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Turgenev Wallage Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
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
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Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
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Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
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Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
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Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Musil
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike
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Nietzsche Marx Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz
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Conscience –Volume 1

Hector Malot

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Hector Malot

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8495-0585-1

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BOOK 1.

HECTOR MALOT

HECTOR-HENRI MALOT, the son of a notary public, was born at La Brouille (Seine-Inferieure), March 20, 1830. He studied law, intending to devote himself also to the Notariat, but toward 1853 or 1854 commenced writing for various small journals. Somewhat later he assisted in compiling the 'Biographie Generale' of Firmin Didot, and was also a contributor to some reviews. Under the generic title of 'Les Victimes d'Amour,' he made his debut with the following three family-romances: 'Les Amants (1859), Les Epoux (1865), and Les Enfants (1866).' About the same period he published a book, 'La Vie Moderne en Angleterre.' Malot has written quite a number of novels, of which the greatest is 'Conscience,' crowned by the French Academy in 1878.

His works have met with great success in all countries. They possess that lasting interest which attends all work based on keen observation and masterly analysis of the secret motives of human actions.

The titles of his writings run as follows: 'Les Amours de Jacques (1868); Un Beau Frere (1869); Romain Kalbris (1864), being a romance for children; Une Bonne Afaire, and Madame Obernin (1870); Un Cure de Province (1872); Un Mariage sons le Second Empire (1873); Une Belle Mere (1874); L'Auberge du Monde (1875-1876, 4 vols.); Les Batailles du Mariage (1877, 3 vols.); Cara (1877); Le Docteur Claude (1879); Le Boheme Tapageuse (1880, 3 vols.); Pompon, and Une Femme d'Argent (1881); La Petite Soeur, and Les Millions Honteux (1882); Les Besogneux, and Paulette (1883); Marichette, and Micheline (1884.); Le Lieutenant Bonnet, and Sang Bleu (1885); Baccara, and Zyte (1886); Viceo Francis, Seduction, and Ghislaine (1887); Mondaine (1888); Mariage Riche, and Justice (1889); Mere (1890), Anie (1891); Complices (1892); Conscience (1893); and Amours de Jeunes et Amours de Vieux (1894).'

About this time Hector Malot resolved not to write fiction any more. He announced this determination in a card published in the journal, 'Le Temps,' May 25, 1895—It was then maliciously stated that "M. Malot his retired from business after having accumulated a fortune." However, he took up his pen again and published a history of his literary life: *Le Roman de mes Romans* (1896); besides two volumes of fiction, *L'Amour dominateur* (1896), and *Pages choisies* (1898), works which showed that, in the language of Holy Writ, "his eye was not dimmed nor his natural force abated," and afforded him a triumph over his slanderers.

EDOUARD PAILLERON de l'Academie Francaise.

CONSCIENCE

CHAPTER I

THE REUNION

When Crozat, the Bohemian, escaped from poverty, by a good marriage that made him a citizen of the Rue de Vaugirard, he did not break with his old comrades; instead of shunning them, or keeping them at a distance, he took pleasure in gathering them about him, glad to open his house to them, the comforts of which were very different from the attic of the Rue Ganneron, that he had occupied for so long a time.

Every Wednesday, from four to seven o'clock, he had a reunion at his house, the Hotel des Medicis, and it was a holiday for which his friends prepared themselves. When a new idea occurred to one of the habitués it was caressed, matured, studied in solitude, in order to be presented in full bloom at the assembly.

Crozat's reception of his friends was pleasing, simple, like the man, cordial on the part of the husband, as well as on the part of the wife, who, having been an actress, held to the religion of comradeship: On a table were small pitchers of beer and glasses; within reach was an old stone jar from Beauvais, full of tobacco. The beer was good, the tobacco dry, and the glasses were never empty.

And it was not silly subjects that were discussed here, worldly babblings, or gossiping about absent friends, but the great questions that ruled humanity: philosophy, politics, society, and religion.

Formed at first of friends, or, at least, of comrades who had worked and suffered together, these reunions had enlarged gradually, until one day the rooms at the Hotel des Medicis became a 'parlotte' where preachers of ideas and of new religions, thinkers, reformers, apostles, politicians, aesthetes, and even babblers in search of ears more or less complaisant that would listen to them, met together. Any one might come who wished, and if one did not

enter there exactly as one would enter an ordinary hotel, it was sufficient to be brought by an habitue in order to have the right to a pipe, some beer, and to speak.

