INDIANA

George Sand

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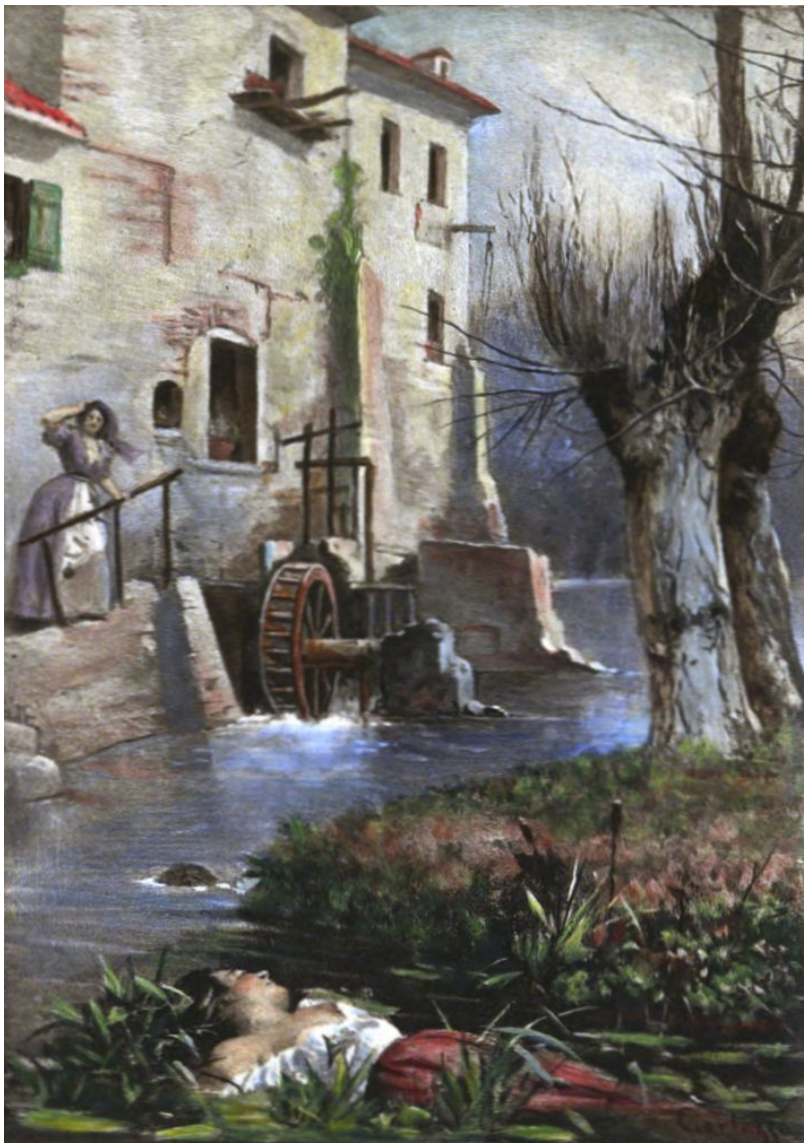

MADAME DELMARE DISCOVERS NOUN'S BODY

Terror nailed her to the spot; but the stream flowed on, slowly drawing a body from the reeds among which it had caught, and bringing it toward Madame Delmare.

INTRODUCTION

I wrote Indiana during the autumn of 1831. It was my first novel; I wrote it without any fixed plan, having no theory of art or philosophy in my mind. I was at the age when one writes with one's instincts, and when reflection serves only to confirm our natural tendencies. Some people chose to see in the book a deliberate argument against marriage. I was not so ambitious, and I was surprised to the last degree at all the fine things that the critics found to say concerning my subversive purposes. Criticism is far too acute; that is what will cause its death. It never passes judgment ingenuously on what has been done ingenuously. It looks for noon at four o'clock, as the old women say, and must cause much suffering to artists who care more for its decrees than they ought to do.

Under all régimes and in all times there has been a race of critics, who, in contempt of their own talent, have fancied that it was their duty to ply the trade of denouncers, of purveyors to the prosecuting attorney's office; extraordinary functions for men of letters to assume with regard to their confrères! The rigorous measures of government against the press never satisfy these savage critics. They would have them directed not only against works but against persons as well, and, if their advice were followed, some of us would be forbidden to write anything whatsoever.

At the time that I wrote *Indiana*, the cry of Saint Simonism was raised on every pretext. Later they shouted all sorts of other things. Even now certain writers are forbidden to open their mouths, under pain of seeing the police agents of certain newspapers pounce upon their work and hale them before the police of the constituted powers. If a writer puts noble sentiments in the mouth of a mechanic, it is an attack

on the bourgeoisie; if a girl who has gone astray is rehabilitated after expiating her sin, it is an attack on virtuous women; if an impostor assumes titles of nobility, it is an attack on the patrician caste; if a bully plays the swashbuckling soldier, it is an insult to the army; if a woman is maltreated by her husband, it is an argument in favor of promiscuous love. And so with everything. Kindly brethren, devout and generous critics! What a pity that no one thinks of creating a petty court of literary inquisition in which you should be the torturers! Would you be satisfied to tear the books to pieces and burn them at a slow fire, and could you not, by your urgent representations, obtain permission to give a little taste of the rack to those writers who presume to have other gods than yours?

