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Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
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Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
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Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
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The Confession of a Child of the Century –Volume 3

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BOOK 3.

PART V

CHAPTER I

SWEET ANTICIPATIONS

Having decided on a long tour, we went first to Paris; the necessary preparations required time, and we took a furnished apartment for one month. The decision to leave France had changed everything: joy, hope, confidence, all returned; no more sorrow, no more grief over approaching separation. We had now nothing but dreams of happiness and vows of eternal love; I wished, once for all, to make my dear mistress forget all the suffering I had caused her. How had I been able to resist such proof of tender affection and courageous resignation? Not only did Brigitte pardon me, but she was willing to make a still greater sacrifice and leave everything for me. As I felt myself unworthy of the devotion she exhibited, I wished to requite her by my love; at last my good angel had triumphed, and admiration and love resumed their sway in my heart. Brigitte and I examined a map to determine where we should go and bury ourselves from the world. We had not yet decided, and we found pleasure in that very uncertainty; while glancing over the map we said "Where shall we go? What shall we do? Where shall we begin life anew?" How shall I tell how deeply I repented my cruelty when I looked upon her smiling face, a face that laughed at the future, although still pale from the sorrows of the past! Blissful projects of future joy, you are perhaps the only true happiness known to man! For eight days we spent our time making purchases and preparing for our departure; then a young man presented himself at our apartments: he brought letters to Brigitte. After their interview I found her sad and distraught; but I could not guess the cause unless the letters were from N — —, that village where I had

confessed my love and where Brigitte's only relatives lived. Nevertheless, our preparations progressed rapidly and I became impatient to get away; at the same time I was so happy that I could hardly rest. When I arose in the morning and the sun was shining through our windows, I experienced such transports of joy that I was almost intoxicated with happiness. So anxious was I to prove the sincerity of my love for Brigitte that I hardly dared kiss the hem of her skirt. Her lightest words made me tremble as if her voice were strange to me; I alternated between tears and laughter, and I never spoke of the past except with horror and disgust. Our room was full of personal effects scattered about in disorder—albums, pictures, books, and the dear map we loved so much. We went to and fro about the little apartment; at brief intervals I would stop and kneel before Brigitte who would call me an idler, saying that she had to do all the work, and that I was good for nothing; and all sorts of projects flitted through our minds. Sicily was far away, but the winters are so delightful there! Genoa is very pretty with its painted houses, its green gardens, and the Apennines in the background! But what noise! What crowds! Among every three men on the street, one is a monk and another a soldier. Florence is sad, it is the Middle Ages living in the midst of modern life. How can any one endure those grilled windows and that horrible brown color with which all the houses are tinted?

What could we do at Rome? We were not travelling in order to forget ourselves, much less for the sake of instruction. To the Rhine? But the season was over, and although we did not care for the world of fashion, still it is sad to visit its haunts when it has fled. But Spain? Too many restrictions there; one travels like an army on the march, and may expect everything except repose. Switzerland? Too many people go there, and most of them are deceived as to the nature of its attractions; but in that land are unfolded the three most beautiful colors on God's earth: the azure of the sky, the verdure of the plains, and the whiteness of the snows on the summits of glaciers.

"Let us go, let us go!" cried Brigitte, "let us fly away like two birds. Let us pretend, my dear Octave, that we met each other only yesterday. You met me at a ball, I pleased you and I love you; you tell me that some leagues distant, in a certain little town, you loved a

certain Madame Pierson; what passed between you and her I do not know. You will not tell me the story of your love for another! And I will whisper to you that not long since I loved a terrible fellow who made me very unhappy; you will reprove me and close my mouth, and we will agree never to speak of such things."

When Brigitte spoke thus I experienced a feeling that resembled avarice;

I caught her in my arms and cried:

"Oh, God! I know not whether it is with joy or with fear that I tremble. I am about to carry off my treasure. Die, my youth; die, all memories of the past; die, all cares and regrets! Oh, my, good, my brave Brigitte! You have made a man out of a child. If I lose you now, I shall never love again. Perhaps, before I knew you, another woman might have cured me; but now you alone, of all the world, have power to destroy me or to save me, for I bear in my heart the wound of all the evil I have done you. I have been an ingrate, blind and cruel. God be praised! You love me still. If you ever return to that home under whose lindens I first met you, look carefully about that deserted house; you will find a phantom there, for the man who left it, and went away with you, is not the man who entered it."

