

Romain Rolland

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE



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Romain Rolland's  
JEAN-CHRISTOPHE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

by

GILBERT CANNAN



Morning

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY  
NEW YORK



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MORNING

# I

## THE DEATH OF JEAN MICHEL

Years have passed. Jean-Christophe is nearly eleven. His musical education is proceeding. He is learning harmony with Florian Holzer, the organist of St. Martin's, a friend of his grandfather's, a very learned man, who teaches him that the chords and series of chords that he most loves, and the harmonies which softly greet his heart and ear, those that he cannot hear without a little thrill running down his spine, are bad and forbidden. When he asks why, no reply is forthcoming but that it is so; the rules forbid them. As he is naturally in revolt against discipline, he loves them only the more. His delight is to find examples of them in the great and admired musicians, and to take them to his grandfather or his master. His grandfather replies that in the great musicians they are admirable, and that Beethoven and Bach can take any liberty. His master, less conciliatory, is angry, and says acidly that the masters did better things.

Jean-Christophe has a free pass for the concerts and the theater. He has learned to play every instrument a little. He is already quite skilful with the violin, and his father procured him a seat in the orchestra. He acquitted himself so well there that after a few months probation he was officially appointed second violin in the *Hof Musik Verein*. He has begun to earn his living. Not too soon either, for affairs at home have gone from bad to worse. Melchior's intemperance has swamped him, and his grandfather is growing old.

Jean-Christophe has taken in the melancholy situation. He is already as grave and anxious as a man. He fulfils his task valiantly, though it does not interest him, and he is apt to fall asleep in the orchestra in the evenings, because it is late and he is tired. The theater no longer rouses in him the emotion it used to do when he was little. When he was little—four years ago—his greatest ambition had been to occupy the place that he now holds. But now he dislikes most of the music he is made to play. He dare not yet pronounce judgment upon it, but he does find it foolish; and if by chance they do play lovely things, he is displeased by the carelessness with which they are rendered, and his best-beloved works are made to appear like his neighbors and colleagues in the orchestra, who, as soon as the curtain has fallen, when they have done with blowing and scraping, mop their brows and smile and chatter quietly, as though they had just finished an hour's



gymnastics. And he has been close to his former flame, the fair barefooted singer. He meets her quite often during the *entr'acte* in the saloon. She knows that he was once in love with her, and she kisses him often. That gives him no pleasure. He is disgusted by her paint and scent and her fat arms and her greediness. He hates her now.

The Grand Duke did not forget his pianist in ordinary. Not that the small pension which was granted to him with this title was regularly paid—it had to be asked for—but from time to time Jean-Christophe used to receive orders to go to the Palace when there were distinguished guests, or simply when Their Highnesses took it into their heads that they wanted to hear him. It was almost always in the evening, at the time when Jean-Christophe wanted to be alone. He had to leave everything and hurry off. Sometimes he was made to wait in the anteroom, because dinner was not finished. The servants, accustomed to see him, used to address him familiarly. Then he would be led into a great room full of mirrors and lights, in which well-fed men and women used to stare at him with horrid curiosity, he had to cross the waxed floor to kiss Their Highnesses' hands, and the more he grew the more awkward he became, for he felt that he was in a ridiculous position, and his pride used to suffer.

When it was all done he used to sit at the piano and have to play for these idiots. He thought them idiots. There were moments when their indifference so oppressed him as he played that he was often on the point of stopping in the middle of a piece. There was no air about him: he was near suffocation, seemed losing his senses. When he finished he was overwhelmed with congratulations and laden with compliments; he was introduced all round. He thought they looked at him like some strange animal in the Prince's menagerie, and that the words of praise were addressed rather to his master than to himself. He thought himself brought low, and he developed a morbid sensibility from which he suffered the more as he dared not show it. He saw offense in the most simple actions. If any one laughed in a corner of the room, he imagined himself to be the cause of it, and he knew not whether it were his manners, or his clothes, or his person, or his hands, or his feet, that caused the laughter. He was humiliated by everything. He was humiliated if people did not talk to him, humiliated if they did, humiliated if they gave him sweets like a child, humiliated especially when the Grand Duke, as sometimes happened, in princely fashion dismissed him by pressing a piece of money into his hand. He was wretched at being poor and at being treated as a poor boy. One evening, as he was going home, the money that he had received weighed so heavily upon him that he threw it through a cellar window, and then immediately he

would have done anything to get it back, for at home there was a month's old account with the butcher to pay.

His relatives never suspected these injuries to his pride. They were delighted at his favor with the Prince. Poor Louisa could conceive of nothing finer for her son than these evenings at the Palace in splendid society. As for Melchior, he used to brag of it continually to his boon-fellows. But Jean-Christophe's grandfather was happier than any. He pretended to be independent and democratic, and to despise greatness, but he had a simple admiration for money, power, honors, social distinction, and he took unbounded pride in seeing his grandson moving among those who had these things. He delighted in them as though such glory was a reflection upon himself, and in spite of all his efforts to appear calm and indifferent, his face used to glow. On the evenings when Jean-Christophe went to the Palace, old Jean Michel used always to contrive to stay about the house on some pretext or another. He used to await his grandson's return with childish impatience, and when Jean-Christophe came in he would begin at once with a careless air to ply him with seeming idle questions, such as:

“Well, did things go well to-night?”

Or he would make little hints like:

“Here's our Jean-Christophe; he can tell us some news.”

Or he would produce some ingenious compliment by way of flattery:

“Here's our young nobleman!”

But Jean-Christophe, out of sorts and out of temper, would reply with a curt “Good-evening!” and go and sulk in a corner. But the old man would persist, and ply him with more direct questions, to which the boy replied only “Yes,” or “No.” Then the others would join in and ask for details. Jean-Christophe would look more and more thunderous. They had to drag the words from his lips until Jean Michel would lose his temper and hurl insults at him. Then Jean-Christophe would reply with scant respect, and the end would be a rumpus. The old man would go out and slam the door. So Jean-Christophe spoiled the joy of these poor people, who had no inkling of the cause of his bad temper. It was not their fault if they had the souls of servants, and never dreamed that it is possible to be otherwise.

Jean-Christophe was turned into himself, and though he never judged his family, yet he felt a gulf between himself and them. No doubt he exaggerated what lay between them, and in spite of their different ways of thought it is quite probable that they could have understood each other if he

had been able to talk intimately to them. But it is known that nothing is more difficult than absolute intimacy between children and parents, even when there is much love between them, for on the one side respect discourages confidence, and on the other the idea, often erroneous, of the superiority of age and experience prevents them taking seriously enough the child's feelings, which are often just as interesting as those of grown-up persons, and almost always more sincere.

But the people that Jean-Christophe saw at home and the conversation that he heard there widened the distance between himself and his family.

Melchior's friends used to frequent the house—mostly musicians of the orchestra, single men and hard drinkers. They were not bad fellows, but vulgar. They made the house shake with their footsteps and their laughter. They loved music, but they spoke of it with a stupidity that was revolting. The coarse indiscretion of their enthusiasm wounded the boy's modesty of feeling. When they praised a work that he loved it was as though they were insulting him personally. He would stiffen himself and grow pale, frozen, and pretend not to take any interest in music. He would have hated it had that been possible. Melchior used to say:

“The fellow has no heart. He feels nothing. I don't know where he gets it from.”

Sometimes they used to sing German four-part songs—four-footed as well—and these were all exactly like themselves—slow-moving, solemn and broad, fashioned of dull melodies. Then Jean-Christophe used to fly to the most distant room and hurl insults at the wall.

His grandfather also had friends: the organist, the furniture dealer, the watch-maker, the contra-bass—garrulous old men, who used always to pass round the same jokes and plunge into interminable discussions on art, politics, or the family trees of the countryside, much less interested in the subjects of which they talked than happy to talk and to find an audience.

As for Louisa, she used only to see some of her neighbors who brought her the gossip of the place, and at rare intervals a “kind lady,” who, under pretext of taking an interest in her, used to come and engage her services for a dinner-party, and pretend to watch over the religious education of the children.

But of all who came to the house, none was more repugnant to Jean-Christophe than his Uncle Theodore, a stepson of his grandfather's, a son by a former marriage of his grandmother Clara, Jean Michel's first wife. He was a partner in a great commercial house which did business in Africa and

the Far East. He was the exact type of one of those Germans of the new style, whose affectation it is scoffingly to repudiate the old idealism of the race, and, intoxicated by conquest, to maintain a cult of strength and success which shows that they are not accustomed to seeing them on their side. But as it is difficult at once to change the age-old nature of a people, the despised idealism sprang up again in him at every turn in language, manners, and moral habits and the quotations from Goethe to fit the smallest incidents of domestic life, for he was a singular compound of conscience and self-interest. There was in him a curious effort, to reconcile the honest principles of the old German *bourgeoisie* with the cynicism of these new commercial *condottieri*—a compound which forever gave out a repulsive flavor of hypocrisy, forever striving to make of German strength, avarice, and self-interest the symbols of all right, justice, and truth.

Jean-Christophe's loyalty was deeply injured by all this. He could not tell whether his uncle were right or no, but he hated him, and marked him down for an enemy. His grandfather had no great love for him either, and was in revolt against his theories; but he was easily crushed in argument by Theodore's fluency, which was never hard put to it to turn into ridicule the old man's simple generosity. In the end Jean Michel came to be ashamed of his own good-heartedness, and by way of showing that he was not so much behind the times as they thought, he used to try to talk like Theodore; but the words came hollow from his lips, and he was ill at ease with them. Whatever he may have thought of him, Theodore did impress him. He felt respect for such practical skill, which he admired the more for knowing himself to be absolutely incapable of it. He used to dream of putting one of his grandsons to similar work. That was Melchior's idea also. He intended to make Rodolphe follow in his uncle's footsteps. And so the whole family set itself to flatter this rich relation of whom they expected help. He, seeing that he was necessary to them, took advantage of it to cut a fine masterful figure. He meddled in everything, gave advice upon everything, and made no attempt to conceal his contempt for art and artists. Rather, he blazoned it abroad for the mere pleasure of humiliating his musicianly relations, and he used to indulge in stupid jokes at their expense, and the cowards used to laugh.

Jean-Christophe, especially, was singled out as a butt for his uncle's jests. He was not patient under them. He would say nothing, but he used to grind his teeth angrily, and his uncle used to laugh at his speechless rage. But one day, when Theodore went too far in his teasing. Jean-Christophe, losing control of himself, spat in his face. It was a fearful affair. The insult was so monstrous that his uncle was at first paralyzed by it; then words came back to him, and he broke out into a flood of abuse. Jean-Christophe sat

petrified by the enormity of the thing that he had done, and did not even feel the blows that rained down upon him: but when they tried to force him down on his knees before his uncle, he broke away, jostled his mother aside, and ran out of the house. He did not stop until he could breathe no more, and then he was right out in the country. He heard voices calling him, and he debated within himself whether he had not better throw himself into the river, since he could not do so with his enemy. He spent the night in the fields. At dawn he went and knocked at his grandfather's door. The old man had been so upset by Jean-Christophe's disappearance—he had not slept for it—that he had not the heart to scold him. He took him home, and then nothing was said to him, because it was apparent that he was still in an excited condition, and they had to smooth him down, for he had to play at the Palace that evening. But for several weeks Melchior continued to overwhelm him with his complaints, addressed to nobody in particular, about the trouble that a man takes to give an example of an irreproachable life and good manners to unworthy creatures who dishonor him. And when his Uncle Theodore met him in the street, he turned his head and held his nose by way of showing his extreme disgust.

Finding so little sympathy at home, Jean-Christophe spent as little time there as possible. He chafed against the continual restraint which they strove to set upon him. There were too many things, too many people, that he had to respect, and he was never allowed to ask why, and Jean-Christophe did not possess the bump of respect. The more they tried to discipline him and to turn him into an honest little German *bourgeois*, the more he felt the need of breaking free from it all. It would have been his pleasure after the dull, tedious, formal performances which he had to attend in the orchestra or at the Palace to roll in the grass like a fowl, and to slide down the grassy slope on the seat of his new trousers, or to have a stone-fight with the urchins of the neighborhood. It was not because he was afraid of scoldings and thwackings that he did not do these things more often, but because he had no playmates. He could not get on with other children. Even the little gutter-snipes did not like playing with him, because he took every game too seriously, and struck too lustily. He had grown used to being driven in on himself, and to living apart from children of his own age. He was ashamed of not being clever at games, and dared not take part in their sport. And he used to pretend to take no interest in it, although he was consumed by the desire to be asked to play with them. But they never said anything to him, and then he would go away hurt, but assuming indifference.

He found consolation in wandering with Uncle Gottfried when he was in the neighborhood. He became more and more friendly with him, and

sympathized with his independent temper. He understood so well now Gottfried's delight in tramping the roads without a tie in the world! Often they used to go out together in the evening into the country, straight on, aimlessly, and as Gottfried always forgot the time, they used to come back very late, and then were scolded. Gottfried knew that it was wrong, but Jean-Christophe used to implore, and he could not himself resist the pleasure of it. About midnight he would stand in front of the house and whistle, an agreed signal. Jean-Christophe would be in his bed fully dressed. He would slip out with his shoes in his hand, and, holding his breath, creep with all the artful skill of a savage to the kitchen window, which opened on to the road. He would climb on to the table; Gottfried would take him on his shoulders, and then off they would go, happy as truants.

Sometimes they would go and seek out Jeremy the fisherman, a friend of Gottfried's, and then they would slip out in his boat under the moon. The water dropping from the oars gave out little arpeggios, then chromatic scales. A milky vapor hung tremulous over the surface of the waters. The stars quivered. The cocks called to each other from either bank, and sometimes in the depths of the sky they heard the trilling of larks ascending from earth, deceived by the light of the moon. They were silent. Gottfried hummed a tune. Jeremy told strange tales of the lives of the beasts—tales that gained in mystery from the curt and enigmatic manner of their telling. The moon hid herself behind the woods. They skirted the black mass of the hills. The darkness of the water and the sky mingled. There was never a ripple on the water. Sounds died down. The boat glided through the night. Was she gliding? Was she moving? Was she still? . . . The reeds parted with a sound like the rustling of silk. The boat grounded noiselessly. They climbed out on to the bank, and returned on foot. They would not return until dawn. They followed the river-bank. Clouds of silver ablets, green as ears of corn, or blue as jewels, teemed in the first light of day. They swarmed like the serpents of Medusa's head, and flung themselves greedily at the bread thrown to them; they plunged for it as it sank, and turned in spirals, and then darted away in a flash, like a ray of light. The river took on rosy and purple hues of reflection. The birds woke one after another. The truants hurried back. Just as carefully as when they had set out, they returned to the room, with its thick atmosphere, and Jean-Christophe, worn out, fell into bed, and slept at once, with his body sweet-smelling with the smell of the fields.

All was well, and nothing would have been known, but that one day Ernest, his younger brother, betrayed Jean-Christophe's midnight sallies. From that moment they were forbidden, and he was watched. But he

contrived to escape, and he preferred the society of the little peddler and his friends to any other. His family was scandalized. Melchior said that he had the tastes of a laborer. Old Jean Michel was jealous of Jean-Christophe's affection for Gottfried, and used to lecture him about lowering himself so far as to like such vulgar company when he had the honor of mixing with the best people and of being the servant of princes. It was considered that Jean-Christophe was lacking in dignity and self-respect.

In spite of the penury which increased with Melchior's intemperance and folly, life was tolerable as long as Jean Michel was there. He was the only creature who had any influence over Melchior, and who could hold him back to a certain extent from his vice. The esteem in which he was generally held did serve to pass over the drunkard's freaks, and he used constantly to come to the aid of the household with money. Besides the modest pension which he enjoyed as retired *Kapellmeister*, he was still able to earn small sums by giving lessons and tuning pianos. He gave most of it to his daughter-in-law, for he perceived her difficulties, though she strove to hide them from him. Louisa hated the idea that he was denying himself for them, and it was all the more to the old man's credit in that he had always been accustomed to a large way of living and had great needs to satisfy. Sometimes even his ordinary sacrifices were not sufficient, and to meet some urgent debt Jean Michel would have secretly to sell a piece of furniture or books, or some relic that he set store by. Melchior knew that his father made presents to Louisa that were concealed from himself, and very often he would lay hands on them, in spite of protest. But when this came to the old man's ears—not from Louisa, who said nothing of her troubles to him, but from one of his grandchildren—he would fly into a terrible passion, and there were frightful scenes between the two men. They were both extraordinarily violent, and they would come to round oaths and threats—almost it seemed as though they would come to blows. But even in his most angry passion respect would hold Melchior in check, and, however drunk he might be, in the end he would bow his head to the torrent of insults and humiliating reproach which his father poured out upon him. But for that he did not cease to watch for the first opportunity of breaking out again, and with his thoughts on the future, Jean Michel would be filled with melancholy and anxious fears.

“My poor children,” he used to say to Louisa, “what will become of you when I am no longer here? . . . Fortunately,” he would add, fondling Jean-Christophe, “I can go on until this fellow pulls you out of the mire.” But he was out in his reckoning; he was at the end of his road. No one would have suspected it. He was surprisingly strong. He was past eighty; he had a full head of hair, a white mane, still gray in patches, and in his thick beard were

still black hairs. He had only about ten teeth left, but with these he could chew lustily. It was a pleasure to see him at table. He had a hearty appetite, and though he reproached Melchior for drinking, he always emptied his bottle himself. He had a preference for white Moselle. For the rest—wine, beer, cider—he could do justice to all the good things that the Lord hath made. He was not so foolish as to lose his reason in his cups, and he kept to his allowance. It is true that it was a plentiful allowance, and that a feebler intelligence must have been made drunk by it. He was strong of foot and eye, and indefatigably active. He got up at six, and performed his ablutions scrupulously, for he cared for his appearance and respected his person. He lived alone in his house, of which he was sole occupant, and never let his daughter-in-law meddle with his affairs. He cleaned out his room, made his own coffee, sewed on his buttons, nailed, and glued, and altered; and going to and fro and up and down stairs in his shirt-sleeves, he never stopped singing in a sounding bass which he loved to let ring out as he accompanied himself with operatic gestures. And then he used to go out in all weathers. He went about his business, omitting none, but he was not often punctual. He was to be seen at every street corner arguing with some acquaintance or joking with some woman whose face he had remembered, for he loved pretty women and old friends. And so he was always late, and never knew the time. But he never let the dinner-hour slip by. He dined wherever he might be, inviting himself, and he would not go home until late—after nightfall, after a visit to his grandchildren. Then he would go to bed, and before he went to sleep read a page of his old Bible, and during the night—for he never slept for more than an hour or two together—he would get up to take down one of his old books, bought second-hand—history, theology, belles-lettres, or science. He used to read at random a few pages, which interested and bored him, and he did not rightly understand them, though he did not skip a word, until sleep came to him again. On Sunday he would go to church, walk with the children, and play bowls. He had never been ill, except for a little gout in his toes, which used to make him swear at night while he was reading his Bible. It seemed as though he might live to be a hundred, and he himself could see no reason why he should not live longer. When people said that he would die a centenarian, he used to think, like another illustrious old man, that no limit can be appointed to the goodness of Providence. The only sign that he was growing old was that he was more easily brought to tears, and was becoming every day more irritable. The smallest impatience with him could throw him into a violent fury. His red face and short neck would grow redder than ever. He would stutter angrily, and have to stop, choking. The family doctor, an old friend, had warned him to take care and to moderate both his anger and his appetite. But with an old



man's obstinacy he plunged into acts of still greater recklessness out of bravado, and he laughed at medicine and doctors. He pretended to despise death, and did not mince his language when he declared that he was not afraid of it.

One summer day, when it was very hot, and he had drunk copiously, and argued in the market-place, he went home and began to work quietly in his garden. He loved digging. Bare-headed under the sun, still irritated by his argument, he dug angrily. Jean-Christophe was sitting in the arbor with a book in his hand, but he was not reading. He was dreaming and listening to the cheeping of the crickets, and mechanically following his grandfather's movements. The old man's back was towards him; he was bending and plucking out weeds. Suddenly Jean-Christophe saw him rise, beat against the air with his arms, and fall heavily with his face to the ground. For a moment he wanted to laugh; then he saw that the old man did not stir. He called to him, ran to him, and shook him with all his strength. Fear seized him. He knelt, and with his two hands tried to raise the great head from the ground. It was so heavy and he trembled so that he could hardly move it. But when he saw the eyes turned up, white and bloody, he was frozen with horror and, with a shrill cry, let the head fall. He got up in terror, ran away and out of the place. He cried and wept. A man passing by stopped the boy. Jean-Christophe could not speak, but he pointed to the house. The man went in, and Jean-Christophe followed him. Others had heard his cries, and they came from the neighboring houses. Soon the garden was full of people. They trampled the flowers, and bent down over the old man. They cried aloud. Two or three men lifted him up. Jean-Christophe stayed by the gate, turned to the wall, and hid his face in his hands. He was afraid to look, but he could not help himself, and when they passed him he saw through his fingers the old man's huge body, limp and flabby. One arm dragged along the ground, the head, leaning against the knee of one of the men carrying the body, bobbed at every step, and the face was scarred, covered with mud, bleeding. The mouth was open and the eyes were fearful. He howled again, and took to flight. He ran as though something were after him, and never stopped until he reached home. He burst into the kitchen with frightful cries. Louisa was cleaning vegetables. He hurled himself at her, and hugged her desperately, imploring her help. His face was distorted with his sobs; he could hardly speak. But at the first word she understood. She went white, let the things fall from her hands, and without a word rushed from the house.

Jean-Christophe was left alone, crouching against a cupboard. He went on weeping. His brothers were playing. He could not make out quite what had happened. He did not think of his grandfather; he was thinking only of

the dreadful sights he had just seen, and he was in terror lest he should be made to return to see them again.

