

mere sagacity—which in any case is probably not true wisdom—drives us all too quickly to this kind of duplicity. What I had dreamed of, as a child, as being the sweetest thing in love, what had seemed to me to be the very essence of love, was to pour out freely, to the one I loved, my tenderness, my gratitude for her kindness, my longing for an everlasting life together. But I had become only too well aware, from my own experience and from that of my friends, that the expression of such sentiments is far from being contagious. The case of an affected old woman like M. de Charlus who, as a result of seeing in his mind's eye only a handsome young man, thinks he himself has become a handsome young man, and betrays more and more effeminacy in his risible affectations of virility—such a case falls under a law which applies far more widely than to the Charluses alone, a law so generalised that not even love itself exhausts it entirely; we do not see our bodies, though others do, and we “follow” our thoughts, the object that is in front of us, invisible to others (made visible at times in a work of art, whence the frequent disillusionment of its admirers when they are admitted into the presence of the artist, whose inner beauty is so imperfectly reflected in his face). Once one has noticed this, one no longer “lets oneself go”; I had taken good care that afternoon not to tell Albertine how grateful I was to her that she had not remained at the Trocadéro. And tonight, having been afraid that she might leave me, I had feigned a desire to leave her, a pretence which moreover, as we shall see presently, had not been dictated solely by the experience I believed myself to have gained from my former loves and was seeking to turn to the profit of this one.

The fear that Albertine was perhaps going to say to me: “I want to be allowed to go out by myself at certain hours, I want to be able to stay away for twenty-four hours,” or some such request for freedom which I did not attempt to define, but which alarmed me, this fear had crossed my mind for a moment during the Verdurin reception. But it had been dispelled, contradicted moreover by the memory of Albertine's constant assurances of how happy she was with me. The intention to leave me, if it existed in Albertine, manifested itself only in an obscure fashion, in certain mournful glances, certain gestures of impatience, remarks which meant nothing of the sort but which, if one analysed them (and there was not even any need for analysis, for one understands at once this language of passion, even the most uneducated understand these remarks which can be explained only by vanity, rancour, jealousy, unexpressed as it happens, but detectable at once by the interlocutor through an intuitive faculty which, like the “good sense” of which Descartes speaks, is “the most evenly distributed thing in the world”), could only be explained by the presence in her of a sentiment which she concealed and which might lead her to form plans for another life without me. Just as this intention did not express itself in her speech in a logical fashion, so the presentiment of this intention, which I had felt tonight, remained just as vague in me. I continued to live by the hypothesis which accepted as true everything that Albertine told me. But it may be that during this time a wholly contrary hypothesis, of which I refused to think, never left me; this is all the more probable since otherwise I should not have felt uncomfortable about telling Albertine that I had been to the Verdurins', and my lack of as-

tonishment at her anger would not have been comprehensible. So that what probably existed in me was an idea of Albertine entirely contrary to that which my reason formed of her, and also to that which her own words suggested, an Albertine who was none the less not wholly invented, since she was like an internal mirror of certain impulses that occurred in her, such as her ill-humour at my having gone to the Verdurins'. Besides, for a long time past, my constant anxieties, my fear of telling Albertine that I loved her, all this corresponded to another hypothesis which explained far more things and had also this to be said for it, that if one adopted the first hypothesis the second became more probable, for by allowing myself to give way to effusions of tenderness for Albertine, I obtained from her nothing but irritation (to which moreover she assigned a different cause).

I may say that what had seemed to me most serious and had struck me most forcibly as a symptom of the fact that she anticipated my accusation was that she had said to me: "I believe Mlle Vinteuil was to be there," to which I had replied in the cruellest possible way: "You didn't tell me you'd met her." As soon as I found Albertine less than nice, instead of telling her I was sad, I became nasty.

Analysing my feelings on the basis of this, on the basis of the unvarying system of ripostes expressing the opposite of what I felt, I can be quite certain that if, that night, I told her that I was going to leave her, it was because—even before I had realised it—I was afraid that she might desire some freedom (I should have been hard put to it to say what this freedom was that made me tremble, but anyhow a freedom which might have given her an opportunity of being unfaithful to me, or at least

which was such that I should no longer have been able to be certain that she was not) and because I wanted to show her, from pride and from cunning, that I was very far from fearing anything of the sort, as I had already shown at Balbec, when I was anxious that she should have a good opinion of me, and later on, when I was anxious that she should not have time to feel bored with me.

Finally, the objection that might be offered to this second, unformulated hypothesis, that everything that Albertine said to me indicated on the contrary that the life which she preferred was the life she led in my house, rest, quiet, reading, solitude, a loathing for Sapphic loves, and so forth, need not be considered seriously. For if on her part Albertine had wanted to gauge what I felt from what I said to her, she would have learned the exact opposite of the truth, since I never expressed a desire to part from her except when I was unable to do without her, and at Balbec I had twice confessed to her that I was in love with another woman, first Andrée, then a mysterious stranger, on the two occasions when jealousy had revived my love for her. My words, therefore, did not in the least reflect my feelings. If the reader has no more than a faint impression of these, that is because, as narrator, I expose my feelings to him at the same time as I repeat my words. But if I concealed the former and he were acquainted only with the latter, my actions, so little in keeping with them, would so often give him the impression of strange reversals that he would think me more or less mad. A procedure which would not, for that matter, be much more false than the one I adopted, for the images which prompted me to action, so opposed to those which were portrayed in my words, were at that moment extremely

Chapter One

GRIEVING AND FORGETTING

“**M**ademoiselle Albertine has gone!” How much further does anguish penetrate in psychology than psychology itself! A moment before, in the process of analysing myself, I had believed that this separation without having seen each other again was precisely what I wished, and, comparing the mediocrity of the pleasures that Albertine afforded me with the richness of the desires which she prevented me from realising, I had felt that I was being subtle, had concluded that I no longer wished to see her, that I no longer loved her. But now these words: “Mademoiselle Albertine has gone,” had produced in my heart an anguish such that I felt I could not endure it much longer. So what I had believed to be nothing to me was simply my entire life. How ignorant one is of oneself. My anguish must be made to end at once; tender towards myself as my mother had been towards my dying grandmother, I said to myself with that genuine wish that one has to relieve the suffering of a person one loves: “Be patient for a moment, we shall find something to take the pain away, don’t fret, we’re not going to allow you to suffer like this.” It was in this category of ideas that my instinct of self-preservation sought for the first balms to lay upon my open wound: “None of this is of the slightest importance, because I’m going to bring her back at once. I shall have to think how, but in any case she will be here

this evening. Therefore it's useless to torment myself." "None of this is of the slightest importance"—I had not been content merely with giving myself this assurance, but had tried to convey the same impression to Françoise by not allowing her to see my suffering, because, even at the moment when I was feeling it so acutely, my love did not forget how important it was that it should appear a happy love, a mutual love, especially in the eyes of Françoise, who disliked Albertine and had always doubted her sincerity.

Yes, a moment ago, before Françoise came into the room, I had believed that I no longer loved Albertine, I had believed that I was leaving nothing out of account, like a rigorous analyst; I had believed that I knew the state of my own heart. But our intelligence, however lucid, cannot perceive the elements that compose it and remain unsuspected so long as, from the volatile state in which they generally exist, a phenomenon capable of isolating them has not subjected them to the first stages of solidification. I had been mistaken in thinking that I could see clearly into my own heart. But this knowledge, which the shrewdest perceptions of the mind would not have given me, had now been brought to me, hard, glittering, strange, like a crystallised salt, by the abrupt reaction of pain. I was so much in the habit of having Albertine with me, and now I suddenly saw a new aspect of Habit. Hitherto I had regarded it chiefly as an annihilating force which suppresses the originality and even the awareness of one's perceptions; now I saw it as a dread deity, so riveted to one's being, its insignificant face so incrusting in one's heart, that if it detaches itself, if it turns away from one,

this deity that one had barely distinguished inflicts on one sufferings more terrible than any other and is then as cruel as death itself.

The first thing to be done was to read Albertine's letter, since I was anxious to think of some way of bringing her back. I felt that this lay in my power, because, as the future is what exists as yet only in the mind, it seems to us to be still alterable by the intervention, at the eleventh hour, of the will. But at the same time, I remembered that I had seen forces other than my own act upon it, forces against which, even if I had had more time, I could never have prevailed. Of what use is it that the hour has not yet struck if we can do nothing to influence what will happen when it does? When Albertine was living in the house I had been quite determined to retain the initiative in our parting. And then she had gone. I opened her letter. It ran as follows:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

Forgive me for not having dared to say to you in person what I am now writing, but I am such a coward, and have always been so afraid in your presence, that however much I tried to force myself I could not find the courage to do so. This is what I should have said to you: Our life together has become impossible; indeed you must have realised, from your outburst the other evening, that there had been a change in our relations. What we were able to patch up that night would become irreparable in a few days' time. It is better for us, therefore, since we have had the good fortune to be reconciled, to part as friends. That is why, my darling, I am sending you this line, and I beg you to be kind enough to forgive me if I am causing you a little grief when you think of the immensity of mine. Dearest one, I do not want to become your enemy; it will be

bad enough to become by degrees, and all too soon, a stranger to you; and so, as I have absolutely made up my mind, before sending you this letter by Françoise I shall have asked her to let me have my boxes. Good-bye: I leave you the best of myself.

ALBERTINE"

"All this means nothing," I told myself, "it's even better than I thought, for as she doesn't mean a word of what she says, she obviously wrote it only in order to give me a shock, to frighten me, to stop me behaving unbearably towards her. I must think of something to do as soon as possible, so that Albertine will be back here this evening. It's sad to think that the Bontemps are unscrupulous people who make use of their niece to extort money from me. But what does that matter? Even if, to have Albertine here this evening, I must give half my fortune to Mme Bontemps, we shall still have enough left, Albertine and I, to live in comfort." And at the same time I calculated whether I had time to go out that morning and order the yacht and the Rolls-Royce which she coveted, quite forgetting, all my doubts having vanished, that I had decided that it would be unwise to give them to her. "Even if Mme Bontemps's agreement isn't enough, if Albertine refuses to obey her aunt and makes it a condition of her return that she shall enjoy complete independence, well, however much it may distress me, I shall let her have it; she shall go out by herself, as and when she likes. One must be prepared to make sacrifices, however painful they may be, for the thing to which one attaches most importance, which is, in spite of everything I decided this morning on the strength of my precise and absurd arguments, that Albertine shall continue to live here." Can I say moreover that to grant her that freedom

would have been altogether painful to me? I should be lying if I did. Already I had often felt that the anguish of leaving her free to misbehave far away from me was perhaps less acute even than the sort of misery which I used to feel when I sensed that she was bored in my company, under my roof. No doubt at the actual moment of her asking me to let her go somewhere, allowing her to do so, with my mind obsessed by the idea of organised orgies, would have been agonising for me. But to say to her: "Take our yacht, or the train, and go away for a month, to some place which I have never seen, where I shall know nothing of what you're doing"—this had often appealed to me, because of the thought that, by force of contrast, when she was far away from me, she would hanker after my society, and would be happy when she returned. "Besides, it's certainly what she herself wants; she doesn't in the least demand that freedom on which moreover, by offering her every day some new pleasure, I could easily succeed in imposing day by day some further restriction. No, what Albertine wanted was for me not to go on behaving insufferably to her, and above all—like Odette with Swann—for me to make up my mind to marry her. Once she is married, her independence will cease to matter to her; we shall stay here together, in perfect happiness." No doubt this meant giving up any thought of Venice. But the cities for which we have most longed (and *a fortiori* the most agreeable hostesses, the most pleasurable diversions—even more than Venice, the Duchesse de Guermantes or the theatre), how pale, insignificant, dead they become when we are tied to another's heart by a bond so painful that it prevents us from tearing ourselves away! "Besides, Albertine is perfectly

right about our marriage. Mamma herself was saying that all this procrastination was ridiculous. Marry her, that's what I ought to have done long ago, that's what I must do now, that's what made her write her letter without meaning a word of it; it's only to bring about our marriage that she has postponed for a few hours what she must desire as keenly as I do: her return to this house. Yes, that's what she wanted, that was the purpose of her action," my compassionate reason assured me; but I felt that, in doing so, my reason was still basing itself on the same hypothesis which it had adopted from the start. Whereas I was well aware that it was the other hypothesis which had invariably proved correct. No doubt this second hypothesis would never have been so bold as to formulate in so many words the notion that Albertine could have been on intimate terms with Mlle Vinteuil and her friend. And yet, when I had been overwhelmed by the impact of that terrible revelation, as the train slowed down before stopping at Incarville station, it was the second hypothesis that had been confirmed. This hypothesis had subsequently never conceived the idea that Albertine might leave me of her own accord, in this fashion, without warning me and giving me time to prevent her departure. But all the same, if, after the immense new leap which life had just caused me to make, the reality that confronted me was as novel as that which is presented to us by the discovery of a scientist, by the inquiries of an examining magistrate or the researches of a historian into the hidden aspects of a crime or a revolution, this reality, while exceeding the puny predictions of my second hypothesis, nevertheless fulfilled them. This second hypothesis was not an intellectual one, and the panic fear that

had gripped me on the evening when Albertine had refused to kiss me, or the night when I had heard the sound of her window being opened, was not based upon reason. But—and what follows will show it even more clearly, as many episodes must have indicated it already—the fact that our intelligence is not the subtlest, most powerful, most appropriate instrument for grasping the truth is only one reason the more for beginning with the intelligence, and not with an unconscious intuition, a ready-made faith in presentiments. It is life that, little by little, case by case, enables us to observe that what is most important to our hearts or to our minds is taught us not by reasoning but by other powers. And then it is the intelligence itself which, acknowledging their superiority, abdicates to them through reasoning and consents to become their collaborator and their servant. Experimental faith. It seemed to me that the unforeseen calamity with which I found myself grappling was also something that I had already known (as I had known of Albertine's friendship with a pair of lesbians), from having read it in so many signs in which (notwithstanding the contrary affirmations of my reason, based upon Albertine's own statements) I had discerned the weariness, the loathing that she felt at having to live in that state of slavery, signs that had so often seemed to me to be written as though in invisible ink behind her sad, submissive eyes, upon her cheeks suddenly inflamed with an unaccountable blush, in the sound of the window that had suddenly been flung open. Doubtless I had not dared to explore them fully or to form explicitly the idea of her sudden departure. I had thought, with a mind kept in equilibrium by Albertine's presence, only of a departure arranged by myself at an undetermined date, that is

to say a date situated in a non-existent time; consequently I had had merely the illusion of thinking of a departure, just as people imagine that they are not afraid of death when they think of it while they are in good health and are actually doing no more than introduce a purely negative idea into a healthy state which the approach of death would of course precisely alter. Besides, the idea of Albertine's departure on her own initiative might have occurred to my mind a thousand times over, in the clearest, the most sharply defined form, without my suspecting any the more what, in relation to myself, that is to say in reality, that departure would be, what an unprecedented, appalling, unknown thing, how entirely novel a calamity. I might have gone on thinking of that departure (had I foreseen it) unceasingly for years on end, without all those thoughts, placed end to end, having the faintest connexion, not merely in intensity but in kind, with the unimaginable hell the curtain of which Françoise had raised for me when she said: "Mademoiselle Albertine has gone." In order to picture to itself an unknown situation the imagination borrows elements that are already familiar and, for that reason, cannot picture it. But the sensibility, even in its most physical form, receives, like the wake of a thunderbolt, the original and for long indelible imprint of the novel event. And I hardly dared say to myself that, if I had foreseen this departure, I would perhaps have been incapable of picturing it to myself in all its horror, or indeed, with Albertine informing me of it, and myself threatening, imploring her, of preventing it. How far removed from me now was the desire to go to Venice! Just as, long ago at Combray, had been the desire to know Mme de Guermantes when the moment came at which I

longed for one thing only, to have Mamma in my room. And it was indeed all the anxieties I had felt ever since my childhood which, at the bidding of this new anguish, had come hastening to reinforce it, to amalgamate themselves with it in a homogeneous mass that suffocated me.

