George Sand
Some Aspects of Her Life and Writings

by Rene Doumic
Translated by Alys Hallard

This volume is dedicated to Madame L. Landouzy with gratitude and affection

This book is not intended as a study of George Sand. It is merely a series of chapters touching on various aspects of her life and writings. My work will not be lost if the perusal of these pages should inspire one of the historians of our literature with the idea of devoting to the great novelist, to her genius and her influence, a work of this kind.

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GEORGE SAND

I

AURORE DUPIN

PSYCHOLOGY OF A DAUGHTER OF ROUSSEAU

In the whole of French literary history, there is, perhaps, no subject of such inexhaustible and modern interest as that of George Sand. Of what use is literary history? It is not only a kind of museum, in which a few masterpieces are preserved for the pleasure of beholders. It is this certainly, but it is still more than this. Fine books are, before anything else, living works. They not only have lived, but they continue to live. They live within us, underneath those ideas which form our conscience and those sentiments which inspire our actions. There is nothing of greater importance for any society than to make an inventory of the ideas and the sentiments which are composing its moral atmosphere every instant that it exists. For every individual this work is the very condition of his dignity. The question is, should we have these ideas and these sentiments, if, in the times before us, there had not been some exceptional individuals who seized them, as it were, in the air and made them viable and durable? These exceptional individuals were capable of thinking more vigorously, of feeling more deeply, and of expressing themselves more forcibly than we are. They bequeathed these ideas and sentiments to us. Literary history is, then, above and beyond all things, the perpetual examination of the conscience of humanity.

There is no need for me to repeat what every one knows, the fact that our epoch is extremely complex, agitated and disturbed. In the midst of this labyrinth in which we are feeling our way with such difficulty, who does not look back regretfully to the days when life was more simple, when it was possible to walk towards a goal, mysterious and unknown though it might be, by straight paths and royal routes?

George Sand wrote for nearly half a century. For fifty times three

hundred and sixty-five days, she never let a day pass by without covering more pages than other writers in a month. Her first books shocked people, her early opinions were greeted with storms. From that time forth she rushed head-long into everything new, she welcomed every chimera and passed it on to us with more force and passion in it. Vibrating with every breath, electrified by every storm, she looked up at every cloud behind which she fancied she saw a star shining. The work of another novelist has been called a repertory of human documents. But what a repertory of ideas her work was! She has said what she had to say on nearly every subject; on love, the family, social institutions and on the various forms of government. And with all this she was a woman. Her case is almost unique in the history of letters. It is intensely interesting to study the influence of this woman of genius on the evolution of modern thought.

I shall endeavour to approach my subject conscientiously and with all due respect. I shall study biography where it is indispensable for the complete understanding of works. I shall give a sketch of the original individuals I meet on my path, portraying these only at their point of contact with the life of our authoress, and it seems to me that a gallery in which we see Sandeau, Sainte-Beuve, Musset, Michel (of Bourges), Liszt, Chopin, Lamennais, Pierre Leroux, Dumas _fils_, Flaubert and many, many others is an incomparable portrait gallery. I shall not attack persons, but I shall discuss ideas and, when necessary, dispute them energetically. We shall, I hope, during our voyage, see many perspectives open out before us.

I have, of course, made use of all the works devoted to George Sand which were of any value for my study, and among others of the two volumes published, under the name of Wladimir Karenine,[1] by a woman belonging to Russian aristocratic society. For the period before 1840, this is the most complete work that has been written. M. Samuel Rocheblave, a clever University professor and the man who knows more than any one about the life and works of George Sand, has been my guide and has helped me greatly with his wise advice. Private collections of documents have also been placed at my service most generously. I am therefore able to supply some hitherto unpublished writings. George Sand published, in all, about a hundred volumes of novels and stories, four volumes of autobiography, and six of correspondence. In spite of all this we are still asked for fresh documents.

[1] WLADIMIR KARENINE: _George Sand, Sa vie et ses aeuvres._

2 Vols. Ollendorf.

It is interesting, as a preliminary study, to note the natural gifts, and the first impressions of Aurore Dupin as a child and young girl, and to see how these predetermined the woman and the writer known to us as George Sand.

Lucile-Amandine-Aurore Dupin, legitimate daughter of Maurice Dupin and of Sophie-Victoire Delaborde, was born in Paris, at 15 Rue Meslay, in the neighbourhood of the Temple, on the 1st of July, 1804. I would call attention at once to the special phenomenon which explains the problem of her destiny: I mean by this her heredity, or rather the radical and violent contrast of her maternal and paternal heredity.

By her father she was an aristocrat and related to the reigning houses.

Her ancestor was the King of Poland, Augustus II, the lover of the beautiful Countess Aurora von Koenigsmarck. George Sand's grandfather was Maurice de Saxe. He may have been an adventurer and a _condottiere_, but France owes to him Fontenoy, that brilliant page of her history. All this takes us back to the eighteenth century with its brilliant, gallant, frivolous, artistic and profligate episodes. Maurice de Saxe adored the theatre, either for itself or for the sake of the women connected with it. On his campaign, he took with him a theatrical company which gave a representation the evening before a battle. In this company was a young artiste named Mlle. de Verrieres whose father was a certain M. Rinteau. Maurice de Saxe admired the young actress and a daughter was born of this _liaison_, who was later on recognized by her father and named Marie-Aurore de Saxe. This was George Sand's grandmother. At the age of fifteen the young girl married Comte de Horn, a bastard son of Louis XV. This husband was obliging enough to his wife, who was only his wife in name, to die as soon as possible. She then returned to her mother "the Opera lady." An elderly nobleman, Dupin de Francueil, who had been the lover of the other Mlle. Verrieres, now fell in love with her and married her. Their son, Maurice Dupin, was the father of our novelist. The astonishing part of this series of adventures is that Marie-Aurore should have been the eminently respectable woman that she was. On her mother's side, though, Aurore Dupin belonged to the people. She was the daughter of Sophie-Victoire Delaborde milliner, the grandchild of a certain bird-seller on the Quai des Oiseaux, who used to keep a public-house, and she was the great-granddaughter of Mere Cloquart.

This double heredity was personified in the two women who shared George Sand's childish affection. We must therefore study the portraits of these two women.

The grandmother was, if not a typical _grande dame_, at least a typical elegant woman of the latter half of the eighteenth century. She was very well educated and refined, thanks to living with the two sisters, Mlles. Verrieres, who were accustomed to the best society. She was a good musician and sang delightfully. When she married Dupin de Francueil, her husband was sixty-two, just double her age. But, as she used to say to her granddaughter, "no one was ever old in those days. It was the Revolution that brought old age into the world."

Dupin was a very agreeable man. When younger he had been _too_ agreeable, but now he was just sufficiently so to make his wife very happy. He was very lavish in his expenditure and lived like a prince, so that he left Marie-Aurore ruined and poor with about three thousand a year. She was imbued with the ideas of the philosophers and an enemy of the Queen's _coterie_. She was by no means alarmed at the Revolution and was very soon taken prisoner. She was arrested on the 26th of November, 1793, and incarcerated in the _Couvent des Anglaises_, Rue des Fosse's-Saint-Victor, which had been converted into a detention house. On leaving prison she settled down at Nohant, an estate she had recently bought. It was there that her granddaughter remembered her in her early days. She describes her as tall, slender, fair and always very calm. At Nohant she had only her maids and her books for company. When in Paris, she delighted in the society of people of her own station and of her time, people who had the ideas and airs of former days. She continued, in this new century, the shades of thought and the manners and Customs of the old _regime._

As a set-off to this woman of race and of culture, Aurore's mother represented the ordinary type of the woman of the people. She was small, dark, fiery and violent. She, too, the bird-seller's daughter, had been imprisoned by the Revolution, and strangely enough in the _Couvent des Anglaises_ at about the same time as Maurice de Saxe's granddaughter. It was in this way that the fusion of classes was understood under the Terror. She was employed as a _figurante_ in a small theatre. This was merely a commencement for her career. At the time when Maurice Dupin met her, she was the mistress of an old general. She already had one child of doubtful parentage. Maurice Dupin, too, had a natural son,

named Hippolyte, so that they could not reproach each other.
When Maurice Dupin married Sophie-Victoire, a month before the birth of Aurore, he had some difficulty in obtaining his mother's consent. She finally gave in, as she was of an indulgent nature. It is possible that Sophie-Victoire's conduct was irreproachable during her husband's lifetime, but, after his death, she returned to her former ways. She was nevertheless of religious habits and would not, upon any account, have missed attending Mass. She was quick-tempered, jealous and noisy and, when anything annoyed her, extremely hot-headed. At such times she would shout and storm, so that the only way to silence her was to shout still more loudly. She never bore any malice, though, and wished no harm to those she had insulted. She was of course sentimental, but more passionate than tender, and she quickly forgot those whom she had loved most fondly. There seemed to be gaps in her memory and also in her conscience. She was ignorant, knowing nothing either of literature or of the usages of society. Her _salon_ was the landing of her flat and her acquaintances were the neighbours who happened to live next door to her. It is easy to imagine what she thought of the aristocrats who visited her mother-in-law. She was amusing when she joked and made parodies on the women she styled "the old Countesses." She had a great deal of natural wit, a liveliness peculiar to the native of the faubourgs, all the impudence of the street arab, and a veritable talent of mimicry. She was a good housewife, active, industrious and most clever in turning everything to account. With a mere nothing she could improvise a dress or a hat and give it a certain style. She was always most skilful with her fingers, a typical Parisian work-girl, a daughter of the street and a child of the people. In our times she would be styled "a midinette."

Such are the two women who shared the affection of Aurore Dupin. Fate had brought them together, but had made them so unlike that they were bound to dislike each other. The childhood of little Aurore served as the lists for their contentions. Their rivalry was the dominating note in the sentimental education of the child.

As long as Maurice Dupin lived, Aurore was always with her parents in their little Parisian dwelling. Maurice Dupin was a brilliant officer, and very brave and jovial. In 1808, Aurore went to him in Madrid, where he was Murat's _aide-de-camp_. She lived in the palace of the Prince of Peace, that vast palace which Murat filled with the splendour of his costumes and the groans caused by his suffering. Like Victor Hugo, who went to the same place at about the same time and under similar conditions, Aurore may have brought back with her

de ses courses lointaines

Comme un vaguefaisceau de lueurs incertaines.

This does not seem probable, though. The return was painful, as they came back worried and ill, and were glad to take refuge at Nohant. They were just beginning to organize their life when Maurice Dupin died suddenly, from an accident when riding, leaving his mother and his wife together.

From this time forth, Aurore was more often with her grandmother at Nohant than with her mother in Paris. Her grandmother undertook the care of her education. Her half-brother, Hippolyte Chatiron, and she received lessons from M. Deschartres, who had educated Maurice Dupin. He was steward and tutor combined, a very authoritative man, arrogant and a great pedant. He was affectionate, though, and extremely devoted. He was both detestable and touching at the same time, and had a warm heart hidden under a rough exterior. Nohant was in the heart of Berry, and this meant the country and Nature. For Aurore Dupin Nature proved to be an incomparable educator.

There was only one marked trait in the child's character up to this date, and that was a great tendency to reverie. For long hours she would remain alone, motionless, gazing into space. People were anxious about her when they saw her looking so _stupid_, but her mother invariably said: "Do not be alarmed. She is always ruminating about something." Country life, while providing her with fresh air and plenty of exercise, so that her health was magnificent, gave fresh food and another turn to her reveries. Ten years earlier Alphonse de Lamartine had been sent to the country at Milly, and allowed to frequent the little peasant children of the place. Aurore Dupin's existence was now very much the same as that of Lamartine. Nohant is situated in the centre of the Black Valley. The ground is dark and rich; there are narrow, shady paths. It is not a hilly country, and there are wide, peaceful horizons. At all hours of the day and at all seasons of the year, Aurore wandered along the Berry roads with her little playfellows, the farmers' children. There was Marie who tended the flock, Solange who collected leaves, and Liset and Plaisir who minded the pigs. She always knew in what meadow or in what place she would find them. She played with them amongst the hay, climbed the trees and dabbled in the water. She minded the flock with them, and in winter, when the herdsmen talked together, assembled round their fire, she listened to their wonderful stories. These credulous country children had "seen with their own eyes" Georgeon, the evil spirit

of the Black Valley. They had also seen will-o'-the-wisps, ghosts, the "white greyhound" and the "Big Beast"! In the evenings, she sat up listening to the stories told by the hemp-weaver. Her fresh young soul was thus impregnated at an early age with the poetry of the country. And it was all the poetry of the country, that which comes from things, such as the freshness of the air and the perfume of the flowers, but also that which is to be found in the simplicity of sentiments and in that candour and surprise face to face with those sights of Nature which have remained the same and have been just as incomprehensible ever since the beginning of the world.

The antagonism of the two mothers increased, though. We will not go into detail with regard to the various episodes, but will only consider the consequences.

The first consequence was that the intelligence of the child became more keen through this duality. Placed as she was, in these two different worlds, between two persons with minds so unlike, and, obliged as she was to go from one to the other, she learnt to understand and appreciate them both, contrasts though they were. She had soon reckoned each of them up, and she saw their weaknesses, their faults, their merits and their advantages.

A second consequence was to increase her sensitiveness. Each time that she left her mother, the separation was heartrending. When she was absent from her, she suffered on account of this absence, and still more because she fancied that she would be forgotten. She loved her mother, just as she was, and the idea that any one was hostile or despised her caused the child much silent suffering. It was as though she had an ever-open wound.

Another consequence, and by no means the least important one, was to determine in a certain sense the immense power of sympathy within her. For a long time she only felt a sort of awe, when with her reserved and ceremonious grandmother. She felt nearer to her mother, as there was no need to be on ceremony with her. She took a dislike to all those who represented authority, rules and the tyranny of custom. She considered her mother and herself as oppressed individuals. A love for the people sprang up in the heart of the daughter of Sophie-Victoire. She belonged to them through her mother, and she was drawn to them now through the humiliations she underwent. In this little enemy of reverences and of society people, we see the dawn of that instinct which, later on, was to cause her to revolt openly. George Sand was quite right in saying, later on,

that it was of no use seeking any intellectual reason as the explanation of her social preferences. Everything in her was due to sentiment. Her socialism was entirely the outcome of her suffering and torments as a child.

Things had to come to a crisis, and the crisis was atrocious. George Sand gives an account of the tragic scene in her _Histoire de ma vie_. Her grandmother had already had one attack of paralysis. She was anxious about Aurore's future, and wished to keep her from the influence of her mother. She therefore decided to employ violent means to this end. She sent for the child to her bedside, and, almost beside herself, in a choking voice, she revealed to her all that she ought to have concealed. She told her of Sophie-Victoire's past, she uttered the fatal word and spoke of the child's mother as a lost woman. With Aurore's extreme sensitiveness, it was horrible to receive such confidences at the age of thirteen. Thirty years later, George Sand describes the anguish of the terrible minute. "It was a nightmare," she says. "I felt choked, and it was as though every word would kill me. The perspiration came out on my face. I wanted to interrupt her, to get up and rush away. I did not want to hear the frightful accusation. I could not move, though; I seemed to be nailed on my knees, and my head seemed to be bowed down by that voice that I heard above me, a voice which seemed to wither me like a storm wind."

It seems extraordinary that a woman, who was in reality so kind-hearted and so wise, should have allowed herself to be carried away like this. Passion has these sudden and unexpected outbursts, and we see here a most significant proof of the atmosphere of passion in which the child had lived, and which gradually insinuated itself within her.

Under these circumstances, Aurore's departure for the convent was a deliverance. Until just recently, there has always been a convent in vogue in France in which it has been considered necessary for girls in good society to be educated. In 1817, _the Couvent des Anglaises_ was in vogue, the very convent which had served as a prison for the mother and grandmother of Aurore. The three years she spent there in that "big feminine family, where every one was as kind as God," she considered the most peaceful and happy time of her life. The pages she devotes to them in her _Histoire de ma vie_ have all the freshness of an oasis. She describes most lovingly this little world, apart, exclusive and self-sufficing, in which life was so intense.

The house consisted of a number of constructions, and was situated
in the neighbourhood given up to convents. There were courtyards
and gardens enough to make it seem like a small village.
There was also a labyrinth of passages above and underground,
just as in one of Anne Radcliffe's novels. There were old walls
overgrown with vine and jasmine. The cock could be heard at midnight,
just as in the heart of the country, and there was a bell with
a silvery tone like a woman's voice. From her little cell,
Aurore looked over the tops of the great chestnut trees on to Paris,
so that the air so necessary for the lungs of a child accustomed
to wanderings in the country was not lacking in her convent home.
The pupils had divided themselves into three categories:
the _diables_, the good girls, who were the specially pious ones,
and the silly ones. Aurore took her place at once among the _diables_.
The great exploit of these convent girls consisted in descending into
the cellars, during recreation, and in sounding the walls, in order
to "deliver the victim." There was supposed to be an unfortunate
victim imprisoned and tortured by the good, kindhearted Sisters.
Alas! all the _diables_ sworn to the task in the _Couvent des
Anglaises_ never succeeded in finding the victim, so that she must be
there still.

Very soon, though, a sudden change-took place in Aurore's soul.
It would have been strange had it been otherwise. With so
extraordinarily sensitive an organization, the new and totally
different surroundings could not fail to make an impression.
The cloister, the cemetery, the long services, the words of the ritual,
murmured in the dimly-lighted chapel, and the piety that seems to
hover in the air in houses where many prayers have been offered up--
all this acted on the young girl. One evening in August, she had gone
into the church, which was dimly lighted by the sanctuary lamp.
Through the open window came the perfume of honeysuckle and the
songs of the birds. There was a charm, a mystery and a solemn
calm about everything, such as she had never before experienced.
"I do not know what was taking place within me," she said,
when describing this, later on, "but I breathed an atmosphere
that was indescribably delicious, and I seemed to be breathing it
in my very soul. Suddenly, I felt a shock through all my being,
a dizziness came over me, and I seemed to be enveloped in a white light.
I thought I heard a voice murmuring in my ear: _`Tolle Lege.'_ I
turned round, and saw that I was quite alone. . . ."

Our modern _psychiatres_ would say that she had had an hallucination
of hearing, together with olfactory trouble. I prefer saying
that she had received the visit of grace. Tears of joy bathed

her face and she remained there, sobbing for a long time.

The convent had therefore opened to Aurore another world of sentiment, that of Christian emotion. Her soul was naturally religious, and the dryness of a philosophical education had not been sufficient for it. The convent had now brought her the aliment for which she had instinctively longed. Later on, when her faith, which had never been very enlightened, left her, the sentiment remained. This religiosity, of Christian form, was essential to George Sand.

The convent also rendered her another eminent service. In the _Histoire de ma vie_, George Sand retraces from memory the portraits of several of the Sisters. She tells us of Madame Marie-Xavier, and of her despair at having taken the vows; of Sister Anne-Joseph, who was as kind as an angel and as silly as a goose; of the gentle Marie-Alicia, whose serene soul looked out of her blue eyes, a mirror of purity, and of the mystical Sister Helene, who had left home in spite of her family, in spite of the supplications and the sobs of her mother and sisters, and who had passed over the body of a child on her way to God. It is like this always. The costumes are the same, the hands are clasped in the same manner, the white bands and the faces look equally pale, but underneath this apparent uniformity what contrasts! It is the inner life which marks the differences so vigorously, and shows up the originality of each one. Aurore gradually discovered the diversity of all these souls and the beauty of each one. She thought of becoming a nun, but her confessor did not advise this, and he was certainly wise. Her grandmother, who had a philosopher's opinion of priests, blamed their fanaticism, and took her little granddaughter away from the convent. Perhaps she felt the need of affection for the few months she had still to live. At any rate, she certainly had this affection. One of the first results of the larger perspicacity which Aurore had acquired at the convent was to make her understand her grandmother at last. She was able now to grasp the complex nature of her relative and to see the delicacy hidden under an appearance of great reserve. She knew now all that she owed to her grandmother, but unfortunately it was one of those discoveries which are made too late.

The eighteen months which Aurore now passed at Nohant, until the death of her grandmother, are very important as regards her psychological biography. She was seventeen years old, and a girl who was eager to live and very emotional. She had first been a child of Nature. Her convent life had taken her away from Nature and accustomed her to falling back on her own thoughts. Nature now

took her back once more, and her beloved Nohant feted her return.

"The trees were in flower," she says, "the nightingales were singing, and, in the distance, I could hear the classic, solemn sound of the labourers. My old friends, the big dogs, who had growled at me the evening before, recognized me again and were profuse in their caresses. . . ."

She wanted to see everything again. The things themselves had not changed, but her way of looking at them now was different. During her long, solitary walks every morning, she enjoyed seeing the various landscapes, sometimes melancholy-looking and sometimes delightful. She enjoyed, too, the picturesqueness of the various things she met, the flocks of cattle, the birds taking their flight, and even the sound of the horses' feet splashing in the water. She enjoyed everything, in a kind of voluptuous reverie which was no longer instinctive, but conscious and a trifle morbid.

Added to all this, her reading at this epoch was without any order or method. She read everything voraciously, mixing all the philosophers up together. She read Locke, Condillac, Montesquieu, Bossuet, Pascal, Montaigne, but she kept Rousseau apart from the others. She devoured the books of the moralists and poets, La Bruyere, Pope, Milton, Dante, Virgil, Shakespeare. All this reading was too much for her and excited her brain. She had reserved Chateaubriand's _Rene_, and, on reading that, she was overcome by the sadness which emanates from these distressing pages. She was disgusted with life, and attempted to commit suicide. She tried to drown herself, and only owed her life to the healthy-mindedness of the good mare Colette, as the horse evidently had not the same reasons as its young mistress for wishing to put an end to its days.

All this time Aurore was entirely free to please herself. Deschartres, who had always treated her as a boy, encouraged her independence. It was at his instigation that she dressed in masculine attire to go out shooting. People began to talk about her "eccentricities" at Landerneau, and the gossip continued as far as La Chatre. Added to this, Aurore began to study osteology with a young man who lived in the neighbourhood, and it was said that this young man, Stephane Ajasson de Grandsaigne, gave her lessons in her own room. This was the climax.

We have a curious testimony as regards the state of the young girl's mind at this epoch. A review, entitled _Le Voile de pourpre_, published recently, in its first number, a letter from Aurore

to her mother, dated November 18, 1821. Her mother had evidently written to her on hearing the gossip about her, and had probably enlarged upon it.

"You reproach me, mother, with neither having timidity, modesty, nor charm," she writes, "or at least you suppose that I have these qualities, but that I refrain from showing them, and you are quite certain that I have no outward decency nor decorum. You ought to know me before judging me in this way. You would then be able to form an opinion about my conduct. Grandmother is here, and, ill though she is, she watches over me carefully and lovingly, and she would not fail to correct me if she considered that I had the manners of a dragoon or of a hussar."

She considered that she had no need of any one to guide or protect her, and no need of leading-strings.

"I am seventeen," she says, "and I know my way about."

If this Monsieur de Grandsaigne had ventured to take any liberty with her, she was old enough to take care of herself.

Her mother had blamed her for learning Latin and osteology. "Why should a woman be ignorant?" she asks. "Can she not be well educated without this spoiling her and without being pedantic? Supposing that I should have sons in the future, and that I had profited sufficiently by my studies to be able to teach them, would not a mother's lessons be as good as a tutor's?"

She was already challenging public opinion, starting a campaign against false prejudices, showing a tendency to generalize, and to make the cause of one woman the cause of all women.

We must now bear in mind the various traits we have discovered, one after another, in Aurore's character. We must remember to what parentage she owed her intellectuality and her sentimentality. It will then be more easy to understand the terms she uses when describing her fascination for Rousseau's writings.

"The language of Jean-Jacques and the form of his deductions impressed me as music might have done when heard in brilliant sunshine. I compared him to Mozart, and I understood everything."

She understood him, for she recognized herself in him. She sympathized with that predominance of feeling and imagination,

that exaggeration of sentiment, that preference for life according to Nature, that emotion on beholding the various sights of the country, that distrust of people, those effusions of religious sentimentality, those solitary reveries, and that melancholy which made death seem desirable to him. All this was to Aurore Dupin the gospel according to Rousseau. The whole of her psychology is to be found here.

She was an exceptional being undoubtedly; but in order to be a genial exception one must have within oneself, and then personify with great intensity all the inspirations which, at a certain moment, are dispersed in the atmosphere. Ever since the great agitation which had shaken the moral world by Rousseau's preaching, there had been various vague currents and a whole crowd of confused aspirations floating about. It was this enormous wave that entered a feminine soul. Unconsciously Aurore Dupin welcomed the new ideal, and it was this ideal which was to operate within her. The question was, what would she do with it, in presence of life with all its everyday and social realities. This question is the object of our study. In the solution of it lies the interest, the drama and the lesson of George Sand's destiny.

II

BARONNE DUDEVANT MARRIAGE AND FREEDOM--THE ARRIVAL IN PARIS--JULES SANDEAU

We must now endeavour to discover what the future George Sand's experiences of marriage were, and the result of these experiences on the formation of her ideas.

"You will lose your best friend in me," were the last words of the grandmother to her granddaughter on her death-bed. The old lady spoke truly, and Aurore was very soon to prove this. By a clause in her will, Madame Dupin de Francueil left the guardianship of Aurore to a cousin, Rene de Villeneuve. It was scarcely likely, though, that Sophie-Victoire should consent to her own rights being frustrated by this illegal clause, particularly as this man belonged to the world of the "old Countesses." She took her daughter with her to Paris. Unfortunately for her, Aurore's eyes were now open, and she was cultured enough to have been in entire sympathy with her exquisite grandmother. It was no longer possible for her to have the old passionate affection and indulgence for her mother, especially as she felt that she had hitherto been deserted by her.

She saw her mother now just as she was, a light woman belonging to the people, a woman who could not resign herself to growing old. If only Sophie-Victoire had been of a tranquil disposition! She was most restless, on the contrary, wanting to change her abode and change her restaurant every day. She would quarrel with people one day, make it up the next; wear a different-shaped hat every day, and change the colour of her hair continually. She was always in a state of agitation. She loved police news and thrilling stories; read the _Sherlock Holmes_ of those days until the middle of the night. She dreamed of such stories, and the following day went on living in an atmosphere of crime. When she had an attack of indigestion, she always imagined that she had been poisoned. When a visitor arrived, she thought it must be a burglar. She was most sarcastic about Aurore's "fine education" and her literary aspirations. Her hatred of the dead grandmother was as strong as ever. She was constantly insulting her memory, and in her fits of anger said unheard-of things. Aurore's silence was her only reply to these storms, and this exasperated her mother. She declared that she would correct her daughter's "sly ways." Aurore began to wonder with terror whether her mother's mind were not beginning to give way. The situation finally became intolerable.

Sophie-Victoire took her daughter to spend two or three days with some friends of hers, and then left her there. They lived in the country at Plessis-Picard, near Melun. Aurore was delighted to find a vast park with thickets in which there were roebucks bounding about. She loved the deep glades and the water with the green reflections of old willow trees. Monsieur James Duplessis and his wife, Angele, were excellent people, and they adopted Aurore for the time being. They already had five daughters, so that one more did not make much difference. They frequented a few families in the neighbourhood, and there was plenty of gaiety among the young people. The Duplessis took Aurore sometimes to Paris and to the theatre.

"One evening," we are told in the _Histoire de ma vie_, "we were having some ices at Tortoni's after the theatre, when suddenly my mother Angele said to her husband, `Why, there's Casimir!' A young man, slender and rather elegant, with a gay expression and a military look, came and shook hands, and answered all the questions he was asked about his father, Colonel Dudevant, who was evidently very much respected and loved by the family."

This was the first meeting, the first appearance of Casimir in the story, and this was how he entered into the life of Aurore.

He was invited to Plessis, he joined the young people good-humouredly in their games, was friendly with Aurore, and, without posing as a suitor, asked for her hand in marriage. There was no reason for her to refuse him. He was twenty-seven years of age, had served two years in the army, and had studied law in Paris. He was a natural son, of course, but he had been recognized by his father, Colonel Dudevant. The Dudevant family was greatly respected. They had a _chateau_ at Guillery in Gascony. Casimir had been well brought up and had good manners. Aurore might as well marry him as any other young man. It would even be preferable to marry him rather than another young man. He was already her friend, and he would then be her husband. That would not make much difference.

The marriage almost fell through, thanks to Sophie-Victoire. She did not consider Casimir good-looking enough. She was not thinking of her daughter, but of herself. She had made up her mind to have a handsome son-in-law with whom she could go out. She liked handsome men, and particularly military men. Finally she consented to the marriage, but, a fortnight before the ceremony, she arrived at Plessis, like a veritable thunderbolt. An extraordinary idea had occurred to her. She vowed that she had discovered that Casimir had been a waiter at a _cafe_. She had no doubt dreamt this, but she held to her text, and was indignant at the idea of her daughter marrying a waiter! . . .

Things had arrived at this crisis when Casimir's mother, Madame Dudevant, who had all the manners of a _grande dame_, decided to pay Sophie-Victoire an official visit. The latter was greatly flattered, for she liked plenty of attention paid to her. It was in this way that Aurore Dupin became Baronne Dudevant.

She was just eighteen years of age. It is interesting to read her description of herself at this time. In her _Voyage en Auvergne_, which was her first writing, dated 1827, she traces the following portrait, which certainly is not exaggerated.

"When I was sixteen," she says, "and left the convent, every one could see that I was a pretty girl. I was fresh-looking, though dark. I was like those wild flowers which grow without any art or culture, but with gay, lively colouring. I had plenty of hair, which was almost black. On looking at myself in the glass, though, I can truthfully say that I was not very well pleased with myself. I was dark, my features were well cut, but not finished. People said that it was the expression of my face that made it interesting.

I think this was true. I was gay but dreamy, and my most natural expression was a meditative one. People said, too, that in this absent-minded expression there was a fixed look which resembled that of the serpent when fascinating his prey. That, at any rate, was the far-fetched comparison of my provincial adorers."

They were not very far wrong, these provincial adorers. The portraits of Aurore at this date show us a charming face of a young girl, as fresh-looking as a child. She has rather long features, with a delicately-shaped chin. She is not exactly pretty, but fascinating, with those great dark eyes, which were her prominent feature, eyes which, when fixed on any one, took complete possession of them--dreamy, passionate eyes, sombre because the soul reflected in them had profound depths.

It is difficult to define that soul, for it was so complex.
To judge by appearances, it was a very peaceful soul, and perhaps, too, it was in reality peaceful. George Sand, who knew herself thoroughly, frequently spoke of her laziness and of her apathy, traits peculiar to the natives of Berry. Superficial observers looked no further, and her mother used to call her "St. Tranquillity." The nuns, though, of her convent had more perspicacity. They said, when speaking of her: "Still waters run deep." Under the smooth surface they fancied that storms were gathering. Aurore had within her something of her mother and of her grandmother, and their opposite natures were blended in her. She had the calmness of Marie-Aurore, but she also had the impetuousness of Sophie-Victoire, and undoubtedly, too, something of the free and easy good humour of her father, the break-neck young officer. It certainly is not surprising to find a love of adventure in a descendant of Maurice de Saxe.

Beside all these inner contrasts, the observer was particularly struck by her sudden changes of humour, by the way in which, after a fit of melancholy sadness, she suddenly gave way to the most exuberant gaiety, followed by long fits of depression and nervous exhaustion.
Personally, I do not believe much in the influence of the physical over the moral nature, but I am fully convinced of the action of the moral over the physical nature. In certain cases and in presence of extremely accentuated conditions, physiological explanations must be taken into account. All these fits of melancholy and weeping, this prostration, these high spirits and the long walks, in order to sober down, denote the exigencies of an abnormal temperament.
When once the crisis was passed, it must not be supposed that, as with many other people, nothing remained of it all. This was by no means the case, as in a nature so extraordinarily organized

for storing up sensations nothing was lost, nothing evaporated,
and everything increased. The still water seemed to be slumbering.
Its violence, though held in check, was increasing in force,
and when once let loose, it would carry all before it.

Such was the woman whom Casimir Dudevant was to marry.
The fascination was great; the honour rather to be feared,
for all depended on his skill in guiding this powerful energy.

The question is whether he loved her. It has been said that it
was a marriage of interest, as Aurore's fortune amounted to twenty
thousand pounds, and he was by no means rich. This may have been so,
but there is no reason why money should destroy one's sentiments,
and the fact that Aurore had money was not likely to prevent
Casimir from appreciating the charms of a pretty girl.
It seems, therefore, very probable that he loved his young wife,
at any rate as much as this Casimir was capable of loving his wife.

The next question is whether she loved him. It has been said
that she did, simply because she declared that she did not.
When, later on, after her separation, she spoke of her marriage,
all her later grievances were probably in her mind. There are
her earlier letters, though, which some people consider a proof
that she cared for Casimir, and there are also a few words jotted
down in her notebook. When her husband was absent, she was anxious
about him and feared that he had met with an accident. It would
be strange indeed if a girl of eighteen did not feel some affection
for the man who had been the first to make love to her, a man whom
she had married of her own free-will. It is rare for a woman to feel
no kind of attachment for her husband, but is that attachment love?
When a young wife complains of her husband, we hear in her reproaches
the protest of her offended dignity, of her humbled pride.
When a woman loves her husband, though, she does not reproach him,
guilty though he may be, with having humiliated and wounded her.
What she has against him then, is that he has broken her heart
by his lack of love for her. This note and this accent can
never be mistaken, and never once do we find it with Aurore.
We may therefore conclude that she had never loved her husband.

Casimir did not know how to win her affection. He did not even
realize that he needed to win it. He was very much like all men.
The idea never occurs to them that, when once they are married,
they have to win their wife.

He was very much like all men. . . . That is the most

faithful portrait that can be traced of Casimir at this epoch.
He had not as yet the vices which developed in him later on.
He had nothing to distinguish him from the average man. He was selfish,
without being disagreeable, rather idle, rather incapable,
rather vain and rather foolish. He was just an ordinary man.
The wife he had married, though, was not an ordinary woman.
That was their misfortune. As Emile Faguet has very wittily
put it, "Monsieur Dudevant, about whom she complained so much,
seems to have had no other fault than that of being merely an
ordinary man, which, of course, is unendurable to a superior woman.
The situation was perhaps equally unendurable for the man." This is
quite right, for Casimir was very soon considerably disconcerted.
He was incapable of understanding her psychology, and, as it
seemed impossible to him that a woman was not his inferior,
he came to the logical conclusion that his wife was "idiotic."
This was precisely his expression, and at every opportunity he
endeavoured to crush her by his own superiority. All this seems
to throw some light on his character and also on the situation.
Here was a man who had married the future George Sand, and he complained,
in all good faith, that his wife was "idiotic"!

Certainly, on comparing the _Correspondance_ with the _Histoire
de ma vie_, the difference of tone is most striking. The letters
in which Baronne Dudevant tells, day by day, of her home life
are too enthusiastic for the letters of an unhappy wife.
There are receptions at Nohant, lively dinners, singing and dancing.
All this is, at any rate, the surface, but gradually
the misunderstandings are more pronounced, and the gulf widens.

There may have been a misunderstanding at the very beginning of their
married life, and Aurore may have had a surprise of the nature of
the one to which Jane de Simerose confesses in _L'Ami des femmes_.
In an unpublished letter written much later on, in the year 1843,
from George Sand to her half-brother Hippolyte Chatiron on the
occasion of his daughter's engagement, the following lines occur:
"See that your son-in-law is not brutal to your daughter the first
night of their marriage. . . . Men have no idea that this
amusement of theirs is a martyrdom for us. Tell him to sacrifice
his own pleasure a little, and to wait until he has taught his wife
gradually to understand things and to be willing. There is nothing
so frightful as the horror, the suffering and the disgust of a poor
girl who knows nothing and who is suddenly violated by a brute.
We bring girls up as much as possible like saints, and then we
hand them over like fillies. If your son-in-law is an intelligent
man and if he really loves your daughter, he will understand

his _role_, and will not take it amiss that you should speak to him beforehand."[2]

[2] Communicated by M. S. Rocheblave.

Is George Sand recalling here any hidden and painful memories? Casimir had, at bottom, a certain brutality, which, later on, was very evident. The question is whether he had shown proofs of it at a time when it would have been wiser to have refrained.

However that may be, the fundamental disagreement of their natures was not long in making itself felt between the husband and wife. He was matter-of-fact, and she was romantic; he only believed in facts, and she in ideas; he was of the earth, earthy, whilst she aspired to the impossible. They had nothing to say to each other, and when two people have nothing to say, and love does not fill up the silences, what torture the daily _tete-a-tete_ must be. Before they had been married two years, they were bored to death. They blamed Nohant, but the fault was in themselves. Nohant seemed unbearable to them, simply because they were there alone with each other. They went to Plessis, perhaps in the hope that the remembrance of the days of their engagement might have some effect on them. It was there, in 1824, that the famous scene of the blow took place. They were playing at a regular children's game in the park, and throwing sand at each other. Casimir lost his patience and struck his wife. It was certainly impolite, but Aurore did not appear to have been very indignant with her husband at the time. Her grievances were quite of another kind, less tangible and much more deeply felt.

From Plessis they went to Ormesson. We do not know what took place there, but evidently something which made a deep impression morally, something very serious. A few years later, referring to this stay at Ormesson, George Sand wrote to one of her friends: "You pass by a wall and come to a house. . . . If you are allowed to enter you will find a delightful English garden, at the bottom of which is a spring of water hidden under a kind of grotto. It is all very stiff and uninteresting, but it is very lonely. I spent several months there, and it was there that I lost my health, my confidence in the future, my gaiety and my happiness. It was there that I felt, and very deeply too, my first approach of trouble. . . ."[3]

[3] Extract from the unpublished letters of George Sand
to Dr. Emile Regnault.

They left Ormesson for Paris, and Paris for Nohant, and after that, by way of trying to shake off the dulness that was oppressing them, they had recourse to the classical mode of diversion--a voyage.

