

VOLUME II

NUMBER VIII

THE
CRITERION

A QUARTERLY REVIEW

July 1924

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ART CHRONICLE

BOOKS OF THE QUARTER

FOREIGN REVIEWS

PUBLISHED BY

R. COBDEN-SANDERSON

17 THAVIES INN, LONDON, E.C.1

Three Shillings and Sixpence net.

THE DEATH OF ALBERTINE

By MARCEL PROUST

I FORSOOK all pride with regard to Albertine ; I sent her a despairing telegram, begging her to return upon any conditions, telling her that she might do anything she liked, that I asked only to be allowed to take her in my arms for a minute three times a week, before she went to bed. And had she confined me to once a week I should have accepted the restriction. She did not return. My telegram had just gone to her when I myself received one. It was from Mme. Bontemps. The world is not created once and for all time for each of us individually. There are added to it in the course of our life things of which we have never had any suspicion. Alas ! It was not a suppression of anguish that was produced in me by the first two lines of the telegram : " My poor friend, our little Albertine is no more. Forgive me for breaking this terrible news to you who were so fond of her. She was thrown by her horse against a tree while she was out riding. All our efforts failed to restore her to life. If only I were dead in her place ! " No, not the suppression of anguish, but an anguish till then undreamed-of, that of learning that she would not come back to me. And yet, had I not told myself, more than once, that, quite possibly, she would not come back ? I had told myself so indeed, but I saw now that never for a moment had I believed it. As I needed her presence, her kisses, to enable me to endure the pain that my suspicions wrought in me, I had formed, since our Balbec days, the habit of being always with her. Even when she had gone out, when I was left alone, I was kissing her still.

I had continued to do so since her departure for Touraine. I had less need of her fidelity than of her return. And if my reason might with impunity cast a doubt on her now and again, my imagination never ceased for an instant to bring her before me. Instinctively I passed my hand over my throat, over my lips which felt themselves kissed by hers still after she had gone away and would never be kissed by her again; I passed my hand over them, as Mamma had stroked me at the time of my grandmother's death, saying: "My poor boy, your grandmother, who was so fond of you, will never kiss you any more." All my life to come seemed to have been plucked from my heart. My life to come? I had not then thought, at times, of living it without Albertine? Why, no! All this time had I then vowed to her service every minute of my life until my death? Why, certainly! This future indissolubly blended with hers I had never had the vision to perceive, but now that it had just been shattered, I could feel the place that it occupied in my gaping heart. Françoise, who still knew nothing, came into my room; in a burst of fury I shouted at her: "What's the matter now?" Then (there are sometimes words which set a different reality in the same place as that which confronts us; they stun us as does a sudden fit of giddiness): "Master has no need to look cross. I've got something that will make him very glad. It's two letters from Mademoiselle Albertine." I felt afterwards that I must have looked at her with the eyes of a man whose mind has become unbalanced. I was not actually glad, nor was I incredulous; I was like a person who sees the same place in his room filled by a sofa and by a grotto. Nothing seeming to him more real, he collapses on the ground. Albertine's two letters must have been written at an interval of a few hours, possibly at the same time, and anyhow only a short while before the ride on which she was killed. The first said: "My friend, I must thank you for the proof of your confidence which you give me when you tell me of your plan to get Andrée to stay

with you. I am sure that she will be delighted to accept, and I think that it will be very pleasant for her. With her talents, she will know how to benefit by the companionship of a man like yourself, and by the admirable influence which you manage to secure over people. I feel that you have had an idea from which as much good may spring for her as for yourself. And so, if she should make the least shadow of difficulty (which I don't believe), telegraph to me, I will bring pressure to bear on her." The second was dated the following day. (As a matter of fact, she must have written them at an interval of a few minutes, possibly at the same time, and must have ante-dated the first. For all the time I had been forming an absurd idea of her intentions, which had been only this: to return to me, and which anyone with no direct interest in the matter, a man lacking in imagination, the plenipotentiary in a peace treaty, the merchant who has to examine a deal, would have judged more accurately than myself.) It contained only these words: "Is it too late for me to return to you? If you have not yet written to Andrée, would you be prepared to take me back? I shall abide by your decision, but I beg you not to be long in letting me know it, you can imagine how impatiently I shall be waiting. If it is telling me to return, I shall take the train at once. With my whole heart, Yours, ALBERTINE."

