



NAXOS

AudioBooks

CLASSIC
FICTION

Stendhal

The Red
AND
The Black

Read by **Bill Homewood**

1	Book 1: Chapter 1	4:20
2	Chapter 2	3:43
3	Chapter 3	4:30
4	'I am quite determined to engage young Sorel...'	2:49
5	Chapter 4	3:40
6	Chapter 5	5:00
7	Returning to his mill, Sorel looked in vain for his son.	3:55
8	Chapter 6	5:22
9	More than an hour later, when M. de Rênal returned...	3:46
10	Chapter 7	5:02
11	'The Mayor,' Julien went on...	5:12
12	Chapter 8	4:30
13	When the Mayor of Verrières returned from the town...	3:15
14	Chapter 9	5:38
15	By dint of talking for talking's sake...	4:44
16	Chapter 10	3:11
17	Chapter 11	6:01
18	Chapter 12	5:16
19	Julien related to him, with suitable omissions...	2:59
20	Chapter 13	6:03

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21	Chapter 14	2:34
22	Chapter 15	3:20
23	Chapter 16	3:43
24	Chapter 17	4:59
25	Chapter 18	4:38
26	It was not until the night between Saturday and Sunday...	4:51
27	When they reached the Bishop's apartment...	4:11
28	Chapter 19	6:16
29	Chapter 20	4:43
30	Chapter 21	4:28
31	'This little peasant upon whom we have lavished every attention...'	4:42
32	Chapter 22	4:15
33	He craved the honour of being presented to Madame Valenod...	5:08
34	The people with whom he dined, in speaking of the joint...	5:05
35	Chapter 23	5:34
36	On the morning after his return, at six o'clock, the abbé Chélan...	6:11
37	Chapter 24	3:20
38	This little air of authority delighted Amanda.	4:01
39	Chapter 25	3:39
40	The man in black had half risen and was impatiently seeking...	3:51

41	Chapter 26	3:27
42	This visit would have made a profound impression upon our hero...	3:50
43	Chapter 27	3:32
44	Chapter 28	6:56
45	Chapter 29	4:53
46	At the time of the examinations...	4:22
47	Without knowing it, the stern abbé Pirard loved this Seminary...	5:16
48	'I can support with official proof what I have the honour...'	5:19
49	Chapter 30	5:33
50	'Beware of a gunshot!' He thought for a moment...	5:37
51	'You are going to Paris!' Madame de Rênal exclaimed quite aloud.	5:36
52	Book 2: Chapter 1	5:31
53	'If after a few months you are of no use to him...'	6:28
54	Chapter 2	6:25
55	At six o'clock the Marquis sent for him...	5:03
56	Chapter 3	4:50
57	Chapter 4	4:21
58	Mathilde's friends were that evening in a state of constant hostility...	5:14
59	Chapter 5	3:33
60	Chapter 6	5:03

61	Julien left the house in the worst of tempers.	5:44
62	Chapter 7	5:53
63	As he travelled past along the road to Calais...	6:09
64	Chapter 8	4:24
65	The passage was now cleared, Julien was free to enter.	4:52
66	Chapter 9	4:44
67	Julien was on a pinnacle of happiness.	4:36
68	Chapter 10	5:13
69	Chapter 11	2:11
70	Chapter 12	4:30
71	Chapter 13	4:53
72	'The style is not unduly affected,' he said to himself...	5:08
73	Chapter 14	3:57
74	Next morning, at a very early hour, Julien left the house unobserved...	3:56
75	Chapter 15	4:50
76	Chapter 16	4:50
77	'The first is hidden in a stout Protestant Bible...'	6:03
78	Chapter 17	4:02
79	'I am horrified at having given myself to the first comer,'...	3:19
80	Chapter 18	4:11

81	Chapter 19	5:56
82	Julien's chivalry was as great as his happiness...	4:39
83	Chapter 20	6:10
84	Chapter 21	6:45
85	Chapter 22	6:49
86	Chapter 23	5:23
87	Next day, the Marquis took Julien to a lonely mansion...	6:26
88	Chapter 24	3:38
89	Chapter 25	4:40
90	Chapter 26	3:36
91	Chapter 27	2:34
92	Chapter 28	3:11
93	Chapter 29	4:19
94	Chapter 30	3:52
95	Chapter 31	5:40
96	Chapter 32	3:31
97	Chapter 33	4:32
98	Chapter 34	5:34
99	Chapter 35	3:43
100	It was in the midst of the transports of the most frenzied ambition...	4:11

101	Chapter 36	6:13
102	Chapter 37	2:41
103	Chapter 38	3:56
104	Chapter 39	3:03
105	Chapter 40	4:07
106	Chapter 41	3:18
107	'Here begins the last day of my life,' thought Julien.	4:39
108	Chapter 42	3:23
109	Chapter 43	3:10
110	Chapter 44	4:03
111	Chapter 45	4:23
112	Two days earlier, he had said to Fouqué...	3:50

Total time: 8:35:47

Stendhal

(1783–1842)

The Red AND The Black

Julien Sorel, the son of a country timber merchant, always carries a portrait of his hero Napoleon Bonaparte, and dreams of military glory. More delicate than his bullying brothers, he takes a post as Latin tutor to the children of the Mayor of Verrières, M. de Rênal; a greedy, pompous, vain and sanctimonious man. Young Julien is attracted to, and fascinated by, M. de Rênal's beautiful wife...