To be sure, the physical blow which such a parting administers to the heart, and which, because of that terrible capacity for registering things with which the body is endowed, makes the pain somehow contemporaneous with all the epochs in our life in which we have suffered—to be sure, this blow to the heart which—so little compunction do we feel for the sufferings of others—she who wishes to give the maximum intensity to the regret she causes, whether because, her departure being only a sham, she merely wants to demand better terms, or because, leaving us for ever—for ever!—she desires to wound us, or in order to avenge herself, or to continue to be loved, or (with an eye to the quality of the memory that she will leave behind her) to destroy the web of lassitude and indifference which she has felt being woven about her—to be sure, this blow to the heart is something we had vowed that we would avoid, assuring ourselves that we would part on good terms. But it is seldom indeed that one does part on good terms, because if one were on good terms one would not part. And then the woman to whom we show the utmost indifference nevertheless obscurely feels that in growing tired of her, by virtue of an identical force of habit, we have grown more and more attached to her, and she reflects that one of the essential elements in parting on good terms is to warn the other person before one goes. But she is afraid, by warning, of preventing. Every woman feels that the greater her power over a man, the

plained also by exhaustion, for she had not undressed and had spent the whole night packing everything except the things she had to ask Françoise for, as they were not in her bedroom or her dressing-room), she was still so sad, so much more erect, so much stiffer than during the previous days that Françoise thought, when Albertine said to her: "Good-bye, Françoise," that she was about to fall. When one is told a thing like that one realises that the woman who appealed to us so much less than any of the women whom one meets so easily in the course of the briefest outing, the woman who makes us resent having to sacrifice them to her, is on the contrary the one we would a thousand times prefer. For the choice lies no longer between a certain pleasure—which has become by force of habit, and perhaps by the mediocrity of its object, almost null and void—and other pleasures which tempt and thrill us, but between these latter pleasures and something that is far stronger than they, compassion for suffering.

When I vowed to myself that Albertine would be back in the house before night, I had proceeded as quickly as possible to cover with a fresh belief the open wound from which I had torn the belief I had lived with until then. But swiftly though my instinct of self-preservation had acted, I had, when Françoise spoke to me, been left helpless for an instant, and for all that I now knew that Albertine would be back that same evening, the pain I had felt during the instant in which I had not yet assured myself of her return (the instant that had followed the words: "Mademoiselle Albertine has asked for her boxes; Mademoiselle Albertine has gone"), this pain reawoke in me of its own accord, as sharp as it had been before, that is to say as if I had still been unaware of Albertine's im-

minent return. However, it was essential that she should return, but of her own accord. On any assumption, to appear to be taking the first step, to be begging her to return, would be to defeat my own object. True, I lacked the strength to give her up as I had given up Gilberte. Even more than to see Albertine again, what I wanted was to put an end to the physical anguish which my heart, less robust than of old, could endure no longer. Then, by dint of accustoming myself not to use my will-power, whether it was a question of work or of anything else, I had become more cowardly. But above all, this anguish was incomparably more intense for a number of reasons of which the most important was perhaps not that I had never tasted any sensual pleasure with Mme de Guermantes or with Gilberte, but that, not seeing them every day, and at every hour of the day, having no opportunity and consequently no need to see them, there had been lacking, in my love for them, the immense force of Habit. Perhaps, now that my heart, incapable of willing and of voluntarily enduring suffering, could think of only one possible solution, that Albertine should return at all costs, perhaps the opposite solution (a deliberate renunciation, a gradual resignation) would have seemed to me a novelist's solution, improbable in real life, had I not myself opted for it in the case of Gilberte. I knew therefore that this other solution might be accepted also, and by one and the same man, for I had remained more or less the same. But time had played its part, time which had aged me, time which moreover had kept Albertine perpetually in my company while we were living together. But at least, without giving her up, what survived in me of all that I had felt for Gilberte was the pride which made me

refuse to be to Albertine a despicable plaything by begging her to return; I wanted her to come back without my appearing to care whether she did or not. I got up, in order to lose no more time, but my anguish made me pause; this was the first time that I had got out of bed since Albertine had left me. Yet I must dress at once in order to go and make inquiries of Albertine's concierge.

Suffering, the prolongation of a spiritual shock that has come from without, keeps aspiring to change its form; one hopes to be able to dispel it by making plans, by seeking information; one wants it to pass through its countless metamorphoses, for this requires less courage than keeping our suffering intact; the bed on which we lie down with our grief appears so narrow, hard and cold. I therefore put my feet to the ground, and I stepped across the room with infinite care, placing myself in such a way as not to see Albertine's chair, the pianola on the pedals of which she used to press her golden slippers, or a single one of the things which she had used and all of which, in the secret language that my memories had taught them, seemed to be seeking to give me a translation, a different version, for a second time to tell me, of her departure. But even without looking at them I could see them: my strength left me; I sank down on one of those blue satin armchairs, the glossy surface of which an hour earlier, in the dimness of my bedroom anaesthetised by a ray of morning light, had made me dream dreams which then I had passionately caressed but which were infinitely remote from me now. Alas, I had never sat in one of them until this minute except when Albertine was still with me. And so I could not remain sitting there, and stood up again; and thus, at every moment, there was one more of those

innumerable and humble "selves" that compose our personality which was still unaware of Albertine's departure and must be informed of it; I was obliged—and this was more cruel than if they had been strangers and did not share my susceptibility to suffering—to announce to all these beings, to all these "selves" who did not yet know of it, the calamity that had just occurred; each of them in turn must hear for the first time the words: "Albertine has asked for her boxes"—those coffin-shaped boxes which I had seen loaded on to the train at Balbec with my mother's—"Albertine has gone." Each of them had to be told of my grief, the grief which is in no way a pessimistic conclusion freely drawn from an accumulation of baneful circumstances, but is the intermittent and involuntary reviviscence of a specific impression that has come to us from without and was not chosen by us. There were some of these "selves" which I had not encountered for a long time past. For instance (I had not remembered that it was the day on which the barber called) the "self" that I was when I was having my hair cut. I had forgotten this "self," and his arrival made me burst into tears, as, at a funeral, does the appearance of an old retired servant who has not forgotten the deceased. Then all of a sudden I remembered that, during the past week, I had from time to time been seized by panic fears which I had not confessed to myself. At those moments, however, I had debated the question, saying to myself: "No need, of course, to consider the hypothesis of her suddenly leaving me. It's absurd. If I were to confide it to a sensible, intelligent man" (and I would have done so to set my mind at rest, had not jealousy prevented me from confiding in anyone) "he would be sure to say to me: 'Why, you're mad. It's im-

possible.' (And, as a matter of fact, during these last days we had not quarrelled once.) People leave you for a reason. They tell you the reason. They give you a chance to reply. They don't run away like that. No, it's perfectly childish. It's the only really absurd hypothesis." And yet, every day, on finding her still there in the morning when I rang my bell, I had heaved an immense sigh of relief. And when Françoise handed me Albertine's letter, I had at once been certain that it referred to the one thing that could not happen, to this departure which I had somehow perceived several days in advance, in spite of the logical reasons for feeling reassured. I had told myself this, almost with self-satisfaction at my perspicacity in my despair, like a murderer who knows that he cannot be found out but is nevertheless afraid and all of a sudden sees his victim's name written at the top of a document on the table of the examining magistrate who has sent for him.

My only hope was that Albertine had gone to Touraine, to her aunt's house, where after all she would be under some sort of surveillance and could not do anything very serious before I brought her back. My worst fear was that she might have stayed in Paris, or have gone to Amsterdam or to Montjouvain, in other words that she had escaped in order to pursue some intrigue the preliminaries of which I had failed to observe. But in reality, when I said to myself Paris, Amsterdam, Montjouvain, that is to say several places, I was thinking of places that were merely potential. And so, when Albertine's concierge informed me that she had gone to Touraine, that place of residence which I had thought desirable seemed to me the most dreadful of all, because it was real, and because for the first time, tortured by the certainty of the present and

the uncertainty of the future, I pictured Albertine starting on a life which she had deliberately chosen to lead apart from me, perhaps for a long time, perhaps for ever, a life in which she would realise that unknown element which in the past had so often troubled me, even though I enjoyed the good fortune of possessing, of caressing what was its outer shell, that charming face, impenetrable and captive. It was this unknown element that formed the core of my love. As for Albertine herself, she scarcely existed in me save under the form of her name, which, but for certain rare moments of respite when I awoke, came and engraved itself upon my brain and continued incessantly to do so. If I had thought aloud, I should have kept on repeating it, and my speech would have been as monotonous, as limited, as if I had been transformed into a bird, a bird like the one in the fable whose song repeated incessantly the name of her whom it had loved when a man. One says the name to oneself, and since one remains silent it is as though one were inscribing it inside oneself, as though it were leaving its trace on one's brain, which must end up, like a wall on which somebody has amused himself scribbling, by being entirely covered with the name, written a thousand times over, of the woman one loves. One rewrites it all the time in one's mind when one is happy, and even more when one is unhappy. And one feels a constantly recurring need to repeat this name which brings one nothing more than what one already knows, until, in course of time, it wearies us. I did not even give a thought to carnal pleasure at this moment; I did not even see in my mind's eye the image of that Albertine who had been the cause of such an upheaval of my being, I did not perceive her body, and if I had tried

to isolate the idea—for there is always one—that was bound up with my suffering, it would have been, alternately, on the one hand my doubt as to the intention with which she had left me, with or without any thought of returning, and on the other hand the means of bringing her back. Perhaps there is something symbolical and true in the infinitesimal place occupied in our anxiety by the one who is its cause. The fact is that her person itself counts for little or nothing; what is almost everything is the series of emotions and anxieties which chance occurrences have made us feel in the past in connexion with her and which habit has associated with her. What proves this clearly is (even more than the boredom which we feel in moments of happiness) the extent to which seeing or not seeing the person in question, being or not being admired by her, having or not having her at our disposal, will seem to us utterly irrelevant when we no longer have to pose ourselves the problem (so otiose that we shall no longer take the trouble to consider it) save in relation to the person herself—the series of emotions and anxieties being forgotten, at least so far as she is concerned, for it may have developed anew, but transferred to another. Before this, when it was still attached to her, we supposed that our happiness was dependent upon her person; it depended merely upon the cessation of our anxiety. Our unconscious was therefore more clairvoyant than ourselves at that moment, when it made the figure of the beloved so minute, a figure which we had even perhaps forgotten, which we might have been comparatively unfamiliar with and thought mediocre, in the terrible drama in which seeing her again in order to cease waiting for her could be a matter of life and death for us. Minuscule proportions of

the woman's form; logical and necessary effect of the manner in which love develops; clear allegory of the subjective nature of that love.

Outside the door of Albertine's house I found a little poor girl who gazed at me with huge eyes and who looked so sweet-natured that I asked her whether she would care to come home with me, as I might have taken home a dog with faithful eyes. She seemed pleased at the suggestion. When I got home, I held her for some time on my knee, but very soon her presence, by making me feel too keenly Albertine's absence, became intolerable. And I asked her to go away, after giving her a five-hundred franc note. And yet, soon afterwards, the thought of having some other little girl in the house with me, of never being alone without the comfort of an innocent presence, was the only thing that enabled me to endure the idea that Albertine might perhaps remain away for some time. The spirit in which Albertine had left me was similar no doubt to that of nations who pave the way by a demonstration of their armed force for the exercise of their diplomacy. She must have left me only in order to obtain from me better terms, greater freedom, more luxury. In that case, of the two of us, the one who prevailed would have been myself, had I had the strength to await the moment when, seeing that she could gain nothing, she would return of her own accord. But if at cards, or in war, where victory alone matters, we can hold out against bluff, the conditions are not the same as those created by love and jealousy, not to mention suffering. If, in order to wait, to "hold out," I allowed Albertine to remain away from me for several days, for several weeks perhaps, I was ruining what had been my sole purpose for more than a year: never to leave her

I shall say nothing of the letter conveying a declaration of affection which I received at this time from a niece of Mme de Guermantes who was considered to be the prettiest girl in Paris, or of the overtures made to me by the Duc de Guermantes on behalf of her parents, resigned, in their anxiety to secure their daughter's happiness, to the inequality of the match, to an apparent misalliance. Such incidents which might prove gratifying to one's self-esteem are too painful when one is in love. One might have the desire but not the indelicacy to communicate them to her who has a less flattering opinion of one, an opinion which moreover would not be modified by the knowledge that one is capable of inspiring a quite different one. What the Duke's niece wrote to me could only have irritated Albertine.

