to our games they always courteously gave in to me, and therefore my contact with them did not help me to meet the painful experiences of the future.

One day they came over and with much grace made me a present of a very rare butterfly. It was of a pale yellow color, almost merging into light green, the yellow of a very ordinary butterfly, but its front wings were a shaded and exquisite pink, similar to the delicate rosy tints sometimes seen at daybreak. They had captured it, they said, in the late-ripening autumn grain fields of Bories,—they had caught hold of it so deftly and carefully that their fingers had made no impression upon its brilliant coloring. When, at about noontime, I received it from them I was in the vestibule of my uncle's house, a place always kept tightly closed during the hours of intense heat. From the wing of the house I heard my cousin singing in the thin and plaintive falsetto of a mountaineer; he often sang in that manner, and when he did so his voice always gave me a feeling of unusual melancholy as it broke the stillness of the late September noons. He sang over and over the same old refrain: "Ah! Ah! The good, good story. . . ." Here he always broke off and recommenced. And from that moment Bories, the pinkish-yellow butterfly, and the sad little refrain of the "good, good story" were inseparably associated in my memory.

But I fear that I have said too much about the incoherent impressions and images which came to me so frequently in days gone by; this is the last time that I will speak at length of them. But it will be seen, because of what follows, how important it is for me to note the association existing between the dissimilar things mentioned above.

CHAPTER XLIX.

We left the mountains at the beginning of October, but my home-coming was marked by a very painful circumstance—I was sent to school! I went, of course, only as a day scholar; and it goes without saying that I was never allowed to go and come alone lest I should get into bad company. The four years that I spent at the university, as a day scholar, were as strange and as full of odd experiences as any of my life. But, notwithstanding, from that fatal day my history becomes much less interesting as a narrative.

I was taken to school for the first time, at two o'clock in the afternoon, upon one of those glorious October days, so sunny and peaceful, that is like a reluctant and sad leave-taking of the summer-time. Ah! how beautiful it had been in the mountains, in the leafless forests and among the autumn-tinted vines!

With a crowd of children, all talking at the same time, I entered the torture chamber. My first impression was one of astonished disgust because of the hideousness of the ink-stained

walls, and of the old benches of shiny wood defaced by the penknife carvings of countless school-boys who had been so inexpressibly miserable in this place. Although I was a stranger to my new companions they treated me with the greatest familiarity (they used thee and thou in addressing me) and gave themselves patronizing airs that were almost impertinent. Although I observed my school-mates timidly and furtively I thought them, for the most part, exceedingly ill-mannered and untidy.

As I was twelve and a half I entered the third class; my tutor considered me advanced enough to keep up with it if I chose to do so, although I myself felt that I was scarcely equal to the task. The first day, for the purpose of qualifying, we had to write Latin exercises, and I remember that my father awaited, with some anxiety, the outcome of the examination. When I told him I was second among fifteen I was surprised that he attached so much importance to a matter of so little interest to me. It was all one to me! Broken hearted as I felt, how could I be affected by such a trifle?

Later, indeed, at no time, did I feel the impetus that the desire to excel brings with it. To be at the foot of the class always seemed to me the least of the ills that a school-boy is called upon to endure.

The weeks following my entrance were extremely painful to me. I felt my intellect cramping rather than expanding under the multiplicity of the lessons and the tasks imposed; even the realm of my young dreams seemed closing against me little by little. The first dismal, foggy weather, and the first gray days added a greater desolation and sadness to my already overwrought feelings. The uncouth chimney-sweeps had returned, and their yearly autumn cry was again heard in the streets. Theirs was a cry that in my earlier years wrung my heart and caused my tears to flow. When one is a child the approach of winter, with its killing gloom and cold, seems to awake in him inexplicable forebodings bespeaking the end of all bright and beautiful things; time goes so slowly in childhood that we appear not to be able to anticipate the inevitable reawakening that comes in the spring to all things.

No, it is only when we are older, and would seem, therefore, to be more impressionable to the changes of the seasons, that we regard winter merely as an incident having its rightful place among the other incidents of life.

I had a calendar and I marked off upon it the slowly passing days. At the commencement of my first year of college life I was oppressed by the thought of the months of study stretching before me, and by the prospect of the interminable months that must come and go before we reached the Easter vacation that was to give us a respite of eight or ten days from the dreadful schoolroom grind and ennui; I seemed to lose all my courage, and at times I was almost overwhelmed with despair at the prospect of the long and dreary days that went so slowly.

In the meantime cold weather, really cold weather set in and aggravated my sorrows. Oh! the daily journey to school upon those frigid December mornings, where for two deadly hours the only warmth we obtained came from the inadequate coal fire, and before me the torture of returning to my home in the face of the icy winter wind! The other children frolicked and ran and pushed each other, and they slid upon the ice when it chanced that the water in the gutters was frozen over. As for me I did not know how to slide, and, besides, sports such as the other boys indulged in, I considered highly undignified. I was always escorted to and from school very sedately, and I felt the humiliation of being conducted. I was sometimes laughed at by my school-mates with whom I was not at all popular; and I had a disdain for those who, like myself, were in bondage. I had scarcely an idea in common with

them.

Even Thursdays I had to give to the preparation of lessons that took the entire day. The written tasks, absurd exercises, I scrawled off in the most careless and illegible handwriting.

And my disgust for life was so great that I no longer took the least bit of pains with myself; often now I was scolded for looking so unkempt, and for having dirty, ink-stained hands. . . . But if I continue in this strain I will succeed in making my recital as tedious as were the school-days of my youth.

CHAPTER L.

Cakes! Cakes! My good hot cakes! The old cake woman had resumed her nightly tour, and again we heard her rapid footsteps and her shrill refrain. Always at the same hour, with the regularity of an automaton, she went by our house. And the long winter recommenced in the same manner as had the preceding ones, and as were similarly to begin the following two or three years.

Our neighbors, the D———s, accompanied by Lucette, always came at eight o'clock Sunday evenings, and another neighbor visited us also upon this same evening. These latter brought with them their little daughter Marguerite, who gradually insinuated herself into my affections.

That year Marguerite and I brought the Sunday winter evenings, over which the thought of the tasks of the morrow brooded sadly, to a close with an entirely new amusement. After the tea, when I felt that the party was about to break up, I would hurry little Marguerite into the dining-room, and there we rushed madly about the round table and tried to catch or tag each other,—we played furiously. It goes without saying that she was usually caught immediately and tagged very often, and I scarcely ever; it therefore fell out that it was almost always her turn to chase me, and she did it desperately. We struck the table with our bodies, and yelled, and carried on our play with the greatest imaginable uproar. We succeeded in turning up the rugs, in disarranging the chairs, and in making havoc of everything. We soon tired of our play, however,—the truth is I was too old to care greatly for such frolics. I had scarcely any feeling save one of melancholy in spite of the wild sport I indulged in, for over me hovered the chilling thought that in the morning the usual round of dry and laborious lessons would begin. My furious revel was simply a way of prolonging that day of truce, of making it count to its very last moment; it was an attempt to divert my thoughts by making plenty of noise. It was also my way of hurling a defiance at those tasks that I had left undone. My negligence troubled my conscience and disturbed my sleep, and caused me finally to look over, hastily and feverishly, by the feeble light of a candle, or by the cold gray light of early dawn, the neglected lessons, before the coming of the despised hour in which I betook myself to school.

There was always a little consternation in the parlor when the sounds of our merriment reached those gathered there; it must have been particularly distressing to our parents to hear that we were amusing ourselves otherwise than with our duet sonatas, and to find that we preferred noise and discord to the "Pretty Shepherdess."

And for at least two winters, at about half-past ten every Sunday evening, we indulged in

that romp around the dining-table. My school was of little value to me, and the tasks imposed of even less benefit; I always went to work reluctantly and in the wrong spirit, and that lessened and extinguished my power and stupefied me. I had the same unfortunate experience when I came in contact with school-mates of my own age, my equals; their roughness disgusted me, and I repulsed all the efforts they made to be friendly. . . . I never saw them except in class, under the master's rod as it were; I had already become a little being too peculiar and set in my ways to be modified greatly by contact with them, and I therefore held aloof, and my eccentricities accentuated themselves.

Almost all of them were older and more developed than I; they also were more crafty and more sophisticated; in consequence there sprung up amongst them a feeling of contempt and enmity for me that I repaid with disdain, for I felt sure that they were incapable of comprehending or following the flights of my imagination.

With the very youthful peasants in the mountains, and the fishermen's children on the Island, I had never been haughty; we had understood each other after the fashion of children who are primitive and therefore fond of childish play; and upon such occasions I had associated with them as if they were my equals. But I was arrogant in my behavior to the boys at school, and they had good reason to consider me whimsical and priggish. It took me many years to conquer that arrogance, to act simply and like other people in the world; and especially it was difficult for me to realize that one is not necessarily superior to his fellows because he is (to his own misfortune often) prince and conjurer in the realm of fancy.

CHAPTER LI.

The theatre wherein was enacted the "Donkey's Skin," very much amplified and more elaborate, had now a permanent place in my aunt Claire's room. Little Jeanne, more interested in it since the additions to the scenery and the text, came over oftener; she painted backgrounds under my direction, and the moments I enjoyed most were those in which I impressed her with my great superiority. We had now a box full of characters, each with a name and a role; and the fantastic processions were made up of regiments of monsters, beasts and gnomes made out of plaster and painted with water colors.

I recall our delight and enthusiasm when we tried for the first time the effect of a scenic background which we had made to represent the "void of heaven." Delicate rosy clouds, bespeaking the dawn, floated over the blue expanse that was softened and paled by the gauze hanging in front of it. And the chariot of a silken-haired fairy, drawn by two butterflies and suspended on invisible threads, advanced towards the centre of the scene.

But in spite of our efforts our work was never finished, for we took no account of limitations; every day we had new ideas and ever more and more wonderful projects, and the great comprehensive representation was deferred from day to day, was postponed to a future that never came.

Every undertaking of my life will be, or has already been, left unfinished and incomplete as was that little play of the "Donkey's Skin."

