



Marcel Proust
A la recherche du temps perdu
Volume 1 Du côté de chez Swann
Part 2: Un amour de Swann

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DU COTE DE CHEZ SWANN

Deuxième partie

UN AMOUR DE SWANN

"Pour faire partie du «petit noyau» ... ". The salon des Verdurin.

The salon des Verdurin really was more like a sect: you had to judge that young pianist supported by M^{me} Verdurin the world's best, as you should the young medical doctor Cottard in his field, and it should not become known that you were visiting other salons.

The gentlemen somehow managed to stick better to the orthodoxy than the ladies, who often fell short in the agility to be - and stay - accepted. At the moment we speak, the "small core", as it was called, held, apart from M^{me} Verdurin herself, only two ladies. The one was the aunt of the pianist, a retired door-keeper, and the other, called "amour" and "Odette" by M^{me} Verdurin, M^{me} de Crécy, a prostitute judged - and such far from only in the "small core" - stunningly gorgeous.

There were no evening programs. The pianist played "when it sang in him", but if that happened to be the highest, Wagner, then there was the risk that M^{me} Verdurin feared her emotions and acquiring a migraine. When he did not play, they conversed. Due to the highly humouristic content of what was said, at least in M^{me} Verdurin's view that was followed by the others as a matter of etiquette, M^{me} Verdurin often had to laugh very loudly, during which one time even her jaw got displaced and immediately corrected by doctor Cottard.

Big soirées involving the invitation of outsiders were kept to the a minimum required to advertise the pianist and the painter. M^{me} Verdurin never saw anyone outside the circle of her salon, never even her immensely rich family. She always felt some discomfort when others showed they could not live similarly: when doctor Cottard put on his coat for a visit to a patient she would plead for rest for the patient, that Cottard would find him cured tomorrow if he did not go and disturb him with a visit at this moment.

M^{me} Verdurin thought of family feast days like Christmas and Easter as a disaster for then the detestable "external" obligations of her "small core" would show themselves in their most merciless ways causing a considerable risk she would sit alone.

One day M^{me} de Crécy confessed, to M. Verdurin, that she had a "friend". Though M. Verdurin understood perfectly what this, in her case, would mean, and, as he knew, his wife would do so too, but since loves of diverse nature were no problem to the "small core" if exclusively consumed in their midst, he had no qualms to raise the issue once with his wife, all the more since he'd rather never have an opinion about anything before having consulted her.

M^{me} Verdurin said never to be able to refuse anything to Odette, her "perfection". M. Swann, unknown, got invited for a type of session after which either the ballotee got raised to the status of confidant or the introducing confidant got put under firm pressure to avoid further intercourse with this awful acquaintance (and that pressure would last until the advice got heeded).

"Certes le «petit noyau» n'avait aucun rapport ... ". Swann and love part 1: Swann's take on love in general

Swann's life at the time was one of having almost been raised to the status of nobility by the faubourg Saint Germain. His reputation having become so far beyond dispute as to safely enabling him to put in place any boring little duchess, he had for long started to seek thrill at places where he had to start all over: not rarely he set out chasing a budding little flower from modest circles. Solid rosy, opulent, and healthy flesh started to turn him on more than a *chique* young lady satisfying all upper class requirements of weakness and washy superciliousness.

In conquering such a simple young flower he also indulged in the lechery of the villain that the immorality of such little adventures rendered him. And something artistic as well, for in his perception it felt more romantic than a novel.

So at some time he amused his intimate friend baron de Charlus with a story an adventure with a lady he met in the train and took home, who turned out to be a sister of a powerful sovereign who had surrounded himself with with all sons of high European politics, and at another they would discuss the tactics of conquering of the exciting kitchen aid of the neighbours.

Often, M. Swann called for the help of his high contacts to come into contact with a lady that had charmed him. He had great skills in doing so inconspicuously or at least so marginally sensed that the person called in could easily honour his request *sub rosa* without raising suspicion elsewhere, though later I heard that when my grandfather would receive a letter from Swann with such a request he immediately knew what was going on and had ceased to collaborate. When later the girl involved, with no idea she had been protected, finally would tell my family with great enthusiasm that she had met Swann, how nice a man that was and that now she had become quite one of the family there and would introduce him to us on short notice, my grandfather would hum songs of which we, in the family, all knew the lyrics such as

*"O, mystery surrounding me
where I do go I leave to thee"*

or:

*"How do I love the lack of sight,
In sweet and blind adventures"*

When grandfather a few months later would ask M. Swann's new friend how things were, and he would get the answer - with straightened back - never to mention that name again in her presence he couldn't prevent himself from asking: "But weren't you so close with him?"

Swann himself was almost part of the family of a nephew of my grandmother's for a while. But one day he did not show up for dinner and they never saw him again. This was a great mystery until one day Swann's goodbye letter to the kitchen aid was found in the folder of bills, where she had mislaid it.

If Swann would deem one of his flames decently blessed by nature fit to be introduced, albeit may be after some small training, into his own favourite salon, he would do so, to keep things a bit lively there.

Needless to tell you, reader that my interest in Swann got inspired by my later life which started to look so much like his.

"Mais tandis que chacune de ces liaisons ... ". Swann and love part 2: Odette de Crécy

Odette was young, and, to common standards, extremely beautiful, but not really Swann's type of girl. The lines of her face were too sharp for him, her big eyes seemed to make her head top-heavy, a bit sad as well, which did, in his eyes, not suit her at all. Then she had that delicate type of skin that he did not like at all, he even found it repulsive.

After being introduced to him, with meaningful blinks of the intermediary, she had written him to ask whether she could visit him to see his collection of paintings.

She got invited, received platonically, did not make a lasting impression, invited herself again, and when she was at Swann's he felt regret she was not her type. To make it worse, her young perfect body did not go well with the fashion of the day, and that extended even to her haircut. If all that once would have been well out of the way, say, near the peak of a passionate meeting of the flesh, Swann would have judged her much more beautiful, but he could not know that yet.

When she went away she would ask when she would be allowed to come again, and whether he would never consider to visit her for tea. Swann would excuse himself using his

study of Ver Meer's [indeed superbly written as Ver Meer in Proust, we shall follow this] *View on Delft* (a study he already totally neglected for quite some time). She confessed to feel like a frog before the areopagus when talking to Swann, from whom she would so much like to learn a lot - she probably had picked up the name without understanding it was a reference to that notoriously corrupt classical Athenian court - asked whether that Ver Meer was still alive and whether any paintings of him were to be seen in Paris.

It should be clear now that Swann's pace was still far from matching Odette's, but, now in middle age, he his routine in going through the the cycle of love - at least of the type he was used to - was such that he easily could have stepped in half way when somebody there, like Odette did now, held her hand out.

And his gallantry rose already, excusing for his reserves by saying he "feared to become unhappy".

She confessed to search for nothing else than love and did so, in Swann's eyes, in such a remarkably innocent way that it moved him and made him go over to soundings: "but I know women, it is hard for me to believe you are not very busy".

"Me? I have nothing to do. I am always free. I would be there only for you, you can call for me day and night. Why don't you just do it? Do you know what I would like do do? I would like to invite you at les Verdurin, where I spend almost every night".

"Et sans doute, en se rappelant ... " With Odette to les Verdurin. Swann's introduction to the trusted "small core".