And as it turned out in the evening, when the other children, tired of doing every sort of mischief in the house, were beginning to feel wearied and hungry, Louisa rushed in again, took them by the hand, and led them to their grandfather's house. She walked very fast, and Ernest and Rodolphe tried to complain, as usual; but Louisa bade them be silent in such a tone of voice that they held their peace. An instinctive fear seized them, and when they entered the house they began to weep. It was not yet night. The last hours of the sunset cast strange lights over the inside of the house—on the door-handle, on the mirror, on the violin hung on the wall in the chief room, which was half in darkness. But in the old man's room a candle was alight, and the flickering flame, vying with the livid, dying day, made the heavy darkness of the room more oppressive. Melchior was sitting near the window, loudly weeping. The doctor, leaning over the bed, hid from sight what was lying there. Jean-Christophe's heart beat so that it was like to break. Louisa made the children kneel at the foot of the bed. Jean-Christophe stole a glance. He expected something so terrifying after what he had seen in the afternoon that at the first glimpse he was almost comforted. His grandfather lay motionless, and seemed to be asleep. For a moment the child believed that the old man was better, and that all was at an end. But when he heard his heavy breathing; when, as he looked closer, he saw the swollen face, on which the wound that he had come by in the fall had made a broad scar; when he understood that here was a man at point of death, he began to tremble; and while he repeated Louisa's prayer for the restoration of his grandfather, in his heart he prayed that if the old man could not get well he might be already dead. He was terrified at the prospect of what was going to happen.

The old man had not been conscious since the moment of his fall. He only returned to consciousness for a moment, enough to learn his condition, and that was lamentable. The priest was there, and recited the last prayers over him. They raised the old man on his pillow. He opened his eyes slowly, and they seemed no longer to obey his will. He breathed noisily, and with unseeing eyes looked at the faces and the lights, and suddenly he opened his mouth. A nameless terror showed on his features.

“But then . . .” he gasped—“but I am going to die!”

The awful sound of his voice pierced Jean-Christophe's heart. Never, never was it to fade from his memory. The old man said no more. He moaned like a little child. The stupor took him once more, but his breathing

became more and more difficult. He groaned, he fidgeted with his hands, he seemed to struggle against the mortal sleep. In his semi-consciousness he cried once:

“Mother!”

Oh, the biting impression that it made, this mumbling of the old man, calling in anguish on his mother, as Jean-Christophe would himself have done—his mother, of whom he was never known to talk in life, to whom he now turned instinctively, the last futile refuge in the last terror! . . . Then he seemed to be comforted for a moment. He had once more a flicker of consciousness. His heavy eyes, the pupils of which seemed to move aimlessly, met those of the boy frozen in his fear. They lit up. The old man tried to smile and speak. Louisa took Jean-Christophe and led him to the bedside. Jean Michel moved his lips, and tried to caress his head with his hand, but then he fell back into his torpor. It was the end.

They sent the children into the next room, but they had too much to do to worry about them, and Jean-Christophe, under the attraction of the horror of it, peeped through the half-open door at the tragic face on the pillow; the man strangled by the firm clutch that had him by the neck; the face which grew ever more hollow as he watched; the sinking of the creature into the void, which seemed to suck it down like a pump; and the horrible death-rattle, the mechanical breathing, like a bubble of air bursting on the surface of waters; the last efforts of the body, which strives to live when the soul is no longer. Then the head fell on one side on the pillow. All, all was silence.

A few moments later, in the midst of the sobs and prayers and the confusion caused by the death, Louisa saw the child, pale, wide-eyed, with gaping mouth, clutching convulsively at the handle of the door. She ran to him. He had a seizure in her arms. She carried him away. He lost consciousness. He woke up to find himself in his bed. He howled in terror, because he had been left alone for a moment, had another seizure, and fainted again. For the rest of the night and the next day he was in a fever. Finally, he grew calm, and on the next night fell into a deep sleep, which lasted until the middle of the following day. He felt that some one was walking in his room, that his mother was leaning over his bed and kissing him. He thought he heard the sweet distant sound of bells. But he would not stir; he was in a dream.

When he opened his eyes again his Uncle Gottfried was sitting at the foot of his bed. Jean-Christophe was worn out, and could remember nothing.

Then his memory returned, and he began to weep. Gottfried got up and kissed him.

“Well, my boy—well?” he said gently.

“Oh, uncle, uncle!” sobbed the boy, clinging to him.

“Cry, then . . .” said Gottfried. “Cry!”

He also was weeping.

When he was a little comforted Jean-Christophe dried his eyes and looked at Gottfried. Gottfried understood that he wanted to ask something.

“No,” he said, putting a finger to his lips, “you must not talk. It is good to cry, bad to talk.”

The boy insisted.

“It is no good.”

“Only one thing—only one! . . .”

“What?”

Jean-Christophe hesitated.

“Oh, uncle!” he asked, “where is he now?”

Gottfried answered:

“He is with the Lord, my boy.”

But that was not what Jean-Christophe had asked.

“No; you do not understand. Where is he—he *himself*?”

(He meant the body.)

He went on in a trembling voice:

“Is *he* still in the house?”

“They buried the good man this morning,” said Gottfried. “Did you not hear the bells?”

Jean-Christophe was comforted. Then, when he thought that he would never see his beloved grandfather again, he wept once more bitterly.

“Poor little beast!” said Gottfried, looking pityingly at the child.

Jean-Christophe expected Gottfried to console him, but Gottfried made no attempt to do so, knowing that it was useless.

“Uncle Gottfried,” asked the boy, “are not you afraid of it, too?”

(Much did he wish that Gottfried should not have been afraid, and would tell him the secret of it!)

“Ssh!” he said, in a troubled voice. . . .

“And how is one not to be afraid?” he said, after a moment. “But what can one do? It is so. One must put up with it.”

Jean-Christophe shook his head in protest.

“One has to put up with it, my boy,” said Gottfried. “*He* ordered it up yonder. One has to love what *He* has ordered.”

“I hate Him!” said Jean-Christophe, angrily shaking his fist at the sky.

Gottfried fearfully bade him be silent. Jean-Christophe himself was afraid of what he had just said, and he began to pray with Gottfried. But blood boiled, and as he repeated the words of servile humility and resignation there was in his inmost heart a feeling of passionate revolt and horror of the abominable thing and the monstrous Being who had been able to create it.

Days passed and nights of rain over the freshly-turned earth under which lay the remains of poor old Jean Michel. At the moment Melchior wept and cried and sobbed much, but the week was not out before Jean-Christophe heard him laughing heartily. When the name of the dead man was pronounced in his presence, his face grew longer and a lugubrious expression came into it, but in a moment he would begin to talk and gesticulate excitedly. He was sincerely afflicted, but it was impossible for him to remain sad for long.

Louisa, passive and resigned, accepted the misfortune as she accepted everything. She added a prayer to her daily prayers; she went regularly to the cemetery, and cared for the grass as if it were part of her household.

Gottfried paid touching attention to the little patch of ground where the old man slept. When he came to the neighborhood, he brought a little souvenir—a cross that he had made, or flowers that Jean Michel had loved. He never missed, even if he were only in the town for a few hours, and he did it by stealth.

Sometimes Louisa took Jean-Christophe with her on her visits to the cemetery. Jean-Christophe revolted in disgust against the fat patch of earth clad in its sinister adornment of flowers and trees, and against the heavy scent which mounts to the sun, mingling with the breath of the sonorous

cypress. But he dared not confess his disgust, because he condemned it in himself as cowardly and impious. He was very unhappy. His grandfather's death haunted him incessantly, and yet he had long known what death was, and had thought about it and been afraid of it. But he had never before seen it, and he who sees it for the first time learns that he knew nothing, neither of death nor of life. One moment brings everything tottering. Reason is of no avail. You thought you were alive, you thought you had some experience of life: you see then that you knew nothing, that you have been living in a veil of illusions spun by your own mind to hide from your eyes the awful countenance of reality. There is no connection between the idea of suffering and the creature who bleeds and suffers. There is no connection between the idea of death and the convulsions of body and soul in combat and in death. Human language, human wisdom, are only a puppet-show of stiff mechanical dolls by the side of the grim charm of reality and the creatures of mind and blood, whose desperate and vain efforts are strained to the fixing of a life which crumbles away with every day.

Jean-Christophe thought of death day and night. Memories of the last agony pursued him. He heard that horrible breathing; every night, whatever he might be doing, he saw his grandfather again. All Nature was changed; it seemed as though there were an icy vapor drawn over her. Round him, everywhere, whichever way he turned, he felt upon his face the fatal breathing of the blind, all-powerful Beast; he felt himself in the grip of that fearful destructive Form, and he felt that there was nothing to be done. But, far from crushing him, the thought of it set him aflame with hate and indignation. He was never resigned to it. He butted head down against the impossible; it mattered nothing that he broke his head, and was forced to realize that he was not the stronger. He never ceased to revolt against suffering. From that time on his life was an unceasing struggle against the savagery of a Fate which he could not admit.

The very misery of his life afforded him relief from the obsession of his thoughts. The ruin of his family, which only Jean Michel had withheld, proceeded apace when he was removed. With him the Kraffts had lost their chief means of support, and misery entered the house.

Melchior increased it. Far from working more, he abandoned himself utterly to his vice when he was free of the only force that had held him in check. Almost every night he returned home drunk, and he never brought back his earnings. Besides, he had lost almost all his lessons. One day he had appeared at the house of one of his pupils in a state of complete intoxication, and, as a consequence of this scandal, all doors were closed to

him. He was only tolerated in the orchestra out of regard for the memory of his father, but Louisa trembled lest he should be dismissed any day after a scene. He had already been threatened with it on several evenings when he had turned up in his place about the end of the performance.

Twice or thrice he had forgotten altogether to put in an appearance. And of what was he not capable in those moments of stupid excitement when he was taken with the itch to do and say idiotic things! Had he not taken it into his head one evening to try and play his great violin concerto in the middle of an act of the *Valkyrie*? They were hard put to it to stop him. Sometimes, too, he would shout with laughter in the middle of a performance at the amusing pictures that were presented on the stage or whirling in his own brain. He was a joy to his colleagues, and they passed over many things because he was so funny. But such indulgence was worse than severity, and Jean-Christophe could have died for shame.

The boy was now first violin in the orchestra. He sat so that he could watch over his father, and, when necessary, beseech him, and make him be silent. It was not easy, and the best thing was not to pay any attention to him, for if he did, as soon as the sot felt that eyes were upon him, he would take to making faces or launch out into a speech. Then Jean-Christophe would turn away, trembling with fear lest he should commit some outrageous prank. He would try to be absorbed in his work, but he could not help hearing Melchior's utterances and the laughter of his colleagues. Tears would come into his eyes. The musicians, good fellows that they were, had seen that, and were sorry for him. They would hush their laughter, and only talk about his father when Jean-Christophe was not by. But Jean-Christophe was conscious of their pity. He knew that as soon as he had gone their jokes would break out again, and that Melchior was the laughing-stock of the town. He could not stop him, and he was in torment. He used to bring his father home after the play. He would take his arm, put up with his pleasantries, and try to conceal the stumbling in his walk. But he deceived no one, and in spite of all his efforts it was very rarely that he could succeed in leading Melchior all the way home. At the corner of the street Melchior would declare that he had an urgent appointment with some friends, and no argument could dissuade him from keeping this engagement. Jean-Christophe took care not to insist too much, so as not to expose himself to a scene and paternal imprecations which might attract the neighbors to their windows.

All the household money slipped away in this fashion. Melchior was not satisfied with drinking away his earnings; he drank away all that his wife

and son so hardly earned. Louisa used to weep, but she dared not resist, since her husband had harshly reminded her that nothing in the house belonged to her, and that he had married her without a sou. Jean-Christophe tried to resist. Melchior boxed his ears, treated him like a naughty child, and took the money out of his hands. The boy was twelve or thirteen. He was strong, and was beginning to kick against being beaten; but he was still afraid to rebel, and rather than expose himself to fresh humiliations of the kind he let himself be plundered. The only resource that Louisa and Jean-Christophe had was to hide their money; but Melchior was singularly ingenious in discovering their hiding-places when they were not there.

Soon that was not enough for him. He sold the things that he had inherited from his father. Jean-Christophe sadly saw the precious relics go—the books, the bed, the furniture, the portraits of musicians. He could say nothing. But one day, when Melchior had crashed into Jean Michel's old piano, he swore as he rubbed his knee, and said that there was no longer room to move about in his own house, and that he would rid the house of all such gimcrackery. Jean-Christophe cried aloud. It was true that the rooms were too full, since all Jean Michel's belongings were crowded into them, so as to be able to sell the house, that dear house in which Jean-Christophe had spent the happiest hours of his childhood. It was true also that the old piano was not worth much, that it was husky in tone, and that for a long time Jean-Christophe had not used it, since he played on the fine new piano due to the generosity of the Prince; but however old and useless it might be, it was Jean-Christophe's best friend. It had awakened the child to the boundless world of music; on its worn yellow keys he had discovered with his fingers the kingdom of sounds and its laws; it had been his grandfather's work (months had gone to repairing it for his grandson), and he was proud of it; it was in some sort a holy relic, and Jean-Christophe protested that his father had no right to sell it. Melchior bade him be silent. Jean-Christophe cried louder than ever that the piano was his, and that he forbade any one to touch it: but Melchior looked at him with an evil smile, and said nothing.

Next day Jean-Christophe had forgotten the affair. He came home tired, but in a fairly good temper. He was struck by the sly looks of his brothers. They pretended to be absorbed in their books, but they followed him with their eyes, and watched all his movements, and bent over their books again when he looked at them. He had no doubt that they had played some trick upon him, but he was used to that, and did not worry about it, but determined, when he had found it out, to give them a good thrashing, as he always did on such occasions. He scorned to look into the matter, and he began to talk to his father, who was sitting by the fire, and questioned him as



to the doings of the day with an affectation of interest which suited him but ill; and while he talked he saw that Melchior was exchanging stealthy nods and winks with the two children. Something caught at his heart. He ran into his room. The place where the piano had stood was empty! He gave a cry of anguish. In the next room he heard the stifled laughter of his brothers. The blood rushed to his face. He rushed in to them, and cried:

“My piano!”

Melchior raised his head with an air of calm bewilderment which made the children roar with laughter. He could not contain himself when he saw Jean-Christophe’s piteous look, and he turned aside to guffaw. Jean-Christophe no longer knew what he was doing. He hurled himself like a mad thing on his father. Melchior, lolling in his chair, had no time to protect himself. The boy seized him by the throat and cried: “Thief! Thief!”

It was only for a moment. Melchior shook himself, and sent Jean-Christophe rolling down on to the tile floor, though in his fury he was clinging to him like grim death. The boy’s head crashed against the tiles. Jean-Christophe got upon his knees. He was livid, and he went on saying in a choking voice:

“Thief, thief! . . . You are robbing us—mother and me. . . . Thief! . . . You are selling my grandfather!”

Melchior rose to his foot, and held his fist above Jean-Christophe’s head. The boy stared at him with hate in his eyes. He was trembling with rage. Melchior began to tremble, too. He sat down, and hid his face in his hands. The two children had run away screaming. Silence followed the uproar. Melchior groaned and mumbled. Jean-Christophe, against the wall, never ceased glaring at him with clenched teeth, and he trembled in every limb. Melchior began to blame himself.

“I am a thief! I rob my family! My children despise me! It were better if I were dead!”

When he had finished whining, Jean-Christophe did not budge, but asked him harshly:

“Where is the piano?”

“At Wormser’s,” said Melchior, not daring to look at him. Jean-Christophe took a step forward, and said:

“The money!”

Melchior, crushed, took the money from his pocket and gave it to his son. Jean-Christophe turned towards the door. Melchior called him:

“Jean-Christophe!”

Jean-Christophe stopped. Melchior went on in a quavering voice:

“Dear Jean-Christophe . . . do not despise me!”

Jean-Christophe flung his arms round his neck and sobbed:

“No, father—dear father! I do not despise you! I am so unhappy!”

They wept loudly. Melchior lamented:

“It is not my fault. I am not bad. That’s true, Jean-Christophe? I am not bad?”

He promised that he would drink no more. Jean-Christophe wagged his head doubtfully, and Melchior admitted that he could not resist it when he had money in his hands. Jean-Christophe thought for a moment and said:

“You see, father, we must . . .”

He stopped.

“What then?”

“I am ashamed . . .”

“Of whom?” asked Melchior naïvely.

“Of you.”

Melchior made a face and said:

“That’s nothing.”

Jean-Christophe explained that they would have to put all the family money, even Melchior’s contribution, into the hands of some one else, who would dole it out to Melchior day by day, or week by week, as he needed it. Melchior, who was in humble mood—he was not altogether starving—agreed to the proposition, and declared that he would then and there write a letter to the Grand Duke to ask that the pension which came to him should be regularly paid over in his name to Jean-Christophe. Jean-Christophe refused, blushing for his father’s humiliation. But Melchior, thirsting for self-sacrifice, insisted on writing. He was much moved by his own magnanimity. Jean-Christophe refused to take the letter, and when Louisa came in and was acquainted with the turn of events, she declared that she would rather beg in the streets than expose her husband to such an insult.

She added that she had every confidence in him, and that she was sure he would make amends out of love for the children and herself. In the end there was a scene of tender reconciliation and Melchior's letter was left on the table, and then fell under the cupboard, where it remained concealed.

But a few days later, when she was cleaning up, Louisa found it there, and as she was very unhappy about Melchior's fresh outbreaks—he had forgotten all about it—instead of tearing it up, she kept it. She kept it for several months, always rejecting the idea of making use of it, in spite of the suffering she had to endure. But one day, when she saw Melchior once more beating Jean-Christophe and robbing him of his money, she could bear it no longer, and when she was left alone with the boy, who was weeping, she went and fetched the letter, and gave it him, and said:

“Go!”

Jean-Christophe hesitated, but he understood that there was no other way if they wished to save from the wreck the little that was left to them. He went to the Palace. He took nearly an hour to walk a distance that ordinarily took twenty minutes. He was overwhelmed by the shame of what he was doing. His pride, which had grown great in the years of sorrow and isolation, bled at the thought of publicly confessing his father's vice. He knew perfectly well that it was known to everybody, but by a strange and natural inconsequence he would not admit it, and pretended to notice nothing, and he would rather have been hewn in pieces than agree. And now, of his own accord, he was going! . . . Twenty times he was on the point of turning back. He walked two or three times round the town, turning away just as he came near the Palace. He was not alone in his plight. His mother and brothers had also to be considered. Since his father had deserted them and betrayed them, it was his business as eldest son to take his place and come to their assistance. There was no room for hesitation or pride; he had to swallow down his shame. He entered the Palace. On the staircase he almost turned and fled. He knelt down on a step; he stayed for several minutes on the landing, with his hand on the door, until some one coming made him go in.

Every one in the offices knew him. He asked to see His Excellency the Director of the Theaters, Baron de Hammer Langbach. A young clerk, sleek, bald, pink-faced, with a white waistcoat and a pink tie, shook his hand familiarly, and began to talk about the opera of the night before. Jean-Christophe repeated his question. The clerk replied that His Excellency was busy for the moment, but that if Jean-Christophe had a request to make they could present it with other documents which were to be sent in for His

Excellency's signature. Jean-Christophe held out his letter. The clerk read it, and gave a cry of surprise.

"Oh, indeed!" he said brightly. "That is a good idea. He ought to have thought of that long ago! He never did anything better in his life! Ah, the old sot! How the devil did he bring himself to do it?"

He stopped short. Jean-Christophe had snatched the paper out of his hands, and, white with rage, shouted:

"I forbid you! . . . I forbid you to insult me!"

The clerk was staggered.

"But, my dear Jean-Christophe," he began to say, "whoever thought of insulting you? I only said what everybody thinks, and what you think yourself."

"No!" cried Jean-Christophe angrily.

"What! you don't think so? You don't think that he drinks?"

"It is not true!" said Jean-Christophe.

He stamped his foot.

The clerk shrugged his shoulders.

"In that case, why did he write this letter?"

"Because," said Jean-Christophe (he did not know what to say) — "because, when I come for my wages every month. I prefer to take my father's at the same time. It is no good our both putting ourselves out. . . . My father is very busy."

He reddened at the absurdity of his explanation. The clerk looked at him with pity and irony in his eyes. Jean-Christophe crumpled the paper in his hands, and turned to go. The clerk got up and took him by the arm.

"Wait a moment," he said. "I'll go and fix it up for you."

He went into the Director's office. Jean-Christophe waited, with the eyes of the other clerks upon him. His blood boiled. He did not know what he was doing, what to do, or what he ought to do. He thought of going away before the answer was brought to him, and he had just made up his mind to that when the door opened.

"His Excellency will see you," said the too obliging clerk.

Jean-Christophe had to go in.

His Excellency Baron de Hammer Langbach, a little neat old man with whiskers, mustaches, and a shaven chin, looked at Jean-Christophe over his golden spectacles without stopping writing, nor did he give any response to the boy's awkward bow.

"So," he said, after a moment, "you are asking, Herr Krafft . . .?"

"Your Excellency," said Jean-Christophe hurriedly, "I ask your pardon. I have thought better of it. I have nothing to ask."

The old man sought no explanation for this sudden reconsideration. He looked more closely at Jean-Christophe, coughed, and said:

"Herr Krafft, will you give me the letter that is in your hand?"

Jean-Christophe saw that the Director's gaze was fixed on the paper which he was still unconsciously holding crumpled up in his hand.

"It is no use, Your Excellency," he murmured. "It is not worth while now."

"Please give it me," said the old man quietly, as though he had not heard.

Mechanically Jean-Christophe gave him the crumpled letter, but he plunged into a torrent of stuttered words while he held out his hand for the letter. His Excellency carefully smoothed out the paper, read it, looked at Jean-Christophe, let him flounder about with his explanations, then checked him, and said with a malicious light in his eyes:

"Very well, Herr Krafft; the request is granted."

He dismissed him with a wave of his hand and went on with his writing.

Jean-Christophe went out, crushed.

"No offense, Jean-Christophe!" said the clerk kindly, when the boy came into the office again. Jean-Christophe let him shake his hand without daring to raise his eyes. He found himself outside the Palace. He was cold with shame. Everything that had been said to him recurred in his memory, and he imagined that there was an insulting irony in the pity of the people who honored and were sorry for him. He went home, and answered only with a few irritable words Louisa's questions, as though he bore a grudge against her for what he had just done. He was racked by remorse when he thought of his father. He wanted to confess everything to him, and to beg his pardon. Melchior was not there. Jean-Christophe kept awake far into the night, waiting for him. The more he thought of him the more his remorse quickened. He idealized him; he thought of him as weak, kind, unhappy,

betrayed by his own family. As soon as he heard his step on the stairs he leaped from his bed to go and meet him, and throw himself in his arms; but Melchior was in such a disgusting state of intoxication that Jean-Christophe had not even the courage to go near him, and he went to bed again, laughing bitterly at his own illusions.

