

**EXPIATION.
TRANSLATED
FROM THE FRENCH**

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Expiation. Translated from the French by Th. Bentzon

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TH. BENTZON

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EXPIATION

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH



NEW YORK
WELCH, FRACKER COMPANY, *Limited*
1889

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AUTHOR'S EDITION

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EXPIATION.

I.

THE Seine in its winding course was sparkling under the last rays of a bright April sun, when a young man stopped on the tow-path in front of the low arched gateway of a house that stood on the river bank not far from Paris. The house was rather commonplace in appearance, and neither elegant nor imposing ; but the lack of architectural ornament was more than supplied by a woodbine that was trained over its front, while at the sides some cherry trees shook their heads, white with their load of blossoms, as if in derision of the big trees in the neighboring park, which were as yet quite bald. The little terraced garden, a

mere basket of hyacinths and violets, was redolent of Spring ; it was filled with the twittering of birds and the buzzing of insects, while a hedge of privet and hawthorn sent its penetrating odor abroad ; altogether it was quite enough to touch the fancy of a young man of twenty.

Bernard—he knew no other than his baptismal name, and we will therefore designate him by that—Bernard was not much beyond this happy age. His face wore an expression of thoughtful gravity, which was tempered by that unspeakable charm of youth that lasts hardly longer than does the down upon the fruit. His complexion was as delicate and as changing as the complexion of a woman. The pallor, that the slightest emotion served to dissipate, the trifling stoop in the tall form, the rather slow and meditative gait, together formed an interesting contrast with the proud energy that was displayed in the glance of his deep, fearless eye. As he took off his hat he disclosed to view a noble forehead, but one on which melancholy had already cast a shade. A light breeze lifted his tawny locks, and the young man stopped to meet its refreshing caress, and, like a city man, to whom a country holiday is a rare event, he drew in with keen

relish, through ears and nostrils, the music and the perfumes of the fields.

For a long time he remained gazing on the river, glowing in the golden light that had been blazing in the western sky, but was now slowly fading. From one of the little willow-fringed islands that dot the bosom of the Seine, pleasant little clumps of trees, where one might expect to see the foliage part and disclose the smiling face of some shy, coquettish Gallic nymph, there came forth a row-boat with two persons in it—a fine-looking young fellow, who handled the oars, and a young girl, of whom all that was plainly distinguishable was a fluttering blue veil, in which the wandering dragon-flies entangled themselves. The sound of their laughter, the chorus of a barcarol, came echoing back from the shore; then, when they had turned a certain point, where they thought they were beyond the reach of inquisitive eyes, their heads gravitated together, the song was no longer heard, and for a second or so, the boat stood motionless under the willows.

A faint tinge of color rose to Bernard's cheeks as he unintentionally witnessed this scene. All the entrancing influences of this brightest time of