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Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
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Emile Zola

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FRUITFULNESS

(FECONDITE)

By Emile Zola

Translated and edited by Ernest Alfred Vizetelly

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

"FRUITFULNESS" is the first of a series of four works in which M. Zola proposes to embody what he considers to be the four cardinal principles of human life. These works spring from the previous series of The Three Cities: "Lourdes," "Rome," and "Paris," which dealt with the principles of Faith, Hope, and Charity. The last scene in "Paris," when Marie, Pierre Froment's wife, takes her boy in her arms and consecrates him, so to say, to the city of labor and thought, furnishes the necessary transition from one series to the other. "Fruitfulness," says M. Zola, "creates the home. Thence springs the city. From the idea of citizenship comes that of the fatherland; and love of country, in minds fed by science, leads to the conception of a wider and vaster fatherland, comprising all the peoples of the earth. Of these three stages in the progress of mankind, the fourth still remains to be attained. I have thought then of writing, as it were, a poem in four volumes, in four chants, in which I shall endeavor to sum up the philosophy of all my work. The first of these volumes is 'Fruitfulness'; the second will be called 'Work'; the third, 'Truth'; the last, 'Justice.' In 'Fruitfulness' the hero's name is Matthew. In the next work it will be Luke; in 'Truth,' Mark; and in 'justice,' John. The children of my brain will, like the four Evangelists preaching the gospel, diffuse the religion of future society, which will be founded on Fruitfulness, Work, Truth, and Justice."

This, then, is M. Zola's reply to the cry repeatedly raised by his hero, Abbe Pierre Froment, in the pages of "Lourdes," "Paris," and "Rome": "A new religion, a new religion!" Critics of those works were careful to point out that no real answer was ever returned to the Abbe's despairing call; and it must be confessed that one must yet wait for the greater part of that answer, since "Fruitfulness," though complete as a narrative, forms but a portion of the whole. It is only after the publication of the succeeding volumes that one will be able to judge how far M. Zola's doctrines and theories in their ensemble may appeal to the requirements of the world.

While "Fruitfulness," as I have said, constitutes a first instalment of M. Zola's conception of a social religion, it embodies a good deal else. The idea of writing some such work first occurred to him many years ago. In 1896 he contributed an article to the Paris *Figaro*, in

which he said: "For some ten years now I have been haunted by the idea of a novel, of which I shall, doubtless, never write the first page.... That novel would have been called 'Wastage'... and I should have pleaded in it in favor of all the rights of life, with all the passion which I may have in my heart."* M. Zola's article then proceeds to discuss the various social problems, theories, and speculations which are set forth here and there in the present work. Briefly, the genesis of "Fruitfulness" lies in the article I have quoted.

* See *Nouvelle Campagne* (1896), par Emile Zola. Paris, 1897, pp. 217-228.

"Fruitfulness" is a book to be judged from several standpoints. It would be unjust and absurd to judge it from one alone, such, for instance, as that of the new social religion to which I have referred. It must be looked at notably as a tract for the times in relation to certain grievous evils from which France and other countries—though more particularly France—are undoubtedly suffering. And it may be said that some such denunciation of those evils was undoubtedly necessary, and that nobody was better placed to pen that denunciation than M. Zola, who, alone of all French writers nowadays, commands universal attention. Whatever opinion may be held of his writings, they have to be reckoned with. Thus, in preparing "Fruitfulness," he was before all else discharging a patriotic duty, and that duty he took in hand in an hour of cruel adversity, when to assist a great cause he withdrew from France and sought for a time a residence in England, where for eleven months I was privileged to help him in maintaining his incognito. "Fruitfulness" was entirely written in England, begun in a Surrey country house, and finished at the Queen's Hotel, Norwood.

It would be superfluous for me to enter here into all the questions which M. Zola raises in his pages. The evils from which France suffers in relation to the stagnancy of its population, are well known, and that their continuance—if continuance there be—will mean the downfall of the country from its position as one of the world's great powers before the close of the twentieth century, is a mathematical certainty. That M. Zola, in order to combat those evils, and to do his duty as a good citizen anxious to prevent the decline of his country,

should have dealt with his subject with the greatest frankness and outspokenness, was only natural. Moreover, absolute freedom of speech exists in France, which is not the case elsewhere. Thus, when I first perused the original proofs of M. Zola's work, I came to the conclusion that any version of it in the English language would be well-nigh impossible. For some time I remained of that opinion, and I made a statement to that effect in a leading literary journal. Subsequently, however, my views became modified. "The man who is ridiculous," wrote a French poet, Barthelemy, "is he whose opinions never change," and thus I at last reverted to a task from which I had turned aside almost in despair.