When Melchior learned a few days later of what had happened, he was in a towering passion, and, in spite of all Jean-Christophe's entreaties, he went and made a scene at the Palace. But he returned with his tail between his legs, and breathed not a word of what had happened, he had been very badly received. He had been told that he would have to take a very different tone about the matter, that the pension had only been continued out of consideration for the worth of his son, and that if in the future there came any scandal concerning him to their ears, it would be suppressed. And so Jean-Christophe was much surprised and comforted to see his father accept his living from day to day, and even boast about having taken the initiative in the *sacrifice*.

But that did not keep Melchior from complaining outside that he had been robbed by his wife and children, that he had put himself out for them all his life, and that now they let him want for everything. He tried also to extract money from Jean-Christophe by all sorts of ingenious tricks and devices, which often used to make Jean-Christophe laugh, although he was hardly ever taken in by them. But as Jean-Christophe held firm, Melchior did not insist. He was curiously intimidated by the severity in the eyes of this boy of fourteen who judged him. He used to avenge himself by some stealthy, dirty trick. He used to go to the cabaret and eat and drink as much as he pleased, and then pay nothing, pretending that his son would pay his debts. Jean-Christophe did not protest, for fear of increasing the scandal, and he and Louisa exhausted their resources in discharging Melchior's debts. In the end Melchior more and more lost interest in his work as violinist, since he no longer received his wages, and his absence from the theater became so frequent that, in spite of Jean-Christophe's entreaties, they had to dismiss him. The boy was left to support his father, his brothers, and the whole household.

So at fourteen Jean-Christophe became the head of the family.

He stoutly faced his formidable task. His pride would not allow him to resort to the charity of others. He vowed that he would pull through alone. From his earliest days he had suffered too much from seeing his mother

accept and even ask for humiliating charitable offerings. He used to argue the matter with her when she returned home triumphant with some present that she had obtained from one of her patronesses. She saw no harm in it, and was glad to be able, thanks to the money, to spare Jean-Christophe a little, and to bring another meager dish forth for supper. But Jean-Christophe would become gloomy, and would not talk all evening, and would even refuse, without giving any reason, to touch food gained in this way. Louisa was vexed, and clumsily urged her son to eat. He was not to be budged, and in the end she would lose her temper, and say unkind things to him, and he would retort. Then he would fling his napkin on the table and go out. His father would shrug his shoulders and call him a *poseur*; his brothers would laugh at him and eat his portion.

But he had somehow to find a livelihood. His earnings from the orchestra were not enough. He gave lessons. His talents as an instrumentalist, his good reputation, and, above all, the Prince's patronage, brought him a numerous *clientèle* among the middle classes. Every morning from nine o'clock on he taught the piano to little girls, many of them older than himself, who frightened him horribly with their coquetry and maddened him with the clumsiness of their playing. They were absolutely stupid as far as music went, but, on the other hand, they had all, more or less, a keen sense of ridicule, and their mocking looks spared none of Jean-Christophe's awkwardnesses. It was torture for him. Sitting by their side on the edge of his chair, stiff, and red in the face; bursting with anger, and not daring to stir; controlling himself so as not to say stupid things, and afraid of the sound of his own voice, so that he could hardly speak a word; trying to look severe, and feeling that his pupil was looking at him out of the corner of her eye, he would lose countenance, grow confused in the middle of a remark; fearing to make himself ridiculous, he would become so, and break out into violent reproach. But it was very easy for his pupils to avenge themselves, and they did not fail to do so, and upset him by a certain way of looking at him, and by asking him the simplest questions, which made him blush up to the roots of his hair; or they would ask him to do them some small service, such as fetching something they had forgotten from a piece of furniture, and that was for him a most painful ordeal, for he had to cross the room under fire of malicious looks, which pitilessly remarked the least awkwardness in his movements and his clumsy legs, his stiff arms, his body cramped by his shyness.

From these lessons he had to hasten to rehearsal at the theater. Often he had no time for lunch, and he used to carry a piece of bread and some cold meat in his pocket to eat during the interval. Sometimes he had to take the

place of Tobias Pfeiffer, the *Musik Direktor*, who was interested in him, and sometimes had him to conduct the orchestra rehearsals instead of himself. And he had also to go on with his own musical education. Other piano lessons filled his day until the hour of the performance, and very often in the evening after the play he was sent for to play at the Palace. There he had to play for an hour or two. The Princess laid claim to a knowledge of music. She was very fond of it, but had never been able to perceive the difference between good and bad. She used to make Jean-Christophe play through strange programmes, in which dull rhapsodies stood side by side with masterpieces. But her greatest pleasure was to make him improvise, and she used to provide him with heartbreakingly sentimental themes.

Jean-Christophe used to leave about midnight, worn out, with his hands burning, his head aching, his stomach empty. He was in a sweat, and outside snow would be falling, or there would be an icy fog. He had to walk across half the town to reach home. He went on foot, his teeth chattering, longing to sleep and to cry, and he had to take care not to splash his only evening dress-suit in the puddles.

He would go up to his room, which he still shared with his brothers, and never was he so overwhelmed by disgust and despair with his life as at the moment when in his attic, with its stifling smell, he was at last permitted to take off the halter of his misery. He had hardly the heart to undress himself. Happily, no sooner did his head touch the pillow than he would sink into a heavy sleep which deprived him of all consciousness of his troubles.

But he had to get up by dawn in summer, and before dawn in winter. He wished to do his own work. It was all the free time that he had between five o'clock and eight. Even then he had to waste some of it by work to command, for his title of *Hof Musicus* and his favor with the Grand Duke exacted from him official compositions for the Court festivals.

So the very source of his life was poisoned. Even his dreams were not free, but, as usual, this restraint made them only the stronger. When nothing hampers action, the soul has fewer reasons for action, and the closer the walls of Jean-Christophe's prison of care and banal tasks were drawn about him, the more his heart in its revolt felt its independence. In a life without obstacles he would doubtless have abandoned himself to chance and to the voluptuous sauntering of adolescence. As he could be free only for an hour or two a day, his strength flowed into that space of time like a river between walls of rock. It is a good discipline for art for a man to confine his efforts between unshakable bounds. In that sense it may be said that misery is a master, not only of thought, but of style; it teaches sobriety to the mind as to



the body. When time is doled out and thoughts measured, a man says no word too much, and grows accustomed to thinking only what is essential; so he lives at double pressure, having less time for living.

This had happened in Jean-Christophe's case. Under his yoke he took full stock of the value of liberty and he never frittered away the precious minutes with useless words or actions. His natural tendency to write diffusely, given up to all the caprice of a mind sincere but indiscriminating, found correction in being forced to think and do as much as possible in the least possible time. Nothing had so much influence on his artistic and moral development—not the lessons of his masters, nor the example of the masterpieces. During the years when the character is formed he came to consider music as an exact language, in which every sound has a meaning, and at the same time he came to loathe those musicians who talk without saying anything.

And yet the compositions which he wrote at this time were still far from expressing himself completely, because he was still very far from having completely discovered himself. He was seeking himself through the mass of acquired feelings which education imposes on a child as second nature. He had only intuitions of his true being, until he should feel the passions of adolescence, which strip the personality of its borrowed garments as a thunder-clap purges the sky of the mists that hang over it. Vague and great forebodings were mingled in him with strange memories, of which he could not rid himself. He raged against these lies; he was wretched to see how inferior what he wrote was to what he thought; he had bitter doubts of himself. But he could not resign himself to such a stupid defeat. He longed passionately to do better, to write great things, and always he missed fire. After a moment of illusion as he wrote, he saw that what he had done was worthless. He tore it up; he burned everything that he did; and, to crown his humiliation, he had to see his official works, the most mediocre of all, preserved, and he could not destroy them—the concerto, *The Royal Eagle*, for the Prince's birthday and the cantata, *The Marriage of Pallas*, written on the occasion of the marriage of Princess Adelaide—published at great expense in *éditions de luxe*, which perpetuated his imbecilities for posterity; for he believed in posterity. He wept in his humiliation.

Fevered years! No respite, no release—nothing to create a diversion from such maddening toil; no games, no friends. How should he have them? In the afternoon, when other children played, young Jean-Christophe, with his brows knit in attention, was at his place in the orchestra in the dusty and

ill-lighted theater; and in the evening, when other children were abed, he was still there, sitting in his chair, bowed with weariness.

No intimacy with his brothers. The younger, Ernest, was twelve. He was a little ragamuffin, vicious and impudent, who spent his days with other rapscallions like himself, and from their company had caught not only deplorable manners, but shameful habits which good Jean-Christophe, who had never so much as suspected their existence, was horrified to see one day. The other, Rodolphe, the favorite of Uncle Theodore, was to go into business. He was steady, quiet, but sly. He thought himself much superior to Jean-Christophe, and did not admit his authority in the house, although it seemed natural to him to eat the food that he provided. He had espoused the cause of Theodore and Melchior's ill-feeling against Jean-Christophe and used to repeat their absurd gossip. Neither of the brothers cared for music, and Rodolphe, in imitation of his uncle, affected to despise it. Chafing against Jean-Christophe's authority and lectures—for he took himself very seriously as the head of the family—the two boys had tried to rebel; but Jean-Christophe, who had lusty fists and the consciousness of right, sent them packing. Still they did not for that cease to do with him as they liked. They abused his credulity, and laid traps for him, into which he invariably fell. They used to extort money from him with barefaced lies, and laughed at him behind his back. Jean-Christophe was always taken in. He had so much need of being loved that an affectionate word was enough to disarm his rancor. He would have forgiven them everything for a little love. But his confidence was cruelly shaken when he heard them laughing at his stupidity after a scene of hypocritical embracing which had moved him to tears, and they had taken advantage of it to rob him of a gold watch, a present from the Prince, which they coveted. He despised them, and yet went on letting himself be taken in from his unconquerable tendency to trust and to love. He knew it. He raged against himself, and he used to thrash his brothers soundly when he discovered once more that they had tricked him. That did not keep him from swallowing almost immediately the fresh hook which it pleased them to bait for him.

A more bitter cause of suffering was in store for him. He learned from officious neighbors that his father was speaking ill of him. After having been proud of his son's successes, and having boasted of them everywhere, Melchior was weak and shameful enough to be jealous of them. He tried to decry them. It was stupid to weep; Jean-Christophe could only shrug his shoulders in contempt. It was no use being angry about it, for his father did not know what he was doing, and was embittered by his own downfall. The

boy said nothing. He was afraid, if he said anything, of being too hard; but he was cut to the heart.

They were melancholy gatherings at the family evening meal round the lamp, with a spotted cloth, with all the stupid chatter and the sound of the jaws of these people whom he despised and pitied, and yet loved in spite of everything. Only between himself and his brave mother did Jean-Christophe feel a bond of affection. But Louisa, like himself, exhausted herself during the day, and in the evening she was worn out and hardly spoke, and after dinner used to sleep in her chair over her darning. And she was so good that she seemed to make no difference in her love between her husband and her three sons. She loved them all equally. Jean-Christophe did not find in her the trusted friend that he so much needed.

So he was driven in upon himself. For days together he would not speak, fulfilling his tiresome and wearing task with a sort of silent rage. Such a mode of living was dangerous, especially for a child at a critical age, when he is most sensitive, and is exposed to every agent of destruction and the risk of being deformed for the rest of his life. Jean-Christophe's health suffered seriously. He had been endowed by his parents with a healthy constitution and a sound and healthy body; but his very healthiness only served to feed his suffering when the weight of weariness and too early cares had opened up a gap by which it might enter. Quite early in life there were signs of grave nervous disorders. When he was a small boy he was subject to fainting-fits and convulsions and vomiting whenever he encountered opposition. When he was seven or eight, about the time of the concert, his sleep had been troubled. He used to talk, cry, laugh and weep in his sleep, and this habit returned to him whenever he had too much to think of. Then he had cruel headaches, sometimes shooting pains at the base of his skull or the top of his head, sometimes a leaden heaviness. His eyes troubled him. Sometimes it was as though red-hot needles were piercing his eyeballs. He was subject to fits of dizziness, when he could not see to read, and had to stop for a minute or two. Insufficient and unsound food and irregular meals ruined the health of his stomach. He was racked by internal pains or exhausted by diarrhea. But nothing brought him more suffering than his heart. It beat with a crazy irregularity. Sometimes it would leap in his bosom, and seem like to break; sometimes it would hardly beat at all, and seem like to stop. At night his temperature would vary alarmingly; it would change suddenly from fever-point to next to nothing. He would burn, then shiver with cold, pass through agony. His throat would go dry: a lump in it would prevent his breathing. Naturally his imagination took fire. He dared not say anything to his family of what he was going through, but he was

continually dissecting it with a minuteness which either enlarged his sufferings or created new ones. He decided that he had every known illness one after the other. He believed that he was going blind, and as he sometimes used to turn giddy as he walked, he thought that he was going to fall down dead. Always that dreadful fear of being stopped on his road, of dying before his time, obsessed him, overwhelmed him, and pursued him. Ah, if he had to die, at least let it not be now, not before he had tasted victory! . . .

Victory . . . the fixed idea which never ceases to burn within him without his being fully aware of it—the idea which bears him up through all his disgust and fatigues and the stagnant morass of such a life! A dim and great foreknowledge of what he will be some day, of what he is already! . . . What is he? A sick, nervous child, who plays the violin in the orchestra and writes mediocre concertos? No; far more than such a child. That is no more than the wrapping, the seeming of a day; that is not his Being. There is no connection between his Being and the existing shape of his face and thought. He knows that well. When he looks at himself in the mirror he does not know himself. That broad red face, those prominent eyebrows, those little sunken eyes, that short thick nose, that sullen mouth—the whole mask, ugly and vulgar, is foreign to himself. Neither does he know himself in his writings. He judges, he knows that what he does and what he is are nothing; and yet he is sure of what he will be and do. Sometimes he falls foul of such certainty as a vain lie. He takes pleasure in humiliating himself and bitterly mortifying himself by way of punishment. But his certainty endures; nothing can alter it. Whatever he does, whatever he thinks, none of his thoughts, actions, or writings contain him or express him. He knows, he has this strange presentiment, that the more that he is, is not contained in the present but is what he *will be*, what he *will be to-morrow*. *He will be!* . . . He is fired by that faith, he is intoxicated by that light! Ah, if only *To-day* does not block the way! If only he does not fall into one of the cunning traps which *To-day* is forever laying for him!

So he steers his bark across the sea of days, turning his eyes neither to right nor left, motionless at the helm, with his gaze fixed on the bourne, the refuge, the end that he has in sight. In the orchestra, among the talkative musicians, at table with his own family, at the Palace, while he is playing without a thought of what he is playing, for the entertainment of Royal folk—it is in that future, that future which a speck may bring toppling to earth—no matter, it is in that that he lives.

He is at his old piano, in his garret, alone. Night falls. The dying light of day is cast upon his music. He strains his eyes to read the notes until the last ray of light is dead. The tenderness of hearts that are dead breathed forth from the dumb page fills him with love. His eyes are filled with tears. It seems to him that a beloved creature is standing behind him, that soft breathing caresses his cheek, that two arms are about his neck. He turns, trembling. He feels, he knows, that he is not alone. A soul that loves and is loved is there, near him. He groans aloud because he cannot perceive it, and yet that shadow of bitterness falling upon his ecstasy has sweetness, too. Even sadness has its light. He thinks of his beloved masters, of the genius that is gone, though its soul lives on in the music which it had lived in its life. His heart is overflowing with love; he dreams of the superhuman happiness which must have been the lot of these glorious men, since the reflection only of their happiness is still so much aflame. He dreams of being like them, of giving out such love as this, with lost rays to lighten his misery with a godlike smile. In his turn to be a god, to give out the warmth of joy, to be a sun of life! . . .

Alas! if one day he does become the equal of those whom he loves, if he does achieve that brilliant happiness for which he longs, he will see the illusion that was upon him. . . .

## II

### OTTO

One Sunday when Jean-Christophe had been invited by his *Musik Direktor* to dine at the little country house which Tobias Pfeiffer owned an hour's journey from the town, he took the Rhine steamboat. On deck he sat next to a boy about his own age, who eagerly made room for him. Jean-Christophe paid no attention, but after a moment, feeling that his neighbor had never taken his eyes off him, he turned and looked at him. He was a fair boy, with round pink cheeks, with his hair parted on one side, and a shade of down on his lip. He looked frankly what he was—a hobbledehoy—though he made great efforts to seem grown up. He was dressed with ostentatious care—flannel suit, light gloves, white shoes, and a pale blue tie—and he carried a little stick in his hand. He looked at Jean-Christophe out of the corner of his eye without turning his head, with his neck stiff, like a hen; and when Jean-Christophe looked at him he blushed up to his ears, took a newspaper from his pocket, and pretended to be absorbed in it, and to look important over it. But a few minutes later he dashed to pick up Jean-Christophe's hat, which had fallen. Jean-Christophe, surprised at such politeness, looked once more at the boy, and once more he blushed. Jean-Christophe thanked him curtly, for he did not like such obsequious eagerness, and he hated to be fussed with. All the same, he was flattered by it.

Soon it passed from his thoughts; his attention was occupied by the view. It was long since he had been able to escape from the town, and so he had keen pleasure in the wind that beat against his face, in the sound of the water against the boat, in the great stretch of water and the changing spectacle presented by the banks—bluffs gray and dull, willow-trees half under water, pale vines, legendary rocks, towns crowned with Gothic towers and factory chimneys belching black smoke. And as he was in ecstasy over it all, his neighbor in a choking voice timidly imparted a few historic facts concerning the ruins that they saw, cleverly restored and covered with ivy. He seemed to be lecturing to himself. Jean-Christophe, roused to interest, plied him with questions. The other replied eagerly, glad to display his knowledge, and with every sentence he addressed himself directly to Jean-Christophe, calling him "*Herr Hof, Violinist.*"

"You know me, then?" said Jean-Christophe.

“Oh yes,” said the boy, with a simple admiration that tickled Jean-Christophe’s vanity.

They talked. The boy had often seen Jean-Christophe at concerts, and his imagination had been touched by everything that he had heard about him. He did not say so to Jean-Christophe, but Jean-Christophe felt it, and was pleasantly surprised by it. He was not used to being spoken to in this tone of eager respect. He went on questioning his neighbor about the history of the country through which they were passing. The other set out all the knowledge that he had, and Jean-Christophe admired his learning. But that was only the peg on which their conversation hung. What interested them was the making of each other’s acquaintance. They dared not frankly approach the subject; they returned to it again and again with awkward questions. Finally they plunged, and Jean-Christophe learned that his new friend was called Otto Diener, and was the son of a rich merchant in the town. It appeared, naturally, that they had friends in common, and little by little their tongues were loosed. They were talking eagerly when the boat arrived at the town at which Jean-Christophe was to get out. Otto got out, too. That surprised them, and Jean-Christophe proposed that they should take a walk together until dinner-time. They struck out across the fields. Jean-Christophe had taken Otto’s arm familiarly, and was telling him his plans as if he had known him from his birth. He had been so much deprived of the society of children of his own age that he found an inexpressible joy in being with this boy, so learned and well brought up, who was in sympathy with him.

Time passed, and Jean-Christophe took no count of it. Diener, proud of the confidence which the young musician showed him, dared not point out that the dinner-hour had rung. At last he thought that he must remind him of it, but Jean-Christophe, who had begun the ascent of a hill in the woods, declared that they must go to the top, and when they reached it he lay down on the grass as though he meant to spend the day there. After a quarter of an hour Diener, seeing that he seemed to have no intention of moving, hazarded again:

“And your dinner?”

Jean-Christophe, lying at full length, with his hands behind his head, said quietly.

“Tssh!”

Then he looked at Otto, saw his scared look, and began to laugh.

“It is too good here,” he explained. “I shan’t go. Let them wait for me!”

He half rose.

“Are you in a hurry? No? Do you know what we’ll do? We’ll dine together. I know of an inn.”

Diener would have had many objections to make—not that any one was waiting for him, but because it was hard for him to come to any sudden decision, whatever it might be. He was methodical, and needed to be prepared beforehand. But Jean-Christophe’s question was put in such a tone as allowed of no refusal. He let himself be dragged off, and they began to talk again.

At the inn their eagerness died down. Both were occupied with the question as to who should give the dinner, and each within himself made it a point of honor to give it—Diener because he was the richer, Jean-Christophe because he was the poorer. They made no direct reference to the matter, but Diener made great efforts to assert his right by the tone of authority which he tried to take as he asked for the menu. Jean-Christophe understood what he was at and turned the tables on him by ordering other dishes of a rare kind. He wanted to show that he was as much at his ease as anybody, and when Diener tried again by endeavoring to take upon himself the choice of wine, Jean-Christophe crushed him with a look, and ordered a bottle of one of the most expensive vintages they had in the inn.

When they found themselves seated before a considerable repast, they were abashed by it. They could find nothing to say, ate mincingly, and were awkward and constrained in their movements. They became conscious suddenly that they were strangers, and they watched each other. They made vain efforts to revive the conversation; it dropped immediately. Their first half-hour was a time of fearful boredom. Fortunately, the meat and drink soon had an effect on them, and they looked at each other more confidently. Jean-Christophe especially, who was not used to such good things, became extraordinarily loquacious. He told of the difficulties of his life, and Otto, breaking through his reserve, confessed that he also was not happy. He was weak and timid, and his schoolfellows put upon him. They laughed at him, and could not forgive him for despising their vulgar manners. They played all sorts of tricks on him. Jean-Christophe clenched his fists, and said they had better not try it in his presence. Otto also was misunderstood by his family. Jean-Christophe knew the unhappiness of that, and they commiserated each other on their common misfortunes. Diener’s parents wanted him to become a merchant, and to step into his father’s place, but he wanted to be a poet. He would be a poet, even though he had to fly the town, like Schiller, and brave poverty! (His father’s fortune would all come to him,



and it was considerable.) He confessed blushingly that he had already written verses on the sadness of life, but he could not bring himself to recite them, in spite of Jean-Christophe's entreaties. But in the end he did give two or three of them, dithering with emotion. Jean-Christophe thought them admirable. They exchanged plans. Later on they would work together; they would write dramas and song-cycles. They admired each other. Besides his reputation as a musician, Jean-Christophe's strength and bold ways made an impression on Otto, and Jean-Christophe was sensible of Otto's elegance and distinguished manners—everything in this world is relative—and of his ease of manner—that ease of manner which he looked and longed for.