For the death of Albertine to be able to suppress my anguish, the shock of the fall would have had to kill her not only in Touraine but in myself. There, never had she been more alive. In order to enter into us, another person must first have assumed the form, have fitted into the surroundings of the time; appearing to us only in a succession of momentary flashes, he has never been able to furnish us with more than one aspect of himself at a time, to present us with more than a single photograph. A great weakness, no doubt, for a person to consist merely in a collection of moments; a great strength also: it is dependent on memory, and our memory of a moment is not informed of anything that has

passed since this moment which it has registered, endures still, lives still, and with it lives the person whose form appears in it. And besides, this disintegration does not only make the dead live, it multiplies him. To find consolation, it would not have been one Albertine that I must first forget. When I had succeeded in making myself bear the grief of losing her, I must begin afresh with another, with a hundred more.

So, then, my life was entirely altered. What had furnished—and not owing to Albertine, concurrently with her, when I was by myself—its pleasantness was precisely, at the prompting of identical moments, the resurgence of moments from the past. By the sound of rain was brought back to me the scent of the Combray lilacs, by the shifting of the sun's rays on the balcony the Champs-Élysées pigeons, by the deadening of sounds in the heat of the morning hours the cool taste of cherries, the desire for Brittany or Venice by the sound of the wind and the return of Easter. Summer came, the days were long, the weather warm. It was the season when, early in the morning, pupils and their masters go into the public gardens to prepare for their final examinations under the trees, seeking to gather the sole drop of coolness that is let fall by a sky less ardent than in the heat of the day, but already as sterilely pure. From my darkened room, with a power of evocation equal to that of former days but capable now of evoking only pain, I felt that outside, in the heaviness of the air, the setting sun was plastering the vertical sides of houses and churches with a tawny distemper. And if Françoise, coming in, disarranged unintentionally the folds of the big curtains, I stifled a cry at the gash that was cut in my heart by that ray of old sunlight which had made beautiful in my eyes the modern front of Bricqueville-l'Orgueilleuse, when Albertine said to me: "It is restored." Not knowing how to account to Françoise for my sigh, I said to her: "Oh, I am thirsty." She left the room, came back, but I turned sharply away, smarting under the painful dis-

charge of one of the thousand invisible memories which at every moment broke from the surrounding gloom: I had noticed that she had brought in cider and cherries, which were what a farm-lad had brought to us in the carriage, at Balbec; "kinds" in which I should have made the most perfect communion before, in the rainbow light of shuttered dining-rooms on scorching days. Then I thought for the first time of the farm called Les Ecorres, and said to myself that on certain days when Albertine had told me, at Balbec, that she would not be free, that she was obliged to go out with her aunt, she had perhaps been with one or other of her girl friends at a farm to which she knew that I was not in the habit of going, and where, while I waited desperately for her at Marie-Antoinette, where they told me: "No, we have not seen her to-day," she had been using, to her friend, the same words that she used with me when we went out together: "He will never think of coming to look for us here, so there's no fear of our being disturbed." I told Françoise to draw the curtains close again, so that I should not see the ray of sunlight. But it continued to filter through, just as corrosive, into my memory. "I don't like it; it's been restored, but we'll go to-morrow to Saint-Martin-le-Vêtu, and the day after to . . ." To-morrow, the day after, it is a future of life held in common, perhaps for all time, that is beginning; my heart leaps towards it, but it is no longer there; Albertine is dead.

I asked Françoise the time. Six o'clock. At last, thank God, was about to be lifted that oppressive heat of which, in days gone by, I had complained with Albertine and which we had both so loved. The day drew to an end. But what did that profit me? The coolness of evening rose, it was the sun setting in my memory at the end of a road which we had taken, she and I, on our way home, that I saw now, farther than the last village, like some distant town not to be reached that night which we must spend at Balbec, always together. Together then; now I must stop short on the

