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Madame Bovary

Part One

1

WE WERE DOING PREP when the Headmaster came in, followed by a respectably dressed new boy and a porter carrying a large desk. Those who were asleep woke up, and everyone stood up as if caught unawares in the middle of their work.

The Headmaster gestured to us to sit down; then, turning to the head of studies:

“Monsieur Roger,” he said quietly, “I’m putting this pupil here in your charge, he will start in the third form. If his work and behaviour merit it he can move up to a higher class, as befits his age.”

Standing in the corner behind the door, so we could hardly see him, the new boy was a country lad, about fifteen years old and taller than the rest of us. His hair was cut straight across his forehead like a village choirboy, he looked well behaved and very self-conscious. Although he wasn’t broad-shouldered his suit jacket, made of green woollen cloth with black buttons, was tight under the arms, and through the slits in the cuff facings you could see red wrists that weren’t used to being covered up. His legs, in long blue socks, appeared from under yellowish trousers that were hiked up by braces. He was wearing stout shoes, unpolished and heavily studded.

We began reciting our lessons. He was all ears, listening closely as if to a sermon, not daring to even cross his legs or lean on his elbow, and when the bell went at two o’clock the head of studies had to tell him to go and sit down with the rest of us.

When we came into the classroom it was our routine to throw our caps onto the floor so as to have our hands free; you had to fling it from the doorway, under the bench, so that it hit the wall and made a lot of dust; it was *the done thing*.

But, either because he hadn’t noticed this operation or daren’t follow suit, when prayers were over the new boy still had his cap on his knees. It was one of those composite pieces of headgear that was a combination of a fur hat, czapka,* bonnet, otter-skin cap and nightcap, in short one of those sad objects whose mute ugliness has the same depths

of expression as the face of an idiot. Egg-shaped and bulging with whalebone, it began at the front with three sausage-like hoops; next, divided by red strips, were diamond patterns, first made of velvet then of rabbit skin; after that came a kind of bag which terminated in a many-sided cardboard shape covered in elaborate braiding from which hung, at the end of a long piece of string, a small cross made of gold thread by way of a tassel. It was new; the peak gleamed.

“Stand up,” said the teacher.

He stood up; his cap fell on the floor. The whole class laughed.

He bent down to pick it up. His neighbour nudged him and he dropped it, he picked it up again.

“Set aside your helm,” said the master, who was a man of wit.

There was an outburst of schoolboy laughter that flustered the poor lad so much that he didn’t know whether he should keep his cap in his hand, leave it on the floor or wear it. He sat down again and laid it in his lap.

“Stand up,” repeated the master, “and tell me your name.”

In a stammering voice the new boy came out with an unintelligible name.

“Again!”

The same stammered words could just be heard beneath the jeers of the class.

“Louder!” shouted the master. “Louder!”

With utmost resolve the new boy opened his enormous mouth, and at the top of his voice, as if shouting to someone, let out the word: *Charbovari*.

Immediately a great rumpus broke out, rose to a crescendo of high-pitched shouts (we screamed, we yelled, we stamped our feet, we chanted: *Charbovari! Charbovari!*), and then ran on into isolated notes, quietening down with great difficulty and sometimes breaking out again along the benches, where muffled laughter sprung up here and there like a firecracker that hasn’t quite gone out.

Meanwhile order was gradually restored under a hail of punishments, and the master, who had managed to catch Charles Bovary’s name, having had it dictated, spelt out and read back to him, told the poor devil to go and sit on the slackers’ bench in front of the rostrum. He started to make a move but hesitated.

“What are you looking for?” asked the master.

“My ca—” said the new boy timidly, looking round anxiously.

“Five hundred lines for the whole class!” exclaimed by a furious voice put a stop to another outbreak, as if it were the *Quos ego*.* “Keep quiet, will you!” added the angry teacher, wiping his brow with a handkerchief that he had taken from under his mortar board. “And as for you, new boy, you will copy out for me twenty times the verb *ridiculus sum*.”*

Then, in a more gentle voice:

“I see you’ve found your cap then; they haven’t stolen it!”

