



THE RED AND THE BLACK

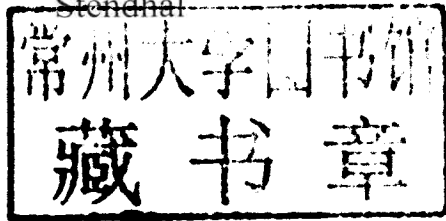
The Red and the Black was a novel ahead of its time.

— André Gide

Stendhal

THE RED AND THE BLACK

Stendhal



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This work was on the point of publication when the great events of July took place and turned every mind in a direction which does not encourage the play of the imagination. We have reason to believe that the following pages were written in 1827.

[Stendhal's note in first French edition]

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE	1
CHAPTER 1 A Small Town.....	3
CHAPTER 2 A Mayor	7
CHAPTER 3 The Bread of the Poor	10
CHAPTER 4 Father and Son	15
CHAPTER 5 Driving a Bargain	19
CHAPTER 6 Dullness	26
CHAPTER 7 Elective Affinities	33
CHAPTER 8 Minor Events	43
CHAPTER 9 An Evening in the Country	50
CHAPTER 10 A Large Heart and a Small Fortune	58
CHAPTER 11 Night Thoughts	61
CHAPTER 12 A Journey	66
CHAPTER 13 Open-work Stockings	72
CHAPTER 14 The English Scissors	77
CHAPTER 15 Cock-crow	80
CHAPTER 16 The Day After	84
CHAPTER 17 The Principal Deputy	88
CHAPTER 18 A King at Verrieres	93
CHAPTER 19 To Think Is to Be Full of Sorrow.....	105
CHAPTER 20 The Anonymous Letters	113
CHAPTER 21 Conversation with a Lord and Master	117
CHAPTER 22 Manners and Customs in 1830	129
CHAPTER 23 The Sorrows of an Official	140
CHAPTER 24 A Capital	153
CHAPTER 25 The Seminary	160
CHAPTER 26 The World, or What the Rich Lack	167
CHAPTER 27 First Experience of Life	176

CHAPTER 28	A Procession.....	180
CHAPTER 29	The First Step	187
CHAPTER 30	Ambition	201

BOOK TWO		217
CHAPTER 1	Country Pleasures	219
CHAPTER 2	First Appearance in Society	229
CHAPTER 3	First Steps	236
CHAPTER 4	The Hotel de La Mole	239
CHAPTER 5	Sensibility and a Pious Lady	250
CHAPTER 6	Pronunciation.....	253
CHAPTER 7	An Attack of Gout	259
CHAPTER 8	What Is the Decoration That Confers Distinction? ...	266
CHAPTER 9	The Ball	275
CHAPTER 10	Queen Marguerite	283
CHAPTER 11	The Tyranny of a Girl	290
CHAPTER 12.	Another Danton	294
CHAPTER 13	A Plot	299
CHAPTER 14	A Girl's Thoughts.....	307
CHAPTER 15	Is It a Plot?	313
CHAPTER 16	One O'clock in the Morning	318
CHAPTER 17	An Old Sword	324
CHAPTER 18	Painful Moments	329
CHAPTER 19	The Opera-Bouffe	334
CHAPTER 20	The Japanese Vase	343
CHAPTER 21	The Secret Note	349
CHAPTER 22	The Discussion.....	354
CHAPTER 23	The Clergy, Their Forests, Liberty	361
CHAPTER 24	Strasbourg	369
CHAPTER 25	The Office of Virtue.....	375
CHAPTER 26	Moral Love	382
CHAPTER 27	The Best Positions in the Church.....	386
CHAPTER 28	Manon Lescaut.....	389
CHAPTER 29	Boredom	393
CHAPTER 30	A Box at the Bouffes	396
CHAPTER 31	Making Her Afraid	400
CHAPTER 32	The Tiger	405

