Publications

BULLETIN

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

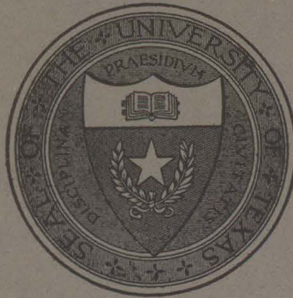
1915: No. 6

JANUARY 25 1915

The Novels and the Ideas of Madame Marcelle Tinayre

BY

Benjamin M. Woodbridge



Published by the University six times a month and entered as second class matter at the postoffice at Austin, Texas

Publications of the University of Texas

Publications Committee:

W. J. Battle
J. C. Townes
W. S. Carter
Killis Campbell
F. W. Simonds
E. C. Barker
A. Caswell Ellis
R. A. Law
J. A. Lomax
A. C. Judson

The University publishes bulletins six times a month. These comprise the official publications of the University, publications on humanistic and scientific subjects, bulletins prepared by the Department of Extension and by the Bureau of Municipal Research and other bulletins of general educational interest. With the exception of special numbers, any bulletin will be sent to a citizen of Texas free on request. All communications about University publications should be addressed to the Editor of University Publications, University of Texas, Austin.

B27-115-500-7233

BULLETIN

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

1915 : No. 6

JANUARY 25 1915

The Novels and the Ideas of Madame Marcelle Tinayre

BY

Benjamin M. Woodbridge

Published by the University six times a month and entered as second class matter at the postoffice at Austin Texas

The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.

Sam Houston.

Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy . . . . It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge and the only security that freemen desire.

Mirabeau B. Lamar.

The Novels and the Ideas of Madame Marcelle Tinayre

Madame Marcelle Tinayre occupies a brilliant place among contemporary French novelists. Her literary career began early with fairy stories written for children and published under a pseudonym. Later she worked as a journalist, thus gaining a wide experience and an acquaintance with many conditions of life which have served her in good stead for admirable scenes in her novels. Her first serious effort, *Avant l'Amour,* won a considerable success and has been followed by a dozen other books, mostly fiction. All can be read with interest; one, at least, has made its mark and seems destined to keep alive the fame of its author. Madame Tinayre's works have been hotly discussed in France, but have received scant notice from American critics. She is hailed by the feminists as a champion of their cause, a fact which may entitle her to some interest on this side of the world.

Feminism is susceptible of many meanings: as applied to Madame Tinayre it has been well defined by a reviewer of *Avant l'Amour,* "Le seul féminisme possible serait celui qui s'occuperait sérieusement de maintenir la femme dans l'unique religion de l'Amour." This sentence marks clearly the trend of our author's theories. Her novels are filled with one theme: the divine right of feminine passion. Without the second adjective, the formula is as old as the world, but the *feminine* is here all important. Madame Tinayre's heroines are the most interesting and living of her characters. She says of them: "Les héroïnes de mes livres, je les ai rêvées pareilles à la maîtresse idéale d'un vieux poète français, celle qui avait, dit-il, corps féminin, cœur d'homme, et tête d'ange." Just what she means, supposing she has realized her dream, can best be discovered by a glance at the novels themselves. The reader may prefer to call her women romantic titans with a superabundance of *corps féminin.*

Avant l'Amour was written in 1891-5 and first published by the *Mercure de France* in 1897. It is the autobiography of a natural child, Marianne, who is left to guardians at the age of eight. She finds in her new home a godfather, kindly but weak,

a bepowdered and worldly godmother, whose entire being is wrapt up in her son, Maxime, a spoiled boy of seventeen. He is presented as a brilliant but utterly selfish youth, and as an ardent admirer of Stendhal's cynical heroes. The critics compare him to Maupassant's Bel Ami. Marianne's guardians,—the husband is an iron-bound reactionary, the wife a petty bour geois,—attempt to give her the conventional education of the well-bred *jeune fille*. She takes occasion to criticise sharply the hypocrisy which this system involves and inculcates, and makes a plea for "sex education." There follows another attack on the instruction given to children at the time of their first communion. These are hard blows at two of the most sacred institutions of French social life. We have to do with a rebel indeed.

At one of her godmother's receptions, Marianne meets a young musician, Rambert, who half promises marriage. Then, on learning of her humble birth and poverty, he quits her shamefully. Throughout the whole incident she acts with the most naive frankness, and learns, in bitterness, her first lesson of man's perfidy. Her chagrin is doubled by the reproaches of her godmother, who had at first favored the projected marriage, but now declares that her ward had thrown herself at the head of the first youth she met, and bids her resign herself to the humdrum life of a music teacher. Marianne revolts and refuses to be thus subdued. "Moi, je ne renonce à rien, je ne tuerai pas mon cœur, je ne sacrifierai pas ma jeunesse à ces dieux aveugles et sourds qu' on appelle les usages, les convenances, le monde . . . je vivrai la vie . . . . j'ai droit à l'amour. . . . Si je ne puis le trouver dans le mariage . . . . alors. . . . " And her thoughts become absorbed with that *alors*.