Various considerations influenced me, and among them was the thought that if "Fruitfulness" were not presented to the public in an English dress, M. Zola's new series would remain incomplete, decapitated so far as British and American readers were concerned. After all, the criticisms dealing with the French original were solely directed against matters of form, the mould in which some part of the work was cast. Its high moral purpose was distinctly recognized by several even of its most bitter detractors. For me the problem was how to retain the whole ensemble of the narrative and the essence of the lessons which the work inculcates, while recasting some portion of it and sacrificing those matters of form to which exception was taken. It is not for me to say whether I have succeeded in the task; but I think that nothing in any degree offensive to delicate susceptibilities will be found in this present version of M. Zola's book.

The English reviews of the French original showed that if certain portions of it were deemed indiscreet, it none the less teemed with admirable and even delightful pages. Among the English reviewers were two well-known lady writers, Madame Darmesteter (formerly Miss Mary Robinson), and Miss Hannah Lynch. And the former remarked in one part of her critique: "Even this short review reveals how honest, how moral, how human and comely is the fable of *Fecondite*,"* while the latter expressed the view that the work was "eminently, pugnaciously virtuous in M. Zola's strictly material conception of virtue." And again: "The pages that tell the story of Mathieu and Marianne, it must be admitted, are as charming as possible. They have a bloom, a beauty, a fragrance we never ex-

pected to find in M. Zola's work. The tale is a simple one: the cheerful conquest of fortune and the continual birth of offspring."**

* *Manchester Guardian*, October 27, 1899. ** *Fortnightly Review*, January 1900.

Of course, these lady critics did not favor certain features of the original, and one of them, indeed, referred to the evil denounced by M. Zola as a mere evil of the hour, whereas it has been growing and spreading for half a century, gradually sapping all the vitality of France. But beside that evil, beside the downfall of the families it attacks, M. Zola portrays the triumph of rectitude, the triumph which follows faith in the powers of life, and observance of the law of universal labor. "Fruitfulness" contains charming pictures of homely married life, delightful glimpses of childhood and youth: the first smile, the first step, the first word, followed by the playfulness and the flirtations of boyhood, and the happiness which waits on the espousals of those who truly love. And the punishment of the guilty is awful, and the triumph of the righteous is the greatest that can be conceived. All those features have been retained, so far as my abilities have allowed, in the present version, which will at the same time, I think, give the reader unacquainted with the French language a general idea of M. Zola's views on one of the great questions of the age, as well as all the essential portions of a strongly conceived narrative.

E. A. V. MERTON, SURREY, ENGLAND: April, 1900.

FRUITFULNESS

I

THAT morning, in the little pavilion of Chantebled, on the verge of the woods, where they had now been installed for nearly a month, Mathieu was making all haste in order that he might catch the seven-o'clock train which every day conveyed him from Janville to Paris. It was already half-past six, and there were fully two thousand paces from the pavilion to Janville. Afterwards came a railway journey of three-quarters of an hour, and another journey of at least equal duration through Paris, from the Northern Railway terminus to the Boulevard de Grenelle. He seldom reached his office at the factory before half-past eight o'clock.

He had just kissed the children. Fortunately they were asleep; otherwise they would have linked their arms about his neck, laughed and kissed him, being ever unwilling to let him go. And as he hastily returned to the principal bedroom, he found his wife, Marianne, in bed there, but awake and sitting up. She had risen a moment before in order to pull back a curtain, and all the glow of that radiant May morning swept in, throwing a flood of gay sunshine over the fresh and healthy beauty of her four-and-twenty years. He, who was three years the elder, positively adored her.

"You know, my darling," said he, "I must make haste, for I fear I may miss the train—and so manage as well as you can. You still have thirty sous left, haven't you?"

She began to laugh, looking charming with her bare arms and her loose-flowing dark hair. The ever-recurring pecuniary worries of the household left her brave and joyous. Yet she had been married at seventeen, her husband at twenty, and they already had to provide for four children.

"Oh! we shall be all right," said she. "It's the end of the month to-day, and you'll receive your money to-night. I'll settle our little debts at Janville to-morrow. There are only the Lepailleurs, who

worry me with their bill for milk and eggs, for they always look as if they fancied one meant to rob them. But with thirty sous, my dear! why, we shall have quite a high time of it!"

She was still laughing as she held out her firm white arms for the customary morning good-by.