And yes, all on his own Swann's soul managed to pass the so initial phase of the love cycle so governed by visual excitement, until it reached the place where Odette stood waiting with her hand held out, she became the bearer of his weal and woe and he ripe for les Verdurin.

Swann preferred not to be introduced by Odette herself but by a connection, my grandfather, who was at the time totally ignorant concerning Swann's stature in France's top circles - Jockey Club, les Laumes and all that - and that was a good thing for had he know about it, he would certainly have concluded something had gone wrong with Swann's head. But it went wrong anyway, for grandfather told us, after having read the request: "here we go again, there will be some woman involved, by the way this Verdurin managed, with all his millions, to drift in the company of outright rabble, I do not want to have anything to with it. No letter! But we are in for a good laugh if Swann gets in there!"

And thus it was Odette herself who set off to introduce the great Charles Swann as a total unknown to the narrow-minded "small core" of les Verdurin.

Dinner there was savoured that night by the young M. and M^{me} Cottard, the young pianist and his aunt, and the painter they cherished lately. Some other trusted members had joined after dinner.

Doctor Cottar, a unlettered immigrant from the countryside, always fearing to react in earnest when being told a joke, or to

laugh at something meant in earnest, had trained himself in a unique mimic that preserved all rights on the matter.

His fear was founded indeed, for in his understanding things regularly went badly wrong. If someone was delighted to give him something valuable, say, an invitation for theatre, and false modesty inspired the good giver to confess that for a *connoisseur* like Cottard the piece might have little appeal, Cottard, who had no idea whatsoever what to think of it thought to do good to accept the invitation while politely and explicitly agreeing that quality of what was offered would be limited indeed.

It started to dawn on M^{me} Verdurin, seeing how absolutely Cottard trusted them in every judgment, and how this headed for curious collisions when material testimonies of hospitality and friendship were politely played down. Her husband had "always wanted to tell her". At the change of the year Cottard did not, as last year, get a three thousand franc ruby as a "little gift", but a three hundred franc stone with a text indicating that such stones were scarce indeed and heaven and earth had been moved to get him one.

The initial impression Swann made to the "little core" was excellent. It was a good thing indeed that they were not aware that his routine of moving in the salons of the highest circles - so despised here - was the cause of this. He had the right body language to these simple people, without causing unrest, but got upset by doctor Cottard for a second when the latter, even before having said a word, with his unfathomable Mona Lisa smile gave him some sort of wink prompting Swann to deep-search his memory to find whether he might have met this man in some compromising establishment - though he rarely came in such places. Swann really hoped Odette had not seen that

lunatic wink. His indignation concerning Cottard had fallen so unexpectedly upon him that he feared to have been visibly icy for a moment. But after observing Cottard a bit longer and having been introduced to his young wife he concluded his worries had been unfounded.

The painter, always addressed in jest by M^{me} Verdurin as "monsieur Biche", invited him for a visit to his atelier at once. There, he was making a portrait of Cottard, ordered by M^{me} Verdurin (M^{me} Verdurin: "Do not forget the smile monsieur Biche, do not forget the smile!").

Swann asked to be introduced to everybody. M^{me} Verdurin had preferred to make her own selection for the presence, that day, of some people who should not start thinking they were welcome had been unavoidable.

But once back at the aunt of the piano player M^{me} Verdurin was back in her element. This lady bowed full of respect but then came back up a bit majestic. Also, she seemed to fear being heard making mistakes in her French and by way of camouflage exercised a bit of a confusing pronunciation all over. An innocent joke about this that Swann permitted himself to M^{me} Verdurin fell wrong. Fortunately, it prompted M^{me} Verdurin to extensively praise the lady, and got joined in that endeavour by her husband who praised her writing talents. That amply provided Swann with the means to correct his small *faux pas* by displaying admiration, respect and interest in this very special lady.

After which he could show his excitement about the proposal that the pianist would play a piece or two.

This turned out to be always ritually preceded by the calling of the most appreciated pieces of the recent weeks, whereby M^{me} Verdurin would protest and claim playing such-and-such piece would be a danger to her health. Then doctor Cottard would have the gratifying role of reassuring her that this time she would not get ill or else he would cure her.

Odette sat down on the canapé in waiting for the music. Swann modestly waited until he got pressed to sit next to her.

"Or quand le pianiste eut joué ... ". The andante of the sonata for piano en violin by Vinteuil.

After the recital Swann made another good impression by being very taken, and genuinely so, with the piece, even though he led M^{me} Verdurin in foreign waters, for she was not used to have much interest in the paper her pianist was playing from, within her track of course the young doctor Cottard, desperate to know what was to be thought of it.

Cottard heard M^{me} Verdurin speak in positive ways about the composer, and after she had chosen the water one more time to further acquire the appropriate swim stroke, Cottard, after having satisfied himself not too much people were listening in, shouted confidently: "Yes, yes, that is what we call a musician *di primo cartello!*"

Swann had heard the piece once before. He had been trying to identify it, had asked around about the composer. It had a musical phrase somewhere, wonderfully appearing, then ethereally vanishing again. It had extraordinarily impressed him. He had failed to trace it. Now he heard it the second time. It turned out to be the andante of the sonata for piano en violin by Vinteuil.

"I know a Vinteuil", Swann said, thinking of the former piano teacher of my grandmother's sisters, who later, having become widower, after receiving his sizeable heritage had moved *du côté de Méséglise* with his bony robust daughter, and who would disapprove of Swann's later marriage with Odette so much that he ceased to visit us for fear to encounter Swann.

"It might be him", M^{me} Verdurin said.

"Well," Swann laughed, "if you could see him two minutes the thought would no longer occur to you".

The composer Vinteuil was suffering from mental absences, the pianist had heard, and he added he felt some of that in his latest pieces, this sonata included.

When Odette said goodbye, M^{me} Verdurin was wholly positive about her "simple and charming" *introducé*. M. Verdurin raised once more the improper joke Swann had made about the pianist's aunt, but the hammer of ballotage had sounded.

"À la grande surprise de M^{me} Verdurin ... ". The Elysée threatens to spoil things.

Swann kept coming regularly. He also often joined them when going out, and when M^{me} Verdurin told him that she would not have to miss so many events had she disposed of a press card, he even promised her to get her one, adding, to his immediate regret, that he would do so tomorrow at the lunch of the prefect of police at the Elysée.

Commotion. Cottard went in upright position to make a forceful statement appropriate to the circumstances, and Swann hastened to say the Elysée was a dull business, that he rarely

came there, which could not prevent that Cottard in months to come would keep regularly parroting something about Swann and the Elysée, while M. Verdurin kept regularly saying, aside to his wife, that he thought it inappropriate that Swann had not mentioned his high contacts at his introduction.

*"Si l'on n'avait pas arrangé une partie au dehors, ... ".
Odette's advance.*

Swann always arrived after dinner, despite Odette's wish to have him next to her at table.

"If you prefer we could go and have dinner elsewhere" she said.

"But how about M^{me} Verdurin?", Swann, who rather held his option for dinner free, asked.

"I'll tell her something about why I could not be in time".

"How sweet you are".

But Swann, already interested but not yet aroused, thought the best way to keep Odette's desires high was to moderately limit their contacts. Moreover he just had started bodily intercourse with a very young worker's girl who had everything he required a girl to have, and he preferred to spend late afternoon and early evening with her, even until he left his coach at les Verdurin (the girl would still be in coach), dinner there would have been done and Odette sat ready with the pianist who was already instructed he should start with the andante of Vinteuil, "our piece", Odette said, meaning her and Swann.