From the moment of waking, when I picked up my grief again at the point where I had left it before going to sleep, like a book which had been shut for a while but which I would keep before my eyes until night, it was invariably to some thought concerning Albertine that I related every sensation, whether it came to me from without or from within. The bell would ring: it must be a letter from her, or she herself perhaps! If I felt well and not too miserable, I was no longer jealous, I no longer had any grievance against her, I wanted to see her at once, to kiss her, to live happily with her ever after. The act of telegraphing to her "Come at once" seemed to me to have become a perfectly simple thing, as though my new mood had changed not merely my attitude, but things external to myself, had made them easier. If I was in a sombre mood, all my anger with her revived, I no longer felt any desire to kiss her, I felt how impossible it was that she

could ever make me happy, I sought only to harm her and to prevent her from belonging to other people. But the outcome of these two opposite moods was identical: it was essential that she should return as soon as possible. And yet, whatever joy I might feel at the moment of her return, I sensed that very soon the same difficulties would recur and that to seek happiness in the satisfaction of a desire of the mind was as naïve as to attempt to reach the horizon by walking straight ahead. The further the desire advances, the further does real possession recede. So that if happiness, or at least the absence of suffering, can be found, it is not the satisfaction, but the gradual reduction and the eventual extinction of desire that one should seek. One seeks to see the beloved object, but one ought to seek not to: forgetfulness alone brings about the ultimate extinction of desire. And I imagine that if an author were to publish truths of this sort he would dedicate the book that contained them to a woman with whom he would thus take pleasure in striking up a relationship, saying to her: "This book is yours." And thus, while telling the truth in his book, he would be lying in his dedication, for he will attach to the book's being hers only the importance that he attaches to the stone which came to him from her and which will remain precious to him only so long as he is in love with her. The bonds between ourselves and another person exist only in our minds. Memory as it grows fainter loosens them, and notwithstanding the illusion by which we want to be duped and with which, out of love, friendship, politeness, deference, duty, we dupe other people, we exist alone. Man is the creature who cannot escape from himself, who knows other people only in himself, and when he asserts the contrary, he is lying. And I

whom we are keeping does not seem to us to be a kept woman as long as we are unaware that she is being kept by other men. And yet, since I had never ceased to spend a great deal of money on her, I had taken her in spite of this moral baseness; I had encouraged this baseness of hers, I had perhaps increased, perhaps even created it. Then, just as we have the faculty of making up stories to soothe our anguish, just as we manage, when we are dying of hunger, to persuade ourselves that a stranger is going to leave us a fortune of a hundred million, I imagined Albertine in my arms, explaining to me without the slightest hesitation that it was because of the similarity of its workmanship that she had bought the second ring, that it was she who had had her initials engraved on it. But this explanation was still fragile, it had not yet had time to thrust into my mind its beneficent roots, and my pain could not be so quickly assuaged. And I reflected that many men who tell their friends that their mistress is very sweet to them must suffer similar torments. Thus it is that they lie to others and to themselves. They do not altogether lie; they do spend in her company hours that are genuinely delightful; but the sweetness which she shows her lover in front of his friends and which enables him to preen himself, and the sweetness which she shows him when they are alone together and which enables him to bless her, conceal all too many unrecorded hours in which the lover has suffered, doubted, sought everywhere in vain to discover the truth! Such sufferings are inseparable from the pleasure of loving, of delighting in a woman's most trivial remarks, remarks which we know to be trivial but which we perfume with her fragrance. At that moment, I was no longer capable of delighting, through memory, in

the fragrance of Albertine. Shattered, holding the two rings in my hand, I stared at that pitiless eagle whose beak was rending my heart, whose wings, chiselled in high relief, had borne away the trust that I still retained in my mistress, in whose claws my tortured mind was unable to escape for an instant from the incessantly recurring questions concerning the stranger whose name the eagle doubtless symbolised though without allowing me to decipher it, whom she had doubtless loved in the past, and whom she had doubtless seen again not so long ago, since it was on the day, so peaceful, so loving and so intimate, of our drive together through the Bois that I had seen, for the first time, the second ring, the one in which the eagle appeared to be dipping its beak in the bright blood of the ruby.

If, however, from morning till night, I never ceased to grieve over Albertine's departure, this did not mean that I thought only of her. For one thing, her charm having for a long time past spread gradually over things which had since become quite remote from her, but were none the less electrified by the same emotion as she gave me, if something made me think of Incarville, or of the Verdurins, or of some new part that Léa was playing, a sudden flux of pain would overwhelm me. For another thing, what I myself called thinking of Albertine meant thinking of how I might get her back, how I might join her, how I might discover what she was doing. With the result that if, during those hours of incessant torment, a pictogram could have represented the images that accompanied my sufferings, it would have shown pictures of the Gare d'Orsay, of the banknotes offered to Mme Bontemps, of Saint-Loup stooping over the sloping desk of a telegraph

office filling in a telegram form to me, never the picture of Albertine. Just as, throughout the whole course of one's life, one's egoism sees before it all the time the objects that are of concern to the self, but never takes in that "I" itself which is perpetually observing them, so the desire which directs our actions descends towards them, but does not reach back to itself, whether because, being unduly utilitarian, it plunges into the action and disdains all knowledge of it, or because it looks to the future to compensate for the disappointments of the present, or because the inertia of the mind urges it to slide down the easy slope of imagination, rather than to climb the steep slope of introspection. In reality, during those hours of crisis in which we would stake our whole life, in proportion as the woman upon whom it depends reveals more and more clearly the immensity of the place that she occupies for us, leaving nothing in the world that is not disrupted by her, so the image of that woman diminishes until it is no longer perceptible. We find in everything the effect of her presence in the emotion that we feel; herself, the cause, we find nowhere. I was so incapable during those days of forming any picture of Albertine that I could almost have believed that I did not love her, just as my mother, in the moments of despair when she was incapable of ever picturing my grandmother (except once in the chance encounter of a dream, the importance of which she felt so strongly, although asleep, that she strove with all the strength that remained to her in her sleep to make it last), might have accused and did in fact accuse herself of not missing her mother, whose death had been a mortal blow to her but whose features eluded her memory.*

Why should I have supposed that Albertine did not

care for women? Because she had said, especially of late, that she did not care for them: but did not our life rest upon a perpetual lie? Never once had she said to me: "Why can't I go out as and when I choose? Why do you always ask other people what I have been doing?" And yet, after all, the conditions of her life were so unusual that she must have asked me this had she not herself guessed the reason. And was it not understandable that my silence as to the causes of her confinement should be matched by a similar and constant silence on her part as to her perpetual desires, her innumerable memories, her countless hopes and longings? Françoise looked as though she knew that I was lying when I alluded to the imminence of Albertine's return. And her belief seemed to be founded upon something more than that truth which generally guided our old housekeeper, to the effect that masters do not like to be humiliated in front of their servants, and allow them to know only so much of the truth as does not depart too far from a flattering fiction calculated to maintain respect for themselves. This time, Françoise's belief seemed to be founded upon something else, as though she had herself aroused and fostered distrust in Albertine's mind, stimulated her anger, driven her, in short, to the point at which she could predict her departure as inevitable. If this was true, my version of a temporary absence, of which I had known and approved, could be received with nothing but incredulity by Françoise. But the idea that she had formed of Albertine's venal nature, the exasperation with which, in her hatred, she magnified the "profit" that Albertine was supposed to be making out of me, might to some extent belie that certainty. And so when in her hearing I made an allusion, as

who frequented houses of assignation, and of Mme Putbus's maid? Was it not for the latter that I had returned to Balbec? More recently, had I not longed to go to Venice? Why then might Albertine not have longed to go to Touraine? Only, when it came to the point, as I now realised, I would not have left her, I would not have gone to Venice. Indeed, in my heart of hearts, when I said to myself: "I shall leave her soon," I knew that I would never leave her, just as I knew that I would never settle down to work, or live a healthy life, or do any of the things which, day after day, I vowed to do on the morrow. Only, whatever I might feel in my heart, I had thought it more adroit to let her live under the perpetual threat of a separation. And no doubt, thanks to my detestable adroitness, I had convinced her only too well. In any case, things could not now go on like this; I could not leave her in Touraine with those girls, with that actress; I could not endure the thought of that life which eluded me. I would await her reply to my letter: if she was doing wrong, alas! a day more or less made no difference (and perhaps I said this to myself because, being no longer in the habit of taking note of every minute of her life, a single one of which wherein she was unobserved would formerly have thrown me into a panic, my jealousy no longer observed the same time-scale). But as soon as I received her answer, if she was not coming back I would go and fetch her; willy-nilly, I would tear her away from her women friends. Besides, was it not better for me to go down in person, now that I had discovered Saint-Loup's hitherto unsuspected duplicity? Might he not, for all I knew, have organised a plot to separate me from Albertine? Was it because I had changed, or because I had

been incapable of imagining then that natural causes would bring me one day to this unprecedented pass? At all events, how I should have lied now had I written to her, as I had said to her in Paris, that I hoped that no accident might befall her! Ah! if some accident had happened to her, my life, instead of being poisoned for ever by this incessant jealousy, would at once regain, if not happiness, at least a state of calm through the suppression of suffering.

The suppression of suffering? Can I really have believed it, have believed that death merely strikes out what exists, and leaves everything else in its place, that it removes the pain from the heart of him for whom the other's existence has ceased to be anything but a source of pain, that it removes the pain and puts nothing in its place? The suppression of pain! As I glanced at the news items in the papers, I regretted that I had not had the courage to form the same wish as Swann. If Albertine could have been the victim of an accident, were she alive I should have had a pretext for hastening to her bedside, were she dead I should have recovered, as Swann said, my freedom to live. Did I believe this? He had believed it, that subtlest of men who thought that he knew himself well. How little do we know of what we have in our hearts! How clearly, a little later, had he been still alive, I could have proved to him that his wish was not only criminal but absurd, that the death of the woman he loved would have delivered him from nothing!

I forsook all pride with regard to Albertine, and sent her a despairing telegram begging her to return on any terms, telling her that she could do whatever she liked, that I asked only to be allowed to take her in my arms for

a minute three times a week, before she went to bed. And if she had said once a week only, I would have accepted the restriction.

She never came back. My telegram had just gone off to her when I myself received one. It was from Mme Bontemps. The world is not created once and for all for each of us individually. There are added to it in the course of our lives things of which we have never had any suspicion. Alas! it was not a suppression of suffering that the first two lines of the telegram produced in me: "My poor friend, our little Albertine is no more. Forgive me for breaking this terrible news to you who were so fond of her. She was thrown by her horse against a tree while she was out riding. All our efforts to restore her to life were unavailing. If only I had died in her stead!" No, not the suppression of suffering, but a suffering until then unimagined, that of realising that she would not come back. But had I not told myself many times that she might not come back? I had indeed done so, but now I saw that I had never believed it for a moment. As I needed her presence, her kisses, to enable me to endure the pain that my suspicions caused me, I had formed, since Balbec, the habit of being always with her. Even when she had gone out, when I was alone, I was kissing her still. I had continued to do so since her departure for Touraine. I had less need of her fidelity than of her return. And if my reason might with impunity cast doubt upon it now and again, my imagination never ceased for an instant to picture it for me. Instinctively I drew my hand over my throat, over my lips, which felt themselves kissed by her lips still after she had gone away, and would never be kissed by them again; I drew my hand over

them, as Mamma had caressed me at the time of my grandmother's death, saying to me: "My poor boy, your grandmother who was so fond of you will never kiss you again." All my life to come seemed to have been wrenched from my heart. My life to come? Had I not, then, thought at times of living it without Albertine? Of course not! Had I then for a long time past pledged her every minute of my life until my death? I had indeed! This future indissolubly blended with hers was something I had never had the vision to perceive, but now that it had just been demolished, I could feel the place that it occupied in my gaping heart. Françoise, who still knew nothing, came into my room. In a sudden fury I shouted at her: "What do you want?" Then (sometimes there are words that set a different reality in the same place as that which confronts us; they bewilder us in the same way as a fit of dizziness) she said to me: "Monsieur has no need to look cross. On the contrary he's going to be pleased. Here are two letters from Mademoiselle Albertine."

I felt, afterwards, that I must have stared at her with the eyes of a man whose mind has become unhinged. I was not even glad, nor was I incredulous. I was like a person who sees the same place in his room occupied by a sofa and by a grotto: nothing seeming real to him any more, he collapses on the floor. Albertine's two letters must have been written shortly before the fatal ride. The first said:

"My dear, I must thank you for the proof of your confidence which you give me when you tell me of your intention to bring Andrée to live with you. I am sure that she will be delighted to accept, and I think that it will be a very good thing for her. Gifted as she is, she will know

how to make the most of the companionship of a man like yourself, and of the admirable influence which you manage to exert over other people. I feel that you have had an idea from which as much good may spring for her as for yourself. And so, if she should make the slightest difficulty (which I do not believe she will), telegraph to me and I will undertake to bring pressure to bear upon her."

The second was dated the following day. (In fact she must have written them both within a few minutes of one another, perhaps at the same time, and must have predated the first. For, all the time, I had been forming absurd ideas of her intentions, which had simply been to return to me, and which anyone not directly interested in the matter, a man without imagination, the negotiator of a peace treaty, the merchant who has to examine a transaction, would have judged more accurately than myself.) It contained only these words:

"Is it too late for me to return to you? If you have not yet written to Andrée, would you be prepared to take me back? I shall abide by your decision, but I beg you not to be long in making it known to me; you can imagine how impatiently I shall be waiting. If it is to tell me to return, I shall take the train at once. Yours with all my heart, Albertine."

For the death of Albertine to have been able to eliminate my suffering, the shock of the fall would have had to kill her not only in Touraine but in myself. There, she had never been more alive. In order to enter into us, another person must first have assumed the form, have adapted himself to the framework of time; appearing to us only in a succession of momentary flashes, he has never

been able to reveal to us more than one aspect of himself at a time, to present us with more than a single photograph of himself. A great weakness no doubt for a person, to consist merely of a collection of moments; a great strength also: he is a product of memory, and our memory of a moment is not informed of everything that has happened since; this moment which it has recorded endures still, lives still, and with it the person whose form is outlined in it. And moreover, this disintegration does not only make the dead one live, it multiplies him or her. In order to be consoled I would have to forget, not one, but innumerable Albertines. When I had succeeded in bearing the grief of losing this Albertine, I must begin again with another, with a hundred others.

So then my life was entirely altered. What had constituted its sweetness—not because of Albertine, but concurrently with her, when I was alone—was precisely the perpetual resurgence, at the bidding of identical moments, of moments from the past. From the sound of pattering raindrops I recaptured the scent of the lilacs at Combray; from the shifting of the sun's rays on the balcony the pigeons in the Champs-Élysées; from the muffling of sounds in the heat of the morning hours, the cool taste of cherries; the longing for Brittany or Venice from the noise of the wind and the return of Easter. Summer was at hand, the days were long, the weather was warm. It was the season when, early in the morning, pupils and teachers repair to the public gardens to prepare for the final examinations under the trees, seeking to extract the sole drop of coolness vouchsafed by a sky less ardent than in the midday heat but already as sterilely pure. From my darkened room, with a power of evocation equal to that of

former days but capable now of evoking only pain, I felt that outside, in the heaviness of the atmosphere, the setting sun was plastering the vertical fronts of houses and churches with a tawny distemper. And if Françoise, when she came in, accidentally disturbed the folds of the big curtains, I stifled a cry of pain at the rent that had just been made in my heart by that ray of long-ago sunlight which had made beautiful in my eyes the modern façade of Marcouville-l'Orgueilleuse when Albertine had said to me: "It's restored." Not knowing how to account to Françoise for my groan, I said to her: "Oh, I'm so thirsty." She left the room, then returned, but I turned sharply away under the impact of the painful discharge of one of the thousand invisible memories which incessantly exploded around me in the darkness: I had noticed that she had brought me cider and cherries, things which a farm-lad had brought out to us in the carriage, at Balbec, "kinds" in which I should have made the most perfect communion, in those days, with the prismatic gleam in shuttered dining-rooms on days of scorching heat. Then I thought for the first time of the farm called Les Ecorres, and said to myself that on certain days when Albertine had told me, at Balbec, that she would not be free, that she was obliged to go somewhere with her aunt, she had perhaps been with one or another of her girlfriends at some farm to which she knew that I was not in the habit of going, and, while I waited desperately for her at Marie-Antoinette where they told me: "No, we haven't seen her today," had been saying to her friend the same words as she used to say to me when we went out together: "He'll never think of looking for us here, so there's no fear of our being disturbed." I told Françoise to draw the cur-

tains together, so that I would no longer see that ray of sunlight. But it continued to filter through, just as corrosively, into my memory. "It doesn't appeal to me, it's been restored, but tomorrow we'll go to Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, and the day after to . . ." Tomorrow, the day after, it was a prospect of life together, perhaps for ever, that was opening up; my heart leapt towards it, but it was no longer there, Albertine was dead.

