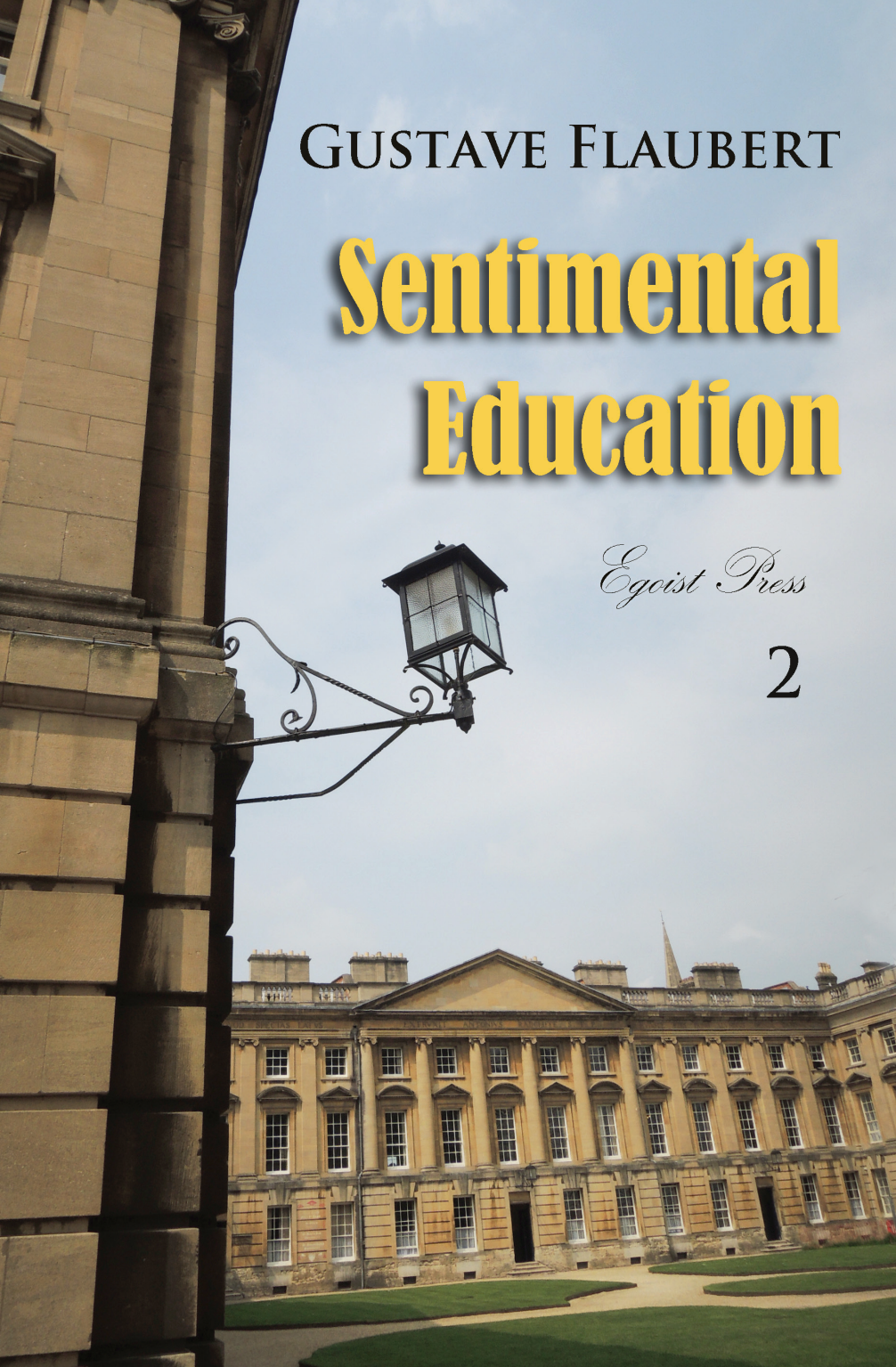
Gustave Flaubert
Sentimental Education
Egoist Press
2

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Volume 2

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CHAPTER XI.

A Dinner and a Duel.

Frederick passed the whole of the[1] next day in brooding over his anger and humiliation. He reproached himself for not having given a slap in the face to Cisy. As for the Maréchale, he swore not to see her again. Others as good-looking could be easily found; and, as money would be required in order to possess these women, he would speculate on the Bourse with the purchase-money of his farm. He would get rich; he would crush the Maréchale and everyone else with his luxury. When the evening had come, he was surprised at not having thought of Madame Arnoux.

"So much the better. What's the good of it?"