CHAPTER 33	The Torment of the Weak.....	410
CHAPTER 34	A Man of Spirit	415
CHAPTER 35	A Storm	421
CHAPTER 36	Painful Details	426
CHAPTER 37	A Dungeon	433
CHAPTER 38	A Man of Power	437
CHAPTER 39	Intrigue.....	443
CHAPTER 40	Tranquillity	447
CHAPTER 41	The Trial	451
CHAPTER 42	In the Prison.....	457
CHAPTER 43	Last Adieux	462
CHAPTER 44	The Shadow of the Guillotine	467
CHAPTER 45	Exit Julien	474
TO THE HAPPY FEW	480

BOOK ONE

The truth, the harsh truth.

DANTON

CHAPTER 1

A Small Town

Put thousands together
Less bad,
But the cage less gay.

HOBBS

The small town of Verrieres may be regarded as one of the most attractive in the Franche-Comte. Its white houses with their high pitched roofs of red tiles are spread over the slope of a hill, the slightest contours of which are indicated by clumps of sturdy chestnuts. The Doubs runs some hundreds of feet below its fortifications, built in times past by the Spaniards, and now in ruins.

Verrieres is sheltered on the north by a high mountain, a spur of the Jura. The jagged peaks of the Verra put on a mantle of snow in the first cold days of October. A torrent which comes tearing down from the mountain passes through Verrieres before emptying its waters into the Doubs, and supplies power to a great number of sawmills; this is an extremely simple industry, and procures a certain degree of comfort for the majority of the inhabitants, who are of the peasant rather than of the burges class. It is not, however, the sawmills that have made this little town rich. It is to the manufacture of printed calicoes, known as Mulhouse stuffs, that it owes the general prosperity which, since the fall of Napoleon, has led to the refacing of almost all the houses in Verrieres.

No sooner has one entered the town than one is startled by the din of a noisy machine of terrifying aspect. A score of weighty hammers, falling with a clang which makes the pavement tremble, are raised aloft by a wheel which the water of the torrent sets in motion. Each of these hammers turns out, daily, I cannot say how many thousands of nails. A bevy of fresh, pretty girls subject to the blows of these enormous hammers, the little scraps of iron which are rapidly transformed into nails. This work, so rough

to the outward eye, is one of the industries that most astonish the traveller who ventures for the first time among the mountains that divide France from Switzerland. If, on entering Verrieres, the traveller inquires to whom belongs that fine nail factory which deafens everybody who passes up the main street, he will be told in a drawling accent: "Eh! It belongs to the Mayor."

Provided the traveller halts for a few moments in this main street of Verrieres, which runs from the bank of the Doubs nearly to the summit of the hill, it is a hundred to one that he will see a tall man appear, with a busy, important air.

At the sight of him every hat is quickly raised. His hair is turning grey, and he is dressed in grey. He is a companion of several Knight Orders, has a high forehead, an aquiline nose, and on the whole his face is not wanting in a certain regularity: indeed, the first impression formed of it may be that it combines with the dignity of a village mayor that sort of charm which may still be found in a man of forty-eight or fifty. But soon the visitor from Paris is annoyed by a certain air of self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency mingled with a suggestion of limitations and want of originality. One feels, finally, that this man's talent is confined to securing the exact payment of whatever is owed to him and to postponing payment till the last possible moment when he is the debtor.

Such is the Mayor of Verrieres, M. de Renal. Crossing the street with a solemn step, he enters the town hall and passes from the visitor's sight. But, a hundred yards higher up, if the visitor continues his stroll, he will notice a house of quite imposing appearance, and, through the gaps in an iron railing belonging to the house, some splendid gardens. Beyond, there is a line of horizon formed by the hills of Burgundy, which seem to have been created on purpose to delight the eye. This view makes the visitor forget the pestilential atmosphere of small financial interests which was beginning to stifle him.

He is told that this house belongs to M. de Renal. It is to the profits that he has made from his great nail factory that the Mayor of Verrieres is indebted for this fine freestone house which he has just finished building. His family, they say, is Spanish, old, and was or claims to have been established in the country long before Louis XIV conquered it.