"Run off, since you are in a hurry. I will go to meet you at the little bridge to-night."

"No, no, I insist on your going to bed! You know very well that even if I catch the quarter-to-eleven-o'clock train, I cannot reach Janville before half-past eleven. Ah! what a day I have before me! I had to promise the Moranges that I would take *dejeuner* with them; and this evening Beauchene is entertaining a customer—a business dinner, which I'm obliged to attend. So go to bed, and have a good sleep while you are waiting for me."

She gently nodded, but would give no positive promise. "Don't forget to call on the landlord," she added, "to tell him that the rain comes into the children's bedroom. It's not right that we should be soaked here as if we were on the high-way, even if those millionaires, the Seguins du Hordel, do let us have this place for merely six hundred francs a year."

"Ah, yes! I should have forgotten that. I will call on them, I promise you."

Then Mathieu took her in his arms, and there was no ending to their leave-taking. He still lingered. She had begun to laugh again, while giving him many a kiss in return for his own. There was all the love of bounding health between them, the joy that springs from the most perfect union, as when man and wife are but one both in flesh and in soul.

"Run off, run off, darling! Remember to tell Constance that, before she goes into the country, she ought to run down here some Sunday with Maurice."

"Yes, yes, I will tell her—till to-night, darling."

But he came back once more, caught her in a tight embrace, and pressed to her lips a long, loving kiss, which she returned with her whole heart. And then he hurried away.

He usually took an omnibus on his arrival at the Northern Railway terminus. But on the days when only thirty sous remained at home he bravely went through Paris on foot. It was, too, a very fine walk by way of the Rue la Fayette, the Opera-house, the Boulevards, the Rue Royale, and then, after the Place de la Concorde, the Cours la Reine, the Alma bridge, and the Quai d'Orsay.

Beauchene's works were at the very end of the Quai d'Orsay, between the Rue de la Federation and the Boulevard de Grenelle. There was hereabouts a large square plot, at one end of which, facing the quay, stood a handsome private house of brickwork with white stone dressings, that had been erected by Leon Beauchene, father of Alexandre, the present master of the works. From the balconies one could perceive the houses which were perched aloft in the midst of greenery on the height of Passy, beyond the Seine; whilst on the right arose the campanile of the Trocadero palace. On one side, skirting the Rue de la Federation, one could still see a garden and a little house, which had been the modest dwelling of Leon Beauchene in the heroic days of desperate toil when he had laid the foundations of his fortune. Then the factory buildings and sheds, quite a mass of grayish structures, overtopped by two huge chimneys, occupied both the back part of the ground and that which fringed the Boulevard de Grenelle, the latter being shut off by long windowless walls. This important and well-known establishment manufactured chiefly agricultural appliances, from the most powerful machines to those ingenious and delicate implements on which particular care must be bestowed if perfection is to be attained. In addition to the hundreds of men who worked there daily, there were some fifty women, burnishers and polishers.

The entry to the workshops and offices was in the Rue de la Federation, through a large carriage way, whence one perceived the far-spreading yard, with its paving stones invariably black and often streaked by rivulets of steaming water. Dense smoke arose from the high chimneys, strident jets of steam emerged from the roof, whilst a low rumbling and a shaking of the ground betokened the activity within, the ceaseless bustle of labor.

It was thirty-five minutes past eight by the big clock of the central building when Mathieu crossed the yard towards the office which

he occupied as chief designer. For eight years he had been employed at the works where, after a brilliant and special course of study, he had made his beginning as assistant draughtsman when but nineteen years old, receiving at that time a salary of one hundred francs a month. His father, Pierre Froment,* had four sons by Marie his wife—Jean the eldest, then Mathieu, Marc, and Luc—and while leaving them free to choose a particular career he had striven to give each of them some manual calling. Leon Beauchene, the founder of the works, had been dead a year, and his son Alexandre had succeeded him and married Constance Meunier, daughter of a very wealthy wall-paper manufacturer of the Marais, at the time when Mathieu entered the establishment, the master of which was scarcely five years older than himself. It was there that Mathieu had become acquainted with a poor cousin of Alexandre's, Marianne, then sixteen years old, whom he had married during the following year.

* Of Lourdes, Rome, and Paris.