edge of that same abyss: she was dead. It was no longer enough to draw the curtains, I must stop the eyes and ears of my memory so as not to see that band of orange in the western sky, so as not to hear those invisible birds responding from one tree to the next on either side of me who was embracing then so tenderly her who now was dead. I tried to avoid those sensations that are given us by the dampness of leaves in the evening air, the steep rise and fall of mountain paths. But already those sensations had gripped me, carried back far enough from the present moment for there to have gathered all the recoil, all the spring necessary to strike me to the heart afresh the idea that Albertine was dead. Ah! Never again should I enter a forest, I should stroll no more beneath the spreading trees. But would the broad plains be less cruel to me? How many times had I crossed, going in search of Albertine, how many times had I taken, on my return with her, the great plain of Cricqueville, now in thick weather when the flooding fog gave us the illusion of being surrounded by a vast lake, now on limpid evenings when the moonlight, dematerialising the earth, made it appear, a yard away, celestial, as it is, in day-time, only on far horizons, enshrined the fields, the woods, with the firmament to which it had assimilated them, in the moss-agate of a universal blue.

Françoise was bound to be glad of Albertine's death, and it should, in justice to her, be said that by a sort of tactful convention she made no pretence of sorrow. But the unwritten laws of her immemorial code and the tradition of a mediæval peasant that floated over her as it floats over the romances of chivalry were older than her hatred of Albertine and even of Eulalie. And so, on one of these late afternoons, as I was not quick enough in concealing my distress, she caught sight of my tears, served by the instinct of a little old peasant woman which at one time had led her to catch and torture animals, to feel only amusement in wringing the necks of poultry and boiling lobsters alive, and, when I was ill, in observing, as it might be the wounds she had inflicted

on an owl, my suffering expression which she afterwards proclaimed in a sepulchral tone and as a presage of coming disaster. But her Combray "Customary" did not permit her to treat lightly tears, grief, things which in her judgment were as fatal as shedding one's flannels or eating without any "stomach" for one's food. "Oh no, Master, it doesn't do to cry like that, it isn't good for you." And in seeking to stem my tears she showed as much uneasiness as though they had been rivers of blood. Unfortunately, I adopted a chilly air that cut short the effusions in which she was hoping to indulge, and which might quite well, for that matter, have been sincere. Her feeling towards Albertine had been, perhaps, like her feeling towards Eulalie, and now that my friend could no longer derive from me any profit, Françoise may have ceased to hate her. She felt bound, however, to show me that she was perfectly well aware that I was crying, only, following the deplorable example set by my family, I did not want to "let it show." "You mustn't cry, Master," she adjured me, in a calmer tone this time, and to prove her clairvoyance rather than to show me any compassion. And she went on: "It was bound to happen; she was too happy, poor thing; she never knew how happy she was."

How slow the day is in dying on these interminable summer evenings. A pallid ghost of the house opposite continued indefinitely to sketch upon the sky its persistent whiteness. At last it was dark indoors; I stumbled against the furniture in the hall, but in the door on to the staircase, in the middle of the blackness which I had believed to be total, the glazed part was translucent and blue, with the blue of a flower, the blue of an insect's wing, a blue that would have seemed to me beautiful if I had not felt it to be a last reflexion, trenchant as a blade of steel, a supreme blow which, in its indefatigable cruelty, was still launched at me by the day. In the end, however, complete darkness came; but then a glimpse of a star by the side of a tree in the courtyard was enough to remind me of how we used to start out in a carriage, after

dinner, for the woods of Chantepie, carpeted with moonlight. And even in the streets it would so happen that I could isolate upon the back of a bench, could gather there the natural purity of a moonbeam in the midst of the artificial lights of Paris, of that Paris over which it enthroned, by making the town return for a moment in my imagination to a state of nature, with the infinite silence of the suggested fields, the heart-rending memory of the walks that I had taken in them with Albertine. Ah! When would night finish? But at the first chill breath of dawn I shuddered, for it had revived in me the sweetness of that summer in which, from Balbec to Incarville, from Incarville to Balbec, we had so many times escorted each other home until the break of day. I had now only one hope for the future—a hope far more heart-rending than any dread—which was that I might forget Albertine. I knew that I should forget her one day; I had quite forgotten Gilberte, Mme. de Guermantes; I had quite forgotten my grandmother. And it is our most fitting and most cruel punishment for that so complete oblivion, as tranquil as the oblivion of the graveyard, by which we have detached ourselves from those whom we no longer love that we can see the same oblivion to be inevitable in the case of those whom we love still. To tell the truth, we know it to be a state not painful, a state of indifference. But not being able to think at the same time of what I was and of what I should one day be, I thought with despair of all that covering mantle of caresses, of kisses, of friendly slumber, of which I must now let myself be divested for all time. The rush of these tender memories sweeping on to break against the idea that she was dead oppressed me by the incessant conflict of their baffled waves so that I could not keep still; I rose; but suddenly I stopped in consternation; the same faint daybreak that I used to see at the moment when I had just left Albertine and was still radiant and warm with her kisses had come into the room, and bared, above the curtains, its blade, now a sinister portent, whose whiteness, cold, im-

placable and compact, thrust itself like a dagger into my heart.