Julien turned sharply round, and, struck by the charm of Madame de Rênal's expression, forgot part of his shyness. A moment later, astounded by her beauty, he forgot everything, even his purpose in coming.

Mme de Rênal, even when the plot takes Julien far away from Verrières, is an ever-present, and redeeming, influence on his

thinking and choices. Their liaison forms the spine of the story, and her admiring devotion to this vain, self-obsessed and ambitious young man is at once surprising and moving: "I have proved myself not unworthy of Julien," she said to herself, with a sweet and secret relish.'

All the principal characters in the book analyse forensically their own manners and behaviour, and are ever aware of the social implications of a word here, a gesture there, a turn of the head, a costume:

"My wife certainly has a head on her shoulders!" the Mayor of Verrières remarked to himself... "Although I said so to her, to maintain my own superiority, it had never occurred to me that if I do not take this little priest Sorel, who, they tell me, knows

his Latin like an angel, the governor of the poorhouse, that restless spirit, might very well have the same idea, and snatch him from me. I can hear the tone of conceit with which he would speak of his children's tutor."

Of course Stendhal pre-dates Sigmund Freud, but the scalpel he takes to his characters' psyches might be described as Freudian, particularly when it comes to their affections and loves. The hero of *Anatol*, a play by Arthur Schnitzler, who was a contemporary of Freud, is a similar study of vanity and chauvinistic arrogance in an unlovable, irritating young man. Throughout the history of literature and drama, we have enjoyed laughing at the folly of conceit in young men and women. There are many such examples in Restoration theatre, and, for example, in Chekhov. It is a common misconception that at all times we have to love our heroes, whatever their foibles. The truth is that we can love hating them, too – and that often this is more fun.

Julien Sorel's relationship with Mme de Rênal is the first of a number of

scandals which dog Julien as he pursues his ambitions. He finds a foothold in the Church – a respectable career which he hopes might enable him to move into Parisian high society, as the splendid military career of his dreams seems out of the question for a slight peasant boy. Artful, ever insinuating himself into useful company, Julien gains the support of influential figures in the Church. Still a young man, he at last makes it to Paris. There, while continuing his theological training as a priest, he takes up the post of secretary to the politically influential Comte de la Mole, for whom he carries out a number of difficult tasks, which include diplomatic trips to England and Germany. Julien is cynically fascinated by the affectations and style of high society, and much of the novel is taken up with his running analytical commentary to himself on all he sees.

Along the way, the young priest is helped by a number of influential people in both the Church and society – in particular he owes a great deal to two men: his mentor, the lugubrious Abbé Pirard, and his master, the tremendously

powerful and extremely perceptive Comte de la Mole. Despite his country background, Julien soon becomes a sophisticate in bourgeois society, a popular guest at dinner and the opera, an expert in intellectual and literary small-talk, a respectable horseman and even an accomplished swordsman. The Comte's coquettish snob of a daughter, Mathilde, becomes his second great passion. She is 'extremely fair and very comely', with 'scintillating' eyes. "'Madame de Rênal, too, had the most beautiful eyes,'" he said to himself; "...but they had nothing in common with these.'" Despite Mathilde's terror of losing her place in society by forming a liaison with 'the young peasant', Julien campaigns brilliantly, and...

After prolonged uncertainties, which might have appeared to a superficial observer to be due to the most decided hatred, so hard was it for the feeling of self-respect which a woman owes to herself, to yield to so masterful a will, Mathilde finally became his mistress.

Stendhal's comic timing and turn of phrase is exquisite and irresistible, especially when it comes to the craft of seduction. On another occasion: 'Far from responding to her lover's eagerness, she was like a barely-animated corpse...'

In Paris, Julien, ever aware of the importance of correct dress, is challenged by the extreme subtleties of the dress codes:

'...By dint of a survey of Count Norbert's person, Julien discovered that he was wearing boots and spurs; "And I ought to be wearing shoes, evidently as his inferior."' Coupled with his arrogance is a strong sense of humiliation about his real social position: "...that class of young people who, born in a lowly and poverty-stricken class, had the chance to educate themselves and the courage to associate with those circles which arrogance of the rich calls society."