One of the habitues, Brigard, was a species of apostle, who had acquired celebrity by practising in his daily life the ideas that he professed and preached. Comte de Brigard by birth, he began by renouncing his title, which made him a vassal of the respect of men and of social conventions; an instructor of law, he could easily have made a thousand or twelve hundred francs a month, but he arranged the number and the price of his lessons so that each day brought him only ten francs in order that he might not be a slave to money; living with a woman whom he loved, he had always insisted, although he had two daughters, on living with her 'en union libre', and in not acknowledging his children legally, because the law debased the ties which attached him to them and lessened his duties; it was conscience that sanctioned these duties; and nature, like conscience, made him the most faithful of lovers, the best, the most affectionate, the most tender of fathers. Tall, proud, carrying in his person and manners the native elegance of his race, he dressed like the porter at the corner, only replacing the blue velvet by chestnut velvet, a less frivolous color. Living in Clamart for twenty years, he always came to Paris on foot, and the only concessions that he made to conventionality or to his comfort were to wear sabots in winter, and to carry his vest on his arm in summer.

Thus organized, he must have disciples, and he sought them everywhere— in the streets, where he buttonholed those he was able to snatch under the trees of the Luxembourg Gardens, and on Wednesday at the house of his old comrade Crozat. How many he had had! But, unfortunately, the greater number turned out badly. Several became ministers; others accepted high government positions for life; some handled millions of francs; two were at Noumea; one preached in the pulpit of Notre Dame.

One afternoon in October the little parlor was full; the end of the summer vacation had brought back the habitues, and for the first time the number was nearly large enough to open a profitable discussion. Crozat, near the door, smiled at the arrivals on shaking hands, and Brigard, his soft felt hat on his head, presided, assisted

by his two favorite disciples of the moment, the advocate Nougarede and the poet Glady, neither of whom would turn out badly, he was certain.

To tell the truth, for those who knew how to look and to see, the pale face of Nougarede, his thin lips, restless eyes, and an austerity of dress and manners which clashed with his twenty-six years, gave him more the appearance of a man of ambition than of an apostle. And when one knew that Glady was the owner of a beautiful house in Paris, and of real estate in the country that brought him a hundred thousand francs a year, it was difficult to imagine that he would long follow Father Brigard.

But to see was not the dominant faculty of Brigard; it was to reason, and reason told him that ambition would soon make Nougarede a deputy, as fortune would one day make Glady an academician; and in that case, although he detested assemblies as much as academies, they would then have two tribunes whence the good word would fall on the multitude with more weight. They might be counted on. When Nougarede began to come to the Wednesday reunions he was as empty as a drum, and if he spoke brilliantly on no matter what subject with an imperturbable eloquence, it was to say nothing. In Glady's first volume were words learnedly arranged to please the ears and the eyes. Now, ideas sustained the discourse of the advocate, as the verses of the poet said something — and these ideas were Brigard's; this something was the perfume of his teaching.

For half an hour the pipes burned fiercely, the smoke slowly rose to the ceiling, and as in a cloud Brigard might be seen like a bearded god, proclaiming his law, his hat on his head; for, if he had made a rule never to take it off, he manipulated it continually while he spoke, frequently pushing it forward, sometimes to the back of his head, to the right, to the left, raising it, and flattening it, according to the needs of his argument.

"It is incontestable," he said, "that we scatter our great force when we ought to concentrate it."

He pressed down his hat.

"In effect," he raised it, "the hour has arrived for us to assert ourselves as a group, and it is a duty for us, since it is a need of humanity—"

At this moment a new arrival glided into the room quietly, with the manifest intention of disturbing no one; but Crozat, who was seated near the door, stopped him and shook hands.

"Tiens', Saniel! Good-day, doctor."

"Good-evening, my dear sir."

"Come to the table; the beer is good to-day."

"Thank you; I am very well here."

Without taking the chair that Crozat designated, he leaned against the wall. He was a tall, solid man about thirty, with tawny hair falling on the collar of his coat, a long, curled beard, a face energetic, but troubled and wan, to which the pale blue eyes gave an expression of hardness that was accentuated by a prominent jaw and a decided air. A Gaul, a true Gaul of ancient times, strong, bold, and resolute.