Presently the street noises would begin, enabling me to read from the qualitative scale of their sonorities the degree of the steadily increasing heat in which they were sounding. But in this heat which, a few hours later, would have saturated itself in the odour of cherries, what I found (like a medicine which the substitution of one ingredient for another is sufficient to transform from the stimulant and tonic that it was into a debilitating drug) was no longer the desire for women but the anguish of Albertine's departure. Besides, the memory of all my desires was as much impregnated with her, and with suffering, as the memory of my pleasures. That Venice where I had thought that her presence would be a nuisance (doubtless because I had felt confusedly that it would be necessary) to me, now that Albertine was no more I preferred not to go there. Albertine had seemed to me to be an obstacle interposed between me and everything else, because she was for me their container and it was from her as from an urn that I might receive them. Now that this urn was shattered, I no longer felt that I had the courage to grasp them, there was not one now from which I did not turn away spiritless, preferring not to taste it. So that my separation from her did not in the least throw open to me the field of potential pleasures which I had imagined to be closed to me by her presence. Besides, the obstacle which her presence had perhaps indeed been in the way of my travelling, of my enjoying life, had only (as always happens) been a mask for other obstacles which reappeared intact now that this first had disappeared. It had been in the same way that, long ago, when any friend came to see me and prevented me from working, if on the following day I was left undisturbed, I did not work any better. Let an illness, a duel, a runaway horse make us see death face to face, how richly we should have enjoyed the life of pleasure, the travels in unknown lands which are about to be snatched

from us. And no sooner is the danger past than what we find once again before us is the same dull life in which none of these delights had any existence for us.

No doubt these nights which are so short continue but for a brief season. Winter would at length return, when I should no longer have to dread the memory of walks with her, protracted until a too early dawn. But the first frosts, would not they bring back to me, preserved in their ice, the germ of my first desires when at midnight I used to summon her to me, when the time seemed so long until I heard her ring my bell, a sound for which I might now wait everlastingly in vain? Would they not bring back to me the germ of my first uneasiness, when, twice over, I was afraid that she would not come? At that time I saw her only rarely, but even those intervals that there were between her visits, making Albertine emerge, at the end of several weeks, from the heart of an unknown life which I made no effort to possess, ensured my peace of mind by preventing the first inklings, constantly interrupted, of my jealousy from coagulating, from forming a solid mass in my heart. So far as they had contrived to be soothing, at that earlier time, so far, in retrospect, were they stamped with the mark of suffering, since all the unaccountable things that she might, while they lasted, have been doing had ceased to be immaterial to me, and especially now that no visit from her would ever fall to my lot again; so that those January evenings on which she used to come, and which, for that reason, had been so dear to me, would blow into me now with their biting winds an uneasiness which then I did not know, and would bring back to me (but now grown pernicious) the first germ of my love, preserved by their frozen breath. And when I thought that I should see begin again that cold season which since Gilberte and my games in the Champs-Élysées had always seemed to me so depressing; when I thought that there would be coming again evenings like that evening of snow when I had vainly, far into the night, waited for Albertine to come; then,