I asked Françoise the time. Six o'clock. At last, thank God, that oppressive heat, of which in the past I used to complain to Albertine and which we so enjoyed, was about to die down. The day was drawing to its close. But what did that profit me? The cool evening air was rising; it was sunset; in my memory, at the end of a road which we had taken, she and I, on our way home, I saw it now, beyond the furthest village, like some distant place, inaccessible that evening, which we would spend at Balbec, still together. Together then; now I must stop short on the brink of that same abyss; she was dead. It was not enough now to draw the curtains; I tried to stop the eyes and ears of my memory in order not to see that band of orange in the western sky, in order not to hear those invisible birds responding from one tree to the next on either side of me who was then so tenderly embraced by her who was now dead. I tried to avoid those sensations that are produced by the dampness of leaves in the evening air, the rise and fall of humpback roads. But already those sensations had gripped me once more, carrying me far enough back from the present moment to give the necessary recoil, the necessary momentum to strike me anew, to the idea that Albertine was dead. Ah! never again would I enter a forest, never again would I stroll be-

neath the trees. But would the broad plains be less painful to me? How often had I crossed, on the way to fetch Albertine, how often had I retrodden, on the way back with her, the great plain of Cricqueville, sometimes in foggy weather when the swirling mists gave us the illusion of being surrounded by a vast lake, sometimes on limpid evenings when the moonlight, dematerialising the earth, making it appear from a few feet away as celestial as it is, in the daytime, in the distance only, enclosed the fields and the woods with the firmament to which it had assimilated them in the moss-agate of a universal blue!

Françoise must have been pleased by Albertine's death, and in fairness to her it should be said that by a sort of tact and decorum she made no pretence of sorrow. But the unwritten laws of her immemorial code and the tradition of the mediaeval peasant woman who weeps as in the romances of chivalry were older than her hatred of Albertine and even of Eulalie. Thus, on one of these late afternoons, as I was not quick enough in concealing my distress, she caught sight of my tears, prompted by her instinct as a former peasant girl which at one time had led her to catch and maltreat animals, to feel nothing but merriment in wringing the necks of chickens and in boiling lobsters alive, and, when I was ill, in observing, as it might be the wounds that she had inflicted on an owl, my suffering expression which she afterwards proclaimed in a sepulchral tone as a presage of coming disaster. But her Combray "unwritten law" did not permit her to treat tears and sorrow lightly—things which in her judgment were as fatal as shedding one's flannel vest or toying with one's food. "Oh, no, Monsieur, it doesn't do to cry like that, it isn't good for you." And in trying to stem my

tears she looked as anxious as if they had been torrents of blood. Unfortunately I adopted a chilly air that cut short the effusions in which she was hoping to indulge and which might well have been sincere. Her attitude towards Albertine was perhaps akin to her attitude towards Eulalie, and, now that my mistress could no longer derive any profit from me, Françoise had ceased to hate her. She felt bound, however, to let me see that she was perfectly well aware that I was crying, and that, following the deplorable example set by my family, I did not wish to "show it." "You mustn't cry, Monsieur," she adjured me, in a calmer tone this time, and with the intention of proving her perspicacity rather than displaying her pity. And she added: "It was bound to happen; she was too happy, poor creature, she never knew how happy she was."

How slow the day is in dying on these interminable summer evenings! A pale ghost of the house opposite continued indefinitely to tinge the sky with its persistent whiteness. At last it was dark in the apartment; I stumbled against the furniture in the hall, but in the door that opened on to the staircase, in the midst of the darkness I had thought to be complete, the glazed panel was translucent and blue, with the blueness of a flower, the blueness of an insect's wing, a blueness that would have seemed to me beautiful had I not felt it to be a last glint, sharp as a steel blade, a final blow that was being dealt me, in its indefatigable cruelty, by the day. Finally, however, complete darkness came, but then a glimpse of a star behind the tree in the courtyard was enough to remind me of the times when we used to set out in a carriage, after dinner, for the woods of Chantepie, carpeted with moonlight. And even in the streets I might chance to isolate upon the

always, even before I began to love, each season had made me a different person, having other desires because he had other perceptions, a person who, having dreamed only of cliffs and storms overnight, if the indiscreet spring daybreak had insinuated a scent of roses through the gaps in the ill-fitting enclosure of his sleep, would wake up on the way to Italy. Even in the course of my love, had not the volatile state of my emotional climate, the varying pressure of my beliefs, had they not one day reduced the visibility of the love that I was feeling, and the next day indefinitely extended it, one day embellished it to a smile, another day condensed it to a storm? We exist only by virtue of what we possess, we possess only what is really present to us, and many of our memories, our moods, our ideas sail away on a voyage of their own until they are lost to sight! Then we can no longer take them into account in the total which is our personality. But they know of secret paths by which to return to us. And on certain nights, having gone to sleep almost without missing Albertine any more—we can only miss what we remember—on awakening I found a whole fleet of memories which had come to cruise upon the surface of my clearest consciousness and which I could distinguish perfectly. Then I wept over what I could see so plainly, though the night before it had been non-existent to me. In an instant, Albertine's name, her death, had changed their meaning; her betrayals had suddenly resumed their old importance.

How could she have seemed dead to me when now, in order to think of her, I had at my disposal only those same images one or other of which I used to recall when she was alive? Either swift-moving and bent over the

mythological wheel of her bicycle, strapped on rainy days inside the warrior tunic of her waterproof which moulded her breasts, her head turbaned and dressed with snakes, when she spread terror through the streets of Balbec; or else on the evenings when we had taken champagne into the woods of Chantepie, her voice provocative and altered, her face suffused with warm pallor, reddened only on the cheekbones, and when, unable to make it out in the darkness of the carriage, I drew her into the moonlight in order to see it more clearly, the face I was now trying in vain to recapture, to see again in a darkness that would never end. A little statuette on the drive to the island in the Bois, a still and plump face with coarse-grained skin at the pianola, she was thus by turns rain-soaked and swift, provoking and diaphanous, motionless and smiling, an angel of music. In this way each one was attached to a moment, to the date of which I found myself carried back when I saw again that particular Albertine. And these moments of the past do not remain still; they retain in our memory the motion which drew them towards the future—towards a future which has itself become the past—drawing us along in their train. Never had I caressed the waterproofed Albertine of the rainy days; I wanted to ask her to take off that armour, in order to experience with her the love of the tented field, the fraternity of travel. But this was no longer possible, for she was dead. Neither, for fear of corrupting her, had I ever shown any sign of comprehension on the evenings when she seemed to be offering me pleasures which, but for my self-restraint, she might not perhaps have sought from others, and which aroused in me now a frantic desire. I should not have found them the same in any other

woman, but I might scour the whole world now without encountering the woman who was prepared to give them to me, for Albertine was dead. It seemed that I had to choose between two facts, to decide which of them was true, to such an extent was the fact of Albertine's death— arising for me from a reality which I had not known, her life in Touraine—in contradiction with all my thoughts of her, my desires, my regrets, my tenderness, my rage, my jealousy. So great a wealth of memories borrowed from the treasury of her life, such a profusion of feelings evoking, implicating her life, seemed to make it incredible that Albertine should be dead. Such a profusion of feelings, for my memory, in preserving my affection, left it all its variety. It was not Albertine alone who was a succession of moments, it was also myself. My love for her was not simple: to a curiosity about the unknown had been added a sensual desire, and to a feeling of almost conjugal sweetness, at one moment indifference, at another a furious jealousy. I was not one man only, but as it were the march-past of a composite army in which there were passionate men, indifferent men, jealous men—jealous men not one of whom was jealous of the same woman. And no doubt it would be from this that one day would come the cure for which I had no wish. In a composite mass, the elements may one by one, without our noticing it, be replaced by others, which others again eliminate, until in the end a change has been brought about which it would be impossible to conceive if we were a single person. The complexity of my love, of my person, multiplied and diversified my sufferings. And yet they could still be ranged in the two categories whose alternation had made up the

whole life of my love for Albertine, swayed alternately by trust and by jealous suspicion.

If I found it difficult to imagine that Albertine, so alive in me (wearing as I did the double harness of the present and the past), was dead, perhaps it was equally paradoxical in me that this suspicion of the misdeeds which Albertine, stripped now of the flesh that had enjoyed them, of the mind that had conceived the desire for them, was no longer either capable of or responsible for, should excite in me such suffering, which I should only have blessed could I have seen it as the token of the spiritual reality of a person materially non-existent, instead of the reflexion, destined itself to fade, of impressions that she had made on me in the past. A woman who could no longer experience pleasures with others ought no longer to have excited my jealousy, if only my tenderness had been able to come to the surface. But it was precisely this that was impossible, since it could not find its object, Albertine, except among memories in which she was still alive. Since, merely by thinking of her, I brought her back to life, her infidelities could never be those of a dead woman, the moment at which she had committed them becoming the present moment, not only for Albertine, but for that one of my various selves thus suddenly evoked who happened to be thinking of her. So that no anachronism could ever separate the indissoluble couple, in which each new culprit was immediately mated with a jealous lover, pitiable and always contemporaneous. I had, during the last months, kept her shut up in my own house. But in my imagination now, Albertine was free; she was abusing her freedom, was prostituting herself to this person or

that. Formerly, I used constantly to think of the uncertainty of the future that stretched before us, and endeavour to read its message. And now, what lay ahead of me, like a counterpart of the future—as worrying as the future because it was equally uncertain, equally difficult to decipher, equally mysterious, and crueller still because I did not have, as with the future, the possibility, or the illusion, of influencing it, and also because it would go on unfolding throughout the whole length of my life without my companion's being present to soothe the anguish that it caused me—was no longer Albertine's future, it was her past. Her past? That is the wrong word, since for jealousy there can be neither past nor future, and what it imagines is invariably the present.

Atmospheric changes, provoking other changes in the inner man, awaken forgotten selves, counteract the torpor of habit, restore their old force to certain memories, to certain sufferings. How much more so with me if this change of weather recalled to me the weather in which Albertine, at Balbec, in the lashing rain, had set out, heaven knows why, on long rides, in the clinging tunic of her waterproof! If she had lived, no doubt today, in this so similar weather, she would be setting out on a comparable expedition in Touraine. Since she could do so no longer, I ought not to have suffered from the thought; but, as with people who have lost a limb, the slightest change in the weather revived the pain I felt in the limb that no longer existed.

Then a recollection that had not come back to me for a long time—for it had remained dissolved in the fluid and invisible expanse of my memory—suddenly crystallised. Many years ago, when somebody mentioned her

bath-wrap, Albertine had blushed. At that time I was not jealous of her. But since then I had intended to ask her if she could remember that conversation, and why she had blushed. It had preoccupied me all the more because I had been told that the two girls who were friends of Léa's frequented the bathing establishment of the hotel, and, it was said, not merely for the purpose of taking showers. But, for fear of annoying Albertine, or else pending some more opportune moment, I had always put off mentioning it to her and in time had ceased to think about it. And all of a sudden, some time after Albertine's death, I recalled this memory, stamped with the character, at once tormenting and solemn, of puzzles left for ever insoluble by the death of the one person who could have explained them. Might I not at least try to find out whether Albertine had ever done anything wrong or even behaved suspiciously in that bathing establishment? By sending someone to Balbec, I might perhaps succeed in doing so. Had she been alive, I should doubtless have been unable to learn anything. But tongues become strangely loosened and will readily talk about a misdeed when the culprit's resentment need no longer be feared. As the constitution of our imagination, which has remained rudimentary and over-simplified (not having undergone the countless transformations which improve upon the primitive models of human inventions, whether it be the barometer, the balloon, the telephone, or anything else, which become barely recognisable in their ultimate perfection), allows us to see only a very few things at one time, the memory of the bathing establishment occupied the whole field of my inner vision. It was as though nothing else had ever happened in the whole of Albertine's life.