Thank God, I have forgotten the names of those who tried to discourage me at my first appearance, and who, being unable to say that my first attempt had fallen completely flat, tried to distort it into an incendiary proclamation against the repose of society. I did not expect so much honor, and I consider that I owe to those critics the thanks which the hare proffered the frogs, imagining from their alarm that he was entitled to deem himself a very thunderbolt of war.

GEORGE SAND.

Nohant, May, 1852.

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1832

If certain pages of this book should incur the serious reproach of tending toward novel beliefs, if unbending judges shall consider their tone imprudent and perilous, I should be obliged to reply to the criticism that it does too much honor to a work of no importance; that, in order to attack the great questions of social order, one must either be conscious of great strength of purpose or pride one's self upon great talent, and that such presumption is altogether foreign to a very simple tale, in which the author has invented almost nothing. If, in the course of his task, he has happened to set forth the lamentations extorted from his characters by the social malady with which they were assailed; if he has not shrunk from recording their aspirations after a happier existence, let the blame be laid upon society for its inequalities, upon destiny for its caprices! The author is merely a mirror which reflects them, a machine which reverses their tracing, and he has no reason for self-reproach if the impression is exact, if the reflection is true.

Consider further that the narrator has not taken for text or devise a few shrieks of suffering and wrath scattered through the drama of human life. He does not claim to conceal serious instruction beneath the exterior form of a tale; it is not his aim to lend a hand in constructing the edifice which a doubtful future is preparing for us and to give a sly kick at that of the past which is crumbling away. He knows too well that we live in an epoch of moral deterioration, wherein the reason of mankind has need of curtains to soften the too bright glare which dazzles it. If he had felt sufficiently learned to write a genuinely useful book, he would have toned down the truth, instead of presenting it

in its crude tints and with its startling effects. That book would have performed the functions of blue spectacles for weak eyes.

He does not abandon the idea of performing that honorable and laudable task some day; but, being still a young man, he simply tells you to-day what he has seen, not presuming to draw his conclusions concerning the great controversy between the future and the past, which perhaps no man of the present generation is especially competent to do. Too conscientious to conceal his doubts from you, but too timid to transform them into certainties, he relies upon your reflections and abstains from weaving into the woof of his narrative preconceived opinions, judgments all formed. He plies with exactitude his trade of narrator. He will tell you everything, even painful truths; but, if you should wrap him in the philosopher's robe, you would find that he was exceedingly confused, simple story-teller that he is, whose mission is to amuse and not to instruct.

Even were he more mature and more skilful, he would not dare to lay his hand upon the great sores of dying civilization. One must be so sure of being able to cure them when one ventures to probe them! He would much prefer to arouse your interest in old discarded beliefs, in old-fashioned, vanished forms of devotion, to employing his talent, if he had any, in blasting overturned altars. He knows, however, that, in these charitable times, a timorous conscience is despised by public opinion as hypocritical reserve, just as, in the arts, a timid bearing is sneered at as an absurd mannerism; but he knows also that there is honor, if not profit, in defending lost causes.

To him who should misunderstand the spirit of this book, such a profession of faith would sound like an anachronism. The narrator hopes that few auditors, after listening to his tale to the end, will deny the moral to be derived from the

facts, a moral which triumphs there as in all human affairs; it seemed to him, when he wrote the last line, that his conscience was clear. He flattered himself, in a word, that he had described social miseries without too much bitterness, human passions without too much passion. He placed the mute under his strings when they echoed too loudly; he tried to stifle certain notes of the soul which should remain mute, certain voices of the heart which cannot be awakened without danger.

Perhaps you will do him justice if you agree that the being who tries to free himself from his lawful curb is represented as very wretched indeed, and the heart that rebels against the decrees of its destiny as in sore distress. If he has not given the best imaginable rôle to that one of his characters who represents *the law*, if that one who represents *opinion* is even less cheerful, you will see a third representing *illusion*, who cruelly thwarts the vain hopes and enterprises of passion. Lastly, you will see that, although he has not strewn rose-leaves on the ground where the law pens up our desires like a sheep's appetite, he has scattered thistles along the roads which lead us away from it.