At this moment Maxime returns from Russia, where he had served as private secretary to the ambassador. He hints darkly at wrongs done him and swears vengeance; he proposes to publish certain compromising documents in a revolutionary journal. He fans the flame of rebellion in Marianne and destroys in her mind the last vestige of respect for convention and tradition. Both consider themselves victims of society; their mutual sense of injury draws them together. They confide in each other, she whole heartedly, he partially, until at last he

declares his passion for her. She has not forgotten her early love for Rambert, and while pitying Maxime, cannot share his feeling. One evening she meets Rambert at the theater, accompanied by an aged dowager under whose patronage he had first appeared. She learns from the whispers of her friends that the pair are lovers, and, in the first bitterness of disillusion, compromises herself gravely with Maxime. Then, seeing the interested motives of those of her companions who succeed in the frenzied matrimonial hunt, she is tempted to follow their example, and submits to the courtship of a wealthy, exhausted libertine. His caresses soon disgust her, and she turns again to Maxime, trying in vain to love him. She learns that his mistress, the wife of his chief at Petrograd, is living near Paris, that he visits her constantly, and is even supported by her money. If there were love between them, Marianne could understand: his position would still be more honorable than that of the dowry hunters by whom she is surrounded. But by Maxime's own avowal, his mistress, much older than himself, has become a chain upon him. Marianne feels only scornful disgust, and his cynical excuses cannot win her pardon. At last, fallen into disgrace with all parties, he has no resource left but to emigrate to America. On the eve of his departure, Marianne, moved more by pity than by love, gives herself to him. He writes to her from Le Hâvre, promising to become worthy of her in the suffering and solitude of his exile. The book closes with a note written two years later, in which Marianne shows herself resigned and hopefully awaiting the return of the man she can love. The reader will scarcely share her confidence. Maxime has shown himself utterly selfish, ready to betray friend or foe in the interests of his own ambition. Does the author mean to imply that he will be purged by suffering and love? If so, it were well to give more proof of such a transformation in the course of the story. I would say rather that Marianne is the first of the generous heroines, all too generous, created by Madame Tinayre.

Unsympathetic as he is, the character of this political free lance and weathercock is convincing. Madame Tinayre has not always succeeded in drawing men so well. Yet here, as always, the heroine is the most interesting figure. One cannot escape

the feeling of sincerity in her portrait, nor of keen observation of the young women of our time who have their share of storm and stress. The reader guesses that the author is immature, but from nothing more than from her eager partisanship of youthful revolt. Whether we sympathize with Marianne or not, we know and understand her.

La Rançon, written in 1894, introduces us to a household which recalls that of Ibsen's *Doll's House.* Paul and Jacqueline Vallier are a frivolous young couple with no other interest in life than to enjoy the passing hour. The first flush of their honeymoon passion over, they have become comrades a little too early, and are growing indifferent to each other. Their pleasures leave them little time to watch over the education of their son, a healthy, indolent child, who promises to resemble his father. Like Ibsen's Nora, Jacqueline is beginning to feel the emptiness of her life and the vanity of her occupations. A musical critic of mature age, Etienne Chartrain, the former teacher of Paul, attracts her strongly; she perceives his superior moral force and his loneliness; he has real need of her as neither her son nor her husband has. Etienne, seeing danger ahead, would keep their intimacy within the bounds of platonic friendship, but the exchange of caresses, innocent at first, intoxicates them both. Jacqueline, who feels herself carried away by irresistible passion, literally runs into his arms. She admits no dishonor, because she cannot do otherwise. "Je suis venue a vous," she writes, "comme on va vers la lumière, vers le bonheur, vers la beauté, j'ai incarné en vous mon amour des plus nobles choses, et c'est avec le meilleur de mon âme que j'ai commencé de vous aimer. Pouvions-nous échapper à la loi qui condamne à s'unir ceux qui s'aiment, et consentir à ne pas mettre tout l'amour dans l'amour?" One thinks of the outbursts of the early heroines of George Sand.

Etienne adopts a sort of Parthian flight; his conduct recalls that of St. Preuil in the *Nouvelle Héloise,* but a St. Preuil of forty is passably ridiculous in spite of the author's passionate pleading. Excited by an evening of Beethoven's music, the lovers offer sacrifice to the terrestial Aphrodite. A fortnight of complete joy follows, and then the return of Paul from an American tour brings new problems to trouble them. Jacque-

line has discovered an essential difference between her nature and that of her husband, but after all he is her husband, and the father of her child. Etienne, blinded though he is by passion, is aroused to the horror of his position by the cordial handshake of his friend. His affection for Paul is in no wise diminished by his liaison with Jacqueline. He cannot renounce either. A curious change takes place in the wife. Her character ripens under the influence of illicit love; encouraged by Etienne to undertake herself the education of her child, her maternal instinct revives; the idealism of her lover reveals to her a new sense of her duties as a wife. "Les scrupules qu' il [Etienne] avait éveillés en elle, elle les avait endormis en lui," remarks the author. A violent attack of diphtheria from which Paul barely recovers, completes the work of regeneration. Jacqueline continues to visit her lover, but is moved rather by pity than by passion. Her departure for Algeria with her husband gives a welcome promise of calm. It is Etienne's suffering which pays the ransom of their love.

The wife is the most interesting character in the book. One feels that the men are little more than puppets whose *rôle* is that of stepping stones for her development. Her change of heart, though rather described than dramatically portrayed, offers food for reflection. Without her love for Etienne, the author seems to say, she would never have been the woman she promises to become at the end of the book. Perhaps not, but adultery is a strange school of ethics. A well known essayist has observed that our age is characterized by the loss of moral nerve. I take such a novel as *La Rançon* as a striking example of the truth of the criticism.

