ALEXANDRE DUMAS
(FILS)

CAMILLE
THE LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS

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Alexandre Dumas (Son)

About Dumas (fils):

Alexandre Dumas fils was born in Paris, France, the illegitimate child of Marie-Catherine Labay, a dressmaker, and novelist Alexandre Dumas. In 1831 his father legally recognized him and ensured the young Dumas received the best education possible at the Institution Goubaux and the Collège Bourbon. At that time, the law allowed the elder Dumas to take the child away from his mother.

Her agony inspired Dumas fils to write about tragic female characters. In almost all of his writings, he emphasized the moral purpose of literature and in his 1858 play, The Illegitimate Son, he espoused the belief that if a man fathers an illegitimate child, then he has an obligation to legitimize the child and marry the woman. Dumas' paternal great-grandparents were a white French nobleman and a young black Haitian woman. In the boarding schools, Dumas fils

was constantly taunted by his classmates. These issues all profoundly influenced his thoughts, behaviour, and writing.

In 1844 Dumas fils moved to Saint-Germain-en-Laye to live with his father. There, he met Marie Duplessis, a young courtesan who would be the inspiration for his romantic novel, La dame aux camélias (The Lady of the Camellias). Adapted into a play, it was titled in English (especially in the United States) as Camille and is the basis for Verdi's 1853 opera, La Traviata. Although he admitted that he had done the adaptation because he needed the money, he had a huge success with the play. Thus began the playwriting career of Dumas fils which not only eclipsed that of his father during his lifetime but also dominated the serious French stage for most of the second half of the nineteenth century. After this, he virtually abandoned the novel.

In 1864, Alexandre Dumas fils married Nadejda Naryschkine, with whom he had a daughter. After Naryschkine's death, he married Henriette Régnier. In 1874, he was admitted to the Académie française and in 1894 he was awarded the Légion d'Honneur. Alexandre Dumas fils died at Marly-le-Roi, Yvelines, on November 27, 1895 and was interred in the Cimetière de Montmartre in Paris. It was, perhaps coincidentally, only some 100 metres away from Marie Duplessis.

Chapter 1

In my opinion, it is impossible to create characters until one has spent a long time in studying men, as it is impossible to speak a language until it has been seriously acquired. Not being old enough to invent, I content myself with narrating, and I beg the reader to assure himself of the truth of a story in which all the characters, with the exception of the heroine, are still alive. Eye-witnesses of the greater part of the facts which I have collected are to be found in Paris, and I might call upon them to confirm me if my testimony is not enough. And, thanks to a particular circumstance, I alone can write these things, for I alone am able to give the final details, without which it would have been impossible to make the story at once interesting and complete.

This is how these details came to my knowledge. On the 12th of March, 1847, I saw in the Rue Lafitte a great yellow placard announcing a sale of furniture and curiosities. The sale was to take place on account of the death of the owner. The owner's name was not mentioned, but the sale was to be held at 9, Rue d'Antin, on the 16th, from 12 to 5. The placard further announced that the rooms and furniture could be seen on the 13th and 14th.

I have always been very fond of curiosities, and I made up my mind not to miss the occasion, if not of buying some, at all events of seeing them. Next day I called at 9, Rue d'Antin.

It was early in the day, and yet there were already a number of visitors, both men and women, and the women, though they were dressed in cashmere and velvet, and had their carriages waiting for them at the door, gazed with astonishment and admiration at the luxury which they saw before them.

I was not long in discovering the reason of this astonishment and admiration, for, having begun to examine things a little carefully, I discovered without difficulty that I was in the house of a kept woman. Now, if there is one thing which women in society would like to see (and there were society women there), it is the home of those women whose carriages splash their own carriages day by day, who, like them, side by side with them, have their boxes at the Opera and at the Italiens, and who parade in Paris the opulent insolence of their beauty, their diamonds, and their scandal.

This one was dead, so the most virtuous of women could enter even her bedroom. Death had purified the air of this abode of splendid foulness, and if more excuse were needed, they had the excuse that they had merely come to a sale, they knew not whose. They had read the placards, they wished to see what the placards had announced, and to make their choice beforehand. What could be more natural? Yet, all the same, in the midst of all these beautiful things, they could not help looking about for some traces of this courtesan's life, of which they had heard, no doubt, strange enough stories.