CHAPTER LII.

Among those professors who seemed, during my school-days, so severe, and indeed almost cruel to me, the most terrible without any exception were the "Bull of Apis" and the "Big Black Ape" (I had nicknames for all of them). I hope should they read this they will understand that I am writing from the child's view-point. Should I meet them to-day I would, in all probability, humbly tender them my hand and ask their pardon for having been such an unmanageable pupil.

Oh! the Big Ape especially, how I hated him! When from the height of his desk these words fell upon my ear: "You will do a hundred lines; I mean you, you little sap-head!" I could have flown at his face like an enraged cat. He was the first to arouse in me those sudden and violent outbursts of rage that characterized me as a man, outbreaks which could scarcely have been foreseen in a child of my sweet and patient disposition.

I would be doing myself a great injustice in saying that I was altogether a bad scholar, I was, rather, an unequal and erratic one; one day at the head of my class, the next day at the foot; but on the whole I maintained a fair average, and at the end of the year I received the prize for translation—I won no others however. It surprised me that every one in the class did not receive the prize that I had won without great effort, for translation was extraordinarily easy for me. On the other hand I found composition very difficult, and narration still more so.

Little by little I deserted my own work-desk, and in my aunt Claire's room, near the china bon-bon bear, I underwent with as much resignation as possible, the torture that the preparing of my tasks imposed. On the wainscoting of the wall, in a hidden recess of the room, there is still visible, among the other fantastical sketches, a pen-portrait of the "Big Ape"; the ink has faded to a light yellow, but the drawing has endured, and when I look at it I again feel a sort of deadly weariness, and a sensation of suffocation chills me through and through—in short I once more live over those dread school-days.

Aunt Claire was more than ever my resource during those hard times; she always looked up words for me in the dictionary, and often she took upon herself the task of writing for me, in an assumed hand, the exercises exacted by the "Big Ape."

CHAPTER LIII.

Bring me, please, dear, the second . . . no, the third drawer of my chiffonier.

It is mamma who is speaking; she is busying herself with the drawers of the chiffonier which every day, for many years, she had asked me to bring to her,—sometimes she pretends to need them merely for the purpose of pleasing me by requiring my services. It was one of the things that I was able to do for her when I was very little: to carry to her one or another of those tiny drawers. It was an honored custom in our household for a long time.

At the time of my life of which I am now writing it was in the evening, at dusk, after my return from school, that I busied myself carrying the little chiffonier drawers. I usually found mamma seated in her accustomed place near the window chatting or embroidering, her work basket was before her, and the bureau, whose different compartments she required from time to time, was situated some distance away, in an anteroom.

The Louis XVth chiffonier was very much revered, for it had belonged to great-grandmothers. In it there were some very old and very tiny painted boxes which had doubtless been handled every day by one or another of our ancestresses. It goes without saying that I knew all the secrets of these compartments that were kept in such exquisite order; there was a special place for silks that was classified by being put into ribbon bags; one for needles, another for braid, and still another for little hooks. And these things were still arranged, I have no doubt, as they had been in our grandmother's days, whose saintly activity my mother imitated.

To bring the drawers of the chiffonier to mamma was the joy and pride of my childhood, and there has been no change in my feelings for those little compartments since that time. They have always inspired me with the most tender respect; they are blended with the image of my mother and they recall to me her beautiful, skillful hands, ever busy manufacturing some pretty, useful article,—even to her last piece of embroidery which was a handkerchief for me.

In my seventeenth year, when we met great reverses—at that troubled time of which I will not speak here, but only mention because I have already, in preceding chapters, touched upon the matter—we had to face, for several months, the dreadful possibility of being obliged to part with our old home and all the precious things that it contained. At that time when I passed in review all the beloved memories and habits and mementoes that I would need to break with, one of my most agonizing thoughts was: "Never more will I be able to come and go in the ante-chamber where the chiffonier stands, nor never again be able to carry its precious little drawers to mamma."

And her very old-fashioned work-basket that I had begged her not to discard, although it was much worn, with its little articles, needle books, receptacles for thimbles and screws for holding the embroidery frames! The thought that a time must surely come when the well-beloved hands that daily touch these things will touch them no more, fills me with so much sorrow that I am bereft of all courage and I struggle in vain against invading sad emotions. Let me hope that as long as I live it may remain as it is, that for so long it will be guarded with the sacredness of a relic; but to whom can I bequeath this heirloom with the assurance that it will be cherished? What will become of those poor little trifles that are so precious to me?

That work-basket belonging to my mother, and the little drawers of the old chiffonier are, I doubt not, the things that I will part with most regretfully when the time comes for me to go into the world.

Truly all of this is very puerile and childish, and I am ashamed of it;—and yet I am almost weeping as I write it.

CHAPTER LIV.

Because of the haste and confusion brought about by conflicting school tasks, I had not for many months found time to read my Bible; indeed I scarcely had time for a morning prayer.

I still went to church regularly every Sunday; that is we all went there together. I reverenced the family pew where we had assembled for so many years; and apart from that reason I hold it dear because it is associated in my memory with my mother.

It was at church, however, that my faith continued to receive its most damaging blows; it was there that religion seemed a cold and meaningless term to me. Usually the commentaries, the narrow human reasoning and dissection took away from the beauty of the Bible and the Gospels, and deprived them of their grandly solemn and exquisite poetry. For a peculiar nature like mine it was very difficult to have any one touch upon holy subjects (in such a way as did the minister) without in some measure, in my opinion, desecrating them. The family worship, held every evening, awakened in me the only religious meditation that I now knew, for the voice that read or prayed was exceedingly dear to me, and that changed everything.

My untiring contemplation of nature, and the reflections that I indulged in in the presence of the fossils I had brought from the mountains and cliffs, and placed in my museum, indicated that there had been bred in me a vague and unconscious pantheism.

In short my deeply rooted and still-living faith was covered over with encumbering earth. At times it threw out a green shoot, but for the most part it lay like an entirely dead thing in the cold ground. Moreover, I was too much troubled to pray; my conscience, still restive and timid, gave me no rest during the time that I was on my knees,—I always felt remorse gnaw at me then because of the slovenly and half-done tasks, and because of the feelings of hate I had for the "Big Ape" and the "Bull of Apis," emotions that I was obliged to hide and disguise until I shuddered at the falsehoods I spoke and acted. These things gave me poignant remorse and excruciating moral distress, and to escape from these emotions I indulged in noisy sports and foolish laughter; and when my conscience troubled me most, and I dared not, therefore, appear before my parents, I took refuge with the servants, played tennis, jumped the rope, or make a great racket.

For two or three years I had not spoken of a religious vocation, for I now understood that such a desire was a thing of the past, was impossible; but I had not found anything to put in its place. When strangers asked what career I was being prepared for, my parents, a little anxious in regard to my future, did not know what to say; and I knew still less what to reply.

However my brother, who was also much concerned over my enigmatical future, in one of those letters that seemed always to come from an enchanted land, suggested, because of a certain facility in mathematics and a certain precision of nature, certainly anomalies in one of my temperament, that it might be well for me to study engineering. And when they consulted me and I replied apathetically: "Very well, it is agreeable enough to me," the matter seemed satisfactorily settled.

I would need to spend a little more than a year at a polytechnic school in order to prepare myself. To be there or elsewhere, what difference did it make to me? . . . When I contemplated the men of a certain age who surrounded me, those occupying the most honorable positions, who had every claim to respect and consideration, I would say to myself: "It will some day be necessary for me to live a useful, sedate life in a given place and fixed sphere as they do, and to grow old as they are—and that is all!" And a bitter

hopelessness overwhelmed me as I brooded on the thought; I yearned for the impossible; I longed most of all to remain a child forever, and the reflection that the years were fleeing, and that, whether I would or would not, I must become a man, was anguish to me.

CHAPTER LV.

Twice a week, in the history classes, I came in contact with the naval students. To give themselves a sailor-like appearance they wore red sashes, and they constantly drew ships and anchors on their copy-books.

I never dreamed of that career for myself; scarcely oftener than once or twice had such a thought passed through my mind and then it had disquieted me: it was, however, the only life in which I could indulge my taste for travel and adventure. It terrified me, this naval career, more than any other because of the long exiles it imposed, exiles that faith could no longer make seem endurable, as in the days when I had expressed a desire to become a missionary.

To go far away as my brother had done; to be separated from my mother and other beloved ones for years and years; not to see during that time the little yard reclothe itself in green at the coming of the spring, nor to see the roses bloom upon the old wall, no, I had not the courage to undertake it.

Because it was assumed, doubtless because of my peculiar education, that such a rough life was wholly unsuited to me. And I knew very well, from some words that had been spoken in my hearing, that should so wild an idea gain a lodgment with me my parents would withhold their consent and thwart me in every way.

CHAPTER LVI.

On my Thursday holidays during the winter, after having finished my duties and accomplished all my school tasks, I felt the greatest homesickness when I mounted to my museum. It was always a little late when I finished my lessons, and the light was usually fading when I looked down at the great meadows that appeared inexpressibly melancholy as they stretched before me enwrapped in a grayish-pink mist. I was homesick for the summer, homesick for the sun and the south, all of which were suggested by the butterflies from my uncle's garden that I had arranged and pinned under glass, and by the mountain fossils that the little Peyrals and I had collected in the summer time.

It was a foretaste of that longing for somewhere else which later, after my return from long voyages to tropical countries, spoiled my visits to my home.

Oh! there was in particular the pinkish-yellow butterfly! There were times when I experienced a bitter pleasure in seeking to understand the great sadness that it caused me. It

was in the glass case at the far end of the room; its two colors so fresh and unusual, like a Chinese painting, or a fairy's robe, were exquisite foils for each other; the butterfly formed a luminous whole that shone out brightly in the gray twilight, and it caused the other butterflies surrounding it to look as dull as dun-colored little bats.