like a consumptive choosing the best climate, from the point of view of his body, for his lungs, but in my case making a moral choice, what at such moments I dreaded most for my grief, for my heart, was the return of the great cold, and I said to myself that what it would be hardest to live through was, perhaps, the winter. Bound up as it was with all the seasons, in order for me to lose the memory of Albertine I should have had first to forget them all, prepared to begin again to learn to know them, as an old man after a stroke of paralysis learns again to read; I should have had first to forfeit the entire universe. Only, I told myself, an actual death of myself would be capable (but that was impossible) of consoling me for hers. I did not realise that the death of oneself is neither impossible nor extraordinary. It is effected without our knowledge, it may be against our will, every day of our lives. And I should suffer from the recurrence of all sorts of days which not nature alone but adventitious circumstances, a purely conventional arrangement, introduce into a season. Presently would return the date on which I had gone to Balbec that other summer when my love, which was not yet inseparable from jealousy and did not perplex itself with the problem of what Albertine could be doing all day, had to pass through so many evolutions before becoming that so different love of the last period, that this final year, in which Albertine's destiny had begun to change and had received its quietus, appeared to me full, multiform, vast, like a whole century. Then it would be the memory of days more slow to recur but from still earlier years; on Sundays of bad weather on which nevertheless everyone else had left the house, in the void of the afternoon when the sound of wind and rain would have bidden me at that time to stay at home, the "philosopher in his garret," with what anxiety should I see approach the hour at which Albertine, so little expected, had come to see me, had fondled me for the first time, breaking off because Françoise had come in with the lamp, at that time now doubly dead when it had

been Albertine who was interested in me, when my affection for her might legitimately nourish so strong a hope. Even at an earlier season, on those glorious evenings when kitchens, girls'-schools, open to the view like wayside shrines, bathed in a golden dust, allow the street to crown itself with a garland of those demi-goddesses who conversing, ever so close to us, with their peers, fill us with a feverish longing to penetrate into their mythological existence; these recalled to me nothing now but the affection of Albertine, who walking by my side, was an obstacle in the way of my approaching them.

Moreover, to the memory even of hours that were purely natural would be added of necessity the moral landscape which makes of each of them a thing apart. When I should hear, later on, the goat-herd's horn, on a first fine, almost Italian morning, the day that followed would blend successively in its sunlight the anxiety of knowing that Albertine was at the Trocadéro possibly with Léa and the two girls, then the kindly, domestic sweetness, almost that of a wife who seemed to me then an embarrassment and whom Françoise was bringing back to me. That telephone message from Françoise which had conveyed to me the dutiful obedience of an Albertine who was returning with her, I had thought at the time that it made me swell with pride. I was mistaken. If it had exhilarated me, that was because it had made me feel that she whom I loved was really mine, lived only for me, and even at a distance, without my needing to occupy my mind with her, regarded me as her lord and master, returning home upon a sign from myself. And so that telephone message had been a particle of sweetness, coming to me from afar, sent out from that region of the Trocadéro where there happened to be for me sources of happiness, directing towards me molecules of comfort, soothing balms, restoring to me at length so sweet a liberty of spirit that I need do no more, surrendering myself without the restriction of a single care to Wagner's music, than await

the certain arrival of Albertine, without fever, with an entire absence of impatience in which I had not had the perspicacity to discern true happiness. And this happiness that she should return, that she should obey me and be mine, the cause of it lay in love and not in pride. It would have been quite immaterial to me now to have at my command fifty women returning, upon a sign from myself, not from the Trocadéro but from the Indies. But that day, listening for Albertine, who, while I sat alone in my room playing music, was coming dutifully to me, I had breathed in, where it lay scattered like notes in a sunbeam, one of those substances which, just as others are salutary to the body, do good to the soul. Then there had been, half an hour later, Albertine's coming, then the drive with Albertine come, a drive which I had thought tedious because it was accompanied for me by certainty. But this very certainty had, from the moment of Françoise's telephoning to me that she was bringing Albertine back, let flow a golden calm into the hours that followed, had made of them as it were a second day, wholly unlike the first because it had quite a different moral basis, which made of it an original day coming to increase the variety of the days that I had known until then, a day which I should never have been able to imagine any more than we could imagine the delicious idleness of a day in summer if such days did not exist in the series of those that we had lived, a day of which I could not say absolutely that I recalled it, for to this calm I added now an anguish which I had not felt then. But at a much later date, when I went over gradually in a reversed order the times through which I had passed before being so much in love with Albertine, when my scarred heart could detach itself without suffering from Albertine dead; then, when I could recall at length without suffering that day on which Albertine had gone on errands with Françoise instead of remaining at the Trocadéro, I recalled it with pleasure, that day belonging to a moral season which I had not known until then, I recalled it at length exactly, without

adding to it now any suffering, rather, on the contrary, as one recalls certain days in summer which one found too hot while they lasted, and from which only after they are gone does one extract their unalloyed standard of fixed gold and imperishable azure.