Who would have told me at Combray, when I lay waiting for my mother's good-night with so heavy a heart, that those anxieties would be healed, and would then break out again one day, not for my mother, but for a girl who would at first be no more, against the horizon of the sea, than a flower upon which my eyes would daily be invited to gaze, but a thinking flower in whose mind I was so childishly anxious to occupy a prominent place that I was distressed by her not being aware that I knew Mme de Villeparisis? Yes, it was for the good-night kiss of such an unknown girl that, in years to come, I was to suffer as intensely as I had suffered as a child when my mother did not come up to my room. And yet if Swann had not spoken to me of Balbec, I should never have known this Albertine who had become so necessary, of love for whom my soul was now almost exclusively composed. Her life would perhaps have been longer, mine would have been devoid of what was now making it a martyrdom. And thus it seemed to me that, by my entirely selfish love, I had allowed Albertine to die just as I had murdered my grandmother. Even later, even after I had already got to know her at Balbec, it is possible that I might not have loved her as I eventually did. For, when I gave up Gilberte and knew that I might love another woman some day, I hardly dared entertain a doubt as to whether, at any rate as regards the past, I could have loved anyone else but Gilberte. Whereas in the case of Albertine I no longer even had any doubt, I was sure that it might well not have been her that I loved, that it might have been someone else. It would have been enough that Mlle de Stermaria, on the evening when I was to dine with her on the island in the Bois, should not have cancelled the ap-

pointment. There was still time then, and it would have been upon Mlle de Stermaria that I would have directed that activity of the imagination which makes us extract from a woman so special a notion of individuality that she appears to us unique in herself and predestined and necessary for us. At the most, adopting an almost physiological point of view, I could say that I might have been able to feel that same exclusive love for another woman but not for *any* other woman. For Albertine, plump and dark, did not resemble Gilberte, slim and fair, and yet they were fashioned of the same healthy stuff, and above the same sensual cheeks there was a look in the eyes of both whose meaning was difficult to grasp. They were women of a sort that would not attract the attention of men who for their part would go mad about other women who "meant nothing" to me. A man has almost always the same way of catching cold, of falling ill; that is to say, he requires for it to happen a particular combination of circumstances; it is natural that when he falls in love he should love a certain type of woman, a type which for that matter is very widespread. The first glances from Albertine which had set me dreaming were not absolutely different from Gilberte's first glances. I could almost believe that the obscure personality, the sensuality, the wilful, cunning nature of Gilberte had returned to tempt me, incarnate this time in Albertine's body, a body quite different and yet not without analogies. In Albertine's case, thanks to a wholly different life shared with me where no fissure of distraction or obliviousness had been able to penetrate a block of thoughts in which a painful preoccupation maintained a permanent cohesion, her living body had not, like Gilberte's, ceased one day to be that in

which I found what I subsequently recognised as being to me (what they would not have been to other men) the attributes of feminine charm. But she was dead. I would forget her. Who could say whether the same qualities of rich blood, of uneasy brooding would then return one day to create turmoil in me? But in what feminine form they would be embodied I could not foretell. The example of Gilberte would as little have enabled me to form an idea of Albertine and guess that I should fall in love with her, as the memory of Vinteuil's sonata would have enabled me to imagine his septet. Indeed, what was more, the first few times I had seen Albertine, I had even managed to believe that it was others I would love. Moreover, she might even have appeared to me, had I met her a year earlier, as dull as a grey sky in which dawn has not yet broken. If I had changed in relation to her, she herself had changed too, and the girl who had come and sat on my bed on the day of my letter to Mlle de Stermaria was no longer the same girl I had known at Balbec, whether by virtue of the explosion of womanhood which occurs at the age of puberty, or as a result of circumstances which I was never able to discover. In any case, even if the woman I was one day to love must to a certain extent resemble her, that is to say if my choice of a woman was not entirely free, this nevertheless meant that, directed in a manner that was perhaps predetermined, it was directed towards something more considerable than an individual, towards a type of woman, and this removed all necessity from my love for Albertine.

We are well aware that the woman whose face we have before our eyes more constantly than light itself, since even with our eyes shut we never cease for an in-

stant to adore her beautiful eyes, her beautiful nose, to arrange opportunities of seeing them again—that this woman who to us is unique might well have been another if we had been in a different town from the one in which we met her, if we had explored other quarters of the town, if we had frequented a different salon. Unique, we suppose? She is legion. And yet she is compact and indestructible in our loving eyes, irreplaceable for a long time to come by any other. The truth is that this woman has only raised to life by a sort of magic countless elements of tenderness existing in us already in a fragmentary state, which she has assembled, joined together, effacing every gap between them, and it is we ourselves who by giving her her features have supplied all the solid matter of the beloved object. Whence it arises that even if we are only one among a thousand to her and perhaps the last of them all, to us she is the only one, the one towards whom our whole life gravitates. It was, indeed, true that I had been quite well aware that this love was not inevitable, not only because it might have crystallised round Mlle de Stermaria, but even apart from that, through knowing the feeling itself, finding it to be only too like what it had been for others, and also sensing it to be vaster than Albertine, enveloping her, unconscious of her, like a tide swirling round a tiny rock. But gradually, by dint of living with Albertine, I was no longer able to fling off the chains which I myself had forged; the habit of associating Albertine's person with the sentiment which she had not inspired made me none the less believe that it was peculiar to her, as habit gives to the mere association of ideas between two phenomena, according to a certain school of philosophy, the illusory force and necessity of a law of causation.

to produce which any other woman might have served, had been the result of an entanglement, of a bringing into contact of dreams, desires, habits, affections, with the requisite conjunction of alternating pains and pleasures? And this continued her life in death, memory being sufficient to sustain the reality of life, which is mental. I recalled Albertine alighting from a railway carriage and telling me that she wanted to go to Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, and I saw her again before that, with her "polo" pulled down over her cheeks; I thought of new possibilities of happiness, towards which I sprang, saying to myself: "We might have gone on together to Infreville, to Doncières." There was no watering-place in the neighbourhood of Balbec in which I did not see her, with the result that that country, like a mythological land which had been preserved, restored to me, living and cruel, the most ancient, the most charming legends, those that had been most obliterated by the sequel of my love. Ah, what anguish were I ever to have to sleep again in that bed at Balbec around whose brass frame, as around an immovable pivot, a fixed bar, my life had moved and evolved, bringing successively into its compass gay conversations with my grandmother, the nightmare of her death, Albertine's soothing caresses, the discovery of her vice, and now a new life into which, looking at the glazed bookcases in which the sea was reflected, I knew that Albertine would never come again! Was it not, that Balbec hotel, like the single set of a provincial theatre, in which for years past the most diverse plays have been performed, which has served for a comedy, for first one tragedy, then another, for a purely poetical drama, that hotel which already stretched quite far back into my past? The fact that this part alone, with

its walls, its bookcases, its mirror, remained invariably the same throughout new epochs of my life, made me better aware that all in all it was the rest, it was myself, that had changed, and thus gave me that impression that the mysteries of life, of love, of death—which in their optimism children believe they have no share in—are not set apart, but one perceives with sorrowful pride that they have formed an integral part of one's own life through the course of the years.

I tried at times to take an interest in the newspapers. But I found the act of reading them repellent, and moreover by no means innocuous. The fact is that from each of our ideas, as from a crossroads in a forest, so many paths branch off in different directions that at the moment when I least expected it I found myself faced by a fresh memory. The title of Fauré's melody *Le Secret* had led me to the Duc de Broglie's *Secret du Roi*, the name Broglie to that of Chaumont;²⁶ or else the words "Good Friday" had made me think of Golgotha, Golgotha of the etymology of the word which is, it seems, the equivalent of *Calvus Mons*, Chaumont. But, whatever the path by which I had arrived at Chaumont, at that moment I received so violent a shock that I was far more concerned to ward off pain than to probe for memories. Some moments after the shock, my intelligence, which like the sound of thunder travels less rapidly, produced the reason for it. Chaumont had made me think of the Buttes-Chaumont, where Mme Bontemps had told me that Andrée used often to go with Albertine, whereas Albertine had told me that she had never seen the Buttes-Chaumont. After a certain age our memories are so intertwined with one another that what we are thinking of, the book we are read-

ing, scarcely matters any more. We have put something of ourselves everywhere, everything is fertile, everything is dangerous, and we can make discoveries no less precious than in Pascal's *Pensées* in an advertisement for soap.

No doubt a fact such as the one about the Buttes-Chaumont, which at the time had appeared to me trifling, was in itself far less serious, far less decisive evidence against Albertine than the story of the bath-attendant or the laundry-girl. But in the first place, a memory which comes to us fortuitously finds in us an intact capacity for imagining, that is to say in this case for suffering, which we would have partly used up had it been, on the contrary, we who had deliberately applied our mind to recreating a memory. And then to these latter memories (those that concerned the bath-attendant and the laundry-girl), ever present albeit obscured in my consciousness, like the furniture placed in the semi-darkness of a gallery which, without being able to see, one avoids knocking into, I had grown accustomed. Whereas it was a long time since I had given a thought to the Buttes-Chaumont, or, to take another instance, to Albertine's scrutiny of the mirror in the casino at Balbec, or to her unexplained delay on the evening when I had waited so long for her after the Guermantes party, or any of those parts of her life which remained outside my heart and which I would have liked to know in order that they might become assimilated, annexed to it, merged with the sweeter memories formed therein by an interior Albertine, an Albertine genuinely possessed. Lifting a corner of the heavy curtain of habit (stupefying habit, which during the whole course of our life conceals from us almost the whole universe, and in the dead of night, without changing the label, substitutes

for the most dangerous or intoxicating poisons of life something anodyne that procures no delights), such memories would come back to me as at the time itself with that fresh and piercing novelty of a recurring season, of a change in the routine of our hours, which, in the realm of pleasures also, if we get into a carriage on the first fine day in spring, or leave the house at sunrise, makes us observe our own most trivial actions with a lucid exaltation which makes that intense minute worth more than the sum-total of the preceding days. Days in the past cover up little by little those that preceded them and are themselves buried beneath those that follow them. But each past day has remained deposited in us, as in a vast library where, even of the oldest books, there is a copy which doubtless nobody will ever ask to see. And yet should this day from the past, traversing the translucency of the intervening epochs, rise to the surface and spread itself inside us until it covers us entirely, then for a moment names resume their former meaning, people their former aspect, we ourselves our state of mind at the time, and we feel, with a vague suffering which however is endurable and will not last for long, the problems which have long ago become insoluble and which caused us such anguish at the time. Our ego is composed of the superimposition of our successive states. But this superimposition is not unalterable like the stratification of a mountain. Incessant upheavals raise to the surface ancient deposits. I found myself once more after the party at the Princesse de Guermantes's, awaiting Albertine's arrival. What had she been doing that evening? Had she been unfaithful to me? With whom? Aimé's revelations, even if I accepted them, in no way diminished for me the anxious, despairing in-

terest of this unexpected question, as though each different Albertine, each new memory, set a special problem of jealousy, to which the solutions of the other problems could not apply.

But I would have liked to know not only with what woman she had spent that evening, but what special pleasure it represented to her, what was happening inside her at that moment. Sometimes, at Balbec, Françoise had gone to fetch her, and had told me that she had found her leaning out of her window with an anxious, questing air, as though she were expecting somebody. Supposing I learned that the girl she was awaiting was Andrée—what was the state of mind in which Albertine awaited her, that state of mind concealed behind the anxious, questing gaze? How important were those tastes to Albertine? How large a place did they occupy in her thoughts? Alas, remembering my own agitation whenever I had caught sight of a girl who attracted me, sometimes when I had merely heard her spoken of without having seen her, my anxiety to look my best, to show myself to advantage, my cold sweats, I had only, in order to torture myself, to imagine the same voluptuous excitement in Albertine, as though by means of the apparatus which, after the visit of a certain practitioner who had shown some scepticism about her malady, my aunt Léonie had wished to see invented, and which would enable the doctor to undergo all the sufferings of his patient in order to understand better. And already it was enough to torture me, to tell me that, compared with this other thing, serious conversations with me about Stendhal and Victor Hugo must have counted for very little with her, to feel her heart being drawn towards other people, detaching itself from mine, implanting itself

elsewhere. But even the importance which this desire must have for her and the reserve with which she surrounded it could not reveal to me what it was qualitatively, still less how she referred to it when she spoke of it to herself. In physical suffering, at least we do not have to choose our pain ourselves. The malady determines it and imposes it on us. But in jealousy we have, so to speak, to try out sufferings of every shape and size, before we arrive at the one which seems to fit. And how much more difficult this is in the case of a suffering such as that of feeling that she whom we loved is finding pleasure with beings who are different from us, who give her sensations which we are not capable of giving her, or who at least by their configuration, their aspect, their ways, represent to her something quite different from us! Ah, if only Albertine had fallen in love with Saint-Loup, how much less, it seemed to me, I should have suffered!

It is true that we are unaware of the particular sensibility of each of our fellow-creatures, but as a rule we do not even know that we are unaware of it, for this sensibility of other people is a matter of indifference to us. So far as Albertine was concerned, my misery or happiness would have depended upon the nature of this sensibility; I was well aware that it was unknown to me, and the fact that it was unknown to me was painful in itself. Once, I had the illusion of seeing these unknown desires and pleasures of Albertine's, another time, of hearing them. Of seeing them when, some time after her death, Andrée came to see me.

For the first time she seemed to me beautiful. I said to myself that her almost frizzy hair, her dark, shadowed eyes, were doubtless what Albertine had loved so much,

you that were lying to you, probably with some ulterior motive," she said with a questioning, defiant air.

"Oh, very well then, since you won't tell me," I replied, pretending to appear to be unwilling to furnish a proof which in fact I did not possess. However, I mentioned vaguely and at random the Buttes-Chaumont.

"I may have gone to the Buttes-Chaumont with Albertine, but is it a place that has a particularly evil reputation?"

I asked her whether she could not raise the subject with Gisèle who had at one time been on intimate terms with Albertine. But Andrée told me that because of a vile thing that Gisèle had done to her recently, asking a favour of her was the one thing that she must absolutely decline to do for me. "If you see her," she went on, "don't tell her what I've said to you about her; there's no point in making an enemy of her. She knows what I think of her, but I've always preferred to avoid having violent quarrels with her which only have to be patched up afterwards. And besides, she's dangerous. But you must understand that when one has read the letter which I had in my hands a week ago, and in which she lied with such absolute treachery, nothing, not even the noblest actions in the world, can wipe out the memory of such a thing."

On the whole I felt that if, in spite of the fact that Andrée had those tastes to the extent of making no pretence of concealing them, and the fact that Albertine had felt for her the great affection which she undoubtedly had felt, Andrée had none the less never had any carnal relations with Albertine and had never been aware that Albertine had those tastes, this meant that Albertine did not have them, and had never enjoyed with anyone those rela-

tions which, rather than with anyone else, she would have enjoyed with Andrée. And so when Andrée had left me, I realised that her categorical assertion had brought me some peace of mind. But perhaps it had been dictated by a sense of the obligation, which Andrée felt that she owed to the dead girl whose memory still survived in her, not to let me believe what Albertine, while she was alive, had doubtless begged her to deny.

Having thought for a moment, contemplating Andrée, that I could actually see these pleasures of Albertine's which I had so often tried to imagine, on another occasion I received an intimation of them otherwise than through the eyes: I thought I heard them. I had had two young laundry-girls, from a district where Albertine had often gone, brought to a house of assignation. One of them, beneath the caresses of the other, suddenly began to utter sounds which at first I found difficult to identify; for one never understands precisely the meaning of an original sound expressive of a sensation which one does not experience oneself. Hearing it from a neighbouring room without being able to see, one may mistake for uncontrollable laughter the noise which is forced by pain from a patient being operated on without an anaesthetic; and as for the noise emitted by a mother who has just been told that her child has died, it can seem to us, if we are unaware of its origin, as difficult to translate into human terms as the noise emitted by an animal or by a harp. It takes us a little time to realise that those two noises express what, by analogy with the (very different) sensations we ourselves may have felt, we call pain; and it took me some time, too, to understand that *this* noise expressed what, by analogy with the (very different) sensations I myself had felt,

I called pleasure; and the pleasure must have been very great to overwhelm to this extent the person who was expressing it and to extract from her this strange utterance which seemed to describe and comment on all the phases of the exquisite drama which the young woman was living through and which was concealed from my eyes by the curtain that is for ever lowered for other people over what happens in the mysterious intimacy of every human creature. In any case these two girls could tell me nothing, as they had no idea who Albertine was.