As soon as my eyes rested upon it I seemed to hear drawled out lazily, in a mountaineer's treble, the refrain: "Ah! ah! the good, good story!" And again I saw the white porch of Bories in the midst of the silence and the hot sunshine of a summer noon. A deep regret for past and gone vacations took possession of me; I felt saddened when I tried to recreate days belonging to a dead past, and tried to imagine vacations still to come; but mingled in with sentiments that I can name, there were those other inexpressible ones that well up from the unfathomable deeps of one's being.

This association between the butterfly, the song and Bories caused me for a long time an extreme sadness that, try as hard as I may, I cannot explain satisfactorily; and the feeling continued until stormy and tempestuous winds swept over my life and carried away with them the small concerns belonging to my childhood.

Sometimes, upon gray winters evenings, when I looked at the butterfly I would sing to myself the little refrain of the "good, good story;" to accomplish this I had to make my voice very flute-like; and as I sang, the porch of Bories appeared to me more vividly than ever, as it stood, sunny but desolate, under the dazzling light of the September noon. This association was a little like the one that later established itself for me between the sad falsetto of the Arab songs, the snowy splendor of their mosques and the winding-sheet whiteness of their lime-washed porticos.

That butterfly in all the freshness and radiance of its two strange colors, mummified, it is true, but as brilliant looking as ever under its glass, retains for me a sort of old-time charm which I cherish. The little St. Hermangardes, whom I have not seen for many years, and who are now attached to an embassy somewhere in the Orient, would doubtless, should they read this, be much astonished to learn what value circumstances has given to their little present.

CHAPTER LVII.

The chief event of these winters, so poisoned by my college life, was the gift-giving festival that we had at New Year.

At about the end of November it was our custom, my sister's, Lucette's and mine, to make out a list of the things we desired most. Everybody in the two families prepared surprises for us, and the mystery surrounding these gifts was our most exquisite pleasure during the last days of the year. Between parents, grandmother and aunts there occurred, to excite my curiosity still further, conversations full of mysterious hints, and whisperings that were hastily discontinued as soon as I appeared.

Between Lucette and me it became a real guessing game. As in the play of "Words with a double meaning," we had the right to ask certain pointed questions,—for example we asked the most ridiculous ones, such as: "Has it hair like an animal?"

And the answers went something after this fashion:

What your father is to give you (a dressing-case made of leather) had hair, but it has none now, except on some portion of its interior (brushes), and that is false. Your mamma's present (a fur muff) still has some hair. What your aunt is to give you (a lamp) will help you to see the hair on the others better; but, let me see, yes, I am sure that that has none.

In the December twilights, in that hour between daylight and darkness, we would sit upon our low stools before the wood-fire, and continue our series of questions from day to day. We grew ever more eager and excited until the 31st, and in the evening of that momentous day the mysteries were revealed.

That day the presents for the two families, wrapped, tied and labeled, were piled upon tables in a room closed against Lucette and me. At eight o'clock the doors were thrown open and we filed in, the elders going first, and each one of us sought for his own gift among the heap of white parcels. For me the moment of entry was an exceedingly joyous one, and until I was twelve or thirteen years of age, I could not refrain from jumping and leaping like a kid long before it came time for us to cross the threshold.

We had supper at eleven, and when the clock in the dining room struck the midnight hour, tranquilly, in harmony with the sound of its calm stroke, we separated in the first moments of those New Years that are now buried under the ashes of many succeeding ones. And on those evenings I fell asleep with all my gifts in my room near me. I even kept the favorite ones upon my bed. The following morning I always waked earlier than usual so that I might re-examine them; they cast a spell of enchantment over that winter morning, the first one of a new year.

Once there was, among my presents, a large illustrated book treating of the antediluvian world.

Through the study of fossils I had already been initiated into the mysteries of prehistoric creations. I knew something about those terrible creatures that in geologic times shook the primitive forests with their heavy tread; for a long time the thought of them disquieted me. I found them all in my book pictured in their proper habitat, surrounded by great brakes, and standing under a leaden sky.

The antediluvian world already haunted my imagination and became the constant subject of my dreams; often I concentrated my whole mind upon it, and endeavored to picture to myself one of its gigantic landscapes that seemed ever enveloped in a sinister and gloomy twilight with a background filled in with great moving shadows. Then when the vision thus created took on a seeming reality I felt an inexpressible sadness that was like an exhalation of the soul,—as soon as the emotion passed the dream-structure vanished.

Soon after this I sketched a new scene for the "Donkey's Skin;" it was one representing the liassic period. I painted a dismal swamp overshadowed by lowering clouds, where, in the shave-grass and the gigantic ferns, strange extinct beasts wandered slowly.

The play of the "Donkey's Skin" seemed no longer the same Donkey's Skin. I discarded one by one the little stage people who now offended me by their uncompromising doll-like stiffness; they were relegated to their card-board box, the poor little things, where they slept the sleep eternal, and without doubt they will never be exhumed.

My new scenes had nothing in common with the old fairy spectacle: in the depths of virgin

forests, in exotic gardens, and oriental palaces formed of pearls and gold I tried to realize, with the small means at my command, all my dreams, while waiting for that improbable better time that ever lies in the future.

CHAPTER LVIII.

That hard winter passed under the ferule of the "Bull of Apis" and the "Great Ape," finally came to an end and spring returned; it was always a troublous time for us, the scholars, for the first mild days gave us a great longing to be out, and we could scarcely hide our restlessness. The roses budded everywhere upon our old walls; my beloved little garden, bright and warm under the March sunshine, tempted me, and I would tarry there a long time to watch the insects wake up, and to see the early butterflies and bees fly away. Even the revised "Donkey's Skin" was neglected.

I was no longer escorted to and from school, for I had persuaded my family to discontinue a custom that made me ridiculous in the eyes of my companions. Often, before returning home, I would take a long and roundabout way and pass by the peaceful ramparts from where I had glimpses of other provinces, and a sight of the distant country.

I worked with even less zeal than usual that spring, for the beautiful weather that tempted me out of doors turned my head and made study almost impossible.

Assuredly one of the things for which I had the least aptitude was French composition; I generally composed a mere rough draught without a particle of embellishment to redeem it. In the class there was a boy who was a very eagle, and he always read his lucubrations aloud. Oh! with what unction he read out his pretty creations! (He is now settled in a manufacturing town, and has become the most prosaic of petty bailiffs.) One day the subject given out was: "A Shipwreck." To me the words had a lyrical sound! But, nevertheless, I handed in my paper with only the title and my name inscribed upon it. No, I could not make up my mind to elaborate the subjects given to us by the "Great Ape"; a sort of instinctive good taste kept me from writing trite commonplaces, and as for putting down things of my own imagining, the knowledge that they would be read and picked to pieces by the old bogey made it impossible for me to compose anything.

I loved, however, even at this time, to write for myself, but I did it with the greatest secrecy. Not in the desk in my room that was profaned by lessons and copy-books, but in the little old-fashioned one that was part of the furniture of my museum, there was hidden away a unique thing that represented my first attempt at a journal. It looked like a sibyl's conjuring book, or an Assyrian manuscript; a seeming endless strip of paper was rolled upon a reed; at the head of this there were two varieties of the Egyptian sphinx and a cabalistic star drawn in red ink,—and under these mysterious signs I wrote down, upon the full length of the paper and in a cipher of my own invention, daily events and reflections. A year later, however, because of the labor involved in transcribing the cryptographic characters I had chosen I discarded them and used the ordinary letters; but I continued my work with the greatest secrecy, and I kept my manuscript under lock and key as if it were an interdicted book. I inscribed there, not so much the events of my almost colorless existence, as my incoherent impressions, the melancholy that I felt at twilight, my regret for past summers, and my

dreams of distant countries. . . . I already had a longing to give my fugitive emotions a determinative quality, I needed to wrestle against my own weaknesses and frailties and to banish, if possible, the dream-like element that I seemed to discover in all the things about me, and for that reason I continued my journal until a few years ago. . . . But at that time the mere idea that a day might come when someone would have a peep at it was insupportable to me; so much so indeed that if I left home and went to the Island or elsewhere for a few days, I always took care to seal up my journal, and with the greatest solemnity I wrote upon the packet: "It is my last wish that this book be burned without being read."

God knows, I have changed since then. But it would be going too far beyond the limits of this story of my childhood to recount here through what changes in my life's view-point it chances that I now sing aloud of my woes, and cry out to the passers-by, for the purpose of drawing to myself the sympathy of distant unknown ones; and I call out with the greater anguish in proportion as I feel myself approaching nearer and nearer to the final dust. . . . And who knows? perhaps as I grow older I may write of those still more sacred things which at present cannot be forced from me,—and by that means try to prolong beyond the bounds of my individual life, memory of my being, of my sorrows, and joys, and love.

CHAPTER LIX.

The return that spring of little Jeanne's father from a sea voyage interested me greatly. For several days her house was topsy-turvy with preparation, and one could guess the joy they felt over his approaching arrival. The frigate that he commanded reached port a little earlier than his family expected it, and from my window I saw him, one fine evening, hurrying along the street alone, on his way home to surprise his people. He had arrived from I know not which distant colony after an absence of two or three years, but it did not seem to me that he was the least altered in appearance. . . . One could then return to his home unchanged? They did come to an end after all, those years of exile, which now I find, in truth, much shorter than they seemed in those days! My brother himself was to return the following autumn, and it would doubtless then seem as if he had never been away from us.

And what joyous events those home-comings were! And what a distinction surrounded those who had but newly returned from so great a distance!

The next day in Jeanne's yard I watched them unpack the enormous wooden boxes that her father had brought from strange countries; some of them were covered with tarpaulin cloth, —pieces of sails no doubt, that were impregnated with the agreeable odor of the ship and the sea; two sailors wearing large blue collars were busy uncording and unscrewing them; and they took from them strange looking objects that had an odor of the "colonies;" straw mats, water jars and Chinese vases; even cocoanuts and other tropical fruits.

Jeanne's grandfather, himself an old seaman, was standing near me watching from the corner of his eye the process of unpacking; suddenly, from between the boards of a case that was being broken open with a hatchet, there crawled out hastily some ugly little brown insects that the sailors jumped on with their feet and destroyed.

