

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace 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
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
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
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Octave Feuillet

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MONSIEUR DE CAMORS

By
OCTAVE FEUILLET

With a Preface by MAXIME DU CAMP, of the French Academy

OCTAVE FEUILLET

OCTAVE FEUILLET'S works abound with rare qualities, forming a harmonious ensemble; they also exhibit great observation and knowledge of humanity, and through all of them runs an incomparable and distinctive charm. He will always be considered the leader of the idealistic school in the nineteenth century. It is now fifteen years since his death, and the judgment of posterity is that he had a great imagination, linked to great analytical power and insight; that his style is neat, pure, and fine, and at the same time brilliant and concise. He unites suppleness with force, he combines grace with vigor.

Octave Feuillet was born at Saint-Lo (Manche), August 11, 1821, his father occupying the post of Secretary-General of the Prefecture de la Manche. Pupil at the Lycee Louis le Grand, he received many prizes, and was entered for the law. But he became early attracted to literature, and like many of the writers at that period attached himself to the "romantic school." He collaborated with Alexander Dumas pere and with Paul Bocage. It can not now be ascertained what share Feuillet may have had in any of the countless tales of the elder Dumas. Under his own name he published the novels 'Onesta' and 'Alix', in 1846, his first romances. He then commenced writing for the stage. We mention 'Echec et Mat' (Odeon, 1846); 'Palma, ou la Nuit du Vendredi-Saint' (Porte St. Martin, 1847); 'La Vieillesse de Richelieu' (Theatre Francais, 1848); 'York' (Palais Royal, 1852). Some of them are written in collaboration with Paul Bocage. They are dramas of the Dumas type, conventional, not without cleverness, but making no lasting mark.

Realizing this, Feuillet halted, pondered, abruptly changed front, and began to follow in the footsteps of Alfred de Musset. 'La Grise' (1854), 'Le Village' (1856), 'Dalila' (1857), 'Le Cheveu Blanc', and other plays obtained great success, partly in the Gymnase, partly in the Comedie Francaise. In these works Feuillet revealed himself as an analyst of feminine character, as one who had spied out all their secrets, and could pour balm on all their wounds. 'Le Roman d'un

Jeune Homme Pauvre' (Vaudeville, 1858) is probably the best known of all his later dramas; it was, of course, adapted for the stage from his romance, and is well known to the American public through Lester Wallack and Pierrepont Edwards. 'Tentation' was produced in the year 1860, also well known in this country under the title 'Led Astray'; then followed 'Montjoye' (1863), etc. The influence of Alfred de Musset is henceforth less perceptible. Feuillet now became a follower of Dumas fils, especially so in 'La Belle au Bois Dormant' (Vaudeville, 1865); 'Le Cas de Conscience (Theatre Francais, 1867); 'Julie' (Theatre Francais 1869). These met with success, and are still in the repertoire of the Comedie Francaise.

As a romancer, Feuillet occupies a high place. For thirty years he was the representative of a noble and tender genre, and was preeminently the favorite novelist of the brilliant society of the Second Empire. Women literally devoured him, and his feminine public has always remained faithful to him. He is the advocate of morality and of the aristocracy of birth and feeling, though under this disguise he involves his heroes and heroines in highly romantic complications, whose outcome is often for a time in doubt. Yet as the accredited painter of the Faubourg Saint-Germain he contributed an essential element to the development of realistic fiction. No one has rendered so well as he the high-strung, neuropathic women of the upper class, who neither understand themselves nor are wholly comprehensible to others. In 'Monsieur de Camors', crowned by the Academy, he has yielded to the demands of a stricter realism. Especially after the fall of the Empire had removed a powerful motive for gilding the vices of aristocratic society, he painted its hard and selfish qualities as none of his contemporaries could have done. Octave Feuillet was elected to the Academie Francaise in 1862 to succeed Scribe. He died December 29, 1890. MAX-
IME DU CAMP de l'Academie Francaise.

MONSIEUR DE CAMORS

BOOK 1.