Swann usually brought her home, thus of course pleasing her, as well as making sure nobody on that stretch could come between them behind his back.

Once at arrival at her house she saw, leaving Swann's coach, the last flower of a chrysanthemum in her garden, ran towards it plucked it and gave it to him. All the way home Swann held it against his nose and after entering he stored it carefully in his *secretaire*.

But bringing her home he never joined her inside. Only twice he paid her a tea visit, having realized how charged with symbolism this was to her.

Odette was ecstatic. She received him in her living room full of palms in Chinese vases and all kinds of knick-knack, in a pink silk dressing gown. The *valet* brought a large number of lights in, that turned out all to have their own place. He knew them he put them there, closely monitored by Odette. She did her utmost to make Swann feel comfortable. Swann thought to tremendously enjoy his tea, but that probably wasn't the prime source of his very good feelings.

Swann's second tea time visit was even more important. He carried an engraving she had requested to see.

She was not feeling totally well and wore a peignoir of mauve chinese crape, she had not tied her hair. When sitting next to him she had taken the engraving, one knee almost choreographically bent to have a relaxed position to study it, she suddenly reminded Swann of Zephora, daughter of Jethro in Boticelli's fresco in the Sistine Chapel and, what never had happened before, her image penetrated into that place in Swann's soul where he had his noblest thoughts. All his little

displeasures about the way she looked disappeared at that memorable moment.

"Et cependant ce n'était pas seulement la lassitude ... ". Swann tries to turn a threatening tide.

When after a few months Swann realized how his life had changed from intense dealings with the most important people of France into intensive, but still platonic intercourse with Odette, he decided that apparently he dedicated himself now to this invaluable masterpiece and that such should be no surprise at all and well worth it. On his desk stood a reproduction of the daughter of Jethro that boosted his art collector's pride with the awareness of possessing - albeit not yet corporeal - a woman who approached this.

But, as is widely known, when happiness finds its way, is often brings with it a certain boredom and petrification, sooner than one likes one has little to say anymore to each other, and stagnates in a type of doldrums. To keep Odette sharp he suddenly wrote her a letter full of defying reproaches, and had it delivered before dinner. It would give her a fit, she would, he hoped, send an answer in which he would read things about her she never told him before.

And indeed, a more tender letter he had never received. At a certain stage he even got one that started: "My dear friend, my hand is trembling so severely I almost fail to write". He stored it in his *secrétaire*, in the drawer already containing the chrysanthemum flower. Sometimes, when she had not had time to write him, she would take him by the arm when he entered at les Verdurin and said: "Come, I have to tell you something". And, fascinated, he followed her on her search for herself.

Odette, the excitement with which she always came to him when he entered at les Verdurin, gave this salon more significance to Swann than any of his high places in Paris.

"Mais une fois qu'ayant songé avec maussaderie à cet inévitable retour ensemble ... ". Swann meets himself, who turns out to be quite dominant.

Because their meeting place was a salon, he could hide for himself Odette's growing significance, and keep presenting it to himself with some indifference. But that came to a sudden end when one evening he had stayed too long in the forest with his worker's girl and Odette has left les Verdurin before he arrived.

Everybody had seen the conspicuous departure of Odette and waited with interest on Swann's arrival. All that attention caused Swann's attempts to hide his dismay to fail utterly, which immediately in all corners was the subject, discussed whispering.

And he added to that by dropping all decorum turn around, and leave.

Arrived at Odette's place the *maitre d'hotel* was not around. Once returned he reported to have been instructed an hour ago to tell Swann, would he come, that Odette probably was drinking a chocolate at Prévost.

Swann ordered his coachman to go there, but the streets were full. Jams. Horses coaches horses coaches. If just forcing his way through and pay the fines would have gone faster he sure would have given the order.

There he sat. In his coach. On tenterhooks. Now Odette had ceased to be the only one engaged in self-discovery.

And she was not in Prévost.

He gave his coach man a list of establishments to check and on foot checked some others himself, but after a while, he did not realize how much later, they stood together again. After a short silence the coach man decided to go for an attempt to force a decision: "I doubt whether you have another option than to go home sir".

Swann resisted. The coachman did have some more convincing arguments that included moral relief, in the eyes of the person searched for, but Swann was unstoppable. He went on to la Maison Dorée, entered Tortoni twice, even reached le Café Anglais, then walked back with big steps and bewildered looks, in the direction of the corner of the Boulevard des Italiens where he had agreed to meet his coachman again. But there he saw Odette coming from the opposite side.

She startled by his view.

"Et il la tenait par l'épaule ... ". Swann's new self resolutely grabs Odette's catleyas.

As if this was not enough, once she had recovered from that emotion, he had told his coachman to follow, and he joined her in her coach, they drove over some obstacle, the coach bounced seriously, which gave her a fright again and her breath failed her.

He put an arm around her shoulder and asked her if with the other he could adjust her catleyas-orchids of her corsage.

She smiled in consent.

And whether he was allowed to wipe the pollen off her dress. This was granted as well. And so on, as in those little books one finds in supermarket at the end of the aisle of ladies underwear offered at a discount when you buy three, *casu quo* [Sweets of Sin](#), so lovingly purchased by Bloom, Joyce's Ulysses, for his wife Molly.

After which, between Odette's shrubs in Chinese pottery, their bond finally was consumed. The associated physical actions would, in their private language, always stay referred to as "fair catlaya", and of that so healthy worker's girl we never heard anything anymore.

Thus Swann had managed to effectively suppress the panic that jumped on him at les Verdurin, he even forgot all about it, and made the transition to a new life style of daily intimacy with Odette, as a result of which he distanced himself even more from his circles of old times, and when seeing them, made a conspicuously changed impression.

When Swann would be late and Odette's staff gone to bed he would knock at the window. On her piano stood some kitsch pieces, but also the andante by Vinteuil, with the mysterious phrase. She was not a good player, played with errors and hesitations, which Swann appreciated even more than a proper execution.

He only visited her in the evenings, had no idea what she did the rest of the day, knew nothing of her past, and was not in the least curious.

And by not touching the subject at all, I, as the author of *La recherche* totally leave it to the reader to realize that she did not raise those subjects herself, and that it did not occur to Swann to ask himself how she maintained her household with that staff between those palms and orchids.

But, apart from the blinks of the person who had introduced her to him, that I did mention, Swann did remember some remarks made here and there about her that suggested that she was a "maintained lady", a kind that he, since he preferred kitchen aids and the like, considered totally and fundamentally perverse. That must have been sheer gossip. Odette was so good, naive, idealistic, almost incapable to lie, as he had witnessed himself, reddening and stammering against M^{me} Verdurin about why she had been absent somewhere - to please Swann - even giving pretexts that were very easy to unravel.

Odette a whore? Impossible!

But after she got reported by a friend of Swann to have been spotted in the rue Abbatucci very charmingly dressed he promised himself to ask Odette about it.

"Sauf en lui demandant la petite phrase de Vinteuil ... ". Swann learns to enjoy Odette's bad taste.

Right from the start Swann understood any attempt to improve Odette's bad taste was useless. He saw very well the limits of her intelligence. Would he try to explain her the works and motivations of the great artists, she no doubt would only be disappointed that things were so different from what she had hoped.