"Cockroaches are they not, Captain?" I inquired of the grandfather.

"Ha! How do you know that, you little landlubber?" he laughingly responded.

To tell the truth, I had never seen any such insects before; but uncles who had lived in the tropics often spoke of them. And I was delighted to make the acquaintance of these tiny creatures that are peculiar to ships and to warm countries.

CHAPTER LX.

Spring! Spring!

The white roses and the jasmine bloomed on our old garden wall, and the deliciously fragrant honeysuckle hung its long garlands over it.

I began to live there from morning until night in closest intimacy with the plants and the old stones. I listened to the sound of the water as it plashed in the shade of the majestic plum tree, I studied the grasses and the wood mosses that grew at the edge of my little lake; and upon the warm side of the garden where the sun shone all through the day, the cactus put out its buds.

My Wednesday evening trips to Limoise commenced again,—and it goes without saying that I dreamed of the beloved place from one week to the next to the detriment of my lessons and my other duties.

CHAPTER LXI.

I believe that that spring was the most radiant and the most ravishingly happy one of my childhood, in contrast no doubt to the terrible winter spent under the rigorous care of the Great Ape.

Oh! the end of May, the high grass and then the June mowing! In what a glory of golden light I see it all again!

I took evening walks with my father and sister as I had done during my earlier years; they now came to meet me at the close of school, at half-past four, and we set out immediately for the fields. Our preference that spring was for a certain meadow abloom with pink amourettes, and I always brought home great bouquets of these flowers.

In that same meadow a migratory and ephemeral species of moth, black and pink (of the same pink as the amourettes) had hatched out, and they slept poised on the long stalks of the grass, or flew away as lightly as the flowers shed their petals when we walked through the hay. . . . And all of these things appear to me again as I saw them in the exquisite, limpid June atmosphere. . . . During the afternoon classes, the thought of the sun-dappled meadows made me more restless than did even the mild air and the spring odors that came in through the open windows.

I cherish particularly the remembrance of an evening in which my mother had promised, as a special favor, to join us in our walk to the fields of pink amourettes. That afternoon I had been more inattentive than usual, and the Great Ape had threatened to keep me in, and all during my lessons I firmly believed that I was to be punished. This keeping in after school, which shut us away from the beautiful June day an hour longer, was always a cruel torture. But to-day my heart felt particularly heavy as I reflected that mamma would, doubtless, come at the appointed hour and expect me,—and with some bitterness I thought that the springtime was so very short, that the hay would soon need to be cut, and that perhaps there would not be, the whole summer long, such another glorious evening as this one.

As soon as school was over I anxiously consulted the fatal list in the hands of the monitor; my name was not there! The Big Black Ape had forgotten me, or had been merciful!

Oh! with what joy I rushed away to join mamma who had kept her promise and who, with my father and sister, smilingly awaited me. . . . The air that I breathed in was more delicious than ever, it was exquisitely soft and balmy, and the atmosphere had a tropical resplendence.

When I recall that time, when I think of those meadows all abloom with amourettes, and of those pink moths, there is mingled, to my regret, a sort of indefinable pain whose intensity I cannot understand, an anguish I always feel when I find myself in the presence of things that impress and charm me with their undercurrent of mystery.

CHAPTER LXII.

I have already said that I was extraordinarily childish for my years.

If the personage I then was could but be brought into the presence of the little Parisian boys of twelve or thirteen, educated according to the more perfect modern method, who at so early an age declaim, discuss and harangue, and entertain all sorts of political ideas, I would, I am sure, be struck dumb by their discourses, and how singular they would find me and with what disdain they would treat me!

I am myself astonished at the childishness that I displayed in certain ways, for in artistic perception and imagination, in spite of my lack of method, and lack of real knowledge, I was incontestably more advanced than are the majority of boys of my age; if that youthful journal, the strip of paper wrapped about a reed in the similitude of a conjuring-book, of which I spoke a short time ago, were still in existence it would emphasize twenty fold this pale record, on which it seems to me there has already fallen the dust of ages.

CHAPTER LXIII.

My room where I now scarcely ever installed myself to study, and which I seldom entered

except at night to sleep, became, during the beautiful month of June, my palace of delight, and I went there after dinner to enjoy the long, and mild, and beautiful twilights. I had invented a sport which I deemed an improvement upon the rag-rat trick that the dirty little street urchins whisked, at the end of long strings, about the feet and legs of the passers-by. My game amused me greatly and I prosecuted it with vivacity. It would, I think, amuse me still if I dared play it, and I hope that my trick will be imitated by all the youngsters who are imprudently allowed to read this chapter.

On the other side of the street, just opposite my window, and similarly upon the second floor there lived the good old maid, Miss Victoire—(she wore a great old-fashioned frilled cap and round spectacles). I had obtained permission from her to fix to the fastening of her shutter a string that I then brought all across the street and into my window, the remainder of this string I rolled upon a stick, ball-fashion.

In the evening, as soon as the light waned, a bird of my own manufacture—a sort of absurd and impossible crow, made out of iron wire and with black silk wings—came slyly from between my venetian blinds that I immediately closed after the exit of the creature, this bird descended in a droll way and posed on the paving stones in the middle of the street. A ring on which it was suspended, and which allowed it to slip freely the length of the string, was not visible because of the dim light, and from time to time I made the crow hop and skip comically about on the ground.

And when the passers-by paused to gaze at this unlikely looking bird that fluttered about so gayly—whiz! I would pull the string that I held firmly in my hand, and the bird would leap from under their very noses and mount high in the air.

Oh! how amused I was, those beautiful evenings, when I peeped out from behind my venetian blinds; how I laughed to myself over the surprised exclamations and the bewilderment of those fooled, and how I enjoyed rehearsing to myself their probable reflections and guesses. And to me the most astonishing part was that after the first moment of surprise, the persons whom I tricked laughed as heartily as I; it should be mentioned that the majority of those passing were neighbors who must certainly have had some inkling of the mystifying joke about to be played on them. I was much loved in the neighborhood at that time. Or if the pedestrians chanced to be sailors, the easy going fellows, themselves only grown children, were much delighted with my child's play.

What will always remain an incomprehensible mystery to me is that in my family, where we seldom sinned through an excess of reserve towards each other, they shut their eyes to my trick, and thus tacitly gave me permission to play it during the entire spring; I am not able to explain to myself how it chanced that they failed to correct me, and the years instead of clearing up this mystery only serve to intensify it.

That black bird has naturally become one of my many relics; at intervals, during the past two or three years, I have looked at it; it is somewhat dingy, but it always recalls to me the beautiful evenings in June, now vanished, the delicious intoxication of that springtime of long ago.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

Those Thursdays at Limoise when the fierce heat of the noon-day sun overwhelmed everything, and the country side lay asleep and silent under its pitiless rays, it was my habit to clamber up to the top of the old wall that enclosed the garden, and there I sat astride and immovable for a long time. The branching ivy reached to my shoulders and innumerable flies and locusts buzzed around me. From the height of this observatory I had a view of the hot and lonely region lying beyond, of the moorland and woodland, and from there I saw a thin white veil of mist that was agitated ceaselessly by the waves of heat, as the surface of a tiny lake is ruffled by the least wind. Those horizons seen from Limoise still had for me the strange mystery I had endowed them with in the first summers of my life. The region visible from the top of the wall was a rather solitary one, and I tried to make myself believe that the waste land and woodland was a veritable untrodden country that stretched out indefinitely; and although I now knew well that about me everywhere there were roads; cultivated fields, and prosperous villages, I succeeded in clinging to the illusion that the surrounding country and contiguous lands were wild and primitive.

And the better to deceive myself I took care to shut out, by looking through my fingers folded together spy-glass fashion, all that would have spoiled for me the impression of loneliness; an old farm house, for instance, with its bit of cultivated vineyard and smooth road.

And there all alone, in that silence murmurous with the buzzing of many insects, distracted by nothing, always turning my hollowed hand towards the most desolate portion of the landscape, I succeeded in gaining an impression of distant, tropical countries.

I had impressions of Brazil particularly, but I do not know why in those moments of contemplation the neighboring forest always suggested that country to me.

In passing I must describe this forest, the first one of all the earth's forests that I knew, and the one I loved the best: the straight, slim trunks of the ancient evergreen oaks, of sombre foliage, were like the columns of a church; not a particle of brush grew under them, but the dry soil was covered all the year with the most exquisite short grass, soft and fine as down, and here and there grew furze, dropwort and other rare flowers that thrive in the shade.

CHAPTER LXV.

The Iliad was being explained to us in class,—no doubt I would have loved it, but our master had made it odious by his analysis, his difficult tasks and his parrot-like recitals;—but suddenly I stopped, filled with admiration of a famous line, whose end is musical as the murmur of the waves of the incoming tide as they spread their sheets of foam upon the pebbly shore.

"Observe," said the Big Ape, "observe the inceptive harmony."

Zounds! Yes, I had observed it. Little need to take the trouble to point out such a sentence to me.

I also had a great admiration, less justified perhaps, for some lines from Virgil.

Since the beginning of the Ecloque I had, with the greatest interest, followed the two shepherds as they made their way across the fields of ancient Rome. I could picture it to myself so vividly, those Roman meadows of two thousand years ago: hot, a little sterile, with thickets of almost petrified shrubs, and evergreen oaks like the stony moorland of Limoise, where I had experienced precisely the pastoral charm that I discovered in this description of a past time.

Onward went the two shepherds, and suddenly, they perceived that their journey was half over, "because the tomb of Bianor was immediately below them . . ." Oh! how vividly I saw that tomb of Bianor disclose itself to their view. Its old stones, that made a white blot on the reddish road, were covered with tiny sun-scorched plants, wild thyme or marjoram, and here and there grew stunted dark foliaged shrubs. And the sonority of the word Bianoris with which the sentence ended suddenly and magically evoked for me the musical humming of the insects that buzzed around the two travellers who, upon that bygone day in June, walked onward in the great silence and serene tranquillity of the hot noon enkindled by a younger sun. I was no longer in the schoolroom; I was in the meadows with the shepherds walking with them this radiant summer day through the sun-scorched flowers and grass of a Roman field,—but still all seemed softened and vague as if looked at through a telescope that had the power to draw into its line of vision ages long past.