One is naturally led to compare the work of Madame Tinayre with that of other feminine novelists. Let us go back to the seventeenth century, and find the woman whom La Rochefoucauld called *la plus vraie* of his acquaintance. Mme. de LaFayette's *Princess de Clèves* is one of the noblest heroines of French fiction. She was bred in the school of Corneille, too much neglected by modern novelists, and knew how to oppose a high sense of duty to passion, grown irresistible nowadays. Her sympathies widen and her character reaches its fullest development through the struggle with love from which she comes out vic-

torious. French heroines of today would do well to ponder her story. Quite the contrary seems to be happening. In the preface to the second edition of *La Rançon,* the author remarks that the conclusion of the work seems to her very questionable, and she refers to the whole as an "histoire de deux amants inférieurs â leur idéal, supérieurs à leur destinée, faibles devant la douleur d'autrui, et contraints au stérile sacrifice de leur grand et bel amour, parcequ' ils ont préféré le 'bon mensonge' à la vérité libératrice." And this truth would have given them the liberty to run away together and enjoy their love in defiance of social obligation and duty. Oh, truth, how art thou fallen!

L'Oiseau d'Orage, written in 1897, lacks originality both in subject and treatment, and leaves the reader unmoved. The theme is the ever recurring one of adultery. Pierre Chaumette, an honest, hard-working doctor, is living happily with his wife, Marthe, in their château near Rochefort. One stormy day he brings home a young cyclist, Jean Demarcys, whom he has found unconscious from a fall. The visitor, nursed by Marthe, discovers in her a certain sentimentality, a craving for a more varied experience. Bored himself by the monotonous life of a small country town, he feels a passing attraction for her. The obligation of guest to host cannot long restrain his impulses, and he deliberately plans to seduce the wife of his benefactor. He brings the halo of Paris and of an unknown world to this innocent provincial, lends her such books as he thinks fitted to abet his designs, and soon succeeds in his purpose. The reader, however well acquainted with the conventionalities of French fiction, can scarcely fail to be a little surprised, and Marthe asks herself the morning after her fall, whether she loves her seducer.

Learning of the pregnancy of his mistress, Jean feels only bored, and find means to obtain an appointment at Rouen. Deserted by her lover, Marthe debates in her own mind whether to avow all to her husband. "Elle sentait qu' il pardonnerait devant l'excès de son infortune, mais que son bonheur, intact encore, resterait frappé à jamais."

Here is a question for a heroine of Ibsen, and it is perhaps the most interesting thing in the book. Similar situations re-

occur constantly. Marthe is not a heroine of Ibsen; she entrusts he secret to a curé of the neighborhood, a man taught by long experience to accommodate the stern Old Testament law to human weakness. Be it said in passing that Madame Tinayre's curés, though barely sketched, are among the most living of her male characters. The priest declares the unborn child the legitimate offspring of Pierre Chaumette, and forbids the wife to imagine any other hypothesis. While pronouncing the absolution, he thinks in his heart: "La paix soit avec cette âme: elle ne pêchera plus."

One ill-advised critic has remarked that *L'Oiseau d'Orage* is the counterpart of *Madame Bovary.* Doubtless Madame Tinayre had read Flaubert's masterpiece, and perhaps had it in mind while writing this book. It will be kinder not to push this comparison too far. We may note, however, that while Flaubert treats Emma Bovary with the sternest logic, Madame Tinayre shows all sympathy for the erring wife. Such an attitude is characteristic of all her work.

It is refreshing to turn to *Hellé,* one of the best written and attractive of the novels of our author. The heroine relates the story of her youth. Early left an orphan, she is entrusted to the care of her uncle, M. de Riveyrac. He is a distinguished Hellenist, and, seeing exceptional promise in his niece, takes charge of her education. His methods are by no means the usual ones; Hellé becomes familiar with the masterpieces of antiquity and thus is led to an ideal of complete and harmonious development of character. Her uncle seeks to give her, a woman, what the Renaissance had brought to the men of the sixteenth century—liberation of the spirit from the chains of convention, social or religious. A visit to Notre Dame, admired by Hellé, draws from him this outburst: "Je hais le culte des chrétiens et leur morale. Par eux l'inquiétude est entrée dans l'univers. Ne me parle pas de l'essor mystique de l'âme; rien n'est beau que la lumière, l'harmonie et la vérité. Les gens qui ont bâti ces cathédrales ont introduit le squelette dans l'art. Partout ils voyaient grimacer la danse macabre. Ils ont réduit la vertu à n'être qu' un contrat sordide avec leur Dieu; ils ont blasphémé l'amour, stigmatisé la femme, et n'ont trouvé d'excuse à la maternité que la virginité féconde de Marie."

And he takes her to the Louvre to reveal to her the beauty of the Venus of Milo.

If Christianity has regarded woman as the incarnation of sin (Anatole France will have it that the holy fathers thus did her great honor!), modern society, in Hellé's opinion, is still more unjust toward her. It would sacrifice her utterly to man, would make her his toy, and the instrument of his pleasure. Hellé has been trained to be the peer and comrade of her husband, who must be one of the supermen, one who, as M. de Riveyrac puts it, has known how to create in himself a demigod. So Hellé scandalizes the dear old ladies of another generation who would have her efface her personality in love. "Mais à quoi bon? m'écriai je, et quel étrange idéal d'amour propose-t-on à la femme? Pourqui doit-elle plutôt que l'homme se briser, se sacrifier? Pourquoi effacerai-je ma personnalité dans l'amour? Celui qui méconnaîtrait la justice au point de m'imposer un suicide intellectuel serait un tyran ou un imbécile: en aucun cas, je ne saurais l'aimer. Je ne veux ni me sacrifier, ni sacrifier mon mari. Nous devons nous efforcer de réaliser ensemble une vie harmonieuse en nous respectant, en nous aidant, en nous complétant."