It was difficult enough to hide his taste without all that, and this was peremptory for it disappointed Odette a bit. She valued totally different things in him, such as his indifference concerning money, his friendliness towards everybody and his subtle ways of dealing with people. She even admired his high connections but did not want to be introduced, she even let him promise never to mention her name. She lost her ambition to be there, she said, after a woman who was her friend at the time had started to say bad things about her.

Swann had no thought whatsoever to bring her there since from her distance she impossibly could have formed an adequate idea about what it involved, and he did not expect this to improve were he to try.

For Odette insisted on liking what she called "chic". This had little to do with the chic of high places. She associated it with those balls at the places of unlettered Paris newly rich celebrities, where she came in only with great efforts, places occurring in the conversation of Swann's friends only to deal with some outsider who seemed to appear there, and to indicate that clearly this person had better stay an outsider.

Swann once could not prevent himself to indicate a passing lady, the marquise de Villeparisis. Odette was chocked by the "tasteless" way she was dressed. Odette also shared my grandmother's - who even refused to visit Swann - opinion that the quay d'Orléans was not a place for a man of Swann's standing to live.

Odette loved what she called "antique", but had no clue whatsoever about style periods. Even without telling her what these knick-knack items she thought of as "chic" were or pretended to be, his own posture, house and furniture sufficed

for Odette to judge him somewhat below standard, so he protected whatever she valued in the image she had of him by refraining to come up with his intellectual values and standards.

To enjoy her childish excitement while doing "chicque" things, he played her game. Mollified.

"Comme tout ce qui environnait Odette ... ". Swann embarks on shaping a positive view on the soul of M^{me} Verdurin, but does so at an unfortunate juncture in this story.

And childish excitement was of course the essence of M^{me} Verdurin's "small core" as well. Swann's judgment about these "charming people" got ever more positive. He managed in an ever subtler and ever more believable way to play down the silliness of their discussions and behaviour: "here I feel at home!", he would tell himself. M^{me} Verdurin noticed every little hitch between Odette and him and immediately came to the rescue. Swann, asking himself nervously whether he would see Odette in summer, got invited by M^{me} Verdurin to come to their summer house together with Odette. This M^{me} Verdurin he now started to call, without any irony, a "great soul". And he did not hesitate to tell some of his surprised old salon friends that he preferred the salon of les Verdurin "a thousand times".

However the very moment he started to become the greatest fan of les Verdurin the tide there started to turn against him. Right from the start he had tried to contain the *allophobia* of the "small core" by talking as little as possible about his high connections (called *the annoying* at les Verdurin). But little by little the information had of course trickled through, and had led to him being judged as "closed", and the ensuing feeling he

was not as loyal as he should and did not trust and recognized the others as they expected of a member.

More serious was the doubt he left about whether the "small core" was unanimous on the basic issues of life. Not that he openly denied that the *princesse de Sagan* was grotesque, or Cottard incredibly funny, but he clearly laughed less loudly about Cottard's "jokes" than the others and the regular confirmation concerning how annoying *the annoying* were never was initiated in Swann's corner.

And that caused unrest.

Had he shouted loudly how annoying *the annoying* were, he could have gone there any time. But the "small core" did not obtain the desired confession.

What a contrast with the new *introducé* - again brought in by Odette - the *comte de Forcheville*! This man immediately understood what was required from him and started to deliver at once.

To his advantage, Forcheville had less than Swann in his soul that could be hurt by the cultural austerity of the "small core" for he was a snob, not very learned, no *connoisseur* or literate and hence realized less clearly the limitations of these people. And he had more to nicely fit the company: contrary to Swann he could join any criticism of someone of *the annoying*, with great energy, and even when he knew it was totally mistaken. Since the most emphatic of such criticisms usually originated from M^{me} Verdurin, she was very pleased with Forcheville in no time.

"Enfin, peut-être avait-il surtout perdu, ce soir-là, de son indulgence ...". Swann's downfall sets in.

The effective machiavellism of the good-looking Forcheville, the fact he was invited by Odette, that M^{me} Verdurin was so pleased with him, all this must have somehow upset Swann. May be some worse feelings, but if so, he held them deep enough down inside to not even notice them himself.

However it may be caused, when Odette asked him: "what do you think of my new introducé", he answered: "repugnant".

Which of course was not overly prudent.

It was only the first shackle in a chain of incidents, as if the devil played with it: Swann, already trained to allow conversations to reach the usual level of total idiocy unhampered unless some subtle push should be given to it for reasons of his strict self interest, now lost all grip.

Then Forcheville, still totally unaware of the prevailing opinion concerning *the annoying*, answered on a question, in jest - intending to praise Swann in order to charm Odette - by explaining how difficult it was to meet Swann for he always was in the the highest of salons. This was not even correct as far as recent time was concerned, but M. Verdurin and his wife threw a glanced at each other in deep perturbation

As if that was not enough, Swann produced, on a sensitive moment - those who thought they would know him by now might be surprized - a judgment contrary to the general opinion, on a lapidary tone even, on behalf of himself as the smallest possible minority, clearly without having considered what he would get out of it.

And that was not much good.

M^{me} Verdurin was delighted about Forcheville, and as far as she was concerned Swann was now on his way to expulsion.

As the author of *La recherche* I leave open whether or not Odette ever reported Swann's judgment about Forcheville to M^{me} Verdurin, but the seasoned reader will regard this as probable, and if it happened, Swann was already doomed by that alone.

The consumption of the expulsion would proceed slowly and heart-rending. M^{me} Verdurin set out to bloc contact of Odette with Swann, and promote that with Forcheville, with all means, not shying away to indicate chairs to be taken at table, in coaches and in restaurants. Odette meekly obeyed.

Forcheville was delighted. After he seeing what was going on he understood that a role of his as an open rival of Swann would be appreciated, and proceeded to the posing of defiant question op to the level of: "but you do not want to pretend that ...", during which he got Odette at his side, who, like Cottard, constantly monitored M^{me} Verdurin to know what position to take.

Swann, still full of love for Odette, could normally be found at les Verdurin during the evenings, his tie with Odette did change in no aspect, not even that of the financial support she often needed to keep her creditors at bay.

Odette did not distance herself from Swann but expected him to understand that in the game of les Verdurin she would stay at the side of the "loyals", the "trusted". Submissively she kept

supporting M^{me} Verdurin in everything she did to irritate Swann.

When in months in which his financial support had been somewhat less than others Swann noticed some cooling of Odette's love, it occurred to him that the mechanism of the "supported lady" could be operative. But even if so, it did not seem to him, in Odette's case, so worrying for he felt sure this would be Odette's first time to be in such a situation. I have to add that Swann did start to experience some mental eclipse and at the same time considered making it seven thousand instead of the usual five thousand to surprize her and boost her love for him.

Yet, Swann got haunted more and more by distrust, and in his jealousy started to get haunted by unbearable phantasies about her possible disloyalty. While small observations started to cause suspicions, at les Verdurin the first events started to occur where Swann was not invited (while Forcheville and Odette were), though at first outside the regular program, so they might have escaped Swann's attention or given him no suspicion.

*"Un jour que Swann était sorti au milieu de l'après-midi ... ".
An unexpected afternoon visit with depressing consequences.*

One day, Swann's midday meeting suddenly got cancelled, and he decided to surprise Odette by visiting her.

The house keeper thought she was around. Swann rang. He heard some walking but nobody opened. He knocked on the window, but saw he had raised the curiosity of the neighbours and left.