Since 1815 he has blushed at his connection with industry: 1815 made him Mayor of Verrieres. The retaining walls that support the various

sections of this splendid garden, which, in a succession of terraces, runs down to the Doubs, are also a reward of M. de Renal's ability as a dealer in iron.

You must not for a moment expect to find in France those picturesque gardens which enclose the manufacturing towns of Germany; Leipsic, Frankfurt, Nuremberg, and the rest. In the Franche-Comte, the more walls a man builds, the more he makes his property bristle with stones piled one above another, the greater title he acquires to the respect of his neighbours. M. de Renal's gardens, honeycombed with walls, are still further admired because he bought, for their weight in gold, certain minute scraps of ground which they cover. For instance that sawmill whose curious position on the bank of the Doubs struck you as you entered Verrieres, and on which you noticed the name "Sorel", inscribed in huge letters on a board which overtops the roof, occupied, six years ago, the ground on which at this moment they are building the wall of the fourth terrace of M. de Renal's gardens.

For all his pride, the Mayor was obliged to make many overtures to old Sorel, a dour and obstinate peasant; he was obliged to pay him in fine golden louis before he would consent to remove his mill elsewhere. As for the "public" lade which supplied power to the saw, M. de Renal, thanks to the influence he wielded in Paris, obtained leave to divert it. This favour was conferred upon him after the 182— elections.

He gave Sorel four acres in exchange for one, five hundred yards lower down by the bank of the Doubs. And, albeit this site was a great deal more advantageous for his trade in planks of firwood, Pere Sorel, as they have begun to call him now that he is rich, contrived to screw out of the impatience and "landowning mania" which animated his neighbour a sum of 6,000 francs.

It is true that this arrangement was adversely criticised by the local wiseacres. On one occasion, it was a Sunday, four years later, M. de Renal, as he walked home from church in his mayoral attire, saw at a distance old Sorel, supported by his three sons, watching him with a smile. That smile cast a destroying ray of light into the Mayor's soul; ever since then he has been thinking that he might have brought about the exchange at less cost to himself.

To win popular esteem at Verrieres, the essential thing is not to adopt (while still building plenty of walls) any plan of construction brought from

Italy by those masons who in spring pass through the gorges of the Jura on their way to Paris. Such an innovation would earn the rash builder an undying reputation of wrong-headedness, and he would be lost forever among the sober and moderate folk who create reputations in the Franche-Comte.

As a matter of fact, these sober folk wield there the most irritating form of "despotism"; it is owing to that vile word that residence in small towns is intolerable to anyone who has lived in that great republic which we call Paris. The tyranny of public opinion (and what an opinion!) is as fatuous in the small towns of France as it is in the United States of America.

CHAPTER 2

A Mayor

Prestige! Sir, is it nothing? To be revered by fools, gaped at by children, envied by the rich and scorned by the wise.

BARNAVE

Fortunately for M. de Renal's reputation as an administrator, a huge retaining wall was required for the public avenue which skirts the hillside a hundred feet above the bed of the Doubs. To this admirable position it is indebted for one of the most picturesque views in France. But, every spring, torrents of rainwater made channels across the avenue, carved deep gullies in it and left it impassable. This nuisance, which affected everybody alike, placed M. de Renal under the fortunate obligation to immortalise his administration by a wall twenty feet in height and seventy or eighty yards long.

The parapet of this wall, to secure which M. de Renal was obliged to make three journeys to Paris, for the Minister of the Interior before last had sworn a deadly enmity to the Verrieres avenue; the parapet of this wall now rises four feet above the ground. And, as though to defy all Ministers past and present, it is being finished off at this moment with slabs of dressed stone.