These facts, it seems to me, are sufficient to protect this book from the reproach of immorality; but, if you absolutely insist that a novel should end like one of Marmontel's tales, you will perhaps chide me on account of the last pages; you will think that I have done wrong in not casting into misery and destitution the character who has transgressed the laws of mankind through two volumes. In this regard, the author will reply that before being moral he chose to be true; he will say again, that, feeling that he was too new to the trade to compose a philosophical treatise on the manner of enduring life, he has restricted himself to telling you the story of *Indiana*, a story of the human heart, with its weaknesses, its passions, its rights and its wrongs, its good qualities and its evil qualities.

Indiana, if you insist upon an explanation of every thing in the book, is a type; she is woman, the feeble being whose mission it is to represent *passions* repressed, or, if you prefer, suppressed by *the law*; she is desire at odds with necessity; she is love dashing her head blindly against all the obstacles of civilization. But the serpent wears out his teeth and breaks them in trying to gnaw a file; the powers of the soul become exhausted in trying to struggle against the positive facts of life. That is the conclusion you may draw from this tale, and it was in that light that it was told to him who transmits it to you.

But despite these protestations the narrator anticipates reproaches. Some upright souls, some honest men's consciences will be alarmed perhaps to see virtue so harsh, reason so downcast, opinion so unjust. He is dismayed at the prospect; for the thing that an author should fear more than anything in the world is the alienating from his works the confidence of good men, the awakening of an ominous sympathy in embittered souls, the inflaming of the sores, already too painful, which are made by the social yoke upon impatient and rebellious necks.

The success which is based upon an unworthy appeal to the passions of the age is the easiest to win, the least honorable to strive for. The historian of *Indiana* denies that he has ever dreamed of it; if he thought that he had reached that result, he would destroy his book, even though he felt for it the artless fatherly affection which swaddles the rickety offspring of these days of literary abortions.

But he hopes to justify himself by stating that he thought it better to enforce his principles by real examples than by poetic fancies. He believes that his tale, with the depressing atmosphere of frankness that envelopes it, may make an impression upon young and ardent brains. They will find it difficult to distrust a historian who forces his way brutally

through the midst of facts, elbowing right and left, with no more regard for one camp than for the other. To make a cause odious or absurd is to persecute it, not to combat it. It may be that the whole art of the novelist consists in interesting the culprits whom he wishes to redeem, the wretched whom he wishes to cure, in their own story.

It would be giving overmuch importance to a work that is destined doubtless to attract very little notice, to seek to protect it against every sort of accusation. Therefore the author surrenders unconditionally to the critics; a single charge seems to him too serious to accept, and that is the charge that he has written a dangerous book. He would prefer to remain in a humble position forever to building his reputation upon a ruined conscience. He will add a word therefore to repel the blame which he most dreads.

Raymon, you will say, is society; egoism is substituted for morality and reason. Raymon, the author will reply, is the false reason, the false morality by which society is governed; he is the man of honor as the world understands the phrase, because the world does not examine closely enough to see everything. The good man you have beside Raymon; and you will not say that he is the enemy of order; for he sacrifices his happiness, he loses all thought of self before all questions of social order.

Then you will say that virtue is not rewarded with sufficient blowing of trumpets. Alas! the answer is that we no longer witness the triumph of virtue elsewhere than at the boulevard theatres. The author will tell you that he has undertaken to exhibit society to you, not as virtuous, but as necessary, and that honor has become as difficult as heroism in these days of moral degeneration. Do you think that this truth will cause great souls to loathe honor? I think just the opposite.

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1842

In allowing the foregoing pages to be reprinted, I do not mean to imply that they form a clear and complete summary of the beliefs which I hold to-day concerning the rights of society over individuals. I do it simply because I regard opinions freely put forth in the past as something sacred, which we should neither retract nor cry down nor attempt to interpret as our fancy directs. But to-day, having advanced on life's highway and watched the horizon broaden around me, I deem it my duty to tell the reader what I think of my book.

When I wrote *Indiana*, I was young; I acted in obedience to feelings of great strength and sincerity which overflowed thereafter in a series of novels, almost all of which were based on the same idea: the ill-defined relations between the sexes, attributable to the constitution of our society. These novels were all more or less inveighed against by the critics, as making unwise assaults upon the institution of marriage. *Indiana*, notwithstanding the narrowness of its scope and the ingenuous uncertainty of its grasp, did not escape the indignation of several self-styled serious minds, whom I was strongly disposed at that time to believe upon their simple statement and to listen to with docility. But, although my reasoning powers were developed hardly enough to write upon so grave a subject, I was not so much of a child that I could not pass judgment in my turn on the thoughts of those persons who passed judgment on mine. However simple-minded a man accused of crime may be and however shrewd the magistrate, the accused has enough common-sense to know whether the magistrate's sentence is equitable or inequitable, wise or absurd.