After a score of years spent in a quiet provincial retreat, M. de Riveyrac introduces Hellé to Parisian society. She feels drawn at first toward a brilliant young poet, Maurice Clairmont. He is on the eve of a pilgrimage to Greece, with the double object of combatting the Turk and of finishing a tragedy on Sapho. Meanwhile her uncle becomes greatly interested in an enthusiastic social reformer, Antoine Genesvrier, who has sacrificed rank and fortune to his ideal. It is not quite clear just what bond could unite the solitary humanist to the humanitarian. The reader fears that there is a failure to appreciate the abyss which separates the two types of men. M. de Riveyrac would have said it was his friend's moral force which he admired. Antoine becomes an intimate of the house, and on the death of the uncle he promises to watch over Hellé as a brother. He has succeeded in interesting her in his own work, thus educating, as he says, her heart. He observes her narrowly in the presence of the misery of his protégés, and at last tells her, in a rather pedantic letter, that he believes her

the ideal associate whom he had not dared to hope for. He is her elder by a number of years, and can offer little more than a share in his austere life. She needs time to know her mind, but he is willing to wait. Meantime Maurice returns from Greece with his tragedy complete and about to be presented by a famous actress. The old charm returns: Hellé's imagination clothes the poet in the beauty she attributes to the poem. Maurice has a honeyed tongue, and is deeply versed in the art of subtle flattery. "Je vous vois, et je vois le compagnon élu par vous entre les élus de la gloire. Il adore en vous son idéal réalisé, la forme vivante de son génie. Il règne sur les âmes, et vous régne sur lui." Meaningless words, which Hellé calls later hyperbolical gallantry. But for the moment she is carried away, and at the end of the triumphal first representation of *Sapho,* she becomes engaged to the poet. Genesvrier withdraws to bury his sorrow in work, while Hellé soon discovers that the man she loved in Maurice was only a figment of her imagination. He wishes her to change the whole course of her life to accept his, of which she sees the vanity, to become an ornament in his mansion and the tool of his ambition. A break is inevitable, and after three months spent in agony of spirit at her country home, she returns to ask forgiveness of Genesvrier. The last chapter shows her once more in the old château, where she is resting after an exhausting winter's work. She is accompanied by a child whose features give promise of the best of both his parents.

Hellé is much more of a rebel than her older sister, Marianne, perhaps more than any of the heroines of the author, for her battle is fought in a purely intellectual field, and she claims for her sex the right to the highest spheres of activity. Marianne asks only the right to love, which, as she understands it, is not much more than the elemental right given by nature. At the head of her story she writes: "J'ai mes droits à l'amour et ma place au soleil." Granted, but she will none the less be the slave of man. Hellé would be his peer; her ideal union is that of thought inspired by love, the genius of man completed by the sublime instinct of woman; her duty is to realize in herself the woman she is capable of being, and to forge her own

happiness while aiding that of another. The influence of Ibsen appears strikingly in this, the author's first mature work.

Yet Hellé's charm, and her portrait is perhaps the most attractive in Madame Tinayre's gallery, is in the fullness of her womanhood. She alone approaches the ideal of the poet, admired by her creator. There is too much *corps de femme*—of the ancient Eve condemned by the church—in the others. I have challenged the friendship of M. de Riveyrac for Genesvrier, but Hellé's affection is entirely natural. In spite of her Greek, she is every bit a woman, and her very passion for completeness of development leads her, chastened by the fall from her first flight of imagination, to the man who has known how to educate her heart. She soon feels herself the moral and intellectual superior of Maurice, who would drag her down to his level. Genesvrier offers her an equal share in his work, and by accepting she can win and give a larger experience of life.

The men are less successful. Maurice is the conventional type of poet, lionized by women, Genesvrier of the social reformer entirely wrapt in his work. He is obviously meant to be the "sympathetic character," but his very enthusiasm is wooden. How unfortunate it is that what Stevenson called the "best birthright of an honest man," a sense of humor, is found so rarely in the heroes of modern fiction.

La Maison du Péché, completed in 1902, is generally recognized as the masterpiece of Madame Tinayre. In no other work has she shown such brilliant technique or such a variety of well drawn and thoroughly interesting characters. Some critics would make of this novel a diatribe against Christianity, but such an interpretation seems forced. The plot, it is true, revolves around the struggle of an austere jansenism with human emotion, but whatever the author may think of religion in its relation to passion, the claims of both are fairly set forth. The reader may at times say with the ancient poet: "Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum," but all the incidents rise naturally from the clash of character. The call to love is sounded with all the charm the author can give it, but the strength and sincerity of the fanatics win admiration.

The outline of the story can be briefly stated. The Chanteprie have lived for generations in the valley of Chevreuse, near the

site of Port Royal des Champs. Their family traditions are closely united to that of the famous abbey. The last representative of the line, Augustin—the offspring of cousins, one a consumptive, the other a neuropath—has been educated according to the most ascetic principles. An early death deprived him of his father, and his mother, who has never ceased to regret the convent, entrusts him to the charge of M. Forgerus, a missionary called expressly from Beyrouth. Tutor and pupil are to live in a small pavilion built by the one black sheep of the family, Adhémar, a century before for a dancer. Adhémar, an ardent admirer of Rousseau, had planted around about a grove which he called the "Bosquet de Julie," and adorned the grounds with all manner of flowers, especially poppies, for which he had a peculiar liking. Since his time the family had known this charming spot, whose natural beauty appealed to Forgerus himself, as "la Maison du Péché." After seven years of faithful work, the tutor returns to Beyrouth. Augustin has received such an education as M. Lancelot gave the young nobles at Port Royal. He is as fully armed against the wiles of the Evil One as study alone, without knowledge of the outside world can make him. Temptation comes in the traditional form. Fanny Manolé, a young artist, acquires a cottage on the Chanteprie estate. Augustin falls under her charm and wishes to marry her, but is shocked by her ignorance and neglect of spiritual duties. He essays to convert her, fails, and she half converts him to what she considers the one religion of life. The "Maison du Péché" merits its name once more, and the portrait of Adhémar seems to smile on the new lovers. The remainder of the story tells of the alternating waves of remorse and passion which tear Augustin and make his life and that of Fanny intolerable. They are about to start for Holland together, when Forgerus, summoned in haste by Mme. de Chanteprie, reappears. He quickly regains his old influence over Augustin, and persuades him to retire to a Cistercian monastery in Limousin. Some months later, Augustin returns, broken in spirit, but only apparently freed from his passion. The story closes with the pathetic scene of his death in which regret for his lost youth struggles with his desire for the consolation of his religion.