Marianne, when only twelve, had become dependent upon her uncle, Leon Beauchene. After all sorts of mishaps a brother of the latter, one Felix Beauchene, a man of adventurous mind but a blunderhead, had gone to Algeria with his wife and daughter, there to woo fortune afresh; and the farm he had established was indeed prospering when, during a sudden revival of Arab brigandage, both he and his wife were murdered and their home was destroyed. Thus the only place of refuge for the little girl, who had escaped miraculously, was the home of her uncle, who showed her great kindness during the two years of life that remained to him. With her, however, were Alexandre, whose companionship was rather dull, and his younger sister, Seraphine, a big, vicious, and flighty girl of eighteen, who, as it happened, soon left the house amid a frightful scandal—an elopement with a certain Baron Lowicz, a genuine baron, but a swindler and forger, to whom it became necessary to marry her. She then received a dowry of 300,000 francs. Alexandre, after his father's death, made a money match with Constance, who brought him half a million francs, and Marianne then found herself still more a stranger, still more isolated beside her new cousin, a thin, dry, authoritative woman, who ruled the home

with absolute sway. Mathieu was there, however, and a few months sufficed: fine, powerful, and healthy love sprang up between the young people; there was no lightning flash such as throws the passion-swayed into each other's arms, but esteem, tenderness, faith, and that mutual conviction of happiness in reciprocal bestowal which tends to indissoluble marriage. And they were delighted at marrying penniless, at bringing one another but their full hearts forever and forever. The only change in Mathieu's circumstances was an increase of salary to two hundred francs a month. True, his new cousin by marriage just vaguely hinted at a possible partnership, but that would not be till some very much later date.

As it happened Mathieu Froment gradually became indispensable at the works. The young master, Alexandre Beauchene, passed through an anxious crisis. The dowry which his father had been forced to draw from his coffers in order to get Seraphine married, and other large expenses which had been occasioned by the girl's rebellious and perverse conduct, had left but little working capital in the business. Then, too, on the morrow of Leon Beauchene's death it was found that, with the carelessness often evinced in such matters, he had neglected to leave a will; so that Seraphine eagerly opposed her brother's interests, demanding her personal share of the inheritance, and even suggesting the sale of the works. The property had narrowly escaped being cut up, annihilated. And Alexandre Beauchene still shivered with terror and anger at the recollection of that time, amidst all his delight at having at last rid himself of his sister by paying her in money the liberally estimated value of her share. It was in order to fill up the void thus created in his finances that he had espoused the half-million represented by Constance—an ugly creature, as he himself bitterly acknowledged, coarse male as he was. Truth to tell, she was so thin, so scraggy, that before consenting to make her his wife he had often called her "that bag of bones." But, on the other hand, thanks to his marriage with her, all his losses were made good in five or six years' time; the business of the works even doubled, and great prosperity set in. And Mathieu, having become a most active and necessary coadjutor, ended by taking the post of chief designer, at a salary of four thousand two hundred francs per annum.

Morange, the chief accountant, whose office was near Mathieu's, thrust his head through the doorway as soon as he heard the young man installing himself at his drawing-table. "I say, my dear Froment," he exclaimed, "don't forget that you are to take dejeuner with us."

"Yes, yes, my good Morange, it's understood. I will look in for you at twelve o'clock."

Then Mathieu very carefully scrutinized a wash drawing of a very simple but powerful steam thresher, an invention of his own, on which he had been working for some time past, and which a big landowner of Beauce, M. Firon-Badinier, was to examine during the afternoon.

The door of the master's private room was suddenly thrown wide open and Beauchene appeared—tall, with a ruddy face, a narrow brow, and big brown, protruding eyes. He had a rather large nose, thick lips, and a full black beard, on which he bestowed great care, as he likewise did on his hair, which was carefully combed over his head in order to conceal the serious baldness that was already coming upon him, although he was scarcely two-and-thirty. Frock-coated the first thing in the morning, he was already smoking a big cigar; and his loud voice, his peals of gayety, his bustling ways, all betokened an egotist and good liver still in his prime, a man for whom money—capital increased and increased by the labor of others—was the one only sovereign power.

"Ah! ah! it's ready, is it not?" said he; "Monsieur Firon-Badinier has again written me that he will be here at three o'clock. And you know that I'm going to take you to the restaurant with him this evening; for one can never induce those fellows to give orders unless one plies them with good wine. It annoys Constance to have it done here; and, besides, I prefer to entertain those people in town. You warned Marianne, eh?"

"Certainly. She knows that I shall return by the quarter-to-eleven-o'clock train."

Beauchene had sunk upon a chair: "Ah! my dear fellow, I'm worn out," he continued; "I dined in town last night; I got to bed only at

one o'clock. And there was a terrible lot of work waiting for me this morning. One positively needs to be made of iron."

