

Solitude.

It is seldom profitable for the student of mental science to turn from the study of the living human book to the idealizations of the romancist; but occasionally creative genius places before us a type of character which, whether a delineation of an actual prototype or a mere conception of the fancy, it is well to closely examine. Such a character is the "Berger" of Jules de Glouvet.

Solitary confinement in dungeons, the silence of the monastic cell, the human waif languishing years on a sea-girt rock, and he who finds no fellowship but only faces—faces in the crowds of cities are all different examples of lonely individuals—and the effect of such environment has been described by various authors with varying degrees of skill, but Jules de Glouvet is, perhaps, the first who, with all the painful minuteness of the old Dutch school of painting, has traced the effect of solitude, from the cradle to old age, upon a peculiar but strong uneducated mind, and has shown with elaborate skill the forces moulding it. His gaunt, taciturn shepherd is placed in a somewhat similar position to man in his natural state. Like primitive man, he hears voices in the storm, articulate whispers in the leaves, and makes a mystery of natural phenomena. "In that intense life sun-born out of the hot earth, so many imperceptible beings multiplied, rustled, hummed; so many bodies unperceived crawled on bark or root; so many voices rose from hidden places. Between grains of sand secret passages were discovered, and within the cast-off garments—the skins of little centipedes. Such are what excited the infantile mind of little André. He, the solitary one, felt millions of living beings around him, beneath the earth, in the air, around the slender fibres of moss. The less he saw the more he believed in the myriad invisible, and when the north wind blew over the land he saw in the waving blades the steps of *those* who had just passed." His early years passing with his father, a shepherd learned in sheep craft, and with a strong belief in the virtues of plants, and living on the wild moor, the boy is strangely taciturn, but at the same time a keen observer.

His first great mental shock is the death of his father from hydrophobia; from that time he hates the very sight of a dog.

André Fleuse is now alone on earth.

The next event is his encounter with woman. Uncouth, silent, unsociable, yet André seeks a shepherd's place at a neighbouring farm, and for the first time is brought into proximity with youthful women. He sees the "*vachere*," a girl 20 years old, active, smiling, red-cheeked, with her sleeves tucked up, her gown pinned back, the look free, the throat full. She tripped along daintily. Her chestnut hair escaped in disorder from beneath her head-dress. "And along the wall, broken by the corner of the cupboard, her rounded shadow moved. Locks of her hair were also shadowed on the wall like bind-weed tendrils." The farmer's wife, also still young, was there. "André did not know if these women were beautiful, for he had no notion of beauty; but he experienced at their sight an intense and entirely new sensation—the mistress excited his curiosity, the servant his attention. He considered first the one, then the other, and found the last most pleasant to the eyes." He cannot forget this maiden; he dreams of her at night, or lies awake thinking of her, and comes to the conclusion that he is bewitched. "The shepherd remained several months in this sore discomfort. Isolation and silence had made him fearful and suspicious. Far from finding, like all young people, joy in relaxation, this young fellow of 25 was weighted with the burden of unconfessed chimeras; he walked with head low, ever ready to take offence. His own kind worried him, laughter annoyed him. It was henceforth a difficult task for him to collect two ideas, and extreme labour to emit the sound of a single sentence. In entering into the house he felt they spoke of him; nothing rendered him more morose than the spectacle of gaiety, raillery, and incomprehensible noisy fun."

One day a heavy sudden storm drives the *vachere* to take refuge in the stable. "She was then in his house, the *vachere* with the glossy skin. He shivered. At first a mysterious fear paralyzed him; he endeavoured to retrace his steps. But—it was *the charm*, no doubt—fear first stopped and then led him. Although his breath became quick, his walk was hurried, and without knowing how, he arrived behind the shed, having furtively made a detour in order not to be perceived. Renotte thought herself alone. She turned a trough upside down, sat upon it, and watched, for form sake, her flock browsing quietly in an old clover field, and knitting, sang as she knitted.

Flouse, separated from her by the narrow front, looked

her in the face. He did not show his head. No, nothing but an eye to the right of a broken stone, and observed her at his will eagerly for the first time. His forehead was covered with sweat under the rain, his hands trembled a little. Instinct urged him on, and the influence of the surroundings made him sensitive to his instincts. Fear oppressed him less in this solitude, and his animal activities spoke louder in the shadow of his own wall, in his stable, in his own atmosphere." He put one of his arms behind him; something warm and unctuous passed slowly over his hand. He turned suddenly with upraised arm. It was Matinal, his dog, an animal he had always a horror of. He kicks the dog away.

"At the same time the contact of the warm tongue had lit a fire in his veins. Overcome by violent sensations, bestially impelled, he marched straight to the shed, right up to Renotte. The girl is astonished, but smiles.

"'Pardi,' she says, 'it is our shepherd. He is going to scold me for entering like this into his sheep pen.'"