The plot, as usual in Madame Tinayre's works, is simple, and the main interest is centered in the characters. All are so well drawn that the reader could easily take them for portraits. We meet first Mme. de Chanteprie, who has all the virtues but the human one of maternal love. She spends her time in pious reading, denies herself all but the necessities of life to aid in works of charity, and is known in the neighborhood as the Saint. Her aim is to make of her son a champion of the faith, and a worthy descendant of the defenders of Port Royal. The world she regards as a snare of the devil, and all natural emotion as a manifestation of original sin. She has never known happiness as wife or mother, and at the end she can watch the agony of her son with calm resignation and even with joy. "Monstrous" she may be, but modern art is far from tabooing monstrosities; impossible she is not, and any who doubt it may turn to the sombre portrait left by Leopardi of his own mother.

More sympathetic are the Captain Courdimanche and his sister, friends of the Chanteprie, and charming in their childlike simplicity. The captain is described as one who, after a stormy career in the army, returned to the faith of his childhood through the influence of a beloved wife. He is a pacific and tender Don Quixote, "qui n'avait d'autre amour que l'amour des pauvres, et d'autre folie que la folie de la croix." He raises rabbits by hundreds and sells them to increase his charity budget. He seems to merit a place in Paradise beside Father Séraphique, the lover of Dame Poverty and the charmer of birds. Having known himself the power of passion, he can better understand Augustin, and gives him excellent counsel.

Mlle. Cariste Courdimanche is a child aged fifty. Her soul in its innocent ignorance has remained as fresh as at the day of baptism. Her time is passed in embroidering altar clothes or making syrups and conserves. She never fails to utter a pious ejaculation at the striking of the hour, thus freeing herself from fifty days of purgatory. Her great and ceaseless struggle is to renounce this accumulated indulgence in favor of suffering souls, but her fear of perdition puts this "heroic act" beyond her strength. She joins the party of the *dévotes* at the last, and shows a scarcely Christian charity toward sinners whom she cannot understand.

When M. Forgerus first arrives, he mentally compares this group to personages at Port Royal: ''N'est-ce pas une sœur des Agnés et des Angélique qui preside le repas? Augustin ne ressemble-t-il pas â M. de Séricourt ou à M. de Luzanci enfant? Est-ce Mademoiselle Courdimanche ou Mademoiselle de Vertus, qui est assise prés de moi? Le capitaine n'offre-t-il pas quelques traits de M. de Pontis, ou de ce M. de la Petitière qui, par humilité, se fit le cordonnier de Port Royal?''

Two priests complete the circle of Mme. de Chanteprie's friends. One is a militant churchman who does not hesitate to use the arms of secular politicians to further his ends. He would convert Augustin to his views, and send him as a deputy to combat the socialists with their own weapons. Forgerus compares him to a Jesuit strayed by mistake into this little Port Royal. The other priest, l'Abbé Vitalis, is a more attractive figure. He avows that, in the first years of his charge, fresh from the seminary, he had shown himself over-zealous, and antagonized his parishoners. Having lost his youthful ardor and his illusions, he asks little and receives less, but lives in harmony with his flock. ''Un curé qui presse le cidre, qui taille les arbres, et qu' on rencontre, le matin, tendant des pièges aux petits oiseaux, un curé qui fait des sermons très courts et n'attaque pas le gouvernement, on le respecte, on l'estime. . . . Et personne ne s'avise plus d'imiter le corbeau derrière lui.'' His *loss of illusion* has gone so far that he has lost his faith as well; he avows to Augustin that his black robe has become a garb of mourning which he can never put off; he is haunted by regret for woman's love and for his faith; his one resource is to endeavor to do for love of humanity what he can no longer do for love of God. He has suffered cruelly and his own struggle enables him the better to understand and counsel Augustin. He refuses, for reasons easy to guess after his confession, to undertake the conversion of Fanny, but he can tell her very homely truths and shows himself a better psychologist than his militant colleague. At the end, he is driven from his parish by the malignity of the *dévotes*.

The most interesting of the secondary characters is Jacquine, an old servant of the Chanteprie, who represents the spirit of the earth in this ultra-puritanical family. Regarded as a sor-

ceress by the peasantry because of her knowledge of simples and concoctions of soothing potions, she has opened the beauty of nature to Augustin. All her affection is for him, her *fieu*, whose childhood she has amused with tales of poachers and folk songs of plaintive love very different from the saints' legends he heard at his mother's knee. She has seen her *fieu's* imagination all turned toward martyrdom and Paradise, and she has sworn that they shall not make a priest of him. She feels from the first an instinctive hatred for Forgerus, but welcomes Fanny as a potent helper and finally loves her because Augustin loves her. Rightly suspected of having aided the illicit meetings of the pair, she is discharged, but Augustin calls her to his sick-bed at the end. When the doctors have despaired of his life, she saves him, and would have healed him entirely, had he had the will to live. Her efforts and bitter regrets contrast powerfully with the calm resignation and prayers of Mme. de Chanteprie.