Who knows? Perhaps if the Big Ape could but have divined the causes that led to my momentary inattention it might have brought about an understanding between us.

CHAPTER LXVI.

One Thursday evening at Limoise, just before the inevitable hour for my departure, I went up alone to the large, old room on the second floor in which I slept. First I leaned out of the open window to watch the July sun sink behind the stony fields and fern heaths that lay towards the sea, which though very near us was invisible. These sunsets at the end of my Thursday holidays always overwhelmed me with melancholy.

During the last minutes of my stay I felt a desire, one I had never known before, to rummage in the old Louis XV bookcase that stood near my bed. There among the volumes in their century-old bindings, where the worms, never disturbed, slowly bored their galleries, I found a book made of thick rough old-fashioned paper, and this I opened carelessly. . . . In it I read, with a thrill of emotion, that from noon until four o'clock in the afternoon, on the 20th of June, 1813, south of the equator, in longitude 110 and latitude 15 (between the tropics, consequently, and in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean) there was fair weather, a beautiful sea, a fine southeast breeze, and in the sky many little clouds called "cat-tails," and that alongside the ship dolphins were passing.

He who had seen the dolphins pass, and who had recorded the fugitive cloud forms had doubtless been dead for many years. I knew that the book was what is called a ship's log-book, one in which seafaring people write every day. Its appearance did not strike me as strange, although I had never before had one in my hand. But for me it was a wonderful and unexpected experience to thus suddenly come into a knowledge of the aspect of the sea and sky in the midst of the South Pacific Ocean, at a given time in a year long past. . . . Oh! for a

glimpse of that beautiful and tranquil sea, of those "cat-tails" that dotted the deep blue arch of the sky, and of those dolphins that swiftly traversed the lonely southern waters!

In this sailor's life, in this profession so terrifying (a career forbidden to me), how many delightful things happened! I had never until this evening realized it with such intensity.

The memory of that hasty little reading is the reason why, during my watches at sea, whenever a helmsman signals a passage of dolphins, I have always turned my eyes in their direction to watch them; and it has always given me a peculiar pleasure to note the incident in the log-book, differing so little from the one in which the sailors of June, 1813, had written before me.

CHAPTER LXVII.

During the vacation that followed, our departure for the south and the mountains enchanted me more than did my first trip there.

As in the preceding summer we started, my sister and I, at the beginning of August. While it was no longer a journey of adventure, the pleasure of returning and again finding there all the things that had formerly so delighted me surpassed the charm of going forth to meet the unknown.

Between the point where the railroad ended and the village in which our cousins lived, in the course of the long carriage ride, our little coachman, in venturing to take what he supposed a short cut, lost his way, and he carried us into the most exquisite forest nooks. The weather was beautiful and radiant. With what joy I saluted the first peasant women whom I saw walking along with great copper water-jars upon their heads, and the first swarthy peasants conversing in the well remembered dialect, how I rejoiced when we rolled along over the blood-colored roads, and when the mountains junipers came into view.

At about noon-time we stopped in a shady valley in a sequestered village called Veyrac to rest our horses, and we seated ourselves at the foot of a chestnut tree. There we were attacked by the ducks of the place, the boldest and most ill bred in the world. They flocked around us in an unseemly manner, uttering shrill cries and quacking hideously. As we departed, even after we were in our carriage, these infuriated creatures followed us; whereupon my sister turned towards them, and with all the dignity of an old-time traveller outraged by an inhospitable population exclaimed: "Ducks of Veyrac, be ye accursed!" And for several years I could not keep a straight face when I remembered the foolish and prolonged laughter that I indulged in at the time. Above all I cannot think of that day without regretting the resplendence of the sun and the blue sky, a resplendence that I never see now.

As we drew near we were met on our way at the bridge spanning the river, by our cousins and the Peyrals. I discovered with pleasure that my little band was complete. We had all grown taller by several inches; but we found immediately that we were not otherwise changed, we were still children ready for the same childish games.

At night-fall there was a terrific storm. And while the thunder boomed around us as if it was

bombarding the roof of my uncle's house, and when all the old stone gargoyles in the village were pouring forth torrents of water that rushed tumultuously over the black pebbles in the street, we took refuge, the little Peyrals and I, in the kitchen, and there we made a racket and joyously danced around in a ring.

It was a very large kitchen, furnished in an old-fashioned way with a perfect arsenal of burnished copper utensils; every variety of pan and kettle, shining like pieces of armor, hung on the halls in the order of their size. It was almost dark, and from the moist earth came the fresh odor one usually smells after a storm, after a summer rain; and through the thick iron-barred Louis XIII windows the lurid, green lightning flashed incessantly and blinded us and compelled us, in spite of ourselves, to close our eyes. We turned round and round like mad beings, and sang together: "The star of night whose peaceful light." . . . It was a sentimental song, never intended for dance music, but we scanned it drolly and mockingly, and thus made of it an accommodating and tuneful dance measure. We continued our joyous sport for I do not know how long a time; we were excited by the noise of the storm and we whirled around like little dervishes; it was a merry-making in celebration of my return; it was a fitting way of inaugurating the holidays; it was a defiance to the Big Ape, and it was an appropriate prologue to the series of expeditions and childish sports of every kind that were to recommence, with more ardor than ever, the next day.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

The following morning at daybreak when I awoke, a noisy cadence, to which I was unaccustomed, fell upon my ears; the neighboring weaver had already commenced, even with the dawn, to work his ancient loom, and the musical to and fro of its shuttle had roused me. Then after the first drowsy, dreamy moment I remembered, with overwhelming joy, that I was at my uncle's in the south; that this was the morning of the first day; that I had before me the prospect of a whole summer of out-of-door life and wildest liberty—had August and September, two months that at present pass as quickly as if they were but two days, but which then seemed of a fairly respectable duration. With a feeling of rapture, after I had wholly shaken off my sleep, I came into a full consciousness of myself and the realities of my life; I felt "joy at my waking."

The preceding winter I had read a story of the Indians of the Great Lakes, and one thing in it had impressed me so deeply that I always remembered it: an old Indian chief, whose daughter was pining away because of her love for a white man, had finally consented to give her to the alien so that she might once more feel "joy at her waking."

Joy at her waking! Indeed, for some time I had myself noticed that the moment of waking is always the one in which I had the most distinct and vivid impression of joy or sorrow; and it is then, at the waking hour, that one finds it so particularly painful to be without joy; my first little sorrows and remorses, my anxieties about the future, were the things that usually obtruded themselves cruelly—however the feeling of sadness vanished very quickly in those days.

At a later time I had very gloomy and sad awakenings. And there are times now when I have moments of terrifying clearness of vision during which I seem to see, if I may so express it,

into the depths of life; it is at such moments that life presents itself to me without those pleasing mirages that during the day still delude me; during those moments I appear to have a more vivid realization of the rapid flight of the years, the crumbling away of all that I endeavor to hold to, I almost realize the final unimaginable nothingness, I see the bottomless pit of death, near at hand, no longer in any way disguised.

But that morning I had a joyful awaking, and unable to remain quietly in bed, I rose immediately. So impatient was I to be out that I scarcely took time to ask myself where I should begin my first day's round of visits.

I had all the nooks and corners of the village to see again, the gothic ramparts and the lovely river; and my uncle's garden to revisit, where probably, since last year, the rarest butterflies had become domiciled. I had visits to make to the ancient and curious houses in the neighborhood, where lived all the kind old women who, in the past summer, had lavished upon me their most luscious grapes as if they were my feudal due;—there was in particular a certain Madame Jeanne, a rich old peasant, who had taken so great a fancy to me that she liked to humor my every whim, and who, for my amusement, every time she passed on her way, like Nausicaa, from the washing-place, looked comically out of the corner of her eyes towards my uncle's house. And, too, there were the surrounding vineyards, and woods, and mountain paths; and beyond, Castelnau, rearing its battlements and towers above the pedestal of chestnuts and oak trees, called me to its ruins! Where should I run first, and how could I ever weary of so beautiful a land!

The sea, to which I was now scarcely ever taken, was for the moment completely forgotten.

After these two happy months school was to re-open. I could not bear to think of it, but its monotony would be broken by a great event, the return of my brother. His four years were not quite completed; but we knew that he had already left the "mysterious island," and we expected him to arrive home in October. For me it would be like becoming acquainted with a stranger. I was somewhat anxious to know whether he would love me when he met me, if he would approve of a thousand little things I did,—how, for instance, my way of playing Beethoven would please him.

I thought constantly of his approaching arrival; I was so overjoyed, and I anticipated with so keen a delight the change his coming would make in my life, that I did not feel a particle of the melancholy which usually beset me in the autumn.

I meant to consult him about a thousand troublous matters, to confide to him all my anguish and uncertainty in regard to the future; I knew also that my parents depended upon him to give them definite advice about me, and expected him to direct me towards a scientific career: that was the one dark spot upon his return.

Awaiting his dread decision, I threw aside all care and amused myself as gayly as possible; I put even less restraint than usual upon myself during the vacation which I regarded as likely to be the very last of my childhood.

CHAPTER LXIX.

After the noon dinner it was the custom in my uncle's house to sit for an hour or two in the entry-way of the house, that vestibule inlaid with flagstones and ornamented with a large, burnished, copper fountain, for it was the coolest place during the heated period of the day. Here it was almost dark, for everything was closed; two or three rays of sunshine, in whose light the flies danced, filtered in through the cracks of the massive Louis XIII door. In the silent village no one was astir, and one heard there only the everlasting clucking of the hens, —all other living creatures seemed asleep.

I, however, did not remain long in the cool vestibule. The bright sunshine lured me out; and, too, scarcely had I installed myself there in the circle before I heard a knocking at the street door: the three little Peyrals had come to fetch me, and to apprise me of their presence they lifted the old iron knocker that was hot enough to burn their fingers.