Unfortunately the mystery had vanished with the goddess, and, for all their endeavours, they discovered only what was on sale since the

owner's decease, and nothing of what had been on sale during her lifetime. For the rest, there were plenty of things worth buying. The furniture was superb; there were rosewood and buhl cabinets and tables, Sevres and Chinese vases, Saxe statuettes, satin, velvet, lace; there was nothing lacking.

I sauntered through the rooms, following the inquisitive ladies of distinction. They entered a room with Persian hangings, and I was just going to enter in turn, when they came out again almost immediately, smiling, and as if ashamed of their own curiosity. I was all the more eager to see the room. It was the dressing-room, laid out with all the articles of toilet, in which the dead woman's extravagance seemed to be seen at its height.

On a large table against the wall, a table three feet in width and six in length, glittered all the treasures of Aucoc and Odiot. It was a magnificent collection, and there was not one of those thousand little things so necessary to the toilet of a woman of the kind which was not in gold or silver. Such a collection could only have been got together little by little, and the same lover had certainly not begun and ended it.

Not being shocked at the sight of a kept woman's dressing-room, I amused myself with examining every detail, and I discovered that these magnificently chiselled objects bore different initials and different coronets. I looked at one after another, each recalling a separate shame, and I said that God had been merciful to the poor child, in not having left her to pay the ordinary penalty, but rather to

die in the midst of her beauty and luxury, before the coming of old age, the courtesan's first death.

Is there anything sadder in the world than the old age of vice, especially in woman? She preserves no dignity, she inspires no interest. The everlasting repentance, not of the evil ways followed, but of the plans that have miscarried, the money that has been spent in vain, is as saddening a thing as one can well meet with. I knew an aged woman who had once been "gay," whose only link with the past was a daughter almost as beautiful as she herself had been. This poor creature to whom her mother had never said, "You are my child," except to bid her nourish her old age as she herself had nourished her youth, was called Louise, and, being obedient to her mother, she abandoned herself without volition, without passion, without pleasure, as she would have worked at any other profession that might have been taught her.

The constant sight of dissipation, precocious dissipation, in addition to her constant sickly state, had extinguished in her mind all the knowledge of good and evil that God had perhaps given her, but that no one had ever thought of developing. I shall always remember her, as she passed along the boulevards almost every day at the same hour, accompanied by her mother as assiduously as a real mother might have accompanied her daughter. I was very young then, and ready to accept for myself the easy morality of the age. I remember, however, the contempt and disgust which awoke in me at the sight of this scandalous chaperoning. Her face, too, was inexpressibly virginal

in its expression of innocence and of melancholy suffering. She was like a figure of Resignation.

One day the girl's face was transfigured. In the midst of all the debauches mapped out by her mother, it seemed to her as if God had left over for her one happiness. And why indeed should God, who had made her without strength, have left her without consolation, under the sorrowful burden of her life? One day, then, she realized that she was to have a child, and all that remained to her of chastity leaped for joy. The soul has strange refuges. Louise ran to tell the good news to her mother. It is a shameful thing to speak of, but we are not telling tales of pleasant sins; we are telling of true facts, which it would be better, no doubt, to pass over in silence, if we did not believe that it is needful from time to time to reveal the martyrdom of those who are condemned without bearing, scorned without judging; shameful it is, but this mother answered the daughter that they had already scarce enough for two, and would certainly not have enough for three; that such children are useless, and a lying-in is so much time lost.

Next day a midwife, of whom all we will say is that she was a friend of the mother, visited Louise, who remained in bed for a few days, and then got up paler and feebler than before.

Three months afterward a man took pity on her and tried to heal her, morally and physically; but the last shock had been too violent, and Louise died of it. The mother still lives; how? God knows.

This story returned to my mind while I looked at the silver toilet things, and a certain space of time must have elapsed during these reflections, for no one was left in the room but myself and an attendant, who, standing near the door, was carefully watching me to see that I did not pocket anything.

I went up to the man, to whom I was causing so much anxiety. "Sir," I said, "can you tell me the name of the person who formerly lived here?"