CHAPTER I

"THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH"

Near eleven o'clock, one evening in the month of May, a man about fifty years of age, well formed, and of noble carriage, stepped from a coupe in the courtyard of a small hotel in the Rue Barbet-de-Jouy. He ascended, with the walk of a master, the steps leading to the entrance, to the hall where several servants awaited him. One of them followed him into an elegant study on the first floor, which communicated with a handsome bedroom, separated from it by a curtained arch. The valet arranged the fire, raised the lamps in both rooms, and was about to retire, when his master spoke:

"Has my son returned home?"

"No, Monsieur le Comte. Monsieur is not ill?"

"Ill! Why?"

"Because Monsieur le Comte is so pale."

"Ah! It is only a slight cold I have taken this evening on the banks of the lake."

"Will Monsieur require anything?"

"Nothing," replied the Count briefly, and the servant retired. Left alone, his master approached a cabinet curiously carved in the Italian style, and took from it a long flat ebony box.

This contained two pistols. He loaded them with great care, adjusting the caps by pressing them lightly to the nipple with his thumb. That done, he lighted a cigar, and for half an hour the muf-

fled beat of his regular tread sounded on the carpet of the gallery. He finished his cigar, paused a moment in deep thought, and then entered the adjoining room, taking the pistols with him.

This room, like the other, was furnished in a style of severe elegance, relieved by tasteful ornament. It showed some pictures by famous masters, statues, bronzes, and rare carvings in ivory. The Count threw a glance of singular interest round the interior of this chamber, which was his own—on the familiar objects—on the sombre hangings—on the bed, prepared for sleep. Then he turned toward a table, placed in a recess of the window, laid the pistols upon it, and dropping his head in his hands, meditated deeply many minutes. Suddenly he raised his head, and wrote rapidly as follows:

"TO MY SON:

"Life wearies me, my son, and I shall relinquish it. The true superiority of man over the inert or passive creatures that surround him, lies in his power to free himself, at will, from those, pernicious servitudes which are termed the laws of nature. Man, if he will it, need not grow old: the lion must. Reflect, my son, upon this text, for all human power lies in it.

"Science asserts and demonstrates it. Man, intelligent and free, is an animal wholly unpremeditated upon this planet. Produced by unexpected combinations and haphazard transformations, in the midst of a general subordination of matter, he figures as a dissonance and a revolt!

"Nature has engendered without having conceived him. The result is as if a turkey-hen had unconsciously hatched the egg of an eagle. Terrified at the monster, she has sought to control it, and has overloaded it with instincts, commonly called duties, and police regulations known as religion. Each one of these shackles broken, each one of these servitudes overthrown, marks a step toward the thorough emancipation of humanity.

"I must say to you, however, that I die in the faith of my century, believing in matter uncreated, all-powerful, and eternal—the Nature of the ancients. There have been in all ages philosophers who have had conceptions of the truth. But ripe to-day, it has become the common property of all who are strong enough to stand it—for, in sooth, this latest religion of humanity is food fit only for the strong. It carries sadness with it, for it isolates man; but it also involves grandeur, making man absolutely free, or, as it were, a very god. It leaves him no actual duties except to himself, and it opens a superb field to one of brain and courage.

"The masses still remain, and must ever remain, submissive under the yoke of old, dead religions, and under the tyranny of instincts. There will still be seen very much the same condition of things as at present in Paris; a society the brain of which is atheistic, and the heart religious. And at bottom there will be no more belief in Christ than in Jupiter; nevertheless, churches will continue to be built mechanically. There are no longer even Deists; for the old chimera of a personal, moral God-witness, sanction, and judge,—is virtually extinct; and yet hardly a word is said, or a line written, or a gesture made, in public or private life, which does not ever affirm that chimera. This may have its uses perchance, but it is nevertheless despicable. Slip forth from the common herd, my son, think for yourself, and write your own catechism upon a virgin page.

