

know what is the matter? It seems to you I am ill? I do not want to tell you? Do you say what is the matter with you? You are a good man, but what a hypocrite----

He thinks I do not understand him.

To Irinel I say gently:

"There is nothing the matter, Irinel. But you, are you well?"

And so it went on--nearly a whole year of depression.

Why should I tell you that I grew thinner and paler, that I often shivered, and with secret pleasure, exaggerated a little cough when I walked in the garden with Irinel? You have seen so many thin and pale men, and you have read so many novels in which consumptive lovers either shoot themselves or throw themselves into the sea, so that if I told you that I grew thinner, that I took to playing billiards, that I began to drink, and that once I drank three half bottles in succession, you would only yawn.

There is nothing remarkable in the love and depression of a nervous person. Who would remain, even for an instant, with a man who suffers in silence? And I kept silence from St. Mary's day to St. Peter's.

"What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

"Are you ill?"

"No, uncle; no, dear Irinel."

At last the momentous day arrived! Irinel finished the last year of her education. On the 20th of June she left school for good.

That very day she asked my uncle abruptly to what watering-place we were going, and on hearing came into my room.

Stretched upon my bed, I was reading the wonderful discourse of Cogălniceanu's, printed in front of the "Chronicles." I made up my mind to read law and study literature and history.

When I saw her I jumped up. She whirled round on one foot, and her gown seemed like a big convolvulus; and after this revolution she stopped in front of me, laughing and clapping her hands. She made me a curtsy as she daintily lifted up her skirt on either side between two fingers, and asked me coyly:

"Mon cher cousin, can you guess where we are going to this summer?"

"No, Irinel," I replied, exaggerating the cough which was becoming more and more of a silly habit.

"What will you give me if I tell you?"

And after once more whirling round while her gown swept across my feet, and laughing and clapping, she asked me most sedately:

"Will you kiss my hand with respect, like a grown-up person's, if I tell you?"

"Yes, Irinel."

And the cough again played its part.

"No, you must kiss my hand first."

She held out her hand to me, which I kissed sadly, but with pleasure.

"And now this one!"