"Mademoiselle Marguerite Gautier."

I knew her by name and by sight.

"What!" I said to the attendant; "Marguerite Gautier is dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did she die?"

"Three weeks ago, I believe."

"And why are the rooms on view?"

"The creditors believe that it will send up the prices. People can see beforehand the effect of the things; you see that induces them to buy."

"She was in debt, then?"

"To any extent, sir."

"But the sale will cover it?"

"And more too."

"Who will get what remains over?"

"Her family."

"She had a family?"

"It seems so."

"Thanks."

The attendant, reassured as to my intentions, touched his hat, and I went out.

"Poor girl!" I said to myself as I returned home; "she must have had a sad death, for, in her world, one has friends only when one is perfectly well." And in spite of myself I began to feel melancholy over the fate of Marguerite Gautier.

It will seem absurd to many people, but I have an unbounded sympathy for women of this kind, and I do not think it necessary to apologize for such sympathy.

One day, as I was going to the Prefecture for a passport, I saw in one of the neighbouring streets a poor girl who was being marched along by two policemen. I do not know what was the matter. All I know is that she was weeping bitterly as she kissed an infant only a few

months old, from whom her arrest was to separate her. Since that day I have never dared to despise a woman at first sight.

Chapter 2

The sale was to take place on the 16th. A day's interval had been left between the visiting days and the sale, in order to give time for taking down the hangings, curtains, etc. I had just returned from abroad. It was natural that I had not heard of Marguerite's death among the pieces of news which one's friends always tell on returning after an absence. Marguerite was a pretty woman; but though the life of such women makes sensation enough, their death makes very little. They are suns which set as they rose, unobserved. Their death, when they die young, is heard of by all their lovers at the same moment, for in Paris almost all the lovers of a well-known woman are friends. A few recollections are exchanged, and everybody's life goes on as if the incident had never occurred, without so much as a tear.

Nowadays, at twenty-five, tears have become so rare a thing that they are not to be squandered indiscriminately. It is the most that can be expected if the parents who pay for being wept over are wept over in return for the price they pay.

As for me, though my initials did not occur on any of Marguerite's belongings, that instinctive indulgence, that natural pity that I have already confessed, set me thinking over her death, more perhaps than it was worth thinking over. I remembered having often met Marguerite in the Bois, where she went regularly every day in a little

blue coupe drawn by two magnificent bays, and I had noticed in her a distinction quite apart from other women of her kind, a distinction which was enhanced by a really exceptional beauty.

These unfortunate creatures whenever they go out are always accompanied by somebody or other. As no man cares to make himself conspicuous by being seen in their company, and as they are afraid of solitude, they take with them either those who are not well enough off to have a carriage, or one or another of those elegant, ancient ladies, whose elegance is a little inexplicable, and to whom one can always go for information in regard to the women whom they accompany.

In Marguerite's case it was quite different. She was always alone when she drove in the Champs-Elysees, lying back in her carriage as much as possible, dressed in furs in winter, and in summer wearing very simple dresses; and though she often passed people whom she knew, her smile, when she chose to smile, was seen only by them, and a duchess might have smiled in just such a manner. She did not drive to and fro like the others, from the Rond-Point to the end of the Champs-Elysees. She drove straight to the Bois. There she left her carriage, walked for an hour, returned to her carriage, and drove rapidly home.

All these circumstances which I had so often witnessed came back to my memory, and I regretted her death as one might regret the destruction of a beautiful work of art.

It was impossible to see more charm in beauty than in that of Marguerite. Excessively tall and thin, she had in the fullest degree the art of repairing this oversight of Nature by the mere arrangement of the things she wore. Her cashmere reached to the ground, and showed on each side the large flounces of a silk dress, and the heavy muff which she held pressed against her bosom was surrounded by such cunningly arranged folds that the eye, however exacting, could find no fault with the contour of the lines. Her head, a marvel, was the object of the most coquettish care. It was small, and her mother, as Musset would say, seemed to have made it so in order to make it with care.