Everything calmed down. Heads bent over satchels, and for two hours the new boy behaved perfectly, despite a few ink pellets that were flicked at him from pen nibs, splattering his face. But he wiped it off with his hand and kept still, eyes lowered.

That evening during prep, he drew a line under his work, cleared away his few belongings, carefully tidied up his paper. We saw him working away conscientiously, looking up every word in the dictionary and taking great pains. Thanks to this willingness he probably wouldn’t have to go down a class; for although he knew his rules well enough, his turn of phrase didn’t have much style. It was the parish priest who had started him off in Latin, his parents having delayed sending him to school for as long as possible in order to save money.

His father, Monsieur Charles-Denis-Bartholomé Bovary, a former assistant military surgeon compromised by some scandal over conscription around 1812, and forced to leave the service at around that time, had made the most of his personal advantages along the way to get his hands on a dowry of sixty thousand francs that came with the daughter of a hosiery merchant who had fallen for his fine bearing. A handsome fellow, a braggart who made his spurs jingle, grew his sideburns to join up with his moustache, wore rings on his fingers and dressed in garish colours, he had the look of a gallant, the ready gusto of a commercial traveller. Once married he lived off his wife’s fortune for two or three years, dining well, getting up late, smoking large porcelain pipes, not coming home at night until after the shows finished and always in cafés. His father-in-law died leaving very little; he was vexed, started up *in manufacturing*, lost money then retired to the country where he was going to *make his name*. But since he knew little more about farming than he did about printed calico, rode his horses instead of putting them to work, drank his cider from bottles

instead of selling it in casks, ate the best poultry in his yard and waxed his hunting boots with the fat from his pigs, he soon came to the conclusion that it was best not to get involved in any more ventures.

For two hundred francs' rent a year he found a place in a village on the borders of the Pays de Caux and Picardy, a sort of part farm, part mansion; and, disgruntled, consumed with regrets, blaming the Almighty, envious of everyone, from the age of forty-five he shut himself away, saying he was sick and tired of humanity and had decided to live in peace and quiet.

His wife had been madly in love with him at first; she had adored him in thousands of slavish little ways that pushed him even further away from her. Once cheerful, outgoing and full of affection, as she got older (in the way stale wine turns sour) she became awkward, whining, highly strung. She had suffered a great deal, without complaining at first, when she saw him chasing after all the sluts in the village and coming home at night indifferent and stinking of drink from all those dreadful places! And then her pride rebelled. But she kept quiet, swallowing her anger in a mute stoicism that stayed with her till her death. She was forever doing the shopping, doing business. She went to the lawyers, to the magistrate, remembered when bills of exchange were due, got them deferred; at home she ironed, sewed, did the laundry, kept an eye on the workmen, settled the invoices while Monsieur, who never troubled his head about anything, and in a permanent state of sulky sluggishness from which he only ever roused himself in order to insult her, sat by the fire smoking and spitting in the ashes.

When she had a baby it had to be put with a wet nurse. Then once he came home, the brat was royally spoiled. His mother fed him on jam; his father let him run around barefoot and, playing the philosopher, even said that they might as well let him go naked, like a young animal. Contrary to his wife's maternal leanings he had a particular manly ideal of childhood, and tried to educate his son accordingly, wanting to bring him up the hard way, like a Spartan, to make sure he had a strong constitution. He sent him to bed without any supper, taught him to swig rum and jeer at religious processions. But, being quiet by nature, the boy didn't respond to his efforts. His mother trailed him round with her all the time; she cut out pieces of cardboard for him, told him stories, talked to him in endless monologues full of mournful cheerfulness and chattering little attentions. In her isolation she

transferred all her threadbare, shattered vanities onto his young head. She dreamt of high-ranking positions, saw him grown, handsome, witty, well established as a civil engineer or magistrate. She taught him to read, even how to sing one or two short sentimental ballads on an old piano of hers. But to all this, the response of Monsieur Bovary, who cared little for literature or the arts, was that *there was no point!* Would they have enough to support him through the state schools, buy a position for him or set him up in business? Besides, *with a bit of nerve a man always gets on in life.* Madame Bovary bit her lip, and the boy roamed the village.