They set off on the 5th of July, 1825, for that famous expedition to the Pyrenees, which was to be so important a landmark in Aurore Dudevant's history. On crossing the Pyrenees, the scenery, so new to her--or rather the memory of which had been lying dormant in her mind since her childhood--filled her with wild enthusiasm. This intense emotion contributed to develop within her that sense of the picturesque which, later on, was to add so considerably to her talent as a writer. She had hitherto been living in the country of plains, the Ile-de-France and Berry. The contrast made her realize all the beauties of nature, and, on her return, she probably understood her own familiar scenery, and enjoyed it all the more. She had hitherto appreciated it vaguely. Lamartine learnt to love the severe scenery of Milly better on returning to it after the softness of Italy.

The Pyrenees served, too, for Baronne Dudevant as the setting for an episode which was unique in her sentimental life.

In the _Histoire de ma vie_ there is an enigmatical page in which George Sand has intentionally measured and velled every expression. She speaks of her moral solitude, which, at that time, was profound and absolute, and she adds: "It would have been mortal to a tender mind and to a girl in the flower of her youth, if it had not been filled with a dream which had taken the importance of a great passion, not in my life, as I had sacrificed my life to duty, but in my thoughts. I was in continual correspondence with an absent person to whom I told all my thoughts, all my dreams, who knew all my humble virtues, and who heard all my platonic enthusiasm. This person was excellent in reality, but I attributed to him more than all the perfections possible to human nature. I only saw this man for a few days, and sometimes only for a few hours, in the course of a year. He was as romantic, in his intercourse with me, as I was. Consequently he did not cause me any scruples, either of religion or of conscience. This man was the stay and consolation of my exile, as regards the world of reality." It was this dream, as intense as any passion,

that we must study here. We must make the acquaintance of this excellent and romantic man.

Aurelien de Seze was a young magistrate, a few years older than Aurore. He was twenty-six years of age and she was twenty-one. He was the great-nephew of the counsel who pleaded for Louis XVI. There was, therefore, in his family a tradition of moral nobility, and the young man had inherited this. He had met Aurore at Bordeaux and again at Cauterets. They had visited the grottoes of Lourdes together. Aurelien had appreciated the young wife's charm, although she had not attempted to attract his attention, as she was not coquettish. She appreciated in him--all that was so lacking in Casimir-- culture of mind, seriousness of character, discreet manners which people took at first for coldness, and a somewhat dignified elegance. He was scrupulously honest, a magistrate of the old school, sure of his principles and master of himself. It was, probably, just that which appealed to the young wife, who was a true woman and who had always wished to be dominated. When they met again at Breda, they had an explanation. This was the "violent grief" of which George Sand speaks. She was consoled by a friend, Zoe Leroy, who found a way of calming this stormy soul. She came through this crisis crushed with emotion and fatigue, but calm and joyful. They had vowed to love each other, but to remain without reproach, and their vow was faithfully kept.

Aurore, therefore, had nothing with which to reproach herself, but with her innate need of being frank, she considered it her duty to write a letter to her husband, informing him of everything. This was the famous letter of November 8, 1825. Later on, in 1836, when her case for separation from her husband was being heard, a few fragments of it were read by her husband's advocate with the idea of incriminating her. By way of reply to this, George Sand's advocate read the entire letter in all its eloquence and generosity. It was greeted by bursts of applause from the audience.

All this is very satisfactory. It is exactly the situation of the Princess of Cleves in Madame de Lafayette's novel. The Princess of Cleves acknowledges to her husband the love she cannot help feeling for Monsieur de Nemours, and asks for his help and advice as her natural protector. This fine proceeding is usually admired, although it cost the life of the Prince of Cleves, who died broken-hearted. Personally, I admire it too, although at times I wonder whether we ought not rather to see in it an unconscious suggestion of perversity. This confession of love to the person who is being, as it were, robbed of that love, is in itself a kind

of secret pleasure. By speaking of the love, it becomes more real, we bring it out to light instead of letting it die away in those hidden depths within us, in which so many of the vague sentiments which we have not cared to define, even to ourselves, die away. Many women have preferred this more silent way, in which they alone have been the sufferers. But such women are not the heroines of novels. No one has appreciated their sacrifice, and they themselves could scarcely tell all that it has cost them.

Aurelien de Seze had taken upon himself the _role_ of confidant to this soul that he had allotted to himself. He took his _role_ very seriously, as was his custom in all things. He became the young wife's director in all matters of conscience. The letters which he wrote to her have been preserved, and we know them by the extracts and the analysis that Monsieur Rocheblave has given us and by his incisive commentaries of them.[4] They are letters of guidance, spiritual letters. The laic confessor endeavours, before all things, to calm the impatience of this soul which is more and more ardent and more and more troubled every day. He battles with her about her mania of philosophizing, her wish to sift everything and to get to the bottom of everything. Strong in his own calmness, he kept repeating to her in a hundred different ways the words: "Be calm!" The advice was good; the only difficulty was the following of the advice.

[4] "George Sand avant George Sand," by S. Rocheblave (_Revue de Paris_, December 15, 1894).

Gradually the professor lost his hold on his pupil, for it seems as though Aurore were the first to tire. Aurelien finally began to doubt the efficacy of his preaching. The usual fate of sentiments outside the common order of things is that they last the length of time that a crisis of enthusiasm lasts. The best thing that can happen then is that their nature should not change, that they should not deteriorate, as is so often the case. When they remain intact to the end, they leave behind them, in the soul, a trail of light, a trail of cold, pure light.

The decline of this platonic _liaison_ with Aurelien de Seze dates from 1828. Some grave events were taking place at Nohant about this time. For the last few years Casimir had fallen into the vices of certain country squires, or so-called gentlemen farmers.

He had taken to drink, in company with Hippolyte Chatiron, and it seems that the intoxication peculiar to the natives of Berry takes a heavy and not a gay form. He had also taken to other bad habits, away from home at first, and later on under the conjugal roof. He was particularly partial to the maid-servants, and, the day following the birth of her daughter, Solange, Aurore had an unpleasant surprise with regard to her husband. From that day forth, what had hitherto been only a vague wish on her part became a fixed idea with her, and she began to form plans. A certain incident served as a pretext. When putting some papers in order, Aurore came upon her husband's will. It was a mere diatribe, in which the future "deceased" gave utterance to all his past grievances against his _idiotic_ wife. Her mind was made up irrevocably from this moment. She would have her freedom again; she would go to Paris and spend three months out of six there. She had a young tutor from the south of France, named Boucoiran, educating her children. This Boucoiran needed to be taken to task constantly, and Baronne Dudevant did not spare him.[5]

[5] An instance of her disposition for lecturing will be seen in the following curious letter sent by George Sand to her friend and neighbour, Adolphe Duplomb. This letter has never been published before, and we owe our thanks for it to Monsieur Charles Duplomb.

Nohant, July 23,1830.

"Are you so very much afraid of me, my poor Hydrogene? You expect a good lecture and you will not expect in vain. Have patience, though. Before giving you the dressing you deserve, I want to tell you that I have not forgotten you, and that I was very vexed on returning from Paris, to find my great simpleton of a son gone. I am so used to seeing your solemn face that I quite miss it. You have a great many faults, but after all, you are a good sort, and in time you will get reasonable. Try to remember occasionally, my dear Plombeus, that you have friends. If I were your only friend, that would be a great deal, as I am to be depended on, and am always at my post as a friend, although I may not be very tender. I am not very polite either, as I speak the truth plainly. That is my characteristic, though. I am a firm friend nevertheless, and to be depended on. Do not forget what I have said now, as I shall not often repeat this. Remember, too, that happiness in this world depends on the interest and esteem that we inspire. I do not say this to every one, as it would be impossible,

but just to a certain number of friends. It is impossible to find one's happiness entirely in one's self, without being an egoist, and I do not think so badly of you that I imagine you to be one. A man whom no one cares for is wretched, and the man who has friends is afraid of grieving them by behaving badly. As Polyte says, all this is for the sake of letting you know that you must do your best to behave well, if you want to prove to me that you are not ungrateful for my interest in you. You ought to get rid of the bad habit of boasting that you have adopted through frequenting young men as foolish as yourself. Do whatever your position and your health allow you to do, provided that you do not compromise the honour or the reputation of any one else. I do not see that a young man is called upon to be as chaste as a nun. But keep your good or bad luck in your love affairs to yourself. Silly talk is always repeated, and it may chance to get to the ears of sensible people who will disapprove. Try, too, not to make so many plans, but to carry out just one or two of them. You know that is why I quarrel with you always. I should like to see more constancy in you. You tell Hippolyte that you are very willing and courageous. As to physical courage, of the kind that consists in enduring illness and in not fearing death, I dare say you have that, but I doubt very much whether you have the courage necessary for sustained work, unless you have very much altered. Everything fresh delights you, but after a little time you only see the inconveniences of your position. You will scarcely find anything without something that is annoying and troublesome, but if you cannot learn to put up with things you will never be a man.

"This is the end of my sermon. I expect you have had enough of it, especially as you are not accustomed to reading my bad handwriting. I shall be glad to hear from you, but do not consider your letter as a State affair, and do not torment yourself to arrange well-turned phrases. I do not care for such phrases at all. A letter is always good enough when the writer expresses himself naturally, and says what he thinks. Fine pages are all very well for the schoolmaster, but I do not appreciate them at all. Promise me to be reasonable, and to think of my sermons now and then. That is all I ask. You may be very sure that if it were not for my friendship for you I should not take the trouble to lecture you. I should be afraid of annoying you if it were not for that. As it is, I am sure that you are not displeased to have my lectures, and that you understand the feeling which dictates them.

"Adieu, my dear Adolphe. Write to me often and tell me always

about your affairs. Take care of yourself, and try to keep well;
but if you should feel ill come back to your native place.
There will always be milk and syrup for you, and you know that I am
not a bad nurse. Every one wishes to be remembered to you, and I
send you my holy blessing.

"AURORE D----"

{The end of footnote [5]}

She considered him idle, and reproached him with his lack of
dignity and with making himself too familiar with his inferiors.
She could not admit this familiarity, although she was certainly
a friend of the people and of the peasants. Between sympathy
and familiarity there was a distinction, and Aurore took care not
to forget this. There was always something of the _grande dame_
in her. Boucoiran was devoted, though, and she counted on him for
looking after her children, for keeping her strictly _au courant_,
and letting her know in case of illness. Perfectly easy on this score,
she could live in Paris on an income of sixty pounds by adding
to it what she could earn.

Casimir made no objections. All that happened later on in
this existence, which was from henceforth so stormy, happened
with his knowledge and with his consent. He was a poor sort of man.

Let us consider now, for a moment, Baronne Dudevant's impressions after
such a marriage. We will not speak of her sadness nor of her disgust.
In a union of this kind, how could the sacred and beneficial character
of marriage have appeared to her? A husband should be a companion.
She never knew the charm of true intimacy, nor the delight of thoughts
shared with another. A husband is the counsellor, the friend.
When she needed counsel, she was obliged to go elsewhere for it,
and it was from another man that guidance and encouragement came.
A husband should be the head and, I do not hesitate to say,
the master. Life is a ceaseless struggle, and the man who has taken
upon himself the task of defending a family from all the dangers
which threaten its dissolution, from all the enemies which prowl
around it, can only succeed in his task of protector if he be
invested with just authority. Aurore had been treated brutally:
that is not the same thing as being dominated. The sensation
which never left her was that of an immense moral solitude.
She could no longer dream in the Nohant avenues, for the old trees
had been lopped, and the mystery chased away. She shut herself up

in her grandmother's little boudoir, adjoining her children's room,
so that she could hear them breathing, and whilst Casimir and Hippolyte
were getting abominably intoxicated, she sat there thinking things over,
and gradually becoming so irritated that she felt the rebellion within
her gathering force. The matrimonial bond was a heavy yoke to her.
A Christian wife would have submitted to it and accepted it,
but the Christianity of Baronne Dudevant was nothing but religiosity.
The trials of life show up the insufficiency of religious sentiment
which is not accompanied by faith. Marriage, without love,
friendship, confidence and respect, was for Aurore merely a prison.
She endeavoured to escape from it, and when she succeeded she uttered
a sigh of relief at her deliverance.

Such, then, is the chapter of marriage in Baronne Dudevant's psychology.
It is a fine example of failure. The woman who had married badly
now remained an individual, instead of harmonizing and blending
in a general whole. This ill-assorted union merely accentuated
and strengthened George Sand's individualism.

Aurore Dudevant arrived in Paris the first week of the year 1831.
The woman who was rebellious to marriage was now in a city which had
just had a revolution.

The extraordinary effervescence of Paris in 1831 can readily be imagined.
There was tempest in the air, and this tempest was bound to break
out here or there, either immediately or in the near future,
in an insurrection. Every one was feverishly anxious to destroy
everything, in order to create all things anew. In everything,
in art, ideas and even in costume, there was the same explosion
of indiscipline, the same triumph of capriciousness. Every day some
fresh system of government was born, some new method of philosophy,
an infallible receipt for bringing about universal happiness,
an unheard-of idea for manufacturing masterpieces, some invention
for dressing up and having a perpetual carnival in the streets.
The insurrection was permanent and masquerade a normal state.
Besides all this, there was a magnificent burst of youth and genius.
Victor Hugo, proud of having fought the battle of _Hernani_,
was then thinking of _Notre-Dame_ and climbing up to it.
Musset had just given his _Contes d'Espagne el d'Italie_. Stendhal
had published _Le Rouge et le Noir_, and Balzac _La Peau de Chagrin_.
The painters of the day were Delacroix and Delaroche. Paganini was
about to give his first concert at the Opera. Such was Paris in all
its impatience and impertinence, in its confusion and its splendour
immediately after the Revolution.

The young wife, who had snapped her bonds asunder, breathed voluptuously in this atmosphere. She was like a provincial woman enjoying Paris to the full. She belonged to the romantic school, and was imbued with the principle that an artist must see everything, know everything, and have experienced himself all that he puts into his books. She found a little group of her friends from Berry in Paris, among others Felix Pyat, Charles Duvernet, Alphonse Fleury, Sandeau and de Latouche. This was the band she frequented, young men apprenticed either to literature, the law, or medicine. With them she lived a student's life. In order to facilitate her various evolutions, she adopted masculine dress. In her _Histoite de ma vie_ she says: "Fashion helped me in my disguise, for men were wearing long, square frock-coats styled a _la proprietaire_. They came down to the heels, and fitted the figure so little that my brother, when putting his on, said to me one day at Nohant: `It is a nice cut, isn't it? The tailor takes his measures from a sentry-box, and the coat then fits a whole regiment.' I had `a sentry-box coat' made, of rough grey cloth, with trousers and waistcoat to match. With a grey hat and a huge cravat of woollen material, I looked exactly like a first-year student. . . ."

Dressed in this style, she explored the streets, museums, cathedrals, libraries, painters' studios, clubs and theatres. She heard Frederick Lemaitre one day, and the next day Malibran. One evening it was one of Dumas' pieces, and the next night _Moise_ at the Opera. She took her meals at a little restaurant, and she lived in an attic. She was not even sure of being able to pay her tailor, so she had all the joys possible. "Ah, how delightful, to live an artist's life! Our device is liberty!" she wrote.[6] She lived in a perpetual state of delight, and, in February, wrote to her son Maurice as follows: "Every one is at loggerheads, we are crushed to death in the streets, the churches are being destroyed, and we hear the drum being beaten all night."[7] In March she wrote to Charles Duvernet: "Do you know that fine things are happening here? It really is amusing to see. We are living just as gaily among bayonets and riots as if everything were at peace. All this amuses me."[8]

[6] _Correspondance_: To Boucoiran, March 4, 1831. [7] _Ibid_. To Maurice Dudevant, February 15, I831. [8] _Ibid_. To Charles Duvernet, March 6, 1831.

She was amused at everything and she enjoyed everything. With her keen sensitiveness, she revelled in the charm of Paris,

and she thoroughly appreciated its scenery.

"Paris," she wrote, "with its vaporous evenings, its pink clouds above the roofs, and the beautiful willows of such a delicate green around the bronze statue of our old Henry, and then, too, the dear little slate-coloured pigeons that make their nests in the old masks of the Pont Neuf . . ."[9]

[9] Unpublished letters of Dr. Emile Regnault.

She loved the Paris sky, so strange-looking, so rich in colouring, so variable.[10]

[10] _Ibid_.

She became unjust with regard to Berry. "As for that part of the world which I used to love so dearly and where I used to dream my dreams," she wrote, "I was there at the age of fifteen, when I was very foolish, and at the age of seventeen, when I was dreamy and disturbed in my mind. It has lost its charm for me now."[11]

[11] _Ibid_.

She loved it again later on, certainly, but just at this time she was over-excited with the joy of her newly-found liberty. It was that really which made her so joyful and which intoxicated her. "I do not want society, excitement, theatres, or dress; what I want is freedom," she wrote to her mother. In another letter she says: "I am absolutely independent. I go to La Chatre, to Rome. I start out at ten o'clock or at midnight. I please myself entirely in all this."[12]

[12] _Correspondance_: To her mother, May 31, 1831.

She was free, and she fancied she was happy. Her happiness at that epoch meant Jules Sandeau.

In a letter, written in the humoristic style in which she delighted,
she gives us portraits of some of her comrades of that time.
She tells us of Duvernet, of Alphonse Fleury, surnamed "the Gaulois,"
and of Sandeau.

"Oh, fair-haired Charles!" she writes, "young man of melancholy
thoughts, with a character as gloomy as a stormy day. . . .
And you, gigantic Fleury, with your immense hands and your alarming
beard. . . . And you, dear Sandeau, agreeable and light,
like the humming bird of fragrant savannahs!"[13]

[13] _Correspondance_: December 1, 1830.

The "dear Sandeau, agreeable and light, like the humming bird
of fragrant savannahs," was to be Baronne Dudevant's Latin
Quarter _liaison_. Her biographers usually pass over this
liaison quickly, as information about it was not forthcoming.
Important documents exist, though, in the form of fifty letters
written by George Sand to Dr. Emile Regnault, then a medical student
and the intimate friend and confidant of Jules Sandeau, who kept
nothing back from him. His son, Dr. Paul Regnault, has kindly
allowed me to see this correspondence and to reproduce some fragments
of it. It is extremely curious, by turn lyrical and playful,
full of effusions, ideas, plans of work, impressions of nature,
and confidences about her love affairs. Taken altogether it reflects,
as nearly as possible, the state of the young woman's mind at this time.

The first letter is dated April, 1831. George Sand had left
Paris for Nohant, and is anxiously wondering how her poor Jules
has passed this wretched day, and how he will go back to the room
from which she had torn herself with such difficulty that morning.
In her letter she gives utterance to the gratitude she owes to the young
man who has reconciled her once more to life. "My soul," she says,
"eager itself for affection, needed to inspire this in a heart capable
of understanding me thoroughly, with all my faults and qualities.
A fervent soul was necessary for loving me in the way that I
could love, and for consoling me after all the ingratitude which
had made my earlier life so desolate. And although I am now old,
I have found a heart as young as my own, a lifelong affection
which nothing can discourage and which grows stronger every day.
Jules has taught me to care once more for this existence, of which I
was so weary, and which I only endured for the sake of my children.
I was disgusted beforehand with the future, but it now seems more

beautiful to me, full as it appears to me of him, of his work, his success, and of his upright, modest conduct. . . . Oh, if you only knew how I love him! . . . ."[14]

[14] This quotation and those that follow are borrowed from the unpublished correspondence with Emile Regnault.

"When I first knew him I was disillusioned about everything, and I no longer believed in those things which make us happy. He has warmed my frozen heart and restored the life that was dying within me." She then recalls their first meeting. It was in the country, at Coudray, near Nohant. She fell in love with her dear Sandeau, thanks to his youthfulness, his timidity and his awkwardness. He was just twenty, in 1831. On approaching the bench where she was awaiting him, "he concealed himself in a neighbouring avenue-- and I could see his hat and stick on the bench," she writes. "Everything, even to the little red ribbon threaded in the lining of his grey hat, thrilled me with joy. . . ."

It is difficult to say why, but everything connected with this young Jules seems absurd. Later on we get the following statement: "Until the day when I told him that I loved him, I had never acknowledged as much to myself. I felt that I did, but I would not own it even to my own heart. Jules therefore learnt it at the same time as I did myself."

People at La Chatre took the young man for her lover. The idea of finding him again in Paris was probably one of her reasons for wishing to establish herself there. Then came her life, as she describes it herself, "in the little room looking on to the quay. I can see Jules now in a shabby, dirty-looking artist's frock-coat, with his cravat underneath him and his shirt open at the throat, stretched out over three chairs, stamping with his feet or breaking the tongs in the heat of the discussion. The Gaulois used to sit in a corner weaving great plots, and you would be seated on a table.

All this must certainly have been charming. The room was too small, though, and George Sand commissioned Emile Regnault to find her a flat, the essential condition of which should be some way of egress for Jules at any hour.

A little flat was discovered on the Quay St. Michel. There were three rooms, one of which could be reserved. "This shall be the dark room," wrote George Sand, "the mysterious room,

the ghost's retreat, the monster's den, the cage of the performing animal, the hiding-place for the treasure, the vampire's cave, or whatever you like to call it. . . ."

In plainer language, it was Jules' room; and then follows some touching eloquence about the dear boy she worshipped who loved her so dearly.

This is the beginning of things, but later on the tone of the correspondence changes. The letters become less frequent, and are also not so gay. George Sand speaks much less of Jules in them and much more of little Solange, whom she intended to bring back to Paris with her. She is beginning to weary of Jules and to esteem him at his true value. He is lazy, and has fits of depression and all the capriciousness of a spoilt child. She has had enough of him, and then, too, it is very evident from the letters that there has been some division among the lively friends who had sworn to be comrades for life. There are explanations and justifications. George Sand discovers that there are certain inconveniences connected with intimacies in which there is such disproportion of age and of social position. Finally there are the following desperate letters, written in fits of irritation: "My dear friend, go to Jules and look after him. He is broken-hearted, and you can do nothing for him in that respect. It is no use trying. I do not ask you to come to me yet, as I do not need anything. I would rather be alone to-day. Then, too, there is nothing left for me in life. It will be horrible for him for a long time, but he is so young. The day will come, perhaps, when he will not be sorry to have lived. . . .

Do not attempt to put matters right, as this time there is no remedy. We do not blame each other at all, and for some time we have been struggling against this horrible necessity. We have had trouble enough. There seemed to be nothing left but to put an end to our lives, and if it had not been for my children, we should have done this.

The question is, Was George Sand blameless in the matter? It appears that she had discovered that her dear Jules was faithless to her, and that, during her absence, he had deceived her. She would not forgive him, but sent him off to Italy, and refused to see him again. The last of these letters is dated June 15, 1833.

"I shall make a parcel of a few of Jules' things that he left in the wardrobe," she says, "and I will send them to you. I do not want anything to do with him when he comes back, and, according to the last words of the letter you showed me,

his return may be soon. For a long time I have been very much hurt by the discoveries I made with regard to his conduct, and I could not feel anything else for him now but affectionate compassion. His pride, I hope, would refuse this. Make him clearly understand, if necessary, that there can never be anything more between us. If this hard task should not be necessary, that is, if Jules should himself understand that it could not be otherwise, spare him the sorrow of hearing that he has lost everything, even my respect. He must undoubtedly have lost his own self-esteem, so that he is punished enough."

Thus ended this great passion. This was the first of George Sand's errors, and it certainly was an immense one. She had imagined that happiness reigns in students' rooms. She had counted on the passing fancy of a young man of good family, who had come to Paris to sow his wild oats, for giving her fresh zest and for carving out for herself a fresh future. It was a most commonplace adventure, utterly destitute of psychology, and by its very bitterness it contrasted strangely with her elevated sentimental romance with Aurelien de Seze. That was the quintessence of refinement. All that is interesting about this second adventure is the proof that it gives us of George Sand's wonderful illusions, of the intensity of the mirage of which she was a dupe, and of which we have so many instances in her life.

Baronne Dudevant had tried conjugal life, and she had now tried free love. She had been unsuccessful in both instances. It is to these adventures though, to these trials, errors and disappointments that we owe the writer we are about to study. George Sand was now born to literature.

III

A FEMINIST OF 1832

THE FIRST NOVELS AND THE QUESTION OF MARRIAGE

When Baronne Dudevant arrived in Paris, in 1831, her intention was to earn her living with her pen. She never really counted seriously on the income she might make by her talent for painting flowers on snuff-boxes and ornamenting cigar-cases with water-colours. She arrived from her province with the intention of becoming a writer. Like most authors who commence, she first tried journalism.

On the 4th of March, she wrote as follows to the faithful Boucoiran:
"In the meantime I must live, and for the sake of that, I have taken
up the worst of trades: I am writing articles for the _Figaro_.
If only you knew what that means! They are paid for, though, at the rate
of seven francs a column."

She evidently found it worth while to write for the _Figaro_,
which at that time was quite a small newspaper, managed by Henri
de Latouche, who also came from Berry. He was a very second-rate
writer himself, and a poet with very little talent but, at any rate,
he appreciated and discovered talent in others. He published Andre
Chenier's first writings, and he introduced George Sand to the public.
His new apprentice was placed at one of the little tables at which
the various parts of the paper were manufactured. Unfortunately she
had not the vocation for this work. The first principle with regard
to newspaper articles is to make them short. When Aurore had come
to the end of her paper, she had not yet commenced her subject.
It was no use attempting to continue, so she gave up "the worst
of trades," lucrative though it might be.

She could not help knowing, though, that she had the gift of writing.
She had inherited it from her ancestors, and this is the blest part
of her atavism. No matter how far back we go, and in every branch
of her genealogical tree, there is artistic heredity to be found.
Maurice de Saxe wrote his _Reveries_. This was a fine book for
a soldier to write, and for that alone he would deserve praise,
even if he had not beaten the Enlish so gloriously. Mademoiselle
Verrieres was an actress and Dupin de Francueil a dilettante.
Aurore's grandmother, Marie-Aurore, was very musical, she sang
operatic songs, and collected extracts from the philosophers.
Maurice Dupin was devoted to music and to the theatre.
Even Sophie-Victoire had an innate appreciation of beauty.
She not only wept, like Margot, at melodrama, but she noticed the pink
of a cloud, the mauve of a flower, and, what was more important,
she called her little daughter's attention to such things.
This illiterate mother had therefore had some influence on Aurore
and on her taste for literature.

It is not enough to say that George Sand was a born writer. She was
a born novelist, and she belonged to a certain category of novelists.
She had been created by a special decree of Providence to write her
own romances, and not others. It is this which makes the history
of the far-back origins of her literary vocation so interesting.
It is extremely curious to see, from her earliest childhood,
the promises of those faculties which were to become the very essence

of her talent. When she was only three years old, her mother used to put her between four chairs in order to keep her still. By way of enlivening her captivity, she tells us what she did.

"I used to make up endless stories, which my mother styled my novels. . . . I told these stories aloud, and my mother declared that they were most tiresome on account of their length and of the development I gave to my digressions. . . . There were very few bad people in them, and never any serious troubles. Everything was always arranged satisfactorily, thanks to my lively, optimistic ideas. . . ."

She had already commenced, then, at the age of three, and these early stories are the precursors of the novels of her maturity. They are optimistic, drawn out, and with long digressions. Something similar is told about Walter Scott. There is evidently a primordial instinct in those who are born story-tellers, and this urges them on to invent fine stories for amusing themselves.

A little later on we have another phenomenon, almost as curious, with regard to Aurore. We are apt to wonder how certain descriptive writers proceed in order to give us pictures, the various features of which stand out in such intense relief that they appear absolutely real to us. George Sand tells us that when Berquin's stories were being read to her at Nohant, she used to sit in front of the fire, from which she was protected by an old green silk screen. She used gradually to lose the sense of the phrases, but pictures began to form themselves in front of her on the green screen.

"I saw woods, meadows, rivers, towns of strange and gigantic architecture. . . . One day these apparitions were so real that I was startled by them, and I asked my mother whether she could see them."

With hallucinations like these a writer can be picturesque. He has in front of him, although it may be between four walls, a complete landscape. He has only to follow the lines of it and to reproduce the colours, so that in painting imaginary landscapes he can paint them from nature, from this model that appears to him, as though by enchantment. He can, if he likes, count the leaves of the trees and listen to the sound of the growing grass.

Still later on, vague religious or philosophical conceptions began to mingle with the fiction that Aurore always had in her mind.

To her poetical life, was added a moral life. She always had a romance going on, to which she was constantly adding another chapter, like so many links in a never-ending chain. She now gave a hero to her romance, a hero whose name was Corambe. He was her ideal, a man whom she had made her god. Whilst blood was flowing freely on the altars of barbarous gods, on Corambe's altar life and liberty were given to a whole crowd of captive creatures, to a swallow, to a robin-redbreast, and even to a sparrow. We see already in all this her tendency to put moral intentions into her romantic stories, to arrange her adventures in such a way that they should serve as examples for making mankind better. These were the novels, with a purpose, of her twelfth year.

Let us now study a striking contrast, by way of observing the first signs of vocation in two totally different novelists. In the beginning of _Facino Cane_, Balzac tells us an incident of the time when, as an aspiring writer, he lived in his attic in the Rue Lesdiguieres. One evening, on coming out of the theatre, he amused himself with following a working-man and his wife from the Boulevard du Pontaux-Choux to the Boulevard Beaumarchais. He listened to them as they talked of the piece they had just seen. They then discussed their business matters, and afterwards house and family affairs. "While listening to this couple," says Balzac, "I entered into their life. I could feel their clothes on my back and, I was walking in their shabby boots."

This is the novelist of the objective school, the one who comes out of himself, who ceases to be himself and becomes another person.

Instead of this exterior world, to which Balzac adapts himself, Aurore talks to us of an inner world, emanating from her own fancy, the reflection of her own imagination, the echo of her own heart, which is really herself. This explains the difference between Balzac's impersonal novel and George Sand's personal novel. It is just the difference between realistic art, which gives way to the object, and idealistic art, which transforms this according to its own will and pleasure.

Up to this time George Sand's ideas had not been put on to paper. Both _Corambe_ and the stories composed between four chairs were merely fancies of a child's mind. Aurore soon began to write, though. She had composed two novels while in the convent, one of which was religious and the other a pastoral story. She was wise enough to tear them both up. On leaving the convent she wrote another novel

for Rene' de Villeneuve, and this shared the same fate. In 1827, she wrote her _Voyage en Auvergne_, and in 1829, another novel. In her _Histoire de ma vie_ she says of this: "After reading it, I was convinced that it was of no value, but at the same time I was sure I could write a better one. . . . I saw that I could write quickly and easily, and without feeling any fatigue. The ideas that were lying dormant in my mind were quickened and became connected, by my deductions, as I wrote. With my meditative life, I had observed a great deal, and had understood the various characters which Fate had put in my way, so that I really knew enough of human nature to be able to depict it." She now had that facility, that abundance of matter and that nonchalance which were such characteristic features of her writing.

When George Sand began to publish, she had already written a great deal. Her literary formation was complete. We notice this same thing whenever we study the early work of a writer. Genius is revealed to us, perhaps, with a sudden flash, but it has been making its way for a long time underground, so that what we take for a spontaneous burst of genius is nothing but the final effort of a sap which has been slowly accumulating and which from henceforth is all-powerful.

George Sand had to go through the inevitable period of feeling her way. We are glad to think that the first book she published was not written by herself alone, so that the responsibility of that execrable novel does not lie solely with her.

On the 9th of March, 1831, George Sand wrote to Boucoiran as follows: "Monstrosities are in vogue, so we must invent monstrosities. I am bringing forth a very pleasant one just at present. . . ." This was the novel written in collaboration with Sandeau which appeared under the signature of Jules Sand towards the end of 1831. It was entitled, _Rose et Blanche, ou la Comedienne et la Religieuse_.

It begins by a scene in a coach, rather like certain novels by Balzac, but accompanied by insignificant details in the worst taste imaginable. Two girls are travelling in the same coach. Rose is a young comedian, and Sister Blanche is about to become a nun. They separate at Tarbes, and the scene of the story is laid in the region of the Pyrenees, in Tarbes Auch, Nerac, the Landes, and finishes with the return to Paris. Rose, after an entertainment which is a veritable orgy, is handed over by her mother to a licentious young man. He is ashamed of himself, and, instead of leading Rose astray, he takes her to the Convent of the Augustines, where she finds Sister

Blanche once more. Sister Blanche has not yet pronounced her vows, and the proof of this is that she marries Horace. But what a wedding! As a matter of fact, Sister Blanche was formerly named Denise. She was the daughter of a seafaring man of Bordeaux, and was both pretty and foolish. She had been dishonoured by the young libertine whom she is now to marry. The memory of the past comes back to Blanche, and makes her live over again her life as Denise. In the mean time Rose had become a great singer. She now arrives, just in time to be present at her friend's deathbed. She enters the convent herself, and takes the place left vacant by Sister Blanche. The whole of this is absurd and frequently very disagreeable.

It is quite easy to distinguish the parts due to the two collaborators, and to see that George Sand wrote nearly all the book. There are the landscapes, Tarbes Auch, Nerac, the Landes, and a number of recollections of the famous journey to the Pyrenees and of her stay at Guillery with the Dudevant family. The Convent of the Augustines in Paris, with its English nuns and its boarders belonging to the best families, is the one in which Aurore spent three years. The cloister can be recognized, the garden planted with chestnut trees, and the cell from which there was a view over the city. All her dreams seemed so near Heaven there, for the rich, cloudy sky was so near--"that most beautiful and ever-changing sky, perhaps the most beautiful in the world," of which we read in _Rose et Blanche_. But together with this romance of religious life is a libertine novel with stories of orgies, of a certain private house, and of very risky and unpleasant episodes. This is the collaborator's share in the work. The risky parts are Sandeau's.

Such, then, is this hybrid composition. It was, in reality, the monstrosity announced by George Sand.

It had a certain success, but the person who was most severe in her judgment of it was Sophie-Victoire, George Sand's mother, who had very prudish tastes in literature. This woman is perfectly delightful, and every time we come across her it is a fresh joy. Her daughter was obliged to make some excuse for herself, and this she did by stating that the work was not entirely her own.

"I do not approve of a great deal of the nonsense," she writes, "and I only let certain things pass to please my publisher, who wanted something rather lively. . . . I do not like the risky parts myself. . . ." Later on in the same letter, she adds: "There is nothing of the kind in the book I am writing now, and I am using nothing of my collaborator's in this, except his

name."[15]

[15] _Correspondance_: To her mother, February 22, 1832.

This was true. Jules Sand had had his day, and the book of which she now speaks was _Indiana_. She signed this "George Sand."

The unpublished correspondence with Emile Regnault, some fragments of which we have just read, contains a most interesting letter concerning the composition of _Indiana_. It is dated February 28, 1832. George Sand first insists on the severity of the subject and on its resemblance to life. "It is as simple, as natural and as positive as you could wish," she says. "It is neither romantic, mosaic, nor frantic. It is just ordinary life of the most _bourgeois_ kind, but unfortunately this is much more difficult than exaggerated literature. . . . There is not the least word put in for nothing, not a single description, not a vestige of poetry. There are no unexpected, extraordinary, or amazing situations, but merely four volumes on four characters. With only just these characters, that is, with hidden feelings, everyday thoughts, with friendship, love, selfishness, devotion, self-respect, persistency, melancholy, sorrow, ingratitude, disappointment, hope, and all the mixed-up medley of the human mind, is it possible to write four volumes which will not bore people? I am afraid of boring people, of boring them as life itself does. And yet what is more interesting than the history of the heart, when it is a true history? The main thing is to write true history, and it is just that which is so difficult. . . ."

This declaration is rather surprising to any one who reads it to-day. We might ask whether what was natural in 1832 would be natural in 1910? That is not the question which concerns us, though. The important fact to note is that George Sand was no longer attempting to manufacture monstrosities. She was endeavouring to be true, and she wanted above everything else to present a character of woman who would be the typical modern woman.

"Noemi (this name was afterwards left to Sandeau, who had used it in _Marianna_. George Sand changed it to that of _Indiana_) is a typical woman, strong and weak, tired even by the weight of the air, but capable of holding up the sky; timid in everyday life, but daring in days of battle; shrewd and clever in seizing the loose threads of ordinary life, but silly and stupid in distinguishing her

own interests when it is a question of her happiness; caring little
for the world at large, but allowing herself to be duped by one man;
not troubling much about her own dignity, but watching over that
of the object of her choice; despising the vanities of the times
as far as she is concerned, but allowing herself to be fascinated
by the man who is full of these vanities. This, I believe,"
she says, "is the usual woman, an extraordinary mixture of weakness
and energy, of grandeur and of littleness, a being ever composed
of two opposite natures, at times sublime and at times despicable,
clever in deceiving and easily deceived herself."

This novel, intended to present to us the modern woman, ought to be
styled a "feminist novel." It was also, as regards other points
of view. _Indiana_ appeared in May, 1832, _Valentine_ in 1833,
and _Jacques_ in 1834. In these three books I should like to show
our present feminism, already armed, and introduced to us according
to George Sand's early ideas.

Indiana is the story of a woman who had made an unfortunate marriage.
At the age of nineteen she had married Colonel Delmare.
Colonels were very much in vogue in those days, and the fact that he
had attained that rank proves that he was much older than she was.
Colonel Delmare was an honest, straightforward man in the Pharisaical
sense of the word. This simply means that he had never robbed
or killed any one. He had no delicacy and no charm, and,
fond as he was of his own authority, he was a domestic tyrant.
Indiana was very unhappy between this execrable husband and a cousin
of hers, Ralph, a man who is twice over English, in the first place
because his name is Brown, and then because he is phlegmatic.
Ralph is delightful and most excellent, and it is on his account
that she is insensible to the charms of Raymon de Ramieres
an elegant and distinguished young man who is a veritable lady-killer.

Space forbids us to go into all the episodes of this story, but the
crisis is that Colonel Delmare is ruined, and his business affairs
call him to the Isle of Bourbon. He intends to take Indiana with him,
but she refuses to accompany him. She knows quite well that Raymon
will do all he can to prevent her going. She hurries away to him,
offers herself to him, and volunteers to remain with him always.
It is unnecessary to give Raymon's reply to this charming proposal.
Poor Indiana receives a very wet blanket on a cold winter's night.