Set, in an oval of indescribable grace, two black eyes, surmounted by eyebrows of so pure a curve that it seemed as if painted; veil these eyes with lovely lashes, which, when drooped, cast their shadow on the rosy hue of the cheeks; trace a delicate, straight nose, the nostrils a little open, in an ardent aspiration toward the life of the senses; design a regular mouth, with lips parted graciously over teeth as white as milk; colour the skin with the down of a peach that no hand has touched, and you will have the general aspect of that charming countenance. The hair, black as jet, waving naturally or not, was parted on the forehead in two large folds and draped back over the head, leaving in sight just the tip of the ears, in which there glittered two diamonds, worth four to five thousand francs each. How it was that her ardent life had left on Marguerite's face the virginal, almost childlike expression, which characterized it, is a problem which we can but state, without attempting to solve it.

Marguerite had a marvellous portrait of herself, by Vidal, the only man whose pencil could do her justice. I had this portrait by me for a few days after her death, and the likeness was so astonishing that it has helped to refresh my memory in regard to some points which I might not otherwise have remembered.

Some among the details of this chapter did not reach me until later, but I write them here so as not to be obliged to return to them when the story itself has begun.

Marguerite was always present at every first night, and passed every evening either at the theatre or the ball. Whenever there was a new piece she was certain to be seen, and she invariably had three things with her on the ledge of her ground-floor box: her opera-glass, a bag of sweets, and a bouquet of camellias.

For twenty-five days of the month the camellias were white, and for five they were red; no one ever knew the reason of this change of colour, which I mention though I can not explain it; it was noticed both by her friends and by the habitue's of the theatres to which she most often went. She was never seen with any flowers but camellias. At the florist's, Madame Barjon's, she had come to be called "the Lady of the Camellias," and the name stuck to her.

Like all those who move in a certain set in Paris, I knew that Marguerite had lived with some of the most fashionable young men in society, that she spoke of it openly, and that they themselves boasted of it; so that all seemed equally pleased with one another.

Nevertheless, for about three years, after a visit to Bagnees, she was said to be living with an old duke, a foreigner, enormously rich, who had tried to remove her as far as possible from her former life, and, as it seemed, entirely to her own satisfaction.

This is what I was told on the subject. In the spring of 1847 Marguerite was so ill that the doctors ordered her to take the waters, and she went to Bagneres. Among the invalids was the daughter of this duke; she was not only suffering from the same complaint, but she was so like Marguerite in appearance that they might have been taken for sisters; the young duchess was in the last stage of consumption, and a few days after Marguerite's arrival she died. One morning, the duke, who had remained at Bagneres to be near the soil that had buried a part of his heart, caught sight of Marguerite at a turn of the road. He seemed to see the shadow of his child, and going up to her, he took her hands, embraced and wept over her, and without even asking her who she was, begged her to let him love in her the living image of his dead child. Marguerite, alone at Bagneres with her maid, and not being in any fear of compromising herself, granted the duke's request. Some people who knew her, happening to be at Bagneres, took upon themselves to explain Mademoiselle Gautier's true position to the duke. It was a blow to the old man, for the resemblance with his daughter was ended in one direction, but it was too late. She had become a necessity to his heart, his only pretext, his only excuse, for living. He made no reproaches, he had indeed no right to do so, but he asked her if she felt herself capable of changing her mode of life,

offering her in return for the sacrifice every compensation that she could desire. She consented.

It must be said that Marguerite was just then very ill. The past seemed to her sensitive nature as if it were one of the main causes of her illness, and a sort of superstition led her to hope that God would restore to her both health and beauty in return for her repentance and conversion. By the end of the summer, the waters, sleep, the natural fatigue of long walks, had indeed more or less restored her health. The duke accompanied her to Paris, where he continued to see her as he had done at Bagneres.

This liaison, whose motive and origin were quite unknown, caused a great sensation, for the duke, already known for his immense fortune, now became known for his prodigality. All this was set down to the debauchery of a rich old man, and everything was believed except the truth. The father's sentiment for Marguerite had, in truth, so pure a cause that anything but a communion of hearts would have seemed to him a kind of incest, and he had never spoken to her a word which his daughter might not have heard.