Brigard continued:

"It is incontestable"—this was his formula, because everything he said was incontestable to him, simply because he said it—"it is incontestable that in the struggle for existence the dogma of conscience must be established, its only sanction being the performance of duty and inward satisfaction—"

"Duty accomplished toward whom?" interrupted Saniel.

"Toward one's self."

"Then begin by stating what are our duties, and codify what is good and what is bad."

"That is easy," some one replied.

"Easy if you admit a certain innate regard for human life, for property, and for the family. But you must acknowledge that not all men have this regard. How many believe that it is not a fault to run away with the wife of a friend, not a crime to appropriate something that they want, or to kill an enemy! Where are the duties of

those who reason and feel in this way? What is their inward satisfaction worth? This is why I will not admit that conscience is the proper guide of our actions."

There were several exclamations at this, which Brigard checked.

"What guide, then, shall men obey?" he demanded.

"Force, which is the last word of the philosophy of life "

"That which leads to a wise and progressive extermination. Is this what you desire?"

"Why not? I do not shrink from an extermination that relieves humanity of idlers that it drags about without power to advance or to free itself, finally sinking under the load. Is it not better for the world to be rid of such people, who obstruct the advancement of others?"

"At least the idea is bizarre coming from a doctor," interrupted Crozat, "since it would put an end to hospitals."

"Not at all; I would preserve them for the study of monsters."

"In placing society on this antagonistic footing," said Brigard, "you destroy society itself, which is founded on reciprocity, on good fellowship; and in doing so you can create for the strong a state of suspicion that paralyzes them. Carthage and Venice practised the selection by force, and destroyed themselves."

"You speak of force, my dear Saniel," interrupted a voice; "where do you get that—the force of things, the tatum? There is no beginning, no will; events decide for us climate, temperament, environment."

"Then," replied Saniel, "there is no responsibility, and this instrument conscience, that should decide everything, is good for nothing. You need not consider consequences. Success or defeat may yet be immaterial, for the accomplishment of an act that you have believed condemnable may serve the race, while another that you have believed beneficent may prove injurious; from which it follows that intentions only should be judged, and that no one but God can sound human hearts to their depths."

He began to laugh.

"Do you believe that? Is that the conclusion at which you have arrived?"

A waiter entered, carrying pitchers of beer on a tray, and the discussion was necessarily interrupted, every one drawing up to the table where Crozat filled the glasses, and the conversation took a more private turn.

Saniel shook hands with Brigard, who received him somewhat coldly; then he approached Glady with the manifest intention of detaining him, but Glady had said that he was obliged to leave, so Saniel said that he could remain no longer, and had only dropped in on passing.

When they were both gone Brigard turned to Crozat and Nougarede, who were near him, and declared that Saniel made him uneasy.

"He believes himself stronger than life," he said, "because he is sound and intelligent. He must take care that he does not go too far!"

CHAPTER II

THE RICH MAN'S REFUSAL

When Saniel and Glady reached the street, the rain that had fallen since morning had ceased, and the asphalt shone clear and glittering like a mirror.

"The walking is good," Saniel remarked.

"It will rain again," responded Glady, looking at the sky.

"I think not." It was evident that Glady wished to take a cab, but as none passed he was obliged to walk with Saniel.

"Do you know," he said, "that you have wounded Brigard?"

"I regret it sincerely; but the salon of our friend Crozat is not yet a church, and I do not suppose that discussion is forbidden there."

"To deny is not to discuss."

"You say that as if you were angry with me."

"Not at all. I am sorry that you have wounded Brigard—nothing more."

"That is too much, because I have a sincere esteem, a real friendship for you, if you will permit me to say so."

But Glady, apparently, did not desire the conversation to take this turn.

"I think this is an empty cab," he said, as a fiacre approached them.

"No," replied Saniel, "I see the light of a cigar through the windowpane."

Glady made a slight gesture of impatience that was not lost upon Saniel, who was expecting some such demonstration.