"As for myself, my life has been a failure, because I was born many years too soon. As yet the earth and the heavens were heaped up and cumbered with ruins, and people did not see. Science, moreover, was relatively still in its infancy. And, besides, I retained the prejudices and the repugnance to the doctrines of the new world that belonged to my name. I was unable to comprehend

that there was anything better to be done than childishly to pout at the conqueror; that is, I could not recognize that his weapons were good, and that I should seize and destroy him with them. In short, for want of a definite principle of action I have drifted at random, my life without plan—I have been a mere trivial man of pleasure.

"Your life shall be more complete, if you will only follow my advice.

"What, indeed, may not a man of this age become if he have the good sense and energy to conform his life rigidly to his belief!

"I merely state the question, you must solve it; I can leave you only some cursory ideas, which I am satisfied are just, and upon which you may meditate at your leisure. Only for fools or the weak does materialism become a debasing dogma; assuredly, in its code there are none of those precepts of ordinary morals which our fathers entitled virtue; but I do find there a grand word which may well counterbalance many others, that is to say, Honor, self-esteem! Unquestionably a materialist may not be a saint; but he can be a gentleman, which is something. You have happy gifts, my son, and I know of but one duty that you have in the world—that of developing those gifts to the utmost, and through them to enjoy life unsparingly. Therefore, without scruple, use woman for your pleasure, man for your advancement; but under no circumstances do anything ignoble.

"In order that ennui shall not drive you, like myself, prematurely from the world so soon as the season for pleasure shall have ended, you should leave the emotions of ambition and of public life for the gratification of your riper age. Do not enter

into any engagements with the reigning government, and reserve for yourself to hear its eulogium made by those who will have subverted it. That is the French fashion. Each generation must have its own prey. You will soon feel the impulse of the coming generation. Prepare yourself, from afar, to take the lead in it.

"In politics, my son, you are not ignorant that we all take our principles from our temperament. The bilious are demagogues, the sanguine, democrats, the nervous, aristocrats. You are both sanguine and nervous, an excellent constitution, for it gives you a choice. You may, for example, be an aristocrat in regard to yourself personally, and, at the same time, a democrat in relation to others; and in that you will not be exceptional.

"Make yourself master of every question likely to interest your contemporaries, but do not become absorbed in any yourself. In reality, all principles are indifferent—true or false according to the hour and circumstance. Ideas are mere instruments with which you should learn to play seasonably, so as to sway men. In that path, likewise, you will have associates.

"Know, my son, that having attained my age, weary of all else, you will have need of strong sensations. The sanguinary diversions of revolution will then be for you the same as a love-affair at twenty.

"But I am fatigued, my son, and shall recapitulate. To be loved by women, to be feared by men, to be as impassive and as imperturbable as a god before the tears of the one and the blood of the other, and to end in a whirlwind—such has been the lot in which I have failed, but which, nevertheless, I bequeath to you. With your great faculties you, however, are capable of accomplishing it, un-

less indeed you should fail through some ingrained weakness of the heart that I have noticed in you, and which, doubtless, you have imbibed with your mother's milk.

"So long as man shall be born of woman, there will be something faulty and incomplete in his character. In fine, strive to relieve yourself from all thralldom, from all natural instincts, affections, and sympathies as from so many fetters upon your liberty, your strength.

"Do not marry unless some superior interest shall impel you to do so. In that event, have no children.

"Have no intimate friends. Caesar having grown old, had a friend.
It was Brutus!

"Contempt for men is the beginning of wisdom.

"Change somewhat your style of fencing, it is altogether too open, my son. Do not get angry. Rarely laugh, and never weep. Adieu.

"CAMORS."

The feeble rays of dawn had passed through the slats of the blinds. The matin birds began their song in the chestnut-tree near the window. M. de Camors raised his head and listened in an absent mood to the sound which astonished him. Seeing that it was day-break, he folded in some haste the pages he had just finished, pressed his seal upon the envelope, and addressed it, "For the Comte Louis de Camors." Then he rose.

M. de Camors was a great lover of art, and had carefully preserved a magnificent ivory carving of the sixteenth century, which had belonged to his wife. It was a Christ the pallid white relieved by a medallion of dark velvet.