He went off with the ploughmen, threw clods of earth at crows to drive them away. He ate blackberries along the embankments and minded the turkeys with a long pole, tossed hay at harvest time, ran in the woods, played hopscotch in the church porch when it was raining, and on feast days begged the verger to let him ring the bells, so he could hang on to the great long rope and let it lift him off the ground.

And he grew like an oak. Soon he had strong hands, a ruddy complexion.

When he was twelve, his mother was finally allowed to arrange for him to start his education. They asked the parish priest to take it on. But the lessons were so short and irregular that they were of little use. They were done at odd moments, hurriedly, standing in the sacristy between a baptism and a burial; or else the priest would send for his pupil after the angelus* when he didn't have to go out. They would go up to his room, settle down: midges and moths fluttered round the candle. It was warm, the child fell asleep; and it wasn't long before the old fellow was nodding off as well, hands clasped on his belly and snoring loudly. At other times, when the priest was on his way back from taking the viaticum* to the sick and spotted Charles up to mischief in the fields, he would call him over, lecture him for a quarter of an hour, then make the most of the opportunity to get him to conjugate verbs under a tree. Then the rain would interrupt them, or some acquaintance walking past. Yet he was always pleased with him, even said the young man had a good memory.

But Charles wasn't allowed to stop there. Madame was tireless in her efforts. And, either out of shame or, more likely, weariness, Monsieur gave in without a fight, and so they waited for another year until after the lad's first communion.

Another six months went by; and the following year Charles was sent off to school full-time in Rouen; his father took him at the end of October, during the Saint-Romain fair.

None of us would be able to remember a thing about him now. He was a boy not given to excesses, who played at break time, worked at his studies, listened in class, slept soundly in the dormitory, ate heartily in the refectory. His guardian was an ironmonger in the Rue Ganterie who took him out once a month, on Sundays after his shop was shut, sent him for a walk down to the harbour to look at the boats, and then brought him back to school by seven o'clock in time for supper. Every Thursday evening he wrote a long letter to his mother, in red ink and with three wax seals; then he looked through his history books or read an old copy of Anacharsis* that was lying around in the prep room. On walks he chatted to the servant, who was from the country too.

As a result of applying himself he was always around the middle of the class; once he even got a certificate of merit for natural history. But at the end of his remove year* his parents took him away from school to study medicine, convinced he would be able to pass the *baccalauréat** on his own.

His mother found him a room on the fourth floor in l'Eau-de-Robec, with a dyer and cleaner she knew. She arranged for his board, got some furniture for him, a table and two chairs, sent an old cherrywood bed from home, and bought a small cast-iron stove with a supply of firewood to keep her poor boy warm. Then after a week she left, having exhorted him endlessly about behaving himself now he was on his own.

When he read the lesson timetable on the notice board it made his head spin: anatomy classes, pathology classes, physiology classes, pharmacy classes, chemistry classes, plus botany, clinical studies and therapeutics, not to mention hygiene or medicine itself, all names whose origin he knew nothing about and which were like so many doors to inner temples filled with venerable darkness.

He didn't understand a word; listen though he might, he couldn't grasp it. Nonetheless he worked, took notes in bound notebooks, attended every class, didn't miss a single ward round. He did his minor daily tasks like a horse in a manège, going round and round with blinkers on, unaware of the grinding work it is doing.