Fanny Manolé is one of the most fascinating heroines the author has drawn. The natural daughter of a famous artist, married to a musician who squandered her dowery and deserted her before his death, her whole life has been spent in Bohemian circles. In a moment of confidence she tells Augustin of her childhood. "Moi, j'ai été élevée par mon père dans un monde d'artistes et de gens de lettres. On a remué beaucoup d'idées devant moi. . . . Des hommes célèbres m'ont tutoyée et tenue sur leurs genoux quand j'étais une gamine rêveuse et rieuse. . . . Que de paradoxes bizarres, que de discours singuliers et profonds j'ai entendus quelquefois! . . . Ah! les beaux jours de mon passé, les beaux espoirs, les beaux songes! . . . Je revois mon père assis devant sa toile, dans ce costume qu' il aimait: la blouse rouge des paysans slaves. . . . Ses cheveux gris frisaient tout droit sur son front; ses yeux bleus flambaient; sa forte voix ébranlait les vitres. . . . Cher père! Quelle nature puissante, heureuse, oui, heureuse, faite pour recevoir le bonheur et le répandre!" Herself a creature all of joy, she has in her frank idolatry of life something of the "pointed ear" of which Vitalis speaks. She believes herself sincere in her wish for conversion, but cannot accept the dogmatic arguments of her director. Then, realizing the truth of

Vitalis' observation that she merely wishes to make a contract with heaven in order to keep Augustin, she abandons her efforts which would thereafter be only hypocrisy, and goes straight to her goal. The attraction which Augustin has for her seems to lie in the contrast between him and her Bohemian associates. Only one of these figures largely in the story—a splendid intelligent animal of epicurean tastes, named Barral. When all her efforts to win back her power over Augustin fail, she yields to the persistent and cynical proposals of this old admirer. The reader can feel only pity for her.

Augustin is the only complex character of the story; the others might almost be labeled with a single epithet. He is stung to the quick when Vitalis quotes Voltaire's remark that the Jansenists were full of pride and St. Augustin. The shoe fitted too well. With no knowledge of the world, he had thought to conquer the world. Then, as Meredith has it, "Love whispered a slight commission to the laughing dame," and if this would-be titan shook Olympus, it was with laughter. A sombre Puritan with neurotic imagination, he has not the strength to be saint or sinner, and by his constant wavering between the two he wrecks his own life, and torments his friends. Modern fiction is full of such figures and leaves a bitter taste which makes us turn joyfully to older stories written before the psychological novel was dreamed of, when an Aucassin could shout aloud: "Then to hell will I go . . . provided only I may have my sweet Nicolette whom I love so well." It is interesting to note that almost any of Madame Tinayre's heroines could say as much, but none of her men.

The scene of the charming idyll called *La Vie Amoureuse de François Barbazanges* is the author's native province of Limousin; the time the end of the seventeenth century. The father of François, an eager student of astrology, casts his son's horoscope at birth. Born under the influence of Venus and Saturn, he will be handsome, polished in manners as well as in speech, and loved of women. He was not to belie the prophecy. Taught to read and to think by the study of d'Urfé's *Astrée,* he is a perfect model of gentility, and rapidly becomes the cynosure of the fair eyes of the village. He disdains these too facile conquests and passes his time dreaming of the ideal mate he is to find

one day. His father, alarmed by his effeminacy, sends for a young relative of very different temperament. Thus is introduced another idea of love, that of the realists, Sorel and Scarron. There are pathetic and comic incidents, but over all is a sense of the poetry of passion, which is the grain of gold in the desert waste of the seventeenth century idealistic novel. This gold Madame Tinayre has sifted out artfully, and has spun with it a charming romance. The critics speak little of this book, which is mentioned as an interlude between serious efforts. Surely it has not the intensity of *La Maison du Péché* and of *La Rebelle,* but, like the other novels of the author, it is a study of love in its different manifestations,—this time of two clashing ideas of love which do not belong only to the century in which they are placed. The characteristic note of Madame Tinayre appears in the tragic incident of Margot la Chabrette, an ill-famed wench whose passion for François opens for her a new world and leads her to a touching end. The hero's own death is violent, but there is a smile on his lips, for he has met the lady of his dreams, and she has come to him, in vision or in reality—little matter which.

La Rebelle represents the maturest work of the author in the literature of revolt. Josanne Valentin is a sister of Marianne's, and at least a relative of Hellé's; she pleads her cause more passionately than any of the other heroines. Married young, she was happy at first, though her love for her husband was not very deep. He falls ill and is obliged to give up his work; enforced idleness changes his character and he becomes a neurasthenic. Josanne adopts him as a sort of peevish child and accepts bravely the double charge of bread-winner and nurse. But she cannot live without happiness, and seeks it in her love for a colorless youth, Maurice Nattier. When she announces her pregnancy, he cools toward her, declines all responsibility, and leaves her to arrange matters as best she can. A child is born and presented to the unsuspecting husband as his legitimate offspring. Though deeply wounded by the selfishness of her lover, Josanne cannot rid herself of her obsession for him. The child, whom she had hoped would be a bond of union between them, proves the contrary, and Maurice is engaged when she becomes a widow. One evening, while waiting in despair