She therefore starts for the Isle of Bourbon, and, some time

after her arrival there, she gets a letter from Raymon which makes
her think that he is very unhappy. She accordingly hastens
back to him, but is received by the young wife whom Raymon has
just married. It is a very brilliant marriage, and Raymon could
not have hoped for anything more satisfactory. Poor Indiana!
The Seine, however, is quite near, and she throws herself into it.
This was quite safe, as Ralph was there to fish her out again.
Ralph was always at hand to fish his cousin out of everything.
He is her appointed rescuer, her Newfoundland dog. In the country
or in the town, on _terra firma_ or on the boat which takes
Indiana to the Isle of Bourbon, we always see Ralph turn up,
phlegmatic as usual. Unnecessary to say that Ralph is in love
with Indiana. His apparent calmness is put on purposely.
It is the snowy covering under which a volcano is burning.
His awkward and unprepossessing appearance conceals an exquisite soul.
Ralph brings Indiana good news. Colonel Delmare is dead,
so that she is free. What will she do now with her liberty?
After due deliberation, Ralph and Indiana decide to commit suicide,
but they have to agree about the kind of death they will die.
Ralph considers that this is a matter of certain importance.
He does not care to kill himself in Paris; there are too many
people about, so that there is no tranquillity. The Isle of Bourbon
seems to him a pleasant place for a suicide. There was a magnificent
horizon there; then, too, there was a precipice and a waterfall.
. . .

Ralph's happy ideas are somewhat sinister, but the couple
set out nevertheless for the Isle of Bourbon in search of a
propitious waterfall. A sea-voyage, under such circumstances,
would be an excellent preparation. When once there, they carry
out their plans, and Ralph gives his beloved wise advice at the
last moment. She must not jump from the side, as that would be bad.
"Throw yourself into the white line that the waterfall makes,"
he says. "You will then reach the lake with that, and the torrent
will plunge you in." This sounds enticing.

Such a suicide was considered infinitely poetical at that epoch,
and every one pitied Indiana in her troubles. It is curious to read
such books calmly a long time afterwards, books which reflect so
exactly the sentiments of a certain epoch. It is curious to note
how the point of view has changed, and how people and things appear
to us exactly the reverse of what they appeared to the author
and to contemporaries.

As a matter of fact, the only interesting person in all this is

Colonel Delmare, or, at any rate, he is the only one of whom Indiana could not complain. He loved her, and he loved no one else but her. The like cannot be said for Indiana. Few husbands would imitate his patience and forbearance, and he certainly allowed his wife the most extraordinary freedom. At one time we find, a young man in Indiana's bedroom, and at another time Indiana in a young man's bedroom. Colonel Delmare receives Raymon at his house in a friendly way, and he tolerates the presence of the sempiternal Ralph in his home. What more can be asked of a husband than to allow his wife to have a man friend and a cousin? Indiana declares that Colonel Delmare has struck her, and that the mark is left on her face. She exaggerated, though, as we know quite well what took place. In reality all this was at Plessis-Picard. Delmare-Dudevant struck Indiana-Aurore. This was certainly too much, but there was no blood shed. As to the other personages, Raymon is a wretched little rascal, who was first the lover of Indiana's maid. He next made love to poor Noun's mistress, and then deserted her to make a rich marriage. Ralph plunges Indiana down a precipice. That was certainly bad treatment for the woman he loved. As regards Indiana, George Sand honestly believed that she had given her all the charms imaginable. As a matter of fact, she did charm the readers of that time. It is from this model that we have one of the favourite types of woman in literature for the next twenty years--the misunderstood woman.

The misunderstood woman is pale, fragile, and subject to fainting. Up to page 99 of the book, Indiana has fainted three times. I did not continue counting. This fainting was not the result of bad health. It was the fashion to faint. The days of nerves and languid airs had come back. The women whose grandmothers had walked so firmly to the scaffold, and whose mothers had listened bravely to the firing of the cannon under the Empire, were now depressed and tearful, like so many plaintive elegies. It was just a matter of fashion. The mis-

understood woman was supposed to be unhappy with her husband, but she would not have been any happier with another man. Indiana does not find fault with Colonel Delmare for being the husband that he is, but simply for being the husband!

"She did not love her husband, for the mere reason, perhaps, that she was told it was her duty to love him and that it had become her second nature, a principle and a law of her conscience to resist inwardly all moral constraint." She affected a most irritating gentleness, an exasperating submissiveness. When she put on her superior, resigned airs, it was enough to unhinge an angel. Besides, what was

there to complain about, and why should she not accommodate herself to conditions of existence with which so many others fall in? She must not be compared to others, though. She is eminently a distinguished woman, and she asks without shrinking: "Do you know what it means to love a woman such as I am?"

In her long silences and her persistent melancholy, she is no doubt thinking of the love appropriate to a woman such as she is. She was a princess in exile and times were then hard for princesses. That is why the one in question took refuge in her homesick sorrow. All this is what people will not understand. Instead of rising to such sublimities, or of being lost in fogs, they judge from mere facts. And on coming across a young wife who is inclined to prefer a handsome, dark young man to a husband who is turning grey, they are apt to conclude: "Well, this is not the first time we have met with a similar case. It is hardly worth while making such a fuss about a young plague of a woman who wants to go to the bad." It would be very unjust, though, not to recognize that _Indiana_ is a most remarkable novel. There is a certain relief in the various characters, Colonel Delmare, Raymon, Ralph and Inaiana. We ought to question the husbands who married wives belonging to the race of misunderstood women brought into vogue by _Indiana_.

Valentine, too, is the story of a woman unhappily married.

This time the chief _role_ is given to the lover, and not to the woman. Instead of the misunderstood woman, though, we have the typical frenzied lover, created by the romantic school. Louise-Valentine de Raimbault is about to marry Norbert-Evariste de Lansac, when suddenly this young person, who is accustomed to going about in the country round and to the village fetes, falls in love with the nephew of one of her farmers. The young man's name is Benedict, and he is a peasant who has had some education. His mentality is probably that of a present-day elementary school-teacher. Valentine cannot resist him, although we are told that Benedict is not very handsome. It is his soul which Valentine loves in him. Benedict knows very well that he cannot marry Valentine, but he can cause her a great deal of annoyance by way of proving his love. On the night of the wedding he is in the nuptial chamber, from which the author has taken care to banish the husband for the time being. Benedict watches over the slumber of the woman he loves, and leaves her an epistle in which he declares that, after hesitating whether he should kill her husband, her, or himself, or whether he should kill all three, or only select two of the three, and after adopting in turn each of

these combinations, he has decided to only kill himself. He is found
in a ditch in a terrible plight, but we are by no means rid of him.
Benedict is not dead, and he has a great deal of harm to do yet.
We shall meet with him again several times, always hidden behind curtains,
listening to all that is said and watching all that takes place.
At the right moment he comes out with his pistol in his hand.
The husband is away during all this time. No one troubles
about him, though. He is a bad husband, or rather he is--a husband,
and Benedict has nothing to fear as far as he is concerned.
But one day a peasant, who does not like the looks of Benedict,
attacks him with his pitchfork and puts an end to this valuable life.

The question arises, by what right Benedict disturbs Valentine's
tranquillity. The answer is by the right of his passion for her.
He has an income of about twenty pounds a year. It would be impossible
for him to marry on that. What has he to offer to the woman whose peace
of mind he disturbs and whose position he ruins? He offers himself.
Surely that should be enough. Then, too, it is impossible to reason
with individuals of his temperament. We have only to look at him,
with his sickly pallor and the restless light in his eyes. We have
only to listen to the sound of his voice and his excited speeches.
At times he goes in for wild declamation, and immediately afterwards
for cold irony and sarcasm. He is always talking of death.
When he attempts to shoot himself he always misses, but when Adele
d'Hervey resists him, at the time he has taken the name of Antony,
he kills her. He is therefore a dangerous madman.

We now have two fresh personages for novels, the misunderstood woman
and the frenzied lover. It is a pity they do not marry each other,
and so rid us of them.

We must not lose sight, though, of the fact that, contestable as
Valentine certainly is as a novel of passion, there is a pastoral
novel of the highest order contained in this book. The setting
of the story is delightful. George Sand has placed the scene
in that Black Valley which she knew so well and loved so dearly.
It is the first of her novels in which she celebrates her birthplace.
There are walks along the country pathways, long meditations at night,
village weddings and fetes. All the poetry and all the picturesqueness
of the country transform and embellish the story.

In _Jacques_ we have the history of a man unhappily married, and this,
through the reciprocity which is inevitable under the circumstances,
is another story of a woman unhappily married.

At the age of thirty-five, after a stormy existence, in which years count double, Jacques marries Fernande, a woman much younger than he is. After a few unhappy months he sees the first clouds appearing in his horizon. He sends for his sister Sylvia to come and live with himself and his wife. Sylvia, like Jacques, is an exceptional individual. She is proud, haughty and reserved. It can readily be imagined that, the presence of this pythoness does not tend to restore the confidence which has become somewhat shaken between the husband and wife. A young man named Octave, who was at first attracted by Sylvia, soon begins to prefer Fernande, who is not a romantic, ironical and sarcastic woman like her sister-in-law. He fancies that he should be very happy with the gentle Fernande. Jacques discovers that Octave and his wife are in love with each other. There are various alternatives for him. He can dismiss his rival, kill him, or merely pardon him. Each alternative is a very ordinary way out of the difficulty, and Jacques cannot resign himself to anything ordinary. He therefore asks his wife's lover whether he really cares for his wife, whether he is in earnest, and also whether this attachment will be durable. Quite satisfied with the result of this examination, he leaves Fernande to Octave. He then disappears and kills himself, but he takes all necessary precautions to avert the suspicion of suicide, in order not to sadden Octave and Fernande in their happiness. He had not been able to keep his wife's love, but he does not wish to be the jailer of the woman who no longer loves him. Fernande has a right to happiness and, as he has not been able to ensure that happiness, he must give place to another man. It is a case of suicide as a duty. There are instances when a husband should know that it is his duty to disappear. . . . Jacques is "a stoic." George Sand has a great admiration for such characters. She gives us her first sketch of one in Ralph, but Jacques is presented to us as a sublime being.

Personally, I look upon him as a mere greenhorn, or, as would be said in Wagner's dramas, a "pure simpleton."

He did everything to ruin his home life. His young wife had confidence in him; she was gay and naive. He went about, folding his arms in a tragic way. He was absent-minded and gloomy, and she began to be awed by him. One day, when, in her sorrow for having displeased him, she flung herself on her knees, sobbing, instead of lifting her up tenderly, he broke away from her caresses, telling her furiously to get up and never to behave in such a way again in his presence. After this he puts his sister, the "bronze woman,"

between them, and he invites Octave to live with them. When he has thus destroyed his wife's affection for him, in spite of the fact that at one time she wished for nothing better than to love him, he goes away and gives up the whole thing. All that is too easy. One of Meilhac's heroines says to a man, who declares that he is going to drown himself for her sake, "Oh yes, that is all very fine. You would be tranquil at the bottom of the water! But what about me? . . ."

In this instance Jacques is tranquil at the bottom of his precipice, but Fernande is alive and not at all tranquil. Jacques never rises to the very simple conception of his duty, which was that, having made a woman the companion of his life's journey, he had no right to desert her on the way.

Rather than blame himself, though, Jacques prefers incriminating the institution of marriage. The criticism of this institution is very plain in the novel we are considering. In her former novels George, Sand treated all this in a more or less vague way. She now states her theory clearly. Jacques considers that marriage is a barbarous institution. "I have not changed my opinion," he says, "and I am not reconciled to society. I consider marriage one of the most barbarous institutions ever invented. I have no doubt that it will be abolished when the human species makes progress in the direction of justice and reason. Some bond that will be more human and just as sacred will take the place of marriage and provide for the children born of a woman and a man, without fettering their liberty for ever. Men are too coarse at present, and women too cowardly, to ask for a nobler law than the iron one which governs them. For individuals without conscience and without virtue, heavy chains are necessary."

We also hear Sylvia's ideas and the plans she proposes to her brother for the time when marriage is abolished.

"We will adopt an orphan, imagine that it is our child, and bring it up in our principles. We could educate a child of each sex, and then marry them when the time came, before God, with no other temple than the desert and no priest but love. We should have formed their souls to respect truth and justice, so that, thanks to us, there would be one pure and happy couple on the face of the earth."

The suppression of marriage, then, was the idea, and, in a future more or less distant, free love!

It is interesting to discover by what series of deductions George Sand proceeds and on what principles she bases everything. When once her principles are admitted, the conclusion she draws from them is quite logical.

What is her essential objection to marriage? The fact that marriage fetters the liberty of two beings. "Society dictates to you the formula of an oath. You must swear that you will be faithful and obedient to me, that you will never love any one but me, and that you will obey me in everything. One of those oaths is absurd and the other vile. You cannot be answerable for your heart, even if I were the greatest and most perfect of men." Now comes the question of love for another man. Until then it was considered that such love was a weakness, and that it might become a fault. But, after all, is not passion a fatal and irresistible thing?

"No human creature can command love, and no one is to be blamed for feeling it or for ceasing to feel it. What lowers a woman is untruth." A little farther on we are told: "They are not guilty, for they love each other. There is no crime where there is sincere love." According to this theory, the union of man and woman depends on love alone. When love disappears, the union cannot continue. Marriage is a human institution, but passion is of Divine essence. In case of any dissension, it is always the institution of marriage which is to be blamed.

The sole end in view of marriage is charm, either that of sentiment or that of the senses, and its sole object is the exchange of two fancies. As the oath of fidelity is either a stupidity or a degradation, can anything more opposed to common sense, and a more absolute ignorance of all that is noble and great, be imagined than the effort mankind is making, against all the chances of destruction by which he is surrounded, to affirm, in face of all that changes, his will and intention to continue? We all remember the heart-rending lamentation of Diderot: "The first promises made between two creatures of flesh," he says, "were made at the foot of a rock crumbling to dust. They called on Heaven to be a witness of their constancy, but the skies in the Heaven above them were never the same for an instant. Everything was changing, both within them and around them, and they believed that their heart would know no change. Oh, what children, what children always!" Ah, not children, but what men rather! We know these fluctuations in our affections. And it is because we are afraid of our own fragility that we call to our aid the protection of laws, to which submission is no slavery, as it is voluntary submission.

Nature does not know these laws, but it is by them that we
distinguish ourselves from Nature and that we rise above it.
The rock on which we tread crumbles to dust, the sky above our heads
is never the same an instant, but, in the depth of our hearts,
there is the moral law--and that never changes!

In order to reply to these paradoxes, where shall we go in search
of our arguments? We can go to George Sand herself. A few
years later, during her intercourse with Lamennals, she wrote her
famous _Lettres a Marcie_ for _Le Monde_. She addresses herself
to an imaginary correspondent, to a woman supposed to be suffering
from that agitation and impatience which she had experienced herself.

"You are sad," says George Sand to her, "you are suffering,
and you are bored to death." We will now take note of some
of the advice she gives to this woman. She no longer believes
that it belongs to human dignity to have the liberty of changing.
"The one thing to which man aspires, the thing which makes him great,
is permanence in the moral state. All which tends to give stability
to our desires, to strengthen the human will and affections,
tends to bring about the _reign of God_ on earth, which means love
and the practice of truth." She then speaks of vain dreams.
"Should we even have time to think about the impossible if we did
all that is necessary? Should we despair ourselves if we were to
restore hope in those people who have nothing left them but hope?"
With regard to feminist claims, she says: "Women are crying out
that they are slaves: let them wait until men are free! . . .
In the mean time we must not compromise the future by our impatience
with the present. . . . It is to be feared that vain attempts
of this kind and unjustifiable claims may do harm to what is styled
at present the cause of women. There is no doubt that women
have certain rights and that they are suffering injustice.
They ought to lay claim to a better future, to a wise independence,
to a greater participation in knowledge, and to more respect,
interest and esteem from men. This future, though, is in their
own hands."

This is wisdom itself. It would be impossible to put it more clearly, and
to warn women in a better way, that the greatest danger for their cause
would be the triumph of what is called by an ironical term--feminism.

These retractions, though, have very little effect. There is a
certain piquancy in showing up an author who is in contradiction
with himself, in showing how he refutes his own paradoxes.
But these are striking paradoxes which are not readily forgotten.

What I want to show is that in these first novels by George Sand we have about the whole of the feminist programme of to-day. Everything is there, the right to happiness, the necessity of reforming marriage, the institution, in a more or less near future, of free unions. Our feminists of to-day, French, English, or Norwegian authoresses, and theoricians like Ellen Key, with her book on _Love and Marriage_, all these rebels have invented nothing. They have done nothing but take up once more the theories of the great feminist of 1832, and expose them with less lyricism but with more cynicism.

George Sand protested against the accusation of having aimed at attacking institutions in her feminist novels. She was wrong in protesting, as it is just this which gives her novels their value and significance. It is this which dates them and which explains the enormous force of expansion that they have had. They came just after the July Revolution, and we must certainly consider them as one of the results of that. A throne had just been overturned, and, by way of pastime, churches were being pillaged and an archbishop's palace had been sack-

aged. Literature was also attempting an insurrection, by way of diversion. For a long time it had been feeding the revolutionary ferment which it had received from romanticism. Romanticism had demanded the freedom of the individual, and the writers at the head of this movement were Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo and Dumas. They claimed this freedom for Rene, for Hermann and for Antony, who were men. An example had been given, and women meant to take advantage of it. Women now began their revolution.

Under all these influences, and in the particular atmosphere now created, the matrimonial mishap of Baronne Dudevant appeared to her of considerable importance. She exaggerated and magnified it until it became of social value. Taking this private mishap as her basis, she puts into each of her heroines something of herself. This explains the passionate tone of the whole story. And this passion could not fail to be contagious for the women who read her stories, and who recognized in the novelist's cause their own cause and the cause of all women.

This, then, is the novelty in George Sand's way of presenting feminist grievances. She had not invented these grievances. They were already contained in Madame de Stael's books, and I have not forgotten her. Delphine and Corinne, though, were women of genius, and presented to us as such. In order to be pitied by Madame de Stael, it was absolutely necessary to be a woman of genius. For a woman to be defended by George Sand, it was only necessary

that she should not love her husband, and this was a much more general thing.

George Sand had brought feminism within the reach of all women. This is the characteristic of these novels, the eloquence of which cannot be denied. They are novels for the vulgarization of the feminist theory.

THE ROMANTIC ESCAPADE

THE VENICE ADVENTURE

George Sand did not have to wait long for success. She won fame with her first book. With her second one she became rich, or what she considered rich. She tells us that she sold it for a hundred and sixty pounds! That seemed to her the wealth of the world, and she did not hesitate to leave her attic on the Quay St. Michel for a more comfortable flat on Quay Malaquais, which de Latouche gave up to her.

There was, at that time, a personage in Paris who had begun to exercise a sort of royal tyranny over authors. Francois Buloz had taken advantage of the intellectual effervescence of 1831 to found the _Revue des Deux Mondes_. He was venturesome, energetic, original, very shrewd, though apparently rough, obliging, in spite of his surly manners. He is still considered the typical and traditional review manager. He certainly possessed the first quality necessary for this function. He discovered talented writers, and he also knew how to draw from them and squeeze out of them all the literature they contained. Tremendously headstrong, he has been known to keep a contributor under lock and key until his article was finished. Authors abused him, quarrelled with him, and then came back to him again. A review which had, for its first numbers, George Sand, Vigny, Musset, Merimee, among many others, as contributors, may be said to have started well. George Sand tells us that after a battle with the _Revue de Paris_ and the _Revue des Deux Mondes_, both of which papers wanted her work, she bound herself to the _Revue des Deux Mondes_, which was to pay her a hundred and sixty pounds a year for thirty-two pages of writing every six weeks. In 1833 the _Revue des Deux Mondes_ published Lelia, and on January 1, 1876, it finished publishing the _Tour de Percemont_. This means an uninterrupted collaboration, extending over a period

of forty-three years.

The literary critic of the _Revue des Deux Mondes_ at that time was a man who was very much respected and very little liked, or, in other words, he was universally detested. This critic was Gustave Planche. He took his own _role_ too seriously, and endeavoured to put authors on their guard about their faults. Authors did not appreciate this. He endeavoured, too, to put the public on guard against its own infatuations. The public did not care for this. He sowed strife and reaped revenge. This did not stop him, though, for he went calmly on continuing his executions. His impassibility was only feigned, and this is the curious side of the story. He suffered keenly from the storms of hostility which he provoked. He had a kindly disposition at bottom and tender places in his heart. He was rather given to melancholy and intensely pessimistic. To relieve his sadness, he gave himself up to hard work, and he was thoroughly devoted to art. In order to comprehend this portrait and to see its resemblance, we, who knew our great Brunetiere, have only to think of him. He, too, was noble, fervent and combative, and he sought in his exclusive devotion to literature a diversion from his gloomy pessimism, underneath which was concealed such kindliness. It seemed with him, too, as though he took a pride in making a whole crowd of enemies, whilst in reality the discovery of every fresh adversary caused him great suffering.

When _Lelia_ appeared, the novel was very badly treated in _L'Europe litteraire_. Planche challenged the writer of the article, a certain Capo de Feuillide, to a duel. So much for the impassibility of severe critics. The duel took place, and afterwards there was a misunderstanding between George Sand and Planche. From that time forth critics have given up fighting duels for the sake of authors.

About the same time, George Sand made use of Sainte-Beuve as her confessor. He seemed specially indicated for this function. In the first place, he looked rather ecclesiastical, and then he had a taste for secrets, and more particularly for whispered confessions. George Sand had absolute confidence in him. She considered that he had an almost angelic nature. In reality, just about that time, the angelic man was endeavouring to get into the good graces of the wife of his best friend, and was writing his _Livre d'Amour_, and divulging to the world a weakness of which he had taken advantage. This certainly was the most villainous thing a man could do. But then he, too, was in love and was struggling and praying. George Sand declares her veneration for him, and she constituted herself his penitent.

She begins her confession by an avowal that must have been
difficult for her. She tells of her intimacy with Merimee,
an intimacy which was of short duration and very unsatisfactory.
She had been fascinated by Merimee's art.

"For about a week," she says, "I thought he had the secret
of happiness." At the end of the week she was "weeping with disgust,
suffering and discouragement." She had hoped to find in him
the devotion of a consoler, but she found nothing but cold
and bitter jesting."[16] This experiment had also proved a failure.

[16] Compare _Lettres a Sainte-Beuve_.

Such were the conditions in which George Sand found herself at
this epoch. Her position was satisfactory; she might have been calm
and independent. Her inner life was once more desolate, and she
was thoroughly discouraged. She felt that she had lived centuries,
that she had undergone torture, that her heart had aged twenty years,
and that nothing was any pleasure to her now. Added to all this,
public life saddened her, for the horizon had clouded over.
The boundless hopes and the enthusiasm of 1831 were things
of the past. "The Republic, as it was dreamed of in July,"
she writes, "has ended in the massacres of Warsaw and in the holocaust
of the Saint-Merry cloister. The cholera has just been raging.
Saint Simonism has fallen through before it had settled the great
question of love."[17]

[17] _Histoire de ma vie_.

Depression had come after over-excitement. This is a phenomenon
frequently seen immediately after political convulsions.
It might be called the perpetual failure of revolutionary promises.

It was under all these influences that George Sand wrote _Lelia_.
She finished it in July, and it appeared in August, 1833.

It is absolutely impossible to give an analysis of _Lelia_. There really
is no subject. The personages are not beings of flesh and blood.
They are allegories strolling about in the garden of abstractions.
Lelia is a woman who has had her trials in life. She has loved and

been disappointed, so that she can no longer love at all. She reduces the gentle poet Stenio to despair. He is much younger than she is, and he has faith in life and in love. His ingenuous soul begins to wither and to lose its freshness, thanks to the scepticism of the beautiful, disdainful, ironical and world-weary Lelia. This strange person has a sister Pulcherie, a celebrated courtesan, whose insolent sensuality is a set-off to the other one's mournful complaints. We have here the opposition of Intelligence and of the Flesh, of Mind and Matter. Then comes Magnus, the priest, who has lost his faith, and for whom Lelia is a temptation, and after him we have Trenmor, Lelia's great friend, Trenmor, the sublime convict. As a young man he had been handsome. He had loved and been young. He had known what it was to be only twenty years of age. "The only thing was, he had known this at the age of sixteen" (!!) He had then become a gambler, and here follows an extraordinary panegyric on the fatal passion for gambling. Trenmor ruins himself, borrows without paying back, and finally swindles "an old millionaire who was himself a defrauder and a dissipated man" out of a hundred francs. Apparently the bad conduct of the man Trenmor robs, excuses the swindling. He is condemned to five years of hard labour. He undergoes his punishment, and is thereby regenerated. "What if I were to tell you," writes George Sand, "that such as he now is, crushed, with a tarnished reputation, ruined, I consider him superior to all of us, as regards the moral life. As he had deserved punishment, he was willing to bear it. He bore it, living for five years bravely and patiently among his abject companions. He has come back to us out of that abominable sewer holding his head up, calm, purified, pale as you see him, but handsome still, like a creature sent by God."

We all know how dear convicts are to the hearts of romantic people. There is no need for me to remind you how they have come to us recently, encircled with halos of suffering and of purity. We all remember Dostoiewsky's _Crime and Punishment_ and Tolstoi's _Resurrection_. When the virtue of expiation and the religion of human suffering came to us from Russia, we should have greeted them as old acquaintances, if certain essential works in our own literature, of which these books are the issue, had not been unknown to us.

The last part of the novel is devoted to Stenio. Hurt by Lelia's disdain, which has thrown him into the arms of her sister Pulcherie, he gives himself up to debauch. We find him at a veritable orgy in Pulcherie's house. Later on he is in a monastery at Camaldules, talking to Trenmor and Magnus. In such books we must never be astonished. . . . There is a long speech by Stenio, addressed to

Don Juan, whom he regrets to have taken as his model. The poor young man of course commits suicide. He chooses drowning as the author evidently prefers that mode of suicide. Lelia arrives in time to kneel down by the corpse of the young man who has been her victim. Magnus then appears on the scene, exactly at the right moment, to strangle Lelia. Pious hands prepare Lelia and Stenio for their burial. They are united and yet separated up to their very death.

The summing up we have given is the original version of _Lelia_. In 1836, George Sand touched up this work, altering much of it and spoiling, what she altered. It is a pity that her new version, which is longer, heavier and more obscure, should have taken the place of the former one. In its first form _Lelia_ is a work of rare beauty, but with the beauty of a poem or an oratorio. It is made of the stuff of which dreams are composed. It is a series of reveries, adapted to the soul of 1830. At every different epoch there is a certain frame of mind, and certain ideas are diffused in the air which we find alike in the works of the writers of that time, although they did not borrow them from each other. _Lelia_ is a sort of summing up of the themes then in vogue in the personal novel and in lyrical poetry. The theme of that suffering which is beneficent and inspiring is contained in the following words: "Come back to me, Sorrow! Why have you left me? It is by grief alone that man is great." This is worthy of Chateaubriand. The theme of melancholy is as follows: "The moon appeared. . . . What is the moon, and what is its nocturnal magic to me? One hour more or less is nothing to me." This might very well be Lamartine. We then have the malediction pronounced in face of impassible Nature: "Yes, I detested that radiant and magnificent Nature, for it was there before me in all its stupid beauty, silent and proud, for us to gaze on, believing that it was enough to merely show itself." This reminds us of Vigny in his _Maison du berger_. Then we have the religion of love: "Doubt God, doubt men, doubt me if you like, but do not doubt love." This is Musset.

But the theme which predominates, and, as we have compared all this to music, we might say the _leit-motiv_ of all, is that of desolation, of universal despair, of the woe of life. It is the same lamentation which, ever since Werther, was to be heard throughout all literature. It is the identical suffering which Rene, Obermann and Lara had been repeating to all the echoes. The elements of it were the same: pride which prevents us from adapting ourselves to the conditions of universal life, an abuse of self-analysis which opens up our wounds again and makes them bleed, the wild imagination which presents to our eyes the deceptive mirage of Promised Lands

from which we are ever exiles. Lelia personifies, in her turn, the "_mal du siecle_." Stenio reproaches her with only singing grief and doubt. "How many, times," he says, "have you appeared to me as typical of the indescribable suffering in which mankind is plunged by the spirit of inquiry! With your beauty and your sadness, your world-weariness and your scepticism, do you not personify the excess of grief produced by the abuse of thought?" He then adds: "There is a great deal of pride in this grief, Lelia!" It was undoubtedly a malady, for Lelia had no reason to complain of life any more than her brothers in despair. It is simply that the general conditions of life which all people have to accept seem painful to them. When we are well the play of our muscles is a joy to us, but when we are ill we feel the very weight of the atmosphere, and our eyes are hurt by the pleasant daylight.

When _Lelia_ appeared George Sand's old friends were stupefied. "What, in Heaven's name, is this?" wrote Jules Neraud, the _Malgache._ "Where have you been in search of this? Why have you written such a book? Where has it sprung from, and what is it for? . . . This woman is a fantastical creature. She is not at all like you. You are lively and can dance a jig; you can appreciate butterflies and you do not despise puns. You sew and can make jam very well."[18]

[18] _Histoire de ma vie_.

It certainly was not her portrait. She was healthy and believed in life, in the goodness of things and in the future of humanity, just as Victor Hugo and Dumas _pere_, those other forces of Nature, did, at about the same time. A soul foreign to her own had entered into her, and it was the romantic soul. With the magnificent power of receptivity which she possessed, George Sand welcomed all the winds which came to her from the four quarters of romanticism. She sent them back with unheard-of fulness, sonorous depth and wealth of orchestration. From that time forth a woman's voice could be heard, added to all the masculine voices which railed against life, and the woman's voice dominated them all!

In George Sand's psychological evolution, _Lelia_ is just this: the beginning of the invasion of her soul by romanticism. It was a borrowed individuality, undoubtedly, but it was not something to be put on and off at will like a mask. It adhered to the skin. It was all very fine for George Sand to say to Sainte-Beuve: "Do

not confuse the man himself with the suffering. . . . And do not believe in all my satanical airs. . . . This is simply a style that I have taken on, I assure you. . . ."

Sainte-Beuve had every reason to be alarmed, and the confessor was quite right in his surmises. The crisis of romanticism had commenced. It was to take an acute form and to reach its paroxysm during the Venice escapade. It is from this point of view that we will study the famous episode, which has already been studied by so many other writers.

No subject, perhaps, has excited the curiosity of readers like this one, and always without satisfying that curiosity. A library could be formed of the books devoted to this subject, written within the last ten years. Monsieur Rocheblave, Monsieur Maurice Clouard, Dr. Cabanes, Monsieur Marieton, the enthusiastic collector, Spoelberch de Lovenjoul and Monsieur Decori have all given us their contributions to the debate.[19] Thanks to them, we have the complete correspondence of George Sand and Musset, the diary of George Sand and Pagello's diary.

[19] Consult: Rocheblave, _La fin dune Legende;_ Maurice Clouard, _Documents inedits sur A. de Musset;_ Dr. Cabanes, _Musset et le Dr. Pagello_; Paul Marieton, _Une histoire d'amour;_ Vicomte Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, _La vrai histoire d'Elle et Lui;_ Decori, _Lettres de George Sand et Musset._

With the aid of all these documents Monsieur Charles Maurras has written a book entitled _Les Amants de Venise_. It is the work of a psychologist and of an artist. The only fault I have to find with it is that the author of it seems to see calculation and artifice everywhere, and not to believe sufficiently in sincerity. We must not forget, either, that as early as the year 1893, all that is essential had been told us by that shrewd writer and admirable woman, Arvede Barine. The chapter which she devotes to the Venice episode, in her biography of Alfred de Musset, is more clear and simple, and at the same time deeper than anything that had yet been written.

It is a subject that has been given up to the curiosity of people and to their disputes. The strange part is the zeal which at once animates every one who takes part in this controversy. The very atmosphere seems to be impregnated with strife, and those interested become, at once, the partisans of George Sand or the partisans of Musset. The two parties only agree on one point, and that is, to throw all

the blame on the client favoured by their adversary. I must confess that I cannot take a passionate interest in a discussion, the subject of which we cannot properly judge. According to _Mussetistes_, it was thanks to George Sand that the young poet was reduced to the despair which drove him to debauchery. On the other hand, if we are to believe the _Sandistes_, George Sand's one idea in interesting herself in Musset was to rescue him from debauchery and convert him to a better life. I listen to all suchpious interpretations, but I prefer others for myself. I prefer seeing the physiognomy of each of the two lovers standing out, as it does, in powerful relief.

It is the custom, too, to pity these two unfortunates, who suffered so much. At the risk of being taken for a very heartless man, I must own that I do not pity them much. The two lovers wished for this suffering, they wanted to experience the incomparable sensations of it, and they got enjoyment and profit from this. They knew that they were working for posterity. "Posterity will repeat our names like those of the immortal lovers whose two names are only one at present, like Romeo and Juliette, like Heloise and Abelard. People will never speak of one of us without speaking of the other."

Juliette died at the age of fifteen and Heloise entered a convent. The Venice lovers did not have to pay for their celebrity as dearly as that. They wanted to give an example, to light a torch on the road of humanity. "People shall know my story," writes George Sand. "I will write it. . . . Those who follow along the path I trod will see where it leads." _Et nunc erudimini_. Let us see for ourselves, and learn.

Their_ liaison_ dates from August, 1833.

George Sand was twenty-nine years of age. It was the time of her greatest charm. We must try to imagine the enchantress as she then was. She was not tall and she was delightfully slender, with an extraordinary-looking face of dark, warm colouring. Her thick hair was very dark, and her eyes, her large eyes, haunted Musset for years after.

"_Ote-moi, memoire importune_,
Ote-moi ces yeux que je vois toujours!"
he writes.

And this woman, who could have been loved passionately, merely for

her charm as a woman, was a celebrity! She was a woman of genius! Alfred de Musset was twenty-three years old. He was elegant, witty, a flirt, and when he liked he could be irresistible. He had won his reputation by that explosion of gaiety and imagination, _Les Contes d'Espagne el d'Italle_. He had written some fine poetry, dreamy, disturbing and daring. He had also given _Les Caprices de Marianne_, in which he figures twice over himself, for he was both Octave the sceptic, the disillusioned man, and Coelio, the affectionate, candid Coelio. He imagined himself Rolla. It was he, and he alone, who should have been styled the sublime boy.

And so here they both are. We might call them Lelia and Stenio, but _Lelia_ was written before the Venice adventure. She was not the reflection of it, but rather the presentiment. This is worthy of notice, but not at all surprising. Literature sometimes imitates reality, but how much more often reality is modelled on literature!

It was as though George Sand had foreseen her destiny, for she had feared to meet Musset. On the 11th of March, she writes as follows to Sainte-Beuve: "On second thoughts, I do not want you to bring Alfred de Musset. He is a great dandy. We should not suit each other, and I was really more curious to see him than interested in him." A little later on, though, at a dinner at the _Freres provencaux_, to which Buloz invited his collaborators, George Sand found herself next Alfred de Musset. She invited him to call on her, and when _Lelia_ was published she sent him a copy, with the following dedication written in the first volume: _A Monsieur mon gamin d'Allred_; and in the second volume: _A Monsieur le vicomte Allred de Musset, hommage respectueux de son devoue serviteur George Sand_. Musset replied by giving his opinion of the new book. Among the letters which followed, there is one that begins with these words: "My dear George, I have something silly and ridiculous to tell you. I am foolishly writing, instead of telling you, as I ought to have done, after our walk. I am heartbroken to-night that I did not tell you. You will laugh at me, and you will take me for a man who simply talks nonsense. You will show me the door, and fancy that I am not speaking the truth. . . . I am in love with you. . . ."

She did not laugh at him, though, and she did not show him the door. Things did not drag on long, evidently, as she writes to her confessor, Sainte-Beuve, on the 25th of August: "I have fallen in love, and very seriously this time, with Alfred de Musset." How long was this to last? She had no idea, but for the time being she declared that she was absolutely happy.

"I have found a candour, a loyalty and an affection which delight me.
It is the love of a young man and the friendship of a comrade."
There was a honeymoon in the little flat looking on the Quay Malaquals.
Their friends shared the joy of the happy couple, as we see by Musset's
frolicsome lines

_George est dans sa chambrette,
Entre deux pots de fleurs,
Fumiant sa cigarette,
Les yeux baignes de pleurs.

Buloz assis par terre
Lui fait de doux serments,
Solange par derriere
Gribouille ses romans._

Plante commme une borne,
Boucoiran tout crott,
Contemple d'un oeil morne
Musset tout debraille, etc.

It is evident that, as poetry, this does not equal the _Nuits._

In the autumn they went for a honeymoon trip to Fontainebleau.
It was there that the strange scene took place which is mentioned
in _Elle et Lui_. One evening when they were in the forest, Musset had
an extraordinary hallucination, which he has himself described:

_Dans tin bois, sur une bruyere,
Au pied d'un arbre vint s'asseoir
Un jeune homme vetu de noir
Qui me ressemnblail comme un frere.

le lui demandais mon chemin,
Il tenait un luth d'ue main,
De l'autre un bouquet d'eglantine.
Il me fit tin salut d'ami
Et, se detournant a demu,
Me montra du doigt la colline._

He really saw this "double," dressed in black, which was to visit
him again later on. His _Nuit de decembre_ was written from it.

They now wanted to see Italy together. Musset had already written on Venice; he now wanted to go there. Madame de Musset objected to this, but George Sand promised so sincerely that she would be a mother to the young man that finally his own mother gave her consent. On the evening of December 12, 1833, Paul de Musset accompanied the two travellers to the mail-coach. On the boat from Lyons to Avignon they met with a big, intel-

ligent-looking man. This was Beyle-Stendhal, who was then Consul at Civita-Vecchia. He was on his way to his post. They enjoyed his lively conversation, although he made fun of their illusions about Italy and the Italian character. He made fun, though, of everything and of every one, and they felt that he was only being witty and trying to appear unkind. At dinner he drank too much, and finished by dancing round the table in his great fur-

lined boots. Later on he gave them some specimens of his obscene conversation, so that they were glad to continue their journey without him.