To save him money his mother sent a piece of roast veal every week by special delivery, which he had for lunch the next day when he got back

from the hospital, stamping his feet to keep warm. Then he had to rush back to class, to the lecture theatre, the poorhouse, and walk home from the other side of town. In the evening, after the scanty dinner his landlord provided, he went up to his room and got on with his work, his wet clothes steaming on him in front of the red-hot stove.

On fine summer evenings when the warm streets are empty, when servant girls play shuttlecock outside their front doors, he would open the window and lean on the sill. The river ran past below, yellow, purple or blue between the bridges and railings, turning this part of Rouen into an unsavoury version of Venice. Crouched on the bank, workmen washed their arms in the water. On poles projecting out of attics, skeins of cotton dried in the breeze. Over the rooftops opposite stretched a great clear sky and a red sunset. How wonderful it must be over there! The coolness of the beech grove! And he would breathe in deeply through his nose to try and smell the good country smells that never reached him here.

He got taller, thinner, his face took on a doleful expression that made it almost interesting.

Of course there came a time when he broke every resolution he had made. One day he missed the ward round, the next day his classes, and gradually, relishing this state of idleness, he stopped going at all.

He began frequenting inns, developed a passion for dominoes. Shutting himself away every night in a filthy barroom to knock on marble-topped tables with small pieces of sheep's bone marked with black dots to him seemed a priceless act of freedom that raised his self-esteem. It was an initiation into life, gave him access to forbidden pleasures; and as he went in he grasped the doorknob with almost sensual delight. Many things that had been held back inside him now opened out; he memorized verses that are sung to welcome people, became keen on Béranger,* learnt to make punch and finally found love.

Thanks to this groundwork he failed the public-health officer's exam. And they were waiting for him at home that evening to celebrate his success!

He set off on foot and stopped on the outskirts of the village, where he asked someone to fetch his mother and told her everything. She made excuses, blamed his failure on the unfairness of the examiners and bolstered him up, taking it on herself to sort things out. Only five

years later did Monsieur Bovary actually discover the truth; but it was water under the bridge, so he accepted it, in any case being incapable of imagining that any son of his could be a fool.

So Charles got back to work and prepared every subject for his exam, learnt all the questions off by heart. He passed with reasonable marks. What a great day for his mother! They gave a big dinner.

Where was he to practise his profession? In Tostes. There was only an elderly doctor there. Madame Bovary had been waiting for him to die for years, and the old chap still hadn't shuffled off before Charles was set up opposite him, as his successor.

But it wasn't enough to have raised her son, have him trained in medicine and discovered Tostes to practise it in: now he needed a wife. So she found one for him: the widow of a bailiff from Dieppe, who was forty-five and had a private income of twelve hundred livres* a year.

Despite being ugly, as dried up as an old prune and blowsy as a spring day, Madame Dubuc didn't want for suitors. To achieve her aim old mother Bovary had to oust every one of them, and she was even wily enough to outmanoeuvre a pork butcher who had the clergy's backing.

In getting married Charles had anticipated the advent of a better situation, imagining that he would have more freedom, that he would be able to do as he liked with his time and money. But it was his wife who was the master: in company he had to say this and not that, eat fish on Fridays, dress the way she saw fit, do as she told him and chase up clients who didn't pay. She opened his mail, spied on his comings and goings, and listened through the partition wall of his consulting room whenever he was with a female patient.

She had to have her hot chocolate every morning, her never-ending little attentions. She was forever complaining about her nerves, her chest, her moods. The sound of people walking about made her ill; when they went away she found the loneliness unbearable; when they came back it was undoubtedly to watch her die. When Charles came home in the evening she brought her long thin arms out from under the bedclothes, put them round his neck and, making him sit on the edge of the bed, started telling him her troubles: he was forgetting her, he loved someone else! She'd always been told that she would be unhappy; and she ended up asking him for some syrup mixture for her health, and a little more love.