Rich, and frequenting the society of poor men, Glady lived in dread of borrowers. It was enough for any man to appear to wish to

talk to him privately to make him believe that he was going to ask for fifty louis or twenty francs; so often was this the case that every friend or comrade was an enemy against whom he must defend his purse. And so he lay in wait as if expecting some one to spring upon him, his eyes open, his ears listening, and his hands in his pockets. This explains his attitude toward Saniel, in whom he scented a demand for money, and was the reason for his attempt to escape by taking a cab. But luck was against him, and he tried to decline the unspoken request in another way.

"Do not be surprised," he said, with the volubility with which a man speaks when he does not wish to give his companion a chance to say a word, "that I was pained to see Brigard take seriously an argument that evidently was not directed against him."

"Neither against him nor against his ideas."

"I know that; you do not need to defend yourself. But I have so much friendship, so much esteem and respect for Brigard that everything that touches him affects me. And how could it be otherwise when one knows his value, and what a man he is? This life of mediocrity that he lives, in order to be free, is it not admirable? What a beautiful example!"

"Not every one can follow it."

"You think that one cannot be contented with ten francs a day?"

"I mean that not every one has the chance to make ten francs a day."

The vague fears of Gladly became definite at these words. They had walked down the Rue Ferou and reached the Place St. Sulpice.

"I think that at last I am going to find a cab," he said, precipitately.

But this hope was not realized; there was not a single cab at the station, and he was forced to submit to the assault from Saniel.

And Saniel began:

"You are compelled to walk with me, and, frankly, I rejoice, because I wish to talk to you of a serious affair—on which depends my future."

"This is a poor place for serious talk."

"I do not find it so."

"We would better appoint some other time."

"Why should we, since chance has thrown us together here?"

Glady resigned himself to the inevitable, and was as polite as he could be in the circumstances.

"I await your pleasure," he said in a gracious tone, that was a contrast to his former one.

Saniel, who was in such a hurry a few moments before, now silently walked by Glady, whose eyes were on the shining asphalt pavement.

At last he spoke.

"I have told you that my future depends on the affair concerning which I wish to speak to you. I can tell you all in a few words: If I am not able to procure three thousand francs within two days, I shall be obliged to leave Paris, to give up my studies and my work here, and go and bury myself in my native town and become a plain country doctor."

Glady did not flinch; if he had not foreseen the amount he expected the demand, and he continued gazing at his feet.

"You know," continued Saniel, "that I am the son of peasants; my father was marshal in a poor village of Auvergne. At school I gave proof of a certain aptitude for work above my comrades, and our cure conceived an affection for me and taught me all he knew. Then he made me enter a small seminary. But I had neither the docile mind nor the submissive character that was necessary for this education, and after several years of pranks and punishments, although I was not expelled, I was given to understand that my departure would be hailed with delight. I then became usher in a small school, but without salary, taking board and lodging as payment. I passed a good examination and was preparing for my degree, when I left the school owing to a quarrel. I had made some money by giving private lessons, and I found myself the possessor of nearly eighty francs. I started for Paris, where I arrived at five o'clock one morning in June, and where I knew, no one. I had a small trunk containing a few shirts, which obliged me to take a carriage. I told the

coachman to take me to a hotel in the Latin Quarter. 'Which hotel?' he asked; 'I do not care,' I answered. 'Do you wish to go to the Hotel du Senat?' The name pleased me; perhaps it was an omen. He took me to the Hotel du Senat, where, with what I had left of my eighty francs, I paid a month in advance. I stayed there eight years."

"That is remarkable."

"What else could I do? I knew Latin and Greek as well as any man in France, but as far as anything else was concerned I was as ignorant as a schoolmaster. The same day I tried to make use of what I knew, and I went to a publisher of classic books, of whom I had heard my professor of Greek literature speak. After questioning me he gave me a copy of Pindar to prepare with Latin notes, and advanced me thirty francs, which lasted me a month. I came to Paris with the desire to work, but without having made up my mind what to do. I went wherever there were lectures, to the Sorbonne, to the College de France, to the Law School, and to the School of Medicine; but it was a month before I came to a decision. The subtleties of law displeased me, but the study of medicine, depending upon the observation of facts, attracted me, and I decided to become a doctor."

"A marriage of reason."