Far be it from me to make out our heroine to be anything but what she was. As long as she remained at Bagneres, the promise she had made to the duke had not been hard to keep, and she had kept it; but, once back in Paris, it seemed to her, accustomed to a life of dissipation, of balls, of orgies, as if the solitude, only interrupted by the duke's stated visits, would kill her with boredom, and the hot breath of her old life came back across her head and heart.

We must add that Marguerite had returned more beautiful than she had ever been; she was but twenty, and her malady, sleeping but not subdued, continued to give her those feverish desires which are almost always the result of diseases of the chest.

It was a great grief to the duke when his friends, always on the lookout for some scandal on the part of the woman with whom, it seemed to them, he was compromising himself, came to tell him, indeed to prove to him, that at times when she was sure of not seeing him she received other visits, and that these visits were often prolonged till the following day. On being questioned, Marguerite admitted everything to the duke, and advised him, without arriere-pensee, to concern himself with her no longer, for she felt incapable of carrying out what she had undertaken, and she did not wish to go on accepting benefits from a man whom she was deceiving. The duke did not return for a week; it was all he could do, and on the eighth day he came to beg Marguerite to let him still visit her, promising that he would take her as she was, so long as he might see her, and swearing that he would never utter a reproach against her, not though he were to die of it.

This, then, was the state of things three months after Marguerite's return; that is to say, in November or December, 1842.

Chapter 3

At one o'clock on the 16th I went to the Rue d'Antin. The voice of the auctioneer could be heard from the outer door. The rooms were crowded with people. There were all the celebrities of the most elegant impropriety, furtively examined by certain great ladies who had again seized the opportunity of the sale in order to be able to see, close at hand, women whom they might never have another occasion of meeting, and whom they envied perhaps in secret for their easy pleasures. The Duchess of F. elbowed Mlle. A., one of the most melancholy examples of our modern courtesan; the Marquis de T. hesitated over a piece of furniture the price of which was being run high by Mme. D., the most elegant and famous adulteress of our time; the Duke of Y., who in Madrid is supposed to be ruining himself in Paris, and in Paris to be ruining himself in Madrid, and who, as a matter of fact, never even reaches the limit of his income, talked with Mme. M., one of our wittiest story-tellers, who from time to time writes what she says and signs what she writes, while at the same time he exchanged confidential glances with Mme. de N., a fair ornament of the Champs-Elysees, almost always dressed in pink or blue, and driving two big black horses which Tony had sold her for 10,000 francs, and for which she had paid, after her fashion; finally, Mlle. R., who makes by her mere talent twice what the women of the world make by their dot and three times as much as the others make by their

amours, had come, in spite of the cold, to make some purchases, and was not the least looked at among the crowd.

We might cite the initials of many more of those who found themselves, not without some mutual surprise, side by side in one room. But we fear to weary the reader. We will only add that everyone was in the highest spirits, and that many of those present had known the dead woman, and seemed quite oblivious of the fact. There was a sound of loud laughter; the auctioneers shouted at the top of their voices; the dealers who had filled the benches in front of the auction table tried in vain to obtain silence, in order to transact their business in peace. Never was there a noisier or a more varied gathering.

I slipped quietly into the midst of this tumult, sad to think of when one remembered that the poor creature whose goods were being sold to pay her debts had died in the next room. Having come rather to examine than to buy, I watched the faces of the auctioneers, noticing how they beamed with delight whenever anything reached a price beyond their expectations. Honest creatures, who had speculated upon this woman's prostitution, who had gained their hundred per cent out of her, who had plagued with their writs the last moments of her life, and who came now after her death to gather in at once the fruits of their dishonourable calculations and the interest on their shameful credit, How wise were the ancients in having only one God for traders and robbers!

Dresses, cashmeres, jewels, were sold with incredible rapidity. There was nothing that I cared for, and I still waited. All at once I

heard: "A volume, beautifully bound, gilt-edged, entitled Manon Lescaut. There is something written on the first page. Ten francs."

"Twelve," said a voice after a longish silence.

"Fifteen," I said.

Why? I did not know. Doubtless for the something written.

"Fifteen," repeated the auctioneer.

"Thirty," said the first bidder in a tone which seemed to defy further competition.