On the 28th the travellers reached Florence. The aspect of this city and his researches in the _Chroniques florentines_ supplied the poet with the subject for _Lorenzaccio_. It appears that George Sand and Musset each treated this subject, and that a _Lorenzaccio_ by George Sand exists. I have not read it, but I prefer Musset's version. They reached Venice on January 19, 1834, and put up at the Hotel Danieli. By this time they were at loggerheads.

The cause of their quarrel and disagreement is not really known, and the activity of retrospective journalists has not succeeded in finding this out. George Sand's letters only give details about their final quarrel. On arriving, George Sand was ill, and this exasperated Musset. He was annoyed, and declared that a woman out of sorts was very trying. There are good reasons for believing that he had found her very trying for some time. He was very elegant and she a learned "white blackbird." He was capricious and she a placid, steady _bourgeois_ woman, very hard-working and very regular in the midst of her irregularity. He used to call her "personified boredom, the dreamer, the silly woman, the nun," when he did not use terms which we cannot transcribe. The climax was when he said to her: "I was mistaken, George, and I beg your pardon, for I do not love you."

Wounded and offended, she replied: "We do not love each other

any longer, and we never really loved each other."

They therefore took back their independence. This is a point to note, as George Sand considered this fact of the greatest importance, and she constantly refers to it. She was from henceforth free, as regarded her companion.

Illness kept them now at Venice. George Sand's illness first and then Musset's alarming malady. He had high fever, accompanied by chest affection and attacks of delirium which lasted six consecutive hours, during which it took four men to hold him.

George Sand was an admirable nurse. This must certainly be acknowledged. She sat up with him at night and she nursed him by day, and, astonishing woman that she was, she was also able to work and to earn enough to pay their common expenses. This is well known, but I am able to give another proof of it, in the letters which George Sand wrote from Venice to Buloz. These letters have been communicated to me by Madame Pailleron, _nee_ Buloz, and by Madame Landouzy, _veuve_ Buloz, whom I thank for the public and for myself. The following are a few of the essential passages:

"February 4.
Read this when you are alone.

MY DEAR BULOZ,--Your reproaches reach me at a miserable moment. If you have received my letter, you already know that I do not deserve them. A fortnight ago I was well again and working. Alfred was working too, although he was not very well and had fits of feverishness. About five days ago we were both taken ill, almost at the same time. I had an attack of dysentery, which caused me horrible suffering. I have not yet recovered from it, but I am strong enough, anyhow, to nurse him. He was seized with a nervous and inflammatory fever, which has made such rapid progress that the doctor tells me he does not know what to think about it. We must wait for the thirteenth or fourteenth day before knowing whether his life is in danger. And what will this thirteenth or fourteenth day be? Perhaps his last one? I am in despair, overwhelmed with fatigue, suffering horribly, and awaiting who knows what future? How can I give myself up to literature or to anything in the world at such a time? I only know that our entire fortune, at present, consists of sixty francs, that we shall have to spend an enormous amount at the chemist's, for the nurse and doctor, and that we are at a very expensive hotel.

We were just about to leave it and go to a private house.
Alfred cannot be moved now, and even if everything should go well,
he probably cannot be moved for a month. We shall have to pay one
term's rent for nothing, and we shall return to France, please God.
If my ill-luck continues, and if Alfred should die, I can assure
you that I do not care what happens after to me. If God allows
Alfred to recover, I do not know how we shall pay the expenses of his
illness and of his return to France. The thousand francs that you
are to send me will not suffice, and I do not know what we shall do.
At any rate, do not delay sending that, as, by the time it arrives,
it will be more than necessary. I am sorry about the annoyance you
are having with the delay for publishing, but you can now judge
whether it is my fault. If only Alfred had a few quiet days,
I could soon finish my work. But he is in a frightful state
of delirium and restlessness. I cannot leave him an instant.
I have been nine hours writing this letter. Adieu, my friend,
and pity me.

"GEORGE.

"Above everything, do not tell any one, not any one in the world,
that Alfred is ill. If his mother heard (and it only needs two
persons for telling a secret to all Paris) she would go mad.
If she has to be told, let who will undertake to tell her, but if
in a fortnight Alfred is out of danger, it is useless for her to
grieve now. Adieu."

"February 13, 1834.

"My friend, Alfred is saved. There has been
no fresh attack, and we have nearly reached the fourteenth day
without the improvement having altered. After the brain affection
inflammation of the lungs declared itself, and this rather alarmed
us for two days. . . . He is extremely weak at present,
and he wanders occasionally. He has to be nursed night and day.
Do not imagine, therefore, that I am only making pretexts for the
delay in my work. I have not undressed for eight nights. I sleep
on a sofa, and have to get up at any minute. In spite of this,
ever since I have been relieved in my mind about the danger,
I have been able to write a few pages in the mornings while he
is resting. You may be sure tht I should like to be able to take
advantage of this time to rest myself. Be assured, my friend,
that I am not short of courage, nor yet of the will to work.

You are not more anxious than I am that I should carry out
my engagements. You know that a debt makes me smart like a wound.
But you are friend enough to make allowances for my situation and
not to leave me in difficulties. I am spending very wretched days
here at this bedside, for the slightest sound, the slightest movement
causes me constant terror. In this disposition of mind I shall
not write any light works. They will be heavy, on the contrary,
like my fatigue and my sadness.

"Do not leave me without money, I beseech you, or I do not know what
will happen to me. I spend about twenty francs a day in medicine
of all sorts. We do not know how to keep him alive. . . ."

These letters give the lie to some of the gossip that has been
spread abroad with regard to the episode of the Hotel Danieli.
And I too, thanks to these letters, shall have put an end to a legend!
In the second volume of Wladimir Karenine's work on George Sand,
on page 61, we have the following words--

"Monsieur Plauchut tells us that, according to Buloz, Musset had
been enticed into a gambling hell during his stay in Venice,
and had lost about four hundred pounds there. The imprudent young
man could not pay this debt of honour, and he never would have been
able to do so. He had to choose between suicide or dishonour.
George Sand did not hesitate a moment. She wrote at once to
the manager of the _Revue_, asking him to advance the money."
And this debt was on her shoulders for a long time.

The facts of the case are as follows, according to a letter from
George Sand to Buloz: "I beseech you, as a favour, to pay Alfred's
debt and to write to him that it is all settled. You cannot imagine
the impatience and the disturbance that this little matter cause him.
He speaks to me of it every minute, and begs me every day to write
to you about it. He owes these three hundred and sixty francs
(L14 8_s_.) to a young man he knows very little and who might talk
of it to people. . . . You have already advanced much larger
sums to him. He has always paid you back, and you are not afraid
that this would make you bankrupt. If, through his illness, he should
not be able to work for a long time, my work could be used for that,
so be at ease. . . . Do this, I beseech you, and write him a short
letter to ease his mind at once. I will then read it to him, and this
will pacify one of the torments of his poor head. Oh, my friend,
if you only knew what this delirium is like! What sublime and
awful things he has said, and then what convulsions and shouts!

I do not know how he has had strength enough to pull through and how it is that I have not gone mad myself. Adieu, adieu, my friend."

There really was a gambling debt, then, but we do not know exactly where it was contracted. It amounted to three hundred and sixty francs, which is very different from the ten thousand francs and the threat of suicide.

And now we come to the pure folly! Musset had been attended by a young doctor, Pietro Pagello. He was a straightforward sort of young man, of rather slow intelligence, without much conversation, not speaking French, but very handsome. George Sand fell in love with him. One night, after having scribbled a letter of three pages, she put it into an envelope without any address and gave it to Pagello. He asked her to whom he was to give the letter. George Sand took the envelope back and wrote on it: "To stupid Pagello." We have this declaration, and among other things in the letter are the following lines: "You will not deceive me, anyhow. You will not make any idle promises and false vows. . . . I shall not, perhaps, find in you what I have sought for in others, but, at any rate, I can always believe that you possess it. . . . I shall be able to interpret your meditations and make your silence speak eloquently. . . ." This shows us clearly the kind of charm George Sand found in Pagello. She loved him because he was stupid.

The next questions are, when did they become lovers, and how did Musset discover their intimacy? It is quite certain that he suspected it, and that he made Pagello confess his love for George Sand.[20] A most extraordinary scene then took place between the three of them, according to George Sand's own account. "Adieu, then," she wrote to Musset, later on, "adieu to the fine poem of our sacred friendship and of that ideal bond formed between the three of us, when you dragged from him the confession of his love for me and when he vowed to you that he would make me happy. Oh, that night of enthusiasm, when, in spite of us, you joined our hands, saying: `You love each other and yet you love me, for you have saved me, body and soul." Thus, then, Musset had solemnly abjured his love for George Sand, he had engaged his mistress of the night before to a new lover, and was from henceforth to be their best friend. Such was the ideal bond, such the sacred friendship! This may be considered the romantic escapade.

[20] On one of George Sand's unpublished letters to Buloz

the following lines are written in the handwriting of Buloz:

"In the morning on getting up he discovered, in an adjoining room,
a tea-table still set, but with only one cup.

"`Did you have tea yesterday evening?'

"`Yes,' answered George Sand, `I had tea with the doctor.'

"`Ah, how is it that there is only one cup?'

"`The other has been taken away.'

"`No, nothing has been taken away. You drank out of the same cup.'

"`Even if that were so, you have no longer the right to trouble
about such things.'

"`I have the right, as I am still supposed to be your lover.
You ought at least to show me respect, and, as I am leaving in
three days, you might wait until I have gone to do as you like.'

"The night following this scene Musset discovered George Sand,
crouching on her bed, writing a letter.

"`What are you doing?' he asked.

"`I am reading,' she replied, and she blew out the candle.

"`If you are reading, why do you put the candle out?'

"`It went out itself: light it again.'

"Alfred de Musset lit it again.

"`Ah, so you were reading, and you have no book. Infamous woman,
you might as well say that you are writing to your lover.'
George Sand had recourse to her usual threat of leaving the house.
Alfred de Musset read her up: `You are thinking of a horrible plan.
You want to hurry off to your doctor, pretend that I am mad
and that your life is in danger. You will not leave this room.
I will keep you from anything so base. If you do go, I will put such
an epitaph on your grave that the people who read it will turn pale,'
said Alfred with terrible energy.

"George Sand was trembling and crying.

"`I no longer love you,' Alfred said scoffingly to George Sand.

"`It is the right moment to take your poison or to go and drown yourself.'

"Confession to Alfred of her secret about the doctor. Reconciliation. Alfred's departure. George Sand's affectionate and enthusiastic letters."

Such are the famous episodes of the _tea-cup_ and _the letter_ as Buloz heard them told at the time. {The end of footnote [20]}

Musset returned in March, 1834, leaving George Sand with Pagello in Venice. The sentimental exaggeration continued, as we see from the letters exchanged between Musset and George Sand. When crossing the Simplon the immutable grandeur of the Alps struck Alusset with admiration, and he thought of his two "great friends." His head was evidently turned by the heights from which he looked at things. George Sand wrote to him: "I am not giving you any message from Pagello, except that he is almost as sad as I am at your absence." "He is a fine fellow," answered Musset. "Tell him how much I like him, and that my eyes fill with tears when I think of him." Later on he writes: "When I saw Pagello, I recognized in him the better side of my own nature, but pure and free from the irreparable stains which have ruined mine." "Always treat me like that," writes Musset again. "It makes me feel proud. My dear friend, the woman who talks of her new lover in this way to the one she has given up, but who still loves her, gives him a proof of the greatest esteem that a man can receive from a woman. . . ." That romanticism which made a drama of the situation in _L'Ecole des Femmes_, and another one out of that in the _Precieuses ridicules_, excels in taking tragically situations that belong to comedy and in turning them into the sublime.

Meanwhile George Sand had settled down in Venice with Pagello-- and with all the family, all the Pagello tribe, with the brother, the sister, to say nothing of the various rivals who came and made scenes. It was the vulgar, ordinary platitude of an Italian intimacy of this kind. In spite of everything, she continued congratulating herself on her choice.

"I have my love, my stay here with me. He never suffers, for he is never weak or suspicious. . . . He is calm and good. . . .
He loves me and is at peace; he is happy without my having to suffer,

without my having to make efforts for his happiness. . . . As for me, I must suffer for some one. It is just this suffering which nurtures my maternal solicitude, etc. . . ." She finally begins to weary of her dear Pagello's stupidity. It occurred to her to take him with her to Paris, and that was the climax. There are some things which cannot be transplanted from one country to another. When they had once set foot in Paris, the absurdity of their situation appeared to them.

"From the moment that Pagello landed in France," says George Sand, "he could not understand anything." The one thing that he was compelled to understand was that he was no longer wanted. He was simply pushed out. George Sand had a remarkable gift for bringing out the characteristics of the persons with whom she had any intercourse. This Pagello, thanks to his adventure with her, has become in the eyes of the world a personage as comic as one of Moliere's characters.

Musset and George Sand still cared for each other. He beseeched her to return to him. "I am good-for-nothing," he says, "for I am simply steeped in my love for you. I do not know whether I am alive, whether I eat, drink, or breathe, but I know I am in love." George Sand was afraid to return to him, and Sainte-Beuve forbade her. Love proved stronger than all other arguments, however, and she yielded.

As soon as she was with him once more, their torture commenced again, with all the customary complaints, reproaches and recriminations. "I was quite sure that all these reproaches would begin again immediately after the happiness we had dreamed of and promised each other. Oh, God, to think that we have already arrived at this!" she writes.

What tortured them was that the past, which they had believed to be "a beautiful poem," now seemed to them a hideous nightmare. All this, we read, was a game that they were playing. A cruel sort of game, of which Musset grew more and more weary, but which to George Sand gradually became a necessity. We see this, as from henceforth it was she who implored Musset. In her diary, dated December 24, 1834, we read: "And what if I rushed to him when my love is too strong for me. What if I went and broke the bell-pull with ringing, until he opened his door to me. Or if I lay down across the threshold until he came out!" She cut off her magnificent hair and sent it to him. Such was the way in which this proud woman humbled herself. She was a prey to love, which seemed to her a holy complaint. It was a case of Venus entirely devoted to her prey. The question is, was this really love? "I no longer love you," she writes, "but I

still adore you. I do not want you any more, but I cannot do without you." They had the courage to give each other up finally in March, 1835.

It now remains for us to explain the singularity of this adventure, which, as a matter of fact, was beyond all logic, even the logic of passion. It is, however, readily understood, if we treat it as a case of acute romanticism, the finest case of romanticism, that has been actually lived, which the history of letters offers us.

The romanticism consists first in exposing one's life to the public, in publishing one's most secret joys and sorrows. From the very beginning George Sand and Musset took the whole circle of their friends into their confidence. These friends were literary people. George Sand specially informs Sainte-Beuve that she wishes her sentimental life from thenceforth to be known. They were quite aware that they were on show, as it were, subjects of an experiment that would be discussed by "the gallery."

Romanticism consists next in the writer putting his life into his books, making literature out of his emotions. The idea of putting their adventure into a story occurred to the two lovers before the adventure had come to an end. It was at Venice that George Sand wrote her first _Lettres d'un voyageur_, addressed to the poet--and to the subscribers of the _Revue des Deux Mondes_. Musset, to improve on this idea, decides to write a novel from the episode which was still unfinished. "I will not die," he says, "until I have written my book on you and on myself, more particularly on you. No, my beautiful, holy fiancee, you shall not return to this cold earth before it knows the woman who has walked on it. No, I swear this by my youth and genius." Musset's contributions to this literature were _Confession d'un enfant du siecle_, _Histoire d'un merle blanc_, _Elle et Lui_, and all that followed.

In an inverse order, romanticism consists in putting literature into our life, in taking the latest literary fashion for our rule of action. This is not only a proof of want of taste; it is a most dangerous mistake. The romanticists, who had so many wrong ideas, had none more erroneous than their idea of love, and in the correspondence between George Sand and Musset we see the paradox in all its beauty. It consists in saying that love leads to virtue and that it leads there through change. Whether the idea came originally from _her_ or from _him_, this was their common faith.

"You have said it a hundred times over," writes George Sand,

"and it is all in vain that you retract; nothing will now efface
that sentence: `Love is the only thing in the world that counts.'
It may be that it is a divine faculty which we lose and then find again,
that we must cultivate, or that we have to buy with cruel suffering,
with painful experience. The suffering you have endured through
loving me was perhaps destined, in order that you might love
another woman more easily. Perhaps the next woman may love you
less than I do, and yet she may be more happy and more beloved.
There are such mysteries in these things, and God urges us along
new and untrodden paths. Give in; do not attempt to resist.
He does not desert His privileged ones. He takes them by the hand
and places them in the midst of the sandbanks, where they are to learn
to live, in order that they may sit down at the banquet at which they
are to rest. . . ." Later on she writes as follows: "Do you
imagine that one love affair, or even two, can suffice for exhausting
or taking the freshness from a strong soul? I believed this, too,
for a long time, but I know now that it is quite the contrary.
Love is a fire that endeavours to rise and to purify itself.
Perhaps the more we have failed in our endeavours to find it,
the more apt we become to discover it, and the more we have been
obliged to change, the more conservative we shall become. Who knows?
It is perhaps the terrible, magnificent and courageous work of a
whole lifetime. It is a crown of thorns which will blossom and be
covered with roses when our hair begins to turn white.

This was pure frenzy, and yet there were two beings ready
to drink in all this pathos, two living beings to live out this
monstrous chimera. Such are the ravages that a certain conception
of literature may make. By the example we have of these two
illustrious victims, we may imagine that there were others,
and very many others, obscure and unknown individuals, but human
beings all the same, who were equally duped. There are unwholesome
fashions in literature, which, translated into life, mean ruin.
The Venice adventure shows up the truth of this in bright daylight.
This is its interest and its lesson.

V

THE FRIEND OF MICHEL (DE BOURGES)

LISZT AND COMTESSE D'AGOULT. _MAUPRAT_

We have given the essential features of the Venice adventure. The love affair, into which George Sand and Musset had put so much literature, was to serve literature. Writers of the romantic school are given to making little songs with their great sorrows. When the correspondence between George Sand and Musset appeared, every one was surprised to find passages that were already well known. Such passages had already appeared in the printed work of the poet or of the authoress. An idea, a word, or an illustration used by the one was now, perhaps, to be found in the work of the other one.

"It is I who have lived," writes George Sand, "and not an unreal being created by my pride and my _ennui_." We all know the use to which Musset put this phrase. He wrote the famous couplet of Perdican with it: "All men are untruthful, inconstant, false, chatterers, hypocritical, proud, cowardly, contemptible and sensual; all women are perfidious, artful, vain, inquisitive and depraved. . . . There is, though, in this world one thing which is holy and sublime. It is the union of these two beings, imperfect and frightful as they are. We are often deceived in our love; we are often wounded and often unhappy, but still we love, and when we are on the brink of the tomb we shall turn round, look back, and say to ourselves: `I have often suffered, I have sometimes been deceived, but I have loved. It is I who have lived, and not an unreal being created by my pride and _ennui_.'" Endless instances of this kind could be given. They are simply the sign of the reciprocal influence exercised over each other by George Sand and Musset, an influence to be traced through all their work.

This influence was of a different kind and of unequal degree. It was George Sand who first made literature of their common recollections. Some of these recollections were very recent ones and were impregnated with tears. The two lovers had only just separated when George Sand made the excursion described in the first _Lettre d'un voyageur_. She goes along the Brenta. It is the month of May, and the meadows are in flower. In the horizon she sees the snowy peaks of the Tyrolese Alps standing out. The remembrance of the long hours spent at the invalid's bedside comes back to her, with all the anguish of the sacred passion in which she thinks she sees God's anger. She then pays a visit to the Oliero grottoes, and once more her wounded love makes her heart ache. She returns through Possagno, whose beautiful women served as models for Canova. She then goes back to Venice, and the doctor gives her a letter from the man she has given up, the man she has sent away. These poetical descriptions, alternating with lyrical effusions, this kind of dialogue with two voices,

one of which is that of nature and the other that of the heart,
remind us of one of Musset's _Nuits_.

The second of these _Lettres d'un voyageur_ is entirely descriptive.
It is spring-time in Venice. The old balconies are gay with flowers;
the nightingales stop singing to listen to the serenades.
There are songs to be heard at every street corner, music in the wake
of every gondola. There are sweet perfumes and love-sighs in the air.
The delights of the Venetian nights had never been described like this.
The harmony of "the three elements, water, sky and marble,"
had never been better expressed, and the charm of Venice had
never been suggested in so subtle and, penetrating a manner.
The second letter treats too of the gondoliers, and of their habits
and customs.

The third letter, telling us about the nobility and the women
of Venice, completes the impression. Just as the Pyrenees had
moved George Sand, so Italy now moved her. This was a fresh
acquisition for her palette. More than once from henceforth
Venice was to serve her for the wonderful scenery of her stories.
This is by no means a fresh note, though, in George Sand's work.
There is no essential difference, then, in her inspiration.
She had always been impressionable, but her taste was now
getting purer. Musset, the most romantic of French poets,
had an eminently classical taste. In the _Lettres de Dupuis
et Cotonet_, he defined romanticism as an abuse of adjectives.
He was of Madame de Lafayette's opinion, that a word taken out was
worth twenty pennies, and a phrase taken out twenty shillings.
In a copy of _Indiana_ he crossed out all the useless epithets.
This must have made a considerable difference to the length of the book.
George Sand was too broad-minded to be hurt by such criticism,
and she was intelligent enough to learn a lesson from it.

Musset's transformation was singularly deeper. When he started
for Venice, he was the youngest and most charming of poets,
fanciful and full of fun. "Monsieur mon gamin d'Alfred,"
George Sand called him at that time. When he returned from there,
he was the saddest of poets. For some time he was, as it were,
stunned. His very soul seemed to be bowed down with his grief.
He was astonished at the change he felt in himself, and he did
not by any means court any fresh inspiration.

J'ai vu, le temps ou ma jeuxesse
Sur mes levres etait sans cesse

Prete a chanter comme un oiseau;
Mais j'ai souffert un dur martyre
Et le moins que j'en pourrais dire,
Si je lessayais sur a lyre,
La briserait comme un roseau,

he writes.

In the _Nuit de Mai_, the earliest of these songs of despair,
we have the poet's symbol of the pelican giving its entrails as food
to its starving young. The only symbols that we get in this poetry
are symbols of sadness, and these are at times given in magnificent
fulness of detail. We have solitude in the _Nuit de decembre_,
and the labourer whose house has been burnt in the _Lettre a Lamartine_.
The _Nuit d'aout_ gives proof of a wild effort to give life another trial,
but in the _Auit d'octobre_ anger gets the better of him once more.

_Honte a toi, qui la premiere
M'as appris la trahison . . .!_

The question has often been asked whether the poet refers here to the
woman he loved in Venice but it matters little whether he did or not.
He only saw her through the personage who from henceforth symbolized
"woman" to him and the suffering which she may cause a man. And yet,
as this suffering became less intense, softened as it was by time,
he began to discover the benefit of it. His soul had expanded,
so that he was now in communion with all that is great in Nature
and in Art. The harmony of the sky, the silence of night, the murmur
of flowing water, Petrarch, Michel Angelo, Shakespeare, all appealed
to him. The day came when he could write:

_Un souvenir heureux est peut-etre sur terre
Plus vrai que le bonheur_.

This is the only philosophy for a conception of life which treats
love as everything for man. He not only pardons now, but he is grateful

_Je ne veux rien savoir, ni si les champ s

fleurissent, Nice quil adviendra di., simulacre

humain, Ni si ces vastes cieux eclaireront demain

Ce qu' ils ensevelissent. heure, en ce lieu,

Je me dis seulement: a cette

Un jour, je fus aime, j'aimais, elle etait belle,

Jenfouis ce tresor dans mon ame immortelle

Et je l'em porte a Dieu._

This love poem, running through all he wrote from the _Nuit de Mai_ to the _Souvenir_, is undoubtedly the most beautiful and the most profoundly human of anything in the French language. The charming poet had become a great poet. That shock had occurred within him which is felt by the human being to the very depths of his soul, and makes of him a new creature. It is in this sense that the theory of the romanticists, with regard to the educative virtues of suffering, is true. But it is not only suffering in connection with our love affairs which has this special privilege. After some misfortune which uproots, as it were, our life, after some disappointment which destroys our moral edifice, the world appears changed to us. The whole network of accepted ideas and of conventional opinions is broken asunder. We find ourselves in direct contact with reality, and the shock makes our true nature come to the front. . . . Such was the crisis through which Musset had just passed. The man came out of it crushed and bruised, but the poet came through it triumphant.

It has been insisted on too much that George Sand was only the reflection of the men who had approached her. In the case of Musset it was the contrary. Musset owed her more than she owed to him. She transformed him by the force of her strong individuality. She, on the contrary, only found in Musset a child, and what she was seeking was a dominator.

She thought she had discovered him this very year 1835.

The sixth _Lettre d'un voyageur_ was addressed to Everard. This Everard was considered by her to be a superior man.

He was so much above the average height that George Sand advised him to sit down when he was with other men, as when standing he was too much above them. She compares him to Atlas carrying the world, and to Hercules in a lion's skin. But among all her comparisons, when she is seeking to give the measure of his superiority, without ever really succeeding in this, it is evident that the comparison she prefers is that of Marius at Minturnae. He personifies virtue a _l'antique:_ he is the Roman.

Let us now consider to whom all this flattery was addressed, and who this man, worthy of Plutarch's pen, was. His name was Michel, and he was an advocate at Bourges. He was only thirty-seven years of age, but he looked sixty. After Sandeau and Musset, George Sand had had enough of "adolescents." She was very much struck with Michel, as he looked like an old man. The size of his cranium was remarkable, or, as she said of his craniums: "It seemed as though he had two craniums, one joined to the other." She wrote: "The signs of the superior faculties of his mind were as prominent at the prow of this strong vessel as those of his generous instincts at the stern."[21] In order to understand this definition of the "fine physique" by George Sand, we must remember that she was very much taken up with phrenology at this time. One of her _Lettres d'un voyageur_ was entitled Sur _Lavater et sur une Maison deserte_. In a letter to Madame d'Agoult, George Sand tells that her gardener gave notice to leave, and, on asking him his reason, the simple-minded man replied: "Madame has such an ugly head that my wife, who is expecting, might die of fright." The head in question was a skull, an anatomical one with compartments all marked and numbered, according to the system of Gall and Spurzheim. In 1837, phrenology was very much in favour. In 1910, it is hypnotism, so we have no right to judge the infatuation of another epoch.

[21] _Histoire de ma vie_.

Michel's cranium was bald. He was short, slight, he stooped, was short-sighted and wore glasses. It is George Sand who gives these details for his portrait. He was born of peasant parents, and was of Jacobin simplicity. He wore a thick, shapeless inverness and sabots. He felt the cold very much, and used to ask permission to put on a muffler indoors. He would then take three or four out of his pockets and put them on his head, one over the other. In the _Lettre d'un voyageur_ George Sand mentions this crown on Everard's head. Such are the illusions of love.

The first time she met Michel was at Bourges. She went with her two friends, Papet and Fleury, to call on him at the hotel. From seven o'clock until midnight he never ceased talking. It was a magnificent night, and he proposed a walk in the town at midnight. When they came back to his door he insisted on taking them home, and so they continued walking backwards and forwards until four in the morning. He must have been an inveterate chatterer to have clung to this public of three persons at an hour when the great buildings, with the moon throwing its white light over them and everything around, must have suggested the majesty of silence. To people who were amazed at this irrepressible eloquence, Michel answered ingenuously: "Talking is thinking aloud. By thinking aloud in this way I advance more quickly than if I thought quietly by myself." This was Numa Roumestan's idea. "As for me," he said, "when I am not talking, I am not thinking." As a matter of fact, Michel, like Numa, was a native of Provence. In Paris there was a repetition of this nocturnal and roving scene. Michel and his friends had come to a standstill on the Saints-Peres bridge. They caught sight of the Tuileries lighted up for a ball. Michel became excited, and, striking the innocent bridge and its parapet with his stick, he exclaimed: "I tell you that if you are to freshen and renew your corrupt society, this beautiful river will first have to be red with blood, that accursed palace will have to be reduced to ashes, and the huge city you are now looking at will have to be a bare strand where the family of the poor man can use the plough and build a cottage home."

This was a fine phrase for a public meeting, but perhaps too fine for a conversation between friends on the Saints-Peres bridge.

This was in 1835, at the most brilliant moment of Michel's career. It was when he was taking part in the trial of the accused men of April. After the insurrections of the preceding year at Lyons and Paris, a great trial had commenced before the Chamber of Peers. We are told that: "The Republican party was determined to make use of the cross-questioning of the prisoners for accusing the Government and for preaching Republicanism and Socialism. The idea was to invite a hundred and fifty noted Republicans to Paris from all parts of France. In their quality of defenders, they would be the orators of this great manifestation." Barb'es, Blanqui, Flocon, Marie, Raspail, Trelat and Michel of Bourges were among these Republicans. "On the 11th of May, the revolutionary newspapers published a manifesto in which the committee for the defence congratulated and encouraged the accused men.

One hundred and ten signatures were affixed to this document, which was a forgery. It had been drawn up by a few of the upholders of the scheme, and, in order to make it appear more important, they had affixed the names of their colleagues without their authorization. Those who had done this then took fright, and attempted to get out of the dangerous adventure by a public avowal. In order to save the situation, two of the guilty party, Trelat and Michel of Bourges, took the responsibility of the drawing up of the manifesto and the apposition of the signatures upon themselves. They were sentenced by the Court of Peers, Trelat to four years of prison and Michel to a month."[22] This was the most shocking inequality, and Michel could not forgive Trelat for getting such a fine sentence.

[22] Thureau Dangin, _Histoire de la Monarchie de Juillet_, II. 297.

What good was one month of prison? Michel's career certainly had been a very ordinary one. He hesitated and tacked about. In a word, he was just a politician. George Sand tells us that he was obliged "to accept, in theory, what he called the necessities of pure politics, ruse, charlatanism and even untruth, concessions that were not sincere, alliances in which he did not believe, and vain promises." We should say that he was a radical opportunist. To be merely an opportunist, though, is not enough for ensuring success. There are different ways of being an opportunist. Michel had been elected a Deputy, but he had no _role_ to play. In 1848, he could not compete with the brilliancy of Raspail, nor had he the prestige of Flocon. He went into the shade completely after the _coup d'etat_. For a long time he had really preferred business to politics, and a choice must be made when one is not a member of the Government.

It is easy to see what charmed George Sand in Michel. He was a sectarian, and she took him for an apostle. He was brutal, and she thought him energetic. He had been badly brought up, but she thought him simply austere. He was a tyrant, but she only saw in him a master. He had told her that he would have her guillotined at the first possible opportunity. This was an incontestable proof of superiority. She was sincere herself, and was con-

sequently not on her guard against vain boasting. He had alarmed her, and she admired him for this, and at once incarnated in him that stoical ideal of which she had been dreaming for years and had not yet been able to attribute to any one else.

This is how she explained to Michel her reasons for loving him.
"I love you," she says, "because whenever I figure to myself grandeur,
wisdom, strength and beauty, your image rises up before me.
No other man has ever exercised any moral influence over me.
My mind, which has always been wild and unfettered, has never
accepted any guidance. . . . You came, and you have taught me."
Then again she says: "It is you whom I love, whom I have loved
ever since I was born, and through all the phantoms in whom
I thought, for a moment, that I had found you." According to this,
it was Michel she loved through Musset. Let us hope that she
was mistaken.

A whole correspondence exists between George Sand and Michel of Bourges.
Part of it was published not long ago in the _Revue illustree_ under
the title of _Lettres de lemmze_. None of George Sand's letters
surpass these epistles to Michel for fervent passion, beauty of form,
and a kind of superb _impudeur_. Let us take, for instance,
this call to her beloved. George Sand, after a night of work,
complains of fatigue, hunger and cold: "Oh, my lover," she cries,
"appear, and, like the earth on the return of the May sunshine,
I should be reanimated, and would fling off my shroud of ice and thrill
with love. The wrinkles of suffering would disappear from my brow,
and I should seem beautiful and young to you, for I should leap
with joy into your iron strong arms. Come, come, and I shall
have strength, health, youth, gaiety, hope. . . . I will go forth
to meet you like the bride of the song, `to her well-beloved.'"
The Well-beloved to whom this Shulamite would hasten was a bald-headed
provincial lawyer who wore spectacles and three mufflers. But it
appears that his "beauty, veiled and unintelligible to the vulgar,
revealed itself, like that of Jupiter hidden under human form,
to the women whom he loved."

We must not smile at these mythological comparisons. George Sand had,
as it were, restored for herself that condition of soul to which the
ancient myths are due. A great current of naturalist poetry circulates
through these pages. In Theocritus and in Rousard there are certain
descriptive passages. There is an analogy between them and that image
of the horse which carries George Sand along on her impetuous course.

"As soon as he catches sight of me, he begins to paw the ground
and rear impatiently. I have trained him to clear a hundred fathoms
a second. The sky and the ground disappear when he bears me along
under those long vaults formed by the apple-trees in blossom. . . .
The least sound of my voice makes him bound like a ball; the smallest

bird makes him shudder and hurry along like a child with no experience.
He is scarcely five years old, and he is timid and restive.
His black crupper shines in the sunshine like a raven's wing."
This description has all the relief of an antique figure.
Another time, George Sand tells how she has seen Phoebus throw
off her robe of clouds and rush along radiant into the pure sky.
The following day she writes: "She was eaten by the evil spirits.
The dark sprites from Erebus, riding on sombre-looking clouds,
threw themselves on her, and it was in vain that she struggled."
We might compare these passages with a letter of July 10, 1836,
in which she tells how she throws herself, all dressed as she is,
into the Indre, and then continues her course through the sunny
meadows, and with what voluptuousness she revels in all the joys
of primitive life, and imagines herself living in the beautiful
times of ancient Greece. There are days and pages when George Sand,
under the afflux of physical life, is pagan. Her genius then is
that of the greenwood divinities, who, at certain times of the year,
were intoxicated by the odour of the meadows and the sap of the woods.
If some day we were to have her complete correspondence given to us,
I should not be surprised if many people preferred it to her
letters to Musset. In the first place, it is not spoiled by that
preoccupation which the Venice lovers had, of writing literature.
Mingled with the accents of sincere passion, we do not find
extraordinary conceptions of paradoxical metaphysics. It is Nature
which speaks in these letters, and for that very reason they are none
the less sorrowful. They, too, tell us of a veritable martyrdom.
We can easily imagine from them that Michel was coarse, despotic,
faithless and jealous. We know, too, that more than once George Sand
came very near losing all patience with him, so that we can sympathize
with her when she wrote to Madame d'Agoult in July, 1836:

"I have had, my fill of great men (excuse the expression). . . .
I prefer to see them all in Plutarch, as they would not then
cause me any suffering on the human side. May they all be carved
in marble or cast in bronze, but may I hear no more about them!" _Amen_.

What disgusted George Sand with her Michel was his vanity and his
craving for adulation. In July, 1837, she had come to the end
of her patience, as she wrote to Girerd. It was one of her
peculiarities to always take a third person into her confidence.
At the time of Sandeau, this third person was Emile Regnault;
at the time of Musset, Sainte-Beuve, and now it was Girerd.
"I am tired out with my own devotion, and I have fought against
my pride with all the strength of my love. I have had nothing
but ingratitude and hardness as my recompense. I have felt my love

dying away and my soul being crushed, but I am cured at last. . . ."
If only she had had all this suffering for the sake of a great man,
but this time it was only in imaginary great man.

The influence, though, that he had had over her thought was real,
and in a certain way beneficial.

At the beginning she was far from sharing Michel's ideas,
and for some of them she felt an aversion which amounted to horror.
The dogma of absolute equality seemed an absurdity to her.
The Republic, or rather the various republics then in gestation,
appeared to her a sort of Utopia, and as she saw each of her friends
making "his own little Republic" for himself, she had not much faith
in the virtue of that form of government for uniting all French people.
One point shocked her above all others in Michel's theories.
This politician did not like artists. Just as the Revolution
did not find chemists necessary, he considered that the Republic
did not need writers, painters and musicians. These were all
useless individuals, and the Republic would give them a little
surprise by putting a labourer's spade or a shoemaker's awl into
their hands. George Sand considered this idea not only barbarous,
but silly.

Time works wonders, for we have an indisputable proof that certain
of his opinions soon became hers. This proof is the Republican
catechism contained in her letters to her son Maurice, who was then
twelve years of age. He was at the Lycee Henri IV, in the same class
as the princes of Orleans. It is interesting to read what his mother
says to him concerning the father of his young school friends.
In a letter, written in December, 1835, she says: "It is certainly true
that Louis-Philippe is the enemy of humanity. . . ." Nothing less
than that! A little later, the enemy of humanity invites the young
friends of his son Montpensier to his _chateau_ for the carnival holiday.
Maurice is allowed to accept the invitation, as he wishes to, but he
is to avoid showing that gratitude which destroys independence.
"The entertainments that Montpensier offers you are favours,"
writes this mother of the Gracchi quite gravely. If he is asked
about his opinions, the child is to reply that he is rather too
young to have opinions yet, but not too young to know what opinions
he will have when he is free to have them. "You can reply,"
says his mother, "that you are Republican by race and by nature."
She then adds a few aphorisms. "Princes are our natural enemies,"
she says; and then again: "However good-hearted the child of a king
may be, he is destined to be a tyrant." All this is certainly
a great commotion to make about her little son accepting a glass

of fruit syrup and a few cakes at the house of a schoolfellow. But George Sand was then under the domination of "Robespierre in person."

Michel had brought George Sand over to republicanism. Without wishing to exaggerate the service he had rendered her by this, it appears to me that it certainly was one, if we look at it in one way. Rightly or wrongly, George Sand had seen in Michel the man who devotes himself entirely to a cause of general interest. She had learnt something in his school, and perhaps all the more thoroughly because it was in his school. She had learnt that love is in any case a selfish passion. She had learnt that another object must be given to the forces of sympathy of a generous heart, and that such an object may be the service of humanity, devotion to an idea.

This was a turn in the road, and led the writer on to leave the personal style for the impersonal style.

There was another service, too, which Michel had rendered to George Sand. He had pleaded for her in her petition for separation from her husband, and she had won her case.