"Is it true?" said Brigitte, and her face, all radiant with love, was raised to heaven; "is it true that I am yours? Yes, far from this odious world in which you have grown old before your time, yes, my child, you shall really love. I shall have you as you are, and, wherever we go you will make me forget the possibility of a day when you will no longer love me. My mission will have been accomplished, and I shall always be thankful for it."

Finally we decided to go to Geneva and then choose some resting place in the Alps. Brigitte was enthusiastic about the lake; I thought I could already breathe the air which floats over its surface, and the odor of the verdure-clad valley; already I beheld Lausanne, Vevey, Oberland, and in the distance the summits of Monte Rosa and the immense plain of Lombardy. Already oblivion, repose, travel, all the delights of happy solitude invited us; already, when in the evening with joined hands, we looked at each other in silence, we felt rising within us that sentiment of strange grandeur which takes

possession of the heart on the eve of a long journey, the mysterious and indescribable vertigo which has in it something of the terrors of exile and the hopes of pilgrimage. Are there not in the human mind wings that flutter and sonorous chords that vibrate? How shall I describe it? Is there not a world of meaning in the simple words: "All is ready, we are about to go"?

Suddenly Brigitte became languid; she bowed her head in silence. When I asked her whether she was in pain, she said "No!" in a voice that was scarcely audible; when I spoke of our departure, she arose, cold and resigned, and continued her preparations; when I swore to her that she was going to be happy, and that I would consecrate my life to her, she shut herself up in her room and wept; when I kissed her she turned pale, and averted her eyes as my lips approached hers; when I told her that nothing had yet been done, that it was not too late to renounce our plans, she frowned severely; when I begged her to open her heart to me and told her I would die rather than cause her one regret, she threw her arms about my neck, then stopped and repulsed me as if involuntarily. Finally, I entered her room holding in my hand a ticket on which our places were marked for the carriage to Besancon. I approached her and placed it in her lap; she stretched out her hand, screamed, and fell unconscious at my feet.

CHAPTER II

THE DEMON OF DOUBT

All my efforts to divine the cause of so unexpected a change were as vain as the questions I had first asked. Brigitte was ill, and remained obstinately silent. After an entire day passed in supplication and conjecture, I went out without knowing where I was going. Passing the Opera, I entered it from mere force of habit.

I could pay no attention to what was going on in the theatre, I was so overwhelmed with grief, so stupefied, that I did not live, so to speak, except in myself, and exterior objects made no impression on my senses. All my powers were centred on a single thought, and the more I turned it over in my head, the less clearly could I distinguish its meaning.

What obstacle was this that had so suddenly come between us and the realization of our fondest hopes? If it was merely some ordinary event or even an actual misfortune, such as an accident or the loss of a friend, why that obstinate silence? After all that Brigitte had done, when our dreams seemed about to be realized, what could be the nature of a secret that destroyed our happiness and could not be confided to me? What! to conceal it from me! And yet I could not find it in my heart to suspect her. The appearance of suspicion revolted me and filled me with horror. On the other hand, how could I conceive of inconstancy or of caprice in that woman, as I knew her? I was lost in an abyss of doubt, and I could not discover a gleam of light, the smallest point, on which to base conjecture.

In front of me in the gallery sat a young man whose face was not unknown to me. As often happens when one is preoccupied, I looked at him without thinking of him as a personal identity or trying to fit a name on him. Suddenly I recognized him: it was he who had brought letters to Brigitte from N — — —. I arose and started to accost him without thinking what I was doing. He occupied a place that I could not reach without disturbing a large number of spectators, and I was forced to await the entr'acte.

My first thought was that if any one could enlighten me it was this young man. He had had several interviews with Madame Pierson in the last few days, and I recalled the fact that she was always much depressed after his visits. He had seen her the morning of the day she was taken ill.