How often, my thoughts straying back to the ball-rooms of Paris, which I had forsaken overnight, my elbows leaning upon those great blocks of stone of a fine grey with a shade of blue in it, have I swept with my gaze the vale of the Doubs! Over there, on the left bank, are five or six winding valleys, along the folds of which the eye can make out quite plainly a number of little streams. After leaping from rock to rock, they may be seen falling into the Doubs. The sun is extremely hot in these mountains; when it is directly overhead, the traveller's rest is sheltered on this terrace by a row of magnificent planes. Their rapid growth, and handsome foliage of a bluish tint are due to the artificial soil with which the Mayor has filled in the space behind his immense retaining wall, for, despite the opposition

of the town council, he has widened the avenue by more than six feet (although he is an Ultra and I myself a Liberal, I give him credit for it), that is why, in his opinion and in that of M. Valenod, the fortunate governor of the Verrieres poorhouse, this terrace is worthy to be compared with that of Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

For my part, I have only one fault to find with the "Cours de la Fidelite"; one reads this, its official title, in ten or twenty places, on marble slabs which have won M. de Renal yet another Cross; what I should be inclined to condemn in the Cours de la Fidelite is the barbarous manner in which the authorities keep these sturdy plane trees trimmed and pollarded. Instead of suggesting, with their low, rounded, flattened heads, the commonest of kitchen garden vegetables, they would like nothing better than to assume those magnificent forms which one sees them wear in England. But the Mayor's will is despotic, and twice a year every tree belonging to the commune is pitilessly lopped. The Liberals of the place maintain, but they exaggerate, that the hand of the official gardener has grown much more severe since the Reverend Vicar Maslon formed the habit of appropriating the clippings.

This young cleric was sent from Besancon, some years ago, to keep an eye upon the abbe Chelan and certain parish priests of the district. An old Surgeon-Major of the Army of Italy, in retirement at Verrieres, who in his time had been simultaneously, according to the Mayor, a Jacobin and a Bonapartist, actually ventured one day to complain to him of the periodical mutilation of these fine trees.

"I like shade," replied M. de Renal with the touch of arrogance appropriate when one is addressing a surgeon, a member of the Legion of Honour; "I like shade, I have my trees cut so as to give shade, and I do not consider that a tree is made for any other purpose, unless, like the useful walnut, it 'yields a return'."

There you have the great phrase that decides everything at Verrieres: YIELD A RETURN; it by itself represents the habitual thought of more than three fourths of the inhabitants.

"Yielding a return" is the consideration that settles everything in this little town which seemed to you, just now, so attractive. The stranger arriving there, beguiled by the beauty of the cool, deep valleys on every side, imagines at first that the inhabitants are influenced by the idea of

beauty; they are always talking about the beauty of their scenery: no one can deny that they make a great to-do about it; but this is because it attracts a certain number of visitors whose money goes to enrich the innkeepers, and thus, through the channel of the rate-collector, “yields a return” to the town.

It was a fine day in autumn and M. de Renal was strolling along the Cours de la Fidelite, his lady on his arm. While she listened to her husband, who was speaking with an air of gravity, Madame de Renal’s eye was anxiously following the movements of three little boys. The eldest, who might be about eleven, was continually running to the parapet as though about to climb on top. A gentle voice then uttered the name Adolphe, and the child abandoned his ambitious project. Madame de Renal looked like a woman of thirty, but was still extremely pretty.

“He may live to rue the day, that fine gentleman from Paris,” M. de Renal was saying in a tone of annoyance, his cheek paler even than was its wont. “I myself am not entirely without friends at Court...”

But albeit I mean to speak to you of provincial life for two hundred pages, I shall not be so barbarous as to inflict upon you the tedium and all the clever turns of a provincial dialogue.

This fine gentleman from Paris, so odious to the Mayor of Verrieres, was none other than M. Appert, who, a couple of days earlier, had contrived to make his way not only into the prison and the poorhouse of Verrieres, but also into the hospital, administered gratuitously by the Mayor and the principal landowners of the neighbourhood.

“But,” Madame de Renal put in timidly, “what harm can this gentleman from Paris do you, since you provide for the welfare of the poor with the most scrupulous honesty?”