Julien's fanatical study of the mores and manners of the time, his cunning and

ambition, combined with naiveté, tortured self-analysis, and an often misplaced sense of duty and honour, entertain and dismay the listener as we accompany him into all sorts of crises of his own making. Finally, 'mounted upon the finest horse in Alsace', he achieves the extraordinary rank of 'Monsieur le Chevalier Julien Sorel de la Vernaye, Lieutenant of the Fifteenth Regiment of Hussars'.

Even as he reflects on this triumph, he receives a letter which pitches him back into the maelstrom he has already created, leading to the novel's surprising denouement.



The book has been filmed eight times for cinema and television, most famously in 1954 when Claude Autant-Lara's film, starring Gérard Philipe, won the French Cinema Critics' Award, and in 1993 when Ewan McGregor starred in a BBC TV mini-series.

In the title, the 'Red' represents the Army, and the 'Black' represents the Church – the choice between on the

one hand aspiring to military glory and on the other to Christian humility: this is the primary struggle in Julien Sorel's mind throughout the story.

In the printed book, most chapters begin with quotations purporting to be from famous authors. In many cases Stendhal himself wrote the quotations, including the portentous 'The truth, the harsh truth' attributed to Dante, with which the book begins. In fact the book's abiding feature is 'the truth'. No character is allowed to be perfect, and his or her imperfections are scrutinised mercilessly for their grim dramatic value, in the way a satirical journalist might compose a portrait of an unloved politician. The satire in the book is cruel rather than affectionate; we laugh somewhat guiltily as Stendhal mocks the hubris, the sanctimoniousness, the vanity and the cant of all those Julien encounters, and of our hero himself.

One might be inclined to see *The Red and the Black* merely as an exposé of the shameful hypocrisy of society in the post-Napoleonic period. France, no longer in the throes of a revolution, once again found itself talking about nothing in

particular in the country inns, the churches and the drawing-rooms of Paris. It is a brilliant love story, of course, a fascinating psychological portrait, a highly researched study of manners and an extraordinary social and political history of early 19th-century France. But the book is even more than this: in the end it is a rueful and chastening look at the human condition, at all of us, with our foibles, jealousies, ambitions and imperfections.



Stendhal was the *nom-de-plume* of Marie-Henri Beyle, who was born in Grenoble in 1783. His first schoolteacher was a Jesuit priest. He served in the army under Napoleon, but on the restoration of the monarchy moved to Italy, where he started his career as a travel writer. His great love of the arts, and his declared ecstatic dizziness at the overwhelming beauty and magnificence of Italian paintings, frescoes, statues and architecture, particularly in Florence, led to the recent coining of the expression: 'the Stendhal Syndrome'. On his return to Paris in 1821 he moved into

Society, had several publicised affairs and published *The Red and the Black* in 1830. *The Red and the Black* is considered by many to be one of his two masterpieces, the other being *The Charterhouse of Parma*, also a romance in which the central hero treads a path between the military and the ecclesiastical. He took a diplomatic post in Italy, but in 1841 became ill and returned to Paris, where he died of a stroke in 1842.

Notes by Bill Homewood



Bill Homewood's West End credits include leads in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Grand Hotel*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Boys From Syracuse*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Hollow Crown* (Royal Shakespeare Company). His innumerable television series include *The Professionals*, *Berkeley Square*, *A Wing and a Prayer*, *The Renford Rejects*, *London's Burning*, *Casualty*, *Coronation Street*, *Crocodile Shoes*, *The Bill* and *Spy Trap*. Bill also directs theatre in the USA, the UK, and France, where he runs a ranch with his wife Estelle Kohler. His recordings for Naxos AudioBooks include *Les Misérables*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *She*.

Credits

Translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff

Edited and mastered by Andrew Riches

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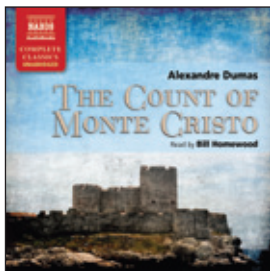
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Stendhal

The Red

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The Black

Read by **Bill Homewood**

Young Julien Sorel, the son of a country timber merchant, carries a portrait of his hero Napoleon Bonaparte and dreams of military glory. A brilliant career in the Church leads him into Parisian high society, where, 'mounted upon the finest horse in Alsace', he gains high military office and wins the heart of the aristocratic Mlle Mathilde de la Mole. Julien's cunning and ambition lead him into all sorts of scrapes, but it is the struggle between his passion for two beautiful women – the quixotic Mathilde and the loyal Mme de Rênal – which ultimately decides his destiny.



Bill Homewood is well known for his appearances in numerous television shows and leading roles in the West End and for the Royal Shakespeare Company. His other recordings for Naxos AudioBooks include *Les Misérables*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *She*.

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