Two days after, at eight o'clock, Pellerin came to pay him a visit. He began by expressing his admiration of the furniture and talking in a wheedling tone. Then, abruptly:

"You were at the races on Sunday?"[2]

"Yes, alas!"

Thereupon the painter decried the anatomy of English horses, and praised the horses of Gericourt and the horses of the Parthenon.

"Rosanette was with you?"

And he artfully proceeded to speak in flattering terms about her.

Frederick's freezing manner put him a little out of countenance.

He did not know how to bring about the question of her portrait. His first idea had been to do a portrait in the style of Titian. But gradually the varied colouring of his model had bewitched him; he had gone on boldly with the work, heaping up paste on paste and light on light. Rosanette, in the beginning, was enchanted. Her appointments with Delmar had interrupted the sittings, and left Pellerin all the time to get bedazzled. Then, as his admiration began to subside, he asked himself whether the picture might not be on a larger scale. He had gone to

have another look at the Titians, realised how the great artist had filled in his portraits with such finish, and saw wherein his own shortcomings lay; and then he began to go over the outlines again in the most simple fashion. After that, he sought, by scraping them off, to lose there, to mingle there, all the tones of the head and those of the background; and the face had assumed consistency and the shades vigour—the whole work had a look of greater firmness. At length the Maréchale came back again. She even indulged in some hostile criticisms. The painter naturally persevered in his own course. After getting into a violent passion at her silliness, he said to himself that, after all, perhaps she was right.[3] Then began the era of doubts, twinges of reflection which brought about cramps in the stomach, insomnia, feverishness and disgust with himself. He had the courage to make some retouchings, but without much heart, and with a feeling that his work was bad.

He complained merely of having been refused a place in the Salon; then he reproached Frederick for not having come to see the Maréchale's portrait.

"What do I care about the Maréchale?"

Such an expression of unconcern emboldened the artist.

"Would you believe that this brute has no interest in the thing any longer?"

What he did not mention was that he had asked her for a thousand crowns. Now the Maréchale did not give herself much bother about ascertaining who was going to pay, and, preferring to screw money out of Arnoux for things of a more urgent character, had not even spoken to him on the subject.

"Well, and Arnoux?"

She had thrown it over on him. The ex-picture-dealer wished to have nothing to do with the portrait.

"He maintains that it belongs to Rosanette."

"In fact, it is hers."

"How is that? 'Tis she that sent me to you," was Pellerin's answer.

If he had been thinking of the excellence of his work, he would not have dreamed perhaps of making capital out of it. But a sum—and a big sum—would be an effective reply to the critics, and would strengthen his own position. Finally, to get rid of his importunities, Frederick courteously enquired his terms.[4]

The extravagant figure named by Pellerin quite took away his breath, and he replied:

"Oh! no—no!"

"You, however, are her lover—'tis you gave me the order!"

"Excuse me, I was only an intermediate agent."

"But I can't remain with this on my hands!"

The artist lost his temper.

"Ha! I didn't imagine you were so covetous!"

"Nor I that you were so stingy! I wish you good morning!"

He had just gone out when Sénécal made his appearance.

Frederick was moving about restlessly, in a state of great agitation.

"What's the matter?"

Sénécal told his story.

"On Saturday, at nine o'clock, Madame Arnoux got a letter which summoned her back to Paris. As there happened to be nobody in the place at the time to go to Creil for a vehicle, she asked me to go there myself. I refused, for this was no part of my duties. She left, and came back on Sunday evening. Yesterday morning, Arnoux came down to the works. The girl from Bordeaux made a complaint to him. I don't know what passed between them; but he took off before everyone the fine I had imposed on her. Some sharp words passed between us. In short, he closed accounts with me, and here I am!"

Then, with a pause between every word:

"Furthermore, I am not sorry. I have done my duty. No matter—you were the cause of it."

"How?" exclaimed Frederick, alarmed lest Sénécal might have guessed his secret.[5]

Sénécal had not, however, guessed anything about it, for he replied:

"That is to say, but for you I might have done better."

Frederick was seized with a kind of remorse.

"In what way can I be of service to you now?"

Sénécal wanted some employment, a situation.

"That is an easy thing for you to manage. You know many people of good position, Monsieur Dambreuse amongst others; at least, so Deslauriers told me."

This allusion to Deslauriers was by no means agreeable to his friend. He scarcely cared to call on the Dambreuses again

after his undesirable meeting with them in the Champ de Mars.

"I am not on sufficiently intimate terms with them to recommend anyone."