The letters he brought Brigitte had not been shown me; it was possible that he knew the reason why our departure was delayed. Perhaps he did not know all the circumstances, but he could doubtless enlighten me as to the contents of those letters, and there was no reason why I should hesitate to question him. When the curtain fell, I followed him to the foyer; I do not know that he saw me coming, but he hastened away and entered a box. I determined to wait until he should come out, and stood looking at the box for fifteen minutes. At last he appeared. I bowed and approached him. He hesitated a moment, then turned and disappeared down a stairway.

My desire to speak to him had been too evident to admit of any other explanation than deliberate intention on his part to avoid me. He surely knew my face, and, whether he knew it or not, a man who sees another approaching him ought, at least, to wait for him. We were the only persons in the corridor at the time, and there could be no doubt he did not wish to speak to me. I did not dream of such impertinent treatment from a man whom I had cordially received at my apartments; why should he insult me? He could have no other excuse than a desire to avoid an awkward interview, during which questions might be asked which he did not care to answer. But why? This second mystery troubled me almost as much as the first. Although I tried to drive the thought from my head, that young man's action in avoiding me seemed to have some connection with Brigitte's obstinate silence.

Of all torments uncertainty is the most difficult to endure, and during my life I have exposed myself to many dangers because I could not wait patiently. When I returned to my apartments I found Brigitte reading those same fateful letters from N— —. I told her that I could not remain longer in suspense, and that I wished to be relieved from it at any cost; that I desired to know the cause of the sudden change which had taken place in her, and that, if she re-

fused to speak, I should look upon her silence as a positive refusal to go abroad with me and an order for me to leave her forever.

She reluctantly handed me the letters she was reading. Her relatives had written her that her departure had disgraced them, that every one knew the circumstances, and that they felt it their duty to warn her of the consequences; that she was living openly as my mistress, and that, although she was a widow and free to do as she chose, she ought to think of the name she bore; that neither they nor her old friends would ever see her again if she persisted in her course; finally, by all sorts of threats and entreaties, they urged her to return.

The tone of the letter angered me, and at first I took it as an insult.

"And that young man who brings you these remonstrances," I cried, "doubtless has orders to deliver them personally, and does not fail to do his own part to the best of his ability. Am I not right?"

Brigitte's dejection made me reflect and calm my wrath.

"You will do as you wish, and achieve my ruin," she said. "My fate rests with you; you have been for a long time my master. Avenge as you please the last effort my old friends have made to recall me to reason, to the world that I formerly respected, to the honor that I have lost. I have not a word to say, and if you wish to dictate my reply, I will obey you."

"I care to know nothing," I replied, "but your intentions; it is for me to comply with your wishes, and I assure you I am ready to do it. Tell me, do you desire to remain, to go away, or shall I go alone?"

"Why that question?" asked Brigitte; "have I said that I had changed my mind? I am suffering, and can not travel in my present condition, but when I recover we will go to Geneva as we have planned."

We separated at these words, and the coldness with which she had expressed her resolution saddened me more than usual. It was not the first time our liaison had been threatened by her relatives; but up to this time whatever letters Brigitte had received she had never taken them so much to heart. How could I bring myself to believe that Brigitte had been so affected by protests which in less

happy moments had had no effect on her? Could it be merely the weakness of a woman who recoils from an act of final significance? "I will do as you please," she had said. No, it does not please me to demand patience, and rather than look at that sorrowful face even a week longer, unless she speaks I will set out alone.

Fool that I was! Had I the strength to do it? I did not close my eyes that night, and the next morning I resolved to call on that young man I had seen at the opera. I do not know whether it was wrath or curiosity that impelled me to this course, nor did I know just what I desired to learn of him; but I reflected that he could not avoid me this time, and that was all I desired.

As I did not know his address, I asked Brigitte for it, pretending that I felt under an obligation to call on him after all the visits he had made us; I had not said a word about my experience at the opera. Brigitte's eyes betrayed signs of tears. When I entered her room she held out her hand and said:

"What do you wish?"

Her voice was sad but tender. We exchanged a few kind words, and I set out less unhappy.