Ever since George Sand had taken back her independence in 1831, her intercourse with Dudevant had not been disagreeable. She and her husband exchanged cordial letters. When he came to Paris, he made no attempt to stay with his wife, lest he should inconvenience her. "I shall put up at Hippolyte's," he says in his letter to her. "I do not want to inconvenience you in the least, nor to be inconvenienced myself, which is quite natural." He certainly was a most discreet husband. When she started for Italy, he begs her to take advantage of so good an opportunity for seeing such a beautiful country. He was also a husband ready to give good advice. Later on, he invited Pagello to spend a little time at Nohant. This was certainly the climax in this strange story.

During the months, though, that the husband and wife were together, again at Nohant, the scenes began once more. Dudevant's irritability was increased by the fact that he was always short of money, and that he was aware of his own deplorable shortcomings as a financial administrator. He had made speculations which had been disastrous. He was very credulous, as so many suspicious people are, and he had been duped by a swindler in an affair of maritime armaments. He had had all the more faith in this enterprise because a picture of the boat had been shown him on paper. He had spent ninety

thousand francs of the hundred thousand he had had, and was now living on his wife's income. Something had to be decided upon. George Sand paid his debts first, and the husband and wife then signed an agreement to the effect that their respective property should be separated. Dudevant regretted having signed this afterwards, and it was torn up after a violent scene which took place before witnesses in October, 1835. The pretext of this scene had been an order given to Maurice. In a series of letters, which have never hitherto been published, George Sand relates the various incidents of this affair. We give some of the more important passages. The following letter is to her half-brother Hippolyte, who used to be Casimir's drinking companion.

"To Hippolyte Chatiron.

"My friend, I am about to tell you some news which will reach you indirectly, and that you had better hear first from me. Instead of carrying out our agreement pleasantly and loyally, Casimir is acting with the most insane animosity towards me. Without my giving him any reason for such a thing, either by my conduct or my manner of treating him, he endeavoured to strike me. He was prevented by five persons, one of whom was Dutheil, and he then fetched his gun to shoot me. As you can imagine, he was not allowed to do this.

"On account of such treatment and of his hatred, which amounts to madness, there is no safety for me in a house to which he always has the right to come. I have no guarantee, except his own will and pleasure, that he will keep our agreement, and I cannot remain at the mercy of a man who behaves so unreasonably and indelicately to me. I have therefore decided to ask for a legal separation, and I shall no doubt obtain this. Casimir made this frightful scene the evening before leaving for Paris. On his return here, he found the house empty, and me staying at Dutheil's, by permission of the President of La Chatre. He also found a summons awaiting him on the mantelshelf. He had to make the best of it, for he knew it was no use attempting to fight against the result of his own folly, and that, by holding out, the scandal would all fall on him. He made the following stipulations, promising to adhere to them. Duthell was our intermediary. I am to allow him a pension of 3,800 francs, which, with the 1,200 francs income that he now has, will make 5,000 francs a year for him. I think this is all straightforward, as I am paying for the education of the two children. My daughter will remain under my guidance, as I understand. My son will remain at the college where he now is

until he has finished his education. During the holidays he will spend a month with his father and a month with me. In this way, there will be no contest. Dudevant will return to Paris very soon, without making any opposition, and the Court will pronounce the separation in default."[23]

[23] Communicated by M. S. Rocheblave.

The following amusing letter on the same subject was written by George Sand to Adolphe Duplomb in the _patois_ peculiar to Berry:

"DEAR HYDROGEN,

"You have been misinformed about what took place at La Chatre. Duthell never quarrelled with the Baron of Nohant-Vic. This is the true story. The baron took it into his head to strike me. Dutheil objected. Fleury and Papet also objected. The baron went to search for his gun to kill every one. Every one did not want to be killed, and so the baron said: `Well, that's enough then,' and began to drink again. That was how it all happened. No one quarrelled with him. But I had had enough. As I do not care to earn my living and then leave _my substance_ in the hands of the _diable_ and be bowed out of the house every year, while the village hussies sleep in my beds and bring their fleas into my house, I just said: `I ain't going to have any more of that,' and I went and found the big judge of La Chatre, and I says, says I: `That's how it is.' And then he says, says he: `All right.' And so he unmarried us. And I am not sorry. They say that the baron will make an appeal. I ain't knowin'. We shall see. If he does, he'll lose everything. And that's the whole story."[24]

[24] Communicated by M. Charles Duplomb.

The case was pleaded in March, 1836, at La Chatre, and in July at Bourges. The Court granted the separation, and the care of the children was attributed to George Sand.

This was not the end of the affair, though. In September, 1837, George Sand was warned that Dudevant intended to get Maurice away

from her. She sent a friend on whom she could count to take her
boy to Fontainebleau, and then went herself to watch over him.
In the mean time, Dudevant, not finding his son at Nohant, took Solange
away with him, in spite of the child's tears and the resistance
of the governess. George Sand gave notice to the police, and,
on discovering that her little daughter was sequestered at Guillery,
near Nerac, she went herself in a post-chaise to the sub-prefect,
a charming young man, who was no other than Baron Hauss-

mann. On hearing the story, he went himself with her, and,
accompanied by the lieutenant of the constabulary and the sheriff's
officer on horseback, laid siege to the house at Guillery in which
the young girl was imprisoned. Dudevant brought his daughter
to the door and handed her over to her mother, threatening at
the same time to take Maurice from her by legal authority.
The husband and wife then separated . . . delighted with each other,
according to George Sand. They very rarely met after this affair.
Dudevant certainly did not impress people very favourably.
After the separation, when matters were being finally settled,
he put in a claim for fifteen pots of jam and an iron frying-pan.
All this seems very petty.

The first use George Sand made of the liberty granted to her
by the law, in 1836, was to start off with Maurice and Solange
for Switzerland to join her friends Franz Liszt and the Comtesse
d'Agoult. George Sand had made Liszt's acquaintance through Musset.
Liszt gave music-lessons to Alfred's sister, Herminie. He was born
in 1811, so that he was seven years younger than George Sand.
He was twenty-three at the time he first met her, and their friendship
was always platonc. They had remarkable affinities of nature.
Liszt had first thought of becoming a priest. His religious
fervour was gradually transformed into an ardent love of humanity.
His early education had been neglected, and he now read eagerly.
He once asked Monsieur Cremieux, the advocate, to teach him "the
whole of French literature." On relating this to some one,
Cremieux remarked: "Great confusion seems to reign in this young
man's mind." He had been wildly excited during the movement of 1830,
greatly influenced by the Saint-Simon ideas, and was roused to enthusiasm
by Lamennals, who had just published the _Paroles d'un Croyant_.
After reading Leone Leoni, he became an admirer of George Sand.
Leone Leoni is a transposition of Manon Lescaut into the romantic style.
A young girl named Juliette has been seduced by a young seigneur,
and then discovers that this man is an abominable swindler.
If we try to imagine all the infamous things of which an _apache_

would be capable, who at the same time is devoted to the women of the pavement, we then have Leone Leoni. Juliette, who is naturally honest and straightforward, has a horror of all the atrocities and shameful things she sees. And yet, in spite of all, she comes back to Leone Leoni, and cannot love any one else. Her love is stronger than she is, and her passion sweeps away all scruples and triumphs over all scruples. The difference between the novel of the eighteenth century, which was so true to life, and this lyrical fantasy of the nineteenth century is very evident. Manon and Des Grieux always remained united to each other, for they were of equal value. Everything took place in the lower depths of society, and in the mire, as it were, of the heart. You have only to make a good man of Des Grieux, or a virtuous girl of Manon, and it is all over. The transposing of Leone Leoni is just this, and the romanticism of it delighted Liszt.

He had just given a fine example of applying romanticism to life. Marie d'Agoult, _nee_ de Flavigny, had decided, one fine day, to leave her husband and daughter for the sake of the passion that was everything to her. She accordingly started for Geneva, and Liszt joined her there.

Between these two women a friendship sprang up, which was due rather to a wish to like each other than to a real attraction or real fellow-feeling. The Comtesse d'Agoult, with her blue eyes, her slender figure, and somewhat ethereal style, was a veritable Diana, an aristocrat and a society woman. George Sand was her exact opposite. But the Comtesse d'Agoult had just "sacrificed all the vanities of the world for the sake of an artist," so that she deserved consideration. The stay at Geneva was gay and animated. The _Piffoels_ (George Sand and her children) and the _Fellows_ (Liszt and his pupil, Hermann Cohen) enjoyed scandalizing the whole hotel by their Bohemian ways. They went for an excursion to the frozen lake. At Lausanne Liszt played the organ. On returning to Paris the friends did not want to separate. In October, 1836, George Sand took up her abode on the first floor of the Hotel de France, in the Rue Laffitte, and Liszt and the Corntesse d'Agoult took a room on the floor above. The trio shared, a drawing-room between them, but in reality it became more the Comtesse d'Agoult's _salon_ than George Sand's. Lamennais, Henri Heine, Mickiewicz, Michel of Bourges and Charles Didier were among their visitors, and we are told that this _salon_, improvised in a hotel was "a reunion of the _elite_, over which the Comtesse d'Agoult presided with exquisite grace." She was a true society woman, a veritable mistress of her home, one of those who could transform a room in a hotel, a travelling carriage,

or even a prison into that exquisite thing, so dear to French polite society of yore--a _salon_.

Among the _habitues_ of Madame d'Agoult's _salon_ was Chopin. This is a new chapter in George Sand's life, and a little later on we shall be able to consider, as a whole, the importance of this intercourse with great artists as regards her intellectual development.

Before finishing our study of this epoch in her life, we must notice how much George Sand's talent had developed and blossomed out. _Mauprat_ was published in 1837, and is undoubtedly the first of her _chefs-d'oeuvre_. In her uninterrupted literary production, which continued regularly in spite of and through all the storms of her private life, there is much that is strange and second-rate and much that is excellent. _Jacques_ is an extraordinary piece of work. It was written at Venice when she was with Pagello. George Sand declared that she had neither put herself nor Musset into this book. She was nevertheless inspired by their case, and she merely transposed their ideal of renunciation. _Andre_ may be classed among the second-rate work. It is the story of a young noble who seduces a girl of the working-class. It is a souvenir of Berry, written in a home-sick mood when George Sand was at Venice. _Simon_ also belongs to the second-rate category. The portrait of Michel of Bourges can easily be traced in it. George Sand had intended doing more for Michel than this. She composed a revolutionary novel in three volumes, in his honour, entitled: _Engelwald with the high forehead_. Buloz neither cared for _Engelwald_ nor for his high forehead, and this novel was never published.

According to George Sand, when she wrote _Mauprat_ her idea was the rehabilitation of marriage. "I had just been petitioning for a separation," she says. I had, until then, been fighting against the abuses of marriage, and, as I had never developed my ideas sufficiently, I had given every one the notion that I despised the essential principles of it. On the contrary, marriage really appeared to me in all the moral beauty of those principles, and in my book I make my hero, at the age of eighty, proclaim his faithfulness to the only woman he has ever loved."

"She is the only woman I have ever loved," says Bernard de Mauprat. "No other woman has ever attracted my attention or been embraced by me. I am like that. When I love, I love for ever, in the past, in the present and in the future."

Mauprat, then, according to George Sand, was a novel with a purpose, just as _Indiana_ was, although they each had an opposite purpose. Fortunately it is nothing of the kind. This is one of those explanations arranged afterwards, peculiar sometimes to authors. The reality about all this is quite different.

In this book George Sand had just given the reins to her imagination, without allowing sociological preoccupations to spoil everything. During her excursions in Berry, she had stopped to gaze at the ruins of an old feudal castle. We all know the power of suggestion contained in those old stones, and how wonderfully they tell stories of the past they have witnessed to those persons who know how to question them. The remembrance of the _chateau_ of Roche Mauprat came to the mind of the novelist. She saw it just as it stood before the Revolution, a fortress, and at the same time a refuge for the wild lord and his eight sons, who used to sally forth and ravage the country. In French narrative literature there is nothing to surpass the first hundred pages in which George Sand introduces us to the burgraves of central France. She is just as happy when she takes us to Paris with Bernard de Mauprat, to Paris of the last days of the old _regime_. She introduces us to the society which she had learnt to know through the traditions of her grandmother. It is not only Nature, but history, which she uses as a setting for her story. How cleverly, too, she treats the analysis which is the true subject of the book, that of education through love. We see the untamed nature of Bernard de Mauprat gradually giving way under the influence of the noble and delicious Edmee.

There are typical peasants, too, in _Mauprat_. We have Marcasse, the mole-catcher, and Patience, the good-natured Patience, the rustic philosopher, well up in Epictetus and in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who has gone into the woods to live his life according to the laws of Nature and to find the wisdom of the primitive days of the world. We are told that, during the Revolution, Patience was a sort of intermediary between the _chateau_ and the cottage, and that he helped in bringing about the reign of equity in his district. It is to be hoped this was so.

In any case, it is very certain that we come across this Patience again in Russian novels with a name ending in _ow_ or _ew_. This is a proof that if the personage seems somewhat impossible, he was at any rate original, new and entertaining.

We hear people say that George Sand is no longer read. It is to be

hoped that _Mauprat_ is still read, otherwise our modern readers miss one of the finest stories in the history of novels. This, then, is the point at which we have arrived in the evolution of George Sand's genius. There may still be modifications in her style, and her talent may still be refreshed under various influences, but with _Mauprat_ she took her place in the first rank of great storytellers.}

VI

A CASE OF MATERNAL AFFECTION IN LOVE

CHOPIN

We have passed over George Sand's intercourse with Liszt and Madame d'Agoult very rapidly. One of Balzac's novels gives us an opportunity of saying a few more words about it.

Balzac had been introduced to George Sand by Jules Sandeau. At the time of her rupture with his friend, Balzac had sided entirely with him. In the _Lettres a l'Etrangere_, we see the author of the _Comedie humaine_ pouring out his indignation with the blue stocking, who was so cruel in her love, in terms which were not extremely elegant. Gradually, and when he knew more about the adventure, his anger cooled down. In March, 1838, he gave Madame Zulma Carraud an account of a visit to Nohant. He found his comrade, George Sand, in her dressing-gown, smoking a cigar by her fireside after dinner.

"She had some pretty yellow slippers on, ornamented with fringe, some fancy stockings and red trousers. So much for the moral side. Physically, she had doubled her chin like a canoness. She had not a single white hair, in spite of all her fearful misfortunes; her dusky complexion had not changed. Her beautiful eyes were just as bright, and she looked just as stupid as ever when she was thinking. . . ."

This is George Sand in her thirty-fifth year, as she was at the time of the fresh adventure we are about to relate.

Balzac continues by giving us a few details about the life of the authoress. It was very much like his own, except that Balzac went to bed at six o'clock and got up at midnight, and George

Sand went to bed at six in the morning and got up at noon.
He adds the following remark, which shows us the state of her feelings:

"She is now in a very quiet retreat, and condemns both marriage and love,
because she has had nothing but disappointment in both herself.
Her man was a rare one, that was really all."

In the course of their friendly conversation, George Sand gave him
the subject for a novel which it would be rather awkward for her
to write. The novel was to be _Galeriens_ or _Amours forces_.
These "galley-slaves" of love were Liszt and the Comtesse d'Agoult,
who had been with George Sand at Chamonix, Paris and Nohant.
It was very evident that she could not write the novel herself.

Balzac accordingly wrote it, and it figures in the _Comedie humaine
as Beatrix_. Beatrix is the Comtesse d'Agoult, the inspirer,
and Liszt is the composer Conti.

"You have no idea yet of the awful rights that a love which no
longer exists gives to a man over a woman. The convict is always
under the domination of the companion chained to him. I am lost,
and must return to the convict prison," writes Balzac in this book.
Then, too, there is no mistaking his portrait of Beatrix.
The fair hair that seems to give light, the forehead which
looks transparent, the sweet, charming face, the long, wonderfully
shaped neck, and, above and beyond all, that air of a princess,
in all this we can easily recognize "the fair, blue-eyed Peri."
Not content with bringing this illustrious couple into his novel,
Balzac introduces other contemporaries. Claude Vignon (who, although
his special work was criticism, made a certain place for himself
in literature) and George Sand herself appear in this book.
She is Felicite des Touches, and her pen name is Camille Maupin.
"Camille is an artist," we are told; "she has genius, and she leads
an exceptional life such as could not be judged in the same way
as an ordinary existence." Some one asks how she writes her books,
and the answer is: "Just in the same way as you do your
woman's work, your netting or your tapestry." She is said to have
the intelligence of an angel and even more heart than talent.
With her fixed, set gaze, her dark complexion and her masculine ways,
she is the exact antithesis of the fair Beatrix. She is constantly
being compared to the latter, and is evidently preferred to her.
It is very evident from whom Balzac gets his information, and it
is also evident that the friendship between the two women has
cooled down.

The cause of the coolness between them was George Sand's infatuation for Chopin, whom she had known through Liszt and Madame d'Agoult. George Sand wrote to Liszt from Nohant, in March, 1837: "Tell Chopin that I hope he will come with you. Marie cannot live without him, and I adore him." In April she wrote to Madame d'Agoult: "Tell Chopin that I idolize him." We do not know whether Madame d'Agoult gave the message, but she certainly replied: "Chopin coughs with infinite grace. He is an irresolute man. The only thing about him that is permanent is his cough." This is certainly very feminine in its ferociousness.

At the time when he came into George Sand's life, Chopin, the composer and virtuoso, was the favourite of Parisian _salons_, the pianist in vogue. He was born in 1810, so that he was then twenty-seven years of age. His success was due, in the first place, to his merits as an artist, and nowhere is an artist's success so great as in Paris. Chopin's delicate style was admirably suited to the dimensions and to the atmosphere of a _salon_.[25]

[25] As regards Chopin, I have consulted a biography by Liszt, a study by M. Camille Bellaigue and the volume by M. Elie Poiree in the _Collection des musiciens celebres_, published by H. Laurens.

He confessed to Liszt that a crowd intimidated him, that he felt suffocated by all the quick breathing and paralyzed by the inquisitive eyes turned on him. "You were intended for all this," he adds, "as, if you do not win over your public, you can at least overwhelm it."

Chopin was made much of then in society. He was fragile and delicate, and had always been watched over and cared for. He had grown up in a peaceful, united family, in one of those simple homes in which all the details of everyday life become less prosaic, thanks to an innate distinction of sentiment and to religious habits. Prince Radz'will had watched over Chopin's education. He had been received when quite young in the most aristocratic circles, and "the most celebrated beauties had smiled on him as a youth." Social life, then, and feminine influence had thus helped to make him ultra refined. It was very evident to every one who met him that he was a well-bred man, and this is quickly observed, even with pianists. On arriving he made a good impression, he was well dressed, his white

gloves were immaculate. He was reserved and somewhat languid.
Every one knew that he was delicate, and there was a rumour of an
unhappy love affair. It was said that he had been in love with a girl,
and that her family had refused to consent to her marriage with him.
People said he was like his own music, the dreamy, melancholy themes
seemed to accord so well with the pale young face of the composer.
The fascination of the languor which seemed to emanate from
the man and from his work worked its way, in a subtle manner,
into the hearts of his hearers. Chopin did not care to know Lelia.
He did not like women writers, and he was rather alarmed at this one.
It was Liszt who introduced them. In his biography of Chopin, he tells
us that the extremely sensitive artist, who was so easily alarmed,
dreaded "this woman above all women, as, like a priestess of Delphi,
she said so many things that the others could not have said.
He avoided her and postponed the introduction. Madame Sand
had no idea that she was feared as a sylph. . . ." She made
the first advances. It is easy to see what charmed her in him.
In the first place, he appealed to her as he did to all women, and then,
too, there was the absolute contrast of their two opposite natures.
She was all force, of an expansive, exuberant nature. He was
very discreet, reserved and mysterious. It seems that the Polish
characteristic is to lend oneself, but never to give oneself away,
and one of Chopin's friends said of him that he was "more Polish
than Poland itself." Such a contrast may prove a strong attraction,
and then, too, George Sand was very sensitive to the charm of music.
But what she saw above all in Chopin was the typical artist, just as she
understood the artist, a dreamer, lost in the clouds, incapable of
any activity that was practical, a "lover of the impossible."
And then, too, he was ill. When Musset left Venice, after all the
atrocious nights she had spent at his bedside, she wrote: "Whom shall
I have now to look after and tend?" In Chopin she found some one
to tend.

About this time, she was anxious about the health of her son Maurice,
and she thought she would take her family to Majorca. This was
a lamentable excursion, but it seemed satisfactory at first.
They travelled by way of Lyons, Avignon, Vaucluse and Nimes.
At Perpignan, Chopin arrived, "as fresh as a rose." "Our journey,"
wrote George Sand, "seems to be under the most favourable conditions."
They then went on to Barcelona and to Palma. In November, 1838,
George Sand wrote a most enthusiastic letter: "It is poetry, solitude,
all that is most artistic and _chique_ on earth. And what skies,
what a country; we are delighted."[26] The disenchantment was soon
to begin, though. The first difficulty was to find lodgings,
and the second to get furniture. There was no wood to burn and

there was no linen to be had. It took two months to have a pair of tongs made, and it cost twenty-eight pounds at the customs for a piano to enter the country. With great difficulty, the forlorn travellers found a country-house belonging to a man named Gomez, which they were able to rent. It was called the "Windy House." The wind did not inconvenience them like the rain, which now commenced. Chopin could not endure the heat and the odour of the fires. His disease increased, and this was the origin of the great tribulations that were to follow.

[26] The following is an unpublished letter to Madame Buloz:

Monday 13th.

MY DEAR CHRISTINE,

"I have only been at Palma four days. My journey has been very satisfactory, but rather long and difficult until we were out of France. I took up my pen (as people say) twenty times over to write the last five or six pages for which _Spiridion_ has been waiting for six months. It is not the easiest thing in the world, I can assure you, to give the conclusion of one's own religious belief, and when travelling it is impossible. At twenty different places I have resolved to think it solemnly over and to write down my conclusion. But these stoppages were the most tiring part of our journey. There were visits, dinners, walks, curiosities, ruins, the Vaucluse fountain, Reboul and the Nimes arena, the Barcelona cathedrals, dinners on board the war-ships, the Italian theatres of Spain (and what theatres and what Italians!), guitars and Heaven knows what beside. There was the moonlight on the sea and above all Valma and Mallorca, the most delightful place in the world, and all this kept me terribly far away from philosophy and theology. Fortunately I have found some superb convents here all in ruins, with palm-trees, aloes and the cactus in the midst of broken mosaics and crumbling cloisters, and this takes me back to _Spiridion_. For the last three days I have had a rage for work, which I cannot satisfy yet, as we have neither fire nor lodging. There is not an inn in Palma, no house to let and no furniture to be bought. On arriving here people first have to buy some ground, then build, and afterwards send for furniture. After this, permission to live somewhere has to be obtained from Government, and after five or six years one can think about opening one's trunk and changing one's chemise, whilst waiting for permission from the Customs to have some shoes and handkerchiefs passed. For the last four days then we have

spent our time going from door to door, as we do not want to sleep in the open air. We hope now to be settled in about three days, as a miracle has taken place. For the first time in the memory of man, there is a furnished house to let in Mallorca, a charming country-house in a delightful desert. . . ." {The end of footnote [26]}

At that time Spain was the very last country in which to travel with a consumptive patient. In a very fine lecture, the subject of which was _The Fight with Tubcrculosis_,[27] Dr. Landouzy proves to us that ever since the sixteenth century, in the districts of the Mediterranean, in Spain, in the Balearic Isles and throughout the kingdom of Naples, tuberculosis was held to be contagious, whilst the rest of Europe was ignorant of this contagion. Extremely severe rules had been laid down with regard to the measures to be taken for avoiding the spread of this disease. A consumptive patient was considered as a kind of plague-stricken individual. Chateaubriand had experienced the inconveniences of this scare during his stay in Rome with Madame de Beaumont, who died there of consumption, at the beginning of the winter of 1803. George Sand, in her turn, was to have a similar experience. When Chopin was convicted of consumption, "which," as she writes, "was equivalent to the plague, according to the Spanish doctors, with their foregone conclusions about contagion," their landlord simply turned them out of his house. They took refuge in the Chartreuse monastery of Valdemosa, where they lived in a cell. The site was very beautiful. By a wooded slope a terrace could be reached, from which there was a view of the sea on two sides.

[27] L. Landouzy of the Academy of Medecine, _La Lutte contre la tuberculose_, published by L. Maretheux.

"We are planted between heaven and earth," wrote George Sand. "The clouds cross our garden at their own will and pleasure, and the eagles clamour over our heads."

A cell in this monastery was composed of three rooms: the one in the middle was intended for reading, prayer and meditation, the other two were the bedroom and the workshop. All three rooms looked on to a garden. Reading, rest and manual labour made up the life of these men. They lived in a limited space certainly, but the view stretched out infinitely, and prayer went up direct to God.

Among the ruined buildings of the enormous monastery there was a cloister still standing, through which the wind howled desperately. It was like the scenery in the nuns' act in _Robert le Diable_. All this made the old monastery the most romantic place in the world.[28]

[28] George Sand to Madame Buloz. Postscript to the letter already quoted:

"I am leaving for the country where I have a furnished house with a garden, magnificently situated for 50 francs a month. I have also taken a cell, that is three rooms and a garden for 35 francs a year in the Chartreuse of Valdemosa, a magnificent, immense monastery quite lonely in the midst of mountains. Our garden is full of oranges and lemons. The trees break under them. We have hedges of cactus twenty to thirty feet high, the sea is about a mile and a half away. We have a donkey to take us to the town, roads inaccessible to visitors, immense cloisters and the most beautiful architecture, a charming church, a cemetery with a palm-tree and a stone cross like the one in the third act of _Robert le Diable_. Then, too, there are beds of shrubs cut in form. All this we have to ourselves with an old woman to wait on us, and the sacristan who is warder, steward, majordomo and Jack-of-all-trades. I hope we shall have ghosts. The door of my cell leads into an enormous cloister, and when the wind slams the door it is like a cannon going off through all the monastery. I am delighted with everything, and fancy I shall be more often in the cell than in the country-house, which is about six miles away. You see that I have plenty of poetry and solitude, so that if I do not work I shall be a stupid thing." {The end of footnote [28]}

The only drawback was that it was most difficult to live there. There was no way of getting warm. The stove was a kind of iron furnace which gave out a terrible odour, and did not prevent the rooms from being so damp that clothes mildewed while they were being worn. There was no way of getting proper food either. They had to eat the most indigestible things. There were five sorts of meat certainly, but these were pig, pork, bacon, ham and pickled pork. This was all cooked in dripping, pork-dripping, of course, or in rancid oil. Still more than this, the natives refused, not only to serve the unfortunate travellers, but to sell them the actual necessaries of life. The fact was, they had scandalized the Majorcan people. All Majorca was indignant because Solange, who at that time was nine years old,

roamed about the mountains _disguised as a man_. Added to this, when the horn sounded which called people to their devotions in the churches, these strange inhabitants of the old Valdemosa monastery never took any more notice than pagans. People kept clear of them. Chopin suffered with the cold, the cooking made him sick, and he used to have fits of terror in the cloisters. They had to leave hastily. The only steamboat from the island was used to transport the pigs which are the pride and wealth of Majorca. People were only taken as an extra. It was, therefore, in the company of these squealing, ill-smelling creatures that the invalid crossed the water. When he arrived at Barcelona, he looked like a spectre and was spitting blood. George Sand was quite right in saying that this journey was an "awful fiasco."

Art and literature did not gain much either by this expedition. George Sand finished her novel entitled _Spiridion_ at Valdemosa. She had commenced it before starting for Spain. In a volume on _Un hiver a Majorque_ she gave some fine descriptions, and also a harsh accusation of the monks, whom she held responsible for all the mishaps of the Sand caravan. She considered that the Majorcans had been brutalized and fanaticized, thanks to their influence. As to Chopin, he was scarcely in a state to derive any benefit from such a journey, and he certainly did not get any. He did not thoroughly appreciate the beauties of nature, particularly of Majorcan nature. In a letter to one of his friends he gives the following description of their habitation:--

"Between rocks and sea, in a great deserted monastery, in a cell, the doors of which are bigger than the carriage entrances to the houses in Paris, you can imagine me, without white gloves, and no curl in my hair, as pale as usual. My cell is the shape of a large-sized bier. . . ."

This certainly does not sound very enthusiastic. The question is whether he composed anything at all at Valdemosa. Liszt presents him to us improvising his Prelude in B flat minor under the most dramatic circumstances. We are told that one day, when George Sand and her children had started on an excursion, they were surprised by a thunderstorm. Chopin had stayed at home in the monastery, and, terrified at the danger he foresaw for them, he fainted. Before they reached home he had improvised his _Prelude_, in which he has put all his terror and the nervousness due to his disease. It appears, though, that all this is a legend, and that there is not a single echo of the stay at Valdemosa in Chopin's work.

The deplorable journey to Majorca dates
from November, 1838 to March, 1839.
The intimacy between George Sand and Chopin continued eight years more.

In the summer Chopin stayed it Nohant. Eugene Delacroix, who was paying a visit there too, describes his presence as follows:
"At times, through the window opening on to the garden, we get wafts of Chopin's music, as he too is at work. It is mingled with the songs of the nightingales and with the perfume of the rose trees."

Chopin did not care much for Nohant. In the first place, he only liked the country for about a fortnight at a time, which is very much like not caring for it at all. Then what made him detest the country were the inhabitants. Hippolyte Chatiron was terrible after he had been drinking. He was extremely effusive and cordial.

In the winter they first lived in the Rue Pigalle. George Sand used to receive Pierre Leroux, Louis Blanc, Edgar Quinet, Etienne Arago, and many other men. Chopin, who was not very intellectual, felt ill at ease amongst all these literary men, these reformers, arguers and speechifiers. In 1842, they emigrated to the Square d'Orleans. There was a sort of little colony established there, consisting of Alexandre Dumas, Dantan the caricaturist, the Viardots, Zimmermann, and the wife of the Spanish consul, Madame Marliani, who had attracted them all there. They took their meals together. It was a regular phalinstery, and Chopin had very elegant tastes!

We must give George Sand credit for looking after him with admirable devotion. She certainly went on nursing her "invalid," or her "dear skeleton," as she called him, but her infatuation had been over for a long time. The absolute contrast of two natures may be attractive at first, but the attraction does not last, and, when the first enthusiasm is over, the logical consequence is that they become disunited. This was what Liszt said in rather an odd but energetic way. He points out all that there was "intolerably incompatible, diametrically opposite and secretly antipathetic between two natures which seemed to have been mutually drawn to each other by a sudden and superficial attraction, for the sake of repulsing each other later on with all the force of inexpressible sorrow and boredom." Illness had embittered Chopin's character. George Sand used to say that "when he was angry he was terrifying." He was very intelligent, too, and delighted in quizzing people for whom he did not care. Solange and Maurice were now older, and this made the situation somewhat delicate.

Chopin, too, had a mania for meddling with family matters. He quarrelled one day with Maurice. Another day George Sand was annoyed with her son-in-law Clesinger and with her daughter Solange, and Chopin took their side. This was the cause of their quarrel; it was the last drop that made the cup of bitterness overflow.

The following is a fragment of a letter which George Sand sent to Grzymala, in 1847: "For seven years I have lived with him as a virgin. If any woman on earth could inspire him with absolute confidence, I am certainly that woman, but he has never understood. I know, too, that many people accuse me of having worn him out with my violent sensuality, and others accuse me of having driven him to despair by my freaks. I believe you know how much truth there is in all this. He himself complains to me that I am killing him by the privations I insist upon, and I feel certain that I should kill him by acting otherwise."[29]

[29] Communicated by M. Rocheblave.

It has been said that when Chopin was at Nohant he had a village girl there as his mistress. We do not care to discuss the truth of this statement.

It is interesting to endeavour to characterize the nature of this episode in George Sand's sentimental life. She helps us herself in this. As a romantic writer she neglected nothing which she could turn into literature. She therefore made an analysis of her own case, worked out with the utmost care, and published it in one of her books which is little read now. The year of the rupture was 1847, and before the rupture had really occurred, George Sand brought out a novel entitled _Lucrezia Floriani_. In this book she traces the portrait of Chopin as Prince Karol. She denied, of course, that it was a portrait, but contemporaries were not to be deceived, and Liszt gives several passages from _Lucrezia Floriani_ in his biography of the musician. The decisive proof was that Chopin recognized himself, and that he was greatly annoyed.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing disagreeable about this portrait. The following fragments are taken from it: "Gentle, sensitive, exquisite in all things, at the age of fifteen he had all the charms of youth, together with the gravity of a riper age. He remained delicate in body ind mind. The lack of muscular development caused him to preserve his fascinating beauty. . . . He was something

like one of those ideal creatures which mediaeval poetry used for the ornamentation of Christian temples. Nothing could have been purer and at the same time more enthusiastic than his ideas. . . . He was always lost in his dreams, and had no sense of reality. . . ." His exquisite politeness was then described, and the ultra acuteness and nervosity which resulted in that power of divination which he possessed. For a portrait to be living, it must have some faults as well as qualities. His delineator does not forget to mention the attitude of mystery in which the Prince took refuge whenever his feelings were hurt. She speaks also of his intense susceptibility. "His wit was very brilliant," she says; "it consisted of a kind of subtle mocking shrewdness, not really playful, but a sort of delicate, bantering gaiety." It may have been to the glory of Prince Karol to resemble Chopin, but it was also quite creditable to Chopin to have been the model from which this distinguished neurasthenic individual was taken.

Prince Karol meets a certain Lucrezia Floriani, a rich actress and courtesan. She is six years older than he is, somewhat past her prime, and now leading a quiet life. She has done with love and love affairs, or, at least, she thinks so. "The fifteen years of passion and torture, which she had gone through, seemed to her now so cruel that she was hoping to have them counted double by the supreme Dispenser of our trials." It was, of course, natural that she should acknowledge God's share in the matter. We are told that "implacable destiny was not satisfied," so that when Karol makes his first declaration, Lucrezia yields to him, but at the same time she puts a suitable colouring on her fall. There are many ways of loving, and it is surely noble and disinterested in a woman to love a man as his mother. "I shall love him," she says, kissing the young Prince's pale face ardently, "but it will be as his mother loved him, just as fervently and just as faithfully. This maternal affection, etc. . . ." Lucrezia Floriani had a way of introducing the maternal instinct everywhere. She undertook to encircle her children and Prince Karol with the same affection, and her notions of therapeutics were certainly somewhat strange and venturesome, for she fetched her children to the Prince's bedside. "Karol breathed more freely," we are told, "when the children were there. Their pure breath mingling with their mother's made the air milder and more gentle for his feverish lungs." This we shall not attempt to dispute. It is the study of the situation, though, that forms the subject of _Lucrezia Floriani_. George Sand gives evidence of wonderful clear-sightedness and penetration in the art of knowing herself.

She gives us warning that it is "a sad story and sorrowful truth" that she is telling us. She has herself the better _role_ of the two naturally. It could not have been on that, account that Chopin' was annoyed. He was a Pole, and therefore doubly chivalrous, so that such an objection would have been unworthy of a lover. What concerns us is that George Sand gives, with great nicety, the, exact causes of the rupture. In the first place, Karol was jealous of Lucrezia's stormy past; then his refined nature shrank from certain of her comrades of a rougher kind. The invalid was irritated by her robust health, and by the presence and, we might almost say, the rivalry of the children. Prince Karol finds them nearly always in his way, and he finally takes a dislike to them. There comes a moment when Lucrezia sees herself obliged to choose between the two kinds of maternity, the natural kind and the maternity according to the convention of lovers.

The special kind of sentiment, then, between George Sand and Chopin, Just as between Lucrezia and Prince Karol, was just this: love with maternal affection. This is extremely difficult to define, as indeed is everything which is extremely complex. George Sand declares that her reason for not refusing intimacy with Chopin was that she considered this in the light of a duty and as a safeguard. "One duty more," she writes, "in a life already so full, a life in which I was overwhelmed with fatigue, seemed to me one chance more of arriving at that austerity towards which I felt myself being drawn with a kind of religious enthusiasm."[30]

[30] _Histoire de via vie._

We can only imagine that she was deceiving herself. To accept a lover for the sake of giving up lovers altogether seems a somewhat heroic means to an end, but also somewhat deceptive. It is certainly true that there was something more in this love than the attraction she felt for Musset and for Michel. In the various forms and degrees of our feelings, there is nothing gained by attempting to establish decided divisions and absolute demarcations for the sake of classifying them all. Among sentiments which are akin, but which our language distinguishes when defining them, there may be some mixture or some confusion with regard to their origin. Alfred de Vigny gives us in _Samson_, as the origin of love, even in man, the remembrance of his mother's caresses:

Il revera toujours a la chaleur du sein.

It seems, therefore, that we cannot apply the same reasoning, with regard to love, when referring to the love of a man or of a woman. With the man there is more pride of possession, and with the woman there is more tenderness, more pity, more charity. All this leads us to the conclusion that maternal affection in love is not an unnatural sentiment, as has so often been said, or rather a perversion of sentiment. It is rather a sentiment in which too much instinct and heredity are mingled in a confused way. The object of the education of feeling is to arrive at discerning and eliminating the elements which interfere with the integrity of it. Rousseau called Madame de Warens his mother, but he was a man who was lacking in good taste. George Sand frequently puts into her novels this conception of love which we see her put into practice in life. It is impossible when analyzing it closely not to find something confused and disturbing in it which somewhat offends us.

It now remains for us to study what influence George Sand's friendship with some of the greatest artists of her times had on her works. Beside Liszt and Chopin, she knew Delacroix, Madame Dorval, Pauline Viardot, Nourrit and Lablache. Through them she went into artistic circles. Some of her novels are stories of the life of artists. _Les Maitres Mosaistes_ treats of the rivalry between two studios. _La derniere Aldini_ is the story of a handsome gondolier who, as a tenor, turned the heads of patrician women. The first part of _Consuelo_ takes us back to the singing schools and theatres of Venice in the eighteenth century, and introduces us to individuals taken from life and cleverly drawn. We have Comte Zustiniani, the dilettante, a wealthy patron of the fine arts; Porpora, the old master, who looks upon his art as something sacred; Corilla, the prima donna, annoyed at seeing a new star appear; Anzoleto, the tenor, who is jealous because he gets less applause than his friend; and above and beyond all the others Consuelo, good kind Consuelo, the sympathetic singer.