Certain journalists of our day who set themselves up as representatives and guardians of public morals—I know not by virtue of what mission they act, since I know not by what faith they are commissioned—pronounced judgment pitilessly against my poor tale, and, by representing it as an argument against social order, gave it an importance and a sort of echo which it would not otherwise have obtained. They thereby imposed a very serious and weighty rôle upon a young author hardly initiated in the most elementary social ideas, whose whole literary and philosophical baggage consisted of a little imagination, courage and love of the truth. Sensitive to the reproofs and almost grateful for the lessons which they were pleased to administer, he examined the arguments which arraigned the moral character of his thoughts before the bar of public opinion, and, by virtue of that examination, which he conducted entirely without pride, he gradually acquired convictions which were mere feelings at the outset of his career and which to-day are fundamental principles.

During ten years of investigations, of scruples, and of irresolution, often painful but always sincere, shunning the rôle of pedagogue which some attributed to me to make me ridiculous, abhorring the imputation of pride and spleen with which others pursued me to make me odious, proceeding according to the measure of my artistic faculties, to seek the synthesis of life by analyzing it, I related facts which have sometimes been acknowledged to be plausible, and drew characters which have often been described as having been studied with care. I restricted myself to that, striving to establish my own conviction rather than to shake other people's, and saying to myself that, if I were mistaken, society would find no lack of loud voices to overturn my arguments and to repair by judicious answers the evil that my imprudent questions might have done. Numerous voices did, in fact, arise to put the public on its guard against the

dangerous writer, but, as for the judicious answers, the public and the author are still awaiting them.

A long while after I wrote the preface to *Indiana* under the influence of a remnant of respect for constituted society, I was still seeking to solve this insoluble problem: *the method of reconciling the welfare and the dignity of individuals oppressed by that same society without modifying society itself.* Leaning over the victims and mingling his tears with theirs, making himself their interpreter with his readers, but, like a prudent advocate, not striving overmuch to palliate the wrong-doing of his clients, and addressing himself to the clemency of the judges rather than to their austerity, the novelist is really the advocate of the abstract beings who represent our passions and our sufferings before the tribunal of superior force and the jury of public opinion. It is a task which has a gravity of its own beneath its trivial exterior, and a task which it is exceedingly difficult to confine to its true path, pestered as you are at every step by those who accuse you of being too serious in respect to form and by those who accuse you of being too frivolous in respect to substance.

I do not flatter myself that I performed this task skilfully; but I am sure that I attempted it in all seriousness, amid inward hesitations wherein my conscience, sometimes dismayed by its ignorance of its rights, sometimes inspired by a heart enamored of justice and truth, marched forward to its goal, without swerving too far from the straight road and without too many backward steps.

To enlighten the public as to this inward struggle by a series of prefaces and discussions would have been a puerile method, wherein the vanity of talking about one's self would have taken too much space to suit me. I could but abstain from it as well as from touching too hastily upon the points which were still obscure in my mind. Conservators called me

too bold, innovators too timid. I confess that I had respect and sympathy for the past and the future alike, and in the battle I found no peace of mind until the day when I fully realized that the one should not be the violation and the annihilation of the other, but its continuation and development.

After this novitiate of ten years, being initiated at last in broader ideas which I derived not from myself but from the philosophical progress which had taken place around me—and particularly from a few vast intellects which I religiously questioned, and, generally speaking, from the spectacle of the sufferings of my fellowmen,—I realized at last that, although I may have done well to distrust myself and to hesitate to put forth my views at the epoch of ignorance and inexperience when I wrote *Indiana*, my present duty is to congratulate myself on the bold utterances to which I allowed myself to be impelled then and afterwards; bold utterances for which I have been reproached so bitterly, and which would have been bolder still had I known how legitimate and honest and sacred they were.

To-day therefore, having re-read the first novel of my youth with as much severity and impartiality as if it were the work of another person, on the eve of giving it a publicity which it has not yet derived from the popular edition, having resolved beforehand not to retract—one should never retract what was said or done in good faith—but to condemn myself if I should discover that my former tendencies were mistaken or dangerous, I find myself so entirely in accord with myself with respect to the sentiment which dictated *Indiana* and which would dictate it now if I had that story to tell to-day for the first time, that I have not chosen to change anything in it save a few ungrammatical sentences and some inappropriate words. Doubtless many more of the same sort remain, and the literary merits of my writings I submit without reserve to the animadversions of the critics;

I gladly accord to them all the competence in that regard which I myself lack. That there is an incontestable mass of talent in the daily press of the present day, I do not deny and I delight to acknowledge it. But that there are many philosophers and moralists in this array of polished writers, I do positively deny, with due respect to those who have condemned me, and who will condemn me again on the first opportunity, from their lofty plane of morality and philosophy.