The name of the young man I was going to see was Smith; he was living near us. When I knocked at his door, I experienced a strange sensation of uneasiness; I was dazed as though by a sudden flash of light. His first gesture froze my blood. He was in bed, and with the same accent Brigitte had employed, with a face as pale and haggard as hers, he held out his hand and said:

"What do you wish?"

Say what you please, there are things in a man's life which reason can not explain. I sat as still as if awakened from a dream, and began to repeat his questions. Why, in fact, had I come to see him? How could I tell him what had brought me there? Even if he had anything to tell me, how did I know he would speak? He had brought letters from N— — —, and knew those who had written them. But it cost me an effort to question him, and I feared he would suspect what was in my mind. Our first words were polite and insignificant. I thanked him for his kindness in bringing letters to Madame Pierson; I told him that upon leaving France we would ask

him to do the same favor for us; and then we were silent, surprised to find ourselves vis-a-vis.

I looked about me in embarrassment. His room was on the fourth floor; everything indicated honest and industrious poverty. Some books, musical instruments, papers, a table and a few chairs, that was all, but everything was well cared for and presented an agreeable ensemble.

As for him, his frank and animated face predisposed me in his favor. On the mantel I observed a picture of an old lady. I stepped up to look at it, and he said it was his mother.

I then recalled that Brigitte had often spoken of him; she had known him since childhood. Before I came to the country she used to see him occasionally at N— — —, but at the time of her last visit there he was away. It was, therefore, only by chance that I had learned some particulars of his life, which now came to mind. He had an honest employment that enabled him to support his mother and sister.

His treatment of these two women deserved the highest praise; he deprived himself of everything for them, and although he possessed musical talents that would have enabled him to make a fortune, the immediate needs of those dependent on him, and an extreme reserve, had always led him to prefer an assured income to the uncertain chances of success in larger ventures.

In a word, he belonged to that small class who live quietly, and who are worth more to the world than those who do not appreciate them. I had learned of certain traits in his character which will serve to paint the man he had fallen in love with a beautiful girl in the neighborhood, and, after a year of devotion to her, had secured her parents' consent to their union. She was as poor as he. The contract was ready to be signed, the preparations for the wedding were complete, when his mother said:

"And your sister? Who will marry her?"

That simple remark made him understand that if he married he would spend all his money in the household expenses and his sister would have no dowry. He broke off the engagement, bravely renouncing his happy prospects; he then came to Paris.

When I heard that story I wished to see the hero. That simple, unassuming act of devotion seemed to me more admirable than all the glories of war.

The more I examined that young man, the less I felt inclined to broach the subject nearest my heart. The idea which had first occurred to me, that he would harm me in Brigitte's eyes, vanished at once. Gradually my thoughts took another course; I looked at him attentively, and it seemed to me that he was also examining me with curiosity.

We were both twenty-one years of age, but what a difference between us! He, accustomed to an existence regulated by the graduated tick of the clock; never having seen anything of life, except that part of it which lies between an obscure room on the fourth floor and a dingy government office; sending his mother all his savings, that farthing of human joy which the hand of toil clasps so greedily; having no thought except for the happiness of others, and that since his childhood, since he had been a babe in arms! And I, during that precious time, so swift, so inexorable, during the time that with him had been a round of toil, what had I done? Was I a man? Which of us had lived?

What I have said in a page can be comprehended in a moment. He spoke to me of our journey and the countries we were going to visit.

"When do you go?" he asked.

"I do not know; Madame Pierson is indisposed, and has been confined to her bed for three days."

"For three days!" he repeated, in surprise.

"Yes; why are you astonished?"

He arose and threw himself on me, his arms extended, his eyes fixed. He was trembling violently.

"Are you ill?" I asked, taking him by the hand. He pressed his hand to his head and burst into tears. When he had recovered sufficiently to speak, he said:

"Pardon me; be good enough to leave me. I fear I am not well; when I have sufficiently recovered I will return your visit."

CHAPTER III

THE QUESTION OF SMITH

Brigitte was better. She had told me that she desired to go away as soon as she was well enough to travel. But I insisted that she ought to rest at least fifteen days before undertaking a long journey.