The democrat endured this refusal stoically, and after a minute's silence:

"All this, I am sure, is due to the girl from Bordeaux, and to your Madame Arnoux."

This "your" had the effect of wiping out of Frederick's heart the slight modicum of regard he entertained for Sénécal. Nevertheless, he stretched out his hand towards the key of his escritoire through delicacy.

Sénécal anticipated him:

"Thanks!"

Then, forgetting his own troubles, he talked about the affairs of the nation, the crosses of the Legion of Honour wasted at the Royal Fête, the question of a change of ministry, the Drouillard case and the Bénier case—scandals of the day—declaimed against the middle class, and predicted a revolution.[6]

His eyes were attracted by a Japanese dagger hanging on the wall. He took hold of it; then he flung it on the sofa with an air of disgust.

"Come, then! good-bye! I must go to Nôtre Dame de Lorette."

"Hold on! Why?"

"The anniversary service for Godefroy Cavaignac is taking place there to-day. He died at work—that man! But all is not over. Who knows?"

And Sénécal, with a show of fortitude, put out his hand:

"Perhaps we shall never see each other again! good-bye!"

This "good-bye," repeated several times, his knitted brows as he gazed at the dagger, his resignation, and the solemnity of his manner, above all, plunged Frederick into a thoughtful mood, but very soon he ceased to think about Sénécal.

During the same week, his notary at Havre sent him the sum realised by the sale of his farm—one hundred and seventy-four thousand francs. He divided it into two portions, invested the first half in the Funds, and brought the second half to a stockbroker to take his chance of making money by it on the Bourse.

He dined at fashionable taverns, went to the theatres, and was trying to amuse himself as best he could, when Hussonnet addressed a letter to him announcing in a gay fashion that

the Maréchale had got rid of Cisy the very day after the races. Frederick was delighted at this intelligence, without taking the trouble to ascertain what the Bohemian's motive was in giving him the information.

It so happened that he met Cisy, three days later. That aristocratic young gentleman kept his counte[7]ance, and even invited Frederick to dine on the following Wednesday.

On the morning of that day, the latter received a notification from a process-server, in which M. Charles Jean Baptiste Oudry apprised him that by the terms of a legal judgment he had become the purchaser of a property situated at Belleville, belonging to M. Jacques Arnoux, and that he was ready to pay the two hundred and twenty-three thousand for which it had been sold. But, as it appeared by the same decree that the amount of the mortgages with which the estate was encumbered exceeded the purchase-money, Frederick's claim would in consequence be completely forfeited.

The entire mischief arose from not having renewed the registration of the mortgage within the proper time. Arnoux had undertaken to attend to this matter formally himself, and had then forgotten all about it. Frederick got into a rage with him for this, and when the young man's anger had passed off:

"Well, afterwards——what?"

"If this can save him, so much the better. It won't kill me! Let us think no more about it!"

But, while moving about his papers on the table, he came across Hussonnet's letter, and noticed the postscript, which had not at first attracted his attention. The Bohemian wanted just five thousand francs to give the journal a start.

"Ah! this fellow is worrying me to death!"

And he sent a curt answer, unceremoniously refusing the application. After that, he dressed himself to go to the Maison d'Or.

Cisy introduced his guests, beginning with the most respectable of them, a big, white-haired gentleman.[8]

"The Marquis Gilbert des Aulnays, my godfather. Monsieur Anselme de Forchambeaux," he said next—(a thin, fair-haired young man, already bald); then, pointing towards a simple-mannered man of forty: "Joseph Boffreu, my cousin; and here is my old tutor, Monsieur Vezou"—a person who seemed a mixture of a ploughman and a seminarist, with large whiskers and a long

frock-coat fastened at the end by a single button, so that it fell over his chest like a shawl.

Cisy was expecting some one else—the Baron de Comaing, who "might perhaps come, but it was not certain." He left the room every minute, and appeared to be in a restless frame of mind. Finally, at eight o'clock, they proceeded towards an apartment splendidly lighted up and much more spacious than the number of guests required. Cisy had selected it for the special purpose of display.

A vermilion épergne laden with flowers and fruit occupied the centre of the table, which was covered with silver dishes, after the old French fashion; glass bowls full of salt meats and spices formed a border all around it. Jars of iced red wine stood at regular distances from each other. Five glasses of different sizes were ranged before each plate, with things of which the use could not be divined—a thousand dinner utensils of an ingenious description. For the first course alone, there was a sturgeon's jowl moistened with champagne, a Yorkshire ham with tokay, thrushes with sauce, roast quail, a béchamel vol-au-vent, a stew of red-legged partridges, and at the two ends of all this, fringes of potatoes which were mingled with truffles. The apartment was illuminated by a lustre and some girandoles, and it was hung with red damask curtains.[9]

Four men-servants in black coats stood behind the armchairs, which were upholstered in morocco. At this sight the guests uttered an exclamation—the tutor more emphatically than the rest.