After an hour he returned, Odette opened, said she had slept, and said some more things that did not seem entirely consistent. He was still there when another hour later again a bell rang. Odette nervously talked through it, showing herself once again sad that Swann's rare afternoon visit, that she so appreciated, had gone so awfully wrong. A little later a coach left, the owner of which apparently was told that Odette was absent.

In quite a low state Swann ended up at his own house, quay d'Orléans, where his love managed to find some way to direct his sadness to his "poor Odette".

At his departure, Odette had given him some letters to post. Suppliers mainly. But one for Forcheville. After a lot of shaking and peering through the slightly transparent envelope, holding it in the light, he could conclude it was Forcheville with whom he had surprised her, but that Forcheville still was unaware of this, and now got told by this letter it had been her uncle. To his relief he found no formulas of tenderness.

Yet the depression of jealousy remained and he considered to take her on holiday until he realized that there would be men wherever he went with her.

"Un mois après le jour où il avait lu la lettre ... ". Coarsening of the game at les Verdurin.

A month later, at a dinner of the "small core" in the Bois de Boulogne it seemed to Swann that M^{me} Verdurin was going round to remind the "trusted" of a party at Chatou the next night. Swann of course now wished to know whether Odette would decline the Chatou invitation or would insist he would be invited as well. But in the course of the evening - in which

she avoided to be *à deux* with Swann - she assumed the pose of being desperate and not up to the heavy counter-tide ravaging her life.

And so all Swann could do is looking forward to the moment they would, as usual, leave together.

But when that moment came, M^{me} Verdurin shouted: "Odette! Come! We have a tiny little place for you next to monsieur Forcheville."

"Yes madame", Odette said.

"But ... we always ...", Swann was unable to think of something better than what he thought.

"But M^{me} Verdurin asked me".

"Well, couldn't you let her go one time with us, we always let her go with you", M^{me} Verdurin said.

"But I have something important to tell her".

"Well, you could write her a letter"

"Bye", Odette held her hand out for a shake.

Swann tried to smile but totally failed.

After M^{me} Verdurin's coach had left she said to her husband: "Have you seen now how this Swann thinks he can treat us? He looked like going to eat me. I am going to tell Odette what I think of it, she will surely understand".

Then after a small pause she got an attack of serious rage, and suddenly looked like our maid Françoise when returning back into the kitchen after slaughtering a seriously resisting chicken, and just like her, she mumbled: "[rotten beast](#)"

Swann sent his coach man away. Walking home, alone, he too drastically changed his vocabulary, dealing with les Verdurin, Chatou, even Odette. Almost home he had reached the stage of denoting the "small core" by "garbage".

At home he thought for a moment to have found an idea how to get invited at the Chatou party, but quickly abandoned it.

Two days later doctor Cottard, who had been absent at Chatou and the memorable day preceding it, in total innocence asked whether M. Swann would come tonight.

"I hope not", Mme Verdurin said, "God save us, he is terribly annoying, bête and badly educated".

With astonishing skill Cottard made a retreat from the battlefield in good order, cunningly narrowing his flanks with an "Ah!-ah!-ah!-ah!-ah!", spoken by using the entire register of his voice, going down from strong to weak.

And that was the end of Swann at les Verdurin.

"Alors ce salon qui avait réuni Swann et Odette ... ". Love assumes the form of absence.

After these memorable incidents Swann and Odette saw each other only after the evening at les Verdurin. His judgment concerning the taste of the "small core", for example about the choice of music, theatre, to be honest really all they put on their

program, acquired outright grimness, as a result of which he needed a quite some energy to collect the substantial amount of hypocrisy needed - for sheer self-interest - to appear enthusiastic, positive or at least never less than neutral about it when Odette touched upon such subjects.

The blunt discourse into which Swann had so swiftly changed his magnanimous opinion concerning M^{me} Verdurin initially had stretched well until Odette, but that was for a short while only. Neither did Odette give up on Swann, but not for a moment had she been considering to risk her position at les Verdurin, and often she looked with some anxiety at Swann when she feared he would want her to refrain from participating in one of those Verdurin activities.

Swann could stretch his self-prescribed feigned interested and positive attitude towards these despicable and outright ridiculous pseudo-cultural events, right before their start, so far as to make Odette worry she would come too late if she let him go all the way.

She lost some weight, but her soul seemed to gain some, and the most youthful of her youthfulness seemed to disappear.

If she was out of town with les Verdurin for a few days, Swann would not receive any messages, for she feared it could make the "small core" discover that she was still in touch with Swann, which for no price she was willing to risk.

And at home Swann would immediately get immersed in his regret that she wasted her time with these barbarians' fake events while he, scholar, connoisseur of architecture, art and literature, could show her the real world.

His prevailing state of awareness now became that of being someone far from where Odette was now, and he actually ritualized that by engaging in solitary activities that reminded him of her.

In his pathological distrust he tortured his brains with repetitions of all she had lately said, and with listing which truths could be behind all those little lies.

But Odette surely had not become totally averse of him. When that showed itself, like when at the end of a party he slunk away to go home and she ran after him to ask him to wait just a few seconds so they could go home together, or when she told Forcheville that she did prefer him not to join her for she wanted to be alone with Swann, even when she criticized him about his laziness in working at his Ver Meer project, he got a vehement sensation of short-lived relief and consolation

The misery could also recede, for instance at a moment when at home she would make an orangeade for the two of them. It prompted phantasies that they would live together and so no uncertain fearful suspicions would be possible anymore - to immediately throw him in fears that in all such peace the two of them would stay behind lonely and without love.

The day after such a stress-free evening he would send her the most beautiful gems and jewels, out of gratitude or driven by a fit of love that he had to release in the world somehow.

Of course, at this stage of the story we all wait for the moment for Swann to conclude that with his money he is financing the pleasure of others, and indeed it seemed to slightly dawn: he resolved to abstain from giving extras. She had expressed the desire to go to Bayreuth for the Wagner season, and, now to his

regret, he had offered her to rent one of those castles of the king of Bavaria for the two of them. She said she would think of it. He hoped she would not return to that subject.

But she did, as follows: she had found that Bayreuth was considered by les Verdurin as well. And, since he had enjoyed their hospitality for so long, she wondered whether he could not send her the money so as to enable her for once to be the one inviting the "small core".

There was no word about Swann, she thought it obvious that he would not join.

Swann's oversight over her finances was meanwhile well enough to know she could make her Bayreuth invitation to the "small core" without an additional donation, and hence that he had already deprived himself of all power to prevent this. It surely would be very "chic", though she, nor - except for the piano player - any other member of that party could distinguish Bach from Clappison.

But he told himself he should understand how Odette longed to be the host of the "small core" for once, and that he would have forgiven her totally had he not been banned from it and become a slave of his jealousy - Forcheville!

And not to see her, being piqued now for over a week, not to see her before she would return from Bayreuth, while she would come running to him so happy and grateful if he only would send that money ...

Odette sensed power and lost her scruples to hurt him with anything. Desperately Swann searched for means of defense. He pretended lack of interest, the treat of definitive breach, did

not appear for a long time, ceased to send messages, but nothing could trick her anymore.

*"Et de fait, l'amour de Swann en était arrivé à ce degré ... ".
Swann's love reaches the stage of inoperability.*

Swann's love was now at the stage that would make a doctor or surgeon doubt whether the patient could still have any benefit from treatment.

Swann himself had lost sight for long. He only wondered, when he saw Odette, that this was the real counterpart of the immensurable dark suffering that had consumed his soul. No, he had become inoperable.

In his mind, the world of high connections now had assumed Odette's colours as well, Swann had been there too often with her in his thoughts. And this explains why as I related, he enjoyed so much to be at a place where he was only the son of his father, the currency trader, when he was as a guest of my family, who knew nothing about him, that he, for a short while would feel so relieved to be incognito to us, but, much more important, even to himself, to be asked to help moving the piano, turn the pages and thus be treated almost as a negligible entity. It alleviated and liberated him for a moment from the awful awareness of what had become of him.

Despite Swann's stern continuation of Odette's financial support, he got more and more trouble to meet her between the many preventions she had to report. If for once he managed to go out with her she insisted to be introduced as his daughter.

In despair Swann asked one of his best friends, "Mémé", baron de Charlus, who knew Odette, to go and talk to her. Charlus did what he could but failed to make much difference.

Swann managed to dig up another common acquaintance: my uncle Adolphe. Adolphe resolutely entered the scene, for Odette told him later that Adolphe had made contact, during which he engaged in serious pawing and Odette reported the greatest trouble in keeping him off.

Furious, Swann excluded further contact with uncle Adolphe, regretting that as a result he would not get in the position to ask him about Nice, where Odette had lived in her earliest adolescence, at a time Adolphe regularly came there.

Though, after his experience with Adolphe, Swann had concluded that his questions about Nice might provoke her male acquaintances of that time to acquire new interest in her, and ceased to ask them, he heard things suggesting him that in Nice, and also in Baden Baden, she had been a youthful attraction who did not exactly leave her charms unused. But a little later he thought his pathological jealousy had given him a false impression.

He judged that people who really were loyal to him would not be ready to hurt him with the ruthless truth.

And all this about someone who, it sometimes seemed, he rarely saw. Sometimes he told himself: "There were times she love me more", but that was an abstract awareness, for he shunned the place in his soul where she was - like hell, and that had become the main effort in his daily life. Her chrysanthemum flower and her passionate letters still were in that drawer of his *secrétaire* but he had put a picklock.

And even this industrious defense would prove in vain.

*"Mais sa si précautionneuse prudence fut déjouée un soir ... ".
How damned haughty we all behave at the soirée of the
marquise de Saint-Euverte.*

That transpired on the day Swann visited the soirée of the marquise de Saint-Euverte.

It was the last one, he had not been there the entire season. There would be a lot of music.

Charlus had passed by just before and, knowing how depressed Swann could feel on such occasions, offered to accompany him, but Swann instead asked him to go and see Odette, to see if he could convince her to meet Swann may be tomorrow. And to ask for her wishes for the summer. Would she like a cruise with Charlus and him?

Dropped at les Saint-Euverte by Charlus, Swann entered to undergo the reception by a host of servants, meticulously designed by the hostess to put the glory of her household on display as impressively as possible. In his thoughts he was in the little dark corridor of an old friend of Odette, a simple couturière, where he knew she would knock on the door at the end of this evening of the week.

The hall. The first he saw were his old friends the general de Froberville and the marquis de Bréauté, who had introduced him at the Jockey Club and had assisted him at duels.

"Dear! Swann! That's an awful time ago" the general said.

And so on. As usual the intercourse was haughty indeed: Swann exactly knew which ladies shunned intercourse with which other ladies, and why, he also knew which ladies felt closer to which other ladies than, to their serious regret, was commonly realized, what kind of cordiality was required to invite someone who would be unwelcome indeed, and how to gratefully accept an invitation from someone whom you never would even think of visiting.

"—Tiens, tu as vu ton ami M. Swann ... ". Swann is spotted at the soirée of the marquise de Saint-Euverte.

Suddenly the marquise de Gallardon, conversing with the princesse des Laumes (who had just entered with the radiation of her goodness to have deigned to come), spotted Swann and said to the princess: "Have you seen your friend Swann is there?".

"O how nice, let me make sure he sees me".

"Funny he even attends parties like this", M^{me} de Gallardon said.

"Yes he is intelligent" (M^{me} des Laumes actually meant: intriguer), "but what is the deal, a jew at the sister and sister in law of two archbishops?"

The pianist started a third piece by Chopin, but the princesse des Laumes would not even have had any attention for it had Chopin resurrected to play his polonaise personally. She belonged to that half of humanity whose interest in the other half she does not know has totally been replaced by the half she knows, and it strongly looked like that latter half was, in this hall, represented by Swann only.

The young and extremely graceful M^{me} Cambremer, sister of our Legrandin in Combray, distinguished herself by saving the grand piano from a leaking candle that threatened to fall during the last measures of the finale, but M^{me} des Laumes only got desperate that Swann did not come to her, while others from a far distance only saw how bad he looked.

For a second the princess even feared he would leave without talking to her, but there he came. "O mon petit Charles", she said to M^{me} de Saint-Euverte, "I already began thinking he did not want to see me!"

"—Mon petit Charles! Ah! enfin il vient, je ... ". Swann hesitatingly approaches his friend the princesse des Laumes.

While approaching the princess, Swann collected his courage to testify his happiness to see her again, digging up some of the charming puns and metaphors that were his trade mark in the faubourg Saint Germain.

Then there were the usual courtesy and light subjects, during which M^{me} de Saint-Euverte understood it was time for her to be pleasingly surprised by the advent of another guest: M^{me} des Laumes told Swann that she had just tried in vain to explain to general de Froberville, who was unable to get his eyes of the young charming saviour of the piano, how odd the name "Cambremer" really was. She hid the slight irritation, if not jealousy she had experienced talking to this general with his eyes elsewhere, by ending ironically: "Yes life is dreadful."

By confirming that dreadfulness deeply and burdened with his own misery Swann managed to blow away some of the fog around his soul, so that he could talk to her with some more attention.

"We should meet more often", she continued, "why don't we see you anymore at Guermantes, my mother in law would love it!"

"Listen, mon petit Charles, now I finally see you, please let me take you to the princess de Parme after this. Basin also would be delighted to see you again. If we hadn't Mémé we would have lost you totally and know nothing about you anymore ..."

On hearing the name "Mémé" - baron de Charlus, brother of the duc de Guermantes and the comtesse de Marsantes, nephew of the prince de Guermantes, the marquise de Villeparisis was his aunt - Mémé, at that very moment on active duty as Swann's ambassador to a little whore, on hearing that name "Mémé", Swann's soul sank back into the deep.

And he kindly declined the invitation to join, for, he thought, at home he might find a letter from Charlus with news about Odette.

"Poor Swann", the princess des Laumes said, once returned to her husband Basin, "he still is that sweet man, but he looks unspeakably unhappy, it is really ridiculous he should suffer so much under such a girl. She is not even interesting, they say she is even obtuse", she added with the wisdom of someone who is not in love herself, the logic that prescribes one should not deign to contract cholera for the bacteria is not worth it.

On his way out Swann got buttonholed by general de Froberville who now had drunk enough to desire to be introduced to M^{me} Cambremer, after which music started again, so Swann felt obliged to wait it out. Thus the tipsy general would cause a turn to Swann's life.

"Mais le concert recommença et Swann ... ". Swann raises the phrase of Vinteuil to the status of knowing subject.

Impatiently Swann waited, between all that second rate nobility and what wanted to be in their company, until the music would be over.