I repeat then, I wrote *Indiana*, and I was justified in writing it; I yielded to an overpowering instinct of outcry and rebellion which God had implanted in me, God who makes nothing that is not of some use, even the most insignificant creatures, and who interposes in the most trivial as well as in great causes. But what am I saying? is this cause that I am defending so very trivial, pray? It is the cause of half of the human race, nay, of the whole human race; for the unhappiness of woman involves that of man, as that of the slave involves that of the master, and I strove to demonstrate it in *Indiana.* Some persons said that I was pleading the cause of an individual; as if, even assuming that I was inspired by personal feeling, I was the only unhappy mortal in this peaceful and radiant human race! So many cries of pain and sympathy answered mine that I know now what to think concerning the supreme felicity of my fellowman.

I do not think that I have ever written anything under the influence of a selfish passion; I have never even thought of avoiding it. They who have read me without prejudice understand that I wrote *Indiana* with a feeling, not deliberately reasoned out, to be sure, but a deep and genuine feeling that the laws which still govern woman's existence in wedlock, in the family and in society are unjust and barbarous. I had not to write a treatise on jurisprudence but to fight against public opinion; for it is that which

postpones or advances social reforms. The war will be long and bitter; but I am neither the first nor the last nor the only champion of so noble a cause, and I will defend it so long as the breath of life remains in my body.

This feeling which inspired me at the beginning I reasoned out and developed as it was combated and reproved. Unjust and malevolent critics taught me much more than I should have discovered in the calm of impunity. For this reason therefore I offer thanks to the bungling judges who enlightened me. The motives that inspired their judgments cast a bright light upon my mind and enveloped my conscience in a sense of profound security. A sincere mind turns everything to advantage, and facts that would discourage vanity redouble the ardor of genuine devotion.

Let no one look upon the reproof which, from the depths of a heart that is to-day serious and tranquil, I have just addressed to the majority of journalists of my time, as implying even a suggestion of protest against the right of censorship with which public morality invests the French press. That criticism often ill performs and ill comprehends its mission in the society of the present day, is evident to all; but that the mission is in itself providential and sacred, no one can deny unless he be an atheist in the matter of progress, unless he be an enemy of the truth, a blasphemer of the future and an unworthy child of France! Liberty of thought, liberty to write and to speak, blessed conquest of the human mind! what are the petty sufferings and the fleeting cares engendered by thy errors or abuses compared to the infinite blessings which thou hast in store for the world!

PART FIRST

I

On a certain cool, rainy evening in autumn, in a small château in Brie, three pensive individuals were gravely occupied in watching the wood burn on the hearth and the hands of the clock move slowly around the dial. Two of these silent guests seemed to give way unreservedly to the vague ennui that weighed upon them; but the third gave signs of open rebellion: he fidgeted about on his seat, stifled half audibly divers melancholy yawns, and tapped the snapping sticks with the tongs, with a manifest intention of resisting the common enemy.

This person, who was much older than the other two, was the master of the house, Colonel Delmare, an old warrior on half-pay, once a very handsome man, now over-corpulent, with a bald head, gray moustache and awe-inspiring eye; an excellent master before whom everybody trembled, wife, servants, horses and dogs.

At last he left his chair, evidently vexed because he did not know how to break the silence, and began to walk heavily up and down the whole length of the salon, without laying aside for an instant the rigidity which characterizes all the movements of an ex-soldier, resting his weight on his loins and turning the whole body at once, with the unfailing self-satisfaction peculiar to the man of show and the model officer.

But the glorious days had passed, when Lieutenant Delmare inhaled triumph with the air of the camps; the retired officer, forgotten now by an ungrateful country, was condemned to undergo all the consequences of marriage. He was the husband of a young and pretty wife, the

proprietor of a commodious manor with its appurtenances, and, furthermore, a manufacturer who had been fortunate in his undertakings; in consequence whereof the colonel was ill-humored, especially on the evening in question; for it was very damp, and the colonel had rheumatism.

He paced gravely up and down his old salon, furnished in the style of Louis XV., halting sometimes before a door surmounted by nude Cupids in fresco, who led in chains of flowers well-bred fawns and good-natured wild boars; sometimes before a panel overladen with paltry, over-elaborated sculpture, whose tortuous vagaries and endless intertwining the eye would have wearied itself to no purpose in attempting to follow. But these vague and fleeting distractions did not prevent the colonel, whenever he turned about, from casting a keen and searching glance at the two companions of his silent vigil, resting upon them alternately that watchful eye which for three years past had been standing guard over a fragile and priceless treasure, his wife.

For his wife was nineteen years of age; and if you had seen her buried under the mantel of that huge fire-place of white marble inlaid with burnished copper; if you had seen her, slender, pale, depressed, with her elbow resting on her knee, a mere child in that ancient household, beside that old husband, like a flower of yesterday that had bloomed in a gothic vase, you would have pitied Colonel Delmare's wife, and the colonel even more perhaps than his wife.