"Upon my word, our host has indulged in a foolishly lavish display of luxury. It is too beautiful!"

"Is that so?" said the Vicomte de Cisy; "Come on, then!"

And, as they were swallowing the first spoonful:

"Well, my dear old friend Aulnays, have you been to the Palais-Royal to see Père et Portier?"

"You know well that I have no time to go!" replied the Marquis.

His mornings were taken up with a course of arboriculture, his evenings were spent at the Agricultural Club, and all his afternoons were occupied by a study of the implements of husbandry in manufactories. As he resided at Saintonge for three fourths of the year, he took advantage of his visits to the capital

to get fresh information; and his large-brimmed hat, which lay on a side-table, was crammed with pamphlets.

But Cisy, observing that M. de Forchambeaux refused to take wine:

"Go on, damn it, drink! You're not in good form for your last bachelor's meal!"

At this remark all bowed and congratulated him.

"And the young lady," said the tutor, "is charming, I'm sure?"

"Faith, she is!" exclaimed Cisy. "No matter, he is making a mistake; marriage is such a stupid thing!"

"You talk in a thoughtless fashion, my friend!" returned M. des Aulnays, while tears began to gather in his eyes at the recollection of his own dead wife.[10]

And Forchambeaux repeated several times in succession:

"It will be your own case—it will be your own case!"

Cisy protested. He preferred to enjoy himself—to "live in the free-and-easy style of the Regency days." He wanted to learn the shoe-trick, in order to visit the thieves' taverns of the city, like Rodolphe in the Mysteries of Paris; drew out of his pocket a dirty clay pipe, abused the servants, and drank a great quantity; then, in order to create a good impression about himself, he disparaged all the dishes. He even sent away the truffles; and the tutor, who was exceedingly fond of them, said through servility;

"These are not as good as your grandmother's snow-white eggs."

Then he began to chat with the person sitting next to him, the agriculturist, who found many advantages from his sojourn in the country, if it were only to be able to bring up his daughters with simple tastes. The tutor approved of his ideas and toadied to him, supposing that this gentleman possessed influence over his former pupil, whose man of business he was anxious to become.

Frederick had come there filled with hostility to Cisy; but the young aristocrat's idiocy had disarmed him. However, as the other's gestures, face, and entire person brought back to his recollection the dinner at the Café Anglais, he got more and more irritated; and he lent his ears to the complimentary remarks made in a low tone by Joseph, the cousin, a fine young fellow without any money, who was a lover of the chase and a University prizeman. Cisy, for[11] the sake of a laugh, called him

a “catcher”[A] several times; then suddenly:

“Ha! here comes the Baron!”

At that moment, there entered a jovial blade of thirty, with somewhat rough-looking features and active limbs, wearing his hat over his ear and displaying a flower in his button-hole. He was the Vicomte’s ideal. The young aristocrat was delighted at having him there; and stimulated by his presence, he even attempted a pun; for he said, as they passed a heath-cock:

“There’s the best of La Bruyère’s characters!”[B]

After that, he put a heap of questions to M. de Comaing about persons unknown to society; then, as if an idea had suddenly seized him:

“Tell me, pray! have you thought about me?”

The other shrugged his shoulders:

“You are not old enough, my little man. It is impossible!”

Cisy had begged of the Baron to get him admitted into his club. But the other having, no doubt, taken pity on his vanity:

“Ha! I was forgetting! A thousand congratulations on having won your bet, my dear fellow!”

“What bet?”

“The bet you made at the races to effect an entrance the same evening into that lady’s house.”

Frederick felt as if he had got a lash with a whip.[12] He was speedily appeased by the look of utter confusion in Cisy’s face.

In fact, the Maréchale, next morning, was filled with regret when Arnoux, her first lover, her good friend, had presented himself that very day. They both gave the Vicomte to understand that he was in the way, and kicked him out without much ceremony.

He pretended not to have heard what was said.

The Baron went on:

“What has become of her, this fine Rose? Is she as pretty as ever?” showing by his manner that he had been on terms of intimacy with her.

Frederick was chagrined by the discovery.

“There’s nothing to blush at,” said the Baron, pursuing the topic, “’tis a good thing!”

Cisy smacked his tongue.

“Whew! not so good!”

“Ha!”