Made drowsy by their meal, with their elbows on the table, they talked and listened to each other with softness in their eyes. The afternoon drew on; they had to go. Otto made a last attempt to procure the bill, but Jean-Christophe nailed him to his seat with an angry look which made it impossible for him to insist. Jean-Christophe was only uneasy on one point—that he might be asked for more than he had. He would have given his watch and everything that he had about him rather than admit it to Otto. But he was not called on to go so far. He had to spend on the dinner almost the whole of his month's money.

They went down the hill again. The shades of evening were beginning to fall over the pine-woods. Their tops were still bathed in rosy light; they swung slowly with a surging sound. The carpet of purple pine-needles deadened the sound of their footsteps. They said no word. Jean-Christophe felt a strange sweet sadness welling through his heart. He was happy; he wished to talk, but was weighed down with his sweet sorrow. He stopped for a moment, and so did Otto. All was silence. Flies buzzed high above them in a ray of sunlight; a rotten branch fell. Jean-Christophe took Otto's hand, and in a trembling voice said:

“Will you be my friend?”

Otto murmured:

“Yes.”

They shook hands; their hearts beat: they dared hardly look at each other.

After a moment they walked on. They were a few paces away from each other, and they dared say no more until they were out of the woods. They were fearful of each other, and of their strange emotion. They walked very fast, and never stopped until they had issued from the shadow of the trees;

then they took courage again, and joined hands. They marveled at the limpid evening falling, and they talked disconnectedly.

On the boat, sitting at the bows in the brilliant twilight, they tried to talk of trivial matters, but they gave no heed to what they were saying. They were lost in their own happiness and weariness. They felt no need to talk, or to hold hands, or even to look at each other; they were near each other.

When they were near their journey's end they agreed to meet again on the following Sunday. Jean-Christophe took Otto to his door. Under the light of the gas they timidly smiled and murmured *au revoir*. They were glad to part, so wearied were they by the tension at which they had been living for those hours and by the pain it cost them to break the silence with a single word.

Jean-Christophe returned alone in the night. His heart was singing: "I have a friend! I have a friend!" He saw nothing, he heard nothing, he thought of nothing else.

He was very sleepy, and fell asleep as soon as he reached his room; but he was awakened twice or thrice during the night, as by some fixed idea. He repeated, "I have a friend," and went to sleep again at once.

Next morning it seemed to be all a dream. To test the reality of it, he tried to recall the smallest details of the day. He was absorbed by this occupation while he was giving his lessons, and even during the afternoon he was so absent during the orchestra rehearsal that when he left he could hardly remember what he had been playing.

When he returned home he found a letter waiting for him. He had no need to ask himself whence it came. He ran and shut himself up in his room to read it. It was written on pale blue paper in a labored, long, uncertain hand, with very correct flourishes:

"DEAR HERR JEAN-CHRISTOPHE—dare I say HONORED FRIEND?—

"I am thinking much of our doings yesterday, and I do thank you tremendously for your kindness to me. I am so grateful for all that you have done, and for your kind words, and the delightful walk and the excellent dinner! I am only worried that you should have spent so much money on it. What a lovely day! Do you not think there was something providential in that strange meeting? It seems to me that it was Fate decreed that we should meet. How glad I shall be to see you again on Sunday! I hope you will not have had too much unpleasantness for having missed the *Hof*

*Musik Direktor's* dinner. I should be so sorry if you had any trouble because of me.

“Dear Herr Jean-Christophe, I am always

“Your very devoted servant and friend,

“OTTO DIENER.

“P.S.—On Sunday please do not call for me at home. It would be better, if you will, for us to meet at the *Schloss Garten*.”

Jean-Christophe read the letter with tears in his eyes. He kissed it; he laughed aloud; he jumped about on his bed. Then he ran to the table and took pen in hand to reply at once. He could not wait a moment. But he was not used to writing. He could not express what was swelling in his heart; he dug into the paper with his pen, and blackened his fingers with ink; he stamped impatiently. At last, by dint of putting out his tongue and making five or six drafts, he succeeded in writing in malformed letters, which flew out in all directions, and with terrific mistakes in spelling:

“MY SOUL,—

“How dare you speak of gratitude, because I love you? Have I not told you how sad I was and lonely before I knew you? Your friendship is the greatest of blessings. Yesterday I was happy, happy!—for the first time in my life. I weep for joy as I read your letter. Yes, my beloved, there is no doubt that it was Fate brought us together. Fate wishes that we should be friends to do great things. Friends! The lovely word! Can it be that at last I have a friend? Oh! you will never leave me? You will be faithful to me? Always! always! . . . How beautiful it will be to grow up together, to work together, to bring together—I my musical whimsies, and all the crazy things that go chasing through my mind; you your intelligence and amazing learning! How much you know! I have never met a man so clever as you. There are moments when I am uneasy. I seem to be unworthy of your friendship. You are so noble and so accomplished, and I am so grateful to you for loving so coarse a creature as myself! . . . But no! I have just said, let there be no talk of gratitude. In friendship there is no obligation nor benefaction. I would not accept any benefaction! We are equal, since we love. How impatient I am to see you! I will not call for you at home, since you do not wish it—although, to tell the truth, I do not understand all these precautions—but you are the wiser; you are surely right. . . .

“One word only! No more talk of money. I hate money—the word and the thing itself. If I am not rich, I am yet rich enough to give to my friend, and it is my joy to give all I can for him. Would not you do the same? And if I needed it, would you not be the first to give me all your fortune? But that shall never be! I have sound fists and a sound head, and I shall always be able to earn the bread that I eat. Till Sunday! Dear God, a whole week without seeing you! And for two days I have not seen you! How have I been able to live so long without you?”

“The conductor tried to grumble, but do not bother about it any more than I do. What are others to me? I care nothing what they think or what they may ever think of me. Only you matter. Love me well, my soul; love me as I love you! I cannot tell you how much I love you. I am yours, yours, yours, from the tips of my fingers to the apple of my eye.

“Yours always,

“JEAN-CHRISTOPHE.”

Jean-Christophe was devoured with impatience for the rest of the week. He would go out of his way, and make long turns to pass by Otto’s house. Not that he counted on seeing him, but the sight of the house was enough to make him grow pale and red with emotion. On the Thursday he could bear it no longer, and sent a second letter even more high-flown than the first. Otto answered it sentimentally.

Sunday came at length, and Otto was punctually at the meeting-place. But Jean-Christophe had been there for an hour, waiting impatiently for the walk. He began to imagine dreadfully that Otto would not come. He trembled lest Otto should be ill, for he did not suppose for a moment that Otto might break his word. He whispered over and over again, “Dear God, let him come—let him come!” and he struck at the pebbles in the avenue with his stick, saying to himself that if he missed three times Otto would not come, but if he hit them Otto would appear at once. In spite of his care and the easiness of the test, he had just missed three times when he saw Otto coming at his easy, deliberate pace; for Otto was above all things correct, even when he was most moved. Jean-Christophe ran to him, and with his throat dry wished him “Good-day!” Otto replied, “Good-day!” and they found that they had nothing more to say to each other, except that the weather was fine and that it was five or six minutes past ten, or it might be ten past, because the castle clock was always slow.

They went to the station, and went by rail to a neighboring place which was a favorite excursion from the town. On the way they exchanged not more than ten words. They tried to make up for it by eloquent looks, but they were no more successful. In vain did they try to tell each other what friends they were; their eyes would say nothing at all. They were just play-acting. Jean-Christophe saw that, and was humiliated. He did not understand how he could not express or even feel all that had filled his heart an hour before. Otto did not, perhaps, so exactly take stock of their failure, because he was less sincere, and examined himself with more circumspection, but he was just as disappointed. The truth is that the boys had, during their week of separation, blown out their feelings to such a diapason that it was impossible for them to keep them actually at that pitch, and when they met again their first impression must of necessity be false. They had to break away from it, but they could not bring themselves to agree to it.

All day they wandered in the country without ever breaking through the awkwardness and constraint that were upon them. It was a holiday. The inns and woods were filled with a rabble of excursionists—little *bourgeois* families who made a great noise and ate everywhere. That added to their ill-humor. They attributed to the poor people the impossibility of again finding the carelessness of their first walk. But they talked, they took great pains to find subjects of conversation; they were afraid of finding that they had nothing to say to each other. Otto displayed his school-learning; Jean-Christophe entered into technical explanations of musical compositions and violin-playing. They oppressed each other: they crushed each other by talking: and they never stopped talking, trembling lest they should, for then there opened before them abysses of silence which horrified them. Otto came near to weeping, and Jean-Christophe was near leaving him and running away as hard as he could, he was so bored and ashamed.

Only an hour before they had to take the train again did they thaw. In the depths of the woods a dog was barking: he was hunting on his own account. Jean-Christophe proposed that they should hide by his path to try and see his quarry. They ran into the midst of the thicket. The dog came near them, and then went away again. They went to right and left, went forward and doubled. The barking grew louder: the dog was choking with impatience in his lust for slaughter. He came near once more. Jean-Christophe and Otto, lying on the dead leaves in the rut of a path, waited and held their breath. The barking stopped; the dog had lost the scent. They heard his yap once again in the distance; then silence came upon the woods. Not a sound, only the mysterious hum of millions of creatures, insects, and creeping things, moving unceasingly, destroying the forest—the measured breathing of

death, which never stops. The boys listened, they did not stir. Just when they got up, disappointed, and said, "It is all over; he will not come!" a little hare plunged out of the thicket. He came straight upon them. They saw him at the same moment, and gave a cry of joy. The hare turned in his tracks and jumped aside. They saw him dash into the brushwood head over heels. The stirring of the rumpled leaves vanished away like a ripple on the face of waters. Although they were sorry for having cried out, the adventure filled them with joy. They rocked with laughter as they thought of the hare's terrified leap, and Jean-Christophe imitated it grotesquely. Otto did the same. Then they chased each other. Otto was the hare, Jean-Christophe the dog. They plunged through woods and meadows, dashing through hedges and leaping ditches. A peasant shouted at them, because they had rushed over a field of rye. They did not stop to hear him. Jean-Christophe imitated the hoarse barking of the dog to such perfection that Otto laughed until he cried. At last they rolled down a slope, shouting like mad things. When they could not utter another sound they sat up and looked at each other, with tears of laughter in their eyes. They were quite happy and pleased with themselves. They were no longer trying to play the heroic friend: they were frankly what they were—two boys.

They came back arm-in-arm, singing senseless songs, and yet, when they were on the point of returning to the town, they thought they had better resume their pose, and under the last tree of the woods they carved their initials intertwined. But then good temper had the better of their sentimentality, and in the train they shouted with laughter whenever they looked at each other. They parted assuring each other that they had had a "hugely delightful" (*kolossal entzückend*) day, and that conviction gained with them when they were alone once more.

They resumed their work of construction more patient and ingenious even than that of the bees, for of a few mediocre scraps of memory they fashioned a marvelous image of themselves and their friendship. After having idealized each other during the week, they met again on the Sunday, and in spite of the discrepancy between the truth and their illusion, they got used to not noticing it and to twisting things to fit in with their desires.

They were proud of being friends. The very contrast of their natures brought them together. Jean-Christophe knew nothing so beautiful as Otto. His fine hands, his lovely hair, his fresh complexion, his shy speech, the politeness of his manners, and his scrupulous care of his appearance delighted him. Otto was subjugated by Jean-Christophe's brimming strength

and independence. Accustomed by age-old inheritance to religious respect for all authority, he took a fearful joy in the company of a comrade in whose nature was so little reverence for the established order of things. He had a little voluptuous thrill of terror whenever he heard him decry every reputation in the town, and even mimic the Grand Duke himself. Jean-Christophe knew the fascination that he exercised over his friend, and used to exaggerate his aggressive temper. Like some old revolutionary, he hewed away at social conventions and the laws of the State. Otto would listen, scandalized and delighted. He used timidly to try and join in, but he was always careful to look round to see if any one could hear.

Jean-Christophe never failed, when they walked together, to leap the fences of a field whenever he saw a board forbidding it, or he would pick fruit over the walls of private grounds. Otto was in terror lest they should be discovered. But such feelings had for him an exquisite savor, and in the evening, when he had returned, he would think himself a hero. He admired Jean-Christophe fearfully. His instinct of obedience found a satisfying quality in a friendship in which he had only to acquiesce in the will of his friend. Jean-Christophe never put him to the trouble of coming to a decision. He decided everything, decreed the doings of the day, decreed even the ordering of life, making plans, which admitted of no discussion, for Otto's future, just as he did for his own family. Otto fell in with them, though he was a little put aback by hearing Jean-Christophe dispose of his fortune for the building later on of a theater of his own contriving. But, intimidated by his friend's imperious tones, he did not protest, being convinced also by his friend's conviction that the money amassed by *Commerzienrath* Oscar Diener could be put to no nobler use. Jean-Christophe never for a moment had any idea that he might be violating Otto's will. He was instinctively a despot, and never imagined that his friend's wishes might be different from his own. Had Otto expressed a desire different from his own, he would not have hesitated to sacrifice his own personal preference. He would have sacrificed even more for him. He was consumed by the desire to run some risk for him. He wished passionately that there might appear some opportunity of putting his friendship to the test. When they were out walking he used to hope that they might meet some danger, so that he might fling himself forward to face it. He would have loved to die for Otto. Meanwhile, he watched over him with a restless solicitude, gave him his hand in awkward places, as though he were a girl. He was afraid that he might be tired, afraid that he might be hot, afraid that he might be cold. When they sat down under a tree he took off his coat to put it about his friend's shoulders; when they walked he carried his cloak. He would have carried Otto himself.

He used to devour him with his eyes like a lover, and, to tell the truth, he was in love.

He did not know it, not knowing yet what love was. But sometimes, when they were together, he was overtaken by a strange unease—the same that had choked him on that first day of their friendship in the pine-woods—and the blood would rush to his face and set his cheeks aflame. He was afraid. By an instinctive unanimity the two boys used furtively to separate and run away from each other, and one would lag behind on the road. They would pretend to be busy looking for blackberries in the hedges, and they did not know what it was that so perturbed them.

But it was in their letters especially that their feelings flew high. They were not then in any danger of being contradicted by facts, and nothing could check their illusions or intimidate them. They wrote to each other two or three times a week in a passionately lyric style. They hardly ever spoke of real happenings or common things; they raised great problems in an apocalyptic manner, which passed imperceptibly from enthusiasm to despair. They called each other, “My blessing, my hope, my beloved, my Self.” They made a fearful hash of the word “Soul.” They painted in tragic colors the sadness of their lot, and were desolate at having brought into the existence of their friend the sorrows of their existence.

“I am sorry, my love,” wrote Jean-Christophe, “for the pain which I bring you. I cannot bear that you should suffer. It must not be. *I will not have it.*” (He underlined the words with a stroke of the pen that dug into the paper.) “If you suffer, where shall I find strength to live? I have no happiness but in you. Oh, be happy! I will gladly take all the burden of sorrow upon myself! Think of me! Love me! I have such great need of being loved. From your love there comes to me a warmth which gives me life. If you knew how I shiver! There is winter and a biting wind in my heart. I embrace your soul.”

“My thought kisses yours,” replied Otto.

“I take your face in my hands,” was Jean-Christophe’s answer, “and what I have not done and will not do with my lips I do with all my being. I kiss you as I love you, Prudence!”

Otto pretended to doubt him.

“Do you love me as much as I love you?”

“O God,” wrote Jean-Christophe, “not as much, but ten, a hundred, a thousand times more! What! Do you not feel it? What would you have me



do to stir your heart?"

"What a lovely friendship is ours!" sighed Otto. "Was there ever its like in history? It is sweet and fresh as a dream. If only it does not pass away! If you were to cease to love me!"

"How stupid you are, my beloved!" replied Jean-Christophe. "Forgive me, but your weakling fear enrages me. How can you ask whether I shall cease to love you! For me to live is to love you. Death is powerless against my love. You yourself could do nothing if you wished to destroy it. Even if you betrayed me, even if you rent my heart, I should die with a blessing upon you for the love with which you fill me. Once for all, then, do not be uneasy, and vex me no more with these cowardly doubts!"

But a week later it was he who wrote:

"It is three days now since I heard a word fall from your lips. I tremble. Would you forget me? My blood freezes at the thought. . . . Yes, doubtless. . . . The other day only I saw your coldness towards me. You love me no longer! You are thinking of leaving me! . . . Listen! If you forget me, if you ever betray me, I will kill you like a dog!"

"You do me wrong, my dear heart," groaned Otto. "You draw tears from me. I do not deserve this. But you can do as you will. You have such rights over me that, if you were to break my soul, there would always be a spark left to live and love you always!"

"Heavenly powers!" cried Jean-Christophe. "I have made my friend weep! . . . Heap insults on me, beat me, trample me underfoot! I am a wretch! I do not deserve your love!"

They had special ways of writing the address on their letters, of placing the stamp—upside down, askew, at bottom in a corner of the envelope—to distinguish their letters from those which they wrote to persons who did not matter. These childish secrets had the charm of the sweet mysteries of love.

One day, as he was returning from a lesson, Jean-Christophe saw Otto in the street with a boy of his own age. They were laughing and talking familiarly. Jean-Christophe went pale, and followed them with his eyes until they had disappeared round the corner of the street. They had not seen him. He went home. It was as though a cloud had passed over the sun; all was dark.

When they met on the following Sunday, Jean-Christophe said nothing at first; but after they had been walking for half an hour he said in a choking voice:

“I saw you on Wednesday in the *Königgasse*.”

“Ah!” said Otto.

And he blushed.

Jean-Christophe went on:

“You were not alone.”

“No,” said Otto: “I was with some one.”

Jean-Christophe swallowed down his spittle and asked in a voice which he strove to make careless:

“Who was it?”

“My cousin Franz.”

“Ah!” said Jean-Christophe; and after a moment: “You have never said anything about him to me.”

“He lives at Rheinbach.”

“Do you see him often?”

“He comes here sometimes.”

“And you, do you go and stay with him?”

“Sometimes.”

“Ah!” said Jean-Christophe again.

Otto, who was not sorry to turn the conversation, pointed out a bird who was pecking at a tree. They talked of other things. Ten minutes later Jean-Christophe broke out again:

“Are you friends with him?”

“With whom?” asked Otto.

(He knew perfectly who was meant.)

“With your cousin.”

“Yes. Why?”

“Oh, nothing!”

Otto did not like his cousin much, for he used to bother him with bad jokes; but a strange malign instinct made him add a few moments later:

“He is very nice.”

“Who?” asked Jean-Christophe.

(He knew quite well who was meant.)

“Franz.”

Otto waited for Jean-Christophe to say something, but he seemed not to have heard. He was cutting a switch from a hazel-tree. Otto went on:

“He is amusing. He has all sorts of stories.”

Jean-Christophe whistled carelessly.

Otto renewed the attack:

“And he is so clever . . . and distinguished! . . .”

Jean-Christophe shrugged his shoulders as though to say:

“What interest can this person have for me?”

And as Otto, piqued, began to go on, he brutally cut him short, and pointed out a spot to which to run.

They did not touch on the subject again the whole afternoon, but they were frigid, affecting an exaggerated politeness which was unusual for them, especially for Jean-Christophe. The words stuck in his throat. At last he could contain himself no longer, and in the middle of the road he turned to Otto, who was lagging five yards behind. He took him fiercely by the hands, and let loose upon him:

“Listen, Otto! I will not—I will not let you be so friendly with Franz, because . . . because you are my friend, and I will not let you love any one more than me! I will not! You see, you are everything to me! You cannot . . . you must not! . . . if I lost you, there would be nothing left but death. I do not know what I should do. I should kill myself; I should kill you! No, forgive me! . . .”

Tears fell from his eyes.

Otto, moved and frightened by the sincerity of such grief, growling out threats, made haste to swear that he did not and never would love anybody so much as Jean-Christophe, that Franz was nothing to him, and that he would not see him again if Jean-Christophe wished it. Jean-Christophe drank in his words, and his heart took new life. He laughed and breathed

heavily; he thanked Otto effusively. He was ashamed of having made such a scene, but he was relieved of a great weight. They stood face to face and looked at each other, not moving, and holding hands. They were very happy and very much embarrassed. They became silent: then they began to talk again, and found their old gaiety. They felt more at one than ever.

But it was not the last scene of the kind. Now that Otto felt his power over Jean-Christophe, he was tempted to abuse it. He knew his sore spot, and was irresistibly tempted to place his finger on it. Not that he had any pleasure in Jean-Christophe's anger; on the contrary, it made him unhappy—but he felt his power by making Jean-Christophe suffer. He was not bad; he had the soul of a girl.

In spite of his promises, he continued to appear arm-in-arm with Franz or some other comrade. They made a great noise between them, and he used to laugh in an affected way. When Jean-Christophe reproached him with it, he used to titter and pretend not to take him seriously, until, seeing Jean-Christophe's eyes change and his lips tremble with anger, he would change his tone, and fearfully promise not to do it again, and the next day he would do it. Jean-Christophe would write him furious letters, in which he called him:

“Scoundrel! Let me never hear of you again! I do not know you! May the devil take you and all dogs of your kidney!”

But a tearful word from Otto, or, as he ever did, the sending of a flower as a token of his eternal constancy, was enough for Jean-Christophe to be plunged in remorse, and to write:

“My angel, I am mad! Forget my idiocy. You are the best of men. Your little finger alone is worth more than all stupid Jean-Christophe. You have the treasures of an ingenuous and delicate tenderness. I kiss your flower with tears in my eyes. It is there on my heart. I thrust it into my skin with blows of my fist. I would that it could make me bleed, so that I might the more feel your exquisite goodness and my own infamous folly! . . .”

But they began to weary of each other. It is false to pretend that little quarrels feed friendship. Jean-Christophe was sore against Otto for the injustice that Otto made him be guilty of. He tried to argue with himself; he laid the blame upon his own despotic temper. His loyal and eager nature, brought for the first time to the test of love, gave itself utterly, and demanded a gift as utter without the reservation of one particle of the heart. He admitted no sharing in friendship. Being ready to sacrifice all for his friend, he thought it right and even necessary that his friend should wholly sacrifice

himself and everything for him. But he was beginning to feel that the world was not built on the model of his own inflexible character, and that he was asking things which others could not give. Then he tried to submit. He blamed himself, he regarded himself as an egoist, who had no right to encroach upon the liberty of his friend, and to monopolize his affection. He did sincerely endeavor to leave him free, whatever it might cost himself. In a spirit of humiliation he did set himself to pledge Otto not to neglect Franz; he tried to persuade himself that he was glad to see him finding pleasure in society other than his own. But when Otto, who was not deceived, maliciously obeyed him, he could not help lowering at him, and then he broke out again.