2

ONE NIGHT AT ABOUT ELEVEN O'CLOCK they were woken by the sound of a horse stopping outside the front door. The maid opened the attic window and altercation for a while with a man in the street below. He had come to fetch the doctor; he had a letter. Shivering, Nastasia went down and opened the locks and bolts one by one. The man left his horse and followed her straight into the house. From under his woollen hat with grey tassels he took a letter wrapped in a piece of old cloth and genteelly presented it to Charles, who sat up in bed to read it. Standing next to him, Nastasia held a lamp; out of modesty, Madame turned to the wall so just her back was visible.

The letter, sealed with a small blue wax seal, begged Monsieur Bovary to come to the farm at Les Bertaux straight away to mend a broken leg. From Tostes to Les Bertaux it was a good six leagues, taking the shortcut through Longueville and Saint-Victor. It was a dark night and young Madame Bovary was afraid her husband might have an accident. So it was decided that the groom would go on ahead. Charles would leave in three hours' time, when there was a moon. They would send a boy to meet him, to show him the way to the farm and open the gates.

At about four in the morning, wrapped in his coat, Charles set off for Les Bertaux. Still drowsy from his warm bed, he let himself be rocked off by the gentle pace of his horse. Whenever it decided to stop at the ditches ringed by thorns that are dug beside ploughed fields, Charles, waking with a start, soon remembered the broken leg, and racked his brains to remember the different fractures he knew. The rain had stopped; it was almost daybreak, and birds sat motionless on the bare branches of the apple trees, ruffling their little feathers in the chill morning wind. The flat countryside stretched away into the distance as far as the eye could see, and clumps of trees round the farms made dark purple patches at odd intervals on the vast grey surface that merged into the dreary colours of the sky on the horizon. Now and then Charles opened his eyes; but soon tiring and giving way to sleep again he fell into a sort of doze in which, recent experiences becoming confused with memories, he saw doubles of himself, student and husband at the same time, lying in bed like a moment ago, walking through an operating theatre as he used to. In his mind the smell of

poultices mingled with the fresh smell of dew; he heard the metal rings of bed curtains sliding along their rods, his wife sleeping... As he was going through Vassonville he noticed a young lad sitting in the grass beside an embankment.

“Are you the doctor?” the boy asked.

At Charles’s reply he picked up his clogs and set off at a run ahead of him.

As they made their way, the public-health officer took from what his guide was saying that Monsieur Rouault must be a well-to-do farmer. He had broken his leg the night before on his way back from eating *galette des Rois** with a neighbour to celebrate Twelfth Night. His wife had died two years ago. He only had “Mam’selle his daughter” with him now, who helped him keep house.

The ruts got deeper. They were almost at Les Bertaux. The young boy disappeared through a gap in the hedge, and then reappeared at the end of a yard to open the gate. The horse slid on the wet grass; Charles bent down to avoid the branches. Guard dogs barked from outside their kennels and dragged on their chains. As he arrived at Les Bertaux his horse took fright and shied badly.

It was a fine-looking farm. Through the open top half of the doors in the stables, big plough horses could be seen eating peacefully from new hay racks. Alongside the outbuildings was a large pile of steaming manure, and among the turkeys and chickens five or six peacocks were pecking about, a luxury of the Cauchois farmyard. The sheep pen was long, the barn tall, its walls as smooth as the skin on your hand. Under the Dutch barn stood two large carts and four ploughs, with whips, collars and full sets of harness whose blue wool fleeces were finely coated with dust from the haylofts. The courtyard, planted with evenly spaced trees, sloped up to the house, and the cheerful sound of geese rang out from over by the pond.

A young woman in a blue merino wool dress with three flounces came to the door to greet Monsieur Bovary, whom she took to the kitchen where there was a good fire going. Lunch was bubbling away everywhere in different-sized pots. Damp clothes were drying inside the fireplace. The shovel, tongs and the nozzle of the bellows, all enormous, shone like burnished steel, while round the walls were ranged a vast array of kitchen utensils, which sparkled occasionally in the bright light from the kitchen lamps and the early sunshine that came through the windows.

Charles went upstairs to the patient. He found him in bed, sweating under the covers, his nightcap thrown across the room. He was a short fat man, fifty years old, with pale skin, blue eyes, bald at the front and wearing earrings. On a chair beside him was a large carafe of brandy from which he helped himself now and then to cheer himself up; but the moment he saw the doctor he became less agitated, and instead of cursing and swearing as he had been doing for the last twelve hours, he began to groan weakly.

It was a simple fracture, no complications. Charles couldn't have wished for anything easier. So, remembering his former teachers' bedside manner, he soothed the patient with jokes and witticisms, those medical cajoleries that are like the oil used to lubricate the scalpel. Someone went to get a bundle of slats from under the cart to use as splints. Charles chose one, cut it into lengths and smoothed it with a piece of broken glass while the maid tore up sheets to make bandages and Mademoiselle Emma tried to stitch some small pads. Because she took a long time to find her needlework box, her father started to get impatient; she didn't reply, but as she sewed she kept pricking her fingers, and then sucking them.

Charles was surprised at how white her nails were. They were shiny, an almond shape polished cleaner than ivory. Yet her hands weren't so pretty, perhaps not pale enough, and slightly rough around the joints; they were also too long, and their outline and contours lacked softness. Her most beautiful feature was her eyes; although brown, they appeared to be black because of her eyelashes, and she looked straight at you with innocent audacity.

Once the dressing was applied, Monsieur Rouault invited the doctor to *have a bite* before he left.

Charles went down to the dining room. Two places with silver tumblers had been laid on a small table at the foot of a large, canopied four-poster bed whose calico cover was printed with Turkish figures. From a tall armoire facing the window came the smell of irises and damp sheets. Sacks of corn were lined up on the floor in the corners. It was the surplus from the granary next door, up three stone steps. By way of decoration, hanging from a nail in the middle of the wall, whose green paint was flaking off under the saltpetre, there was a pencil sketch of Minerva's head in a gilt frame, under which was written, in Gothic script: "To my dear Papa".

At first they talked about the patient, then the weather, how cold the winter was, the wolves that roamed the fields at night. Mademoiselle Rouault didn't much enjoy the country, especially now she had to look after the farm virtually all by herself. As the room was chilly she shivered as she ate, partly revealing her fleshy lips, which she had a habit of biting when she wasn't talking.

Her neck appeared from a white, turned-down collar. Her hair, whose two black headbands were so smooth that they seemed to be a single piece, had a fine parting down the middle, which deepened according to the contours of her head; almost covering her ears, it was swept back into a heavy chignon, with a waviness round the temples which the country doctor now noticed for the first time. Her cheeks were rosy. She wore a tortoiseshell lorgnette looped through two buttons of her bodice, like men did.

After going up to say goodbye to old man Rouault, when Charles came back to the dining room before leaving, he found her standing with her forehead resting on the window and looking out at the garden, where the beanpoles had been blown down by the wind. She turned round.

"Are you looking for something?" she asked.

"My riding crop, actually," he replied.

And he began rummaging about on the bed, behind the doors, under the chairs; it had fallen on the floor between the grain sacks and the wall. Mademoiselle Emma spotted it; she leant over the sacks of corn. Out of courtesy Charles hurried across, and as he stretched out his arm he felt his chest brush against the young woman's back, which was bent forward in front of him. She stood up, blushing deeply, and as she handed him the leather whip she looked over his shoulder.

Instead of coming back to Les Bertaux three days later as promised, he returned the next day, and then regularly twice a week, not counting the odd unexpected visits that he made as if inadvertently.

What was more, everything went well; the leg healed without complications, and when after six weeks old man Rouault was seen walking unaided in his orchards, people began to regard Monsieur Bovary as a man of considerable ability. Old Rouault said he wouldn't have had better treatment from the best doctors in Yvetot or even Rouen.