The third occupant of this lonely house was also sitting under the same mantel, at the other end of the burning log. He was a man in all the strength and all the bloom of youth, whose glowing cheeks, abundant golden hair and full whiskers presented a striking contrast to the grizzly hair, weather-beaten complexion and harsh countenance of the master of the house; but the least *artistic* of men would

none the less have preferred Monsieur Delmare's harsh and stern expression to the younger man's regular but insipid features. The bloated face carved in relief on the sheet of iron that formed the back of the fire-place, with its eye fixed constantly on the burning logs, was less monotonous perhaps than the pink and white fair-haired character in this narrative, absorbed in like contemplation. However, his strong and supple figure, the clean-cut outline of his brown eyebrows, the polished whiteness of his forehead, the tranquil expression of his limpid eyes, the beauty of his hands, and even the rigorously correct elegance of his hunting costume, would have caused him to be considered a very comely *cavalier* in the eyes of any woman who had conceived a passion for the so-called *philosophic* tastes of another century. But perhaps Monsieur Delmare's young and timid wife had never as yet examined a man with her eyes; perhaps there was an entire absence of sympathy between that pale and unhappy woman and that sound sleeper and hearty eater. Certain it is that the conjugal Argus wearied his hawklike eye without detecting a glance, a breath, a palpitation, between these two very dissimilar beings. Thereupon, being assured that he had not the slightest pretext for jealousy to occupy his mind, he relapsed into a state of depression more profound than before, and abruptly plunged his hands into his pockets.

The only cheerful and attractive face in the group was that of a beautiful hunting dog, of the large breed of pointers, whose head was resting on the knees of the younger man. She was remarkable by reason of her long body, her powerful hairy legs, her muzzle, slender as a fox's, and her intelligent face, covered with disheveled hair, through which two great tawny eyes shone like topazes. Those dog's eyes, so fierce and threatening during the chase, had at that moment an indefinable expression of affectionate melancholy; and when her master, the object of that

instinctive love, sometimes so superior to the deliberate affection of man, ran his fingers through the beautiful creature's silky silver locks, her eyes sparkled with pleasure, while her long tail swept the hearth in regular cadence, and scattered the ashes over the inlaid floor.

It was a fitting subject for Rembrandt's brush, that interior, dimly lighted by the fire on the hearth. At intervals fugitive white gleams lighted up the room and the faces, then, changing to the red tint of the embers, gradually died away; the gloom of the salon varying as the fitful gleams grew more or less dull. Each time that Monsieur Delmare passed in front of the fire, he suddenly appeared, like a ghost, then vanished in the mysterious depths of the salon. Strips of gilding stood forth in the light now and then on the oval frames, adorned with wreaths and medallions and fillets of wood, on furniture, inlaid with ebony and copper, and even on the jagged cornices of the wainscoting. But when a brand went out, resigning its brilliancy to some other blazing point, the objects which had been in the light a moment before withdrew into the shadow, and other projections stood forth from the obscurity. Thus one could have grasped in due time all the details of the picture, from the console supported by three huge gilded tritons, to the frescoed ceiling, representing a sky studded with stars and clouds, and to the heavy hangings of crimson damask, with long tassels, which shimmered like satin, their ample folds seeming to sway back and forth as they reflected the flickering light.

One would have said, from the immobility of the two figures in bold relief before the fire, that they feared to disturb the immobility of the scene; that they had been turned to stone where they sat, like the heroes of a fairy tale, and that the slightest word or movement would bring the walls of an imaginary city crumbling about their ears. And the dark-browed master, who alone broke the silence and the shadow

with his regular tread, seemed a magician who held them under a spell.

At last the dog, having obtained a smile from her master, yielded to the magnetic power which the eye of man exerts over that of the lower animals. She uttered a low whine of timid affection and placed her fore paws on her beloved's shoulders with inimitable ease and grace of movement.

"Down, Ophelia, down!"

And the young man reproved the docile creature sternly in English, whereupon she crawled toward Madame Delmare, shamefaced and repentant, as if to implore her protection. But Madame Delmare did not emerge from her reverie, and allowed Ophelia's head to rest on her two white hands, as they lay clasped on her knee, without bestowing a caress upon her.

"Has that dog taken up her quarters in the salon for good?" said the colonel, secretly well-pleased to find a pretext for an outburst of ill-humor, to pass the time. "Be off to your kennel, Ophelia! Come, out with you, you stupid beast!"