“He has only come to cast blame, and then he’ll go back and have articles put in the Liberal papers.”

“You never read them, my dear.”

“But people tell us about those Jacobin articles; all that distracts us, and hinders us from doing good.^① As for me, I shall never forgive the cure.”

① Author’s footnote: authentic.

CHAPTER 3

The Bread of the Poor

A virtuous priest who does not involve himself in intrigue is a blessing for the village.

FLEURY

It should be explained that the cure of Verrieres, an old man of eighty, but blessed by the keen air of his mountains with an iron character and strength, had the right to visit at any hour of the day the prison, the hospital, and even the poorhouse. It was at six o'clock in the morning precisely that M. Appert, who was armed with an introduction to the cure from Paris, had had the good sense to arrive in an inquisitive little town. He had gone at once to the presbytery.

As he read the letter addressed to him by M. le Marquis de La Mole, a Peer of France, and the wealthiest landowner in the province, the cure Chelan sat lost in thought.

"I am old and liked here," he murmured to himself at length, "they would never dare!" Turning at once to the gentleman from Paris, with eyes in which, despite his great age, there burned that sacred fire which betokens the pleasure of performing a fine action which is slightly dangerous:

"Come with me, sir, and, in the presence of the gaoler and especially of the superintendents of the poorhouse, be so good as not to express any opinion of the things we shall see." M. Appert realised that he had to deal with a man of feeling; he accompanied the venerable cure, visited the prison, the hospital, the poorhouse, asked many questions and, notwithstanding strange answers, did not allow himself to utter the least word of reproach.

This visit lasted for some hours. The cure invited M. Appert to dine with him, but was told that his guest had some letters to write: he did not wish to compromise his kind friend any further. About three o'clock, the gentlemen went back to complete their inspection of the poorhouse, after

which they returned to the prison. There they found the gaoler standing in the doorway; a giant six feet tall, with bandy legs; terror had made his mean face hideous.

“Ah, sir,” he said to the cure, on catching sight of him, “is not this gentleman, that I see with you, M. Appert?”

“What if he is?” said the cure.

“Because yesterday I received the most definite instructions, which the Prefect sent down by a gendarme who had to gallop all night long, not to allow M. Appert into the prison.”

“I declare to you, M. Noiroud,” said the cure, “that this visitor, who is in my company, is M. Appert. Do you admit that I have the right to enter the prison at any hour of the day or night, bringing with me whom I please?”

“Yes, M. le cure,” the gaoler murmured in a subdued tone, lowering his head like a bulldog brought reluctantly to obedience by fear of the stick. “Only, M. le cure, I have a wife and children, if I am reported I shall be dismissed; I have only my place here to live on.”

“I too should be very sorry to lose mine,” replied the worthy cure, in a voice swayed by ever increasing emotion.

“What a difference!” the gaoler answered promptly; “why you, M. le cure, we know that you have an income of 800 livres, a fine place in the sun ...”

Such are the events which, commented upon, exaggerated in twenty different ways, had been arousing for the last two days all the evil passions of the little town of Verrieres. At that moment they were serving as text for the little discussion which M. de Renal was having with his wife. That morning, accompanied by M. Valenod, the governor of the poorhouse, he had gone to the cure’s house, to inform him of their extreme displeasure. M. Chelan was under no one’s protection; he felt the full force of their words.

“Well, gentlemen, I shall be the third parish priest, eighty years of age, to be deprived of his living in this district. I have been here for six and fifty years; I have christened almost all the inhabitants of the town, which was no more than a village when I came. Every day I marry young couples whose grandparents I married long ago. Verrieres is my family; but I said to myself, when I saw the stranger: ‘This man, who has come from Paris, may indeed be a Liberal, there are far too many of them; but what harm can he do to our poor people and our prisoners?’”

The reproaches of M. de Renal, and above all those of M. Valenod, the governor of the poorhouse, becoming more and more bitter: