

**HÉLOÏSE AND
ABÉLARD; IN TWO
VOLUMES; VOL. II**

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Héloïse and Abélard; in two Volumes; Vol. II by George Moore

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HÉLOÏSE AND ABÉLARD

CHAP. XXI.

THE ship that brought the twain from Orléans to Tours was still lying alongside the wharf, and it was Denise's project that they should hire it to take herself and Alan back to Nantes, for Abélard had seen a horse in the inn stables that pleased him, and was saying that horses might be dearer at Orléans than at Tours, and that it was not likely that he would see one that pleased him more than a certain bay stallion. A moment after the ostler led the horse into the yard, and Alan whispered that he was a bargain. Abélard sprang into the saddle and rode round the yard, the bay stallion bucking a little, Abélard balancing his long body, his short legs tight about the horse like a girth—a broad, lean man, who sat the bay stallion well, his shoulders square, his hands low down on the horse's withers. The horse bounded across the yard, bucked and bounded again, till, feeling the task to unseat his rider to be hopeless, he suddenly stopped, and stood champing the bit, in a rage. Alan had his hand on one rein and the owner of the horse had his on the other. He bucks in no evil intent, said the horse-dealer; it's only his play. He will not kick again for he has learnt his master, Alan said, returning to Denise, who was anxious that Abélard should not buy so headstrong a brute. Dissuade Abélard! cried Alan; look at him and tell me if his body and mind are not as like as twins, as stubborn one as the other. Alan is quite right, Héloïse answered quickly; were the world searched,

nothing more like his mind would be found than his body. But, like Denise, she was averse from savage animals, and Abélard, to cut a story that was beginning to be a long one, short, rode away waving his hand, saying to himself: everything is settled; protracted farewells may be borne only by those whose hearts are cold. And knowing himself to be already sick with grief at parting from his dear Héloïse, and that his pain would grow worse day by day, he began to think of the book that she wished him to write (the title they had discovered together: *Sic et non*), and rode in meditation of it for her sake, till he caught sight of a tall man walking very quickly in front of him. To pass him by he would have to push his horse into a trot, and he did not do this, for he could not put it out of his mind that he had known somebody who walked with that very gait, somebody whom he had known long ago and intimately. But though he rummaged his memory he failed always at the last moment to recall his former friend, and in his perplexity, as he was about to pass the wayfarer by he drew rein, saying to himself: it cannot be, and yet — He trotted his horse on again and looked back. It is the Comte de Rodebœuf, he said to himself, tramping the road in tatters like any common gleeman, a lute upon his back. The Comte de Rodebœuf himself, or the devil, he said aloud. The Comte de Rodebœuf I am, and maybe on my way to the devil, but whose are the eyes that can see the Comte de Rodebœuf through these sorry rags? The Comte de Rodebœuf's eyes are blinder than mine, Abélard answered, for seemingly he does not know his gleeman of old time, Lucien de Marolle. Lucien de Marolle, Rodebœuf repeated, but I remember him well; my horse found him asleep under a tree, and afterwards we sang and composed together for many months, eighteen months or two years, maybe, I have forgotten which. Abélard replied: my name is now Pierre Abélard. Now a trouvère, the Comte interjected,

ascended from gleeman to trouvère, while I descended from trouvère to gleeman. Sir—— began Abélard, but the Comte, stopping him, said : we are equals, and had distinctions to be indulged in it would be for me to honour thee with plurality ; but I have not forgotten Lucien altogether, so we'll thou and thee each other as wayfarers should. But thy garb is——? Philosophie, Abélard answered. No surprise is that, the Comte answered, for thou wast never without a thought for dialectics, and could put down the lute with pleasure to embarrass a man with subtle reasoning till he found himself in a quandary, and then the spirit of the lute would rise up in thee again and philosophy would be forgotten, Pierre du Pallet. So Pierre du Pallet is now Pierre Abélard, the greatest philosopher since Plato. Which may be true or false, Abélard cried, but it is certain that thou'rt the Comte de Rodebœuf, and it ill befits me to ride beside thee when thou goest on foot. My good Pierre, it is greatly pleasing to me to meet thee in the flutter of thy good fortune, and I pray that it may never leave thee; but unless thy way be mine, we must part, for I have business by yonder hill which may mend my state. But I would come with thee and hear thy story and tell thee mine, and help thee if I may, Abélard rejoined. To help me, the Comte replied, will be an easy task, for thou'rt the best lutanist in the land of France, and my broken fingers cannot touch the strings as they used to in the olden days. Wilt play for me? Of a certainty I will, Abélard said; but are the trees and the clouds our audience? Not so, the Comte answered; but let us hasten our steps and I will tell thee as we march along. There is a coach that ascends that hill-side at sunset, and if we are there before it comes the passengers will distribute largess for our songs. Of a certainty, said Abélard, I will play and sing for thee, but—— Of what thinkest thou? Rodebœuf enquired. Of the horse I am riding, Abélard

replied. Thou'lt leave him at the inn, Rodebœuf answered; a good hostel lies between us and the last hill, and the last half-league we will walk together and wait in the shade of a rock, for there are no trees, till the coach comes into sight. The adventure pleases me greatly, said Abélard, and I shall listen to the story of thy broken fingers, with sorrow, of course. My fingers, my fingers! the Comte cried, thou shalt hear their story when we have collected our pence on yonder hill-side. Ride on in front of me, and when thy horse has been stabled follow the road and find me on the hill-side.

Abélard struck his heels into his horse, forgetful of the animal's temper, and the fight was a stiff one, but Abélard was again the victor, and when he walked out of the inn stables after giving instructions for the care of his horse he caught sight of Rodebœuf coming round the bend in the road, hurrying over the ground as fast as his long legs could carry him, for the Comte de Rodebœuf was a tall, hale man, with a red beard and a pleasing voice that cried: come, come, all the haste we can make is needed. But if we hurry so, Abélard cried, we shall have no breath for song. True, thou art shorter legged than I, and as I do not catch sight of the coach on which my hope is set, let us carry our thoughts back to Erato, the Muse of light song I believe her to be, but thou canst tell me. Abélard was about to reply, but seeing the Comte bent over the dust in search of tracks, he refrained. I see no tracks, and as I gather from the undisturbed dust that we are in time, we would do well to rehearse our little concert. We will sing our old songs if thou hast not forgotten them, said Abélard. Not one have I forgotten—not one of mine nor one of thine. Ten minutes, no more, is needed for rehearsal. To it, he cried, handing Abélard his lute, and as they knew each other's methods from old time an excellent entertainment was ready for the travellers when they appeared. Coin after

coin was thrown to the gleemen, and when the coach horses broke into a trot the Comte de Rodebœuf said: if we could do as well each day as we have done to-day there would be no need to complain of my evil fortune. And I am glad that it is to thee, Pierre, that I owe this little store; to no one would I liefer be indebted. The debt may be paid with thy story, Mathieu, Abélard answered. Let me hear how the great Comte de Rodebœuf lost all his money and estates and became a travelling gleeman.

Thou'lt not believe that such a reversal of fortune could befall me or any man, and of all me, whose life till a few years ago was successful in all things, in the lists, in song and love story. Dost believe in evil powers, Abélard? In the spells of the witches, and the enchantments of magicians, sorcerers, and the like? In devils, of course, for there could not be a hell without devils. But there are evil spirits that are not in hell, and other evils. Who does not believe in the evil eye? And there are gems that bring evil upon those who wear them. The opal is of evil repute, and we shrink from a man who wears one. Worst of all, there are animals that bring evil, as is well known. Men who have been fortunate all their lives become possessed of a certain dog or horse, and from that moment are followed by misfortune and disaster. Birds have always been believed to be the harbingers of good or evil tidings; ravens are a sign of death, magpies cannot be seen separately without danger if we do not turn round three times. These birds are speaking birds, the most dangerous to man, as I know to my cost, and the dealer who sold me Laure knew it, for of a certainty he was of the plot to do me evil; but I know not whether his power was on the bird or the bird's power on him. Let this pass; I bought a grey bird, whose wrinkled eyelid fell over an eye that seemed to know all things. Thou'rt thinking that it would be easy to wring the neck of such a bird,