If necessary, he would have forgiven Otto for preferring other friends to himself; but what he could not stomach was the lie. Otto was neither liar nor hypocrite, but it was as difficult for him to tell the truth as for a stutterer to pronounce words. What he said was never altogether true nor altogether false. Either from timidity or from uncertainty of his own feelings he rarely spoke definitely. His answers were equivocal, and, above all, upon every occasion he made mystery and was secret in a way that set Jean-Christophe beside himself. When he was caught tripping, or was caught in what, according to the conventions of their friendship, was a fault, instead of admitting it he would go on denying it and telling absurd stories. One day Jean-Christophe, exasperated, struck him. He thought it must be the end of their friendship and that Otto would never forgive him; but after sulking for a few hours Otto came back as though nothing had happened. He had no resentment for Jean-Christophe's violence—perhaps even it was not unpleasing to him, and had a certain charm for him—and yet he resented Jean-Christophe letting himself be tricked, gulping down all his mendacities. He despised him a little, and thought himself superior. Jean-Christophe, for his part, resented Otto's receiving blows without revolting.

They no longer saw each other with the eyes of those first days. Their failings showed up in full light. Otto found Jean-Christophe's independence less charming. Jean-Christophe was a tiresome companion when they went walking. He had no sort of concern for correctness. He used to dress as he liked, take off his coat, open his waistcoat, walk with open collar, roll up his shirt-sleeves, put his hat on the end of his stick, and fling out his chest in the air. He used to swing his arms as he walked, whistle, and sing at the top of his voice. He used to be red in the face, sweaty, and dusty. He looked like a peasant returning from a fair. The aristocratic Otto used to be mortified at being seen in his company. When he saw a carriage coming he used to

contrive to lag some ten paces behind, and to look as though he were walking alone.

Jean-Christophe was no less embarrassing company when he began to talk at an inn or in a railway-carriage when they were returning home. He used to talk loudly, and say anything that came into his head, and treat Otto with a disgusting familiarity. He used to express opinions quite recklessly concerning people known to everybody, or even about the appearance of people sitting only a few yards away from him, or he would enter into intimate details concerning his health and domestic affairs. It was useless for Otto to roll his eyes and to make signals of alarm. Jean-Christophe seemed not to notice them, and no more controlled himself than if he had been alone. Otto would see smiles on the faces of his neighbors, and would gladly have sunk into the ground. He thought Jean-Christophe coarse, and could not understand how he could ever have found delight in him.

What was most serious was that Jean-Christophe was just as reckless and indifferent concerning all the hedges, fences, inclosures, walls, prohibitions of entry, threats of fines, *Verbot* of all sorts, and everything that sought to confine his liberty and protect the sacred rights of property against it. Otto lived in fear from moment to moment, and all his protests were useless. Jean-Christophe grew worse out of bravado.

One day, when Jean-Christophe, with Otto at his heels, was walking perfectly at home across a private wood, in spite of, or because of, the walls fortified with broken bottles which they had had to clear, they found themselves suddenly face to face with a gamekeeper, who let fire a volley of oaths at them, and after keeping them for some time under a threat of legal proceedings, packed them off in the most ignominious fashion. Otto did not shine under this ordeal. He thought that he was already in jail, and wept, stupidly protesting that he had gone in by accident, and that he had followed Jean-Christophe without knowing whither he was going. When he saw that he was safe, instead of being glad, he bitterly reproached Jean-Christophe. He complained that Jean-Christophe had brought him into trouble. Jean-Christophe quelled him with a look, and called him "Lily-liver!" There was a quick passage of words. Otto would have left Jean-Christophe if he had known how to find the way home. He was forced to follow him, but they affected to pretend that they were not together.

A storm was brewing. In their anger they had not seen it coming. The baking countryside resounded with the cries of insects. Suddenly all was still. They only grew aware of the silence after a few minutes. Their ears buzzed. They raised their eyes; the sky was black; huge, heavy, livid clouds

overcast it. They came up from every side like a cavalry-charge. They seemed all to be hastening towards an invisible point, drawn by a gap in the sky. Otto, in terror, dare not tell his fears, and Jean-Christophe took a malignant pleasure in pretending not to notice anything. But without saying a word they drew nearer together. They were alone in the wide country. Silence. Not a wind stirred,—hardly a fevered tremor that made the little leaves of the trees shiver now and then. Suddenly a whirling wind raised the dust, twisted the trees and lashed them furiously. And the silence came again, more terrible than before. Otto, in a trembling voice, spoke at last.

“It is a storm. We must go home.”

Jean-Christophe said:

“Let us go home.”

But it was too late. A blinding, savage light flashed, the heavens roared, the vault of clouds rumbled. In a moment they were wrapped about by the hurricane, maddened by the lightning, deafened by the thunder, drenched from head to foot. They were in deserted country, half an hour from the nearest house. In the lashing rain, in the dim light, came the great red flashes of the storm. They tried to run but, their wet clothes clinging, they could hardly walk. Their shoes slipped on their feet, the water trickled down their bodies. It was difficult to breathe. Otto’s teeth were chattering, and he was mad with rage. He said biting things to Jean-Christophe. He wanted to stop; he declared that it was dangerous to walk; he threatened to sit down on the road, to sleep on the soil in the middle of the plowed fields. Jean-Christophe made no reply. He went on walking, blinded by the wind, the rain, and the lightning; deafened by the noise; a little uneasy, but unwilling to admit it.

And suddenly it was all over. The storm had passed, as it had come. But they were both in a pitiful condition. In truth, Jean-Christophe was, as usual, so disheveled that a little more disorder made hardly any difference to him. But Otto, so neat, so careful of his appearance, cut a sorry figure. It was as though he had just taken a bath in his clothes, and Jean-Christophe, turning and seeing him, could not help roaring with laughter. Otto was so exhausted that he could not even be angry. Jean-Christophe took pity and talked gaily to him. Otto replied with a look of fury. Jean-Christophe made him stop at a farm. They dried themselves before a great fire, and drank hot wine. Jean-Christophe thought the adventure funny, and tried to laugh at it; but that was not at all to Otto’s taste, and he was morose and silent for the rest of their walk. They came back sulking and did not shake hands when they parted.

As a result of this prank they did not see each other for more than a week. They were severe in their judgment of each other. But after inflicting punishment on themselves by depriving themselves of one of their Sunday walks, they got so bored that their rancor died away. Jean-Christophe made the first advances as usual. Otto condescended to meet them, and they made peace.

In spite of their disagreement it was impossible for them to do without each other. They had many faults; they were both egoists. But their egoism was naïve; it knew not the self-seeking of maturity which makes it so repulsive; it knew not itself even; it was almost lovable, and did not prevent them from sincerely loving each other! Young Otto used to weep on his pillow as he told himself stories of romantic devotion of which he was the hero; he used to invent pathetic adventures, in which he was strong, valiant, intrepid, and protected Jean-Christophe, whom he used to imagine that he adored. Jean-Christophe never saw or heard anything beautiful or strange without thinking: "If only Otto were here!" He carried the image of his friend into his whole life, and that image used to be transfigured, and become so gentle that, in spite of all that he knew about Otto, it used to intoxicate him. Certain words of Otto's which he used to remember long after they were spoken, and to embellish by the way, used to make him tremble with emotion. They imitated each other. Otto aped Jean-Christophe's manners, gestures, and writing. Jean-Christophe was sometimes irritated by the shadow which repeated every word that he said and dished up his thoughts as though they were its own. But he did not see that he himself was imitating Otto, and copying his way of dressing, walking, and pronouncing certain words. They were under a fascination. They were infused one in the other; their hearts were overflowing with tenderness. They trickled over with it on every side like a fountain. Each imagined that his friend was the cause of it. They did not know that it was the waking of their adolescence.

Jean-Christophe, who never distrusted any one, used to leave his papers lying about. But an instinctive modesty made him keep together the drafts of the letters which he scrawled to Otto, and the replies. But he did not lock them up; he just placed them between the leaves of one of his music-books, where he felt certain that no one would look for them. He reckoned without his brothers' malice.

He had seen them for some time laughing and whispering and looking at him; they were declaiming to each other fragments of speech which threw



them into wild laughter. Jean-Christophe could not catch the words, and, following his usual tactics with them, he feigned utter indifference to everything they might do or say. A few words roused his attention: he thought he recognized them. Soon he was left without doubt that they had read his letters. But when he challenged Ernest and Rodolphe, who were calling each other "My dear soul," with pretended earnestness, he could get nothing from them. The little wretches pretended not to understand, and said that they had the right to call each other whatever they liked. Jean-Christophe, who had found all the letters in their places, did not insist farther.

Shortly afterwards he caught Ernest in the act of thieving; the little beast was rummaging in the drawer of the chest in which Louisa kept her money. Jean-Christophe shook him, and took advantage of the opportunity to tell him everything that he had stored up against him. He enumerated, in terms of scant courtesy, the misdeeds of Ernest, and it was not a short catalogue. Ernest took the lecture in bad part; he replied impudently that Jean-Christophe had nothing to reproach him with, and he hinted at unmentionable things in his brother's friendship with Otto. Jean-Christophe did not understand; but when he grasped that Otto was being dragged into the quarrel he demanded an explanation of Ernest. The boy tittered; then, when he saw Jean-Christophe white with anger, he refused to say any more. Jean-Christophe saw that he would obtain nothing in that way; he sat down, shrugged his shoulders, and affected a profound contempt for Ernest. Ernest, piqued by this, was impudent again; he set himself to hurt his brother, and set forth a litany of things each more cruel and more vile than the last. Jean-Christophe kept a tight hand on himself. When at last he did understand, he saw red; he leaped from his chair. Ernest had no time to cry out. Jean-Christophe had hurled himself on him, and rolled with him into the middle of the room, and beat his head against the tiles. On the frightful cries of the victim, Louisa, Melchior, everybody, came running. They rescued Ernest in a parlous state. Jean-Christophe would not loose his prey: they had to beat and beat him. They called him a savage beast, and he looked it. His eyes were bursting from his head, he was grinding his teeth, and his only thought was to hurl himself again on Ernest. When they asked him what had happened, his fury increased, and he cried out that he would kill him. Ernest also refused to tell.

Jean-Christophe could not eat nor sleep. He was shaking with fever, and wept in his bed. It was not only for Otto that he was suffering. A revolution was taking place in him. Ernest had no idea of the hurt that he had been able to do his brother. Jean-Christophe was at heart of a puritanical intolerance,

which could not admit the dark ways of life, and was discovering them one by one with horror. At fifteen, with his free life and strong instincts, he remained strangely simple. His natural purity and ceaseless toil had protected him. His brother's words had opened up abyss on abyss before him. Never would he have conceived such infamies, and now that the idea of it had come to him, all his joy in loving and being loved was spoiled. Not only his friendship with Otto, but friendship itself was poisoned.

It was much worse when certain sarcastic allusions made him think, perhaps wrongly, that he was the object of the unwholesome curiosity of the town, and especially, when, some time afterwards, Melchior made a remark about his walks with Otto. Probably there was no malice in Melchior, but Jean-Christophe, on the watch, read hidden meanings into every word, and almost he thought himself guilty. At the same time Otto was passing through a similar crisis.

They tried still to see each other in secret. But it was impossible for them to regain the carelessness of their old relation. Their frankness was spoiled. The two boys who loved each other with a tenderness so fearful that they had never dared exchange a fraternal kiss, and had imagined that there could be no greater happiness than in seeing each other, and in being friends, and sharing each other's dreams, now felt that they were stained and spotted by the suspicion of evil minds. They came to see evil even in the most innocent acts: a look, a hand-clasp—they blushed, they had evil thoughts. Their relation became intolerable.

Without saying anything they saw each other less often. They tried writing to each other, but they set a watch upon their expressions. Their letters became cold and insipid. They grew disheartened. Jean-Christophe excused himself on the ground of his work, Otto on the ground of being too busy, and their correspondence ceased. Soon afterwards Otto left for the University, and the friendship which had lightened a few months of their lives died down and out.

And also, a new love, of which this had been only the forerunner, took possession of Jean-Christophe's heart, and made every other light seem pale by its side.

### III

#### MINNA

Four or five months before these events Frau Josepha von Kerich, widow of Councilor Stephan von Kerich, had left Berlin, where her husband's duties had hitherto detained them, and settled down with her daughter in the little Rhine town, in her native country. She had an old house with a large garden, almost a park, which sloped down to the river, not far from Jean-Christophe's home. From his attic Jean-Christophe could see the heavy branches of the trees hanging over the walls, and the high peak of the red roof with its mossy tiles. A little sloping alley, with hardly room to pass, ran alongside the park to the right; from there, by climbing a post, you could look over the wall. Jean-Christophe did not fail to make use of it. He could then see the grassy avenues, the lawns like open meadows, the trees interlacing and growing wild, and the white front of the house with its shutters obstinately closed. Once or twice a year a gardener made the rounds, and aired the house. But soon Nature resumed her sway over the garden, and silence reigned over all.

That silence impressed Jean-Christophe. He used often stealthily to climb up to his watch-tower, and as he grew taller, his eyes, then his nose, then his mouth reached up to the top of the wall; now he could put his arms over it if he stood on tiptoe, and, in spite of the discomfort of that position, he used to stay so, with his chin on the wall, looking, listening, while the evening unfolded over the lawns its soft waves of gold, which lit up with bluish rays the shade of the pines. There he could forget himself until he heard footsteps approaching in the street. The night scattered its scents over the garden: lilac in spring, acacia in summer, dead leaves in the autumn. When Jean-Christophe was on his way home in the evening from the Palace, however weary he might be, he used to stand by the door to drink in the delicious scent, and it was hard for him to go back to the smells of his room. And often he had played—when he used to play—in the little square with its tufts of grass between the stones, before the gateway of the house of the Kerichs. On each side of the gate grew a chestnut-tree a hundred years old; his grandfather used to come and sit beneath them, and smoke his pipe, and the children used to use the nuts for missiles and toys.

One morning, as he went up the alley, he climbed up the post as usual. He was thinking of other things, and looked absently. He was just going to

climb down when he felt that there was something unusual about it. He looked towards the house. The windows were open; the sun was shining into them and, although no one was to be seen, the old place seemed to have been roused from its fifteen years' sleep, and to be smiling in its awakening. Jean-Christophe went home uneasy in his mind.

At dinner his father talked of what was the topic of the neighborhood: the arrival of Frau Kerich and her daughter with an incredible quantity of luggage. The chestnut square was filled with rascals who had turned up to help unload the carts. Jean-Christophe was excited by the news, which, in his limited life, was an important event, and he returned to his work, trying to imagine the inhabitants of the enchanted house from his father's story, as usual hyperbolic. Then he became absorbed in his work, and had forgotten the whole affair when, just as he was about to go home in the evening, he remembered it all, and he was impelled by curiosity to climb his watch-tower to spy out what might be toward within the walls. He saw nothing but the quiet avenue, in which the motionless trees seemed to be sleeping in the last rays of the sun. In a few moments he had forgotten why he was looking, and abandoned himself as he always did to the sweetness of the silence. That strange place—standing erect, perilously balanced on the top of a post—was meet for dreams. Coming from the ugly alley, stuffy and dark, the sunny gardens were of a magical radiance. His spirit wandered freely through these regions of harmony, and music sang in him; they lulled him, and he forgot time and material things, and was only concerned to miss none of the whisperings of his heart.

So he dreamed open-eyed and open-mouthed, and he could not have told how long he had been dreaming, for he saw nothing. Suddenly his heart leaped. In front of him, at a bend in an avenue, were two women's faces looking at him. One, a young lady in black, with fine irregular features and fair hair, tall, elegant, with carelessness and indifference in the poise of her head, was looking at him with kind, laughing eyes. The other, a girl of fifteen, also in deep mourning, looked as though she were going to burst out into a fit of wild laughter; she was standing a little behind her mother, who, without looking at her, signed to her to be quiet. She covered her lips with her hands, as if she were hard put to it not to burst out laughing. She was a little creature with a fresh face, white, pink, and round-cheeked; she had a plump little nose, a plump little mouth, a plump little chin, firm eyebrows, bright eyes, and a mass of fair hair plaited and wound round her head in a crown to show her rounded neck and her smooth white forehead—a Cranach face.

Jean-Christophe was turned to stone by this apparition. He could not go away, but stayed, glued to his post, with his mouth wide open. It was only when he saw the young lady coming towards him with her kindly mocking smile that he wrenched himself away, and jumped—tumbled—down into the alley, dragging with him pieces of plaster from the wall. He heard a kind voice calling him, “Little boy!” and a shout of childish laughter, clear and liquid as the song of a bird. He found himself in the alley on hands and knees, and, after a moment’s bewilderment, he ran away as hard as he could go, as though he was afraid of being pursued. He was ashamed, and his shame kept bursting upon him again when he was alone in his room at home. After that he dared not go down the alley, fearing oddly that they might be lying in wait for him. When he had to go by the house, he kept close to the walls, lowered his head, and almost ran without ever looking back. At the same time he never ceased to think of the two faces that he had seen; he used to go up to the attic, taking off his shoes so as not to be heard, and to look his hardest out through the skylight in the direction of the Kerichs’ house and park, although he knew perfectly well that it was impossible to see anything but the tops of the trees and the topmost chimneys.

About a month later, at one of the weekly concerts of the *Hof Musik Verein*, he was playing a concerto for piano and orchestra of his own composition. He had reached the last movement when he chanced to see in the box facing him Frau and Fräulein Kerich looking at him. He so little expected to see them that he was astounded, and almost missed out his reply to the orchestra. He went on playing mechanically to the end of the piece. When it was finished he saw, although he was not looking in their direction, that Frau and Fräulein Kerich were applauding a little exaggeratedly, as though they wished him to see that they were applauding. He hurried away from the stage. As he was leaving the theater he saw Frau Kerich in the lobby, separated from him by several rows of people, and she seemed to be waiting for him to pass. It was impossible for him not to see her, but he pretended not to do so, and, brushing his way through, he left hurriedly by the stage-door of the theater. Then he was angry with himself, for he knew quite well that Frau Kerich meant no harm. But he knew that in the same situation he would do the same again. He was in terror of meeting her in the street. Whenever he saw at a distance a figure that resembled her, he used to turn aside and take another road.

It was she who came to him. She sought him out at home.

One morning when he came back to dinner Louisa proudly told him that a lackey in breeches and livery had left a letter for him, and she gave him a large black-edged envelope, on the back of which was engraved the Kerich arms. Jean-Christophe opened it, and trembled as he read these words:

“Frau Josepha von Kerich requests the pleasure of *Hof Musicus* Jean-Christophe Krafft’s company at tea to-day at half-past five.”

“I shall not go,” declared Jean-Christophe.

“What!” cried Louisa. “I said that you would go.”

Jean-Christophe made a scene, and reproached his mother with meddling in affairs that were no concern of hers.

“The servant waited for a reply. I said that you were free to-day. You have nothing to do then.”

In vain did Jean-Christophe lose his temper, and swear that he would not go; he could not get out of it now. When the appointed time came, he got ready fuming; in his heart of hearts he was not sorry that chance had so done violence to his whims.

Frau von Kerich had had no difficulty in recognizing in the pianist at the concert the little savage whose shaggy head had appeared over her garden wall on the day of her arrival. She had made inquiries about him of her neighbors, and what she learned about Jean-Christophe’s family and the boy’s brave and difficult life had roused interest in him, and a desire to talk to him.

Jean-Christophe, trussed up in an absurd coat, which made him look like a country parson, arrived at the house quite ill with shyness. He tried to persuade himself that Frau and Fräulein Kerich had had no time to remark his features on the day when they had first seen him. A servant led him down a long corridor, thickly carpeted, so that his footsteps made no sound, to a room with a glass-paneled door which opened on to the garden. It was raining a little, and cold; a good fire was burning in the fireplace. Near the window, through which he had a peep of the wet trees in the mist, the two ladies were sitting. Frau Kerich was working and her daughter was reading a book when Jean-Christophe entered. When they saw him they exchanged a sly look.

“They know me again,” thought Jean-Christophe, abashed.

He bobbed awkwardly, and went on bobbing.

Frau von Kerich smiled cheerfully, and held out her hand.

“Good-day, my dear neighbor,” she said. “I am glad to see you. Since I heard you at the concert I have been wanting to tell you how much pleasure you gave me. And as the only way of telling you was to invite you here, I hope you will forgive me for having done so.”

In the kindly, conventional words of welcome there was so much cordiality, in spite of a hidden sting of irony, that Jean-Christophe grew more at his ease.

“They do not know me again,” he thought, comforted.

Frau von Kerich presented her daughter, who had closed her book and was looking interestedly at Jean-Christophe.

“My daughter Minna,” she said. “She wanted so much to see you.”

“But, mamma,” said Minna, “it is not the first time that we have seen each other.”

And she laughed aloud.

“They do know me again,” thought Jean-Christophe, crestfallen.

“True,” said Frau von Kerich, laughing too, “you paid us a visit the day we came.”

At these words the girl laughed again, and Jean-Christophe looked so pitiful that when Minna looked at him she laughed more than ever. She could not control herself, and she laughed until she cried. Frau von Kerich tried to stop her, but she, too, could not help laughing, and Jean-Christophe, in spite of his constraint, fell victim to the contagiousness of it. Their merriment was irresistible; it was impossible to take offense at it. But Jean-Christophe lost countenance altogether when Minna caught her breath again, and asked him whatever he could be doing on the wall. She was tickled by his uneasiness. He murmured, altogether at a loss. Frau von Kerich came to his aid, and turned the conversation by pouring out tea.

She questioned him amiably about his life. But he did not gain confidence. He could not sit down; he could not hold his cup, which threatened to upset; and whenever they offered him water, milk, sugar or cakes, he thought that he had to get up hurriedly and bow his thanks, stiff, trussed up in his frock-coat, collar, and tie, like a tortoise in its shell, not daring and not being able to turn his head to right or left, and overwhelmed

by Frau von Kerich's innumerable questions, and the warmth of her manner, frozen by Minna's looks, which he felt were taking in his features, his hands, his movements, his clothes. They made him even more uncomfortable by trying to put him at his ease—Frau von Kerich by her flow of words, Minna by the coquettish eyes which instinctively she made at him to amuse herself.