at a rendezvous, she picks up a book, *La Travailleuse,* which makes a deep impression on her. Woman, declares the author, has not chosen of her own accord to enter into the spheres of activity which have hitherto been reserved to men. Economic necessity obliges her to vie with him, and in accepting the burdens of the new condition, she demands its privileges: moral independence with the untrammeled right to think, act and love, in short, all that man has claimed for himself and refused to her. Marriage is not tabooed, but its conditions must change. "L'union ne subsistera que par le tendresse réciproque, l'accord toujours renouvelé des pensées et des sentiments, la fidélité libre et volontaire, et cette parfaite sincérité qui permet l'entière confiance." In short, Josanne finds eloquent expression of the thoughts which have long been developing vaguely in her own mind. Chance gives her opportunity to review the book for *Le Monde Féminin,* a journal which had employed her for humbler tasks. Her article attracts the attention of Noel Delysle, author of *La Travailleuse,* who becomes interested in her. Wishing to marry her, he demands the absolute sincerity which he had prescribed for successful marital union. He declares himself without the prejudices condemned in his book, and incapable of asking from woman more than he exacts from himself. As he could not remain faithful to a partner who should not inspire his passion, he would readily pardon all sinners guilty of only having loved too much. He tells his own story frankly: he has had many mistresses, but all have passed without leaving any impression; they were mere caprices which are as if they had never existed; Josanne is his only real love. Yet so weak is the flesh that during a short absence from her, he had revisited one of his former associates—he confesses it with shame. Thus encouraged, Josanne relates her story. In spite of his theories and boasted freedom from prejudice, Noel, when the case comes home to him, proves no more than e'en a man. Her past haunts him like an avenging fury, and at times he even hates her child as the living embodiment of that past. He passes through every stage of wounded pride and jealousy, while his own theories confront him at each turn. Bitterest of all is the shaft sent by Brabantio into Othello's heart: she has deceived, she will deceive again. Jo-

sanne's very sincerity now tears her lover; she will not deny her passion for Maurice, her love is her excuse. At last Noel understands her; her past is a part of her, has made her the woman he loves and who loves him. Then all that might be a barrier between them falls.

Many critics will have it that the book is misnamed—that Josanne is not a rebel because she accepts marriage at the end. Such an interpretation is a misunderstanding of the author's work. Josanne's revolt is against the injustice of existing social laws, not against love; against the tyranny which crushes the woman's personality, and not against marriage itself.

One of the most striking of Josanne's claims is for the same moral law for man as for woman. If the sowing of wild oats is essential in the development of a young man's character (the author does not put it quite so crudely, but this is her idea), the same liberty should be accorded to woman. A different ethical code is hinted at by one of the most charming characters of the book, an aged spinster, named Mlle. Bon. "Je savais comment vivent les hommes avant leur mariage, et j'avais vu beaucoup de femmes séduites, lâchées, qui tambaient . . . je savais où . .. Alors je m'étais promis d'épouser un jeune homme qui n'aurait jamais profité de la misère, de la faiblesse de ces malheureuses, pour . . . vous comprenez! . . . Un jeune homme pur comme moi-même. . . . Et je ne l'ai pas rencontré." Josanne herself believes that the *fallen woman* is deserving of all sympathy, for however low she may sink, she has been dragged down by man. Yet, since men claim freedom before marriage and even in marriage, Josanne would demand the same privilege for women. Experience is as necessary for the complete development of their character as for men's, and the first duty of all is the working out of personality. Moreover, when woman gives herself, she is moved, not by the caprice of a moment, but by love, which excuses all. Such theories are not common in French literature, and have perhaps never been expressed with the same boldness. English readers are reminded of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* but there is to be noted the contrast between Hardy's skepticism of the result and the absolute confidence of Madame Tinayre. "Justice was done, and the president of the immortals had finished his sport with Tess," concludes the

one, and the other: "La victoire restait à l'amour qui n'avait pas désespéré,—à l'amour fort comme la vie."

Faguet has remarked that for a good novel there are needed "des idées et pas de thèse." Over insistance on the thesis is the worst fault of *La Rebelle*. One feels that the characters, though well drawn, are forced into subordination to it. Noel Delysle, who is quite capable of independent thought, declares that he has become, under Josanne's influence, the Don Quixote of feminism. The social order everywhere combatted by the author as the universal one—woman the toy and slave of man—is reversed in her novels: woman holds the strings and man dances to her music. Slave of his slave becomes his doom, and the reader cannot escape the impression of a decidedly abnormal state of society.

It should be added that the book is not all devoted to the thesis. Madame Tinayre's art shows at its best in the descriptions of humble denizens of Paris and in the scenes of Josanne's life as reporter for *Le Monde Féminin*. Probably the author is drawing on reminiscences of her own journalistic career.

In her last books she seems to be drawing away from the problem novel. The volume entitled *L'Amour qui Pleure* consists of short stories relating the suffering imposed by passion in different situations. Love is represented as an all conquering force, which nothing can resist, and for whose loss there is no consolation but death.

L'Ombre de l'Amour takes us again to the author's native province, but this time it is the Limousin of today which is the scene of two tragic dramas. The "shadow of love" is the pity which the two principal female characters feel for the men who cause their ruin. One, a simple peasant girl, has a strong vocation for the cloistral life. Her parents refuse their consent, and she lives as a sort of lay saint. She attempts to redeem a poacher, who has long terrorized the neighborhood; her efforts succeed at first; then, savage instinct getting the upper hand, the ruffian violates her, and she kills herself to avoid her shame. The other, Mlle. Cayrol, led by thwarted maternal instinct, attaches herself to a young tubercular patient, (Madame Tinayre takes a certain pleasure in avowedly treating well-worn romantic themes), to whose selfish desire she yields in the hope

of consoling his last hours. The two plots are closely woven together, and the story, however disagreeable, is well told.