Novelists sometimes pretend in an introduction that while travelling in a foreign country they have met somebody who has told them the story of another person's life. They then withdraw in favour of this chance acquaintance, and the story that he tells them is nothing more or less than their novel. Thus the life of Fabrice del Dongo was related to Stendhal by a canon of Padua. How gladly would we, when we are in love, that is to say when another person's existence seems to us mysterious, find some such well-informed narrator! And undoubtedly he exists. Do we not ourselves frequently relate the story of some woman or other quite dispassionately to one of our friends, or to a stranger, who has known nothing of her love-affairs and listens to us with keen interest? Such a person as I was when I spoke to Bloch about the Princesse de Guermantes or Mme Swann, such a person existed, who could have spoken to me of Albertine, such a person exists always . . . but we never come across him. It seemed to me that if I had been able to find women who had known her I should have learned everything I did not yet know. And yet to strangers it must have seemed that nobody could have known as much about her

life as I did. Indeed, did I not know her dearest friend, Andrée? Thus one imagines that the friend of a minister must know the truth about some political affair or cannot be implicated in a scandal. From his own experience the friend has found that whenever he discussed politics with the minister the latter confined himself to generalisations and told him nothing more than what had already appeared in the newspapers, or that if he was in any trouble, his repeated attempts to secure the minister's help have invariably been met with an "It's not in my power" against which the friend is himself powerless. I said to myself: "If I could have known such and such witnesses!"—from whom, if I had known them, I should probably have been unable to extract anything more than from Andrée, herself the custodian of a secret which she refused to surrender. Differing in this respect also from Swann who, when he was no longer jealous, ceased to feel any curiosity as to what Odette might have done with Forcheville, I found that, even after my jealousy had subsided, the thought of making the acquaintance of Albertine's laundry-girl, of people in her neighbourhood, of reconstructing her life in it, her intrigues, alone had any charm for me. And as desire always springs from an initial glamour, as had happened to me in the past with Gilberte and with the Duchesse de Guermantes, it was the women of Albertine's background, in the districts in which she had formerly lived, that I sought to know, and whose presence alone I could have desired. Whether or not I could learn anything from them, the only women towards whom I felt attracted were those whom Albertine had known or whom she might have known, women of her own background or of the sort with whom she liked

her: "How comforting it is, my darling, to have a daughter like you; one day when I'm no longer here, if people still mention your poor papa, it will be only to you and because of you," Swann, in thus pinning a timorous and anxious hope of survival on his daughter after his death, was as mistaken as an old banker who, having made a will in favour of a little dancer whom he is keeping and who has very nice manners, tells himself that though to her he is no more than a great friend, she will remain faithful to his memory. She had very nice manners while her feet under the table sought the feet of those of the old banker's friends who attracted her, but all this very discreetly, behind an altogether respectable exterior. She will wear mourning for the worthy man, will feel relieved to be rid of him, will enjoy not only the ready money, but the real estate, the motor-cars that he has bequeathed to her, taking care to remove the monogram of the former owner which makes her feel slightly ashamed, and will never associate her enjoyment of the gift with any regret for the giver. The illusions of paternal love are perhaps no less poignant than those of the other kind; many daughters regard their fathers merely as the old men who leave their fortunes to them. Gilberte's presence in a drawing-room, instead of being an occasion for people to speak of her father from time to time, was an obstacle in the way of their seizing the opportunities that might still have remained for them to do so, and that were becoming more and more rare. Even in connexion with the things he had said, the presents he had given, people acquired the habit of not mentioning him, and she who ought to have kept his memory young, if not perpetuated it, found herself hastening and completing the work of death and oblivion.

And it was not only with regard to Swann that Gilberte was gradually completing the process of forgetting; she had accelerated in me that process with regard to Albertine. Under the influence of desire, and consequently of the desire for happiness which Gilberte had aroused in me during the few hours in which I had supposed her to be someone else, a certain number of miseries, of painful preoccupations, which only a little while earlier had obsessed my mind, had slipped away from me, carrying with them a whole block of memories, probably long since crumbling and precarious, with regard to Albertine. For if many memories, which were connected with her, had at the outset helped to keep alive in me my grief for her death, in return that grief had itself fixed those memories. So that the modification of my sentimental state, prepared for no doubt obscurely day by day by the continuous erosions of forgetfulness, but realised abruptly as a whole, gave me the impression, which I remember having felt that day for the first time, of a void, of the suppression in myself of a whole segment of my associations of ideas, such as a man feels in whose brain a long-impaired artery has burst, so that a whole section of his memory is abolished or paralysed. I no longer loved Albertine. At most, on certain days, when the weather was of the sort which, by modifying, by awakening one's sensibility, brings one back into relationship with the real, I felt painfully sad in thinking of her. I was suffering from a love that no longer existed. Thus does an amputee, in certain kinds of weather, feel pain in the limb that he has lost.

The disappearance of my suffering, and of all that it carried away with it, left me diminished, as recovery from

an illness which has occupied a big place in one's life often does. No doubt it is because memories are not always true that love is not eternal, and because life is made up of a perpetual renewal of cells. But this renewal, in the case of memories, is nevertheless retarded by one's attention, which temporarily arrests and freezes what is bound to change. And since it is the case with grief as with the desire for women that one magnifies it by thinking about it, having plenty of other things to do should make it easier not only to be chaste but to forget.

By another reaction, if (though it was a distraction—the desire for Mlle d'Epoucheville—that had suddenly brought home to me the tangible reality of forgetting) it remains true that it is time that gradually brings forgetfulness, forgetfulness in its turn does not fail to alter profoundly our notion of time. There are optical errors in time as there are in space. The persistence within me of an old impulse to work, to make up for lost time, to change my way of life, or rather to begin to live, gave me the illusion that I was still as young as in the past; and yet the memory of all the events that had succeeded one another in my life (and also of those that had succeeded one another in my heart, for when one has greatly changed, one is misled into supposing that one has lived longer) in the course of those last months of Albertine's existence, had made them seem to me much longer than a year, and now this forgetfulness of so many things, separating me by gulfs of empty space from quite recent events which they made me think remote, because I had had what is called "the time" to forget them, by its fragmentary, irregular interpolation in my memory—like a thick fog at sea which obliterates all the landmarks—dis-

torted, dislocated my sense of distances in time, contracted in one place, distended in another, and made me suppose myself now further away from things, now much closer to them, than I really was. And as in the new spaces, as yet unexplored, which extended before me, there would be no more trace of my love for Albertine than there had been, in the time lost which I had just traversed, of my love for my grandmother, my life appeared to me—offering a succession of periods in which, after a certain interval, nothing of what had sustained the previous period survived in that which followed—as something utterly devoid of the support of an individual, identical and permanent self, something as useless in the future as it was protracted in the past, something that death might as well put an end to at this point or that, without in the least concluding it, as those courses of French history in the sixth form at school which stop short indiscriminately, according to the whim of the curriculum or the professor, at the Revolution of 1830, or that of 1848, or the end of the Second Empire.

Perhaps then the fatigue and sadness that I felt arose not so much from my having loved in vain what I was already forgetting as from my beginning to enjoy the company of new living people, purely social figures, mere friends of the Guermantes, offering no interest in themselves. It was easier perhaps to reconcile myself to the discovery that she whom I had loved was no more, after a certain interval of time, than a pale memory, than to the rediscovery in myself of that futile activity which makes us waste time decorating our lives with a human vegetation which is robust but parasitic, which likewise will become nothing when it is dead, which already is alien to all

that we have ever known, but which nevertheless our garrulous, melancholy, conceited senility seeks to cultivate. The newcomer who would find it easy to endure the prospect of life without Albertine had made his appearance in me, since I had been able to speak of her at Mme de Guermantes's in the language of grief without any real suffering. The possible advent of these new selves, which ought each to bear a different name from the preceding one, was something I had always dreaded, because of their indifference to the object of my love—long ago in connexion with Gilberte when her father told me that if I went to live in Oceania I would never wish to return, quite recently when I had read with such a pang in my heart the memoirs of a mediocre writer who, separated by life from a woman whom he had adored when he was young, meets her as an old man without pleasure, without any desire to see her again. Yet he was bringing me on the contrary, this newcomer, at the same time as oblivion an almost complete elimination of suffering, a possibility of comfort—this newcomer, so dreaded yet so beneficent, who was none other than one of those spare selves which destiny holds in reserve for us, and which, paying no more heed to our entreaties than a clear-sighted and thus all the more authoritative physician, it substitutes in spite of us, by a timely intervention, for the self that has been too seriously wounded. This process, as it happens, automatically occurs from time to time, like the decay and renewal of our tissues, but we notice it only if the former self contained a great grief, a painful foreign body, which we are surprised to find no longer there, in our amazement at having become another person to whom the sufferings of his predecessor are no more than the sufferings

of a stranger, of which we can speak with compassion because we do not feel them. Indeed we are unconcerned about having undergone all those sufferings, since we have only a vague remembrance of having suffered them. It may well be that likewise our nightmares are horrifying. But on waking we are another person, who cares little that the person whose place he takes has had to flee from a gang of cut-throats during the night.

No doubt this self still maintained some contact with the old, as a friend who is indifferent to a bereavement speaks of it nevertheless to the persons present in a suitable tone of sorrow, and returns from time to time to the room in which the widower who has asked him to receive the company for him may still be heard weeping. I too still wept when I became once again for a moment the former friend of Albertine. But it was into a new personality that I was tending to change altogether. It is not because other people are dead that our affection for them fades; it is because we ourselves are dying. Albertine had no cause to reproach her friend. The man who was usurping his name was merely his heir. We can only be faithful to what we remember, and we remember only what we have known. My new self, while it grew up in the shadow of the old, had often heard the other speak of Albertine; through that other self, through the stories it gathered from it, it thought that it knew her, it found her lovable, it loved her; but it was only a love at second hand.

Another person in whom the process of forgetting, as far as Albertine was concerned, was probably more rapid at this time, and indirectly enabled me to register a little later a new advance which that process had made in myself (and this is my memory of my second stage before fi-

best friend and the person for whom I feel most affection," she told me. And she even appeared to be slightly alarmed at the thought that I might ask her to let me dine with them. She was hungry for people, and a third person who knew her too well, such as myself, by preventing her from letting herself go, would prevent her from enjoying herself to the full in their company.

It is true that I was not there when she came; she was waiting for me, and I was about to go through my small sitting-room to join her when I realised, on hearing a voice, that I had another visitor. Impatient to see Andrée, and not knowing who the other person was (who evidently did not know her since he had been put in another room), I listened for a moment at the door of the small sitting-room; for my visitor was not alone, he was speaking to a woman. "Oh, my darling, it is in my heart!" he warbled to her, quoting the verses of Armand Silvestre. "Yes, you will always remain my darling in spite of everything you've done to me:

The dead are sleeping peacefully beneath earth's crust.
And so must sleep the feelings time effaces.
Those relics of the heart, they also have their dust;
Do not lay hands upon their sacred traces.²⁹

It's a bit outmoded, but how pretty it is! And also what I might have said to you from the first:

You will make them weep, child beloved and lovely . . .

What, you don't know it?

. . . All those urchins, men of the future,
Already they hang their youthful reverie
Upon your eyelashes caressing and pure.

Ah! for a moment I thought I could say to myself:

The very first night that he came here
I had for my pride no further fear.
I told him: 'You will love me, dear,
For just as long as you are able.'
In his arms I slept like an angel."

Curious to see the woman to whom this deluge of poems was addressed, even though it meant postponing for a moment my urgent meeting with Andrée, I opened the door. They were being recited by M. de Charlus to a young soldier whom I soon recognised as Morel, and who was about to set off for his fortnight's training. He was no longer on friendly terms with M. de Charlus, but saw him from time to time to ask some favour of him. M. de Charlus, who usually gave a more masculine style to his love-making, also had his tender moments. Moreover, during his childhood, in order to be able to feel and understand the words of the poets, he had been obliged to imagine them as being addressed not to faithless beauties but to young men. I left them as soon as I could, although I sensed that paying visits with Morel was an immense satisfaction to M. de Charlus, to whom it gave the momentary illusion of having married again. And besides, he combined in his person the snobbery of queens with the snobbery of servants.

The memory of Albertine had become so fragmentary that it no longer caused me any sadness and was no more now than a transition to fresh desires, like a chord which announces a change of key. And indeed, any idea of a passing sensual whim being ruled out, in so far as I was still faithful to Albertine's memory, I was happier at hav-

ing Andrée in my company than I would have been at having an Albertine miraculously restored. For Andrée could tell me more things about Albertine than Albertine herself had ever told me. Now the problems concerning Albertine still remained in my mind although my tenderness for her, both physically and emotionally, had already vanished. And my desire to know about her life, because it had diminished less, was now relatively greater than my need of her presence. Moreover, the idea that a woman had perhaps had relations with Albertine no longer aroused in me anything save the desire to have relations with that woman myself. I told Andrée this, caressing her as I spoke. Then, without making the slightest effort to make her words consistent with those of a few months earlier, Andrée said to me with a lurking smile: "Ah! yes, but you're a man. And so we can't do quite the same things as I used to do with Albertine." And whether because she felt that it would increase my desire (in the hope of extracting confidences, I had told her that I would like to have relations with a woman who had had them with Albertine) or my grief, or perhaps destroy a sense of superiority to herself which she might suppose me to feel at being the only person who had had relations with Albertine, she went on: "Ah! we spent many happy hours together; she was so caressing, so passionate. But it wasn't only with me that she liked to enjoy herself. She had met a handsome young fellow at Mme Verdurin's called Morel. They came to an understanding at once. He undertook—having her permission to enjoy them himself, for he liked little novices, and as soon as he had set them on the path of evil would abandon them—he undertook to entice young fisher-girls in remote villages, or young

laundry-girls, who would fall for a boy but might not have responded to a girl's advances. As soon as a girl was well under his control, he'd bring her to a safe place and hand her over to Albertine. For fear of losing Morel, who took part in it all too, the girl always obeyed, and yet she lost him all the same, because, as he was afraid of what might happen and also as once or twice was enough for him, he would run off leaving a false address. Once he had the nerve to bring one of these girls, with Albertine, to a brothel at Couliville, where four or five of the women had her together, or in turn. That was his passion, and Albertine's too. But Albertine suffered terrible remorse afterwards. I believe that when she was with you she had conquered her passion and put off indulging it from day to day. Besides, her affection for you was so great that she had scruples. But it was quite certain that if she ever left you she'd begin again. Only I think that after having left you, if she succumbed to that overpowering urge, her remorse must have been even greater. She hoped that you would rescue her, that you would marry her. She felt in her heart that her obsession was a sort of criminal lunacy, and I've often wondered whether it wasn't after an incident of that sort, which had led to a suicide in a family, that she killed herself on purpose. I must confess that in the early days of her stay with you she hadn't entirely given up her games with me. There were days when she seemed to need it, so much so that once, when it would have been so easy elsewhere, she couldn't bring herself to say good-bye without taking me to bed with her, in your house. We were out of luck, and were very nearly caught. She'd taken advantage of the fact that Françoise had gone out to do some shopping, and you weren't yet home.