His eye, meeting this pale, sad image, was attracted to it for a moment with strange fascination. Then he smiled bitterly, seized one of the pistols with a firm hand and pressed it to his temple.

A shot resounded through the house; the fall of a heavy body shook the floor-fragments of brains strewed the carpet. The Comte de Camors had plunged into eternity!

His last will was clenched in his hand.

To whom was this document addressed? Upon what kind of soil will these seeds fall?

At this time Louis de Camors was twenty-seven years old. His mother had died young. It did not appear that she had been particularly happy with her husband; and her son barely remembered her as a young woman, pretty and pale, and frequently weeping, who used to sing him to sleep in a low, sweet voice. He had been brought up chiefly by his father's mistress, who was known as the Vicomtesse d'Oilly, a widow, and a rather good sort of woman. Her natural sensibility, and the laxity of morals then reigning at Paris, permitted her to occupy herself at the same time with the happiness of the father and the education of the son. When the father deserted her after a time, he left her the child, to comfort her somewhat by this mark of confidence and affection. She took him out three times a week; she dressed him and combed him; she fondled him and took him with her to church, and made him play with a handsome Spaniard, who had been for some time her secretary. Besides, she neglected no opportunity of inculcating precepts of sound morality. Thus the child, being surprised at seeing her one evening press a kiss upon the forehead of her secretary, cried out, with the blunt candor of his age:

"Why, Madame, do you kiss a gentleman who is not your husband?"

"Because, my dear," replied the Countess, "our good Lord commands us to be charitable and affectionate to the poor, the infirm, and the exile; and Monsieur Perez is an exile."

Louis de Camors merited better care, for he was a generous-hearted child; and his comrades of the college of Louis-le-Grand always remembered the warm-heartedness and natural grace which

made them forgive his successes during the week, and his varnished boots and lilac gloves on Sunday. Toward the close of his college course, he became particularly attached to a poor bursar, by name Lescande, who excelled in mathematics, but who was very ungraceful, awkwardly shy and timid, with a painful sensitiveness to the peculiarities of his person. He was nicknamed "Wolfhead," from the refractory nature of his hair; but the elegant Camors stopped the scoffers by protecting the young man with his friendship. Lescande felt this deeply, and adored his friend, to whom he opened the inmost recesses of his heart, letting out some important secrets.

He loved a very young girl who was his cousin, but was as poor as himself. Still it was a providential thing for him that she was poor, otherwise he never should have dared to aspire to her. It was a sad occurrence that had first thrown Lescande with his cousin—the loss of her father, who was chief of one of the Departments of State.

After his death she lived with her mother in very straitened circumstances; and Lescande, on occasion of his last visit, found her with soiled cuffs. Immediately after he received the following note:

"Pardon me, dear cousin! Pardon my not wearing white cuffs. But I must tell you that we can change our cuffs—my mother and I—only three times a week. As to her, one would never discover it. She is neat as a bird. I also try to be; but, alas! when I practise the piano, my cuffs rub. After this explanation, my good Theodore, I hope you will love me as before. "JULIETTE."

Lescande wept over this note. Luckily he had his prospects as an architect; and Juliette had promised to wait for him ten years, by which time he would either be dead, or living deliciously in a humble house with his cousin. He showed the note, and unfolded his plans to Camors. "This is the only ambition I have, or which I can have," added Lescande. "You are different. You are born for great things."

"Listen, my old Lescande," replied Camors, who had just passed his rhetoric examination in triumph. "I do not know but that my destiny may be ordinary; but I am sure my heart can never be. There I feel transports—passions, which give me sometimes great joy, sometimes inexpressible suffering. I burn to discover a world—to save a nation—to love a queen! I understand nothing but great ambitions and noble alliances, and as for sentimental love, it troubles me but little. My activity pants for a nobler and a wider field!

"I intend to attach myself to one of the great social parties, political or religious, that agitate the world at this era. Which one I know not yet, for my opinions are not very fixed. But as soon as I leave college I shall devote myself to seeking the truth. And truth is easily found. I shall read all the newspapers.

