

**RENÉE  
MAUPERIN**

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Renée Mauperin by Edmond de Goncourt & Jules de Goncourt

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# RENÉE MAUPERIN

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NOTICE.

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"RENÉE MAUPERIN" is more of a novel than any other of the Brothers de Goncourt's works of fiction. It is a somewhat complicated story, the characters in which are studied with great knowledge of the surroundings and the period selected by the authors. For many people, those who prefer analysis to art, this is Messieurs de Goncourt's masterpiece. The authors' object has been to depict a phase of contemporary middle-class life. Their heroine, Renée, the most prominent personage of the story, is a strange girl, half a boy, who has been brought up in the chaste ignorance of virgins, but who has divined life. Spoilt by her father, she has grown upon the dunghill of advanced civilization with an artistic soul and a nervous, refined temperament. She is the most adorable little thing imaginable, she talks slang, she paints and acts, her mind is awake to every form of curiosity, and she is possessed of masculine pride, straightforwardness, and honesty. By her side there is her brother, who is also marvellously true to life: a serious young man, the type of properly regulated ambition, the outcome of the manners and customs which have resulted from Parliamentary rule. He is one of those very sharp fellows who make love to mothers in view of marrying their daughters. Then comes the whole gallery of middle-class folks of either sex, all delineated with one

stroke of the pen, with a delightfully fine touch and without any approach to caricature. These people are enriched and satisfied revolutionists who have become conservatives, and who, of all their hatreds, only retain their animosity for Jesuits and priests. Some chapters of the book are of a comic character attaining to perfection, satirical without violence, extremely true to life. The tragedy begins in the second part of the work. Renée's brother has assumed a noble name in view of furthering his matrimonial plans. But a nobleman of that name is still living, and, having learnt through Renée of her brother's action, he challenges the young man and kills him. Then Renée, horrified by what she has done, slowly dies of heart disease, her distressing agony lasting through nearly one-third of the volume. Never has the approach of death been studied with more painful patience; and one finds here all the authors' literary art, all their power of happy expression employed to depict even the most fleeting tremors of the disease. I know of nothing that is more touching or more terrible.

ÉMILE ZOLA.

# RENÉE MAUPERIN.

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## I.

" You do not like society, mademoiselle ? "

" You will not repeat what I say ? It chokes me. That is the effect the world has upon me. Perhaps it is that I have been unlucky. I have fallen among serious young men, friends of my brother ; young ' text books ' I call them. To the girls I meet I can only talk of the last sermon they have heard, of the last piece of music they have been studying, or of the last dress they have worn ; my conversation with my contemporaries is limited."

" You spend all the year in the country, do you not ? "

" Yes. But we are so close to Paris. Have you seen the new piece at the Opéra-Comique ? Is it pretty ? "

" Yes, mademoiselle, it is charming ; the music is admirably written. All Paris was there the first night. I ought to explain to you that I never go to a play except on a first night."

" Could you believe that the Opéra-Comique is the only theatre to which I am ever taken, besides the Français—and only there when they play a masterpiece. They bore me to extinction those masterpieces ! To think that they will not allow me to go to the Palais-Royal ! But I read all the pieces that are played there, nevertheless. It took