Until a short time before he had shown himself a prodigious worker, endowed with really marvellous energy and strength. Moreover, he had given proof of unfailing business instinct with regard to many profitable undertakings. Invariably the first to appear at the works, he looked after everything, foresaw everything, filling the place with his bustling zeal, and doubling his output year by year. Recently, however, fatigue had been gaining ground on him. He had always sought plenty of amusement, even amid the hard-working life he led. But nowadays certain "sprees," as he called them, left him fairly exhausted.

He gazed at Mathieu: "You seem fit enough, you do!" he said. "How is it that you manage never to look tired?"

As a matter of fact, the young man who stood there erect before his drawing-table seemed possessed of the sturdy health of a young oak tree. Tall and slender, he had the broad, lofty, tower-like brow of the Froments. He wore his thick hair cut quite short, and his beard, which curled slightly, in a point. But the chief expression of his face rested in his eyes, which were at once deep and bright, keen and thoughtful, and almost invariably illumined by a smile. They showed him to be at once a man of thought and of action, very simple, very gay, and of a kindly disposition.

"Oh! I," he answered with a laugh, "I behave reasonably."

But Beauchene protested: "No, you don't! The man who already has four children when he is only twenty-seven can't claim to be reasonable. And twins too—your Blaise and your Denis to begin with! And then your boy Ambroise and your little girl Rose. Without counting the other little girl that you lost at her birth. Including her, you would now have had five youngsters, you wretched fellow! No, no, I'm the one who behaves reasonably—I, who have but one child, and, like a prudent, sensible man, desire no others!"

He often made such jesting remarks as these, through which filtered his genuine indignation; for he deemed the young couple to be over-careless of their interests, and declared that the prolificness of his cousin Marianne was quite scandalous.

Accustomed as Mathieu was to these attacks, which left him perfectly serene, he went on laughing, without even giving a reply, when a workman abruptly entered the room—one who was currently called "old Moineaud," though he was scarcely three-and-forty years of age. Short and thick-set, he had a bullet head, a bull's neck, and face and hands scarred and dented by more than a quarter of a century of toil. By calling he was a fitter, and he had come to submit a difficulty which had just arisen in the piecing together of a reaping machine. But, his employer, who was still angrily thinking of over-numerous families, did not give him time to explain his purpose.

"And you, old Moineaud, how many children have you?" he inquired.

"Seven, Monsieur Beauchene," the workman replied, somewhat taken aback. "I've lost three."

"So, including them, you would now have ten? Well, that's a nice state of things! How can you do otherwise than starve?"

Moineaud began to laugh like the gay thriftless Paris workman that he was. The little ones? Well, they grew up without his even noticing it, and, indeed, he was really fond of them, so long as they remained at home. And, besides, they worked as they grew older, and brought a little money in. However, he preferred to answer his employer with a jest which set them all laughing.

After he had explained the difficulty with the reaper, the others followed him to examine the work for themselves. They were already turning into a passage, when Beauchene, seeing the door of the women's workshop open, determined to pass that way, so that he might give his customary look around. It was a long, spacious place, where the polishers, in smocks of black serge, sat in double rows polishing and grinding their pieces at little work-boards. Nearly all of them were young, a few were pretty, but most had low and common faces. An animal odor and a stench of rancid oil pervaded the place.

The regulations required perfect silence there during work. Yet all the girls were gossiping. As soon, however, as the master's approach was signalled the chatter abruptly ceased. There was but one

girl who, having her head turned, and thus seeing nothing of Beauchene, went on furiously abusing a companion, with whom she had previously started a dispute. She and the other were sisters, and, as it happened, daughters of old Moineaud. Euphrasie, the younger one, she who was shouting, was a skinny creature of seventeen, light-haired, with a long, lean, pointed face, uncomely and malignant; whereas the elder, Norine, barely nineteen, was a pretty girl, a blonde like her sister, but having a milky skin, and withal plump and sturdy, showing real shoulders, arms, and hips, and one of those bright sunshiny faces, with wild hair and black eyes, all the freshness of the Parisian hussy, aglow with the fleeting charm of youth.

Norine was ever quarrelling with Euphrasie, and was pleased to have her caught in a misdeed; so she allowed her to rattle on. And it thereupon became necessary for Beauchene to intervene. He habitually evinced great severity in the women's workshop, for he had hitherto held the view that an employer who jested with his workgirls was a lost man. Thus, in spite of the low character of which he was said to give proof in his walks abroad, there had as yet never been the faintest suggestion of scandal in connection with him and the women in his employ.