"Besides, Paris is an intellectual highway, so brilliantly lighted it is only necessary to open one's eyes and have good faith and independence, to find the true road.

"And I am in excellent case for this, for though born a gentleman, I have no prejudices. My father, who is himself very enlightened and very liberal, leaves me free. I have an uncle who is a Republican; an aunt who is a Legitimist—and what is still more, a saint; and another uncle who is a Conservative. It is not vanity that leads me to speak of these things; but only a desire to show you that, having a foot in all parties, I am quite willing to compare them dispassionately and make a good choice. Once master of the holy truth, you may be sure, dear old Lescande, I shall serve it unto death—with my tongue, with my pen, and with my sword!"

Such sentiments as these, pronounced with sincere emotion and accompanied by a warm clasp of the hand, drew tears from the old Lescande, otherwise called Wolfhead.

CHAPTER II

FRUIT FROM THE HOTBED OF PARIS

Early one morning, about eight years after these high resolves, Louis de Camors rode out from the 'porte-cochere' of the small hotel he had occupied with his father.

Nothing could be gayer than Paris was that morning, at that charming golden hour of the day when the world seems peopled only with good and generous spirits who love one another. Paris does not pique herself on her generosity; but she still takes to herself at this charming hour an air of innocence, cheerfulness, and amiable cordiality.

The little carts with bells, that pass one another rapidly, make one believe the country is covered with roses. The cries of old Paris cut with their sharp notes the deep murmur of a great city just awaking.

You see the jolly concierges sweeping the white footpaths; half-dressed merchants taking down their shutters with great noise; and groups of ostlers, in Scotch caps, smoking and fraternizing on the hotel steps.

You hear the questions of the sociable neighborhood; the news proper to awakening; speculations on the weather bandied across from door to door, with much interest.

Young milliners, a little late, walk briskly toward town with elastic step, making now a short pause before a shop just opened; again taking wing like a bee just scenting a flower.

Even the dead in this gay Paris morning seem to go gayly to the cemetery, with their jovial coachmen grinning and nodding as they pass.

Superbly aloof from these agreeable impressions, Louis de Camors, a little pale, with half-closed eyes and a cigar between his teeth, rode into the Rue de Bourgogne at a walk, broke into a canter on the Champs Elysees, and galloped thence to the Bois. After a

brisk run, he returned by chance through the Porte Maillot, then not nearly so thickly inhabited as it is to-day. Already, however, a few pretty houses, with green lawns in front, peeped out from the bushes of lilac and clematis. Before the green railings of one of these a gentleman played hoop with a very young, blond-haired child. His age belonged in that uncertain area which may range from twenty-five to forty. He wore a white cravat, spotless as snow; and two triangles of short, thick beard, cut like the boxwood at Versailles, ornamented his cheeks. If Camors saw this personage he did not honor him with the slightest notice. He was, notwithstanding, his former comrade Lescande, who had been lost sight of for several years by his warmest college friend. Lescande, however, whose memory seemed better, felt his heart leap with joy at the majestic appearance of the young cavalier who approached him. He made a movement to rush forward; a smile covered his good-natured face, but it ended in a grimace. Evidently he had been forgotten. Camors, now not more than a couple of feet from him, was passing on, and his handsome countenance gave not the slightest sign of emotion. Suddenly, without changing a single line of his face, he drew rein, took the cigar from his lips, and said, in a tranquil voice:

"Hello! You have no longer a wolf head!"

"Ha! Then you know me?" cried Lescande.

"Know you? Why not?"

"I thought—I was afraid—on account of my beard—"

"Bah! your beard does not change you—except that it becomes you. But what are you doing here?"

"Doing here! Why, my dear friend, I am at home here. Dismount, I pray you, and come into my house."

"Well, why not?" replied Camors, with the same voice and manner of supreme indifference; and, throwing his bridle to the servant who followed him, he passed through the gardengate, led, supported, caressed by the trembling hand of Lescande.