

## Trees, Woods and Literature—6

For indeed, instead of retiring along the shortest line, and gaining the shore of Lake Maggiore, where his boat was awaiting him, he made an enormous circuit to go and visit his tree. The reader may perhaps remember the love that Fabrizio bore for a chestnut tree planted by his mother twenty-three years earlier. "It would be quite worthy of my brother," he said to himself, "to have had the tree cut down; but those creatures are incapable of delicate shades of feeling; he will never have thought of it. And besides, that would not be a bad augury," he added with firmness. Two hours later he was shocked by what he saw; mischief-makers or a storm had broken one of the main branches of the young tree which hung down withered; Fabrizio cut it off reverently, using his dagger, and smoothed the cut carefully, so that the rain should not get inside the trunk. Then, although time was highly precious to him, for day was about to break, he spent a good hour in turning the soil round his dear tree. All these acts of folly accomplished, he went rapidly on his way towards Lake Maggiore. All things considered, he was not at all sad; the tree was coming on well, was more vigorous than ever, and in five years had almost doubled in height. The branch was only an accident of no consequence; once it had been cut off, it did no harm to the tree, which would grow all the better if its spread began higher from the ground

From *The Charterhouse of Parma* (*La Chartreuse de Parme*) by Stendhal, translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff. Reprinted by permission of Mr. George Scott Moncrieff and Messrs. Chatto and Windus.

Henri Beyle was born in Grenoble, in the south-east of France, on 23 January 1783. He passionately hated his father, and this may have been the cause of his use later of scores of noms-de-plume, one of them Stendhal, the name by which he is now universally known. As a young man he obtained a commission in Napoleon's army, and was involved in the retreat from Moscow. His middle years were spent in journalism and art criticism and general hack work, until in 1831 he was appointed French Consul at Civita Vecchia, near Rome. His sudden death in March 1842 has been ascribed to venereal disease contracted in 1808.

Stendhal is now remembered mainly for his two great novels, *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1831) and *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839). He has been claimed to be the originator of the modern psychological novel.

C. K. Scott Moncrieff (1889-1930) is best known as the translator of Proust.