The distinctive mark of Madame Tinayre is the insistence on the overmastering force of the emotions in woman, and on her superiority to man in self-sacrifice and love. Doctor Cayrol has striven to give his daughter his own sense of duty to the race. To him the union of health with weakness or disease is the greatest of crimes; she accepts his ideas, and yet her need of tenderness throws her into the arms of the dying consumptive. The damnable egoism of the patient needs no comment. But the doctor himself? He is one of the most sympathetic male characters portrayed by the author, yet he has been too ready to allow his daughter to renounce all for him. Circumstances favored this sacrifice: in the lost village of Limousin, there are none worthy of her, and the doctor is too poor to give her a dowry. Still he cannot feel himself without reproach, and recognizes sadly the too frequent inclination of parents to believe their daughters "whose only wish is to live for others." At the end of the book Mlle. Cayrol returns to make a home for her father while he lives. Had she been free she would have gratified her maternal instincts by remaining as infant nurse in a child's hospital.

The chief interest of the book is the vivid description of this little visited province with its curious customs and natives. One is tempted to hope that Limousin may become for Madame Tinayre what Berry was for George Sand. Her peasants are always successful, and she has a keen eye for the picturesque in landscape and character. Limousin offers her an ample opportunity. "Aucune terre excepté l'antique Bretagne, ne porte un tel faix de siècles sur ses rochers. Elle a encore ses fontaines sacrées, ses rites païens, ses processions imitant les stades de la lune dans le cycle des douze mois. Ses pâtres, charmeurs de loups, parlent encore la langue de Bertran de Born et de Bernard de Ventadour. Ses laboureurs éraflant les 'camps de César,' heurtent parfois une armeure latine, un casque de légionnaire, une aigle de bronze oxydé. Et, dans les grottes de ses collines, on trouve des pierres gravées à l'image du mammouth, et les os des hommes qui vecurent et moururent là, au matin du monde."

The background of *La Douceur de Vivre* is Naples and Pompeii: the subject the effect of the Italian sky on visitors from Belgium. The author is interested chiefly in the contrast of character of north and south. Marie Wallers feels at first only disgust for the filth and slovenly poverty of the Neapolitans. But the charm of the voluptuous climate grows upon her, and she realizes that the austere principles which have governed her life are losing their grip. "La douceur de vivre, hélas! qui peut la gouter, s'il s'embarrasse d' un haut idéal ou d'un grand devoir?" The constant spectacle and offer of the joy of living slowly mould her conception of ideal duty, and she returns to Belgium ready to divorce her worthless husband, and accept marriage with an old admirer, an act she had considered as unsanctioned by her religion. Here again the scene is all important, and although one may believe the writer's knowledge of Naples somewhat superficial, piquant touches are not wanting. Take, for example, the following incident: The heroine is traversing Neapolitan slums under the guidance of a young sculptor, Salvatore di Toma. She is jostled by a passer from whom her escort demands an apology. Marie, seeing a quarrel imminent, begs him to drop the matter, but he only replies that he knows his duty. A lively dispute in Billingsgate follows, in which Salvatore finally silences his antagonist by this crushing retort: "Puisses tu avaler un parapluie fermé et le rendre ouvert!"

The author's last work, *Madelaine au Miroir,* which she calls the journal of a woman, is not a novel, but rather the reveries of a young widow. At the end, of course, we have a glimpse of a second hymen, which promises the complete joy missed in the first. The book is charmingly written, in a rich poetic style, and, best of all, portrays a woman's character so simply that we almost forget its complexity. Madeleine, not being a heroine of fiction, is permitted her share of sound judgment, and some sense of humor. A trifle sentimental, she dreams bewitchingly in woods awakened by spring, or behind her window in the rain; she has just a dash of pretension, but without it we should never have seen her journal. So speak that low, lest she hear, for no reader would cast the smallest shadow across her mirror.

Little idea of the art of Madame Tinayre can be formed from these bald summaries of her novels, but the trend of her ideas may be distinctly perceived. Woman is born free and the equal of man, yet everywhere she is in his bondage. The feminist, and she is a socialist in her way, demands a redivision of social privilege in which woman is to have an equal share. She is to receive an education similar to man's, and thus to fit herself to enter into the struggle for existence on equal terms with him. Marriage is to be a partnership in which both parties retain their rights of individual development and in which sacrifices are evenly divided. Needless to say these theories seem less revolutionary in America than in France of today. Other ideas of the author's may be less acceptable on this side of the ocean. She regards love as a universal and irresistible force, perhaps stronger in woman than in man. All have a right to share in its joys, and marriage is not a necessary prelude. Error in love involves no shame.

There seems to be a curious contradiction in the author's thought on this subject. Woman appears enslaved again and again by that love which she demands freedom to seek. It is written of la Rebelle herself: "Elle n'est plus Josanne Valentin; elle est la femme devant l'homme," and she returns to elemental instincts in the embrace of her lover. If it is all to end thus, why so much ado?

Some points of comparison with George Sand have been indicated. In both are found the passionate rebel, the socialist and the lover of picturesque landscape with its humble toilers. It may be hoped that this new titan, like her predecessor, will abandon theses, and choose definitely to portray character without bias and present new corners of Limousin.*

---

*It is a pleasure to thank my colleagues, Professor Casis and Miss Hubbard for kindly criticism of this essay.