"Oh dear, yes! In the first place, I found her nothing extraordinary, and then, you pick up the like of her as often as you please, for, in fact, she is for sale!"

"Not for everyone!" remarked Frederick, with some bitterness.

"He imagines that he is different from the others," was Cisy's comment. "What a good joke!"

And a laugh ran round the table.

Frederick felt as if the palpitations of his heart would suffocate him. He swallowed two glasses of water one after the other.

But the Baron had preserved a lively recollection of Rosanette.

"Is she still interested in a fellow named Arnoux?"[13]

"I haven't the faintest idea," said Cisy, "I don't know that gentleman!"

Nevertheless, he suggested that he believed Arnoux was a sort of swindler.

"A moment!" exclaimed Frederick.

"However, there is no doubt about it! Legal proceedings have been taken against him."

"That is not true!"

Frederick began to defend Arnoux, vouched for his honesty, ended by convincing himself of it, and concocted figures and proofs. The Vicomte, full of spite, and tipsy in addition, persisted in his assertions, so that Frederick said to him gravely:

"Is the object of this to give offence to me, Monsieur?"

And he looked Cisy full in the face, with eyeballs as red as his cigar.

"Oh! not at all. I grant you that he possesses something very nice—his wife."

"Do you know her?"

"Faith, I do! Sophie Arnoux; everyone knows her."

"You mean to tell me that?"

Cisy, who had staggered to his feet, hiccoughed:

"Everyone—knows—her."

"Hold your tongue. It is not with women of her sort you keep company!"

"I—flatter myself—it is."

Frederick flung a plate at his face. It passed like a flash of lightning over the table, knocked down two bottles, demolished a fruit-dish, and breaking into three pieces, by knocking against

the épergne, hit the Vicomte in the stomach.

All the other guests arose to hold him back. He struggled and shrieked, possessed by a kind of frenzy.[14]

M. des Aulnays kept repeating:

"Come, be calm, my dear boy!"

"Why, this is frightful!" shouted the tutor.

Forchambeaux, livid as a plum, was trembling. Joseph indulged in repeated outbursts of laughter. The attendants sponged out the traces of the wine, and gathered up the remains of the dinner from the floor; and the Baron went and shut the window, for the uproar, in spite of the noise of carriage-wheels, could be heard on the boulevard.

As all present at the moment the plate had been flung had been talking at the same time, it was impossible to discover the cause of the attack—whether it was on account of Arnoux, Madame Arnoux, Rosanette, or somebody else. One thing only they were certain of, that Frederick had acted with indescribable brutality. On his part, he refused positively to testify the slightest regret for what he had done.

M. des Aulnays tried to soften him. Cousin Joseph, the tutor, and Forchambeaux himself joined in the effort. The Baron, all this time, was cheering up Cisy, who, yielding to nervous weakness, began to shed tears.

Frederick, on the contrary, was getting more and more angry, and they would have remained there till daybreak if the Baron had not said, in order to bring matters to a close:

"The Vicomte, Monsieur, will send his seconds to call on you to-morrow."

"Your hour?"

"Twelve, if it suits you."

"Perfectly, Monsieur."

Frederick, as soon as he was in the open air, drew a deep breath. He had been keeping his feel[15]ings too long under restraint; he had satisfied them at last. He felt, so to speak, the pride of virility, a superabundance of energy within him which intoxicated him. He required two seconds. The first person he thought of for the purpose was Regimbart, and he immediately directed his steps towards the Rue Saint-Denis. The shop-front was closed, but some light shone through a pane of glass over the door. It opened and he went in, stooping very low as he passed

under the penthouse.

A candle at the side of the bar lighted up the deserted smoking-room. All the stools, with their feet in the air, were piled on the table. The master and mistress, with their waiter, were at supper in a corner near the kitchen; and Regimbart, with his hat on his head, was sharing their meal, and even disturbed the waiter, who was compelled every moment to turn aside a little. Frederick, having briefly explained the matter to him, asked Regimbart to assist him. The Citizen at first made no reply. He rolled his eyes about, looked as if he were plunged in reflection, took several strides around the room, and at last said:

"Yes, by all means!" and a homicidal smile smoothed his brow when he learned that the adversary was a nobleman.

"Make your mind easy; we'll rout him with flying colours! In the first place, with the sword——"

"But perhaps," broke in Frederick, "I have not the right."

"I tell you 'tis necessary to take the sword," the Citizen replied roughly. "Do you know how to make passes?"