Then with hats pulled over our eyes and equipped with hammers, staffs and butterfly-nets we would start out in search of new adventures. First we passed through the narrow gothic streets paved with pebbles, then we struck into the paths that lay just beyond the village, paths that were always covered with wheat-chaff that got into our shoes, and into which we sank ankle deep; finally we reached the open country, the vineyards, and the roads that led to the woods, or better still those that brought us to the river which we forded by means of the flower-covered islets.

This wild liberty was a complete avengement for the monotony of my cribbed and cabined home life, ever the same all the year through; but I still lacked the companionship of little boys of my own age, I needed to clash with them,—and, too, this freedom lasted only a couple of months.

CHAPTER LXX.

One day I had a great desire, wherefore I do not know, unless out of pure bravado and the spirit of perversity, to do something unseemly. After having searched all of one morning for this something I found it.

It is well known that the swarms of flies which one finds in the south during the summer, and which contaminate everything are a veritable plague. I knew that there was a trap set for them in the middle of my uncle's kitchen. It was a treacherous pipe of a special shape, at the bottom of which, in the soapy pan of water there, the flies were invariably drowned. Now on the particular day in which I felt so devilish I bethought me of that disgusting blackish mass at the bottom of the vessel, made up of the thousands of flies drowned during the past two or three days, and I wondered what sort of toothsome dish I should make of it, a pancake, perhaps, or better still, an omelette.

Quickly and nervously, and with a loathing that almost made me vomit, I poured the pasty black mass into a plate and carried it to the house of old Madame Jeanne, the only one in the world willing to do anything and everything for me.

"A fly omelette! To be sure! Why not! That is very simple!" she exclaimed. She went immediately to the fire with a frying pan and some eggs. She gave the unclean mess a good preliminary beating, and then she placed it on her high and ancient fireplace. As I watched

her procedure I was dismayed and surprised at myself.

But the three little Peyrals, whom I had met unexpectedly, went into such ecstasies over my idea, a thing they always did, that I was fortified; and when the omelette, at just the right time, was turned out hot upon a plate we started forth triumphantly to carry the exhibit home to show to our families. We formed a procession in the order of our respective heights, and as we marched we sang, "The Star of Night" in voices loud and hoarse enough to summon the devil to earth.

CHAPTER LXXI.

In the mountains the end of summer was always a beautiful season, for the meadows lying at the foot of the hillside forests, already yellow, were purple with crocuses. Then, too, the vintage commenced and lasted for about fifteen days,—days of enchantment for us.

We now spent most of our time in the shady nooks of the woods and meadows in the neighborhood of the Peyral vineyards; there we had play-dinners consisting of candy and fruits. We would spread out on the grass what we considered a most elegant cloth, and this we decorated, after the old fashion, with garlands of flowers, and we put on it plates made of yellow and red vine leaves. The vintagers brought us the most luscious grapes, bunches chosen from among a thousand; and, with the heat of the sun to aid, we sometimes became a little tipsy, not, however, made so by sweet wine, for we had drunk none, but by the juice of the grapes merely, in the self-same fashion as did the wasps and flies that warmed themselves upon the trellises. . . .

One morning at the end of September, when the weather was rainy and it was chilly enough for me to realize that melancholy autumn was near at hand, I was attracted into the kitchen by the bright wood fire that leaped gayly in the high, old-fashioned chimney-place. And as I stood there, idle and out of sorts, because of the rain, I amused myself by melting a pewter plate and plunging it, in its liquid state, into a pail of water.

The result was a shapeless, bright, and silvery-gray lump which very much resembled silver-ore. I looked at the mass thoughtfully for some time: an idea germinated, and there and then I planned a new amusement which became our most delightful pastime during those last days of vacation.

That same evening we held a conference on the steps of the great stairway, and I told the Peyrals that from the aspect of the soil and the plants I had come to the conclusion that there were silver mines in this part of the country. As I spoke I assumed the knowing and bold airs of one of those venturesome scouts, who is usually the principal personage in old-fashioned stories of American adventure.

Searching for mines fell well into line with the abilities of my little band, for often, armed with pick and shovel, they had set out to discover fossils or rare stones.

The next day, therefore, half way up the mountain, when we arrived at a path chosen by me for its appropriateness, for it was lonely and mysterious, shut in by forest trees and embedded between high, moss-grown, rocky banks, I stopped my little band peremptorily, as

if I were endowed with the keen scent of an Indian chief. I pretended that I had here recognized the presence of precious ore-beds; and, in truth, when we dug in the place I indicated we found the first nuggets, the melted plate that I had buried there the day before.

These mines occupied us constantly until the end of my stay. The Peyrals were convinced and full of amazement, and although I spent some time each morning in the kitchen melting plates and covers to feed our vein of silver, I very nearly deluded myself into believing in the reality of the mine.

The isolated silent spot, so exquisitely beautiful, where these excavations took place, and the melancholy but enchanting serenity of the end of summer, gave a rare charm to our little dream of adventure. We were, however, most amusingly secret and mysterious in regard to our discovery; we considered it a tribal secret, and we cherished it as such.

Our riches, mixed in with some of the red mountain soil, we hoarded in an old trunk in my uncle's attic as if the latter were an Ali Baba's cave.

We pledged ourselves to leave it there during the winter, until the next vacation, at which time we counted on making additions to our treasure.

CHAPTER LXXII.

In the first week of October we received a joyous telegram from our father bidding us leave for home as speedily as possible. My brother, who was returning to Europe by a packet-boat on its way from Panama, was to disembark at Southampton; we had but just time to reach home if we wished to be there to welcome him.

We arrived the evening of the third day just in time, for my brother was expected a few hours later on the night train. I had barely time to put into his room, in their accustomed places, the various little trinkets that he had four years previously confided to my care, before the hour set for our departure to the station to meet him. To me his return, announced so unexpectedly, did not seem a reality, and I was so excited that for two nights I scarcely slept at all.

This is why, in spite of my impatience to see my brother, I fell asleep at the station; when he appeared it seemed a sort of dream to me. I embraced him timidly, for he was very different from my mental image of him. He was bronzed and bearded, his manner of speech was more rapid, and, with a slightly smiling, slightly anxious expression, he regarded me fixedly, as if to ascertain what the years had done for me, and to deduce from that what my future was to be.

When I returned home I fell asleep standing; it wad the dead sleepiness of a child fatigued by a long journey, against which it is futile to struggle, and I was carried to my bed.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

I awaked the following morning with a feeling of joyousness that penetrated to the very depths of my being, and as I remembered the cause for my happiness my eyes fell upon an extraordinary object standing on a table in my room. It was evidently a very slim canoe with a balance beam and sails. Then my gaze encountered other unfamiliar objects scattered about: necklaces of shells strung on human hair, head-dresses of feathers, ornaments appertaining to a dark and primitive savagery; it was as if distant Polynesia had come to me during my sleep. My brother, it seems had already begun to open his cases, and while I slept he had slipped noiselessly into my room and grouped around me these ornaments intended for my museum.

I jumped out of bed quickly so that I might go and find him, for I had scarcely seen him the evening before.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

And it seems I hardly saw him during those hurried weeks that he spent with us. Of that period, which lasted so short a time, I have very confused visions, similar to those one has of things seen during a rapid journey. I remember vaguely that we lived more gayly, and that his presence among us brought many young people to our house. I remember also that he seemed at times to be preoccupied and absorbed by things entirely outside the family sphere; perhaps he had longings for the tropics, for the "delicious island," or it may be he dreaded his early departure.

Sometimes I held him captive near the piano by playing for him the haunting music of Chopin which I had but just begun to understand. He was disquieted however by my playing, and he said that Chopin's music was too exuberant and at the same time too enervating for me. He had come among us so recently that he was better able to judge of me than were the others, and he realized perhaps that my intellect was in danger of becoming warped through the nature of the artistic and intellectual effort it put forth; no doubt he thought Chopin and the "Donkey's Skin" equally dangerous, and considered that I was becoming excessively affected and abnormal in spite of my fits of childish behavior. I am sure that he thought even my amusements were fanciful and unhealthy. Be that as it may, he one day, to my great joy, decreed that I should learn to ride horseback, but that was the only change his coming made in my education. Cowardice prompted me to defer discussion of those weighty questions appertaining to my future which I was so anxious to talk over with him; I preferred to take my time, and, too, I shrunk from making a decision, and thus by my silence I sought to prolong my childhood. Besides, I did not consider it a pressing matter after all, inasmuch as he was to be with us for some years. . . .

But one fine morning, although we had reckoned so largely on keeping him, there came news of a higher rank and an order from the naval department commanding him to start without delay for a distant part of the orient, where an expedition was organizing.

After a few days which were mainly spent in preparing for that unforeseen campaign he left us as if borne away by a gust of wind.

Our adieus were less sad this time, for we did not expect him to be absent more than two years. . . . In reality it was his eternal farewell to us; whatever is left of his body lies at the bottom of the Indian Ocean, towards the middle of the Bay of Bengal.

When he had departed, while the noise of the carriage that was bearing him away could still be heard, my mother turned to me with an expression of love that touched me to the very innermost fibre of my being; and as she drew me to her she said with the emphasis of conviction: "Thank God, at least we shall keep you with us!"

Keep me! . . . They would keep me! . . . Oh! . . . I lowered my head and turned my eyes away, for I could feel that their expression had changed, had become a little wild. I could not respond to my mother with a word or a caress.

Such a serene confidence upon her part distressed me cruelly, for the moment in which I heard her say, "We shall keep you," I understood, for the first time in my life, what a firm hold on my mind the project of going away had taken—of going even farther than my brother, of going everywhere upon the face of the earth.

A sea-faring life terrified me, and I relished the idea of it as little as ever. To a little being like me, so greatly attached to my home, bound to it by a thousand sweet ties, the very thought of it made my heart bleed. And besides, how could I break the news of such a decision to my parents, how give them so much pain and thus flagrantly outrage their wishes! But to renounce all my plans, always to remain in the same place, to be upon this earth, and to see nothing of it—what a squalid, disenchanting future! What was the use to live, what the good of growing up for that?