As for Charles, he never once asked himself why he enjoyed coming to Les Bertaux. Had he done so he would have probably put his

enthusiasm down to the seriousness of the case, or perhaps the money he hoped to make. Yet was that why his visits to the farm made such a delightful break from his dreary routine? On those days he got up early, set off at a gallop, spurred his horse on, then dismounted to wipe his feet on the grass and put on his black gloves before going in. He liked the thought of arriving in the yard, feeling his shoulder against the gate as it opened, the cock crowing on the wall, the boys running to meet him. He liked the barn and the stables; he liked old man Rouault, who clapped his hand in his and called him his saviour; he liked Mademoiselle Emma's little clogs on the scrubbed flagstones in the kitchen; their high heels made her slightly taller, and when she walked in front of him the wooden soles lifted up and made a brisk clacking sound noise against the leather of her boots.

She always saw him off from the top step of the front entrance. If his horse hadn't been brought round, she would wait there. They had said goodbye, they didn't say any more; a breeze would get up round her, blowing the downy hair on the nape of her neck every which way, or tossing the apron strings tied at her waist, which twirled like streamers. Once, during the thaw, the bark of the trees in the courtyard was streaming, snow was melting on the roofs of the farm buildings. She was standing on the doorstep; she fetched her umbrella, opened it. Shining through the dapple-grey silk, the sun cast shifting plays of light across the white skin of her face. In the balmy warmth beneath it, she smiled, and raindrops could be heard falling one by one onto the tightly stretched *moiré*.

When Charles first started going regularly to Les Bertaux, young Madame Bovary made a point of asking after his patient, and had even selected a nice new page for Monsieur Rouault in the account book that she kept in duplicate. But when she heard that he had a daughter, she made enquiries, and she discovered that Mademoiselle Rouault, brought up in a convent with the Ursulines,* had had, as they say, *a good education*, and therefore knew her geography, as well as how to dance, draw, do tapestry and play the piano. It was the last straw!

"So that's why his face lights up when he's going to see her," she thought, "and why he wears his new waistcoat, even though it might get spoilt in the rain? Oh, that woman! That woman!..."

And instinctively she hated her. At first she made herself feel better by dropping hints. Charles didn't get them; next, by making casual

remarks that he chose to ignore for fear of trouble; and finally with point-blank rudeness, to which he didn't have an answer. How come he kept going back to Les Bertaux when Monsieur Rouault had recovered, and they still hadn't paid? Ah, it was because there was someone there, *a person* who knew how to make conversation, an embroiderer, a wit. So that was what he liked: he had need of young ladies from town salons! And she went on:

"Old man Rouault's daughter a town lady! Come off it! Their grandfather was a shepherd, they've got a cousin who was nearly hauled up in front of the bench for giving someone a nasty injury during an argument. There's no point putting on airs, turning up to church on Sunday in a silk dress like some countess. And if it weren't for last year's rape crop the poor old bloke would have had a hard time paying his debts!"

Out of apathy Charles stopped paying calls at Les Bertaux. H elo ise made him swear not to go there again, with his hand on her missal, and after many sobs and kisses in a great outpouring of love. So he obeyed; yet the boldness of his desire protested against his servile behaviour, and out of naive hypocrisy he considered that forbidding him to see her was like giving him the right to love her. Besides, the widow was scrawny; she had long teeth; she wore a little black shawl all year round which came halfway down her back; her hard waist was corseted in dresses like scabbards, which were too short and showed her ankles with the ribbons of her wide shoes criss-crossed over grey stockings.

Charles's mother came to see them occasionally; but after a few days her daughter-in-law's company seemed to sharpen her tongue; and like a pair of knives they were soon whittling away at him with comments and criticisms. He shouldn't eat so much! Why offer a drink to all and sundry who came to the door? And it was sheer pig-headedness to refuse to wear flannel!