The theatres of Venice seem to be very much like those of Paris and of other places. We have the following sketch of the vanity of the comedian. "Can a man be jealous of a woman's advantages? Can a lover dislike his sweetheart to have success? A man can certainly be jealous of a woman's advantages when that man is a vain artist, and a lover may hate his sweetheart to have any success if they both belong to the theatre. A comedian is not a man, Consuelo, but a woman. He lives on his sickly vanity; he only thinks of satisfying that vanity, and he works for the sake of intoxicating himself with vanity.

A woman's beauty is apt to take attention from him and a woman's talent may cause his talent to be thrown in the background. A woman is his rival, or rather he is the rival of a woman. He has all the little meannesses, the caprices, the exigences and the weak points of a coquette." Such is the note of this picture of things and people in the theatrical world. How can we doubt its veracity!

At any rate, the general idea that George Sand had of the artist was exactly the idea adopted by romanticism. We all know what a being set apart and free from all social and moral laws, what a "monster" romanticism made of the artist. It is one of its dogmas that the necessities of art are incompatible with the conditions of a regular life. An artist, for instance, cannot be _bourgeois_, as he is the exact opposite. We have Kean's speech in Dumas' drama, entitled _Kean, or Disorder and Genius._

"An actor," he says, "must know all the passions, so that he may express them as he should. I study them in myself." And then he adds: "That is what you call, orderly! And what is to become of genius while I am being orderly?"

All this is absurd. The artist is not the man who has felt the most, but the man best gifted for imagining the various states of mind and feeling and for expressing them. We know, too, that an irregular life is neither the origin nor the stamp of extraordinary intellectual worth. All the cripples of Bohemian life prove to us that genius is not the outcome of that kind of life, but that, on the contrary, such life is apt to paralyze talent. It is very convenient, though, for the artist and for every other variety of "superior beings" to make themselves believe that ordinary morals are not for them. The best argument we can have against this theory is the case of George Sand. The artist, in her case, was eminently a very regular and hard-working _bourgeois_ woman.

The art in which George Sand gave evidence of the surest taste was music. That is worthy of notice. In one of her _Lettres d'un voyageur_, she celebrates Liszt attacking the _Dies irae_ on the Fribourg organ. She devotes another letter to the praise of Meyer-beer. She has analyzed the different forms of musical emotion in several of her books. One of the ideas dear to romanticism was that of the union and fusion of all the arts. The writer can, and in a certain way he ought, to produce with words the same effects that the painter does with colours and the sculptor with lines. We all know how much

literature romantic painters and sculptors have put into their art. The romantic writers were less inclined to accord the same welcome to music as to the plastic arts. Theophile Gautier is said to have exclaimed that music was "the most disagreeable and the dearest of all the arts." Neither Lamartine, Hugo, nor any other of the great writers of that period was influenced by music. Musset was the first one to be impassioned by it, and this may have been as much through his dandyism as from conviction.

_Fille de la douleur, Harmonie, Harmonie,

Langue que fiour l'amour invents le ginie,

Qui nous viens d'Italie, et qui lui vins des cieux,

Douce langue du coeur, la seule ou la pensiee,

Cette vierge craintive et d'une ombre ofensie,

Passe en gardant son voile et sans craindre les eux,

Qui sait ce qu'un enfant peut entendre et peut dire

Dans tes soupirs divins nes de l'air qu'il respire,

Tristes comme son coeur et doux comme sa voix?_

George Sand, who agreed with Musset, claimed for "the most beautiful of all the arts," the honour of being able to paint "all the shades of sentiment and all the phases of passion." "Music," she says, "can express everything. For describing scenes of nature it has ideal colours and lines, neither exact nor yet too minute, but which are all the more vaguely and delightfully poetical."[31]

[31] Eleventh _Lettre d'un voyageur_: To Giacomo Meyerbeer.

As examples of music in literature we have George Sand's phrase, more lyrical and musical than picturesque. We have, too, the gentle, soothing strophes of Sully Prudhomme and the vague melody of the Verlaine songs: "_De la musique avant toute chose_." It would be absurd to exaggerate the influence exercised by George Sand,

and to attribute to her an importance which does not belong to her, over poetical evolution. It is only fair to say, though, that music, which was looked upon suspiciously for so long a time by classical writers of sane and sure taste, has completely invaded our present society, so that we are becoming more and more imbued with it. George Sand's predilection for modern art is another feature which makes her one of us, showing that her tendencies were very marked for things of the present day.

VII

THE HUMANITARIAN DREAM

PIERRE LEROUX--SOCIALISTIC NOVELS

Hitherto we have seen George Sand put into her work her sufferings, her protests as a woman, and her dreams as an artist. But the nineteenth-century writer did not confine his ambitions to this modest task. He belonged to a corporation which counted among its members Voltaire and Rousseau. The eighteenth-century philosophers had changed the object of literature. Instead of an instrument of analysis, they had made of it a weapon for combat, an incomparable weapon for attacking institutions and for overthrowing governments. The fact is, that from the time of the Restoration we shall scarcely meet with a single writer, from the philosopher to the vaudevillist, and from the professor to the song-maker, who did not wish to act as a torch on the path of humanity. Poets make revolutions, and show Plato how wrong he was in driving them away from his Republic. Sophocles was appointed a general at Athens for having written a good tragedy, and so novelists, dramatists, critics and makers of puns devoted themselves to making laws. George Sand was too much a woman of her times to keep aloof from such a movement. We shall now have to study her in her socialistic _role_.

We can easily imagine on what side her sympathies were. She had always been battling with institutions, and it seemed to her that institutions were undoubtedly in the wrong. She had proved that there was a great deal of suffering in the world, and as human nature is good at bottom, she decided that society was all wrong. She was a novelist, and she therefore considered that the most satisfactory solutions are those in which imagination and feeling

play a great part. She also considered that the best politics
are those which are the most like a novel. We must now follow her,
step by step, along the various roads leading to Utopia.
The truth is, that in that great manufactory of systems and that
storehouse of panaceas which the France of Louis-Philippe had become,
the only difficulty was to choose between them all.

The first, in date, of the new gospels was that of the Saint-Simonians.
When George Sand arrived in Paris, Saint-Simonism was one of the
curiosities offered to astonished provincials. It was a parody
of religion, but it was organized in a church with a Father
in two persons, Bazard and Enfantin. The service took place
in a _bouis-bouis_. The costume worn consisted of white trousers,
a red waistcoat and a blue tunic. On the days when the Father came
down from the heights of Menilmontant with his children, there was
great diversion for the people in the street. An important thing
was lacking in the organization of the Saint-Simonians. In order
to complete the "sacerdotal couple," a woman was needed to take her
place next the Father. A Mother was asked for over and over again.
It was said that she would soon appear, but she was never forthcoming.
Saint-Simon had tried to tempt Madame de Stael.

"I am an extraordinary man," he said to her, "and you are just as
extraordinary as a woman. You and I together would have a still
more extraordinary child." Madame de Stael evidently did not care
to take part in the manufacture of this prodigy. When George Sand's
first novels appeared, the Saint-Simonians were full of hope.
This was the woman they had been waiting for, the free woman,
who having meditated on the lot of her sisters would formulate
the Declaration of the rights and duties of woman. Adolphe Gueroult
was sent to her. He was the editor of the _Opinion nationale_.
George Sand had a great fund of common sense, though, and once more
the little society awaited the Mother in vain. It was finally decided
that she should be sought for in the East. A mission was organized,
and messengers were arrayed in white, as a sign of the vow of chastity,
with a pilgrim's staff in their hand. They begged as they went along,
and slept sometimes outdoors, but more often at the police-station.
George Sand was not tempted by this kind of maternity, but she kept
in touch with the Saint-Simonians. She was present at one of their
meetings at Menilmontant. Her published _Corrspondance_ contains
a letter addressed by her to the Saint-Simonian family in Paris.
As a matter of fact, she had received from it, on the 1st
of January, 1836, a large collection of presents. There were in all
no less than fifty-nine articles, among which were the following:
a dress-box, a pair of boots, a thermometer, a carbine-carrier,

a pair of trousers and a corset.

Saint-Simonism was universally jeered at, but it is quite a mistake to think that ridicule is detrimental in France. On the contrary, it is an excellent means of getting anything known and of spreading the knowledge of it abroad; it is in reality a force. Saint-Simonism is at the root of many of the humanitarian doctrines which were to spring up from its ashes. One of its essential doctrines was the diffusion of the soul throughout all humanity, and another that of being born anew. Enfantin said: "I can feel St. Paul within me. He lives within me." Still another of its doctrines was that of the rehabilitation of the flesh. Saint-Simonism proclaimed the equality of man and woman, that of industry and art and science, and the necessity of a fresh repartition of wealth and of a modification of the laws concerning property. It also advocated increasing the attributions of the State considerably. It was, in fact, the first of the doctrines offering to the lower classes, by way of helping them to bear their wretched misery, the ideal of happiness here below, lending a false semblance of religion to the desire for material well-being. George Sand had one vulnerable point, and that was her generosity. By making her believe that she was working for the outcasts of humanity, she could be led anywhere, and this was what happened.

Among other great minds affected by the influence of Saint-Simonism, it is scarcely surprising to find Lamennais. When George Sand first knew him, he was fifty-three years of age. He had broken with Rome, and was the apocalyptic author of _Paroles d'un croyant_. He put into his revolutionary faith all the fervour of his loving soul, a soul that had been created for apostleship, and to which the qualification of "a disaffected cathedral" certainly applied.

After the famous trial, Liszt took him to call on George Sand in her attic. This was in 1835. She gives us the following portrait of him: "Monsieur de Lamennais is short, thin, and looks ill. He seems to have only the feeblest breath of life in his body, but how his face beams. His nose is too prominent for his small figure and for his narrow face. If it were not for this nose out of all proportion, he would be handsome. He was very easily entertained. A mere nothing made him laugh, and how heartily he laughed."[32] It was the gaiety of the seminarist, for Monsieur Feli always remained the _Abbe_ de Lamennais. George Sand had a passionate admiration for him. She took his side against any one who attacked him in her third _Lettre d'un voyageur_, in her _Lettre a Lerminier_, and in her article on _Amshaspands et Darvands_.

This is the title of a book by Lamennais. The extraordinary names refer to the spirits of good and evil in the mythology of Zoroaster. George Sand proposed to pronounce them _Chenapans et Pedants_. Although she had a horror of journalism, she agreed to write in Lamennais' paper, _Le Monde._

[32] _Histoire de ma vie._

"He is so good and I like him so much," she writes, "that I would give him as much of my blood and of my ink as he wants."[33] She did not have to give him any of her blood, and he did not accept much of her ink. She commenced publishing her celebrated _Lettres a Marcie_ in _Le Monde_. We have already spoken of these letters, in order to show how George Sand gradually attenuated the harshness of her early feminism.

[33] _Correspondance_: To Jules Janin, February 15, 1837.

These letters alarmed Lamennais, nevertheless, and she was obliged to discontinue them. Feminism was the germ of their disagreement. Lamennais said: "She does not forgive St. Paul for having said: `Wives, obey your husbands.'" She continued to acknowledge him as "one of our saints," but "the father of our new Church" gradually broke away from her and her friends, and expressed his opinion about her with a severity and harshness which are worthy of note.

Lamennais' letters to Baron de Vitrolles contain many allusions to George Sand, and they are most uncomplimentary.

"I hear no more about Carlotta" (Madame Marliani), he writes, "nor about George Sand and Madame d'Agoult. I know there has been a great deal of quarrelling among them. They are as fond of each other as Lesage's two _diables_, one of whom said: `That reconciled us, we kissed each other, and ever since then we have been mortal enemies.'" He also tells that there is a report that in her novel, entitled _Horace_, she has given as unflattering a portrait as possible of her dear, sweet, excellent friend,

Madame d'Agoult, the _Arabella_ of the _Lettres d'un voyageur_. "The portraits continue," he writes, "all true to life, without being like each other." In the same book, _Horace_, there is a portrait of Mallefille, who was beloved "during one quarter of the moon," and abhorred afterwards. He concludes the letter with the following words: "Ah, how fortunate I am to be forgotten by those people! I am not afraid of their indifference, but I should be afraid of their attentions. . . . Say what you like, my dear friend, those people do not tempt me at all. Futility and spitefulness dissolved in a great deal of _ennui_, is a bad kind of medicine." He then goes on to make fun, in terms that it is difficult to quote, of the silly enthusiasm of a woman like Marliani, and even of George Sand, for the theories of Pierre Leroux, of which they did not understand the first letter, but which had taken their fancy. George Sand may have looked upon Lamennais as a master, but it is very evident that she was not his favoured disciple.

It was due to his teaching that George Sand obtained her definite ideas about Catholicism, or rather against it. She was decidedly its adversary, because she held that the Church had stifled the spirit of liberty, that it had thrown a veil over the words of Christ, and that it was the obstacle in the way of holy equality. What she owed specially, though, to Lamennais was another lesson, of quite another character. Lamennais was the man of the nineteenth century who waged the finest battle against individualism, against "the scandal of the adoration of man by man."[34]

[34] Compare Brunetiere, _Evolution de la poesie lyrique_, vol. i. p. 310.

Under his influence, George Sand began to attach less importance to the personal point of view, she ceased applying everything to herself, and she discovered the importance of the life of others. If we study this attentively, we shall see that a new phase now commenced in the history of her ideas. Lamennais was the origin of this transformation, although it is personified in another man, and that other man, was named Pierre Leroux.

What a strange mystery it is, among so many other mysteries, that of one mind taking possession of another mind. We have come into contact with great minds which have made no impression on us, whilst other minds, of secondary intelligence, perhaps, and it may be inferior to our own, have governed us.

By the side of a Lamennais, this Pierre Leroux was a very puny personage. He had been a compositor in a printing works, before founding the _Globe_. This paper, in his hands, was to become an organ of Saint-Simonism. He belonged neither to the _bourgeois_ nor to the working-class. He was Clumsy, not well built, and had an enormous shock of hair, which was the joy of caricaturists. He was shy and awkward, in addition to all this. He nevertheless appeared in various _salons_, and was naturally more or less ridiculous. In January, 1840, Beranger writes: "You must know that our metaphysician has surrounded himself with women, at the head of whom are George Sand and Marliani, and that, in gilded drawing-rooms, under the light of chandeliers, he exposes his religious principles and his muddy boots." George Sand herself made fun of this occasionally. In a letter to Madame d'Agoult, she writes:

"He is very amusing when he describes making his appearance in your drawing-room of the Rue Laffitte. He says: `I was all muddy, and quite ashamed of myself. I was keeping out of sight as much as possible in a corner. _This lady_ came to me and talked in the kindest way possible. She is very beautiful.'"[35]

[35] _Correspondance_: To Madame d'Agoult, October 16, 1837/.

There are two features about him, then, which seem to strike every one, his unkemptness and his shyness. He expressed his ideas, which were already obscure, in a form which seemed to make them even more obscure. It has been said wittily that when digging out his ideas, he buried himself in them.[36] Later on, when he spoke at public meetings, he was noted for the nonsense he talked in his interminable and unintelligible harangues.

[36] P. Thureau-Dangin, _Histoire de la Monarchie de Juillet._

And yet, in spite of all this, the smoke from this mind attracted George Sand, and became her pillar of light moving on before her. His hazy philosophy seemed to her as clear as daylight, it appealed to her heart and to her mind, solved her doubts, and gave her tranquillity, strength, faith, hope and a patient and persevering love of humanity. It seems as though, with that marvellous faculty that she had for idealizing always, she manufactured a Pierre Leroux of her own,

who was finer than the real one. He was needy, but poverty becomes
the man who has ideas. He was awkward, but the contemplative man,
on coming down from the region of thought on to our earth once more,
only gropes along. He was not clear, but Voltaire tells us that when
a man does not understand his own words, he is talking metaphysics.
Chopin had personified the artist for her; Pierre Leroux, with his
words as entangled as his hair, figured now to her as the philosopher.
She saw in him the chief and the master. _Tu duca e tu maestro_.

In February, 1844, she wrote the following extraordinary lines:
"I must tell you that George Sand is only a pale reflection
of Pierre Leroux, a fanatical disciple of the same ideal,
but a disciple mute and fascinated when listening to his words,
and quite prepared to throw all her own works into the fire,
in order to write, talk, think, pray and act under his inspiration.
I am merely the popularizer, with a ready pen and an impressionable mind,
and I try to translate, in my novels, the philosophy of the master."

The most extraordinary part about these lines is that they were
absolutely true. The whole secret of the productions of George
Sand for the next ten years is contained in these words.
With Pierre Leroux and Louis Viardot she now founded a review,
La Revue independante, in which she could publish, not only novels
(beginning with _Horace_, which Buloz had refused), but articles
by which philosophical-socialistic ideas could have a free course.
Better still than this, the novelist could take the watchword from
the sociologist. just as Mascarilla put Roman history into madrigals,
she was able to put Pierre Leroux's philosophy into novels.

It would be interesting to know what she saw in Pierre Leroux,
and which of his ideas she approved and preferred. One of the ideas
dear to Pierre Leroux was that of immortality, but an immortality
which had very little in common with Christianity. According to it,
we should live again after death, but in humanity and in another world.
The idea of metempsychosis was very much in vogue at this epoch.
According to Jean Rcynaud and Lamennais, souls travelled from star
to star, but Pierre Leroux believed in metempsychosis on earth.

"We are not only the children and the posterity
of those who have already lived, but we are, at bottom,
the anterior generations themselves. We have gone
through former existences which we do not remember,
but it may be that at times we have fragmentary
reminiscences of them."

George Sand must have been very deeply impressed by this idea. It inspired her with _Sept cordes de la lyre_, _Spiridion_, _Consuelo_ and the _Comtesse de Rudolstadt_, the whole cycle of her philosophical novels.

The _Sept cordes de la lyre_ is a dramatic poem after the manner of _Faust_. Maitre Albertus is the old doctor conversing with Mephistocles. He has a ward, named Helene, and a lyre. A spirit lives in this lyre. It is all in vain that the painter, the _maestro_, the poet, the critic endeavour to make the cords vibrate. The lyre remains dumb. Helene, even without putting her hands on it, can draw from it magnificent harmony; Helene is mad. All this may seem very incomprehensible to you, and I must confess that it is so to me. Albertus himself declares: "This has a poetical sense of a very high order perhaps, but it seems vague to me." Personally, I am of the same opinion as Albertus. With a little effort, I might, like any one else, be able to give you an interpretation of this logogriph, which might appear to have something in it. I prefer telling you frankly that I do not understand it. The author, perhaps, did not understand it much better so that it may have been metaphysics.

I would call your attention, though, to that picture of Helene, with the magic lyre in her hand, risking her life, by climbing to the spire of the steeple and uttering her inspiring speech from there. Is not this something like Solness, the builder, from the top of his tower? Like Tolstoi, Ibsen had evidently read George Sand and had not forgotten her.

Spiridion introduces us into a strange convent, in which we see the portraits come out of their frames and roam about the cloisters. The founder of the convent, Hebronius, lives again in the person of Father Alexis, who is no other than Leroux.

In _Consuelo_ we have the same imagination. We have already considered the first part of this novel, that which takes place at Venice, in the schools of music and in the theatres of song. Who would have thought that the charming diva, the pupil of Porpora, was to have such strange adventures? She arrives in Bohemia, at the Chateau of Rudolstadt. She has been warned that extraordinary things take place there. Comte Albert de Rudolstadt is subject to nervous fits and to great lethargy. He disappears from the chateau and then reappears, without any one seeing him go in or out. He believes that he has been Jean Ziska, and this is probably true.

He has been present at events which took place three hundred years previously, and he describes them. Consuelo discovers Albert's retreat. It is a cavern hollowed out of a mountain in the vicinity, which communicates, by means of a well, with his rooms. The Chateau of Rudolstadt is built on the same architectural plan as Anne Radcliffe's chateau. After staying for some time in this bewildering place, Consuelo sets forth once more. She now meets Haydn, goes through the Bohmer Wald with him, arrives in Venice, is introduced to Maria Theresa, and is engaged at the Imperial Theatre. She is now recalled to the Chateau of Rudolstadt. Albert is on his deathbed, and he marries her _in extremis_, after telling her that he is going to leave her for a time, but that he shall return to her on earth by a new birth. He, too, had evidently read Pierre Leroux, and it was perhaps that which had caused his illness.

Consuelo is a novel of adventures after the style of _Gil Blas_, the _Vie de Marianne_, and _Wilkelm Meister_. It is a historical novel, for which we have Joseph Haydn, Maria Theresa, Baron Trenk, and the whole history of the Hussites. It is a fantastical story with digressions on music and on popular songs, but running through it all, with the persistency of a fixed idea, are divagations on the subject of earthly metempsychosis. Such, then, is this incongruous story, odd and exaggerated, but with gleams of light and of great beauty, the reading of which is apt to leave one weary and disturbed.

We meet with Consuelo again in another book. In those days, it was not enough for a novel to consist of several volumes. People liked a sequel also. _Vingt ans apres_ was the sequel to _Trois Mousquetaires_, and the _Vicomte de Bragelonne_ was a sequel to that sequel. Our grandparents were capable of allowing themselves to be bored to a degree which makes us ashamed of our frivolity. The _Comtesse de Rudolstadt_ was the sequel to _Consuelo_. As time went on, Pierre Leroux called George Sand's attention to the study of freemasonry. In 1843, she declared that she was plunged in it, and that it was a gulf of nonsense and uncertainties, in which "she was dabbling courageously."

"I am up to my ears in freemasonry," she writes. "I cannot get away from the kaddosh, the Rose Croix and the Sublime Scotchman. The result of all this will be a mysterious novel." The mysterious novel was the _Comtesse de Rudolstadt_. Consuelo, who through her marriage with Albert is now Comtesse de Rudolstadt, continues her European tour. She reaches Berlin, and we find her at the Court of Frederick II. We now have Voltaire, La Mettrie, the Sans-Souci suppers, Cagliostro, Saint-Germain and the occult sciences.

Frederick II sends Consuelo to prison. There appears to be no reason for this, unless it be that in order to escape she must first have been imprisoned. Some mysterious rescuers take a great interest in Consuelo, and transport her to a strange dwelling, where she has a whole series of surprises. It is, in fact, a sort of Palace of Illusions. She is first in a dark room, and she then finds herself suddenly in a room of dazzling light. "At the far end of this room, the whole aspect of which is very forbidding, she distinguishes seven personages, wrapped in red cloaks and wearing masks of such livid whiteness that they looked like corpses. They were all seated behind a table of black marble. Just in front of the table, and on a lower seat, was an eighth spectre. He was dressed in black, and he, too, wore a white mask. By the wall, on each side of the room, were about twenty men in black cloaks and masks. There was the most profound silence. Consuelo turned round and saw that there were also black phantoms behind her. At each door there were two of them standing up, each holding a huge, bright sword."[37]

[37] _Comtesse de Rudolstadt._

She wondered whether she had reached the infernal regions, but she discovered that she was in the midst of a secret society, styled the Invisibles. Consuelo is to go through all the various stages of the initiation. She first puts on the bridal dress, and after this the widow's weeds. She undergoes all the various trials, and has to witness the different spectacles provided for her edification, including coffins, funeral palls, spectres and simulated tortures. The description of all the various ceremonies takes up about half of the book. George Sand's object was to show up this movement of secret societies, which was such a feature of the eighteenth century, and which was directed both against monarchical power and against the Church. It contributed to prepare the way for the Revolution, and gave to this that international character and that mystic allure which would otherwise have been incomprehensible.

From _Spiridion_ to the _Comtesse de Rudolstadt_, then, we have this series of fantastical novels with ghosts, subterranean passages, secret hiding-places,

hallucinations and apparitions. The unfortunate part is that at present we scarcely know to what category of readers they would appeal. As regards grown-up people, we all prefer something with a vestige of truth in it now-a-days. As to our children, they would prefer _Monte-Cristo_ to _Consuelo_, and _Tom Thumb_ to _Spiridion_. At the time that they were written, in spite of the fact that Buloz protested against all this philosophy, these novels were quite in accordance with the public taste. A mania for anything fantastic had taken possession of the most serious people. Ballanche wrote his _La Palingenesie_, and Edgar Quinet _Ahasverus_. Things took place through the ages, and the reader travelled through the immensity of the centuries, just as though Wells had already invented his machine for exploring time. In a country like France, where clear-mindedness and matter-of-fact intelligence are appreciated, all this seems surprising. It was no doubt the result of infiltrations which had come from abroad. There was something wrong with us just then, "something rotten in the kingdom of France." We see this by that fever of socialistic doctrines which burst forth among us about the year 1840. We have the _Phalanstere_ by Fourier, _La Phalange_ by Considerant, the _Icarie_ by Cabet, and his famous _Voyage_, which appeared that very year. We were always to be devoured by the State, accompanied by whatever sauce we preferred. The State was always to find us shelter, to dress us, to govern us and to tyrannize over us. There was the State as employer, the State as general storekeeper, the State to feed us; all this was a dream of bliss. Buonarotti, formerly Babeuf's accomplice, preached Communism. Louis Blanc published his _Organisation du travail_, in which he calls to his aid a political revolution, foretaste of a social revolution. Proudhon published his _Memoire sur la propriete_, containing the celebrated phrase: "Property means theft." He declared himself an anarchist, and as a matter of fact anarchy was already everywhere. A fresh evil had suddenly made its appearance, and, by a cruel irony, it was the logical consequence of that industrial development of which the century was so proud. The result of all that wealth had been to create a new form of misery, an envious, jealous form of misery, much more cruel than the former one, for it filled the heart with a ferment of hatred, a passion for destruction.

It was Pierre Leroux, also, who led George Sand on to Socialism. She had been on the way to it by herself. For a long time she had been raising an altar in her heart to that entity called the People, and she had been adorning it with all the virtues. The future belonged to the people, the whole of the future, and first of all

that of literature.

Poetry was getting a little worn out, but to restore its freshness there were the poets of the people. Charles Poncy, of Toulon, a bricklayer, published a volume of poetry, in 1842, entitled _Marines_. George Sand adopted him. He was the demonstration of her theory, the example which illustrated her dream. She congratulated him and encouraged him. "You are a great poet," she said to him, and she thereupon speaks of him to all her friends. "Have you read Baruch?" she asks them. "Have you read Poncy, a poet bricklayer of twenty years of age?" She tells every one about his book, dwells on its beauties, and asks people to speak of it.

As a friend of George Sand, I have examined the poems by Poncy of which she specially speaks. The first one is entitled _Meditation sur les toits_. The poet has been obliged to stay on the roof to complete his work, and while there he meditates.

"Le travail me retient bien tard sur ces toitures. . . ."

He then begins to wonder what he would see if, like Asmodee in the _Diable boiteux_, he could have the roof taken off, so that the various rooms could be exposed to view. Alas! he would not always find the concord of the Golden Age.

> _Que de fois contemolant cet amas de maisons
> Quetreignent nos remparts couronnes de gazons,
> Et ces faubourgs naissants que la ville trop pleine
> Pour ses enfants nouveaux eleve dans la plaine.
> Immobiles troufieaux ou notre clocher gris
> Semble un patre au milieu de ses blanches brebis,
> Jai pense que, malgre notre angoisse et nos peines,
> Sous ces toits paternels il existait des haines,
> Et que des murs plus forts que ces murs mitoyens
> Separent ici-bas les coeurs des citoyens._

This was an appeal to concord, and all brothers of humanity were invited to rally to the watchword.

The intention was no doubt very good. Then, too, _murs mitoyens_ was an extremely rich and unexpected rhyme for _citoyens_. This was worthy indeed of a man of that party.

Another of the poems greatly admired by George Sand was _Le Forcat_.

_Regarder le forcat sur la poutre equarrie
Poser son sein hale que le remords carie_. . .

Certainly if Banville were to lay claim to having invented rhymes that are puns, we could only say that he was a plagiarist after reading Charles Poncy.

In another poem addressed to the rich, entitled _L'hiver_, the poet notices with grief that the winter

. . . _qui remplit les salons, les Wdtres,
Remplit aussi la Morgue et les amphitheatres._

He is afraid that the people will, in the end, lose their patience, and so he gives to the happy mortals on this earth the following counsel:

_Riches, a vos plaisirs faites participer
L'homme que les malheurs s'acharnent a frapper
Oh, faites travailler le pere de famille,
Pour qu'il puisse arbiter la pudeur de sa fille,
Pourqu'aux petits enfants maigris par les douleurs
Il rapporte, le soir, le pain et non des pleurs,
Afin que son epouse, au desespoir en proie,
Se ranime a sa vue et l'embrasse avec joie,
Afin qua l'Eternel, a l'heure de sa mort.
Vous n'offriez pas un coeur carie de remords_.

The expression certainly leaves much to be desired in these poems, but they are not lacking in eloquence. We had already had something of this kind, though, written by a poet who was not a bricklayer. He, too, had asked the rich the question following:

_Dans vos fetes d'hiver, riches, heureux du monde,
Quand le bal tournoyant de ses feux vous inonde. . .
Songez-vous qu'il est la, sous le givre et la neige,
Ce pere sans travail que la famine assiege?_

He advises them to practise charity, the sister of prayer.

_Donnez afin qu'un jour, a votre derniere heure,

Contre tous vos peches vous ayez la Priere

D'un mendiant puissant au ciel_."

We cannot, certainly, expect Poncy to be a Victor Hugo. But as we had Victor Hugo's verses, of what use was it for them to be rewritten by Poncy? My reason for quoting a few of the fine lines from _Feuilles d'automne_ is that I felt an urgent need of clearing away all these platitudes. Poncy was not the only working-man poet. Other trades produced their poets too. The first poem in _Marines_ is addressed to Durand, a poet carpenter, who introduces himself as "_Enfant de la foret qui ceint Fontainebleau_."

This man handled the plane and the lyre, just as Poncy did the trowel and the lyre.

This poetry of the working-classes was to give its admirers plenty of disappointment. George Sand advised Poncy to treat the things connected with his trade, in his poetry. "Do not try to put on other men's clothes, but let us see you in literature with the plaster on your hands which is natural to you and which interests us," she said to him.

Proud of his success with the ladies of Paris, Poncy wanted to wash his hands, put on a coat, and go into society. It was all in vain that George Sand beseeched Poncy to remain the poet of humanity. She exposed to him the dogma of impersonality in such fine terms, that more than one _bourgeois_ poet might profit by what she said.

"An individual," she said, "who poses as a poet, as a pure artist, as a god like most of our great men do, whether they be _bourgeois_ or aristocrats, soon tires us with his personality. . . . Men are only interested in a man when that man is interested in humanity."

This was all of no use, though, for Poncy was most anxious to treat other subjects rather more lively and--slightly libertine. His literary godmother admonished him.

"You are dedicating to _Juana l'Espagnole_ and to various other fantastical beauties verses that I do not approve. Are you a _bourgeois_ poet or a poet of the people? If the former, you can sing in honour of all the voluptuousness and all the sirens of the universe,

without ever having known either. You can sup with the most delicious houris or with all the street-walkers, in your poems, without ever leaving your fireside or having seen any greater beauty than the nose of your hall-porter. These gentlemen write their poetry in this way, and their rhyming is none the worse for it. But if you are a child of the people and the poet of the people, you ought not to leave the chaste breast of Desiree, in order to run about after dancing-girls and sing about their voluptuous arms."[38]

[38] See the letters addressed to Charles Poncy in the _Correspondance._

It is to be hoped that Poncy returned to the chaste Desiree. But why should he not read to the young woman the works of Pierre Leroux? We need a little gaiety in our life. In George Sand's published _Correspondance_, we only have a few of her letters to Charles Poncy. They are all in excellent taste. There is an immense correspondence which M. Rocheblave will publish later on. This will be a treat for us, and it will no doubt prove that there was a depth of immense candour in the celebrated authoress.

It does not seem to me that the writings of the working-men poets have greatly enriched French literature. Fortunately George Sand's sympathy with the people found its way into literature in another way, and this time in a singularly interesting way. She did not get the books written by the people themselves, but she put the people into books. This was the plan announced by George Sand in her preface to the _Compagnon du tour de France_. There is an entirely fresh literature to create, she writes, "with the habits and customs of the people, as these are so little known by the other classes." The _Compagnon du tour de France_ was the first attempt at this new literature of the people. George Sand had obtained her documents for this book from a little work which had greatly struck her, entitled _Livre du compagnonnage_, written by Agricol Perdiguier, surnamed Avignonnais-la-Vertu, who was a _compagnon_ carpenter. Agricol Perdiguier informs us that the _Compagnons_ were divided into three chief categories: the _Gavots_, the _Devorants_ and the _Drilles_, or the _Enfants de Salomon_, the _Enlants de Maitre Jacques_ and the _Enfants du_ _Pere Soubise_. He then describes the rites of this order. When two _Compagnons_ met, their watchword was "_Tope_." After this they asked each other's trade, and then they went to drink a glass together. If a _Compagnon_ who was generally respected left the town, the others gave him what was termed a "conduite en regle." If it was thought that he did not deserve this,

he had a "conduite de Grenoble." Each _Compagnon_ had a surname, and among such surnames we find _The Prudence of Draguignan_, _The Flower of Bagnolet_ and _The Liberty of Chateauneuf_. The unfortunate part was that among the different societies, instead of the union that ought to have reigned, there were rivalries, quarrels, fights, and sometimes all this led to serious skirmishes; Agricol Perdiguier undertook to preach to the different societies peace and tolerance. He went about travelling through France with this object in view. His second expedition was-at George Sand's expense.

A fresh edition of his book contained the letters of approval addressed to him by those who approved his campaign. Among these signatures are the following: Nantais-Pret-a-bien-faire, Bourgignonla-Felicite, Decide-le-Briard. All this is a curious history of the syndicates of the nineteenth century. Agricol Perdiguier may have seen the _Confederation du Travail_ dawning in the horizon.

In the _Compagnon du Tour de France_, Pierre Huguenin, a carpenter, travels about among all these different societies of the _Compagnonnage_, and lets us see something of their competition, rivalries, battles, etc. He is then sent for to the Villepreux Chateau, to do some work. The noble Yseult falls in love with this fine-talking carpenter, and at once begs him to make her happy by marrying her.

In the _Meunier d'Angibault_ it is a working locksmith, Henri Lemor, who falls in love with Marcelle de BIanchemont. Born to wealth, she regrets that she is not the daughter or the mother of workingmen. Finally, however, she loses her fortune, and rejoices in this event. The personage who stands out in relief in this novel is the miller, Grand Louis. He is always gay and contented, with a smile on his lips, singing lively songs and giving advice to every one.

In the _Peche de M. Antoine_, the _role_ of Grand Louis falls to Jean the carpenter. In this story all the people are communists, with the exception of the owner of the factory, who, in consequence, is treated with contempt. His son Emile marries the daughter of Monsieur Antoine. Her name is Gilberte, and a silly old man, the Marquis de Boisguilbaut, leaves her all his money, on condition that the young couple found a colony of agriculturists in which there shall be absolute communism. All these stories, full of eloquence and dissertations on the misfortune of being rich and the corrupting influence of wealth, would be insufferable, if it were not for the fact that the Angibault mill were in the Black Valley, and the crumbling chateau, belonging to Monsieur Antoine,

on the banks of the Creuse.

They are very poor novels, and it would be a waste of time to attempt to defend them. They are not to be despised, though, as regards their influence on the rest of George Sand's work, and also as regards the history of the French novel. They rendered great service to George Sand, inasmuch as they helped her to come out of herself and to turn her attention to the miseries of other people, instead of dwelling all the time on her own. The miseries she now saw were more general ones, and consequently more worthy of interest. In the history of the novel they are of capital importance, as they are the first ones to bring into notice, by making them play a part, people of whom novelists had never spoken. Before Eugene Sue and before Victor Hugo, George Sand gives a _role_ to a mason, a carpenter and a joiner. We see the working-class come into literature in these novels, and this marks an era.

As to their socialistic influence, it is supposed by many people that they had none. The kind of socialism that consists of making tinkers marry marchionesses, and duchesses marry zinc-workers, seems very childish and very feminine. It is just an attempt at bringing about the marriage of classes. This socialistic preaching, by means of literature, cannot be treated so lightly, though, as it is by no means harmless. It is, on the contrary, a powerful means of diffusing doctrines to which it lends the colouring of imagination, and for which it appeals to the feelings. George Sand propagated the humanitarian dream among a whole category of men and women who read her books. But for her, they would probably have turned a deaf ear to the inducements held out to them with regard to this Utopia. Lamartine with his _Girondins_ reconciled the _bourgeois_ classes to the idea of the Revolution. In both cases the effect was the same, and it is just this which literature does in affairs of this kind. Its _role_ consists here in creating a sort of snobbism, and this snobbism, created by literature in favour of all the elements of social destruction, continues to rage at present. We still see men smiling indulgently and stupidly at doctrines of revolt and anarchy, which they ought to repudiate, not because of their own interest, but because it is their duty to repudiate them with all the strength of their own common sense and rectitude. Instead of any arguments, we have facts to offer. All this was in 1846, and the time was now drawing near when George Sand was to see those novels of hers actually taking place in the street, so that she could throw down to the rioters the bulletins that she wrote in their honour.

VIII

1848

GEORGE SAND AND THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT--

HER PASTORAL NOVELS

IN 1846, George Sand published _Le Peche de M. Antoine_.
It was a very dull story of a sin, for sins are not always amusing.
The same year, though, she published _La Mare au Diable_.
People are apt to say, when comparing the socialistic novels and
the pastoral novels by George Sand, that the latter are superb,
because they are the result of a conception of art that was
quite disinterested, as the author had given up her preaching mania,
and devoted herself to depicting people that she knew and things that
she liked, without any other care than that of painting them well.
Personally, I think that this was not so. George Sand's pastoral
style is not essentially different from her socialistic style.
The difference is only in the success of the execution, but the
ideas and the intentions are the same. George Sand is continuing
her mission in them, she is going on with her humanitarian dream,
that dream which she dreamed when awake.