If anyone had been watching Madame Delmare closely he could have divined, in that trivial and commonplace incident of her private life, the painful secret of her whole existence. An imperceptible shudder ran over her body, and her hands, in which she unconsciously held the favorite animal's head, closed nervously around her rough, hairy neck, as if to detain her and protect her. Whereupon Monsieur Delmare, drawing his hunting-crop from the pocket of his jacket, walked with a threatening air toward poor Ophelia, who crouched at his feet, closing her eyes, and whining with grief and fear in anticipation. Madame Delmare became even paler than usual; her bosom heaved convulsively, and, turning her great blue eyes upon her husband with an indescribable expression of terror, she said:

"In pity's name, monsieur, do not kill her!"

These few words gave the colonel a shock. A feeling of chagrin took the place of his angry impulse.

"That, madame, is a reproof which I understand very well," he said, "and which you have never spared me since the day that I killed your spaniel in a moment of passion while hunting. He was a great loss, was he not? A dog that was forever forcing the hunting and rushing after the game! Whose patience would he not have exhausted? Indeed, you were not nearly so fond of him until he was dead; before that you paid little attention to him; but now that he gives you a pretext for blaming me—"

"Have I ever reproached you?" said Madame Delmare in the gentle tone which we adopt from a generous impulse with those we love, and from self-esteem with those whom we do not love.

"I did not say that you had," rejoined the colonel in a half-paternal, half-conjugal tone; "but the tears of some women contain bitterer reproaches than the fiercest imprecations of others. *Morbleu!* madame, you know perfectly well that I hate to see people weeping about me."

"I do not think that you ever see me weep."

"Even so! don't I constantly see you with red eyes? On my word, that's even worse!"

During this conjugal colloquy the young man had risen and put Ophelia out of the room with the greatest tranquillity; then he returned to his seat opposite Madame Delmare after lighting a candle and placing it on the chimney-piece.

This act, dictated purely by chance, exerted a sudden influence upon Monsieur Delmare's frame of mind. As soon as the light of the candle, which was more uniform and steadier than that of the fire, fell upon his wife, he observed

the symptoms of suffering and general prostration which were manifest that evening in her whole person: in her weary attitude, in the long brown hair falling over her emaciated cheeks and in the purple rings beneath her dull, inflamed eyes. He took several turns up and down the room, then returned to his wife and, suddenly changing his tone:

"How do you feel to-day, Indiana?" he said, with the stupidity of a man whose heart and temperament are rarely in accord.

"About as usual, thank you," she replied, with no sign of surprise or displeasure.

"'As usual' is no answer at all, or rather it's a woman's answer; a Norman answer, that means neither yes nor no, neither well nor ill."

"Very good; I am neither well nor ill."

"I say that you lie," he retorted with renewed roughness; "I know that you are not well; you have told Sir Ralph here that you are not. Tell me, isn't that the truth? Did she not tell you so, Monsieur Ralph?"

"She did," replied the phlegmatic individual addressed, paying no heed to the reproachful glance which Indiana bestowed upon him.

At that moment a fourth person entered the room: it was the factotum of the household, formerly a sergeant in Monsieur Delmare's regiment.

He explained briefly to Monsieur Delmare that he had his reasons for believing that charcoal thieves had been in the park the last few nights at the same hour, and that he had come to ask for a gun to take with him in making his nightly round before locking the gates. Monsieur Delmare, scenting powder in the adventure, at once took down his fowling-piece, gave Lelièvre another, and started to leave the room.

"What!" said Madame Delmare in dismay, "you would kill a poor peasant on account of a few bags of charcoal?"

"I will shoot down like a dog," retorted Delmare, irritated by this remonstrance, "any man whom I find prowling around my premises at night. If you knew the law, madame, you would know that it authorizes me to do it."

"It is a horrible law," said Indiana, warmly. But she quickly repressed this impulse and added in a lower tone: "But your rheumatism? You forget that it rains, and that you will suffer for it to-morrow if you go out to-night."

"You are terribly afraid that you will have to nurse your old husband," replied Delmare, impatiently opening the door.

And he left the room, still muttering about his age and his wife.

II

The two personages whom we have mentioned, Indiana Delmare and Sir Ralph, or, if you prefer, Monsieur Rodolphe Brown, continued to face each other, as calm and cold as if the husband were standing between them. The Englishman had no idea of justifying himself, and Madame Delmare realized that she had no serious grounds for reproaching him, for he had spoken with no evil intention. At last, making an effort, she broke the silence and upbraided him mildly.

"That was not well done of you, my dear Ralph," she said. "I had forbidden you to repeat the words that I let slip in a moment of pain, and Monsieur Delmare is the last person in the world whom I should want told of my trouble."

"I can't understand you, my dear," Sir Ralph replied; "you are ill and you refuse to take care of yourself. I had to choose between the chance of losing you and the necessity of letting your husband know."

"Yes," said Madame Delmare, with a sad smile, "and you decided to *notify the authorities.*"

"You are wrong, you are wrong, on my word, to allow yourself to inveigh so against the colonel; he is a man of honor, a worthy man."