It had now become a struggle. "Thirty-five," I cried in the same tone.

"Forty."

"Fifty."

"Sixty."

"A hundred."

If I had wished to make a sensation I should certainly have succeeded, for a profound silence had ensued, and people gazed at me as if to see what sort of a person it was, who seemed to be so determined to possess the volume.

The accent which I had given to my last word seemed to convince my adversary; he preferred to abandon a conflict which could only

have resulted in making me pay ten times its price for the volume, and, bowing, he said very gracefully, though indeed a little late:

"I give way, sir."

Nothing more being offered, the book was assigned to me.

As I was afraid of some new fit of obstinacy, which my amour propre might have sustained somewhat better than my purse, I wrote down my name, had the book put on one side, and went out. I must have given considerable food for reflection to the witnesses of this scene, who would nodoubt ask themselves what my purpose could have been in paying a hundred francs for a book which I could have had anywhere for ten, or, at the outside, fifteen.

An hour after, I sent for my purchase. On the first page was written in ink, in an elegant hand, an inscription on the part of the giver. It consisted of these words:

Manon to Marguerite.

Humility.

It was signed Armand Duval.

What was the meaning of the word Humility? Was Manon to recognise in Marguerite, in the opinion of M. Armand Duval, her superior in vice or in affection? The second interpretation seemed the more probable, for the first would have been an impertinent piece of

plain speaking which Marguerite, whatever her opinion of herself, would never have accepted.

I went out again, and thought no more of the book until at night, when I was going to bed.

Manon Lescaut is a touching story. I know every detail of it, and yet whenever I come across the volume the same sympathy always draws me to it; I open it, and for the hundredth time I live over again with the heroine of the Abbe Prevost. Now this heroine is so true to life that I feel as if I had known her; and thus the sort of comparison between her and Marguerite gave me an unusual inclination to read it, and my indulgence passed into pity, almost into a kind of love for the poor girl to whom I owed the volume. Manon died in the desert, it is true, but in the arms of the man who loved her with the whole energy of his soul; who, when she was dead, dug a grave for her, and watered it with his tears, and buried his heart in it; while Marguerite, a sinner like Manon, and perhaps converted like her, had died in a sumptuous bed (it seemed, after what I had seen, the bed of her past), but in that desert of the heart, a more barren, a vaster, a more pitiless desert than that in which Manon had found her last resting-place.

Marguerite, in fact, as I had found from some friends who knew of the last circumstances of her life, had not a single real friend by her bedside during the two months of her long and painful agony.

Then from Manon and Marguerite my mind wandered to those whom I knew, and whom I saw singing along the way which led to just

such another death. Poor souls! if it is not right to love them, is it not well to pity them? You pity the blind man who has never seen the daylight, the deaf who has never heard the harmonies of nature, the dumb who has never found a voice for his soul, and, under a false cloak of shame, you will not pity this blindness of heart, this deafness of soul, this dumbness of conscience, which sets the poor afflicted creature beside herself and makes her, in spite of herself, incapable of seeing what is good, of bearing the Lord, and of speaking the pure language of love and faith.

Hugo has written Marion Delorme, Musset has written Bernerette, Alexandre Dumas has written Fernande, the thinkers and poets of all time have brought to the courtesan the offering of their pity, and at times a great man has rehabilitated them with his love and even with his name. If I insist on this point, it is because many among those who have begun to read me will be ready to throw down a book in which they will fear to find an apology for vice and prostitution; and the author's age will do something, no doubt, to increase this fear. Let me undeceive those who think thus, and let them go on reading, if nothing but such a fear hinders them.

I am quite simply convinced of a certain principle, which is: For the woman whose education has not taught her what is right, God almost always opens two ways which lead thither the ways of sorrow and of love. They are hard; those who walk in them walk with bleeding feet and torn hands, but they also leave the trappings of vice upon the

thorns of the wayside, and reach the journey's end in a nakedness which is not shameful in the sight of the Lord.

Those who meet these bold travellers ought to succour them, and to tell all that they have met them, for in so doing they point out the way. It is not a question of setting at the outset of life two sign-posts, one bearing the inscription "The Right Way," the other the inscription "The Wrong Way," and of saying to those who come there, "Choose." One must needs, like Christ, point out the ways which lead from the second road to the first, to those who have been easily led astray; and it is needful that the beginning of these ways should not be too painful nor appear too impenetrable.