Finally they gave up trying to get anything more from him than bows and monosyllables, and Frau von Kerich, who had the whole burden of the conversation, asked him, when she was worn out, to play the piano. Much more shy of them than of a concert audience, he played an adagio of Mozart. But his very shyness, the uneasiness which was beginning to fill his heart from the company of the two women, the ingenuous emotion with which his bosom swelled, which made him happy and unhappy, were in tune with the tenderness and youthful modesty of the music, and gave it the charm of spring. Frau von Kerich was moved by it; she said so with the exaggerated words of praise customary among men and women of the world; she was none the less sincere for that, and the very excess of the flattery was sweet coming from such charming lips. Naughty Minna said nothing, and looked astonished at the boy who was so stupid when he talked, but was so eloquent with his fingers. Jean-Christophe felt their sympathy, and grew bold under it. He went on playing; then, half turning towards Minna, with an awkward smile and without raising his eyes, he said timidly:

“This is what I was doing on the wall.”

He played a little piece in which he had, in fact, developed the musical ideas which had come to him in his favorite spot as he looked into the garden, not, be it said, on the evening when he had seen Minna and Frau von Kerich—for some obscure reason, known only to his heart, he was trying to persuade himself that it was so—but long before, and in the calm rhythm of the *andante con moto*, there were to be found the serene impression of the singing of birds, mutterings of beasts, and the majestic slumber of the great trees in the peace of the sunset.

The two hearers listened delightedly. When he had finished Frau von Kerich rose, took his hands with her usual vivacity, and thanked him effusively. Minna clapped her hands, and cried that it was “admirable,” and that to make him compose other works as “sublime” as that, she would have a ladder placed against the wall, so that he might work there at his ease. Frau von Kerich told Jean-Christophe not to listen to silly Minna; she begged him to come as often as he liked to her garden, since he loved it, and she added that he need never bother to call on them if he found it tiresome.



“You need never bother to come and see us,” added Minna. “Only if you do not come, beware!”

She wagged her finger in menace.

Minna was possessed by no imperious desire that Jean-Christophe should come to see her, or should even follow the rules of politeness with regard to herself, but it pleased her to produce a little effect which instinctively she felt to be charming.

Jean-Christophe blushed delightedly. Frau von Kerich won him completely by the tact with which she spoke of his mother and grandfather, whom she had known. The warmth and kindness of the two ladies touched his heart; he exaggerated their easy urbanity, their worldly graciousness, in his desire to think it heartfelt and deep. He began to tell them, with his naïve trustfulness, of his plans and his wretchedness. He did not notice that more than an hour had passed, and he jumped with surprise when a servant came and announced dinner. But his confusion turned to happiness when Frau von Kerich told him to stay and dine with them, like the good friends that they were going to be, and were already. A place was laid for him between the mother and daughter, and at table his talents did not show to such advantage as at the piano. That part of his education had been much neglected; it was his impression that eating and drinking were the essential things at table, and not the manner of them. And so tidy Minna looked at him, pouting and a little horrified.

They thought that he would go immediately after supper. But he followed them into the little room, and sat with them, and had no idea of going. Minna stilled her yawns, and made signs to her mother. He did not notice them, because he was dumb with his happiness, and thought they were like himself—because Minna, when she looked at him, made eyes at him from habit—and finally, once he was seated, he did not quite know how to get up and take his leave. He would have stayed all night had not Frau von Kerich sent him away herself, without ceremony, but kindly.

He went, carrying in his heart the soft light of the brown eyes of Frau von Kerich and the blue eyes of Minna; on his hands he felt the sweet contact of soft fingers, soft as flowers, and a subtle perfume, which he had never before breathed, enveloped him, bewildered him, brought him almost to swooning.

He went again two days later, as was arranged, to give Minna a music lesson. Thereafter, under this arrangement, he went regularly twice a week in the morning, and very often he went again in the evening to play and talk.

Frau von Kerich was glad to see him. She was a clever and a kind woman. She was thirty-five when she lost her husband, and although young in body and at heart, she was not sorry to withdraw from the world in which she had gone far since her marriage. Perhaps she left it the more easily because she had found it very amusing, and thought wisely that she could not both eat her cake and have it. She was devoted to the memory of Herr von Kerich, not that she had felt anything like love for him when they married; but good-fellowship was enough for her; she was of an easy temper and an affectionate disposition.

She had given herself up to her daughter's education; but the same moderation which she had had in her love, held in check the impulsive and morbid quality which is sometimes in motherhood, when the child is the only creature upon whom the woman can expend her jealous need of loving and being loved. She loved Minna much, but was clear in her judgment of her, and did not conceal any of her imperfections any more than she tried to deceive herself about herself. Witty and clever, she had a keen eye for discovering at a glance the weakness, and ridiculous side, of any person; she took great pleasure in it, without ever being the least malicious, for she was as indulgent as she was scoffing, and while she laughed at people she loved to be of use to them.

Young Jean-Christophe gave food both to her kindness and to her critical mind. During the first days of her sojourn in the little town, when her mourning kept her out of society, Jean-Christophe was a distraction for her—primarily by his talent. She loved music, although she was no musician; she found in it a physical and moral well-being in which her thoughts could idly sink into a pleasant melancholy. Sitting by the fire—while Jean-Christophe played—a book in her hands, and smiling vaguely, she took a silent delight in the mechanical movements of his fingers, and the purposeless wanderings of her reverie, hovering among the sad, sweet images of the past.

But more even than the music, the musician interested her. She was clever enough to be conscious of Jean-Christophe's rare gifts, although she was not capable of perceiving his really original quality. It gave her a curious pleasure to watch the waking of those mysterious fires which she saw kindling in him. She had quickly appreciated his moral qualities, his uprightness, his courage, the sort of Stoicism in him, so touching in a child.

But for all that she did not view him the less with the usual perspicacity of her sharp, mocking eyes. His awkwardness, his ugliness, his little ridiculous qualities amused her; she did not take him altogether seriously; she did not take many things seriously. Jean-Christophe's antic outbursts, his violence, his fantastic humor, made her think sometimes that he was a little unbalanced; she saw in him one of the Kraffts, honest men and good musicians, but always a little wrong in the head. Her light irony escaped Jean-Christophe; he was conscious only of Frau von Kerich's kindness. He was so unused to any one being kind to him! Although his duties at the Palace brought him into daily contact with the world, poor Jean-Christophe had remained a little savage, untutored and uneducated. The selfishness of the Court was only concerned in turning him to its profit and not in helping him in any way. He went to the Palace, sat at the piano, played, and went away again, and nobody ever took the trouble to talk to him, except absently to pay him some banal compliment. Since his grandfather's death, no one, either at home or outside, had ever thought of helping him to learn the conduct of life, or to be a man. He suffered cruelly from his ignorance and the roughness of his manners. He went through an agony and bloody sweat to shape himself alone, but he did not succeed. Books, conversation, example—all were lacking. He would fain have confessed his distress to a friend, but could not bring himself to do so. Even with Otto he had not dared, because at the first words he had uttered, Otto had assumed a tone of disdainful superiority which had burned into him like hot iron.

And now with Frau von Kerich it all became easy. Of her own accord, without his having to ask anything—it cost Jean-Christophe's pride so much!—she showed him gently what he should not do, told him what he ought to do, advised him how to dress, eat, walk, talk, and never passed over any fault of manners, taste, or language; and he could not be hurt by it, so light and careful was her touch in the handling of the boy's easily injured vanity. She took in hand also his literary education without seeming to be concerned with it; she never showed surprise at his strange ignorance, but never let slip an opportunity of correcting his mistakes simply, easily, as if it were natural for him to have been in error; and, instead of alarming him with pedantic lessons, she conceived the idea of employing their evening meetings by making Minna or Jean-Christophe read passages of history, or of the poets, German and foreign. She treated him as a son of the house, with a few fine shades of patronizing familiarity which he never saw. She was even concerned with his clothes, gave him new ones, knitted him a woolen comforter, presented him with little toilet things, and all so gently that he never was put about by her care or her presents. In short, she gave

him all the little attentions and the quasi-maternal care which come to every good woman instinctively for a child who is intrusted to her, or trusts himself to her, without her having any deep feeling for it. But Jean-Christophe thought that all the tenderness was given to him personally, and he was filled with gratitude; he would break out into little awkward, passionate speeches, which seemed a little ridiculous to Frau von Kerich, though they did not fail to give her pleasure.

With Minna his relation was very different. When Jean-Christophe met her again at her first lesson, he was still intoxicated by his memories of the preceding evening and of the girl's soft looks, and he was greatly surprised to find her an altogether different person from the girl he had seen only a few hours before. She hardly looked at him, and did not listen to what he said, and when she raised her eyes to him, he saw in them so icy a coldness that he was chilled by it. He tortured himself for a long time to discover wherein lay his offense. He had given none, and Minna's feelings were neither more nor less favorable than on the preceding day; just as she had been then, Minna was completely indifferent to him. If on the first occasion she had smiled upon him in welcome, it was from a girl's instinctive coquetry, who delights to try the power of her eyes on the first comer, be it only a trimmed poodle who turns up to fill her idle hours. But since the preceding day the too-easy conquest had already lost interest for her. She had subjected Jean-Christophe to a severe scrutiny and she thought him an ugly boy, poor, ill-bred, who played the piano well, though he had ugly hands, held his fork at table abominably, and ate his fish with a knife. Then he seemed to her very uninteresting. She wanted to have music lessons from him; she wanted, even, to amuse herself with him, because for the moment she had no other companion, and because in spite of her pretensions of being no longer a child, she had still in gusts a crazy longing to play, a need of expending her superfluous gaiety, which was, in her as in her mother, still further roused by the constraint imposed by their mourning. But she took no more account of Jean-Christophe than of a domestic animal, and if it still happened occasionally during the days of her greatest coldness that she made eyes at him, it was purely out of forgetfulness, and because she was thinking of something else, or simply so as not to get out of practice. And when she looked at him like that, Jean-Christophe's heart used to leap. It is doubtful if she saw it; she was telling herself stories. For she was at the age when we delight the senses with sweet fluttering dreams. She was forever absorbed in thoughts of love, filled with a curiosity which was only innocent from ignorance. And she only thought of love, as a well-taught young lady should, in terms of marriage. Her ideal was far from having taken definite

shape. Sometimes she dreamed of marrying a lieutenant, sometimes of marrying a poet, properly sublime, *à la* Schiller. One project devoured another and the last was always welcomed with the same gravity and just the same amount of conviction. For the rest, all of them were quite ready to give way before a profitable reality, for it is wonderful to see how easily romantic girls forget their dreams, when something less ideal, but more certain, appears before them.

As it was, sentimental Minna was, in spite of all, calm and cold. In spite of her aristocratic name, and the pride with which the ennobling particle filled her, she had the soul of a little German housewife in the exquisite days of adolescence.

Naturally Jean-Christophe did not in the least understand the complicated mechanism—more complicated in appearance than in reality—of the feminine heart. He was often baffled by the ways of his friends, but he was so happy in loving them that he credited them with all that disturbed and made him sad with them, so as to persuade himself that he was as much loved by them as he loved them himself. A word or an affectionate look plunged him in delight. Sometimes he was so bowled over by it that he would burst into tears.

Sitting by the table in the quiet little room, with Frau von Kerich a few yards away sewing by the light of the lamp—Minna reading on the other side of the table, and no one talking, he looking through the half-open garden-door at the gravel of the avenue glistening under the moon, a soft murmur coming from the tops of the trees—his heart would be so full of happiness that suddenly, for no reason, he would leap from his chair, throw himself at Frau von Kerich's feet, seize her hand, needle or no needle, cover it with kisses, press it to his lips, his cheeks, his eyes, and sob. Minna would raise her eyes, lightly shrug her shoulders, and make a face. Frau von Kerich would smile down at the big boy groveling at her feet, and pat his head with her free hand, and say to him in her pretty voice, affectionately and ironically:

“Well, well, old fellow! What is it?”

Oh, the sweetness of that voice, that peace, that silence, that soft air in which were no shouts, no roughness, no violence, that oasis in the harsh desert of life, and—heroic light gilding with its rays people and things—the light of the enchanted world conjured up by the reading of the divine poets!

Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare, springs of strength, of sorrow, and of love!

...

Minna, with her head down over the book, and her face faintly colored by her animated delivery, would read in her fresh voice, with its slight lisp, and try to sound important when she spoke in the characters of warriors and kings. Sometimes Frau von Kerich herself would take the book; then she would lend to tragic histories the spiritual and tender graciousness of her own nature, but most often she would listen, lying back in her chair, her never-ending needlework in her lap; she would smile at her own thoughts, for always she would come back to them through every book.

Jean-Christophe also had tried to read, but he had had to give it up; he stammered, stumbled over the words, skipped the punctuation, seemed to understand nothing, and would be so moved that he would have to stop in the middle of the pathetic passages, feeling tears coming. Then in a tantrum he would throw the book down on the table, and his two friends would burst out laughing. . . . How he loved them! He carried the image of them everywhere with him, and they were mingled with the persons in Shakespeare and Goethe. He could hardly distinguish between them. Some fragrant word of the poets which called up from the depths of his being passionate emotions could not in him be severed from the beloved lips that had made him hear it for the first time. Even twenty years later he could never read Egmont or Romeo, or see them played, without there leaping up in him at certain lines the memory of those quiet evenings, those dreams of happiness, and the beloved faces of Frau von Kerich and Minna.

He would spend hours looking at them in the evening when they were reading; in the night when he was dreaming in his bed, awake, with his eyes closed; during the day, when he was dreaming at his place in the orchestra, playing mechanically with his eyes half closed. He had the most innocent tenderness for them, and, knowing nothing of love, he thought he was in love. But he did not quite know whether it was with the mother or the daughter. He went into the matter gravely, and did not know which to choose. And yet, as it seemed to him that he must at all costs make his choice, he inclined towards Frau von Kerich. And he did in fact discover, as soon as he had made up his mind to it, that it was she that he loved. He loved her quick eyes, the absent smile upon her half-open lips, her pretty forehead, so young in seeming, and the parting to one side in her fine, soft hair, her rather husky voice, with its little cough, her motherly hands, the elegance of her movements, and her mysterious soul. He would thrill with happiness when, sitting by his side, she would kindly explain to him the

meaning of some passage in a book which he did not understand; she would lay her hand on Jean-Christophe's shoulder; he would feel the warmth of her fingers, her breath on his cheek, the sweet perfume of her body; he would listen in ecstasy, lose all thought of the book, and understand nothing at all. She would see that and ask him to repeat what she had said; then he would say nothing, and she would laughingly be angry, and tap his nose with her book, telling him that he would always be a little donkey. To that he would reply that he did not care so long as he was *her* little donkey, and she did not drive him out of her house. She would pretend to make objections; then she would say that although he was an ugly little donkey, and very stupid, she would agree to keep him—and perhaps even to love him—although he was good for nothing, if at the least he would be just *good*. Then they would both laugh, and he would go swimming in his joy.

When he discovered that he loved Frau von Kerich, Jean-Christophe broke away from Minna. He was beginning to be irritated by her coldness and disdain, and as, by dint of seeing her often, he had been emboldened little by little to resume his freedom of manner with her, he did not conceal his exasperation from her. She loved to sting him, and he would reply sharply. They were always saying unkind things to each other, and Frau von Kerich only laughed at them. Jean-Christophe, who never got the better in such passages of words, used sometimes to issue from them so infuriated that he thought he detested Minna; and he persuaded himself that he only went to her house again because of Frau von Kerich.

He went on giving her music lessons. Twice a week, from nine to ten in the morning, he superintended the girl's scales and exercises. The room in which they did this was Minna's studio—an odd workroom, which, with an amusing fidelity, reflected the singular disorder of her little feminine mind.

On the table were little figures of musical cats—a whole orchestra—one playing a violin, another the violoncello—a little pocket-mirror, toilet things and writing things, tidily arranged. On the shelves were tiny busts of musicians—Beethoven frowning, Wagner with his velvet cap, and the Apollo Belvedere. On the mantelpiece, by a frog smoking a red pipe, a paper fan on which was painted the Bayreuth Theater. On the two bookshelves were a few books—Lübke, Mommsen, Schiller, "Sans Famille," Jules Verne, Montaigne. On the walls large photographs of the Sistine Madonna, and pictures by Herkomer, edged with blue and green ribbons. There was also a view of a Swiss hotel in a frame of silver thistles; and above all, everywhere in profusion, in every corner of the room, photographs of

officers, tenors, conductors, girl-friends, all with inscriptions, almost all with verse—or at least what is accepted as verse in Germany. In the center of the room, on a marble pillar, was enthroned a bust of Brahms, with a beard; and, above the piano, little plush monkeys and cotillion trophies hung by threads.

Minna would arrive late, her eyes still puffy with sleep, sulky; she would hardly reach out her hand to Jean-Christophe, coldly bid him good-day, and, without a word, gravely and with dignity sit down at the piano. When she was alone, it pleased her to play interminable scales, for that allowed her agreeably to prolong her half-somnolent condition and the dreams which she was spinning for herself. But Jean-Christophe would compel her to fix her attention on difficult exercises, and so sometimes she would avenge herself by playing them as badly as she could. She was a fair musician, but she did not like music—like many German women. But, like them, she thought she ought to like it, and she took her lessons conscientiously enough, except for certain moments of diabolical malice indulged in to enrage her master. She could enrage him much more by the icy indifference with which she set herself to her task. But the worst was when she took it into her head that it was her duty to throw her soul into an expressive passage: then she would become sentimental and feel nothing.

Young Jean-Christophe, sitting by her side, was not very polite. He never paid her compliments—far from it. She resented that, and never let any remark pass without answering it. She would argue about everything that he said, and when she made a mistake she would insist that she was playing what was written. He would get cross, and they would go on exchanging ungracious words and impertinences. With her eyes on the keys, she never ceased to watch Jean-Christophe and enjoy his fury. As a relief from boredom she would invent stupid little tricks, with no other object than to interrupt the lesson and to annoy Jean-Christophe. She would pretend to choke, so as to make herself interesting; she would have a fit of coughing, or she would have something very important to say to the maid. Jean-Christophe knew that she was play-acting; and Minna knew that Jean-Christophe knew that she was play-acting; and it amused her, for Jean-Christophe could not tell her what he was thinking.

One day, when she was indulging in this amusement and was coughing languidly, hiding her mouth in her handkerchief, as if she were on the point of choking, but in reality watching Jean-Christophe's exasperation out of the corner of her eye, she conceived the ingenious idea of letting the handkerchief fall, so as to make Jean-Christophe pick it up, which he did



with the worst grace in the world. She rewarded him with a “Thank you!” in her grand manner, which nearly made him explode.

She thought the game too good not to be repeated. Next day she did it again. Jean-Christophe did not budge; he was boiling with rage. She waited a moment, and then said in an injured tone:

“Will you please pick up my handkerchief?”

Jean-Christophe could not contain himself.

“I am not your servant!” he cried roughly. “Pick it up yourself!”

Minna choked with rage. She got up suddenly from her stool, which fell over.

“Oh, this is too much!” she said, and angrily thumped the piano; and she left the room in a fury.

Jean-Christophe waited. She did not come back. He was ashamed of what he had done; he felt that he had behaved like a little cad. And he was at the end of his tether: she made fun of him too impudently! He was afraid lest Minna should complain to her mother, and he should be forever banished from Frau von Kerich’s thoughts. He knew not what to do; for if he was sorry for his brutality, no power on earth would have made him ask pardon.

He came again on the chance the next day, although he thought that Minna would refuse to take her lesson. But Minna, who was too proud to complain to anybody—Minna, whose conscience was not shielded against reproach—appeared again, after making him wait five minutes more than usual; and she sat down at the piano, stiff, upright, without turning her head or saying a word, as though Jean-Christophe no longer existed for her. But she did not fail to take her lesson, and all the subsequent lessons, because she knew very well that Jean-Christophe was a fine musician, and that she ought to learn to play the piano properly if she wished to be—what she wished to be—a well-bred young lady of finished education.

But how bored she was! How they bored each other!

One misty morning in March, when little flakes of snow were flying, like feathers, in the gray air, they were in the studio. It was hardly daylight. Minna was arguing, as usual, about a false note that she had struck, and pretending that it “was written so.” Although he knew perfectly well that she was lying, Jean-Christophe bent over the book to look at the passage in

question closely. Her hand was on the rack, and she did not move it. His lips were near her hand, he tried to read and could not; he was looking at something else—a thing soft, transparent, like the petals of a flower. Suddenly—he did not know what he was thinking of—he pressed his lips as hard as he could on the little hand.

They were both dumfounded by it. He flung backwards; she withdrew her hand—both blushing. They said no word; they did not look at each other. After a moment of confused silence she began to play again: she was very uneasy: her bosom rose and fell as though she were under some weight: she struck wrong note after wrong note. He did not notice it: he was more uneasy than she. His temples throbbed; he heard nothing; he knew not what she was playing; and, to break the silence, he made a few random remarks in a choking voice. He thought that he was forever lost in Minna's opinion. He was confounded by what he had done, thought it stupid and rude. The lesson-hour over, he left Minna without looking at her, and even forgot to say good-bye. She did not mind. She had no thought now of deeming Jean-Christophe ill-mannered; and if she made so many mistakes in playing, it was because all the time she was watching him out of the corner of her eye with astonishment and curiosity, and—for the first time—sympathy.

When she was left alone, instead of going to look for her mother as usual, she shut herself up in her room and examined this extraordinary event. She sat with her face in her hands in front of the mirror. Her eyes seemed to her soft and gleaming. She bit gently at her lip in the effort of thinking. And as she looked complacently at her pretty face, she visualized the scene, and blushed and smiled. At dinner she was animated and merry. She refused to go out at once, and stayed in the drawing-room for part of the afternoon; she had some work in her hand, and did not make ten stitches without a mistake, but what did that matter! In a corner of the room, with her back turned to her mother, she smiled; or, under a sudden impulse to let herself go, she pranced about the room and sang at the top of her voice. Frau von Kerich started and called her mad. Minna flung her arms round her neck, shaking with laughter, and hugged and kissed her.

In the evening, when she went to her room, it was a long time before she went to bed. She went on looking at herself in the mirror, trying to remember, and having thought all through the day of the same thing—thinking of nothing. She undressed slowly; she stopped every moment, sitting on the bed, trying to remember what Jean-Christophe was like. It was a Jean-Christophe of fantasy who appeared, and now he did not seem nearly so uncouth to her. She went to bed and put out the light. Ten minutes later

the scene of the morning rushed back into her mind, and she burst out laughing. Her mother got up softly and opened the door, thinking that, against orders, she was reading in bed. She found Minna lying quietly in her bed, with her eyes wide open in the dim candlelight.