Then she'd turned out all the lights so that when you let yourself in with your key it would take you some time to find the switch; and she'd left the door of her room open. We heard you come upstairs, and I only just had time to tidy myself up and come down. Which was quite unnecessary as it happened, for by an incredible chance you'd left your key at home and had to ring the bell. But we lost our heads all the same, so that to conceal our embarrassment we both of us, without having a chance to consult each other, had the same idea: to pretend to dread the scent of syringa which as a matter of fact we adored. You were bringing a big branch of it home with you, which enabled me to turn my head away and hide my confusion. This didn't prevent me from telling you in the most idiotic way that perhaps Françoise had come back and would let you in, when a moment earlier I had told you the lie that we'd only just come in from our drive and that when we arrived Françoise hadn't yet left the house (which was true). But the big mistake we made—assuming that you had your key—was to turn out the light, for we were afraid that as you came upstairs you'd see it being turned on again; or at least we hesitated too long. And for three nights on end Albertine couldn't get a wink of sleep because she was constantly afraid that you might be suspicious and ask Françoise why she hadn't turned on the light before leaving the house. For Albertine was terribly afraid of you, and at times she maintained that you were treacherous and nasty and that you hated her really. After three days she gathered from your calm that you hadn't thought of asking Françoise, and she was able to sleep again. But she never resumed her relations with me after that, either from fear or from remorse, for she made out

that she did really love you, or perhaps she was in love with someone else. At all events, nobody could ever mention syringa again in her hearing without her turning crimson and putting her hand over her face in the hope of hiding her blushes."

Like certain strokes of fortune, there are strokes of misfortune that come too late, and do not assume the magnitude they would have had in our eyes a little earlier. One such was the misfortune that Andrée's terrible revelation was to me. No doubt, even when a piece of bad news is bound to make us unhappy, it may happen that, in the involvement, the give and take of conversation, it will pass in front of us without stopping and, preoccupied as we are by all the things we have to say in reply, transformed into someone else by the desire to please our present interlocutors, protected for a few moments in this new context against the affections and the sufferings that we discarded upon entering it and will return to when the brief spell is broken, we do not have the time to take them in. However, if these affections and these sufferings are too predominant, we enter only distractedly into the zone of a new and momentary world, in which, too faithful to our sufferings, we are incapable of becoming other; and then the words that we hear said enter at once into relation with our heart, which has not been neutralised. But for some time past words that concerned Albertine, like a poison that has evaporated, had lost their toxic power. She was already too remote from me. As an afternoon stroller, seeing a misty crescent in the sky, thinks: "So that's the vast moon," I said to myself: "What, so that truth which I've sought for so long, which I've so dreaded, is nothing more than these few words uttered in

the course of conversation, words to which one cannot even give one's whole attention because one isn't alone!" Besides, it took me at a serious disadvantage, as I had exhausted myself with Andrée. Really, I would have liked to have more strength to devote to a truth of such magnitude; it remained extraneous to me, but this was because I had not yet found a place for it in my heart. We would like the truth to be revealed to us by novel signs, not by a sentence, a sentence similar to those which we have constantly repeated to ourselves. The habit of thinking prevents us at times from experiencing reality, immunises us against it, makes it seem no more than another thought. There is no idea that does not carry in itself its possible refutation, no word that does not imply its opposite.

In any case, if it was true, it was by this time the sort of useless truth about the life of a dead mistress that rises up from the depths and reveals itself when we can no longer have any use for it. Then, thinking doubtless of some other woman whom we now love and with regard to whom the same thing may occur (for to her whom we have forgotten we no longer give a thought), we lament. We say to ourselves: "If she were alive!" We say to ourselves: "If she who is alive could only understand all this and realise that when she is dead I shall know everything that she is hiding from me!" But it is a vicious circle. If I could have caused Albertine to live, I should at the same time have caused Andrée to reveal nothing. It is to some extent the same thing as the everlasting "You'll see when I no longer love you," which is so true and so absurd, since one would indeed elicit much if one no longer loved, but one would no longer be interested in eliciting it. In fact it is precisely the same thing. For if the woman you

see again when you no longer love her then tells you all, it is because it is no longer she, or because it is no longer you: the person who loved has ceased to exist. There too death has passed by, and has made everything simple and pointless. I pursued these reflexions basing myself on the assumption that Andrée was truthful—which was possible—and had been prompted to sincerity with me precisely because she had now had relations with me, from that Saint-André-des-Champs side of her nature which Albertine too had shown me at the start. She was encouraged in this case by the fact that she was no longer afraid of Albertine, for the reality of other people survives their death for only a short time in our minds, and after a few years they are like those gods of obsolete religions whom one offends without fear because one has ceased to believe in their existence. But the fact that Andrée no longer believed in the reality of Albertine might mean that she no longer feared (any more than to betray a secret which she had promised not to reveal) to concoct a lie which retrospectively slandered her alleged accomplice. Had this absence of fear permitted her to reveal the truth at last in telling me all that, or else to concoct a lie, if, for some reason, she supposed me to be full of happiness and pride and wished to cause me pain? Perhaps she was irritated with me (an irritation that had been held in abeyance so long as she saw that I was miserable, disconsolate) because I had had relations with Albertine and she envied me, perhaps—supposing that I considered myself on that account more favoured than her—an advantage which she herself had never, perhaps, obtained, nor even sought. Thus it was that I had often heard her say how ill they were looking to people whose look of radiant health, and

in particular their awareness of it, exasperated her, and add, in the hope of annoying them, that she herself was very well, a fact that she never ceased to proclaim when she was seriously ill until the day when, in the detachment of death, it no longer mattered to her that others should be well and should know that she herself was dying. But that day was still remote. Perhaps she was angry with me, for what reason I had no idea, as long ago she had been filled with rage against the young man so learned in sporting matters, so ignorant of everything else, whom we had met at Balbec, who since then had been living with Rachel, and on the subject of whom Andrée poured forth defamatory remarks, hoping to be sued for slander in order to be able to formulate discreditable accusations against his father the falseness of which he would be unable to prove. Quite possibly this rage against myself had simply revived, having doubtless ceased when she saw how miserable I was. For the very same people whom, her eyes flashing with rage, she had longed to disgrace, to kill, to send to prison, by false testimony if need be, had only to reveal themselves to be unhappy or humiliated, for her to cease to wish them any harm, and to be ready to overwhelm them with kindness. For she was not fundamentally wicked, and if her unapparent, slightly deeper nature was not the niceness which one assumed at first from her delicate attentions, but rather envy and pride, her third nature, deeper still, the true but not entirely realised nature, tended towards kindness and the love of her fellow-creatures. Only, like all those people who in a certain state desire a better one, but, knowing it only through desiring it, do not realise that the first condition is to break away from the former state—like

neurasthenics or drug-addicts who are anxious to be cured, but at the same time not to be deprived of their neuroses or their drugs, or like those world-loving religious or artistic spirits who long for solitude but seek none the less to envisage it as not implying an absolute renunciation of their former existence—Andrée was prepared to love all her fellow-creatures, but on the condition that she should first of all have succeeded in not having to visualise them as triumphant, and to that end should have humiliated them in advance. She did not understand that one should love even the proud, and conquer their pride by love and not by an even more overweening pride. But the fact is that she was like those invalids who wish to be cured by the very means that prolong their disease, which they like and would cease at once to like if they renounced them. But people wish to learn to swim and at the same time to keep one foot on the ground.

As regards the young sportsman, the Verdurins' nephew, whom I had met during my two visits to Balbec, it may be recounted here, incidentally and prematurely, that, some time after Andrée's visit, the account of which will be resumed in a moment, certain events occurred which caused a great sensation. First of all, this young man (perhaps in memory of Albertine with whom I did not then know that he had been in love) became engaged to Andrée and married her, to the despair of Rachel, of which he took no notice. Andrée no longer said then (that is to say some months after the visit of which I have been speaking) that he was a wretch, and I realised later on that she had said so only because she was madly in love with him and felt that he did not want her. But another fact made an even greater impression. This young man

in him not of stupidity but of vanity, and indeed of a certain practical sense, a certain perceptiveness in adapting his vanity to the mentality of the imbeciles whose esteem he valued and in whose eyes a dinner-jacket might perhaps shine with greater brilliance than the gaze of a thinker. Who can say whether, seen from without, some man of talent, or even a man devoid of talent but a lover of the things of the mind, myself for instance, would not have appeared, to anyone who met him at Rivebelle, in the hotel at Balbec, or on the esplanade, the most perfect and pretentious fool? Not to mention that for Octave matters of art must have been something so intimate, inhabiting the most secret recesses of his being, that doubtless it would never have occurred to him to speak of them, as Saint-Loup, for instance, would have done, Saint-Loup for whom the arts had all the glamour that horses and carriages had for Octave. And then he may have had a passion for gambling, and it is said that he retained it. But all the same, if the piety which brought to light the unknown work of Vinteuil emerged from the murky environment of Montjouvain, I was no less struck by the thought that what were perhaps the most extraordinary masterpieces of our day had emerged not from the *concours général*, from a model, academic education in the manner of the Broglie family, but from the frequentation of paddocks and fashionable bars. In any case, in those days at Balbec, the reasons which made me anxious to know him, and which made Albertine and her friends anxious that I should not know him, were equally extraneous to his merit, and could only have illustrated the eternal misunderstanding between an "intellectual" (represented in this instance by myself) and society (represented

by the little band) with regard to a social personality (the young golfer). I had no inkling of his talent, and his prestige in my eyes—like that of Mme Blatin long ago—had been that of being, whatever they might say, the friend of my girlfriends, and more one of their band than myself. On the other hand, Albertine and Andrée, symbolising in this respect the incapacity of society people to bring a sound judgment to bear upon the things of the mind and their propensity to attach themselves in that connexion to false appearances, not only thought me almost idiotic because I took an interest in such an imbecile, but were astonished above all that, golfer for golfer, my choice should have fallen upon the poorest player of them all. If, for instance, I had chosen to make friends with young Gilbert de Belloeuvre, apart from golf he was a boy who had a certain amount of conversation, who had almost succeeded in the *concours général* and was an agreeable versifier (as a matter of fact he was the stupidest of them all). Or again, if my object had been to "make a study for a book," Guy Saumoy, who was completely insane, who had abducted two girls, was at least a singular type who might "interest" me. These two might have been allowed me, but the other, what attraction could I find in him? He was the epitome of the "great lout," of the "thickhead."

To return to Andrée's visit, after the disclosure that she had just made to me of her relations with Albertine, she added that the main reason for which Albertine had left me was concern about what her friends of the little band, and other people as well, might think of her living like that with a young man to whom she was not married: "Of course I know it was in your mother's house. But that makes no difference. You can't imagine what that

sort of girls' community is like, what they conceal from one another, how they dread one another's opinion of them. I've seen some of them being terribly severe with young men simply because they knew their friends and they were afraid that certain things might be repeated, and then I've happened by chance to see those very same girls in a totally different light, much to their chagrin."

A few months earlier, this knowledge which Andrée appeared to possess of the motives that swayed the girls of the little band would have seemed to me the most precious thing in the world. What she said was perhaps sufficient to explain why Albertine, who had given herself to me afterwards in Paris, had refused to do so at Balbec where I was constantly meeting her friends, a fact which I had absurdly supposed to be so advantageous for being on better terms with her. Perhaps indeed it was because she had seen signs of my confiding in Andrée, or because I had rashly told the latter that she was coming to spend the night at the Grand Hotel, that Albertine, who an hour earlier was perhaps ready to let me enjoy certain favours as though that were the simplest thing in the world, had abruptly changed her mind and threatened to ring the bell. But then, she must have been accommodating to lots of others. This thought rekindled my jealousy and I told Andrée that there was something that I wished to ask her.

"You did those things in your grandmother's empty apartment?"

"Oh, no, never, we'd have been disturbed."

"Why, I thought . . . it seemed to me . . ."

"Besides, Albertine chiefly liked doing it in the country."

"Oh! where?"

"Originally, when she hadn't time to go very far, we used to go to the Buttes-Chaumont. She knew a house there. Or else we would lie under the trees, there's never anyone about. In the grotto of the Petit Trianon, too."

"There, you see; how am I to believe you? You swore to me, not a year ago, that you'd never done anything at the Buttes-Chaumont."

"I was afraid of hurting you."