We have a proof of this in the preface of the author to the reader
with which the _Mare au Diable_ begins. This preface would be
disconcerting to any one who does not remember the intellectual
atmosphere in which it was written.

People have wondered by what fit of imagination George Sand,
when telling such a wholesome story of country life, should evoke
the ghastly vision of Holbein's Dance of Death. It is the close
of day, the horses are thin and exhausted, there is an old peasant,
and, skipping about in the furrows near the team, is Death,
the only lively, careless, nimble being in this scene of "sweat
and weariness." She gives us the explanation of it herself.
She wanted to show up the ideal of the new order of things,
as opposed to the old ideal, as translated by the ghastly dance.

"We have nothing more to do with death," she writes, "but with life.
We no longer believe in the _neant_ of the tomb, nor in salvation

bought by enforced renunciation. We want life to be good, because we want it to be fertile. . . . Every one must be happy, so that the happiness of a few may not be criminal and cursed by God." This note we recognize as the common feature of all the socialistic Utopias. It consists in taking the opposite basis to that on which the Christian idea is founded. Whilst Christianity puts off, until after death, the possession of happiness, transfiguring death by its eternal hopes, Socialism places its Paradise on earth. It thus runs the risk of leaving all those without any recourse who do not find this earth a paradise, and it has no answer to give to the lamentations of incurable human misery.

George Sand goes on to expose to us the object of art, as she understands it. She believes that it is for pleading the cause of the people.

She does not consider that her _confreres_ in novel-writing and in Socialism set about their work in the best way. They paint poverty that is ugly and vile, and sometimes even vicious and criminal. How is it to be expected that the bad, rich man will take pity on the sorrows of the poor man, if this poor man is always presented to him as an escaped convict or a night loafer? It is very evident that the people, as presented to us in the _Mysteres de Paris_, are not particularly congenial to us, and we should have no wish to make the acquaintance of the "Chourineur." In order to bring about conversions, George Sand has more faith in gentle, agreeable people, and, in conclusion, she tells us: "We believe that the mission of art is a mission of sentiment and of love, and that the novel of to-day ought to take the place of the parable and the apologue of more primitive times." The object of the artist, she tells us, "is to make people appreciate what he presents to them." With that end in view, he has a right to embellish his subjects a little. "Art," we are told, "is not a study of positive reality; it is the seeking for ideal truth." Such is the point of view of the author of _La Mare au Diable_, which we are invited to consider as a parable and an apologue.

The parable is clear enough, and the apologue is eloquent. The novel commences with that fine picture of the ploughing of the fields, so rich in description and so broadly treated that there seems to be nothing in French literature to compare with it except the episode of the Labourers in _Jocelyn_. When _Jocelyn_ was published, George Sand was severe in her criticism of it, treating it as poor work, false in sentiment and careless in style. "In the midst of all this, though," she adds, "there are certain

pages and chapters such as do not exist in any languaoe, pages that I read seven times over, crying all the time like a donkey."
I fancy that she must have cried over the episode of the _Labourers_. Whether she remembered it or not when writing her own book little matters. My only reason for mentioning it is to point out the affinity of genius between Lamartine and George Sand, both of them so admirable in imagining idylls and in throwing the colours of their idyllic imagination on to reality.

I have ventured, to analyze the _Comtesse de Rudolstadt_ and even _Consuelo_, but I shall not be guilty of the bad taste of telling the story of _La Mare au Diable_, as all the people of that neighbourhood are well known to us, and have been our friends for a long time. We are all acquainted with Germain, the clever farm-labourer, with Marie, the shepherdess, and with little Pierre. We remember how they climbed the _Grise_, lost their way in the mist, and were obliged to spend the night under the great oak-trees. When we were only about fifteen years of age, with what delight we read this book, and how we loved that sweet Marie for her simple grace and her affection, which all seemed so maternal. How much better we liked her than the Widow Guerin, who was so snobbish with her three lovers. And how glad we were to be present at that wedding, celebrated according to the custom in Berry from time immemorial.

It is easy to see the meaning of all these things. They show us how natural kindliness is to the heart of man. If we try to find out why Germain and Marie appear so delightful to us, we shall discover that it is because they are simple-hearted, and follow the dictates of Nature. Nature must not be deformed, therefore, by constraint nor transformed by convention, as it leads straight to virtue.

We have heard the tune of this song before, and we have seen the blossoming of some very fine pastoral poems and a veritable invasion of sentimental literature. In those days tears were shed plentifully over poetry, novels and plays. We have had Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Sedaine, Florian and Berquin. The Revolution, brutal and sanguinary as it was, did not interrupt the course of these romantic effusions. Never were so many tender epithets used as during the years of the Reign of Terror, and in official processions Robespierre was adorned with flowers like a village bride.

This taste for pastoral things, at the time of the Revolution, was not a mere coincidence. The same principles led up to the idyll in literature and to the Revolution in history. Man was supposed to be naturally good, and the idea was to take away from him all

the restraints which had been invented for curbing his nature.
Political and religious authority, moral discipline and the prestige
of tradition had all formed a kind of network of impediments,
by which man had been imprisoned by legislators who were inclined
to pessimism. By doing away with all these fetters, the Golden Age
was to be restored and universal happiness was to be established.
Such was the faith of the believers in the millennium of 1789,
and of 1848. The same dream began over and over again, from Diderot
to Lamartine and from Jean-Jacques to George Sand. The same state
of mind which we see reflected in _La Mare au Diable_ was to make
of George Sand the revolutionary writer of 1848. We can now understand
the _role_ which the novelist played in the second Republic.
It is one of the most surprising pages in the history of this
extraordinary character.

The joy with which George Sand welcomed the Republic can readily
be imagined. She had been a Republican ever since the days of Michel
of Bourges, and a democrat since the time when, as a little girl,
she took the side of her plebeian mother against "the old Countesses."
For a long time she had been wishing for and expecting a change
of government. She would not have been satisfied with less than this.
She was not much moved by the Thiers-Guizot duel, and it would have
given her no pleasure to be killed for the sake of Odilon Barrot.
She was a disciple of Romanticism, and she wanted a storm.
When the storm broke, carrying all before it, a throne, a whole society
with its institutions, she hurried away from her peaceful Nohant.
She wanted to breathe the atmosphere of a revolution, and she was soon
intoxicated by it.

"Long live the Republic," she wrote in her letters. "What a dream and
what enthusiasm, and then, too, what behaviour, what order in Paris.
I have just arrived, and I saw the last of the barricades. The people
are great, sublime, simple and generous, the most admirable people
in the universe. I spent nights without any sleep and days without
sitting down. Every one was wild and intoxicated with delight,
for after going to sleep in the mire they have awakened in heaven."[39]

[39] _Correspondance: _ To Ch. Poncy, March 9, 1848.

She goes on dreaming thus of the stars. Everything she hears,
everything she sees enchants her. The most absurd measures delight her.
She either thinks they are most noble, liberal steps to have taken,
or else they are very good jokes.

"Rothschild," she writes, "expresses very fine sentiments about liberty at present. The Provisional Government is keeping him in sight, as it does not wish him to make off with his money, and so will put some of the troops on his track. The most amusing things are happening." A little later on she writes: "The Government and the people expect to have bad deputies, but they have agreed to put them through the window. You must come, and we will go and see all this and have fun."[40]

[40] _Correspondance:_ To Maurice Sand, March 24, 1848.

She was thoroughly entertained, and that is very significant. We must not forget the famous phrase that sounded the death-knell of the July monarchy, "La France s'ennuie." France had gone in for a revolution by way of being entertained.

George Sand was entertained, then, by what was taking place. She went down into the street where there was plenty to see. In the mornings there were the various coloured posters to be read. These had been put up in the night, and they were in prose and in verse.

Processions were also organized, and men, women and children, with banners unfurled, marched along to music to the Hotel de Ville, carrying baskets decorated with ribbons and flowers. Every corporation and every profession considered itself bound in honour to congratulate the Government and to encourage it in its well-doing. One day the procession would be of the women who made waistcoats or breeches, another day of the water-carriers, or of those who had been decorated in July or wounded in February; then there were the pavement-layers, the washerwomen, the delegates from the Paris night-soil men. There were delegates, too, from the Germans, Italians, Poles, and most of the inhabitants of Montmartre and of Batignolles. We must not forget the trees of Liberty, as George Sand speaks of meeting with three of these in one day. "Immense pines," she writes, "carried on the shoulders of fifty working-men. A drum went first, then the flag, followed by bands of these fine tillers of the ground, strong-looking, serious men with wreaths of leaves on their head, and a spade, pick-axe or hatchet over their shoulder. It was magnificent; finer than all the _Roberts_ in the world."[41] Such was the tone of her letters.

[41] _Correspondance._

She had the Opera from her windows and an Olympic circus at every cross-road. Paris was certainly _en fete_. In the evenings it was just as lively. There were the Clubs, and there were no less than three hundred of these. Society women could go to them and hear orators in blouses proposing incendiary movements, which made them shudder deliciously. Then there were the theatres. Rachel, draped in antique style, looking like a Nemesis, declaimed the _Marseillaise_. And all night long the excitement continued. The young men organized torchlight processions, with fireworks, and insisted on peaceably-inclined citizens illuminating. It was like a Nationial Fete day, or the Carnival, continuing all the week.

All this was the common, everyday aspect of Paris, but there were the special days as well to break the monotony of all this. There were the manifestations, which had the great advantage of provoking counter-manifestations. On the 16th of March, there was the manifestation of the National Guard, who were tranquil members of society, but on the 17th there was a counter-manifestation of the Clubs and workingmen. On such days the meeting-place would be at the Bastille, and from morning to night groups, consisting of several hundred thousand men, would march about Paris, sometimes in favour of the Assembly against the Provisional Government, and sometimes in favour of the Provisional Government against the Assembly. On the 17th of April, George Sand was in the midst of the crowd, in front of the Hotel de Ville, in order to see better. On the 15th of May, as the populace was directing its efforts against the Palais Bourbon, she was in the Rue de Bourgogne, in her eagerness not to miss anything. As she was passing in front of a _cafe_, she saw a woman haranguing the crowd in a very animated way from one of the windows. She was told that this woman was George Sand. Women were extremely active in this Revolution. They organized a Legion for themselves, and were styled _"Les Vesuviennes_." They had their clubs, their banquets and their newspapers. George Sand was far from approving all this feminine agitation, but she did not condemn it altogether. She considered that "women and children, disinterested as they are in all political questions, are in more direct intercourse with the spirit that breathes from above over the agitations of this world."[42] It was for them, therefore, to be the inspirers of politics. George Sand was one of these inspirers. In order to judge what counsels this Egeria gave, we have only to read some of her letters. On the 4th of March,

she wrote as follows to her friend Girerd: "Act vigorously, my dear brother. In our present situation, we must have even more than devotion and loyalty; we must have fanaticism if necessary." In conclusion, she says that he is not to hesitate "in sweeping away all that is of a _bourgeois_ nature." In April she wrote to Lamartine, reproaching him with his moderation and endeavouring to excite his revolutionary spirit. Later on, although she was not of a very warlike disposition, she regretted that they had not, like their ancestors of 1793, cemented their Revolution at home by a war with the nations.

[42] _Correspondance:_ To the Citizen Thore, May 28, 1848.

"If, instead of following Lamartine's stupid, insipid policy," she then wrote, "we had challenged all absolute monarchies, we should have had war outside, but union at home, and strength, in consequence of this, it home and abroad."[43] Like the great ancestors, she declared that the revolutionary idea is neither that of a sect nor of a party. "It is a religion," she says, "that we want to proclaim." All this zeal, this passion and this persistency in a woman is not surprising, but one does not feel much confidence in a certain kind of inspiration for politics after all this.

[43] _Correspondance:_ To Mazzini, October 10, 1849.

My reason for dwelling on the subject is that George Sand did not content herself with merely looking on at the events that were taking place, or even with talking about them with her friends. She took part in the events, by means of her pen. She scattered abroad all kinds of revolutionary writings. On the 7th of March, she published her first _Letter to the People_, at the price of a penny, the profits of which were to be distributed among working-men without employment. After congratulating these great and good people on their noble victory, she tells them they are all going to seek together for the truth of things. That was exactly the state of the case. They did not yet know what they wanted, but, in the mean time, while they were considering, they had at any rate begun with a revolution. There was a second _Letter to the People_, and then these ceased. Publications in those days were very short-lived. They came to life again, though, sometimes from their ashes. In April a newspaper was started, entitled _The Cause of the People_. This was edited

almost entirely by George Sand. She wrote the leading article: _Sovereignty is Equality_. She reproduced her first _Letter to the People_, gave an article on the aspect of the streets of Paris, and another on theatrical events. She left to her collaborator, Victor Borie, the task of explaining that the increase of taxes was an eminently republican measure, and an agreeable surprise for the person who had to pay them. The third number of this paper contained a one-act play by George Sand, entitled _Le Roi attend_. This had just been given at the Comedie-Francaise, or at the Theatre de la Republique, as it was then called. It had been a gratis performance, given on the 9th of April, 1848, as a first national representation. The actors at that time were Samson, Geffroy, Regnier, Anais, Augustine Brohan and Rachel. There were not many of them, but they had some fine things to interpret.

In George Sand's piece, Moliere was at work with his servant, Laforet, who could not read, but without whom, it appears, he could not have written a line. He has not finished his play, the actors have not learnt their parts, and the king is impatient at being kept waiting. Moliere is perplexed, and, not knowing what to do, he decides to go to sleep. The Muse appears to him, styles him "the light of the people," and brings to him all the ghosts of the great poets before him. AEschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Shakespeare all declare to him that, in their time, they had all worked towards preparing the Revolution of 1848. Moliere then wakes up, and goes on to the stage to pay his respects to the king. The king has been changed, though. "I see a king," says Moliere, "but his name is not Louis XIV. It is the people, the sovereign people. That is a word I did not know, a word as great as eternity."

We recognize the democrat in all this. _Le Roi_ _attend_ may be considered as an authentic curiosity of revolutionary art. The newspaper announced to its readers that subscriptions could be paid in the Rue Richelieu. Subscribers were probably not forthcoming, as the paper died a natural death after the third number.

George Sand did much more than this, though.[44] We must not forget that she was an official publicist in 1848. She had volunteered her services to Ledru-Rollin, and he had accepted them. "I am as busy as a statesman," she wrote at this time. "I have already written two Government circulars."[45]

[44] With regard to George Sand's _role_, see _La Revolution de_ 1848,

by Daniel Stern (Madame d'Agoult).

[45] _Correspondance:_ To Maurice Sand, March 24, 1848.

With George Sand's collaboration, the _Bulletin de la Republique_ became unexpectedly interesting. This paper was published every other day, by order of Ledru-Rollin, and was intended to establish a constant interchange of ideas and sentiments between the Government and the people. "It was specially addressed to the people of rural districts, and was in the form of a poster that the mayor of the place could have put up on the walls, and also distribute to the postmen to be given away. The _Bulletins_ were anonymous, but several of them were certainly written by George Sand. The seventh is one of these, and also the twelfth. The latter was written with a view to drawing the attention of the public to the wretched lot of the women and girls of the lower classes, who were reduced to prostitution by the lowness of their wages. Their virginity is an object of traffic," we are told, "quoted on the exchange of infamy." The sixteenth _Bulletin_ was simply an appeal for revolt. George Sand was looking ahead to what ought to take place, in case the elections did not lead to the triumph of social truth. "The people," she hoped, "would know their duty. There would, in that case, be only one way of salvation for the people who had erected barricades, and that would be to manifest their will a second time, and so adjourn the decisions of a representation that was not national." This was nothing more nor less than the language of another Fructidor. And we know what was the result of words in those days. The _Bulletin_ was dated. the 15th, and on the 17th the people were on the way to the Hotel de Ville. These popular movements cannot always be trusted, though, as they frequently take an unexpected turn, and even change their direction when on the way. It happened this time that the manifestation turned against those who were its instigators. Shouts were heard that day in Paris of _"Death to the Communists"_ and _"Down with Cabet_." George Sand could not understand things at all. This was not in the programme, and she began to have her doubts about the future of the Republic-- the real one, that of her friends.

It was much worse on the 15th of May, the day which was so fatal to Barbes, for he played the part of hero and of dupe on that eventful day. Barbes was George Sand's idol at that time.

It was impossible for her to be without one, although, with her vivid imagination, she changed her idols frequently. With her idealism,

she was always incarnating in some individual the perfections that she was constantly imagining. It seems as though she exteriorized the needs of her own mind and put them into an individual who seemed suitable to her for the particular requirements of that moment. At the time of the monarchy, Michel of Bourges and Pierre Leroux had been able to play the part, the former of a radical theorician and the latter of the mystical forerunner of the new times. At present Barbes had come on to the scene.

He was a born conspirator, the very man for secret societies. He had made his career by means of prisons, or rather he had made prison his career, In 1835, he had commenced by helping thirty of the prisoners of April to escape from Sainte-Pelagie. At that time he was affiliated to the _Societe des Familles_. The police discovered a whole arsenal of powder and ammunition at the house in the Rue de Lourcine, and Barbes was condemned to prison for a year and sent to Carcassonne, where he had relatives. When he left prison, the _Societe des Saisons_ had taken the place of the _Societe des Familles_. With Blanqui's approval, Barbes organized the insurrection of May 12 and 13, 1830. This time blood was shed. In front of the Palais de Justice, the men, commanded by Barbes, had invited Lieutenant Droulneau to let them enter. The officer replied that he would die first. He was immediately shot, but Barbes was sentenced to death for this. Thanks to the intervention of Lamartine and Victor Hugo, his life was spared, but he was imprisoned at Mont Saint-Michel until 1843, and afterwards at Nimes. On the 28th of February, 1848, the Governor of Nimes prison informed him that he was free. He was more surprised and embarrassed than pleased by this news.

"I was quite bewildered," he owned later on, "by this idea of leaving prison. I looked at my prison bed, to which I had grown so accustomed. I looked at my blanket and at my pillow and at all my belongings, hung so carefully at the foot of my bed." He asked permission to stay there another day. He had become accustomed to everything, and when once he was out again, and free, he was like a man who feels ill at ease.

He took part in the affair of the 15th of May, and this is what gives a tragic, and at the same time comic, character to the episode. Under pretext of manifesting in favour of Poland, the National Assembly was to be invaded. Barbes did not approve of this manifestation, and had decided to keep out of it. Some people cannot be present at a revolutionary scene without taking part in it, and without soon wanting to play the chief part in it. The excitement goes

to their head. Barbes seems to have been obeying in instinct over which he had no control, for, together with a workman named Albert, he headed the procession which was to march from the Chamber of Deputies to the Hotel de Ville and establish a fresh Provisional Government. He had already commenced composing the proclamations to be thrown through the windows to the people, after the manner of the times, when suddenly Lamartine appeared on the scene with Ledru-Rollin and a captain in the artillery. The following dialogue then took place:

"Who are you?"

"A member of the Provisional Government."

"Of the Government of yesterday or of to-day

"Of the one of to-day."

"In that case I arrest you."

Barbes was taken to Vincennes. He had been free rather less than three months, when he returned to prison as though it were his natural dwelling-place.

George Sand admired him just as much after this as before. For her, the great man of the Revolution was neither Ledru-Rollin, Lamartine, nor even Louis-Blanc; it was Barbes. She compared him to Joan of Arc and to Robespierre. To her, he was much more than a mere statesman, this man of conspiracies and dungeons, ever mysterious and unfortunate, always ready for a drama or a romance. In her heart she kept an altar for this martyr, and never thought of wondering whether, after all, this idol and hero were not a mere puppet.

The skirmish of May 15 undeceived George Sand very considerably. The June insurrection and the civil war, with blood flowing in the Paris streets, those streets which were formerly so lively and amusing, caused her terrible grief. From henceforth her letters were full of her sadness and discouragement. The most gloomy depression took the place of her former enthusiasm. It had only required a few weeks for this change to take place. In February she had been so proud of France, and now she felt that she was to be pitied for being a Frenchwoman. It was all so sad, and she was so ashamed. There was no one to count upon now. Lamartine was a chatterer; Ledru-Rollin was like a woman; the people were ignorant and ungrateful, so that the mission of literary people was over. She therefore

took refuge in fiction, and buried herself in her dreams of art.
We are not sorry to follow her there.

Francois le Champi appeared as a serial in the _Journal des Debats_.
The _denouement_ was delayed by another _denouement_, which the
public found still more interesting. This was nothing less than
the catastrophe of the July Monarchy, in February, 1848.

After the terrible June troubles, George Sand had been heartbroken,
and had turned once more to literature for consolation.
She wrote _La Petite Fadette_, so that the pastoral romances
and the Revolution are closely connected with each other.
Beside the novels of this kind which we have already mentioned,
we must add _Jeanne_, which dates from 1844, and the _Maitres Sonneurs_,
written in 1853. This, then, completes the incomparable series,
which was the author's _chef-d'oeuvre_, and one of the finest gems
of French literature. This was George Sand's real style, and the note
in literature which was peculiarly her own. She was well fitted for
such writing, both by her natural disposition and by circumstances.
She had lived nearly all her life in the country, and it was
there only that she lived to the full. She made great efforts,
but Paris certainly made her homesick for her beloved Berry.
She could not help sighing when she thought of the ploughed fields,
of the walnut-trees, and of the oxen answering to the voice of
the labourers.

"It is no use," she wrote about the same time, "if you are born
a country person, you cannot get used to the noise of cities.
It always seems to me that our mud is beautiful mud, whilst that
here makes me feel sick. I very much prefer my keeper's wit
to that of certain of the visitors here. It seems to me that I am
livelier when I have eaten some of Nannette's wheat-cake than I
am after my coffee in Paris. In short, it appears to me that we
are all perfect and charming, that no one could be more agreeable
than we are, and that Parisians are all clowns."[46]

[46] _Correspondance:_ To. Ch. Duvernet, November 12, 1842.

This was said in all sincerity. George Sand was quite indifferent
about all the great events of Parisian life, about social tittle-tattle
and Boulevard gossip. She knew the importance, though, of every
episode of country life, of a sudden fog or of the overflowing
of the river. She knew the place well, too, as she had visited

every nook and corner in all weathers and in every season.
She knew all the people; there was not a house she had not entered,
either to visit the sick or to clear up some piece of business
for the inmates. Not only did she like the country and the country
people because she was accustomed to everything there, but she had
something of the nature of these people within her. She had a certain
turn of mind that was peasant-like, her slowness to take things in,
her dislike of speech when thinking, her thoughts taking the form
of "a series of reveries which gave her a sort of tranquil ecstasy,
whether awake or asleep."[47] It does not seem as though there
has ever been such an _ensemble_ of favourable conditions.

[47] See in _Jeanne_ a very fine page on the peasant soul.

She did not succeed in her first attempt. In several of her novels,
ever since _Valentine_, she had given us peasants among her characters.
She had tried labourers, mole-catchers, fortune-tellers and beggars,
but all these were episodic characters. _Jeanne_ is the first novel
in which the heroine is a peasant. Everything connected with Jeanne
herself in the novel is exquisite. We have all seen peasant women
of this kind, women with serious faces and clearly-cut features,
with a dreamy look in their eyes that makes us think of the maid
of Lorraine. It is one of these exceptional creatures that George Sand
has depicted. She has made an ecstatic being of her, who welcomes
all that is supernatural, utterly regardless of dates or epochs.
To her all wonderful beings appeal, the Virgin Mary and fairies,
Druidesses, Joan of Arc and Napoleon. But Jeanne, the Virgin
of Ep Nell, the Velleda of the Jomatres stones, the mystical sister
of the Great Shepherdess, was very poorly supported. This remark
does not refer to her cousin Claudie, although this individual's
conduct was not blameless. Jeanne had gone into service at Boussac,
and she was surrounded by a group of middle-class people, among whom
was Sir Arthur----, a wealthy Englishman, who wanted to marry her.
This mixture of peasants and _bourgeois_ is not a happy one.
Neither is the mixture of _patois_ with a more Christian way of talking,
or rather with a written style. The author was experimenting and
feeling her way.

When she wrote _La Mare au Diable_ she had found it, for in this work
we have unity of tone, harmony of the characters with their setting,
of sentiment with the various adventures, and, above all,
absolute simplicity.

In _Francois le Champi_ there is much that is graceful,
and there is real feeling mingled with a touch of sentimentality.
Madeleine Blanchet is rather old for Champi, whom she had brought
up like her own child. In the country, though, where difference
of age is soon less apparent, the disproportion does not seem as
objectionable as it would in city life. The novel is not a study
of maternal affection in love, as it is not Madeleine's feelings
that are analyzed, but those of Francois. For a long time he had been
in love without knowing it, and he is only aware of it when this love,
instead of being a sort of agreeable dream and melancholy pleasure,
is transformed into suffering.

The subject of _La Petite Fadette_ is another analysis of a love
which has been silent for a long time. It is difficult to say
which is the best of these delightful stories, but perhaps,
on the whole, this last one is generally preferred, on account
of the curious and charming figure of little Fadette herself.
We can see the thin, slender girl, suddenly appearing on the road,
emerging from a thicket. She seems to be part of the scenery,
and can scarcely be distinguished from the objects around her.
The little wild country girl is like the spirit of the fields,
woods, rivers and precipices. She is a being very near to Nature.
Inquisitive and mischievous, she is bold in her speech, because she
is treated as a reprobate. She jeers, because she knows that she
is detested, and she scratches, because she suffers. The day comes
when she feels some of that affection which makes the atmosphere
breathable for human beings. She feels her heart beating faster
in her bosom, thanks to this affection, and from that minute
a transformation takes place within her. Landry, who has been
observing her, is of opinion that she must be something of a witch.
Landry is very simple-minded. There is no witchcraft here except that
of love, and it was not difficult for that to work the metamorphosis.
It has worked many others in this world.

The _Maitres Soneurs_ initiates us into forest life, so full of
mysterious visions. In opposition to the sedentary, stay-at-home life
of the inhabitant of plains, with his indolent mind, we have the
free-and-easy humour of the handsome and adventurous muleteer,
Huriel, with his love of the road and of all that is unexpected.
He is a _cheminau_ before the days of M. Richepin.

I do not know any stories more finished than these. They certainly
prove that George Sand had the artistic sense, a quality which has
frequently been denied her. The characters in these stories
are living and active, and at the same time their psychology

is not insisted upon, and they do not stand out in such relief as to turn our attention from things, which, as we know, are more important than people in the country. We are surrounded on all sides by the country, and bathed, as it were, in its atmosphere. And yet, in spite of all this, the country is not once described. There is not one of those descriptions so dear to the heart of those who are considered masters in the art of word-painting. We do riot describe those things with which we live. We are content to have them ever present in our mind and to be in constant communion with them. Style is, perhaps, the sovereign quality in these stories. Words peculiar to the district are introduced just sufficiently to give an accent. Somewhat old-fashioned expressions are employed, and these prove the survival of by-gone days, which, in the country, are respected more than elsewhere. Without any apparent effort, the narrative takes that epic form so natural to those who, as _aedes_ of primitive epochs, or story-tellers by country firesides, give their testimony about things of the past.

I am aware that George Sand has been accused of tracing portraits of her peasants which were not like them. This is so absurd that I do not consider it worth while to spend time in discussing it. It would be so easy to show that in her types of peasants there is more variety, and also more reality, than in Balzac's more realistic ones. Without being untruthful portraits, it may be that they are somewhat flattered, and that we have more honest, delicate and religious peasants in these stories than in reality. This may be so, and George Sand warns us of this herself. It was her intention to depict them thus.

It was not absolute reality and the everyday details of the peasants' habits and customs that she wanted to show us, but the poetry of the country, the reflection of the great sights of Nature in the soul of those who, thanks to their daily work, are the constant witnesses of them. The peasant certainly has no exact notion of the poetry of Nature, nor is he always conscious of it. He feels it, though, within his soul in a vague way. At certain moments he has glimpses of it, perhaps, when love causes him emotion, or perhaps when he is absent from the part of the world, where he has always lived. His homesickness then gives him a keener perception. This poetry is perhaps never clearly revealed to any individual, not to the labourer who traces out his furrows tranquilly in the early morning, nor to the shepherd who spends whole weeks alone in the mountains, face to face with the stars. It dwells, though, in the inner conscience of the race. The generations which come and go have it within them, and they do not fall to express it.

It is this poetry which we find in certain customs and beliefs, in the various legends and songs. When Le Champi returns to his native place, he finds the whole country murmuring with the twitter of birds which he knew so well.

"And all this reminded him of a very old song with which his mother Zabelli used to sing him to sleep. It was a song with words such as people used to employ in olden times."

In George Sand's pastoral novels we have some of these old words. They come to us from afar, and are like a supreme blossoming of old traditions.

It is all this which characterizes these books, and assigns to them their place in our literature. We must not compare them with the rugged studies of Balzac, nor with the insipid compositions of the bucolic writer, nor even with Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's masterpiece, as there are too many cocoanut trees in that. They prevent us seeing the French landscapes. Very few people know the country in France and the humble people who dwell there. Very few writers have loved the country well enough to be able to depict its hidden charms.

La Fontaine has done it in his fables and Perrault in his tales. George Sand has her place, in this race of writers, among the French Homers.

IX

THE `BONNE DAME' OF NOHANT THE THEATRE--ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS--LIFE AT NOHANT

Novelists are given to speaking of the theatre somewhat disdainfully. They say that there is too much convention, that an author is too much the slave of material conditions, and is obliged to consider the taste of the crowd, whilst a book appeals to the lover of literature, who can read it by his own fireside, and to the society woman, who loses herself in its pages. As soon, though, as one of their novels has had more success than its predecessors, they do not hesitate to cut it up into slices, according to the requirements of the publishing house, so that it may go beyond the little circle of lovers of literature and society women and reach the crowd--

the largest crowd possible.

George Sand never pretended to have this immense disdain for the theatre which is professed by ultra-refined writers. She had always loved the theatre, and she bore it no grudge, although her pieces had been hissed. In those days plays that did not find favour were hissed. At present they are not hissed, either because there are no more poor plays, or because the public has seen so many bad ones that it has become philosophical, and does not take the trouble to show its displeasure. George Sand's first piece, _Cosima_, was a noted failure. About the year 1850, she turned to the theatre once more, hoping to find a new form of expression for her energy and talent. _Francois le Champi_ was a great success. In January, 1851, she wrote as follows, after the performance of _Claudie: _ "A tearful success and a financial one. The house is full every day; not a ticket given away, and not even a seat for Maurice. The piece is played admirably; Bocage is magnificent. The public weeps and blows its nose, as though it were in church. I am told that never in the memory of man has there been such a first night. I was not present myself."

There may be a slight exaggeration in the words "never in the memory of man," but the success was really great. _Claudie_ is still given, and I remember seeing Paul Mounet interpret the part of Remy admirably at the Odeon Theatre. As to the _Mariage de Victorine_, it figures every year on the programme of the Conservatoire competitions. It is the typical piece for would-be _ingenues._

Francois le Champi, Claudie and the _Mariage de Victorine_ may be considered as the series representing George Sand's dramatic writings. These pieces were all her own, and, in her own opinion, that was their principal merit. The dramatic author is frequently obliged to accept the collaboration of persons who know nothing of literature.

"Your characters say this," observes the manager; it is all very well, but, believe me, it will be better for him to say just the opposite. The piece will run at least sixty nights longer." There was a manager at the Gymnase Theatre in those days named Montigny. He was a very clever manager, and knew exactly what the characters ought to say for making the piece run. George Sand complained of his mania for changing every play, and she added: "Every piece that I did not change, such, for instance, as _Champi_, _Claudie_, _Victorine, Le Demon du foyer_ and _Le Pressoir_, was a success, whilst all the others were either failures or they had a very short run."[48]

[48] _Correspondance:_ To Maurice Sand, February 24, 1855.

It was in these pieces that George Sand carried out her own idea of what was required for the theatre. Her idea was very simple. She gives it in two or three words: "I like pieces that make me cry." She adds: "I like drama better than comedy, and, like a woman, I must be infatuated by one of the characters." This character is the congenial one. The public is with him always and trembles for him, and the trembling is all the more agreeable, because the public knows perfectly well that all will end well for this character. It can even go as far as weeping the traditional six tears, as Madame de Sevigne did for Andromaque. Tears at the theatre are all the sweeter, because they are all in vain. When, in a play, we have a congenial character who is there from the beginning to the end, the play is a success. Let us take _Cyraino de Bergerac_, for instance, which is one of the greatest successes in the history of the theatre.

Francois le Champi is eminently a congenial character, for he is a man who always sets wrong things right. We are such believers in justice and in the interference of Providence. When good, straightforward people are persecuted by fate, we always expect to see a man appear upon the scene who will be the champion of innocence, who will put evil-doers to rights, and find the proper thing to do and say in every circumstance.

Francois appears at the house of Madeleine Blanchet, who is a widow and very sad and ill. He takes her part and defends her from the results of La Severe's intrigues. He is hard on the latter, and he disdains another woman, Mariette, but both La Severe and Mariette love him, so true is it that women have a weakness for conquerors. Francois only cares for Madeleine, though. On the stage, we like a man to be adored by all women, as this seems to us a guarantee that he will only care for one of them.

"Champi" is a word peculiar to a certain district, meaning "natural son." Dumas _fils_ wrote a play entitled _Le Fils naturel_. The hero is also a superior man, who plays the part of Providence to the family which has refused to recognize him.

In _Claudie_, as in _Francois le Champi_, the rural setting is one of the great charms of the play. The first act is one of the most picturesque scenes on the stage. It takes place

in a farmyard, the day when the reapers have finished their task,
which is just as awe-inspiring as that of the sowers. A cart,
drawn by oxen, enters the yard, bringing a sheaf all adorned
with ribbons and flowers. The oldest of the labourers, Pere Remy,
addresses a fine couplet to the sheaf of corn which has cost
so much labour, but which is destined to keep life in them all.
Claudie is one of those young peasant girls, whom we met with
in the novel entitled _Jeanne_. She had been unfortunate,
but Jeanne, although virtuous and pure herself, did not despise her,
for in the country there is great latitude in certain matters.
This is just the plain story, but on the stage everything becomes
more dramatic and is treated in a more detailed and solemn fashion.
Claudie's misfortune causes her to become a sort of personage apart,
and it raises her very high in her own esteem.

"I am not afraid of anything that can be said about me,"
observes Claudie, "for, on knowing the truth, kind-hearted, upright
people will acknowledge that I do not deserve to be insulted."
Her old grandfather, Remy, has completely absolved her.

"You have repented and suffered enough, and you have worked
and wept and expiated enough, too, my poor Claudie," he says.
Through all this she has become worthy to make an excellent marriage.
It is a case of that special moral code by which, after free love,
the fault must be recompensed.

Claudie is later on the Jeannine of the _Idees de Madame Aubray_,
the Denise of Alexandre Dumas. She is the unmarried mother,
whose misfortunes have not crushed her pride, who, after being outraged,
has a right now to a double share of respect. The first good young
man is called upon to accept her past life, for there is a law
of solidarity in the world. The human species is divided into
two categories, the one is always busy doing harm, and the other
is naturally obliged to give itself up to making good the harm done.

The Mariage de Victorine belongs to a well-known kind of literary
exercise, which was formerly very much in honour in the colleges.
This consists in taking a celebrated work at the place where the
author has left it and in imagining the "sequel." For instance,
after the _Cid_, there would be the marriage of Rodrigue and Chimene
for us. As a continuation of _L'Ecole des Femmes_, there is
the result of the marriage of the young Horace with the tiresome
little Agnes. Corneille gave a sequel to the _Menteur_ himself.
Fabre d'Eglantine wrote the sequel to _Le Misanthrope_, and called
it _Le Philinte de Moliere_. George Sand gives us here the

sequel of Sedaine's _chef-d'oeuvre_ (that is, a _chef-d'oeuvre_
for Sedaine), _Le Philosophe sans le savor._

In _Le Philosophe sans le savoir_ Monsieur Vanderke is a nobleman,
who has become a merchant in order to be in accordance with the ideas
of the times. He is a Frenchman, but he has taken a Dutch name out
of snobbishness. He has a clerk or a confidential servant named Antoine.
Victorine is Antoine's daughter. Vanderke's son is to fight a duel,
and from Victorine's emotion, whilst awaiting the result of this duel,
it is easy to see that she is in love with this young man.
George Sand's play turns on the question of what is to be done when
the day comes for Victorine to marry. An excellent husband is found
for her, a certain Fulgence, one of Monsieur Vanderke's clerks.
He belongs to her own class, and this is considered one of the
indispensable conditions for happiness in marriage. He loves her,
so that everything seems to favour Victorine. We are delighted,
and she, too, seems to be in good spirits, but, all the time that she
is receiving congratulations and presents, we begin to see that she
has some great trouble.

"Silk and pearls!" she exclaims; "oh, how heavy they are, but I am
sure that they are very fine. Lace, too, and silver; oh, such a
quantity of silver. How rich and fine and happy I shall be.
And then Fulgence is so fond of me." (She gets sadder and sadder.)
"And father is so pleased. How strange. I feel stifled."
(She sits down in Antoinc's chair.) "Is this joy? . . . I feel . . .
Ah, it hurts to be as happy as this. . . ." She bursts into tears.
This suppressed emotion to which she finally gives vent, and this
forced smile which ends in sobs are very effective on the stage.
The question is, how can Victorine's tears be dried? She wants
to marry young Vanderke, the son of her father's employer, instead
of the clerk. The only thing is, then, to arrange this marriage.

"Is it a crime, then, for my brother to love Victorine?" asks Sophie,
"and is it mad of me to think that you will give your consent?"

"My dear Sophie," replies Monsieur Vanderke, "there are no unequal
marriages in the sight of God. A servitor like Antoine is a friend,
and I have always brought you up to consider Victorine as your
companion and equal."

This is the way the father of the family speaks. Personally,
I consider him rather imprudent.

As this play is already a sequel to another one, I do not wish

to propose a sequel to _Le Mariage de Victorine_, but I cannot help wondering what will happen when Vanderke's son finds himself the son-in-law of an old servant-man, and also what will occur if he should take his wife to call on some of his sister's friends. It seems to me that he would then find out he had, made a mistake. Among the various personages, only one appears to me quite worthy of interest, and that is poor Fulgence, who was so straightforward and honest, and who is treated so badly.