But with a chock he realized that they had started the sonata for violin and piano by Vinteuil. THE sonata, the now unbearable sonata.

He locked his ears but failed. Even worse: this was not just a painful memory but a reliving: on the street at night, finding her, going into the coach together, the orchid, the pollen, opening the letter "... my hands tremble ...". the "I? I have nothing to do. I am always free. I would be there only for you, you can call me day and night ... ", the whole catastrophe, no way to stop it.

And then and there Swann descried a wretched man with whom he immediately had an intense pity and sympathy, whom he wanted to console ... until he realized it was himself.

The phrase had replaced vague memories of love, having become vague and blurred by desperate repression, with the pollen itself. Painful jealousy of rivals, including his own person in that happy night, in that coach, repossessed him without mercy.

His monocle fell out of his eye, he had no better idea than to start polishing it, and wiped his face.

It seemed Swann as if the musicians did not play the phrase, but executed the rite required to let her appear, a goddess,

protectress and trustee of his life, who, in order to come to him through the crowd and take him apart, had assumed the disguise of sound. Gone was his feeling to be banned and alone for at low voice she talked about Odette. This phrase knew him. And she knew Odette.

The phrase had witnessed everything from the beginning, wanted to say something and Swann got it: your happiness then, your misery now, it is all nothing.

He felt pity and tenderness for his unknown and sublime brother Vinteuil whose misery had attracted the phrase and who had managed to write down the music by which she, the phrase, could be awoken again.

He knew that in the final part, she would return for a very short while. For a moment he dreaded the return of noise and conversation, but nobody said or did anything.

Until the comtesse de Monteriender, known for her stupidities, already during the last bars expressed her admiration of the musicians: "This is miraculous, I never witnessed such a powerful thing ..."

After some thought, she specified: "Never ... since the turning tables"

"A partir de cette soirée, Swann comprit ... ". Something begins to move (in Swann).

From that moment Swann had the courage to face the truth: Odette's feelings for him were of the past.

Soon he could think that he probably would forget Odette would she leave Paris, but he himself dared not yet to leave for fear that his defense against desperate feelings, so industriously built up along his usual tracks in Paris, would not hold against fresh impressions in a new environment and the wound of his soul would open and expose his longing in all its unbearability.

He regretted that fear, for he would have liked to go to the Dutch Mauritshuis museum that had bought *Diana*, thought to be by Nicolaas Maes, a painting which Swann thought was in fact made by Ver Meer. As the author of *La recherche* I leave it to the reader to conclude it was not a real disaster to lose some more time, since the Mauritshuis would buy it only much later, when Gilberte would be about five years old.

At this moment all Swann could hope for was to see Odette every now and then, though she still needed his wealth so badly that she would not sever her ties with Swann under any condition whatsoever and even, it was said, in the back of her mind considered Swann as her ideal marriage partner.

The friendship between Odette and Charles, though it yielded Swann little, gave him the satisfaction that at least he got spoken about positively, and it was an important tool in his daily activities which largely consisted of concocting intrigues that would induce Odette to find it pleasurable or at least necessary, to meet Swann.

Despite all these efforts, he now had a deep understanding of Mehmet II (the sultan of Bellini's portrait that, Swann judged, resembled my friend Bloch), who once cured his excess of love for a woman by piercing her at his sword.

"He is going to Egypt", Odette told Swann with great excitement. Forcheville. Swann got the point at once. When the next time he asked her: "When were you leaving again?", he just got the answer.

But when he once got an anonymous letter reporting Odette was, c.q. had been the mistress of Forcheville, de Bréauté, that painter at les Verdurin and others among whom a notable amount of women, that she had been spotted at *maisons de passe* (hotels letting rooms by the hour), this still was beyond what Swann could cope with. He could not think for a second that a benevolent acquaintance might have taken this unthankful part upon him. These had to be evil forces at work.

Some details of the letter suggested it could have been written by a close friend. Even Charlus, M. des Laumes of M. d'Orsan could not be ruled out.

For hours he delved in his mind to evaluate the morality of the three main suspects, followed by a long row of others and made up his mind, of each of them many times, during which at some junctures he frowned upon some of them as a result of remembering some situations they once indulged themselves to get in, which ... and then realized the similarity of these situations which the one he was in with Odette, and his mind got dark: no it was absolutely impossible any of them could have sent him this despicable letter.

After being engaged with something else - he did not remember what exactly - his mind again allowed some light to enter and he saw straight in front of him that Odette, when she was indignant about someone, used standards of judgment identical to the ones he had copied from his parents without

changing much, the very same that he had used in the hours past to screen his entire circle of friends.

Nevertheless, he did tactically make Odette aware he had received information about her, apparently hoping that, if such was necessary at all, she would be more careful next time and avoid repetition, thus lying against Odette even more than he already did to himself.

When at some occasions he even, without presenting it as a truth, told her a story he got about her, she would react with forceful indignation, for she knew that would nicely mask why she really got those red cheeks.

When once he read in a newspaper an announcement of the play *Girls of Marble*, he got haunted by a new association to what Odette once told him: she had been somewhere *à deux* with M^{me} Verdurin who said: "Take care, you, you're not made of marble, I can defrost you!".

He mechanically opened the paper on provincial news: a heavy storm in the Channel, damage in Dieppe, Cabourg and Beuzeval.

"Le nom de Beuzeval l'avait fait penser à celui d'une autre ... ".
Swann develops the ambition to personally Odette concerning sex with women.

With M^{me} Verdurin? Absolutely impossible! He no longer could think of anything else.

The next visit to Odette he took a place far from her, not knowing what would surface with a kiss, affection or anger, fearing both.

He felt how his love for Odette was ailing.

He took the decision and asked: "Odette, did you ever have an affair with M^{me} Verdurin or another woman?"

Resistance. First non-verbally, then verbally, then indignation. Swann concluded that indeed it could well be true, waited, like a surgeon with his little knife, till the flesh had come to rest, and continued his incision.

In the end he even applied a subtle anesthetic: in the name of their love he would of course forgive her anything she might have done, but was not this lack of clarity a torture for them both?

"But I have no idea" she shouted angrily, "maybe long ago, two or three times".

This, in the surgeon, caused a sharp pain as if a cross got cut in his heart. And the comtesse at the soirée Saint-Euverte appeared to him and said: "This is the most powerful since the turning table".

As the author of *La recherche* I might have to tell you that at Swann's time, certainly in Paris, just as many women enjoyed corporeal pastime with each other as at the time you are reading this, but the thing is: the rest considered it more infamous than sister-murder and the women engaging in it stood of course, as a matter of camouflage, in front in that judgment. The irony of the metaphor should not hinder you to realize that we dealt with a conversation that in Paris, at the time was considerably rarer than a turning table, and that it probably did give Swann, exceptionally intelligent, mundane and learned though he was, to say the least, an unstable

impression of the furniture in Odette's palm infested living room.

Swann decided he should prevent the repetition of these cruel corporeal manipulations that had occurred "two or three times". But how? Against ten or twelve dangerous women he could easily protect her, but how many would there be?

Under his fresh wound he felt his healing tissue operative. And he resumed his interrogation: "Also with ladies I know?"

"*Mais non*, absolutely not."

"It would be so good if I knew the names, then it would be a thing of the past and I would never have to embarrass you with it. But you have been so nice to me already, I will not insist anymore, just this: how long ago was this?"

"O Charles, you kill me! Really, it is all very long ago."