As I have said, I thought (although not until much later) that on the contrary it was on this second occasion, the day of her confessions, that Andrée had sought to hurt me. And this thought would have occurred to me at once, because I should have felt the need of it, if I had still been as much in love with Albertine. But Andrée's words did not hurt me sufficiently to make it essential for me to dismiss them immediately as untrue. On the whole, if what Andrée said was true, and I did not doubt it at the time, the real Albertine whom I now discovered, after having known so many diverse forms of Albertine, differed very little from the young bacchante who had loomed up and at once been detected that first day, on the front at Balbec, and who had offered me so many different aspects in succession, as a town alters the disposition of its buildings one after the other as we approach it, to the point of crushing, obliterating the principal monument which alone we could see from a distance, until finally, when we know it well and can judge it exactly, its true proportions prove to be those which the perspective of the first glance had indicated, the rest, through which we passed, being no more than that succession of lines of defence which everything in creation raises against our vision, and which we must cross one after another, at the

cost of how much suffering, before we arrive at the heart. If, however, I had no need to believe absolutely in Albertine's innocence because my suffering had diminished, I can say that conversely, if I did not suffer unduly at this revelation, it was because, some time since, the belief in Albertine's innocence that I had fabricated for myself had been gradually replaced, without my realising it, by the belief, ever present in my mind, in her guilt. Now if I no longer believed in Albertine's innocence, it was because I had already ceased to feel the need, the passionate desire to believe in it. It is desire that engenders belief, and if we are not as a rule aware of this, it is because most belief-creating desires—unlike the desire which had persuaded me that Albertine was innocent—end only with our own life. To all the evidence that corroborated my original version, I had stupidly preferred mere assertions by Albertine. Why had I believed them? Lying is essential to humanity. It plays as large a part perhaps as the quest for pleasure, and is moreover governed by that quest. One lies in order to protect one's pleasure, or one's honour if the disclosure of one's pleasure runs counter to one's honour. One lies all one's life long, even, especially, perhaps only, to those who love one. For they alone make us fear for our pleasure and desire their esteem. I had at first thought Albertine guilty, and it was only my desire, by utilising the powers of my intelligence to construct an edifice of doubt, that had put me on the wrong track. Perhaps we live surrounded by electric, seismic signs which we must interpret in good faith in order to know the truth about people's characters. If the truth be told, saddened as I was in spite of everything by Andrée's words, I thought it fitter that the reality should finally turn out to

accord with what my instinct had originally foreboded rather than with the wretched optimism to which I had later so cravenly surrendered. I preferred that life should remain on the same level as my intuitions. Those, moreover, that I had had that first day on the beach, when I had believed that these girls were the incarnation of frenzied pleasure, of vice, and again on the evening when I had seen Albertine's governess leading that passionate girl home to the little villa, as one drives into its cage a wild animal which nothing, later on, despite appearances, will ever succeed in taming—did not those intuitions accord with what Bloch had told me when he had made the world seem so fair to my eyes by showing me, making me quiver with excitement on all my walks, at every encounter, the universality of desire? Perhaps, when all was said, it was better that I should not have found those first intuitions verified afresh until now. While the whole of my love for Albertine endured, they would have made me suffer too acutely and it was better that there should have subsisted of them only a trace, my perpetual suspicion of things which I did not see and which nevertheless happened continually so close to me, and perhaps another trace as well, earlier, vaster, which was *my love itself*. For was it not, despite all the denials of my reason, tantamount to knowing Albertine in all her hideousness, actually to choose her, to love her? And even in the moments when mistrust is stilled, is not love the persistence of that mistrust and a transformation of it, is it not a proof of clairvoyance (a proof unintelligible to the lover himself), since desire, reaching out always towards what is most opposite to oneself, forces one to love what will make one suffer? There is no doubt that, inherent in a woman's

charm, in her eyes, her lips, her figure, are the elements, unknown to us, most calculated to make us unhappy, so much so that to feel attracted to her, to begin to love her, is, however innocent we may pretend it to be, to read already, in a different version, all her betrayals and her misdeeds. And may not those charms which, to attract me, corporealised thus the raw, dangerous, fatal elements of a person, have stood in a more direct relation of cause and effect to those secret poisons than do the seductive luxuriance and the toxic juice of certain venomous flowers? It was perhaps, I told myself, Albertine's vice itself, the cause of my future sufferings, that had produced in her that honest, frank manner, creating the illusion that one enjoyed with her the same loyal and unqualified comradeship as with a man, just as a parallel vice had produced in M. de Charlus a feminine delicacy of sensibility and mind. In the midst of the most complete blindness, perspicacity subsists in the form of predilection and tenderness; so that it is a mistake to speak of a bad choice in love, since as soon as there is a choice it can only be a bad one.

"Did those excursions to the Buttes-Chaumont take place when you used to call for her here?" I asked Andrée.

"Oh! no, from the day Albertine came back from Balbec with you, except the time I told you about, she never did anything again with me. She wouldn't even allow me to mention such things to her."

"But my dear Andrée, why go on lying to me? By the merest chance, for I never try to find out anything, I've learned in the minutest detail things of that sort which Albertine did, I can tell you exactly, on the bank of a

river with a laundry-girl, only a few days before her death."

"Ah! perhaps after she'd left you, that I can't say. She felt that she'd failed, that she'd never again be able to regain your trust."

These last words shattered me. Then I thought again of the evening of the syringa, and remembered that about a fortnight later, as my jealousy kept changing its object, I had asked Albertine whether she had ever had relations with Andrée, and she had replied: "Oh! never! Of course, I adore Andrée; I have a deep affection for her, but as I might have for a sister, and even if I had the tastes which you seem to suppose, she's the last person I should have thought of in that connexion. I can swear to you by anything you like, the honour of my aunt, the grave of my poor mother." I had believed her. And yet even if my suspicions had not been aroused by the contradiction between her former partial admissions with regard to certain matters and the vehemence with which she had afterwards denied them as soon as she saw that I was not indifferent to them, I ought to have remembered Swann, convinced of the platonic nature of M. de Charlus's friendships and assuring me of it on the evening of the very day I had seen the tailor and the Baron in the courtyard; I ought to have reflected that there are two worlds one behind the other, one consisting of the things that the best, the sincerest people say, and behind it the world composed of the sequence of what those same people do; so that when a married woman says to you of a young man: "Oh! it's perfectly true that I have an immense affection for him, but it's something quite innocent, quite pure, I could swear it on the memory of my parents," one ought one-

self, instead of feeling any hesitation, to swear to oneself that she has probably just come out of the bathroom into which, after every assignation she has with the young man in question, she rushes in order not to have a child. The spray of syringa made me profoundly sad, as did also the thought that Albertine could have believed, and said, that I was treacherous and hostile; and most of all perhaps, certain lies so unexpected that I had difficulty in grasping them. One day Albertine had told me that she had been to an aerodrome where one of the airmen was a friend of hers (this doubtless in order to divert my suspicions from women, thinking that I was less jealous of men), and that it had been amusing to see how dazzled Andrée was by the said airman, by all the compliments he paid Albertine, until finally Andrée had wanted to go up in his aeroplane with him. Now this was a complete fabrication; Andrée had never visited the aerodrome in question.

When Andrée left me, it was dinner-time. "You'll never guess who has been to see me and stayed at least three hours," said my mother. "I call it three hours, but it was perhaps longer. She arrived almost on the heels of my first visitor, who was Mme Cottard, sat still and watched everybody come and go—and I had more than thirty callers—and left me only a quarter of an hour ago. If you hadn't had your friend Andrée with you, I'd have sent for you."

"Well, who was it?"

"A person who never pays calls."

"The Princesse de Parme?"

"Why, I have a cleverer son than I thought. It's no fun making you guess a name; you hit on it at once."

"Did she apologise for her coldness yesterday?"

"No, that would have been stupid. The visit itself was her apology. Your poor grandmother would have thought it admirable. It seems that about two o'clock she sent a footman to ask whether I had an 'at home.' She was told that this was the very day and so up she came."

My first thought, which I did not dare mention to Mamma, was that the Princesse de Parme, surrounded the day before by people of rank and fashion with whom she was on intimate terms and enjoyed conversing, on seeing my mother come into the room had felt an annoyance which she had made no attempt to conceal. And it was quite in the style of the great ladies of Germany, which for that matter the Guermantes had largely adopted—that haughtiness for which they thought to atone by a scrupulous affability. But my mother believed, and I came in time to share her opinion, that the Princesse de Parme, having simply failed to recognise her, had not felt bound to pay any attention to her, and that she had learned after my mother's departure who she was, either from the Duchesse de Guermantes whom my mother had met below or from the list of her visitors, whose names were requested by the ushers before they entered her presence and inscribed in a register. She had felt that it would be ungracious to send word or to say to my mother: "I didn't recognise you," and instead—and this was no less in keeping with the code of manners of the German courts and with the ways of the Guermantes than my original version—had thought that a visit, an exceptional action on the part of a royal personage, and what was more a visit of several hours' duration, would convey the explanation to my mother in an indirect but no less convincing form, which is just what did happen.

would appear to have left Berlin where he considered that his presence no longer served any purpose."

Stop press: "His Majesty the Emperor left Compiègne this morning for Paris in order to confer with the Marquis de Norpois, the Minister for War and Marshal Bazaine in whom public opinion has especial confidence. H. M. the Emperor has cancelled the banquet which he was to give for his sister-in-law the Duchess of Alba. This action created everywhere, as soon as it became known, a particularly favourable impression. The Emperor has held a review of his troops, whose enthusiasm is indescribable. Several corps, by virtue of a mobilisation order issued immediately upon the Sovereign's arrival in Paris, are, in any contingency, ready to move in the direction of the Rhine."*

Sometimes at dusk as I returned to the hotel I felt that the Albertine of long ago, invisible to my eyes, was nevertheless enclosed within me as in the lead-covered cells of an inner Venice, the tight lid of which some incident occasionally lifted to give me a glimpse of that past.

Thus for instance one evening a letter from my stock-broker reopened for me for an instant the gates of the prison in which Albertine dwelt within me, alive, but so remote, so profoundly buried that she remained inaccessible to me. Since her death I had ceased to indulge in the speculations that I had made in order to have more money for her. But time had passed; the wisest judgments of the previous generation had been belied by the next, as had occurred in the past to M. Thiers who had said that railways could never prove successful; and the stocks of which M. de Norpois had said to us: "The income from

them may not be very great, but at least the capital will never depreciate," were, more often than not, those which had declined most in value. In the case of my English Consols and Raffineries Say shares alone, I had to pay out such considerable sums in brokers' commissions, as well as interest and contango fees, that in a rash moment I decided to sell out everything and found that I now possessed barely a fifth of what I had inherited from my grandmother and still possessed when Albertine was alive. This became known at Combray among the surviving members of our family and their friends who, knowing that I went about with the Marquis de Saint-Loup and the Guermantes family, said to themselves: "Pride goes before a fall!" They would have been greatly astonished to learn that it was for a girl of Albertine's modest background, almost a protégée of my grandmother's former piano-teacher, Vinteuil, that I had made these speculations. Besides, in that Combray world in which everyone is classified for ever, as in an Indian caste, according to the income he is known to enjoy, no one would have been capable of imagining the great freedom that prevailed in the world of the Guermantes, where no importance was attached to wealth and where poverty was regarded as being as disagreeable as, but no more degrading, having no more effect on a person's social position, than a stomach-ache. Doubtless people at Combray imagined, on the contrary, that Saint-Loup and M. de Guermantes must be ruined aristocrats with heavily mortgaged estates, to whom I had been lending money, whereas if I had been ruined they would have been the first to offer, unavailingly, to come to my assistance. As for my comparative penury, it was all the more awkward at the moment, inas-

much as my Venetian interests had been concentrated for some little time past on a young vendor of glassware whose blooming complexion offered to the delighted eye a whole range of orange tones and filled me with such a longing to see her daily that, realising that my mother and I would soon be leaving Venice, I had made up my mind to try to create some sort of position for her in Paris which would save me from being parted from her. The beauty of her seventeen years was so noble, so radiant, that it was like acquiring a genuine Titian before leaving the place. But would the scant remains of my fortune be enough to tempt her to leave her native land and come to live in Paris for my sole convenience?

But as I came to the end of the stockbroker's letter, a passage in which he said: "I shall look after your credits" reminded me of a scarcely less hypocritically professional expression which the bath-attendant at Balbec had used in speaking to Aimé of Albertine: "It was I who looked after her," she had said. And these words which had never recurred to my mind acted like an "Open sesame!" upon the hinges of the prison door. But a moment later the door closed once more upon the immured victim—whom I was not to blame for not wishing to join since I was no longer able to see her, to call her to mind, and since other people exist for us only through the idea that we have of them—but who for a moment had been rendered more touching by my desertion of her, albeit she was unaware of it, so that for the duration of a lightning-flash I had thought with longing of the time, already remote, when I used to suffer night and day from the companionship of her memory. Another time, in San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, an eagle accompanying one of the Apostles, and

conventionalised in the same manner, revived the memory and almost the suffering caused by the two rings the similarity of which Françoise had revealed to me, and as to which I had never learned who had given them to Albertine.

One evening, however, an incident occurred of such a nature that it seemed as though my love must revive. No sooner had our gondola stopped at the hotel steps than the porter handed me a telegram which the messenger had already brought three times to the hotel, for owing to the inaccurate rendering of the addressee's name (which I recognised nevertheless, through the corruptions introduced by the Italian clerks, as my own) the post office required a signed receipt certifying that the telegram was indeed for me. I opened it as soon as I was in my room, and, glancing through the message which was filled with inaccurately transmitted words, managed nevertheless to make out: "My dear friend, you think me dead, forgive me, I am quite alive, I long to see you, talk about marriage, when do you return? Affectionately. Albertine." Then there occurred in me in reverse order a process parallel to that which had occurred in the case of my grandmother. When I had learned the fact of my grandmother's death, I had not at first felt any grief. And I had been really grieved by her death only when certain involuntary memories had brought her alive again for me. Now that Albertine no longer lived for me in my thoughts, the news that she was alive did not cause me the joy that I might have expected. Albertine had been no more to me than a bundle of thoughts, and she had survived her physical death so long as those thoughts were alive in me; on the other hand, now that those thoughts were dead,

Albertine did not rise again for me with the resurrection of her body. And when I realised that I felt no joy at the thought of her being alive, that I no longer loved her, I ought to have been more shattered than a man who, looking at his reflexion in a mirror, after months of travel or sickness, discovers that he has white hair and a different face, that of a middle-aged or an old man. This is shattering because its message is: "the man that I was, the fair-haired young man, no longer exists, I am another person." And yet, was not the impression that I now felt the proof of as profound a change, as total a death of my former self and of the no less complete substitution of a new self for that former self, as the sight of a wrinkled face topped with a white wig instead of the face of long ago? But one is no more distressed at having become another person, after a lapse of years and in the natural sequence of time, than one is at any given moment by the fact of being, one after another, the incompatible persons, malicious, sensitive, refined, caddish, disinterested, ambitious which one can be, in turn, every day of one's life. And the reason why one is not distressed is the same, namely that the self which has been eclipsed—momentarily in this latter case and when it is a question of character, permanently in the former case and when the passions are involved—is not there to deplore the other, the other which is for the moment, or from then onwards, one's whole self; the caddish self laughs at his caddishness because one is the cad, and the forgetful self does not grieve about his forgetfulness precisely because he has forgotten.

I should have been incapable of resuscitating Albertine because I was incapable of resuscitating myself, of resuscitating the self of those days. Life, in accordance with

its habit which is, by unceasing, infinitesimal labours, to change the face of the world, had not said to me on the morrow of Albertine's death: "Become another person," but, by changes too imperceptible for me to be conscious even that I was changing, had altered almost everything in me, with the result that my mind was already accustomed to its new master—my new self—when it became aware that it had changed; it was to this new master that it was attached. My feeling for Albertine, my jealousy, stemmed, as we have seen, from the irradiation, by the association of ideas, of certain pleasant or painful impressions, the memory of Mlle Vinteuil at Montjouvain, the precious good-night kisses that Albertine used to give me on the neck. But in proportion as these impressions had grown fainter, the vast field of impressions which they coloured with a hue that was agonising or soothing reverted to neutral tones. As soon as oblivion had taken hold of certain dominant points of suffering and pleasure, the resistance offered by my love was overcome, I no longer loved Albertine. I tried to recall her image to my mind. I had been right in my presentiment when, a couple of days after Albertine's flight, I was appalled by the discovery that I had been able to live for forty-eight hours without her. It had been the same as when I wrote to Gilberte long ago saying to myself: "If this goes on for a year or two, I shall no longer love her." And if, when Swann asked me to come and see Gilberte again, this had seemed to me as embarrassing as greeting a dead woman, in Albertine's case death—or what I had supposed to be death—had achieved the same result as a prolonged breach in Gilberte's. Death merely acts in the same way as absence. The monster at whose apparition my love had trembled,