“What is it?” she asked. “What is amusing you?”

“Nothing,” said Minna gravely. “I was thinking.”

“You are very lucky to find your own company so amusing. But go to sleep.”

“Yes, mamma,” replied Minna meekly. Inside herself she was grumbling: “Go away! Do go away!” until the door was closed, and she could go on enjoying her dreams. She fell into a sweet drowsiness. When she was nearly asleep, she leaped for joy:

“He loves me. . . . What happiness! How good of him to love me! . . . How I love him!”

She kissed her pillow and went fast asleep.

When next they were together Jean-Christophe was surprised at Minna’s amiability. She gave him “Good-day,” and asked him how he was in a very soft voice; she sat at the piano, looking wise and modest; she was an angel of docility. There were none of her naughty schoolgirl’s tricks, but she listened religiously to Jean-Christophe’s remarks, acknowledged that they were right, gave little timid cries herself when she made a mistake and set herself to be more accurate. Jean-Christophe could not understand it. In a very short time she made astounding progress. Not only did she play better, but with musical feeling. Little as he was given to flattery, he had to pay her a compliment. She blushed with pleasure, and thanked him for it with a look tearful with gratitude. She took pains with her toilet for him; she wore ribbons of an exquisite shade; she gave Jean-Christophe little smiles and soft glances, which he disliked, for they irritated him, and moved him to the depths of his soul. And now it was she who made conversation, but there was nothing childish in what she said; she talked gravely, and quoted the poets in a pedantic and pretentious way. He hardly ever replied; he was ill at ease. This new Minna that he did not know astonished and disquieted him.

Always she watched him. She was waiting. . . . For what? . . . Did she know herself? . . . She was waiting for him to do it again. He took good care not to, for he was convinced that he had behaved like a clod; he seemed never to give a thought to it. She grew restless, and one day when he was

sitting quietly at a respectful distance from her dangerous little paws, she was seized with impatience: with a movement so quick that she had no time to think of it, she herself thrust her little hand against his lips. He was staggered by it, then furious and ashamed. But none the less he kissed it very passionately. Her naïve effrontery enraged him; he was on the point of leaving her there and then.

But he could not. He was entrapped. Whirling thoughts rushed in his mind; he could make nothing of them. Like mists ascending from a valley they rose from the depths of his heart, he wandered hither and thither at random through this mist of love, and whatever he did, he did but turn round and round an obscure fixed idea, a Desire unknown, terrible and fascinating as a flame to an insect. It was the sudden eruption of the blind forces of Nature.

They passed through a period of waiting. They watched each other, desired each other, were fearful of each other. They were uneasy. But they did not for that desist from their little hostilities and sulkinesses; only there were no more familiarities between them; they were silent. Each was busy constructing their love in silence.

Love has curious retroactive effects. As soon as Jean-Christophe discovered that he loved Minna, he discovered at the same time that he had always loved her. For three months they had been seeing each other almost every day without ever suspecting the existence of their love. But from the day when he did actually love her, he was absolutely convinced that he had loved her from all eternity.

It was a good thing for him to have discovered at last *whom* he loved. He had loved for so long without knowing whom! It was a sort of relief to him, like a sick man, who, suffering from a general illness, vague and enervating, sees it become definite in sharp pain in some portion of his body. Nothing is more wearing than love without a definite object: it eats away and saps the strength like a fever. A known passion leads the mind to excess; that is exhausting, but at least one knows why. It is an excess; it is not a wasting away. Anything rather than emptiness.

Although Minna had given Jean-Christophe good reason to believe that she was not indifferent to him he did not fail to torture himself with the idea that she despised him. They had never had any very clear idea of each other, but this idea had never been more confused and false than it was now; it consisted of a series of strange fantasies which could never be made to

agree, for they passed from one extreme to the other, endowing each other in turn with faults and charms which they did not possess—charms when they were parted, faults when they were together. In either case they were wide of the mark.

They did not know themselves what they desired. For Jean-Christophe his love took shape as that thirst for tenderness, imperious, absolute, demanding reciprocation, which had burned in him since childhood, which he demanded from others, and wished to impose on them by will or force. Sometimes this despotic desire of full sacrifice of himself and others—especially others, perhaps—was mingled with gusts of a brutal and obscure desire, which set him whirling, and he did not understand it. Minna, curious above all things, and delighted to have a romance, tried to extract as much pleasure as possible from it for her vanity and sentimentality; she tricked herself whole-heartedly as to what she was feeling. A great part of their love was purely literary. They fed on the books they had read, and were forever ascribing to themselves feelings which they did not possess.

But the moment was to come when all these little lies and small egoisms were to vanish away before the divine light of love. A day, an hour, a few seconds of eternity. . . . And it was so unexpected! . . .

One evening they were alone and talking. The room was growing dark. Their conversation took a serious turn. They talked of the infinite, of Life, and Death. It made a larger frame for their little passion. Minna complained of her loneliness, which led naturally to Jean-Christophe's answer that she was not so lonely as she thought.

“No,” she said, shaking her head. “That is only words Every one lives for himself; no one is interested in you; nobody loves you.”

Silence.

“And I?” said Jean-Christophe suddenly, pale with emotion.

Impulsive Minna jumped to her feet, and took his hands.

The door opened. They flung apart. Frau von Kerich entered. Jean-Christophe buried himself in a book, which he held upside down. Minna bent over her work, and pricked her finger with her needle.

They were not alone together for the rest of the evening, and they were afraid of being left. When Frau von Kerich got up to look for something in the next room, Minna, not usually obliging, ran to fetch it for her, and Jean-

Christophe took advantage of her absence to take his leave without saying good-night to her.

Next day they met again, impatient to resume their interrupted conversation. They did not succeed. Yet circumstances were favorable to them. They went a walk with Frau von Kerich, and had plenty of opportunity for talking as much as they liked. But Jean-Christophe could not speak, and he was so unhappy that he stayed as far away as possible from Minna. And she pretended not to notice his discourtesy; but she was piqued by it, and showed it. When Jean-Christophe did at last contrive to utter a few words, she listened icily; he had hardly the courage to finish his sentence. They were coming to the end of the walk. Time was flying. And he was wretched at not having been able to make use of it.

A week passed. They thought they had mistaken their feeling for each other. They were not sure but that they had dreamed the scene of that evening. Minna was resentful against Jean-Christophe. Jean-Christophe was afraid of meeting her alone. They were colder to each other than ever.

A day came when it had rained all morning and part of the afternoon. They had stayed in the house without speaking, reading, yawning, looking out of the window; they were bored and cross. About four o'clock the sky cleared. They ran into the garden. They leaned their elbows on the terrace wall, and looked down at the lawns sloping to the river. The earth was steaming; a soft mist was ascending to the sun; little raindrops glittered on the grass; the smell of the damp earth and the perfume of the flowers intermingled; around them buzzed a golden swarm of bees. They were side by side, not looking at each other; they could not bring themselves to break the silence. A bee came up and clung awkwardly to a clump of wistaria heavy with rain, and sent a shower of water down on them. They both laughed, and at once they felt that they were no longer cross with each other, and were friends again. But still they did not look at each other. Suddenly, without turning her head, she took his hand, and said:

“Come!”

She led him quickly to the little labyrinth with its box-bordered paths, which was in the middle of the grove. They climbed up the slope, slipping on the soaking ground, and the wet trees shook out their branches over them. Near the top she stopped to breathe.

“Wait . . . wait . . .” she said in a low voice, trying to take breath.

He looked at her. She was looking away; she was smiling, breathing hard, with her lips parted; her hand was trembling in Jean-Christophe's.

They felt the blood throbbing in their linked hands and their trembling fingers. Around them all was silent. The pale shoots of the trees were quivering in the sun; a gentle rain dropped from the leaves with silvery sounds, and in the sky were the shrill cries of swallows.

She turned her head towards him; it was a lightning flash. She flung her arms about his neck; he flung himself into her arms.

“Minna! Minna! My darling! . . .”

“I love you, Jean-Christophe! I love you!”

They sat on a wet wooden seat. They were filled with love, sweet, profound, absurd. Everything else had vanished. No more egoism, no more vanity, no more reservation. Love, love—that is what their laughing, tearful eyes were saying. The cold coquette of a girl, the proud boy, were devoured with the need of self-sacrifice, of giving, of suffering, of dying for each other. They did not know each other; they were not the same; everything was changed; their hearts, their faces, their eyes, gave out a radiance of the most touching kindness and tenderness. Moments of purity, of self-denial, of absolute giving of themselves, which through life will never return!

After a desperate murmuring of words and passionate promises to belong to each other forever, after kisses and incoherent words of delight, they saw that it was late, and they ran back hand in hand, almost falling in the narrow paths, bumping into trees, feeling nothing, blind and drunk with the joy of it.

When he left her he did not go home; he could not have gone to sleep. He left the town, and walked over the fields; he walked blindly through the night. The air was fresh, the country dark and deserted. A screech-owl hooted shrilly. Jean-Christophe went on like a sleep-walker. The little lights of the town quivered on the plain, and the stars in the dark sky. He sat on a wall by the road and suddenly burst into tears. He did not know why. He was too happy, and the excess of his joy was compounded of sadness and delight; there was in it thankfulness for his happiness, pity for those who were not happy, a melancholy and sweet feeling of the frailty of things, the mad joy of living. He wept for delight, and slept in the midst of his tears. When he awoke dawn was peeping. White mists floated over the river, and veiled the town, where Minna, worn out, was sleeping, while in her heart was the light of her smile of happiness.

They contrived to meet again in the garden next morning and told their love once more, but now the divine unconsciousness of it all was gone. She was a little playing the part of the girl in love, and he, though more sincere, was also playing a part. They talked of what their life should be. He regretted his poverty and humble estate. She affected to be generous, and enjoyed her generosity. She said that she cared nothing for money. That was true, for she knew nothing about it, having never known the lack of it. He promised that he would become a great artist; that she thought fine and amusing, like a novel. She thought it her duty to behave really like a woman in love. She read poetry; she was sentimental. He was touched by the infection. He took pains with his dress; he was absurd; he set a guard upon his speech; he was pretentious. Frau von Kerich watched him and laughed, and asked herself what could have made him so stupid.

But they had moments of marvelous poetry, and these would suddenly burst upon them out of dull days, like sunshine through a mist. A look, a gesture, a meaningless word, and they were bathed in happiness; they had their good-byes in the evening on the dimly-lighted stairs, and their eyes would seek each other, divine each other through the half darkness, and the thrill of their hands as they touched, the trembling in their voices, all those little nothings that fed their memory at night, as they slept so lightly that the chiming of each hour would awake them, and their hearts would sing "I am loved," like the murmuring of a stream.

They discovered the charm of things. Spring smiled with a marvelous sweetness. The heavens were brilliant, the air was soft, as they had never been before. All the town—the red roofs, the old walls, the cobbled streets—showed with a kindly charm that moved Jean-Christophe. At night, when everybody was asleep, Minna would get up from her bed, and stand by the window, drowsy and feverish. And in the afternoon, when he was not there, she would sit in a swing, and dream, with a book on her knees, her eyes half closed, sleepy and lazily happy, mind and body hovering in the spring air. She would spend hours at the piano, with a patience exasperating to others, going over and over again scales and passages which made her turn pale and cold with emotion. She would weep when she heard Schumann's music. She felt full of pity and kindness for all creatures, and so did he. They would give money stealthily to poor people whom they met in the street, and would then exchange glances of compassion; they were happy in their kindness.

To tell the truth, they were kind only by fits and starts. Minna suddenly discovered how sad was the humble life of devotion of old Frida, who had been a servant in the house since her mother's childhood, and at once she



ran and hugged her, to the great astonishment of the good old creature, who was busy mending the linen in the kitchen. But that did not keep her from speaking harshly to her a few hours later, when Frida did not come at once on the sound of the bell. And Jean-Christophe, who was consumed with love for all humanity, and would turn aside so as not to crush an insect, was entirely indifferent to his own family. By a strange reaction he was colder and more curt with them the more affectionate he was to all other creatures; he hardly gave thought to them; he spoke abruptly to them, and found no interest in seeing them. Both in Jean-Christophe and Minna their kindness was only a surfeit of tenderness which overflowed at intervals to the benefit of the first comer. Except for these overflowings they were more egoistic than ever, for their minds were filled only with the one thought, and everything was brought back to that.

How much of Jean-Christophe's life was filled with the girl's face! What emotion was in him when he saw her white frock in the distance, when he was looking for her in the garden; when at the theater, sitting a few yards away from their empty places, he heard the door of their box open, and the mocking voice that he knew so well; when in some outside conversation the dear name of Kerich cropped up! He would go pale and blush; for a moment or two he would see and hear nothing. And then there would be a rush of blood over all his body, the assault of unknown forces.

The little German girl, naïve and sensual, had odd little tricks. She would place her ring on a little pile of flour, and he would have to get it again and again with his teeth without whitening his nose. Or she would pass a thread through a biscuit, and put one end of it in her mouth and one in his, and then they had to nibble the thread to see who could get to the biscuit first. Their faces would come together; they would feel each other's breathing; their lips would touch, and they would laugh forcedly, while their hands would turn to ice. Jean-Christophe would feel a desire to bite, to hurt: he would fling back, and she would go on laughing forcedly. They would turn away, pretend indifference, and steal glances at each other.

These disturbing games had a disquieting attraction for them; they wanted to play them, and yet avoided them. Jean-Christophe was fearful of them, and preferred even the constraint of the meetings when Frau von Kerich or some one else was present. No outside presence could break in upon the converse of their loving hearts; constraint only made their love sweeter and more intense. Everything gained infinitely in value; a word, a movement of the lips, a glance were enough to make the rich new treasure of their inner life shine through the dull veil of ordinary existence. They alone

could see it, or so they thought, and smiled, happy in their little mysteries. Their words were no more than those of a drawing-room conversation about trivial matters; to them they were an unending song of love. They read the most fleeting changes in their faces and voices as in an open book; they could have read as well with their eyes closed, for they had only to listen to their hearts to hear in them the echo of the heart of the beloved. They were full of confidence in life, in happiness, in themselves. Their hopes were boundless. They loved, they were loved, happy, without a shadow, without a doubt, without a fear of the future. Wonderful serenity of those days of spring! Not a cloud in the sky. A faith so fresh that it seems that nothing can ever tarnish it. A joy so abounding that nothing can ever exhaust it. Are they living? Are they dreaming? Doubtless they are dreaming. There is nothing in common between life and their dream—nothing, except in that moment of magic: they are but a dream themselves; their being has melted away at the touch of love.

It was not long before Frau von Kerich perceived their little intrigue, which they thought very subtly managed, though it was very clumsy. Minna had suspected it from the moment when her mother had entered suddenly one day when she was talking to Jean-Christophe, and standing as near to him as she could, and on the click of the door they had darted apart as quickly as possible, covered with confusion. Frau von Kerich had pretended to see nothing. Minna was almost sorry. She would have liked a tussle with her mother; it would have been more romantic.

Her mother took care to give her no opportunity for it; she was too clever to be anxious, or to make any remark about it. But to Minna she talked ironically about Jean-Christophe, and made merciless fun of his foibles; she demolished him in a few words. She did not do it deliberately; she acted upon instinct, with the treachery natural to a woman who is defending her own. It was useless for Minna to resist, and sulk, and be impertinent, and go on denying the truth of her remarks: there was only too much justification for them, and Frau von Kerich had a cruel skill in flicking the raw spot. The largeness of Jean-Christophe's boots, the ugliness of his clothes, his ill-brushed hat, his provincial accent, his ridiculous way of bowing, the vulgarity of his loud-voicedness, nothing was forgotten which might sting Minna's vanity. Such remarks were always simple and made by the way: they never took the form of a set speech, and when Minna, irritated, got upon her high horse to reply, Frau von Kerich would innocently

be off on another subject. But the blow struck home, and Minna was sore under it.

She began to look at Jean-Christophe with a less indulgent eye. He was vaguely conscious of it, and uneasily asked her: "Why do you look at me like that?"

And she answered:

"Oh, nothing!"

But a moment after, when he was merry, she would harshly reproach him for laughing so loudly. He was abashed; he never would have thought that he would have to take care not to laugh too loudly with her: all his gaiety was spoiled. Or when he was talking absolutely at his ease, she would absently interrupt him to make some unpleasant remark about his clothes, or she would take exception to his common expressions with pedantic aggressiveness. Then he would lose all desire to talk, and sometimes would be cross. Then he would persuade himself that these ways which so irritated him were a proof of Minna's interest in him, and she would persuade herself also that it was so. He would try humbly to do better. But she was never much pleased with him, for he hardly ever succeeded.

But he had no time—nor had Minna—to perceive the change that was taking place in her. Easter came, and Minna had to go with her mother to stay with some relations near Weimar.

During the last week before the separation they returned to the intimacy of the first days. Except for little outbursts of impatience Minna was more affectionate than ever. On the eve of her departure they went for a long walk in the park; she led Jean-Christophe mysteriously to the arbor, and put about his neck a little scented bag, in which she had placed a lock of her hair: they renewed their eternal vows, and swore to write to each other every day; and they chose a star out of the sky, and arranged to look at it every evening at the same time.

The fatal day arrived. Ten times during the night he had asked himself, "Where will she be to-morrow?" and now he thought, "It is to-day. This morning she is still here: to-night she will be here no longer." He went to her house before eight o'clock. She was not up; he set out to walk in the park; he could not; he returned. The passages were full of boxes and parcels; he sat down in a corner of the room listening for the creaking of doors and floors, and recognizing the footsteps on the floor above him. Frau von Kerich passed, smiled as she saw him and, without stopping, threw him a mocking good-day. Minna came at last; she was pale, her eyelids were

swollen; she had not slept any more than he during the night. She gave orders busily to the servants; she held out her hand to Jean-Christophe, and went on talking to old Frida. She was ready to go. Frau von Kerich came back. They argued about a hat-box. Minna seemed to pay no attention to Jean-Christophe, who was standing, forgotten and unhappy, by the piano. She went out with her mother, then came back: from the door she called out to Frau von Kerich. She closed the door. They were alone. She ran to him, took his hand, and dragged him into the little room next door; its shutters were closed. Then she put her face up to Jean-Christophe's and kissed him wildly. With tears in her eyes she said:

“You promise—you promise that you will love me always?”

They sobbed quietly, and made convulsive efforts to choke their sobs down so as not to be heard. They broke apart as they heard footsteps approaching. Minna dried her eyes, and resumed her busy air with the servants, but her voice trembled.

He succeeded in snatching her handkerchief, which she had let fall—her little dirty handkerchief, crumpled and wet with her tears.

He went to the station with his friends in their carriage. Sitting opposite each other Jean-Christophe and Minna hardly dared look at each other for fear of bursting into tears. Their hands sought each other, and clasped until they hurt. Frau von Kerich watched them with quizzical good-humor, and seemed not to see anything. The time arrived. Jean-Christophe was standing by the door of the train when it began to move, and he ran alongside the carriage, not looking where he was going, jostling against porters, his eyes fixed on Minna's eyes, until the train was gone. He went on running until it was lost from sight. Then he stopped, out of breath, and found himself on the station platform among people of no importance. He went home, and, fortunately, his family were all out, and all through the morning he wept.

For the first time he knew the frightful sorrow of parting, an intolerable torture for all loving hearts. The world is empty; life is empty; all is empty. The heart is choked; it is impossible to breathe; there is mortal agony; it is difficult, impossible, to live—especially when all around you there are the traces of the departed loved one, when everything about you is forever calling up her image, when you remain in the surroundings in which you lived together, she and you, when it is a torment to try to live again in the same places the happiness that is gone. Then it is as though an abyss were opened at your feet; you lean over it; you turn giddy; you almost fall. You

fall. You think you are face to face with Death. And so you are; parting is one of his faces. You watch the beloved of your heart pass away; life is effaced; only a black hole is left—nothingness.

Jean-Christophe went and visited all the beloved spots, so as to suffer more. Frau von Kerich had left him the key of the garden, so that he could go there while they were away. He went there that very day, and was like to choke with sorrow. It seemed to him as he entered that he might find there a little of her who was gone; he found only too much of her; her image hovered over all the lawns; he expected to see her appear at all the corners of the paths; he knew well that she would not appear, but he tormented himself with pretending that she might, and he went over the tracks of his memories of love—the path to the labyrinth, the terrace carpeted with wistaria, the seat in the arbor, and he inflicted torture on himself by saying: “A week ago . . . three days ago . . . yesterday, it was so. Yesterday she was here . . . this very morning. . . .” He racked his heart with these thoughts until he had to stop, choking, and like to die. In his sorrow was mingled anger with himself for having wasted all that time, and not having made use of it. So many minutes, so many hours, when he had enjoyed the infinite happiness of seeing her, breathing her, and feeding upon her. And he had not appreciated it! He had let the time go by without having tasted to the full every tiny moment! And now! . . . Now it was too late. . . . Irreparable! Irreparable!

He went home. His family seemed odious to him. He could not bear their faces, their gestures, their fatuous conversation, the same as that of the preceding day, the same as that of all the preceding days—always the same. They went on living their usual life, as though no such misfortune had come to pass in their midst. And the town had no more idea of it than they. The people were all going about their affairs, laughing, noisy, busy; the crickets were chirping; the sky was bright. He hated them all; he felt himself crushed by this universal egoism. But he himself was more egoistic than the whole universe. Nothing was worth while to him. He had no kindness. He loved nobody.

He passed several lamentable days. His work absorbed him again automatically: but he had no heart for living.

One evening when he was at supper with his family, silent and depressed, the postman knocked at the door and left a letter for him. His heart knew the sender of it before he had seen the handwriting. Four pairs of eyes, fixed on him with undisguised curiosity, waited for him to read it, clutching at the hope that this interruption might take them out of their usual boredom. He placed the letter by his plate, and would not open it, pretending

carelessly that he knew what it was about. But his brothers, annoyed, would not believe it, and went on prying at it; and so he was in tortures until the meal was ended. Then he was free to lock himself up in his room. His heart was beating so that he almost tore the letter as he opened it. He trembled to think what might be in it; but as soon as he had glanced over the first words he was filled with joy.