He answers not. His throat was burning, his teeth set. The girl, who was a gossip, went on, observing nothing—

"'Have you been sent by mistress? I am waiting for the end of the shower—it pours so.'"

The man looked at her. His eyes fixed themselves on the rapid movement of her fingers while she knitted. His gaze wandered over her from top to toe. . . . He endeavoured to address a word, to stammer something to her, but could only utter a hoarse sigh. He suddenly stooped, like an animal, and seized her in his hairy arms.

Renotte, accustomed to the horse play of the rustics, struggled and cuffed him without much anger; but as he pressed her with greater violence she became cross, turned her head towards him, and met his gaze. Immediately she was seized with a sudden terror—this man, with set mouth, had the look of a madman. She desperately struck at him; he smiled a painful grimace with the open mouth of a hungry animal. She twisted herself, crying under the pressure; his inexorable arms ever enlaced her. She felt herself lost.

"'Malheureux!' said she, feigning consent, 'I hear my master calling me. Hark!'"

The shepherd's ears buzzed so that he also thought that he heard something.

"'Wait at least until I shut the door.'"

Curious and panting he loosens his hold.

Thanks to the ruse she escapes, and from this day the shepherd relapsed into his wild state. His father had caressed a dog, the dog had bit, and had given him his death; he had wished to caress a woman, the woman had bit, after her manner. Dogs and women were from henceforth equally odious. He had to support a dog because of his duties, but he carefully avoided woman. He soon returns to the isolation of his dilapidated and native home, and contracts a habit of speaking to himself. "Not that he holds with himself long discourse. No. But he endeavours to unravel one idea from another in the mists of his brain, and then in order to see it clearly seeks a word which can express its image. This word he pronounces aloud, in order to better comprehend it. Sometimes his words were overheard. His rare utterances, thrown into the midst of the immense silence, had no sense for other than him. The simple folk suspected him of communion with invisible beings. They thought he had the gift of prophecy; words followed by no connecting events were forgotten, but those which seemed to be followed by events were remembered. One day, recalling to mind Renotte and the burning sensation he had at her touch, he murmured, "The fire," and a moment afterwards he added, shivering, "The fire—at the supper hour." The overseer of the mill happened to overhear this, and six weeks afterwards a cart-load of hay getting on fire in the mill-yard while the millers supped was supposed to fulfil the prophecy. "The physical life that he led, his floating superstitions, the strange emotions of his past, his habitual state of fasting, predisposed him to unconscious exaltation. He reasoned not on the matter, but at length felt himself more drawn to the unknown, which attracted him, than to his kind, whom he loved not. He finished by discovering movements and forms in shadows which others passed without seeing. He had hallucinations, he saw visions. Credulous as the rest, he believed them when they talked of him; he listened in the space in which the supernatural speaks to simple souls and heard it. The people made him see by telling him that he had seen, and by telling him he had understood he thought he had done so. Led by his confused aspirations, he turned his back on his kind, went as far as he could into the entrails of nature, found himself alone, felt himself upon an eminence. His wildness increased—he thought he had *le don*."

Genius may go for forty days into the wilderness, and underneath the stars develop high thoughts; but enduring solitude, and especially the solitude of the young, tends to the production of morbid fancies, to self-exaltation, or to depression. The communion of the sexes, the music and the strife of tongues, the interchange of thought are necessities of our human natures. Solitary men are either gods, maniacs, or brutes, and it is given to very few indeed to be of the divine order. The weird figure that Jules de Glouvet has contributed to our study is not unknown in a more accentuated degree in asylums. The extreme taciturnity, coupled with evident powers of sensuous observation, the irritation produced when the laughter of others is heard, are symptoms sufficiently familiar. With the rest of the story we have nothing to do—the loves of Langevin and Louise, the murder of the Pere Robine, the dramatic detection by means of “le doigt qui parle,” and the fate of the evil and the good are, in our point of view, merely accessories to the conception of “le grand berger.”

“Le voilà debout, le grand berger. Il a serré le lacet de sa talonnette et montré du doigt les moutons au chien vigilant. Noiraud se frotte contre ses jambes, prêt à partir. Le soleil s'est couché tout pâle et le ciel est noir. Allons, Matinal, amène tes béliers. Déjà le grand berger s'achemine.”

Shall the Statistical Year of Asylums be Altered?

We fully endorse the following remarks of the President (Dr. H. Newington) at the last Quarterly Meeting of the Association:—“There seems to exist in the minds of some superintendents of asylums a fear lest, in consequence of various dates of the asylum year being altered under the Local Government Act, our statistics should have to be furnished, not from January 1 to December 31 as they now are, but to one of two other dates fixed under the Local Government Act. I need hardly say any alteration in our dates for the purposes of statistics would be disastrous. Some people make light of our figures and say they are useless, and no doubt they are useless to the great majority of people, because they use them as bricks, and try to build substantial edifices with them without the use of a due amount of the cement of common sense. But there are