* * *

With the result that these several years not only imposed on the memory of Albertine, which made them so painful, the successive colouring, the different modulations of their seasons or of their hours, from long afternoons in June to winter evenings, from seas by moonlight to dawns that broke as one took one's homeward way, from snow in Paris to fallen leaves at Saint-Cloud ; there were also each of the particular ideas of Albertine that I successively formed, the bodily aspect in which I pictured her at each of those moments, the degree of frequency with which I had seen her during that season, which itself appeared consequently more or less dispersed or compact, the anxieties which she might have caused me by keeping me waiting, the attraction which I had at a given moment for her, hopes formed then blasted ; all of these modified the character of my retrospective sorrow fully as much as the impressions of light or scents which were associated with it, and completed each of the solar years through which I had lived and which were already, with all their springs, their trees, their skies, so sad because of the indissociable memory of her, complemented each of them with a sort of sentimental year in which the hours were defined, not by the sun's position, but by the strain of waiting for a tryst, in which the length of the days, the increase of the temperature were determined not by the seasons but by the soaring flight of my hopes, the progress of our intimacy, the gradual transformation of her face, the travels on which she had gone, the frequency and style of the letters which she had written me during her absence, her more or less precipitate eagerness to see me on her return. And, lastly, if these changes of season, if these different days ren-

dered to me each a fresh Albertine, it was not only by the suggestion of corresponding moments. The reader will remember that always, even before I had begun to be in love, each day had made of me a different person, swayed by other desires because he had other perceptions, a person who, just as he had dreamed only of cliffs and tempests overnight, if the indiscreet spring dawn had distilled a scent of roses through the ill-fitting portals of his house of sleep, would awake alert to start for Italy. Even in my love, had not the changing state of my moral atmosphere, the varying pressure of my beliefs, had they not one day diminished the visibility of the love that I was feeling, had they not another day extended it beyond all bounds, one day sweetened it to a smile, another contracted it to a storm. One exists only by virtue of what one possesses, one possesses only what is really present to one, and so many of our memories, of our humours, of our ideas set out to voyage far away from us, until they are lost to sight. Then we can no longer make them enter into our reckoning of the total which is our personality. But they know of secret paths by which to return to us. And on certain nights, having gone to sleep almost without regretting Albertine—one can regret only what one recalls—on awaking I found a whole fleet of memories that had come to cruise upon the surface of my clearest consciousness, which I found marvellously distinct. Then I wept for what I could see so plainly, for what overnight had been to me but nothing at all. Albertine's name, her death had changed in meaning; her betrayals had suddenly resumed all their old importance.

How could she seem dead to me when now, in order to think of her, I had at my disposal only the same images of which, when she was alive, I would see again one or another, each one associated with a particular moment? Visible in turn, now rapid and bowed above the mystic wheel of her bicycle, as she appeared on rainy days in the waterproof tunic which showed her breasts swelling beneath an amazonian cuirass, while snakes writhed in her hair, or again, on the evenings

on which we had taken champagne with us to the Chantepie woods, her voice provoking, altered, with that pallid warmth, colouring only over her cheekbones, so much so that, barely able in the darkness of the carriage to see her, I could make out only a phantom in the moonlight, whom I tried now in vain to recapture and to see again in a darkness that would never end ; a little statuette as we drove to the island ; large, with a grained skin, by the pianola, such was she now in turn, rain-soaked and swift, provoking and diaphanous, motionless and smiling, an angel of music. So that what would have had to be obliterated in me was not one only, but countless Albertines. Each was attached to a moment to the date of which I found myself carried back when I saw again that particular Albertine. And the moments of the past do not remain still ; they keep in our memory the motion which drew them towards the future—a future now become itself, too, a past—and draw us in their train. Never had I caressed the waterproofed Albertine of the rainy days ; I wanted to ask her to divest herself of that armour ; that would be to know with her the love of the tented field, the brotherhood of travel. But this was no longer possible, she was dead. Never either, for fear of corrupting her, had I shown any sign of comprehension on the evenings when she seemed to be offering me pleasures which, but for that restraint, she would not perhaps have sought from others, and which excited in me now a frenzied desire. I should not have found them the same in any other, but her who would fain have given me them I might scour the whole world now without encountering, for Albertine was dead. It seemed that I had to choose between two sets of facts, to decide which was the truth, so far was the fact of Albertine's death—arising for me from a reality which I had not known : her life in Touraine—in contradiction with all my thoughts of her, my desires, my regrets, my tenderness, my rage, my jealousy. So great a wealth of memories, borrowed from the treasury of her life, such a profusion of sentiments, evok-