And then early in the spring a solicitor from Ingouville, who managed the widow Dubuc's capital, did a moonlight flit, taking all the money from his practice. It was true that as well as her share in a boat which was valued at six thousand francs, H elo ise still had her house in the Rue Saint-Fran ois; and yet out of this fortune that so much had been heard about, nothing apart from a few sticks of furniture and one or two bits and pieces had found their way to the marital home. The situation needed clarification. The house in Dieppe turned out to be

mortgaged to the hilt; as for what she had entrusted to the lawyer, God only knew, and the share in the boat didn't amount to more than a thousand écus. So the woman had been lying! Smashing a chair on the ground in fury, Monsieur Bovary senior accused his wife of bringing misfortune on their son by hitching him to such a nag, whose harness wasn't worth a tick. They came to Tostes. There were explanations. There were scenes. In tears, Héloïse threw herself into her husband's arms, begging him to stand up for her. Charles tried to take her side against his parents. They got angry and left.

But *the blow had been struck*. A week later as she was hanging out washing in the yard, she started coughing up blood, and the next day while Charles had his back turned closing the curtains, she said: "Oh my God!" gave a sigh and fainted. She was dead! It was quite a surprise!

After the funeral, Charles went home. There was no one downstairs; he went up to the bedroom, saw her dress hanging at the back of the alcove; and then leaning on the writing desk, he stayed there filled with painful musings until evening. After all, she had loved him.

3

ONE MORNING, old man Rouault came to bring Charles the payment for his mended leg; seventy-five francs in forty-sou pieces, and a turkey. He had heard about his loss, and did what he could to comfort him.

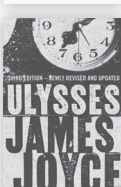
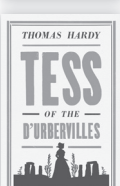
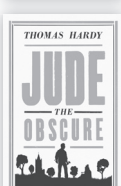
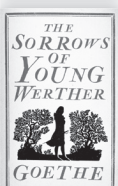
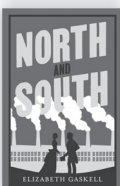
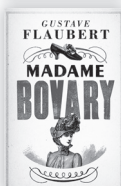
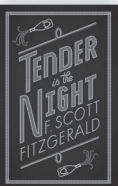
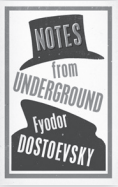
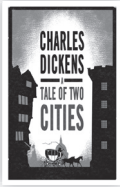
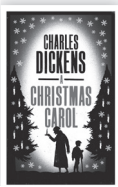
"I know all about it!" he said, patting him on the back. "I was in your position once! When I lost my poor dear departed I went out to the fields to be all alone; I threw myself down under a tree, I called on the Lord, said silly things to him; I wanted to be like the moles that were hanging from the branches, with worms crawling about in their bellies, in other words dead. And when I thought that at that very moment other people were with their dear little wives, hugging them tight, I thrashed my stick on the ground; I was as good as mad, I wouldn't eat a thing; the thought of going to the café by myself sickened me, you wouldn't credit it. But very slowly, one day at a time, spring following winter and autumn coming after summer, it slipped by little by little, bit by bit; it went away, left me, what I mean to say is that it got less,

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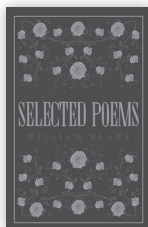
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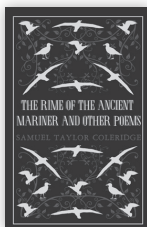


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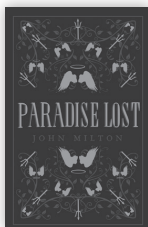
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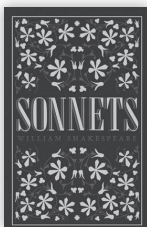
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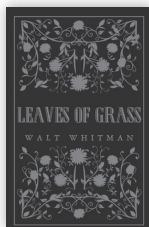
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