"No, a marriage for love. Because, if I had consulted reason, it would have told me that to marry medicine when one has nothing—neither family to sustain you nor relatives to push you—would be to condemn yourself to a life of trials, of battles, and of misery. My student life was happy; I worked hard, and by giving lessons in Latin I had enough to eat. When I received as house-surgeon six, eight, nine hundred francs, I thought it a large fortune, and I would have remained in this position for the rest of my life if I had been able to do so, but when I took my degree of doctor I was obliged to leave the hospital. The possessor of several thousand francs, I should have followed rigorously my dream of ambition. While attending the mistress of one of my comrades I made the acquaintance of an upholsterer, who suggested that he should furnish an apartment for me, and that I might pay him later. I yielded to temptation. Remember, I had passed eight years in the Hotel du Senat, and I knew nothing of Paris life. A home of my own! My own

furniture, and a servant in my anteroom! I should be somebody! My upholsterer could have installed me in his own quarter of Paris, and perhaps could have obtained some patients for me among his customers, who are rich and fashionable. But he did not do this, probably concluding that with my awkward appearance I would not be a success with such people. When you are successful it is original to be a peasant—people find you clever; but before success comes to you it is a disgrace. He furnished me an apartment in a very respectable house in the Rue Louis-le-Grand. When I went into it I had debts to the amount of ten thousand francs behind me, the interest on this sum, the rent of two thousand four hundred francs, not a sou in my pocket, not a relative — "

"That was courageous."

"I did not know that in Paris everything is accomplished through influence, and I imagined that an intelligent man could make his way without assistance. I was to learn by experience. When a new doctor arrives anywhere his brother doctors do not receive him with much sympathy. 'What does this intruder want?' 'Are there not enough of us already?' He is watched, and the first patient that he loses is made use of as an example of his ignorance or imprudence, and his position becomes uncomfortable. The chemists of my quarter whom I called upon did not receive me very warmly; they made me feel the distance that separates an honorable merchant from a beggar, and I was given to understand that they could patronize me only on condition that I ordered the specialties that they wished to profit by—iron from this one and tar from that. On commencing to practise I had as patients only the people of the quarter, whose principle was never to pay a doctor, and who wait for the arrival of a new one in order that they may be rid of the old one and this sort is numerous everywhere. It happened that my concierge was from Auvergne like myself, and he considered it his duty to make me give free attendance to all those from our country that he could find in the quarter and everywhere else, so that I had the patriotic satisfaction of seeing all the charcoal-dealers from Auvergne sprawling in my beautiful armchairs. Finally, by remaining religiously at home every Sunday in summer, while the other doctors were away, by rising quickly at night every time my bell rang, I was able to acquire a practice among a class of people who were more reasonable and

satisfactory. I obtained a prize at the Academy. At the same time I delivered, at a moderate price, lectures in anatomy at schools on the outskirts of the city; I gave lessons; I undertook all the anonymous work of the book trade and of journalism that I could find. I slept five hours a day, and in four years I had decreased my debt seven thousand francs. If my upholsterer wished to be paid I could have it arranged, but that was not his intention. He wishes to take his furniture that is not worn out, and to keep the money that he has received. If I do not pay these three thousand francs in a few days I shall be turned into the street. To tell the truth, I shall soon have a thousand francs, but those who owe it to me are not in Paris, or will pay in January. Behold my situation! I am desperate because there is no one to whom I can apply; those whom I have asked for money have not listened to me; I have told you that I have no relatives, and neither have I any friends — perhaps because I am not amiable. And then I thought of you. You know me. You know that people say I have a future before me. At the end of three months I shall be a doctor in the hospitals; my competitors admit that I shall not miss admission; I have undertaken some experiments that will, perhaps, give me fame. Will you give me your hand?"

Glady extended it toward him. "I thank you for having applied to me; it is a proof of confidence that touches me." He pressed the hand that he had taken with some warmth. "I see that you have divined the sentiments of esteem with which you have inspired me."

Saniel drew a long breath.

"Unfortunately," continued Glady, "I cannot do what you desire without deviating from my usual line of conduct. When I started out in life I lent to all those who appealed to me, and when I did not lose my friends I lost my money. I then took an oath to refuse every one. It is an oath that I cannot break. What would my old friends say if they learned that I did for a young man what I have refused to do for them?"

"Who would know it?"

"My conscience."

They had reached the Quai Voltaire, where fiacres were stationed.

"At last here are some cabs," Gladys said. "Pardon me for leaving you, but I am in a hurry."