"Well, all I really want to know is whether it still happened after we met".

"Well ... one time we were in the Bois de Boulogne ... you were at the *princesse des Laumes*", she clearly felt better now she could use a detail from reality, "and there was a lady I had not seen for a long time, who said I really should see how beautifully the moon shone in the water behind that rock ... ". Curiously, she started to laugh, then saw Swann's face and said: "You are a miscreant, you enjoy to torture me, let me tell lies to get rid of you."

That one hurt Swann quite a bit harder than the first. He sank through the floor to the hell circle under the one he was

already, and after having arrived there still knew nothing better than to consider her only half guilty. Was she not in Nice, almost still a child, given to a rich Englishman?

And Swann opined that his diagnostic surgical operation only had made things worse.

"Mais souvent les choses qu'il ne connaissait pas ... ". Odette confesses - almost - everything!

The next blow: on the evening on which he had searched for her so desperately and by a miracle found her, had wiped her pollen and reached for her catleyas, she did not come, as she had maintained, from the Maison Dorée but from Forcheville.

Swann, now on the right track, henceforth was able to read the news in stories Odette told spontaneously, since her lies betrayed her underestimation of the wide gap between Swann's consciousness and hers, as a result of which she told things in a way she thought would be normal to Swann but were not.

The rest of his most elevated and heavenly memories of their love turned out, once you knew what the rest of Odette's day had looked like, to lose all value too. After that, further updates could not press him deeper down any more than the phrase at the soirée Saint-Euverte had done.

After this, at some moments Odette experienced bouts of charm offensive. She let him know he absolutely had to come at once, wanted to make love at once, putting her lust on display in such a coercive way that Swann failed to convince himself she was serious.

During such an event he heard some something shoving and cracking. He jumped up for a search, found nothing. Odette angry. Love aborted. Had there been a hidden witness who had to be made jealous? Or a voyeur given value for money?

Swann visited brothels, to find out whether Odette was know there, with no result.

The little painter of les Verdurin had been ill. Cottard had recommended a sailing cruise. After a number of "loyals" had subscribed, les Verdurin decided to rent a yacht they later bought. Cruises became recurrent events in the program, Odette always joined them.

When she was at sea Swann felt becoming independent of her but no sooner was she back or he lapsed again into his depression.

But then they left to sail the entire Mediterranean from West to East and stayed away for a year.

Swann was totally relaxed, almost happy.

"Un jour, peu après le retour de ces trois voyageurs ... ". The Miraculous Blessings Of Public Transport.

After arriving in Istanbul M. en M^{me} Cottard, the pianist en de painter managed to desert and returned to Paris. Swann encountered M^{me} Cottard in public transport. Her simple cordiality soon broke through her bourgeois stiffness - after all she only recently started to train herself in that - and she asked Swann's opinion about a new portrait of les Verdurin's little painter, about which, as she put it "everybody seemed to need an opinion lately".

Swann had not seen it, he said.

M^{me} Cottard, regretting to have forced Swann to concede his ignorance, praised him for his honesty, which, she opined, was a praiseworthy faculty not widely spread over mankind.

The conversation flagged. M^{me} Cottard knew herself still far from her stop and embarked on the subject her heart inspired her: "You should have been there during our sea trip, monsieur Swann, you were the subject. All the way!"

Swann flabbergasted, but then grasped the touching benevolence of this simple woman.

"But yes", M^{me} Cottard continued - her district was still far to go - "M^{me} de Crecy was in the company and you will understand the consequence. Odette can be nowhere without starting about you".

"O dear", Swann joined the act, "I hope I have nothing to be ashamed for!"

"But she adores you! So often she talks about you! When for instance we look at a painting she says «Swann would know at once whether or not it is authentic!» But even without that, she will suddenly say «What would he be doing now? It is such a pity, he has so many talents and does so little with them». I hope you forgive me that I tell you. And when M. Verdurin asks how she can know something about someone who is eight hundred kilometers away, she says: «In the eye of a friend nothing is impossible». I do not say all this to flatter you, but in Odette you have a friend as very few people have indeed. But if you do not know that you are the only one. M^{me} Verdurin also said it lately: «Odette loves us but we can't compete with

Swann». O, rue de Bonaparte, I have to get off! Would you be so kind to tell me, is my aigrette sitting right?"

With this quadrature of the benevolent lie, M^{me} Cottard, by sheer accident, for once widely surpassed her husband as a therapist. She had planted in Swann, right next to his pathological emotions, normal and simple affections for Odette, affections of thankfulness and sympathy that gave Odette the human touch that she - curiously - in Swann's mind had lacked since her Botticelli's Zephora appearance, since Swann had swiped the pollen and reached for her catleyas.

From that moment he was able to have for Odette the kind of harmless, comforting and peaceful sympathy that so naturally arose in him when dealing with a M^{me} Cottard.

"Jadis ayant souvent pensé avec terreur ... ". A final dream.

Swann remembered to have been scared to death when fearing to lose his love for Odette. Whenever he got alarmed by the tiniest sign, he clamped fast at it desperately. This fear receded together with his love. All traumatizing events of jealousy and nostalgia still occurred on a daily basis, but with a lighter, bearable impact.

He tried to look back on his miserable life of the recent past but failed. He wanted to know when exactly his rude and merciless love had gone but even deeply ploughing his memory failed to find it.

Thus he thought all was over, but he was wrong: one time he had a last dream.

He walked, at dusk, on a road along the sea. The sea was down a deep abyss, but the road went up and down. In his company were M^{me} Verdurin, doctor Cottard, an unknown young man wearing a fez, the little painter of les Verdurins, Napoleon III and my grandfather.

There was a fresh breeze from the sea, with big waves. He got ice-cold mud on his cheek, Odette told him. His clothing embarrassed him for he wore pyjamas. He hoped it was now dark enough to make that indiscernible, but M^{me} Verdurin looked at him with a cold gaze, during which her nose grew and under it a big moustache, which turned her into Mehmet II.

Swann turned to look back to Odette. Her cheeks were pale, with a little red spot on each, her face lines were sharp but she looked with her big eyes that like tears were on the verge to drop. Swann burst into a love that made him desire to take her with him at once.

Odette looked at her watch and said: "O, I have to go". Quickly she said goodbye, to everybody in the same way, Swann included. Neither did she say anything to him.

He dared not ask her anything. While she walked away he had to answer - while keeping up his smile - a question by M^{me} Verdurin, his heart thumped in his throat.

Suddenly he hated Odette, he wanted to squeeze those big eyes like oranges, to crush those cheeks.

The dream jumped in time a little.

The little painter remarked that Napoleon had disappeared as well, right after Odette. "She is his mistress", he said.

The boy in the fez started to cry. Swann consoled him. He took his fez, dried his eyes and said: "just realize she is right, I recommended it so often to her. He could very well be the man who understands her".

Dark set in. Total dark. A bell started chiming. Alarm. The village ahead was burning. A farmer, wounded by burns, came running towards them and shouted: "Quickly, ask Charlus where Odette and her friend went, he always knows everything about her. Those two have put the village on fire".

Swann got woken up by his *valet*: de barber had arrived. The sound of the waves and the bell stayed in his ears for a while.

After the barber's visit he would leave for Combray. In the evening he had written my father that finally he would come again. Prudently, he had refrained from adding that the visit of M^{me} Cambremer to Combray had been partly inspiring him to the decision.

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