And in that empty parlor with its disordered chairs, one even overturned, and while I was still under the dark spell of our sad farewells, there beside my mother, leaning against her with eyes turned away and with soul overwhelmed with sorrow, I suddenly remembered the old log-book which I had read at sunset last spring at Limoise. The short sentences written down upon the old paper with yellow ink came slowly back to me one after the other with a charm as lulling and perfidious as that exercised by a magic incantation:

"Fair weather . . . beautiful sea . . . light breeze from the south-east . . . Shoals of dolphins . . . passing to larboard."

And with a shudder of almost religious awe, with pantheistic ecstasy, my inward eye saw all about me the sad and vast blue splendor of the South Pacific Ocean.

A great calm, tinged with melancholy, fell upon us after my brother's departure, and to me the days were monotonous in the extreme.

They had always thought of sending me to the Polytechnic school, but it had not been decided upon irrevocably. The wish to become a sailor, which had obtruded itself upon me almost against my will, charmed and terrified me in an almost equal degree; I lacked the courage necessary to settle such a grave matter with myself, and I always hesitated to speak of it. The upshot was that I decided to reflect over it until my next vacation, and thus by my irresolution and delay I secured to myself a few more months of careless childhood.

I still led as solitary a life as ever; it was very difficult for me to change the bent that my mind had taken in spite of my mental distress and in spite of my latent desire to roam far and wide over the earth. More than ever I stayed in the house and busied myself painting stage scenery, and playing Chopin and Beethoven; to all appearances I was tranquil and

deeply absorbed in my dreams, and I became ever more and more attached to my home, to its every nook and corner, even to the stones in its walls. It is true that now and again I took a horseback ride, but I always went with a groom and never with children of my own age—I still had no young playmates.

My second year at college was much less painful than my first; it passed more quickly, and moreover I had formed an attachment for two of my classmates, my elders by a year or two, the only ones who had not the preceding year treated me disdainfully. The thin ice once broken, there had sprung up between us an ardent and sentimental friendship; we even called each other by our baptismal names, something that was contrary to school etiquette. Since we never saw each other except in the schoolroom, we were obliged to communicate in mysterious whispers under the teacher's eye, our relations, consequently, were inalterably courteous and did not resemble the ordinary friendship between boys. I loved them with all my heart; I would have allowed myself to be cut into bits for them; and, in all sincerity, I imagined that this affection would endure throughout my life.

My excessive exclusiveness caused me to treat the others in the class with great indifference and haughtiness; still a certain superficial self, necessary for social purposes, had already begun to take shallow root, and I knew better now how to remain on good terms with them, and at the same time to keep my true self hidden from them.

I generally contrived to sit between my two friends, Andre and Paul. If, however, we were separated we continually and slyly exchanged notes written in a cipher to which we alone had the key.

These letters were always love confidences: "I have seen her to-day; she wore a blue dress trimmed with gray fur, and she had a lark's wing on her turban, etc."—For we had chosen sweethearts who became the subject of our very poetical prattle.

Something of the ridiculous and whimsical invariably marks this transition age in a boy's life, and for that reason I have thought it worth while to transcribe the boyish note.

Before going further I wish to say that my transition periods have lasted longer than do those of the majority of men, and during them I have been carried from one extreme to another; and, too they have caused me to touch all the perilous rocks along life's way,—I am also fully conscious of the fact that until almost my twenty-fifth year I had eccentric and absurd manners. . . .

But now I will continue with my confidences respecting our three love affairs.

Andre was ardently in love with a young lady almost six years older than himself who had already been introduced into society,—I believe that his affair was a case of real and deep affection.

I had chosen Jeanne for my sweetheart, and my two friends were the only beings who knew my secret. To do as they did, although I considered it a little silly, I wrote her name in cipher on the covers of my copy-books; in every way and manner I sought to persuade myself of the ardor of my passion, but I am bound to admit that the whole thing was a little artificial, for the amusing coquetry that Jeanne and I had indulged in early in our acquaintance had developed into a true and great friendship, a hereditary friendship I may call it, a continuation of that felt by our ancestors long before our birth. No, my first real love, of which I will soon speak, was for a being seen in a dream.

As for Paul—alas! His heart affair was very shocking to me, for it did particular violence to the ideas that I then had. He was in love with a little shop-girl who worked in a perfumery store, and on his Sunday holidays he gazed at her through the show-case window. It is true that she was named Stella or Olympia, and that raised her somewhat in my esteem; and, too, Paul took pains to surround his love with an ethereal and poetic atmosphere in order to make it more acceptable to us. At the bottom of his cipher notes he constantly wrote, for our benefit, the sweetest rhymed verses dedicated to her, wherein her name, ending in "a," recurred again and again, like the perfume of musk.

In spite of my great affection for him I could not but smile pityingly over his poetic effusions. And I think that it is partly because of them that I have never, at any epoch in my life, had the least inclination to write a single line of verse. My notes were always written in a wild and free prose that outraged every rule.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

Paul knew by heart many verses of a forbidden poet named Alfred de Musset. The strange quality of these verses troubled me, and yet I was fascinated by them. In class he would whisper them, in a scarcely perceptible voice, into my ear; and although my conscience accused me, I used to allow him to begin:

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Jacque was very quiet as he looked at Marie,
I know not what that sleeping maiden
Had of mystery in her features, the noblest ever seen.
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In my brother's study, where from time to time, when I was overwhelmed with sorrow over his departure, I isolated myself, I had seen on a shelf in his book-case a large volume of this poet's works, and often I had been tempted to take it down; but my parents had said to me: "You are not to touch any of the books that are there without permission from us," and my conscience always gave me pause.

As to asking for permission, I knew only too well that my request would be refused.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

I will here recount a dream that I had in my fourteenth year. It came to me during one of those mild and sweet nights that are ushered in by a long and delicious twilight.

In the room where I had spent all the years of my childhood I had been lulled to sleep by the sound of songs that the sailors and young girls sang as they danced around the flower-twined May-pole. Until the moment of deep sleep I had listened to those very old national airs which the children of the people were singing in a loud, free voice, but distance softened and mellowed and poetized the voices as they traversed the tranquil silence; strangely enough I

had been soothed by the noisy mirth and overflowing joyousness of these beings who, during their fleeting youth, are so much more artless than we, and more oblivious of death.

In my dream it was twilight, not a sad one however, but on the contrary, the air was soft and mild and overflowing with sweet odors like that of a real May night. I was in the yard of our house, the aspect of which was not changed in any particular, but as I walked beside the walls all abloom with jasmine, honeysuckle and roses, I felt restless and troubled as if I was seeking for some unnamable something; I seemed to have a consciousness that someone, whom I wished ardently to see, awaited my coming; I felt as if there was about to happen to me something so strange and wonderful as to intoxicate me by its very advance.

At a spot where grew a very old rosebush, one that had been planted by an ancestor and for that reason guarded sacredly, although it did not bear more than one rose in two or three years, I saw a young girl standing motionless with a seductive and mysterious smile upon her lips.

The twilight became a little deeper, the air more languorous.

Everywhere it became darker; but about her shone a sort of indeterminate light, like that coming from a reflector, and her figure outlined itself clearly against the shadows in the background.

I guessed that she was very beautiful and young; but her forehead and her eyes were hidden from me by the veil of night; indeed, I could see nothing very distinctly except the exquisite oval of her lower face, and her mouth which was parted smilingly. She leaned against the old flowerless rosebush, almost in its branches. Night came on rapidly. The girl seemed perfectly at home in the garden; she had come I knew not from where, for there was no door by which she could have entered; she appeared to find it as natural to be here as I found it natural to find her here.

I drew very close in order to get a glimpse of her eyes which puzzled me; suddenly, in spite of the darkness that became ever thicker, I saw them very distinctly; they also were smiling like the lips;—and they were not just any impersonal eyes, such, for instance, as may be found in a statue representing youth; no, on the contrary they were very particularly somebody's eyes; more and more they impressed me as belonging to someone already much beloved whom I, with transports of infinite joy and tenderness had found again.

I waked from sleep with a start, and as I did so I sought to retain the phantom being who faded away and became more and more intangible and unreal, in proportion as my mind grew clearer through the effort it made to remember. Could it be possible that she was not and had never been more than a vision? Had nothingness re-engulfed and forever effaced her? I longed to sleep again so that I might see her; the thought that she was an illusion, nothing more than the figment of a dream, caused me great dejection and almost overwhelmed me with hopelessness.

And it took me a very long time to forget her; I loved her, loved her tenderly, and the thought of her always stirred into life an emotion that was sweet but sad; and during those moments everything unconnected with her seemed colorless and worthless. It was love, true love with all its great melancholy and deep mystery, with its overwhelming but sad enchantment, love that, like a perfume, endows with a fragrance all it touches; and that corner of the garden where she had appeared to me and the old flowerless rosebush that had clasped her in its branches awakened in me, because of her, agonizing but delicious memories.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

And again came radiant June. It was evening, the exquisite hour of twilight. I was alone in my brother's study where I had been for some time; the window was opened wide to a sky all golden and pink, and I stood beside it and listened to the martins uttering their shrill cries as they circled and darted above the old roofs.

No one knew that I was there, and never before had I felt so isolated at the top of the house, nor more tempted by the unknown.

With a beating heart I opened a volume of De Musset's poems: his Don Paez.

The first phrases were as musical and rhythmical as if sung by a seductive golden-voiced siren:

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Black eyebrows, snow-white hands, and to indicate the tinyness
Of her feet, I need only say she was an Andalusian countess.
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That spring night when the darkness fell about me, when my eyes, although never so close to the book, could no longer distinguish anything of the enchanting verses save rows of little lines that showed gray against the white of the page, I went out into the town alone.