"Well, now, Mademoiselle Euphrasie!" he exclaimed; "do you intend to be quiet? This is quite improper. You are fined twenty sous, and if I hear you again you will be locked out for a week."

The girl had turned round in consternation. Then, stifling her rage, she cast a terrible glance at her sister, thinking that she might at least have warned her. But the other, with the discreet air of a pretty wench conscious of her attractiveness, continued smiling, looking her employer full in the face, as if certain that she had nothing to fear from him. Their eyes met, and for a couple of seconds their glances mingled. Then he, with flushed cheeks and an angry air, resumed, addressing one and all: "As soon as the superintendent turns her back you chatter away like so many magpies. Just be careful, or you will have to deal with me!"

Moineaud, the father, had witnessed the scene unmoved, as if the two girls—she whom the master had scolded, and she who slyly gazed at him—were not his own daughters. And now the round

was resumed and the three men quitted the women's workshop amidst profound silence, which only the whirl of the little grinders disturbed.

When the fitting difficulty had been overcome downstairs and Moineaud had received his orders, Beauchene returned to his residence accompanied by Mathieu, who wished to convey Marianne's invitation to Constance. A gallery connected the black factory buildings with the luxurious private house on the quay. And they found Constance in a little drawing-room hung with yellow satin, a room to which she was very partial. She was seated near a sofa, on which lay little Maurice, her fondly prized and only child, who had just completed his seventh year.

"Is he ill?" inquired Mathieu.

The child seemed sturdily built, and he greatly resembled his father, though he had a more massive jaw. But he was pale and there was a faint ring round his heavy eyelids. His mother, that "bag of bones," a little dark woman, yellow and withered at six-and-twenty, looked at him with an expression of egotistical pride.

"Oh, no! he's never ill," she answered. "Only he has been complaining of his legs. And so I made him lie down, and I wrote last night to ask Dr. Boutan to call this morning."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Beauchene with a hearty laugh, "women are all the same! A child who is as strong as a Turk! I should just like anybody to tell me that he isn't strong."

Precisely at that moment in walked Dr. Boutan, a short, stout man of forty, with very keen eyes set in a clean-shaven, heavy, but extremely good-natured face. He at once examined the child, felt and sounded him; then with his kindly yet serious air he said: "No, no, there's nothing. It is the mere effect of growth. The lad has become rather pale through spending the winter in Paris, but a few months in the open air, in the country, will set him right again."

"I told you so!" cried Beauchene.

Constance had kept her son's little hand in her own. He had again stretched himself out and closed his eyes in a weary way, whilst she, in her happiness, continued smiling. Whenever she chose she

could appear quite pleasant-looking, however unprepossessing might be her features. The doctor had seated himself, for he was fond of lingering and chatting in the houses of friends. A general practitioner, and one who more particularly tended the ailments of women and children, he was naturally a confessor, knew all sorts of secrets, and was quite at home in family circles. It was he who had attended Constance at the birth of that much-spoiled only son, and Marianne at the advent of the four children she already had.

Mathieu had remained standing, awaiting an opportunity to deliver his invitation. "Well," said he, "if you are soon leaving for the country, you must come one Sunday to Janville. My wife would be so delighted to see you there, to show you our encampment."

Then he jested respecting the bareness of the lonely pavilion which they occupied, recounting that as yet they possessed only a dozen plates and five egg-cups. But Beauchene knew the pavilion, for he went shooting in the neighborhood every winter, having a share in the tenancy of some extensive woods, the shooting-rights over which had been parcelled out by the owner.

"Seguin," said he, "is a friend of mine. I have lunched at your pavilion. It's a perfect hovel!"

Then Constance, contemptuous at the idea of such poverty, recalled what Madame Seguin – to whom she referred as Valentine – had told her of the dilapidated condition of the old shooting-box. But the doctor, after listening with a smile, broke in:

"Mme. Seguin is a patient of mine. At the time when her last child was born I advised her to stay at that pavilion. The atmosphere is wholesome, and children ought to spring up there like couch-grass."

Thereupon, with a sonorous laugh, Beauchene began to jest in his habitual way, remarking that if the doctor were correct there would probably be no end to Mathieu's progeny, numerous as it already was. But this elicited an angry protest from Constance, who on the subject of children held the same views as her husband himself professed in his more serious moments.

Mathieu thoroughly understood what they both meant. They regarded him and his wife with derisive pity, tinged with anger.