"A little."[16]

"Oh! a little. This is the way with all of them; and yet they have a mania for committing assaults. What does the fencing-school teach? Listen to me: keep a good distance off, always confining yourself in circles, and parry—parry as you retire; that is permitted. Tire him out. Then boldly make a lunge on him! and, above all, no malice, no strokes of the La Fougère kind.[C] No! a simple one-two, and some disengagements. Look here! do you see? while you turn your wrist as if opening a lock. Père Vauthier, give me your cane. Ha! that will do."

He grasped the rod which was used for lighting the gas, rounded his left arm, bent his right, and began to make some thrusts against the partition. He stamped with his foot, got animated, and pretended to be encountering difficulties, while he exclaimed: "Are you there? Is that it? Are you there?" and his enormous silhouette projected itself on the wall with his hat apparently touching the ceiling. The owner of the café shouted from time to time: "Bravo! very good!" His wife, though a little unnerved, was likewise filled with admiration; and Théodore, who had been in the army, remained riveted to the spot with amazement, the fact being, however, that he regarded M. Regimbart with a species of hero-worship.

Next morning, at an early hour, Frederick hurried to the establishment in which Dussardier was employed. After having passed through a succession of departments all full of clothing-materials, either adorn[17]ing shelves or lying on tables, while here and there shawls were fixed on wooden racks shaped like toadstools, he saw the young man, in a sort of railed cage, surrounded by account-books, and standing in front of a desk at which he was writing. The honest fellow left his work.

The seconds arrived before twelve o'clock.

Frederick, as a matter of good taste, thought he ought not to be present at the conference.

The Baron and M. Joseph declared that they would be satisfied with the simplest excuses. But Regimbart's principle being never to yield, and his contention being that Arnoux's honour should be vindicated (Frederick had not spoken to him about anything else), he asked that the Vicomte should apologise. M. de Comaing was indignant at this presumption. The Citizen would not abate an inch. As all conciliation proved impracticable, there was nothing for it but to fight.

Other difficulties arose, for the choice of weapons lay with Cisy, as the person to whom the insult had been offered. But Regimbart maintained that by sending the challenge he had constituted himself the offending party. His seconds loudly protested that a buffet was the most cruel of offences. The Citizen carped at the words, pointing out that a buffet was not a blow. Finally, they decided to refer the matter to a military man; and the four seconds went off to consult the officers in some of the barracks.

They drew up at the barracks on the Quai d'Orsay. M. de Comaing, having accosted two captains, explained to them the question in dispute.

The captains did not understand a word of what he was saying, owing to the confusion caused by the[18] Citizen's incidental remarks. In short, they advised the gentlemen who consulted them to draw up a minute of the proceedings; after which they would give their decision. Thereupon, they repaired to a café; and they even, in order to do things with more circumspection, referred to Cisy as H, and Frederick as K.

Then they returned to the barracks. The officers had gone out. They reappeared, and declared that the choice of arms

manifestly belonged to H.

They all returned to Cisy's abode. Regimbart and Dussardier remained on the footpath outside.

The Vicomte, when he was informed of the solution of the case, was seized with such extreme agitation that they had to repeat for him several times the decision of the officers; and, when M. de Comaing came to deal with Regimbart's contention, he murmured "Nevertheless," not being very reluctant himself to yield to it. Then he let himself sink into an armchair, and declared that he would not fight.

"Eh? What?" said the Baron. Then Cisy indulged in a confused flood of mouthings. He wished to fight with firearms—to discharge a single pistol at close quarters.

"Or else we will put arsenic into a glass, and draw lots to see who must drink it. That's sometimes done. I've read of it!"

The Baron, naturally rather impatient, addressed him in a harsh tone:

"These gentlemen are waiting for your answer. This is indecent, to put it shortly. What weapons are you going to take? Come! is it the sword?"

The Vicomte gave an affirmative reply by merely nodding his head; and it was arranged that the meet[19]ing should take place next morning at seven o'clock sharp at the Maillot gate.

Dussardier, being compelled to go back to his business, Regimbart went to inform Frederick about the arrangement. He had been left all day without any news, and his impatience was becoming intolerable.

"So much the better!" he exclaimed.

The Citizen was satisfied with his deportment.

"Would you believe it? They wanted an apology from us. It was nothing—a mere word! But I knocked them off their beam-ends nicely. The right thing to do, wasn't it?"

"Undoubtedly," said Frederick, thinking that it would have been better to choose another second.

Then, when he was alone, he repeated several times in a very loud tone:

"I am going to fight! Hold on, I am going to fight! 'Tis funny!"

And, as he walked up and down his room, while passing in front of the mirror, he noticed that he was pale.

"Have I any reason to be afraid?"