A few very affectionate words. Minna was writing to him by stealth. She called him “Dear *Christlein*,” and told him that she had wept much, had looked at the star every evening, that she had been to Frankfort, which was a splendid town, where there were wonderful shops, but that she had never bothered about anything because she was thinking of him. She reminded him that he had sworn to be faithful to her, and not to see anybody while she was away, so that he might think only of her. She wanted him to work all the time while she was gone, so as to make himself famous, and her too. She ended by asking him if he remembered the little room where they had said good-bye on the morning when she had left him: she assured him that she would be there still in thought, and that she would still say good-bye to him in the same way. She signed herself, “Eternally yours! Eternally! . . .” and she had added a postscript bidding him buy a straw hat instead of his ugly felt—all the distinguished people there were wearing them—a coarse straw hat, with a broad blue ribbon.

Jean-Christophe read the letter four times before he could quite take it all in. He was so overwhelmed that he could not even be happy; and suddenly he felt so tired that he lay down and read and re-read the letter and kissed it again and again. He put it under his pillow, and his hand was forever making sure that it was there. An ineffable sense of well-being permeated his whole soul. He slept all through the night.

His life became more tolerable. He had ever sweet, soaring thoughts of Minna. He set about answering her; but he could not write freely to her; he had to hide his feelings: that was painful and difficult for him. He continued clumsily to conceal his love beneath formulas of ceremonious politeness, which he always used in an absurd fashion.

When he had sent it he awaited Minna’s reply, and only lived in expectation of it. To win patience he tried to go for walks and to read. But his thoughts were only of Minna: he went on crazily repeating her name over and over again; he was so abject in his love and worship of her name that he carried everywhere with him a volume of Lessing, because the name of Minna occurred in it, and every day when he left the theater he went a

long distance out of his way so as to pass a mercery shop, on whose signboard the five adored letters were written.

He reproached himself for wasting time when she had bid him so urgently to work, so as to make her famous. The naïve vanity of her request touched him, as a mark of her confidence in him. He resolved, by way of fulfilling it, to write a work which should be not only dedicated, but consecrated, to her. He could not have written any other at that time. Hardly had the scheme occurred to him than musical ideas rushed in upon him. It was like a flood of water accumulated in a reservoir for several months, until it should suddenly rush down, breaking all its dams. He did not leave his room for a week. Louisa left his dinner at the door; for he did not allow even her to enter.

He wrote a quintette for clarionet and strings. The first movement was a poem of youthful hope and desire; the last a lover's joke, in which Jean-Christophe's wild humor peeped out. But the whole work was written for the sake of the second movement, the *larghetto*, in which Jean-Christophe had depicted an ardent and ingenuous little soul, which was, or was meant to be, a portrait of Minna. No one would have recognized it, least of all herself; but the great thing was that it was perfectly recognizable to himself; and he had a thrill of pleasure in the illusion of feeling that he had caught the essence of his beloved. No work had ever been so easily or happily written: it was an outlet for the excess of love which the parting had stored up in him; and at the same time his care for the work of art, the effort necessary to dominate and concentrate his passion into a beautiful and clear form, gave him a healthiness of mind, a balance in his faculties, which gave him a sort of physical delight—a sovereign enjoyment known to every creative artist. While he is creating he escapes altogether from the slavery of desire and sorrow; he becomes then master in his turn: and all that gave him joy or suffering seems then to him to be only the fine play of his will. Such moments are too short: for when they are done he finds about him, more heavy than ever, the chains of reality.

While Jean-Christophe was busy with his work he hardly had time to think of his parting from Minna; he was living with her. Minna was no longer in Minna; she was in himself. But when he had finished he found that he was alone, more alone than before, more weary, exhausted by the effort; he remembered that it was a fortnight since he had written to Minna and that she had not replied.

He wrote to her again, and this time he could not bring himself altogether to exercise the constraint which he had imposed on himself for

the first letter. He reproached Minna jocularly—for he did not believe it himself—with having forgotten him. He scolded her for her laziness and teased her affectionately. He spoke of his work with much mystery, so as to rouse her curiosity, and because he wished to keep it as a surprise for her when she returned. He described minutely the hat that he had bought; and he told how, to carry out the little despot's orders—for he had taken all her commands literally—he did not go out at all, and said that he was ill as an excuse for refusing invitations. He did not add that he was even on bad terms with the Grand Duke, because, in excess of zeal, he had refused to go to a party at the Palace to which he had been invited. The whole letter was full of a careless joy, and conveyed those little secrets so dear to lovers. He imagined that Minna alone had the key to them, and thought himself very clever, because he had carefully replaced every word of love with words of friendship.

After he had written he felt comforted for a moment; first, because the letter had given him the illusion of conversation with his absent fair, but chiefly because he had no doubt but that Minna would reply to it at once. He was very patient for the three days which he had allowed for the post to take his letter to Minna and bring back her answer; but when the fourth day had passed he began once more to find life difficult. He had no energy or interest in things, except during the hour before the post's arrival. Then he was trembling with impatience. He became superstitious, and looked for the smallest sign—the crackling of the fire, a chance word—to give him an assurance that the letter would come. Once that hour was passed he would collapse again. No more work, no more walks; the only object of his existence was to wait for the next post, and all his energy was expended in finding strength to wait for so long. But when evening came, and all hope was gone for the day, then he was crushed; it seemed to him that he could never live until the morrow, and he would stay for hours, sitting at his table, without speaking or thinking, without even the power to go to bed, until some remnant of his will would take him off to it; and he would sleep heavily, haunted by stupid dreams, which made him think that the night would never end.

This continual expectation became at length a physical torture, an actual illness. Jean-Christophe went so far as to suspect his father, his brother, even the postman, of having taken the letter and hidden it from him. He was racked with uneasiness. He never doubted Minna's fidelity for an instant. If she did not write, it must be because she was ill, dying, perhaps dead. Then he rushed to his pen and wrote a third letter, a few heartrending lines, in which he had no more thought of guarding his feelings than of taking care



with his spelling. The time for the post to go was drawing near; he had crossed out and smudged the sheet as he turned it over, dirtied the envelope as he closed it. No matter! He could not wait until the next post. He ran and hurled his letter into the box and waited in mortal agony. On the next night but one he had a clear vision of Minna, ill, calling to him; he got up, and was on the point of setting out on foot to go to her. But where? Where should he find her?

On the fourth morning Minna's letter came at last—hardly a half-sheet—cold and stiff. Minna said that she did not understand what could have filled him with such stupid fears, that she was quite well, that she had no time to write, and begged him not to get so excited in future, and not to write any more.

Jean-Christophe was stunned. He never doubted Minna's sincerity. He blamed himself; he thought that Minna was justly annoyed by the impudent and absurd letters that he had written. He thought himself an idiot, and beat at his head with his fist. But it was all in vain; he was forced to feel that Minna did not love him as much as he loved her.

The days that followed were so mournful that it is impossible to describe them. Nothingness cannot be described. Deprived of the only boon that made living worth while for him—his letters to Minna—Jean-Christophe now only lived mechanically, and the only thing which interested him at all was when in the evening, as he was going to bed, he ticked off on the calendar, like a schoolboy, one of the interminable days which lay between himself and Minna's return. The day of the return was past. They ought to have been at home a week. Feverish excitement had succeeded Jean-Christophe's prostration. Minna had promised when she left to advise him of the day and hour of their arrival, he waited from moment to moment to go and meet them; and he tied himself up in a web of guesses as to the reasons for their delay.

One evening one of their neighbors, a friend of his grandfather, Fischer, the furniture dealer, came in to smoke and chat with Melchior after dinner as he often did. Jean-Christophe, in torment, was going up to his room after waiting for the postman to pass when a word made him tremble. Fischer said that next day he had to go early in the morning to the Kerichs' to hang up the curtains. Jean-Christophe stopped dead, and asked:

“Have they returned?”

“You wag! You know that as well as I do,” said old Fischer roguishly. “Fine weather! They came back the day before yesterday.”

Jean-Christophe heard no more; he left the room, and got ready to go out. His mother, who for some time had secretly been watching him without his knowing it, followed him into the lobby, and asked him timidly where he was going. He made no answer, and went out. He was hurt.

He ran to the Kerichs' house. It was nine o'clock in the evening. They were both in the drawing-room and did not appear to be surprised to see him. They said "Good-evening" quietly. Minna was busy writing, and held out her hand over the table and went on with her letter, vaguely asking him for his news. She asked him to forgive her discourtesy, and pretended to be listening to what he said, but she interrupted him to ask something of her mother. He had prepared touching words concerning all that he had suffered during her absence; he could hardly summon a few words; no one was interested in them, and he had not the heart to go on—it all rang so false.

When Minna had finished her letter she took up some work, and, sitting a little away from him, began to tell him about her travels. She talked about the pleasant weeks she had spent—riding on horseback, country-house life, interesting society; she got excited gradually, and made allusions to events and people whom Jean-Christophe did not know, and the memory of them made her mother and herself laugh. Jean-Christophe felt that he was a stranger during the story; he did not know how to take it, and laughed awkwardly. He never took his eyes from Minna's face, beseeching her to look at him, imploring her to throw him a glance for alms. But when she did look at him—which was not often, for she addressed herself more to her mother than to him—her eyes, like her voice, were cold and indifferent. Was she so constrained because of her mother, or was it that he did not understand? He wished to speak to her alone, but Frau von Kerich never left them for a moment. He tried to bring the conversation round to some subject interesting to himself; he spoke of his work and his plans; he was dimly conscious that Minna was evading him, and instinctively he tried to interest her in himself. Indeed, she seemed to listen attentively enough; she broke in upon his narrative with various interjections, which were never very apt, but always seemed to be full of interest. But just as he was beginning to hope once more, carried off his feet by one of her charming smiles, he saw Minna put her little hand to her lips and yawn. He broke off short. She saw that, and asked his pardon amiably, saying that she was tired. He got up, thinking that they would persuade him to stay, but they said nothing. He spun out his "Good-bye," and waited for a word to ask him to come again next day; there was no suggestion of it. He had to go. Minna did not take him to the door. She held out her hand to him—an indifferent hand that drooped limply in his—and he took his leave of them in the middle of the room.

He went home with terror in his heart. Of the Minna of two months before, of his beloved Minna, nothing was left. What had happened? What had become of her? For a poor boy who has never yet experienced the continual change, the complete disappearance, and the absolute renovation of living souls, of which the majority are not so much souls as collections of souls in succession changing and dying away continually, the simple truth was too cruel for him to be able to believe it. He rejected the idea of it in terror, and tried to persuade himself that he had not been able to see properly, and that Minna was just the same. He decided to go again to the house next morning, and to talk to her at all costs.

He did not sleep. Through the night he counted one after another the chimes of the clock. From one o'clock on he was rambling round the Kerichs' house; he entered it as soon as he could. He did not see Minna, but Frau von Kerich. Always busy and an early riser, she was watering the pots of flowers on the veranda. She gave a mocking cry when she saw Jean-Christophe.

"Ah!" she said. "It is you! . . . I am glad you have come. I have something to talk to you about. Wait a moment. . . ."

She went in for a moment to put down her watering can and to dry her hands, and came back with a little smile as she saw Jean-Christophe's discomfiture; he was conscious of the approach of disaster.

"Come into the garden," she said; "we shall be quieter."

In the garden that was full still of his love he followed Frau von Kerich. She did not hasten to speak, and enjoyed the boy's uneasiness.

"Let us sit here," she said at last. They were sitting on the seat in the place where Minna had held up her lips to him on the eve of her departure.

"I think you know what is the matter," said Frau von Kerich, looking serious so as to complete his confusion. "I should never have thought it of you, Jean-Christophe. I thought you a serious boy. I had every confidence in you. I should never have thought that you would abuse it to try and turn my daughter's head. She was in your keeping. You ought to have shown respect for her, respect for me, respect for yourself."

There was a light irony in her accents. Frau von Kerich attached not the least importance to this childish love affair; but Jean-Christophe was not conscious of it, and her reproaches, which he took, as he took everything, tragically, went to his heart.

“But, Madam . . . but, Madam . . .” he stammered, with tears in his eyes, “I have never abused your confidence. . . . Please do not think that. . . . I am not a bad man, that I swear! . . . I love Fräulein Minna. I love her with all my soul, and I wish to marry her.”

Frau von Kerich smiled.

“No, my poor boy,” she said, with that kindly smile in which was so much disdain, as at last he was to understand, “no, it is impossible; it is just a childish folly.”

“Why? Why?” he asked.

He took her hands, not believing that she could be speaking seriously, and almost reassured by the new softness in her voice. She smiled still, and said:

“Because . . .”

He insisted. With ironical deliberation—she did not take him altogether seriously—she told him that he had no fortune, that Minna had different tastes. He protested that that made no difference; that he would be rich, famous; that he would win honors, money, all that Minna could desire. Frau von Kerich looked skeptical; she was amused by his self-confidence, and only shook her head by way of saying no. But he stuck to it.

“No, Jean-Christophe,” she said firmly, “no. It is not worth arguing. It is impossible. It is not only a question of money. So many things! The position . . .”

She had no need to finish. That was a needle that pierced to his very marrow. His eyes were opened. He saw the irony of the friendly smile, he saw the coldness of the kindly look, he understood suddenly what it was that separated him from this woman whom he loved as a son, this woman who seemed to treat him like a mother; he was conscious of all that was patronizing and disdainful in her affection. He got up. He was pale. Frau von Kerich went on talking to him in her caressing voice, but it was the end; he heard no more the music of the words; he perceived under every word the falseness of that elegant soul. He could not answer a word. He went. Everything about him was going round and round.

When he regained his room he flung himself on his bed, and gave way to a fit of anger and injured pride, just as he used to do when he was a little boy. He bit his pillow; he crammed his handkerchief into his mouth, so that no one should hear him crying. He hated Frau von Kerich. He hated Minna. He despised them mightily. It seemed to him that he had been insulted, and

he trembled with shame and rage. He had to reply, to take immediate action. If he could not avenge himself he would die.

He got up, and wrote an idiotically violent letter:

“MADAM,—

“I do not know if, as you say, you have been deceived in me. But I do know that I have been cruelly deceived in you. I thought that you were my friends. You said so. You pretended to be so, and I loved you more than my life. I see now that it was all a lie, that your affection for me was only a sham; you made use of me. I amused you, provided you with entertainment, made music for you. I was your servant. Your servant: that I am not! I am no man’s servant!

“You have made me feel cruelly that I had no right to love your daughter. Nothing in the world can prevent my heart from loving where it loves, and if I am not your equal in rank, I am as noble as you. It is the heart that ennobles a man. If I am not a Count, I have perhaps more honor than many Counts. Lackey or Count, when a man insults me, I despise him. I despise as much any one who pretends to be noble, and is not noble of soul.

“Farewell! You have mistaken me. You have deceived me. I detest you!

“He who, in spite of you, loves, and will love till death, Fräulein Minna, *because she is his*, and nothing can take her from him.”

Hardly had he thrown his letter into the box than he was filled with terror at what he had done. He tried not to think of it, but certain phrases cropped up in his memory: he was in a cold sweat as he thought of Frau von Kerich reading those enormities. At first he was upheld by his very despair, but next day he saw that his letter could only bring about a filial separation from Minna, and that seemed to him the direst of misfortunes. He still hoped that Frau von Kerich, who knew his violent fits, would not take it seriously, that she would only reprimand him severely, and—who knows?—that she would be touched perhaps by the sincerity of his passion. One word, and he would have thrown himself at her feet. He waited for five days. Then came a letter. She said:

“DEAR SIR,—

“Since, as you say, there has been a misunderstanding between us, it would be wise not any further to prolong it. I should be very sorry to force upon you a relationship which has become painful to you. You will think it natural, therefore, that we should break it off. I hope that you will in time to come have no lack of other friends who will be able to appreciate you as you wish to be appreciated. I have no doubt as to your future, and from a distance shall, with sympathy, follow your progress in your musical career. Kind regards,

“JOSEPHA VON KERICH.”

The most bitter reproaches would have been less cruel. Jean-Christophe saw that he was lost. It is possible to reply to an unjust accusation. But what is to be done against the negativeness of such polite indifference? He raged against it. He thought that he would never see Minna again, and he could not bear it. He felt how little all the pride in the world weighs against a little love. He forgot his dignity: he became cowardly; he wrote more letters, in which he implored forgiveness. They were no less stupid than the letter in which he had railed against her. They evoked no response. And everything was said.

He nearly died of it. He thought of killing himself. He thought of murder. At least, he imagined that he thought of it. He was possessed by incendiary and murderous desires. People have little idea of the paroxysm of love or hate which sometimes devours the hearts of children. It was the most terrible crisis of his childhood. It ended his childhood. It stiffened his will. But it came near to breaking it forever.

He found life impossible. He would sit for hours with his elbows on the window-sill looking down into the courtyard, and dreaming, as he used to when he was a little boy, of some means of escaping from the torture of life when it became too great. The remedy was there, under his eyes. Immediate . . . immediate? How could one know? . . . Perhaps after hours—centuries—horrible sufferings! . . . But so utter was his childish despair that he let himself be carried away by the giddy round of such thoughts.

Louisa saw that he was suffering. She could not gauge exactly what was happening to him, but her instinct gave her a dim warning of danger. She tried to approach her son, to discover his sorrow, so as to console him. But the poor woman had lost the habit of talking intimately to Jean-Christophe.

For many years he had kept his thoughts to himself, and she had been too much taken up by the material cares of life to find time to discover them or divine them. Now that she would so gladly have come to his aid she knew not what to do. She hovered about him like a soul in torment; she would gladly have found words to bring him comfort, and she dared not speak for fear of irritating him. And in spite of all her care she did irritate him by her every gesture and by her very presence, for she was not very adroit, and he was not very indulgent. And yet he loved her; they loved each other. But so little is needed to part two creatures who are dear to each other, and love each other with all their hearts! A too violent expression, an awkward gesture, a harmless twitching of an eye or a nose, a trick of eating, walking, or laughing, a physical constraint which is beyond analysis. . . . You say that these things are nothing, and yet they are all the world. Often they are enough to keep a mother and a son, a brother and a brother, a friend and a friend, who live in proximity to each other, forever strangers to each other.

Jean-Christophe did not find in his mother's grief a sufficient prop in the crisis through which he was passing. Besides, what is the affection of others to the egoism of passion preoccupied with itself?

One night when his family were sleeping, and he was sitting by his desk, not thinking or moving, he was engulfed in his perilous ideas, when a sound of footsteps resounded down the little silent street, and a knock on the door brought him from his stupor. There was a murmuring of thick voices. He remembered that his father had not come in, and he thought angrily that they were bringing him back drunk, as they had done a week or two before, when they had found him lying in the street. For Melchior had abandoned all restraint, and was more and more the victim of his vice, though his athletic health seemed not in the least to suffer from an excess and a recklessness which would have killed any other man. He ate enough for four, drank until he dropped, passed whole nights out of doors in icy rain, was knocked down and stunned in brawls, and would get up again next day, with his rowdy gaiety, wanting everybody about him to be gay too.

Louisa, hurrying up, rushed to open the door. Jean-Christophe, who had not budged, stopped his ears so as not to hear Melchior's vicious voice and the tittering comments of the neighbors. . . .

. . . Suddenly a strange terror seized him; for no reason he began to tremble, with his face hidden in his hands. And on the instant a piercing cry made him raise his head. He rushed to the door. . . .

In the midst of a group of men talking in low voices, in the dark passage, lit only by the flickering light of a lantern, lying, just as his grandfather had done, on a stretcher, was a body dripping with water, motionless. Louisa was clinging to it and sobbing. They had just found Melchior drowned in the mill-race.

Jean-Christophe gave a cry. Everything else vanished: all his other sorrows were swept aside. He threw himself on his father's body by Louisa's side, and they wept together.

Seated by the bedside, watching Melchior's last sleep, on whose face was now a severe and solemn expression, he felt the dark peace of death enter into his soul. His childish passion was gone from him like a fit of fever; the icy breath of the grave had taken it all away. Minna, his pride, his love, and himself. . . . Alas! What misery! How small everything showed by the side of this reality, the only reality—death! Was it worth while to suffer so much, to desire so much, to be so much put about to come in the end to that! . . .

He watched his father's sleep, and he was filled with an infinite pity. He remembered the smallest of his acts of kindness and tenderness. For with all his faults Melchior was not bad: there was much good in him. He loved his family. He was honest. He had a little of the uncompromising probity of the Kraffts, which, in all questions of morality and honor, suffered no discussion, and never would admit the least of those small moral impurities which so many people in society regard not altogether as faults. He was brave, and whenever there was any danger faced it with a sort of enjoyment. If he was extravagant himself, he was so for others too; he could not bear anybody to be sad, and very gladly gave away all that belonged to him—and did not belong to him—to the poor devils he met by the wayside. All his qualities appeared to Jean-Christophe now, and he invented some of them, or exaggerated them. It seemed to him that he had misunderstood his father. He reproached himself with not having loved him enough. He saw him as broken by Life; he thought he heard that unhappy soul, drifting, too weak to struggle, crying out for the life so uselessly lost. He heard that lamentable entreaty that had so cut him to the heart one day:

“Jean-Christophe! Do not despise me!”

And he was overwhelmed by remorse. He threw himself on the bed, and kissed the dead face and wept. And as he had done that day, he said again:

“Dear father, I do not despise you. I love you. Forgive me!”

But that piteous entreaty was not appeased, and went on:



“Do not despise me! Do not despise me!” And suddenly Jean-Christophe saw himself lying in the place of the dead man: he heard the terrible words coming from his own lips; he felt weighing on his heart the despair of a useless life, irreparably lost. And he thought in terror: “Ah! everything, all the suffering, all the misery in the world, rather than come to that! . . .” How near he had been to it! Had he not all but yielded to the temptation to snap off his life himself, cowardly to escape his sorrow? As if all the sorrows, all betrayals, were not childish griefs beside the torture and the crime of self-betrayal, denial of faith, of self-contempt in death!

He saw that life was a battle without armistice, without mercy, in which he who wishes to be a man worthy of the name of a man must forever fight against whole armies of invisible enemies; against the murderous forces of Nature, uneasy desires, dark thoughts, treacherously leading him to degradation and destruction. He saw that he had been on the point of falling into the trap. He saw that happiness and love were only the friends of a moment to lead the heart to disarm and abdicate. And the little puritan of fifteen heard the voice of his God:

“Go, go, and never rest.”

“But whither, Lord, shall I go? Whatsoever I do, whithersoever I go, is not the end always the same? Is not the end of all things in that?”

“Go on to Death, you who must die! Go and suffer, you who must suffer! You do not live to be happy. You live to fulfil my Law. Suffer; die. But be what you must be—a Man.”

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

A table of contents has been added for reader convenience.

[The end of *Jean-Christophe: Morning* by Romain Rolland]