But how deep Victorine was! Even if we admit that she did not deliberately scheme and plot to get herself married by the son of the family, she did instinctively all that had to be done for that. She was very deep in an innocent way, and I have come to the conclusion that such deepness is the most to be feared.

I see quite well all that is lacking in these pieces, and that they are not very great, but all the same they form a "theatre" apart. There is unity in this theatrical work of George Sand. Whether it makes a hero of the natural son, rehabilitates the seduced girl, or cries down the idea of _mesalliances_, it is always the same fight in which it is engaged; it is always fighting against the same enemies, prejudice and narrow-mindedness. On the stage, we call every opinion contrary to our own prejudice or narrow-mindedness. The theatre lives by fighting. It matters little what the author is attacking. He may wage war with principles, prejudices, giants, or windmills. Provided that there be a battle, there will be a theatre for it.

The fact that George Sand's theatre was the forerunner of the theatre of Dumas _fils_ gives it additional value. We have already noticed the analogy of situations and the kinship of theories contained in George Sand's best plays and in the most noted ones by Dumas. I have no doubt that Dumas owed a great deal to George Sand. We shall see that he paid his debt as only he could have done. He knew the novelist when he was quite young, as Dumas _pere_ and George Sand were on very friendly terms. In her letter telling Sainte-Beuve not to take Musset to call on her, as she thought him impertinent, she tells him to bring Dumas _pere_, whom she evidently considered well bred. As she was a friend of his father's, she was like a mother for the son. The first letter to him in the _Correspondance_ is dated 1850. Dumas _fils_ was then twenty-six years of age, and she calls him "my son."

He had not written _La Dame aux Camelias_ then. It was performed for the first time in February, 1852. He was merely the author of a few second-rate novels and of a volume of execrable poetry.

He had not found out his capabilities at that time. There is no doubt that he was greatly struck by George Sand's plays, imbued as they were with the ideas we have just pointed out.

All this is worthy of note, as it is essential for understanding the work of Alexandre Dumas _fils_. He, too, was a natural son, and his illegitimate birth had caused him much suffering. He was sent to the Pension Goubaux, and for several years he endured the torture he describes with such harshness at the beginning of _L'Affaire Clemenceau_. He was exposed to all kinds of insults and blows. His first contact with society taught him that this society was unjust, and that it made the innocent suffer. The first experience he had was that of the cruelty and cowardice of men. His mind was deeply impressed by this, and he never lost the impression. He did not forgive, but made it his mission to denounce the pharisaical attitude of society. His idea was to treat men according to their merits, and to pay them back for the blows he had received as a child.[49] It is easy, therefore, to understand how the private grievances of Dumas _fils_ had prepared his mind to welcome a theatre which took the part of the oppressed and waged war with social prejudices. I am fully aware of the difference in temperament of the two writers. Dumas _fils_, with his keen observation, was a pessimist. He despised woman, and he advises us to kill her, under the pretext that she has always remained "the strumpet of the land of No." although she may be dressed in a Worth costume and wear a Reboux hat.

[49] See our study of Dumas _fils_ in a volume entitled _Portraits d'ecrivains._

As a dramatic author, Alexandre Dumas _fils_ had just what George Sand lacked. He was vigorous, he had the art of brevity and brilliant dialogue. It is thanks to all this that we have one of the masterpieces of the French theatre, _Le Marquis de Villemer_, as a result of their collaboration.

We know from George Sand's letters the share that Dumas _fils_ had in this work. He helped her to take the play from her novel, and to write the scenario. After this, when once the play was written, he touched up the dialogue, putting in more emphasis and brilliancy. It was Dumas, therefore, who constructed the play. We all know how careless George Sand was with her composition. She wrote with scarcely any plan in her mind beforehand, and let herself be carried away by events. Dumas' idea was that the _denouement_

is a mathematical total, and that before writing the first word of a piece the author must know the end and have decided the action. Theatrical managers complained of the sadness of George Sand's plays. It is to Dumas that we owe the gaiety of the Duc d'Aleria's _role_. It is one continual flow of amusing speeches, and it saves the piece from the danger of falling into tearful drama. George Sand had no wit, and Dumas _fils_ was full of it. It was he who put into the dialogue those little sayings which are so easily recognized as his.

"What do the doctors say?" is asked, and the reply comes:

"What do the doctors say? Well, they say just what they know: they say nothing."

"My brother declares that the air of Paris is the only air he can breathe," says another character.

"Congratulate him for me on his lungs," remarks his interlocutor.

"Her husband was a baron . . ." remarks some one.

"Who is not a baron at present?" answers another person.

A certain elderly governess is being discussed.

"Did you not know her?"

"Mademoiselle Artemise? No, monsieur."

"Have you ever seen an albatross?"

"No, never."

"Not even stuffed? Oh, you should go to the Zoo. It is a curious creature, with its great beak ending in a hook. . . . It eats all day long. . . . Well, Mademoiselle Artemise, etc. . . ."

The _Marquis de Villemer_ is in its place in the series of George Sand's plays, and is quite in accordance with the general tone of her theatre. It is like the _Mariage de Victorine_ over again. This time Victorine is a reader, who gets herself married by a Marquis named Urbain. He is of a gloomy disposition, so that she will not enjoy his society much, but she will be a Marquise. Victorine and Caroline are both persons who know how to make their

way in the world. When they have a son, I should be very much surprised if they allowed him to make a _mesalliance_.

George Sand was one of the persons f or whom Dumas _fils_ had the greatest admiration. As a proof of this, a voluminous correspondence between them exists. It has not yet been published, but there is a possibility that it may be some day. I remember, when talking with Dumas _fils_, the terms in which he always spoke of "la mere Sand," as he called her in a familiar but filial way. He compared her to his father, and that was great praise indeed from him. He admired in her, too, as he admired in his father, that wealth of creative power and immense capacity for uninterrupted work. As a proof of this admiration, we have only to turn to the preface to _Le Fils naturel_, in which Dumas is so furious with the inhabitants of Palaiseau. George Sand had taken up her abode at Palaiseau, and Dumas had been trying in vain to discover her address in the district, when he came across one of the natives, who replied as follows: "George Sand? Wait a minute. Isn't it a lady with papers?" "So much for the glory," concludes Dumas, "of those of us with papers." According to him, no woman had ever had more talent or as much genius. "She thinks like Montaigne," he says, "she dreams like Ossian and she writes like Jean-Jacques. Leonardo sketches her phrases for her, and Mozart sings them. Madame de Sevigne kisses her hands, and Madame de Stael kneels down to her as she passes." We can scarcely imagine Madame de Stael in this humble posture, but one of the charms of Dumas was his generous nature, which spared no praise and was lavish in enthusiasm.

At the epoch at which we have now arrived, George Sand had commenced that period of tranquillity and calm in which she was to spend the rest of her life. She had given up politics, for, as we have seen, she was quickly undeceived with regard to them, and cured of her illusions. When the _coup d'etat_ of December, 1851, took place, George Sand, who had been Ledru-Rollin's collaborator and a friend of Barbes, soon made up her mind what to do. As the daughter of Murat's _aide-de-camp_, she naturally had a certain sympathy with the Bonapartists. Napoleon III was a socialist, so that it was possible to come to an understanding. When the prince had been a prisoner at Ham, he had sent the novelist his study entitled _L'Extinction du pauperisme_. George Sand took advantage of her former intercourse with him to beg for his indulgrence in favour of some of her friends. This time she was in her proper _role_, the _role_ of a woman. The "tyrant" granted the favours she asked, and George Sand then

came to the conclusion that he was a good sort of tyrant. She was accused of treason, but she nevertheless continued to speak of him with gratitude. She remained on good terms with the Imperial family, particularly with Prince Jerome, as she appreciated his intellect. She used to talk with him on literary and philosophical questions. She sent him two tapestry ottomans one year, which she had worked for him. Her son Maurice went for a cruise to America on Prince Jerome's yacht, and he was the godfather of George Sand's little grandchildren who were baptized as Protestants.

George Sand deserves special mention for her science in the art of growing old. It is not a science easy to master, and personally this is one of my reasons for admiring her. She understood what a charm there is in that time of life when the voice of the passions is no longer heard, so that we can listen to the voice of things and examine the lesson of life, that time when our reason makes us more indulgent, when the sadness of earthly separations is softened by the thought that we shall soon go ourselves to join those who have left us. We then begin to have a foretaste of the calmness of that Great Sleep which is to console us at the end of all our sufferings and grief. George Sand was fully aware of the change that had taken place within her. She said, several times over, that the age of impersonality had arrived for her. She was delighted at having escaped from herself and at being free from egoism. From henceforth she could give herself up to the sentiments which, in pedantic and barbarous jargon, are called altruistic sentiments. By this we mean motherly and grandmotherly affection, devotion to her family, and enthusiasm for all that is beautiful and noble. She was delighted when she was told of a generous deed, and charmed by a book in which she discovered talent. It seemed to her as though she were in some way joint author of it.

"My heart goes out to all that I see dawning or growing . . ." she wrote, at this time. "When we see or read anything beautiful, does it not seem as though it belongs to us in a way, that it is neither yours nor mine, but that it belongs to all who drink from it and are strengthened by it?"[50]

[50] _Correspondance:_ To Octave Feuillet, February 27, 1859.

This is a noble sentiment, and less rare than is generally believed. The public little thinks that it is one of the great joys of the writer, when he has reached a certain age, to admire the works

of his fellow-writers. George Sand encouraged her young _confreres_, Dumas _fils_, Feuillet and Flaubert, at the beginning of their career, and helped them with her advice.

We have plenty of information about her at this epoch. Her intimate friends, inquisitive people and persons passing through Paris, have described their visits to her over and over again. We have the impressions noted down by the Goncourt brothers in their _Jounal_. We all know how much to trust to this diary. Whenever the Goncourts give us an idea, an opinion, or a doctrine, it is as well to be wary in accepting it. They were not very intelligent. I do not wish, in saying this, to detract from them, but merely to define them. On the other hand, what they saw, they saw thoroughly, and they noted the general look, the attitude or gesture with great care.

We give their impressions of George Sand. In March, 1862, they went to call on her. She was then living in Paris, in the Rue Racine. They give an account of this visit in their diary.

"_March_ 30, 1862.

"On the fourth floor, No. 2, Rue Racine. A little gentleman, very much like every one else, opened the door to us. He smiled, and said: `Messieurs de Goncourt!' and then, opening another door, showed us into a very large room, a kind of studio.

"There was a window at the far end, and the light was getting dim, for it was about five o'clock. We could see a grey shadow against the pale light. It was a woman, who did not attempt to rise, but who remained impassive to our bow and our words. This seated shadow, looking so drowsy, was Madame Sand, and the man who opened. the door was the engraver Manceau. Madame Sand is like an automatic machine. She talks in a monotonous, mechanical voice which she neither raises nor lowers, and which is never animated. In her whole attitude there is a sort of gravity and placidness, something of the half-asleep air of a person ruminating. She has very slow gestures, the gestures of a somnambulist. With a mechanical movement she strikes a wax match, which gives a flicker, and lights the cigar she is holding between her lips.

"Madame Sand was extremely pleasant; she praised us a great deal, but with a childishness of ideas, a platitude of expression and a mournful good-naturedness that was as chilling as the bare wall of a room. Manceau endeavoured to enliven the dialogue. We talked of her theatre at Nohant, where they act for her and

for her maid until four in the morning. . . . We then talked
of her prodigious faculty for work. She told us that there was
nothing meritorious in that, as she had always worked so easily.
She writes every night from one o'clock until four in the morning,
and she writes again for about two hours during the day.
Manceau explains everything, rather like an exhibitor of phenomena.
`It is all the same to her,' he told us, `if she is disturbed.
Suppose you turn on a tap at your house, and some one comes
in the room. You simply turn the tap off. It is like that with
Madame Sand.'"

The Goncourt brothers were extremely clever in detracting from the
merits of the people about whom they spoke. They tell us that George
Sand had "a childishness in her ideas and a platitude of expression."
They were unkind without endeavouring to be so. They ran down
people instinctively. They were eminently literary men. They were
also artistic writers, and had even invented "artistic writing,"
but they had very little in common with George Sand's attitude
of mind. To her the theory of art for the sake of art had always
seemed a very hollow theory. She wrote as well as she could,
but she never dreamed of the profession of writing having anything
in common with an acrobatic display.

In September, 1863, the Goncourt brothers again speak of George Sand,
telling us about her life at Nohant, or rather putting the account
they give into the mouth of Theophile Gautier. He had just returned
from Nohant, and he was asked if it was amusing at George Sand's.

"Just as amusing as a monastery of the Moravian brotherhood,"
he replies. "I arrived there in the evening, and the house is
a long way from the station. My trunk was put into a thicket,
and on arriving I entered by the farm in the midst of all the dogs,
which gave me a fright. . . ."

As a matter of fact, Gautier's arrival at Nohant had been quite
a dramatic poem, half tragic and half comic. Absolute freedom
was the rule of Nohant. Every one there read, wrote, or went
to sleep according to his own will and pleasure. Gautier arrived
in that frame of mind peculiar to the Parisian of former days.
He considered that he had given a proof of heroism in venturing
outside the walls of Paris. He therefore expected a hearty welcome.
He was very much annoyed at his reception, and was about to start back
again immediately, when George Sand was informed of his arrival.
She was extremely vexed at what had happened, and exclaimed, "But had

not any one told him how stupid I am!"

The Goncourt brothers asked Gautier what life at Nohant was like.

"Luncheon is at ten," he replied, "and when the finger was on the hour, we all took our seats. Madame Sand arrived, looking like a somnambulist, and remained half asleep all through the meal. After luncheon we went into the garden and played at _cochonnet_. This roused her, and she would then sit down and begin to talk."

It would have been more exact to say that she listened, as she was not a great talker herself. She had a horror of a certain kind of conversation, of that futile, paradoxical and spasmodic kind which is the speciality of "brilliant talkers." Sparkling conversation of this sort disconcerted her and made her feel ill at ease. She did not like the topic to be the literary profession either. This exasperated Gautier, who would not admit of there being anything else in the world but literature.

"At three o'clock," he continued, "Madame Sand went away to write until six. We then dined, but we had to dine quickly, so that Marie Caillot would have time to dine. Marie Caillot is the servant, a sort of little Fadette whom Madame Sand had discovered in the neighbourhood for playing her pieces. This Marie Caillot used to come into the drawing-room in the evening. After dinner Madame Sand would play patience, without uttering a word, until midnight. . . . At midnight she began to write again until four o'clock. . . . You know what happened once. Something monstrous. She finished a novel at one o'clock in the morning, and began another during the night. . . . To make copy is a function with Madame Sand."

The marionette theatre was one of the Nohant amusements. One of the joys of the family, and also one of the delights of _dilettanti_,[51] was the painting of the scenery, the manufacturing of costumes, the working out of scenarios, dressing dolls and making them talk.

[51] "The individual named George Sand is very well. He is enjoying the wonderful winter which reigns in Berry; he gathers flowers, points out any interesting botanical anomalies, sews dresses and mantles for his daughter-in-law, and costumes for the marionettes, cuts out stage scenery, dresses dolls and reads music. . . ."--_Correspondance:_ To Flaubert, January 17, 1869.

In one of her novels, published in 1857, George Sand introduces
to us a certain Christian Waldo, who has a marionette show.
He explains the attraction of this kind of theatre and the
fascination of these _burattini_, which were living beings to him.
Those among us who, some fifteen years ago, were infatuated by a
similar show, are not surprised at Waldo's words. The marionettes
to which we refer were to be seen in the Passage Vivienne.
Sacred plays in verse were given, and the managers were Monsieur
Richepin and Monsieur Bouchor. For such plays we preferred actors
made of wood to actors of flesh and blood, as there is always
a certain desecration otherwise in acting such pieces.

George Sand rarely left Nohant now except for her little flat
in Paris. In the spring of 1855, she went to Rome for a short time,
but did not enjoy this visit much. She sums up her impressions
in the following words: "Rome is a regular see-saw." The ruins
did not interest her much.

"After spending several days in visiting urns, tombs, crypts
and columns, one feels the need of getting out of all this a
little and of seeing Nature."

Nature, however, did not compensate her sufficiently for her
disappointment in the ruins.

"The Roman Campagna, which has been so much vaunted, is certainly
singularly immense, but it is so bare, flat and deserted, so monotonous
and sad, miles and miles of meadow-land in every direction,
that the little brain one has left, after seeing the city,
is almost overpowered by it all."

This journey inspired her with one of the weakest of her novels,
La Daniella. It is the diary of a painter named Jean Valreg,
who married a laundry-girl. In 1861, after an illness, she went
to Tamaris, in the south of France. This name is the title
of one of her novels. She does not care for this place either.
She considers that there is too much wind, too much dust, and that
there are too many olive-trees in the south of France.

I am convinced that at an earlier time in her life she would,
have been won over by the fascination of Rome. She had comprehended
the charm of Venice so admirably. At an earlier date, too,
she would not have been indifferent to the beauties of Provence,
as she had delighted in meridional Nature when in Majorca.

The years were over, though, for her to enjoy the variety of outside shows with all their phantasmagoria. A time comes in life, and it had already come for her, when we discover that Nature, which has seemed so varied, is the same everywhere, that we have quite near us all that we have been so far away to seek, a little of this earth, a little water and a little sky. We find, too, that we have neither the time nor the inclination to go away in search of all this when our hours are counted and we feel the end near. The essential thing then is to reserve for ourselves a little space for our meditations, between the agitations of life and that moment which alone decides everything for us.

X

THE GENIUS OF THE WRITER

CORRESPONDENCE WITH FLAUBERT--LAST NOVELS

With that maternal instinct which was so strong within her, George Sand could not do without having a child to scold, direct and take to task. The one to whom she was to devote the last ten years of her life, who needed her beneficent affection more than any of those she had adopted, was a kind of giant with hair turned back from his forehead and a thick moustache like a Norman of the heroic ages. He was just such a man as we can imagine the pirates in Duc Rollo's boats. This descendant of the Vikings had been born in times of peace, and his sole occupation was to endeavour to form harmonious phrases by avoiding assonances.

I do not think there have been two individuals more different from each other than George Sand and Gustave Flaubert. He was an artist, and she in many respects was _bourgeoise_. He saw all things at their worst; she saw them better than they were. Flaubert wrote to her in surprise as follows: "In spite of your large sphinx eyes, you have seen the world through gold colour."

She loved the lower classes; he thought them detestable, and qualified universal suffrage as "a disgrace to the human mind." She preached concord, the union of classes, whilst he gave his opinion as follows:

"I believe that the poor hate the rich, and that the rich are afraid of the poor. It will be like this eternally."

It was always thus. On every subject the opinion of the one was sure to be the direct opposite of the opinion of the other. This was just what had attracted them.

"I should not be interested in myself," George Sand said, "if I had the honour of meeting myself." She was interested in Flaubert, as she had divined that he was her antithesis.

"The man who is Just passing," says Fantasio, "is charming. There are all sorts of ideas in his mind which would be quite new to me."

George Sand wanted to know something of these ideas which were new to her. She admired Flaubert on account of all sorts of qualities which she did not possess herself. She liked him, too, as she felt that he was unhappy.

She went to see him during the summer of 1866. They visited the historic streets and old parts of Rouen together. She was both charmed and surprised. She could not believe her eyes, as she had never imagined that all that existed, and so near Paris, too. She stayed in that house at Croisset in which Flaubert's whole life was spent. It was a house with wide windows and a view over the Seine. The hoarse, monotonous sound of the chain towing the heavy boats along could be heard distinctly within the rooms. Flaubert lived there with his mother and niece. To George Sand everything there seemed to breathe of tranquillity and comfort, but at the same time she brought away with her an impression of sadness. She attributed this to the vicinity of the Seine, coming and going as it does according to the bar.

"The willows of the islets are always being covered and uncovered," she writes; "it all looks very cold and sad.[52]

[52] _Correspondance:_ To Maurice Sand, August 10, 1866.

She was not really duped, though, by her own explanation. She knew perfectly well that what makes a house sad or gay, warm or icy-cold is not the outlook on to the surrounding country, but the soul of those who inhabit it and who have fashioned it in their own image. She had just been staying in the house of the misanthropist.

When Moliere put the misanthropist on the stage with his wretched-looking face, he gave him some of the features which remind us so strongly of Flaubert. The most ordinary and everyday events were always enough to put Alceste into a rage. It was just the same with Flaubert. Everyday things which we are philosophical enough to accept took his breath away. He was angry, and he wanted to be angry. He was irritated with every one and with everything, and he cultivated this irritation. He kept himself in a continual state of exasperation, and this was his normal state. In his letters he described himself as "worried with life," "disgusted with everything," "always agitated and always indignant." He spells _hhhindignant_ with several h's. He signs his letters, "The Reverend Father Cruchard of the Barnabite Order, director of the Ladies of Disenchantment." Added to all this, although there may have been a certain amount of pose in his attitude, he was sincere. He "roared" in his own study, when he was quite alone and there was no one to be affected by his roaring. He was organized in a remarkable way for suffering. He was both romantic and realistic, a keen observer and an imaginative man. He borrowed some of the most pitiful traits from reality, and recomposed them into a regular nightmare. We agree with Flaubert that injustice and nonsense do exist in life. But he gives us Nonsense itself, the seven-headed and ten-horned beast of the Apocalypse. He sees this beast everywhere, it haunts him and blocks up every avenue for him, so that he cannot see the sublime beauties of the creation nor the splendour of human intelligence.

In reply to all his wild harangues, George Sand gives wise answers, smiling as she gives them, and using her common sense with which to protect herself against the trickery of words. What has he to complain of, this grown-up child who is too naive and who expects too much? By what extraordinary misfortune has he such an exceptionally unhappy lot? He is fairly well off and he has great talent. How many people would envy him! He complains of life, such as it is for every one, and of the present conditions of life, which had never been better for any one at any epoch. What is the use of getting irritated with life, since we do not wish to die? Humanity seemed despicable to him, and he hated it. Was he not a part of this humanity himself? Instead of cursing our fellow-men for a whole crowd of imperfections inherent to their nature, would it not be more just to pity them for such imperfections? As to stupidity and nonsense, if he objected to them, it would be better to pay no attention to them, instead of watching out for them all the time. Beside all this, is there not more reason than we imagine for every one of us to be indulgent towards the stupidity

of other people?

"That poor stupidity of which we hear so much," exclaimed George Sand.
"I do not dislike it, as I look on it with maternal eyes."
The human race is absurd, undoubtedly, but we must own that we
contribute ourselves to this absurdity.

There is something morbid in Flaubert's case, and with equal clearness
of vision George Sand points out to him the cause of it and the remedy.
The morbidness is caused in the first place by his loneliness,
and by the fact that he has severed all bonds which united him to the
rest of the universe. Woe be to those who are alone! The remedy
is the next consideration. Is there not, somewhere in the world,
a woman whom he could love and who would make him suffer? Is there
not a child somewhere whose father he could imagine himself to be,
and to whom he could devote himself? Such is the law of life.
Existence is intolerable to us as long as we only ask for our own
personal satisfaction, but it becomes dear to us from the day when we
make a present of it to another human being.

There was the same antagonism in their literary opinions.
Flaubert was an artist, the theorist of the doctrine of art for art,
such as Theophile Gautier, the Goncourt brothers and the Parnassians
comprehended it, at about the same epoch. It is singularly
interesting to hear him formulate each article of this doctrine,
and to hear George Sand's fervent protestations in reply.
Flaubert considers that an author should not put himself into
his work, that he should not write his books with his heart,
and George Sand answers:

"I do not understand at all, then. Oh no, it is all incomprehensible
to me."

With what was an author to write his books, if not with his own
sentiments and emotions? Was he to write them with the hearts
of other people? Flaubert maintained that an author should only
write for about twenty persons, unless he simply wrote for himself,
"like a _bourgeois_ turning his serviette-rings round in his attic."
George Sand was of opinion that an author should write "for all those
who can profit by good reading." Flaubert confesses that if attention
be paid to the old distinction between matter and form, he should give
the greater importance to form, in which he had a religious belief.
He considered that in the correctness of the putting together,
in the rarity of the elements, the polish of the surface and
the perfect harmony of the whole there was an intrinsic virtue,

a kind of divine force. In conclusion, he adds:

"I endeavour to think well always, _in order to_ write well,
but I do not conceal the fact that my object is to write well."

This, then, was the secret of that working up of the style,
until it became a mania with him and developed into a torture.
We all know of the days of anguish which Flaubert spent in searching
for a word that escaped him, and the weeks that he devoted to rounding
off one of his periods. He would never write these down until he
had said them to himself, or, as he put it himself, until "they
had gone through his jaw." He would not allow two complements
in the same phrase, and we are told that he was ill after reading
in one of his own books the following words: "Une couronne _de_
fleurs _d_'oranger."

"You do not know what it is," he wrote, "to spend a whole day holding
one's head and squeezing one's brains to find a word. Ideas flow
with you freely and continually, like a stream. With me they come
like trickling water, and it is only by a huge work of art that I
can get a waterfall. Ah, I have had some experience of the terrible
torture of style!" No, George Sand certainly had no experience
of this kind, and she could not even conceive of such torture.
It amazed her to hear of such painful labour, for, personally, she let
the wind play on her "old harp" just as it listed.

Briefly, she considered that her friend was the victim of a
hopeless error. He took literature for the essential thing, but there
was something before all literature, and that something was life.
"The Holy of Holies, as you call literature, is only secondary
to me in life. I have always loved some one better than it,
and my family better than that some one."

This, then, was the keynote of the argument. George Sand considered
that life is not only a pretext for literature, but that literature
should always refer to life and should be regulated by life,
as by a model which takes the precedence of it and goes far
beyond it. This, too, is our opinion.

The state of mind which can be read between the lines in George Sand's
letters to Flaubert is serenity, and this is also the characteristic
of her work during the last period of her life. Her "last style"
is that of _Jean de la Rocke_, published in 1860. A young nobleman,
Jean de la Roche, loses his heart to the exquisite Love Butler.
She returns his affection, but the jealousy of a young brother

obliges them to separate. In order to be near the woman he loves, Jean de la Roche disguises himself as a guide, and accompanies the whole family in an excursion through the Auvergne mountains. A young nobleman as a guide is by no means an ordinary thing, but in love affairs such disguises are admitted. Lovers in the writings of Marivaux took the parts of servants, and in former days no one was surprised to meet with princes in disguise on the high-roads.

George Sand's masterpiece of this kind is undoubtedly _Le Marquis de Villemer_, published in 1861. A provincial _chateau_, an old aristocratic woman, sceptical and indulgent, two brothers capable of being rivals without ceasing to be friends, a young girl of noble birth, but poor, calumny being spread abroad, but quickly repudiated, some wonderful pages of description, and some elegant, sinuous conversations. All this has a certain charm. The poor girl marries the Marquis in the end. This, too, is a return to former days, to the days when kings married shepherdesses. The pleasure that we have in reading such novels is very much like that which we used to feel on hearing fairy-stories.

"If some one were to tell me the story of _Peau d'Ane_, I should be delighted," confessed La Fontaine, and surely it would be bad form to be more difficult and over-nice than he was. Big children as we are, we need stories which give food to our imagination, after being disappointed by the realities of life. This is perhaps the very object of the novel. Romance is not necessarily an exaggerated aspiration towards imaginary things. It is something else too. It is the revolt of the soul which is oppressed by the yoke of Nature. It is the expression of that tendency within us towards a freedom which is impossible, but of which we nevertheless dream. An iron law presides over our destiny. Around us and within us, the series of causes and effects continues to unwind its hard chain. Every single one of our deeds bears its consequence, and this goes on to eternity. Every fault of ours will bring its chastisement. Every weakness will have to be made good. There is not a moment of oblivion, not an instant when we may cease to be on our guard. Romantic illusion is, then, just an attempt to escape, at least in imagination, from the tyranny of universal order.

It is impossible, in this volume, to consider all George Sand's works. Some of her others are charming, but the whole series would perhaps appear somewhat monotonous. There is, however, one novel of this epoch to which we must call attention, as it is like a burst of thunder during calm weather. It also reveals an aspect

of George Sand's ideas which should not be passed over lightly.
This book was perhaps the only one George Sand wrote under the
influence of anger. We refer to _Mademoiselle La Quintinie_.
Octave Feuillet had just published his _Histoire de Sibylle_,
and this book made George Sand furiously angry. We are at a loss
to comprehend her indignation. Feuillet's novel is very graceful
and quite inoffensive. Sibylle is a fanciful young person,
who from her earliest childhood dreams of impossible things.
She wants her grandfather to get a star for her, and another time
she wants to ride on the swan's back as it swims in the pool.
When she is being prepared for her first communion, she has
doubts about the truth of the Christian religion, but one night,
during a storm, the priest of the place springs into a boat and goes
to the rescue of some sailors in peril. All the difficulties
of theological interpretations are at once dispelled for her.
A young man falls in love with her, but on discovering that he is
not a believer she endeavours to convert him, and goes moonlight
walks with him. Moonlight is sometimes dangerous for young girls,
and, after one of these sentimental and theological strolls, she has
a mysterious ailment. . . .

In order to understand George Sand's anger on reading this novel,
which was both religious and social, and at the same time very harmless,
we must know what her state of mind was on the essential question
of religion.

In the first place, George Sand was not hostile to religious ideas.
She had a religion. There is a George Sand religion. There are not
many dogmas, and the creed is simple. George Sand believed firmly
in the existence of God. Without the notion of God, nothing can
be explained and no problem solved. This God is not merely the
"first cause." It is a personal and conscious God, whose essential,
if not sole, function is to forgive--every one.

"The dogma of hell," she writes, "is a monstrosity, an imposture,
a barbarism. . . . It is impious to doubt God's infinite pity,
and to think that He does not always pardon, even the most guilty
of men." This is certainly the most complete application that has ever
been made of the law of pardon. This God is not the God of Jacob,
nor of Pascal, nor even of Voltaire. He is not an unknown God either.
He is the God of Beranger and of all good people. George Sand
believed also, very firmly, in the immortality of the soul.
On losing any of her family, the certainty of going to them some day
was her great consolation.

"I see future and eternal life before me as a certainty," she said; "it is like a light, and, thanks to its brilliancy, other things cannot be seen; but the light is there, and that is all I need." Her belief was, then, in the existence of God, the goodness of Providence and the immortality of the soul. George Sand was an adept in natural religion.

She did not accept the idea of any revealed religion, and there was one of these revealed religions that she execrated. This was the Catholic religion. Her correspondence on this subject during the period of the Second Empire is most significant. She was a personal enemy of the Church, and spoke of the Jesuits as a subscriber to the _Siecle_ might do to-day. She feared the dagger of the Jesuits for Napoleon III, but at the same time she hoped there might be a frustrated attempt at murder, so that his eyes might be opened. The great danger of modern times, according to her, was the development of the clerical spirit. She was not an advocate for liberty of education either. "The priestly spirit has been encouraged," she wrote.[53] "France is overrun with convents, and wretched friars have been allowed to take possession of education." She considered that wherever the Church was mistress, it left its marks, which were unmistakable: stupidity and brutishness. She gave Brittany as an example.

[53] _Correspondance:_ To Barbes, May 12, 1867.

"There is nothing left," she writes, "when the priest and Catholic vandalism have passed by, destroying the monuments of the old world and leaving their lice for the future."[54]

[54] _Ibid.:_ To Flaubert, September 21, 1860.

It is no use attempting to ignore the fact. This is anti-clericalism in all its violence. Is it not curious that this passion, when once it takes possession of even the most distinguished minds, causes them to lose all sentiment of measure, of propriety and of dignity.

Mademoiselle La Quintinie is the result of a fit of anti-clerical mania. George Sand gives, in this novel, the counterpart of _Sibylle_. Emile Lemontier, a free-thinker, is in love with the daughter of General La Quintinie. Emile is troubled in his mind because, as his

fiancee is a Catholic, he knows she will have to have a confessor. The idea is intolerable to him, as, like Monsieur Homais, he considers that a husband could not endure the idea of his wife having private conversations with one of those individuals. Mademoiselle La Quintinie's confessor is a certain Moreali, a near relative of Eugene Sue's Rodin. The whole novel turns on the struggle between Emile and Moreali, which ends in the final discomfiture of Moreali. Mademoiselle La Quintinie is to marry Emile, who will teach her to be a free-thinker. Emile is proud of his work of drawing a soul away from Christian communion. He considers that the light of reason is always sufficient for illuminating the path in a woman's life. He thinks that her natural rectitude will prove sufficient for making a good woman of her. I do not wish to call this into question, but even if she should not err, is it not possible that she may suffer? This free-thinker imagines that it is possible to tear belief from a heart without rending it and causing an incurable wound. Oh, what a poor psychologist! He forgets that beliefis the summing up and the continuation of the belief of a whole series of generations. He does not hear the distant murmur of the prayers of by-gone years. It is in vain to endeavour to stifle those prayers; they will be heard for ever within the crushed and desolate soul.

Mademoiselle La Quintinie is a work of hatred. George Sand was not successful with it. She had no vocation for writing such books, and she was not accustomed to writing them. It is a novel full of tiresome dissertations, and it is extremely dull.

From that date, though, George Sand experienced the joy of a certain popularity. At theatrical performances and at funerals the students manifested in her honour. It was the same for Sainte-Beuve, but this does not seem to have made either of them any greater.

We will pass over all this, and turn to something that we can admire. The robust and triumphant old age of George Sand was admirable. Nearly every year she went to some fresh place in France to find a setting for her stories. She had to earn her living to the very last, and was doomed to write novels for ever. "I shall be turning my wheel when I die," she used to say, and, after all, this is the proper ending for a literary worker.

In 1870 and 1871, she suffered all the anguish of the "Terrible Year." When once the nightmare was over, she set to work once more like a true daughter of courageous France, unwilling to give in. She was as hardy as iron as she grew old. "I walk to the river," she wrote in 1872, "and bathe in the cold water, warm as I am.

. . . I am of the same nature as the grass in the field.
Sunshine and water are all I need."

For a woman of sixty-eight to be able to bathe every day in the cold water of the Indre is a great deal. In May, 1876, she was not well, and had to stay in bed. She was ill for ten days, and died without suffering much. She is buried at Nohant, according to her wishes, so that her last sleep is in her beloved Berry.

In conclusion, we would say just a few words about George Sand's genius, and the place that she takes in the history of the French novel.

On comparing George Sand with the novelists of her time, what strikes us most is how different she was from them. She is neither like Balzac, Stendhal, nor Merimee, nor any story-teller of our thoughtful, clever and refined epoch. She reminds us more of the "old novelists," of those who told stories of chivalrous deeds and of old legends, or, to go still further back, she reminds us of the _aedes_ of old Greece. In the early days of a nation there were always men who went to the crowd and charmed them with the stories they told in a wordy way. They scarcely knew whether they invented these stories as they told them, or whether they had heard them somewhere. They could not tell either which was fiction and which reality, for all reality seemed wonderful to them. All the people about whom they told were great, all objects were good and everything beautiful. They mingled nursery-tales with myths that were quite sensible, and the history of nations with children's stories. They were called poets.

George Sand did not employ a versified form for her stories, but she belonged to the family of these poets. She was a poet herself who had lost her way and come into our century of prose, and she continued her singing.

Like these early poets, she was primitive. Like them, she obeyed a god within her. All her talent was instinctive, and she had all the ease of instinctive talent. When Flaubert complained to George Sand of the "tortures" that style cost him, she endeavoured to admire him.

"When I see the difficulty that my old friend has in writing his novel, I am discouraged about my own case, and I say to myself that I am writing poor sort of literature."

This was merely her charity, for she never understood that there could be any effort in writing. Consequently she could not understand

that it should cause suffering. For her, writing was a pleasure, as it was the satisfaction of a need. As her works were no effort to her, they left no trace in her memory. She had not intended to write them, and, when once written, she forgot them.

"_Consuelo and La Comtesse de Rudolstadt_, what are these books?" she asks. "Did I write them? I do not remember a single word of them."

Her novels were like fruit, which, when ripe, fell away from her. George Sand always returned to the celebration of certain great themes which are the eternal subjects of all poetry, subjects such as love and nature, and sentiments like enthusiasm and pity. The very language completes the illusion. The choice of words was often far from perfect, as George Sand's vocabulary was often uncertain, and her expression lacked precision and relief. But she had the gift of imagery, and her images were always delightfully fresh. She never lost that rare faculty which she possessed of being surprised at things, so that she looked at everything with youthful eyes. There is a certain movement which carries the reader on, and a rhythm that is soothing. She develops the French phrase slowly perhaps, but without any confusion. Her language is like those rivers which flow along full and limpid, between flowery banks and oases of verdure, rivers by the side of which the traveller loves to linger and to lose himself in dreams.

The share which belongs to George Sand in the history of the French novel is that of having impregnated the novel with the poetry in her own soul. She gave to the novel a breadth and a range which it had never hitherto had. She celebrated the hymn of Nature, of love and of goodness in it. She revealed to us the country and the peasants of France. She gave satisfaction to the romantic tendency which is in every one of us, to a more or less degree.

All this is more even than is needed to ensure her fame. She denied ever having written for posterity, and she predicted that in fifty years she would be forgotten. It may be that there has been for her, as there is for every illustrious author who dies, a time of test and a period of neglect. The triumph of naturalism, by influencing taste for a time, may have stopped our reading George Sand. At present we are just as tired of documentary literature as we are disgusted with brutal literature. We are gradually coming back to a better comprehension of what there is of "truth" in George Sand's conception of the novel. This may be summed up in a few words-- to charm, to touch and to console. Those of us who know something

of life may perhaps wonder whether to console may not be the final aim of literature. George Sand's literary ideal may be read in the following words, which she wrote to Flaubert:

"You make the people who read your books still sadder than they were before. I want to make them less unhappy." She tried to do this, and she often succeeded in her attempt. What greater praise can we give to her than that? And how can we help adding a little gratitude and affection to our admiration for the woman who was the good fairy of the contemporary novel?

THE END