He was seized with a feeling of intolerable misery at the prospect of exhibiting fear on the ground.

"And yet, suppose I happen to be killed? My father met his death the same way. Yes, I shall be killed!"

And, suddenly, his mother rose up before him in a black dress; incoherent images floated before his mind. His own cowardice exasperated him. A paroxysm of courage, a thirst for human blood, took possession of him. A battalion could not have made him retreat. When this feverish excitement had[20] cooled down, he was overjoyed to feel that his nerves were perfectly steady. In order to divert his thoughts, he went to the opera, where a ballet was being performed. He listened to the music, looked at the danseuses through his opera-glass, and drank a glass of punch between the acts. But when he got home again, the sight of his study, of his furniture, in the midst of which he found himself for the last time, made him feel ready to swoon.

He went down to the garden. The stars were shining; he gazed up at them. The idea of fighting about a woman gave him a greater importance in his own eyes, and surrounded him with a halo of nobility. Then he went to bed in a tranquil frame of mind.

It was not so with Cisy. After the Baron's departure, Joseph had tried to revive his drooping spirits, and, as the Vicomte remained in the same dull mood:

"However, old boy, if you prefer to remain at home, I'll go and say so."

Cisy durst not answer "Certainly;" but he would have liked his cousin to do him this service without speaking about it.

He wished that Frederick would die during the night of an attack of apoplexy, or that a riot would break out so that next morning there would be enough of barricades to shut up all the approaches to the Bois de Boulogne, or that some emergency might prevent one of the seconds from being present; for in the absence of seconds the duel would fall through. He felt a longing to save himself by taking an express train—no matter where. He regretted that he did not understand medicine so as to be able[21] to take something which, without endangering his life, would cause it to be believed that he was dead. He finally wished to be ill in earnest.

In order to get advice and assistance from someone, he sent for M. des Aulnays. That worthy man had gone back to

Saintonge on receiving a letter informing him of the illness of one of his daughters. This appeared an ominous circumstance to Cisy. Luckily, M. Vezou, his tutor, came to see him. Then he unbosomed himself.

"What am I to do? my God! what am I do?"

"If I were in your place, Monsieur, I should pay some strapping fellow from the market-place to go and give him a drubbing."

"He would still know who brought it about," replied Cisy.

And from time to time he uttered a groan; then:

"But is a man bound to fight a duel?"

"'Tis a relic of barbarism! What are you to do?"

Out of complaisance the pedagogue invited himself to dinner. His pupil did not eat anything, but, after the meal, felt the necessity of taking a short walk.

As they were passing a church, he said:

"Suppose we go in for a little while—to look?"

M. Vezou asked nothing better, and even offered him holy water.

It was the month of May. The altar was covered with flowers; voices were chanting; the organ was resounding through the church. But he found it impossible to pray, as the pomps of religion inspired him merely with thoughts of funerals. He fancied that he could hear the murmurs of the De Profundis.

"Let us go away. I don't feel well."[22]

They spent the whole night playing cards. The Vicomte made an effort to lose in order to exorcise ill-luck, a thing which M. Vezou turned to his own advantage. At last, at the first streak of dawn, Cisy, who could stand it no longer, sank down on the green cloth, and was soon plunged in sleep, which was disturbed by unpleasant dreams.

If courage, however, consists in wishing to get the better of one's own weakness, the Vicomte was courageous, for in the presence of his seconds, who came to seek him, he stiffened himself up with all the strength he could command, vanity making him realise that to attempt to draw back now would destroy him. M. de Comaing congratulated him on his good appearance.

But, on the way, the jolting of the cab and the heat of the morning sun made him languish. His energy gave way again. He could not even distinguish any longer where they were. The Baron amused himself by increasing his terror, talking about

the "corpse," and of the way they meant to get back clandestinely to the city. Joseph gave the rejoinder; both, considering the affair ridiculous, were certain that it would be settled.

Cisy kept his head on his breast; he lifted it up slowly, and drew attention to the fact that they had not taken a doctor with them.

"'Tis needless," said the Baron.

"Then there's no danger?"

Joseph answered in a grave tone:

"Let us hope so!"

And nobody in the carriage made any further remark.

At ten minutes past seven they arrived in front of the Maillot gate. Frederick and his seconds were[23] there, the entire group being dressed all in black. Regimbart, instead of a cravat, wore a stiff horsehair collar, like a trooper; and he carried a long violin-case adapted for adventures of this kind. They exchanged frigid bows. Then they all plunged into the Bois de Boulogne, taking the Madrid road, in order to find a suitable place.