"And who says that he's not, Sir Ralph?"

"Why, you do, without meaning to. Your depression, your ailing condition, and, as he himself observes, your red eyes, tell everybody every hour in the day that you are not happy."

"Hush, Sir Ralph, you go too far. I have never given you permission to find out so much."

"I anger you, I see; but what would you have! I am not clever; I am not acquainted with the subtle distinctions of your language, and then, too, I resemble your husband in many ways. Like him I am utterly in the dark as to what a man must say to a woman, either in English or in French, to console her. Another man would have conveyed to your mind, without putting it in words, the idea that I have just expressed so awkwardly; he would have had the art to insinuate himself into your confidence without allowing you to detect his progress, and perhaps he would have succeeded in affording some relief to your heart, which puts fetters on itself and locks itself up before me. This is not the first time that I have noticed how much more influence words have upon women than ideas, especially in France. Women more than——"

"Oh! you have a profound contempt for women, my dear Ralph. I am alone here against two of you, so I must make up my mind never to be right."

"Put us in the wrong, my dear cousin, by recovering your health, your good spirits, your bloom, your animation of the old days; remember Ile Bourbon and that delightful retreat of ours, Bernica, and our happy childhood, and our friendship, which is as old as you are yourself."

"I remember my father, too," said Indiana, dwelling sadly upon the words and placing her hand in Sir Ralph's.

They relapsed into profound silence.

"Indiana," said Ralph, after a pause, "happiness is always within our reach. Often one has only to put out his hand to grasp it. What do you lack? You have modest competence, which is preferable to great wealth, an excellent husband, who loves you with all his heart, and, I dare to assert, a sincere and devoted friend."

Madame Delmare pressed Sir Ralph's hand faintly, but she did not change her attitude; her head still hung forward on her breast and her tear-dimmed eyes were fixed on the magic effects produced by the embers.

"Your depression, my dear friend," continued Sir Ralph, "is due purely to physical causes; which one of us can escape disappointment, vexation? Look below you and you will see people who envy you, and with good reason. Man is so constituted that he always aspires to what he has not."

I spare you a multitude of other commonplaces which the excellent Sir Ralph put forth in a tone as monotonous and sluggish as his thoughts. It was not that Sir Ralph was a fool, but he was altogether out of his element. He lacked neither common sense nor shrewdness; but the rôle of consoler of women was, as he himself acknowledged, beyond his capacity. And this man had so little comprehension of another's grief, that with the best possible disposition to furnish a remedy, he could not touch it without inflaming it. He was so conscious of his awkwardness that he rarely ventured to take notice of his friend's sorrows; and on this occasion he made superhuman efforts to perform what he considered the most painful duty of friendship.

When he saw that Madame Delmare was obliged to make an effort to listen to him, he held his peace, and naught could be heard save the innumerable little voices whispering in the burning wood, the plaintive song of the log as it becomes heated and swells, the crackling of the bark as it curls before breaking, and the faint phosphorescent explosions of the alburnum, which emits a bluish flame. From time to time the baying of a dog mingled with the whistling of the wind through the cracks of the door and the beating of the rain against the windowpanes. That evening was one of the saddest that Madame Delmare had yet passed in her little manor-house in Brie.

Moreover, an indefinable vague feeling of suspense weighed upon that impressionable soul and its delicate fibres. Weak creatures live on alarms and presentiments. Madame Delmare had all the superstitions of a nervous, sickly Creole; certain nocturnal sounds, certain phases of the moon were to her unfailing presages of specific events, of impending misfortunes, and the night spoke to that dreamy, melancholy creature a language full of mysteries and phantoms which she alone could understand and translate according to her fears and her sufferings.

"You will say again that I am mad," she said, withdrawing her hand, which Sir Ralph still held, "but some disaster, I don't know what, is preparing to fall upon us. Some danger is impending over someone—myself, no doubt—but, look you, Ralph, I feel intensely agitated, as at the approach of a great crisis in my destiny. I am afraid," she added, with a shudder, "I feel faint."

And her lips became as white as her cheeks. Sir Ralph, terrified, not by Madame Delmare's presentiments, which he looked upon as symptoms of extreme mental exhaustion, but by her deathly pallor, pulled the bell-rope violently to summon assistance. No one came, and as Indiana grew weaker and weaker, Sir Ralph, more alarmed in proportion, moved her away from the fire, deposited her in a reclining chair, and ran through the house at random, calling the servants, looking for water or salts, finding nothing, breaking all the bell-ropes, losing his way in the labyrinth of dark rooms, and wringing his hands with impatience and anger against himself.

At last it occurred to him to open the glass door that led into the park, and to call alternately Lelièvre and Noun, Madame Delmare's Creole maid.

A few moments later Noun appeared from one of the dark paths in the park, and hastily inquired if Madame Delmare