Here is Christianity with its marvellous parable of the Prodigal Son to teach us indulgence and pardon. Jesus was full of love for souls wounded by the passions of men; he loved to bind up their wounds and to find in those very wounds the balm which should heal them. Thus he said to the Magdalen: "Much shall be forgiven thee because thou hast loved much," a sublimity of pardon which can only have called forth a sublime faith.

Why do we make ourselves more strict than Christ? Why, holding obstinately to the opinions of the world, which hardens itself in order that it may be thought strong, do we reject, as it rejects, souls bleeding at wounds by which, like a sick man's bad blood, the evil of their past may be healed, if only a friendly hand is stretched out to lave them and set them in the convalescence of the heart?

It is to my own generation that I speak, to those for whom the theories of M. de Voltaire happily exist no longer, to those who, like myself, realize that humanity, for these last fifteen years, has been in one of its most audacious moments of expansion. The science of good and evil is acquired forever; faith is refashioned, respect for sacred things has returned to us, and if the world has not all at once become good, it has at least become better. The efforts of every intelligent man tend in the same direction, and every strong will is harnessed to the same principle: Be good, be young, be true! Evil is nothing but vanity, let us have the pride of good, and above all let us never despair. Do not let us despise the woman who is neither mother, sister, maid, nor wife. Do not let us limit esteem to the family nor indulgence to egoism. Since "there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance," let us give joy to heaven. Heaven will render it back to us with usury. Let us leave on our way the alms of pardon for those whom earthly desires have driven astray, whom a divine hope shall perhaps save, and, as old women say when they offer you. some homely remedy of their own, if it does no good it will do no harm.

Doubtless it must seem a bold thing to attempt to deduce these grand results out of the meagre subject that I deal with; but I am one of those who believe that all is in little. The child is small, and he includes the man; the brain is narrow, and it harbours thought; the eye is but a point, and it covers leagues.

Chapter 4

Two days after, the sale was ended. It had produced 3.50,000 francs. The creditors divided among them two thirds, and the family, a sister and a grand-nephew, received the remainder.

The sister opened her eyes very wide when the lawyer wrote to her that she had inherited 50,000 francs. The girl had not seen her sister for six or seven years, and did not know what had become of her from the moment when she had disappeared from home. She came up to Paris in haste, and great was the astonishment of those who had known Marguerite when they saw as her only heir a fine, fat country girl, who until then had never left her village. She had made the fortune at a single stroke, without even knowing the source of that fortune. She went back, I heard afterward, to her countryside, greatly saddened by her sister's death, but with a sadness which was somewhat lightened by the investment at four and a half per cent which she had been able to make.

All these circumstances, often repeated in Paris, the mother city of scandal, had begun to be forgotten, and I was even little by little forgetting the part I had taken in them, when a new incident brought to my knowledge the whole of Marguerite's life, and acquainted me with such pathetic details that I was taken with the idea of writing down the story which I now write.

The rooms, now emptied of all their furniture, had been to let for three or four days when one morning there was a ring at my door.

My servant, or, rather, my porter, who acted as my servant, went to the door and brought me a card, saying that the person who had given it to him wished to see me.

I glanced at the card and there read these two words: Armand Duval.

I tried to think where I had seen the name, and remembered the first leaf of the copy of Manon Lescaut. What could the person who had given the book to Marguerite want of me? I gave orders to ask him in at once.

I saw a young man, blond, tall, pale, dressed in a travelling suit which looked as if he had not changed it for some days, and had not even taken the trouble to brush it on arriving at Paris, for it was covered with dust.

M. Duval was deeply agitated; he made no attempt to conceal his agitation, and it was with tears in his eyes and a trembling voice that he said to me:

"Sir, I beg you to excuse my visit and my costume; but young people are not very ceremonious with one another, and I was so anxious to see you to-day that I have not even gone to the hotel to which I have sent my luggage, and have rushed straight here, fearing that, after all, I might miss you, early as it is."