Regimbart said to Frederick, who was walking between him and Dussardier:

"Well, and this scare—what do we care about it? If you want anything, don't annoy yourself about it; I know what to do. Fear is natural to man!"

Then, in a low tone:

"Don't smoke any more; in this case it has a weakening effect."

Frederick threw away his cigar, which had only a disturbing effect on his brain, and went on with a firm step. The Vicomte advanced behind, leaning on the arms of his two seconds. Occasional wayfarers crossed their path. The sky was blue, and from time to time they heard rabbits skipping about. At the turn of a path, a woman in a Madras neckerchief was chatting with a man in a blouse; and in the large avenue under the chestnut-trees some grooms in vests of linen-cloth were walking horses up and down.

Cisy recalled the happy days when, mounted on his own chestnut horse, and with his glass stuck in his eye, he rode up to carriage-doors. These recollections intensified his wretchedness. An intolerable thirst parched his throat. The buzzing of flies mingled with the throbbing of his arteries. His feet sank

into the sand. It seemed to him as if he had been walking during a period which had neither beginning nor end.[24]

The seconds, without stopping, examined with keen glances each side of the path they were traversing. They hesitated as to whether they would go to the Catelan Cross or under the walls of the Bagatelle. At last they took a turn to the right; and they drew up in a kind of quincunx in the midst of the pine-trees.

The spot was chosen in such a way that the level ground was cut equally into two divisions. The two places at which the principals in the duel were to take their stand were marked out. Then Regimbart opened his case. It was lined with red sheep's-leather, and contained four charming swords hollowed in the centre, with handles which were adorned with filigree. A ray of light, passing through the leaves, fell on them, and they appeared to Cisy to glitter like silver vipers on a sea of blood.

The Citizen showed that they were of equal length. He took one himself, in order to separate the combatants in case of necessity. M. de Comaing held a walking-stick. There was an interval of silence. They looked at each other. All the faces had in them something fierce or cruel.

Frederick had taken off his coat and his waistcoat. Joseph aided Cisy to do the same. When his cravat was removed a blessed medal could be seen on his neck. This made Regimbart smile contemptuously.

Then M. de Comaing (in order to allow Frederick another moment for reflection) tried to raise some quibbles. He demanded the right to put on a glove, and to catch hold of his adversary's sword with the left hand. Regimbart, who was in a hurry, made no objection to this. At last the Baron, addressing Frederick:[25]

"Everything depends on you, Monsieur! There is never any dishonour in acknowledging one's faults."

Dussardier made a gesture of approval. The Citizen gave vent to his indignation:

"Do you think we came here as a mere sham, damn it! Be on your guard, each of you!"

The combatants were facing one another, with their seconds by their sides.

He uttered the single word:

"Come!"

Cisy became dreadfully pale. The end of his blade was

quivering like a horsewhip. His head fell back, his hands dropped down helplessly, and he sank unconscious on the ground. Joseph raised him up and while holding a scent-bottle to his nose, gave him a good shaking.

The Vicomte reopened his eyes, then suddenly grasped at his sword like a madman. Frederick had held his in readiness, and now awaited him with steady eye and uplifted hand.

"Stop! stop!" cried a voice, which came from the road simultaneously with the sound of a horse at full gallop, and the hood of a cab broke the branches. A man bending out his head waved a handkerchief, still exclaiming:

"Stop! stop!"

M. de Comaing, believing that this meant the intervention of the police, lifted up his walking-stick.

"Make an end of it. The Vicomte is bleeding!"

"I?" said Cisy.

In fact, he had in his fall taken off the skin of his left thumb.

"But this was by falling," observed the Citizen.

The Baron pretended not to understand.[26]

Arnoux had jumped out of the cab.

"I have arrived too late? No! Thanks be to God!"

He threw his arms around Frederick, felt him, and covered his face with kisses.

"I am the cause of it. You wanted to defend your old friend! That's right—that's right! Never shall I forget it! How good you are! Ah! my own dear boy!"

He gazed at Frederick and shed tears, while he chuckled with delight. The Baron turned towards Joseph:

"I believe we are in the way at this little family party. It is over, messieurs, is it not? Vicomte, put your arm into a sling. Hold on! here is my silk handkerchief."

Then, with an imperious gesture: "Come! no spite! This is as it should be!"

The two adversaries shook hands in a very lukewarm fashion. The Vicomte, M. de Comaing, and Joseph disappeared in one direction, and Frederick left with his friends in the opposite direction.

As the Madrid Restaurant was not far off, Arnoux proposed that they should go and drink a glass of beer there.

"We might even have breakfast."