ing, implicating her life, seemed to make it unbelievable that Albertine could be dead. Such a profusion of sentiments, for my memory, while preserving my affection, left to it all its variety. It was not Albertine alone that was simply a succession of moments; it was also myself. My love for her had not been single. To a curious interest in the unknown had been added a sensual desire, and, to a sentiment of an almost conjugal quietness, at one moment indifference, at another a jealous fury. I was not a single man, but the steady advance, hour after hour, of an army in close formation, in which there appeared, according to the moment, impassioned men, indifferent men, jealous men—jealous men among whom no two were moved to jealousy by the same woman. And no doubt it would be from here that one day would come the healing which I should not expect. In a composite mass the elements can one by one, without our noticing it, be replaced by others, which others again eliminate or reinforce, until in the end a change has been brought about which would be inconceivable if the composite mass were uniform. The complexity of my love, of my person, multiplied, diversified my sufferings. And yet they could always be ranged beneath the two headings, the option between which had made up the whole life of my love for Albertine, alternately swayed by trust and by jealous suspicions. These suspicions became at times so tormenting that I begged Aimé, who was still working in Paris, to go down to Balbec and to inquire into the life that Albertine had led there. He promised to arrange for a holiday at the end of the month, and I made over to him two thousand francs for the journey.

If I had found it difficult to imagine that Albertine, so vitally alive in me, was dead, perhaps it was equally paradoxical in me, wearing as I did the double harness of the present and the past, that Albertine, whom I knew to be dead, could still excite my jealousy, and that this suspicion of misdeeds of which Albertine, stripped now of the flesh that had rejoiced in them, of the mind that had been

able to desire them, was no longer capable, nor responsible for them, should excite in me so keen a suffering that I should only have blessed them could I have seen in those misdeeds a pledge of the moral reality of a person materially non-existent, in place of the reflexion, destined itself too to fade, of impressions which she had made on me long ago. A woman who could no longer taste any pleasure with other people ought not any longer to have excited my jealousy if only my affection had been able to come to the surface. But this was just what was impossible, since it could not find its object, Albertine, save among memories in which she was still alive. Since, merely by thinking of her, I brought her back to life, her betrayals could never be those of a dead woman; the moments at which she had been guilty of them becoming the present moment, not only for Albertine but for that one of my various selves, suddenly brought to light, who was regarding her. So that no anachronism could ever separate the indissoluble couple, in which to each fresh culprit was immediately mated a jealous lover, pitiable and always contemporaneous. I had in the last months kept her confined in my own house. But in my imagination now Albertine was free, she abused her freedom, prostituted herself to this friend or to that. Before, I used constantly to dream of the future that was unfolding itself before me, I endeavoured to read its story. And now what lay before me like a counterpart of the future—as absorbing as a future because it was equally uncertain, as difficult to decipher, as mysterious, more cruel still because I had not, as with the future, the possibility or the illusion of influencing it, and also because it unrolled itself to the full measure of my own life without my companion's being present to soothe the anguish that it caused me—was no longer Albertine's future; it was her past. Her past? That is the wrong word, since for jealousy there can be neither past nor future, and what it imagines is invariably the Present.

Atmospheric changes, provoking other changes in the body

of man, awoken forgotten variants of himself, upset the somnolent course of habit, restore their old force to certain memories, to certain sufferings ; how much the more so with me if this changed spell of weather recalled to me that in which Albertine used at Balbec, under threatening rain it might be, to set out, heaven knew why, on long rides, in the clinging mail of her waterproof. If she had lived, no doubt to-day, in weather so similar as this, she would be setting out, in Touraine, upon a corresponding expedition. Since she could do so no longer, I ought not to have been pained by the thought, but, as with amputated cripples, the least change in the weather revived my pains in the member that had ceased, now, to belong to me.

(Translated by C. K. SCOTT MONCRIEFF.)