Whenever I attempted to persuade her to speak frankly, she assured me that the letter was the only cause of her melancholy, and begged me to say nothing more about it. Then I tried in vain to guess what was passing in her heart. We went to the theatre every night in order to avoid embarrassing interviews. There we sometimes pressed each other's hands at some fine bit of acting or beautiful strain of music, or exchanged, perhaps, a friendly glance, but going and returning we were mute, absorbed in our thoughts.

Smith came almost every day. Although his presence in the house had been the cause of all my sorrow, and although my visit to him had left singular suspicions in my mind, still his apparent good faith and his simplicity reassured me. I had spoken to him of the letters he had brought, and he did not appear offended, but saddened. He was ignorant of the contents, and his friendship for Brigitte led him to censure them severely. He would have refused to carry them, he said, had he known what they contained. On account of Brigitte's tone of reserve in his presence, I did not think he was in her confidence.

I therefore welcomed him with pleasure, although there was always a sort of awkward embarrassment in our meeting. He was asked to act as intermediary between Brigitte and her relatives after our departure. When we three were together he noticed a certain coldness and restraint which he endeavored to banish by cheerful good-humor. If he spoke of our liaison it was with respect and as a man who looks upon love as a sacred bond; in fact, he was a kind friend, and inspired me with full confidence.

But despite all this, despite all his efforts, he was sad, and I could not get rid of strange thoughts that came to my mind. The tears I had seen that young man shed, his illness coming on at the same time as Brigitte's, I know not what melancholy sympathy I thought I discovered between them, troubled and disquieted me. Not over a month ago I would have become violently jealous; but now, of what could I suspect Brigitte? Whatever the secret she was concealing from me, was she not going away with me? Even were it possible that Smith could share some secret of which I knew nothing, what could be the nature of the mystery? What was there to be censured in their sadness and in their friendship?

She had known him as a child; she met him again after long years just as she was about to leave France; she chanced to be in an unfortunate situation, and fate decreed that he should be the instrument of adding to her sorrow. Was it not natural that they should exchange sorrowful glances, that the sight of this young man should awaken memories and regrets? Could he, on the other hand, see her start off on a long journey, proscribed and almost abandoned, without grave apprehensions? I felt this that must be the explanation, and that it was my duty to assure them that I was capable of protecting the one from all dangers, and of requiring the other for the services he had rendered. And yet a deadly chill oppressed me, and I could not determine what course to pursue.

When Smith left us in the evening, we either were silent or talked of him. I do not know what fatal attraction led me to ask about him continually. She, however, told me just what I have told my reader; Smith's life had never been other than it was now—poor, obscure, and honest. I made her repeat the story of his life a number of times, without knowing why I took such an interest in it.

There was in my heart a secret cause of sorrow which I would not confess. If that young man had arrived at the time of our greatest happiness, had he brought an insignificant letter to Brigitte, had he pressed her hand while assisting her into the carriage, would I have paid the least attention to it? Had he recognized me at the opera or had he not—had he shed tears for some unknown reason, what would it matter so long as I was happy? But while unable to divine the cause of Brigitte's sorrow, I saw that my past conduct, whatever

she might say of it, had something to do with her present state. If I had been what I ought to have been for the last six months that we had lived together, nothing in the world, I was persuaded, could have troubled our love.

Smith was only an ordinary man, but he was good and devoted; his simple and modest qualities resembled the large, pure lines which the eye seizes at the first glance; one could know him in a quarter of an hour, and he inspired confidence if not admiration. I could not help thinking that if he were Brigitte's lover, she would cheerfully go with him to the ends of the earth.

I had deferred our departure purposely, but now I began to regret it.

Brigitte, too, at times urged me to hasten the day.

"Why do you wait?" she asked. "Here I am recovered and everything is ready."

Why did we wait, indeed? I do not know.