In the almost deserted streets, not yet lighted, the rows of linden and acacia trees all abloom, deepened the shadows and perfumed the air with their heavy fragrance. I pulled my felt hat over my eyes and, like Don Paez, I strode along with a light supple step, and looked up at balconies and indulged in I know not what little childish dreams of Spanish twilights and Andalusian serenades.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

Vacation came again, and for the third time we took the journey to the South, and there in the glorious August and September sunshine all passed off in the same fashion as during preceding summers; the same games with my loyal band, the expeditions to the vineyards and mountains; in the ruins of Castelnau, the same brooding over mediaeval times, and, in the sequestered woodland path where we had struck our vein of silver, we still eagerly turned up the red soil, putting on meantime the airs of bold adventurers,—the little Peyrals, however, no longer believed in the mines.

These beginnings of summer, always so alike, deluded me into thinking that in spite of my occasional fears my childhood would be indefinitely prolonged; but I no longer felt "joy at waking;" a sort of disquietude, such as oppresses one when he has left his duty undone, weighed upon me more and more heavily each morning when I thought that time was flying,

that the vacation would soon be over, and that I still lacked the courage to come to a decision in regard to my future.

CHAPTER LXXX.

And one day, when September was more than half over, I realized, because of the particularly torturing anxiety I felt when I waked, that I must no longer defer the matter—the term which I had allotted to myself was over.

In my heart of hearts I had more than half determined what my decision was to be; but before it could be rendered effective it was necessary for me to avow it, and I promised myself that the day should not pass away without my having, as courageously as possible, accomplished that task. It was my intention to first confide in my brother; for although I feared that in the beginning he would oppose me with all his power, I hoped that he would finally take my part and help me carry the day.

Therefore, after the mid-day dinner, when the sun was hottest, I carried my pen and paper into my uncle's garden, and I locked myself in there for the purpose of writing my letter. It was one of my boyhood habits to study or write in the open air, and often I chose the most singular places—tree-tops or the roof—for my work.

It was a hot and cloudless September afternoon. The old garden, silent and melancholy as ever, gave me, strangely enough, more than the customary feeling of regret that I was so far away from my mother, that all of summer would pass without my seeing my home and the flowers in the beloved little yard. And then, too, what I was upon the point of writing would result in separating me farther from all that I loved, and for that reason I felt extraordinarily sad. It seemed to me that there was something a little funereal in the air of the garden, as if the walls, the plum trees, the vine-covered bower, even the very alfalfa fields beyond the garden, were vitally interested in this, the first grave act of my life which was about to take place under their eyes.

For the purpose of writing I hesitated between two or three places, all blazing hot and almost shadeless. It was my way of gaining time, an attempt to delay writing that letter which, with the ideas I then had, would render my decision, once I had announced it, irrevocable. The sun-baked earth was already strewn with red vine branches and withered leaves; the holly-hocks and dahlias, grown tall as trees, had a few meagre blossoms at the tops of their long stalks; the blazing sun perfected and turned to gold the musk-scented grapes that always ripened a little late; but in spite of the excessive heat and the exquisite limpid blue of the sky one felt that summer was over.

I finally selected the arbor at the end of the garden for my purpose. Its vines were stripped of their leaves, but the steel-blue butterflies and the wasps still came and posted themselves upon the tendrils of the grape-vines.

There in the calm and tranquil solitude, in the summer-like silence filled with the musical chirp of insects, I wrote and timidly signed my compact with the sea.

Of the letter itself I remember very little; but I recall distinctly the emotion with which I

enclosed it in its envelope—I felt as if I had forever sealed my destiny.

After a few moments of deep reverie I wrote the address—my brother's name and the name of a country in the far Orient where he then was—on the envelope. There was now nothing more to do save to take it to the village post-office; but I remained seated there in the arbor for a long time in a dreamy mood. I leaned against the warm wall where the lizards ran back and forth, and held upon my knees, with a feeling of uncertainty and dismay, the little square of paper wherein I had settled my future. Then I was seized with a longing to look towards the horizon, to have a glimpse of the great spaces beyond the garden; and I put my foot into the familiar breach in the wall by means of which I often mounted, in order to watch the flight of elusive butterflies, and, with the aid of my hands, I raised myself to the top of the wall and leaned there propped up by my elbows. The same well-known prospect greeted me: the hillsides covered with red vines, the wooded mountains whose trees were rapidly being stripped of their yellow leaves, and above, perched high, the noble reddish-brown ruin of Castelnau. And in the nearer distance was Bories with its old rounded porch white with lime-wash; and as I looked at it I seemed to hear the plaintive refrain: "Ah! Ah! the good, good story!" sung in a strange voice, and at the same time there appeared to me the vision of the pinkish-yellow butterfly which two years before I had pricked with a pin, and placed under glass in my little museum.

It drew near the hour for the ancient country diligence, that took the letters away from the village, to depart, and I scrambled down from the wall, and after locking the garden gate, I slowly directed my steps towards the post-office.

Like one with eyes fixed upon a vision, I walked along without taking notice of anything or any one. My spirit was wandering far away, in the fern-carpeted forests of the delicious isle, along the sands of gloomy Senegal where had lived the uncle who had interested himself in my museum, and across the South Pacific Ocean where the dolphins were passing.

The assured nearness and certainty of these things intoxicated me; for the first time in my existence the world and life seemed to open before me; my way was illuminated by a light altogether new to it: it is true the light was a little mournful, a little sad, but it was powerful nevertheless, and penetrated to the far distant horizon where lie old age and death.

Many little childish images obtruded themselves from time to time into my lofty dream; I saw myself in a sailor's uniform walking upon the sun-blistered quays of tropical lands; and I prefigured my home-comings, after perilous voyages, bringing with me cases filled to the brim with wonderful things out of which cockroaches escaped as they had done formerly in Jeanne's garden when her father's boxes were unpacked.

But suddenly a pang went through my heart: those returns from distant countries could not take place for many years—the faces welcoming me home would be changed by time! Instantly I pictured those beloved faces to myself; in a wan vision I saw them all together. Although its members received me with smiles of joyous welcome, it was a sad group to look upon, for wrinkles seamed every brow, and my mother had white curls such as she has to-day. And my great aunt Bertha, already so old, would she, too, be there? With a sort of uneasiness, I was rapidly making a calculation of my aunt Bertha's age when I arrived at the post-office.

I did not hesitate, however; with a hand that trembled only a little I slipped my letter into the box, and the die was cast.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

I will end these reminiscences here, because what follows is not yet distant enough from me to be submitted to the unknown reader. And besides it seems to me that my childhood really came to an end upon the day in which I announced my decision in regard to my future.

I was then fourteen and a half years of age, and that gave me, therefore, three years and a half in which to prepare myself for the naval academy, consequently I had time to do it thoroughly and properly.

But in the meantime I had to encounter many refusals and all sorts of difficulties before my admittance to the Borda. And later I lived through many troublous years; years replete with struggles and mistakes,—I had many a Calvary to climb; I had to pay cruelly and in full for having been reared a sensitive, shy little creature, by force of will I had to recast and harden my physical as well as my moral being. One day, when I was about twenty-seven years of age, a circus director, after having seen my muscles that then had the elasticity and strength of steel, gave utterance, in his admiration, to the truest words I have ever had addressed to me: "What a pity, sir," he said, "that your education commenced so late!"

CHAPTER LXXXII.

My sister and I had expected to visit the mountains again the next summer.

But Azrael passed our way; terrible and unexpected misfortunes disrupted our tranquil and happy family life.

And it was not until fifteen years later, after I had been over the greater part of the earth, that I revisited this corner of France.

All was greatly changed there; my uncle and aunt slept in the graveyard; my boy cousins had left, and my girl cousin, who already had threads of silver among her dark locks, was preparing to quit this part of the country forever, this empty house in which she did not wish to live alone; and the Titi and the Marciette (whose names were no longer prefaced by the article) had grown into tall young ladies whom I would not have recognized.

Between two long voyages, in a hurry as always, my life hastening feverishly upon its way, in remembrance of bygone days, I made this pilgrimage to my uncle's house to see it once more, and for the last time, before it was delivered into the hands of strangers.

It was in November, and the cold gray sky completely changed the aspect of the country, which I had never seen before except under the glorious summer sun.

After spending my only morning in revisiting a thousand places, my melancholy ever augmented by the lowering winter clouds, I found that I had forgotten the old garden and the vine-clad arbor in whose meagre shade I had come to so momentous a decision, and I

wished to run there, at the last moment, before my carriage took me away from this spot forever.

"You will have to go alone," said my cousin, who was busy packing her trunks. She gave me the large key, the same large key that I carried in the warm and radiant days of old when I went there, net in hand, to catch the butterflies . . . oh! the summers of my childhood, how marvellous and how enchanting they were!

For the last time of all, I entered the garden, which under the gray sky appeared shrunken to me. I went first to the arbor, now leafless and desolate, in which I had written the portentous letter to my brother, and, by means of the same breach in the wall that had served me in days gone by, I lifted myself to the coping to get a hasty glimpse of the surrounding country, to bid it a last farewell. Bories looked singularly near and small to me, it was almost unrecognizably so, and the mountains beyond seemed diminished also, appeared no higher than little hills. And all of these things that formerly I had seen flooded with sunlight, now looked dull and sinister in the wan, gray November light, and under the dark and wintry clouds. I felt as if with the commencement of nature's autumn, my life's autumn had also dawned.

And the world, the world which I had thought so immense and so full of wonder and charm the day that I leaned on this same wall, after I had made my decision,—the whole wide world, did it not look as faded and shrunken to me now as this poor landscape?

And especially Bories, that under the autumnal sky looked like a phantom of itself, filled me with the deepest sadness.

As I gazed at it I recalled the pinkish-yellow butterfly still under its glass in my museum; it had remained there in the same spot, and had preserved its fresh bright hues during the time that I had sailed all round the globe. For many years I had not thought of the association between the two things; but as soon as I remembered the yellow butterfly, which was recalled to my mind by Bories, I heard a small voice within me sing over and over, very softly: "Ah! Ah! the good, good story!" . . . The little voice was strange and flute-like, but above all it was sad, sad enough for tears, sad enough to sing over the tomb where lie buried the vanished years and dead summers.

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