Seated near the fire, my eyes wandered from Smith to my loved one. I saw that they were both pale, serious, silent. I did not know why, and I could not help thinking that there was but one cause, or one secret to learn. This was not one of those vague, sickly suspicions, such as had formerly tormented me, but an instinct, persistent and fatal. What strange creatures are we! It pleased me to leave them alone before the fire, and to go out on the quay to dream, leaning on the parapet and looking at the water. When they spoke of their life at N— — —, and when Brigitte, almost cheerful, assumed a motherly air to recall some incident of their childhood days, it seemed to me that I suffered, and yet took pleasure in it. I asked questions; I spoke to Smith of his mother, of his plans and his prospects; I gave him an opportunity to show himself in a favorable light, and forced his modesty to reveal his merit.

"You love your sister very much, do you not?" I asked. "When do you expect to marry her off?"

He blushed, and replied that his expenses were rather heavy and that it would probably be within two years, perhaps sooner, if his health would permit him to do some extra work which would bring

in enough to provide her dowry; that there was a well-to-do family in the country, whose eldest son was her sweetheart; that they were almost agreed on it, and that fortune would one day come, like sleep, without thinking of it; that he had set aside for his sister a part of the money left by their father; that their mother was opposed to it, but that he would insist on it; that a young man can live from hand to mouth, but that the fate of a young girl is fixed on the day of her marriage. Thus, little by little, he expressed what was in his heart, and I watched Brigitte listening to him. Then, when he arose to leave us, I accompanied him to the door, and stood there, pensively listening to the sound of his footsteps on the stairs.

Upon examining our trunks we found that there were still a few things needed before we could start; Smith was asked to purchase them. He was remarkably active, and enjoyed attending to matters of this kind. When I returned to my apartments, I found him on the floor, strapping a trunk. Brigitte was at the piano we had rented by the week during our stay. She was playing one of those old airs into which she put so much expression, and which were so dear to us. I stopped in the hall; every note reached my ear distinctly; never had she sung so sadly, so divinely.

Smith was listening with pleasure; he was on his knees holding the buckle of the strap in his hands. He fastened it, then looked about the room at the other goods he had packed and covered with a linen cloth. Satisfied with his work, he still remained kneeling in the same spot; Brigitte, her hands on the keys, was looking out at the horizon. For the second time I saw tears fall from the young man's eyes; I was ready to shed tears myself, and not knowing what was passing in me, I held out my hand to him.

"Were you there?" asked Brigitte. She trembled and seemed surprised.

"Yes, I was there," I replied. "Sing, my dear, I beg of you. Let me hear your sweet voice."

She continued her song without a word; she noticed my emotion as well as Smith's; her voice faltered. With the last notes she arose, and came to me and kissed me.

On another occasion I had brought an album containing views of Switzerland. We were looking at them, all three of us, and when Brigitte found a scene that pleased her, she would stop to examine it. There was one view that seemed to attract her more than the others; it was a certain spot in the canton of Vaud, some distance from Brigues; some trees with cows grazing in the shade; in the distance a village consisting of some dozen houses, scattered here and there. In the foreground a young girl with a large straw hat, seated under a tree, and a farmer's boy standing before her, apparently pointing out, with his iron-tipped stick, the route over which he had come; he was directing her attention to a winding path that led to the mountain. Above them were the Alps, and the picture was crowned by three snow-capped summits. Nothing could be more simple or more beautiful than this landscape. The valley resembled a lake of verdure, and the eye followed its contour with delight.

"Shall we go there?" I asked Brigitte. I took a pencil and traced some figures on the picture.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"I am trying to see if I can not change that face slightly and make it resemble yours. The pretty hat would become you, and can I not, if I am skilful, give that fine mountaineer some resemblance to me?"

The whim seemed to please her and she set about rubbing out the two faces. When I had painted her portrait, she wished to try mine. The faces were very small, hence not very difficult; it was agreed that the likenesses were striking. While we were laughing at it, the door opened and I was called away by the servant.

When I returned, Smith was leaning on the table and looking at the picture with interest. He was absorbed in a profound revery, and was not aware of my presence; I sat down near the fire, and it was not until I spoke to Brigitte that he raised his head. He looked at us a moment, then hastily took his leave and, as he approached the door, I saw him strike his forehead with his hand.

When I saw these signs of grief, I said to myself "What does it mean?" Then I clasped my hands to plead with—whom? I do not know; perhaps my good angel, perhaps my evil fate.

