The Human Comedy
Scenes from Private Life
Part I

By

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AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT AND RACKET

Half-way down the Rue Saint-Denis, almost at the corner of the Rue du Petit-Lion, there stood formerly one of those delightful houses which enable historians to reconstruct old Paris by analogy. The threatening walls of this tumbledown abode seemed to have been decorated with hieroglyphics. For what other name could the passer-by give to the Xs and Vs which the horizontal or diagonal timbers traced on the front, outlined by little parallel cracks in the plaster? It was evident that every beam quivered in its mortices at the passing of the lightest vehicle. This venerable structure was crowned by a triangular roof of which no example will, ere long, be seen in Paris. This covering, warped by the extremes of the Paris climate, projected three feet over the roadway, as much to protect the threshold from the rainfall as to shelter the wall of a loft and its sill-less dormer-window. This upper story was built of planks, overlapping each other like slates, in order, no doubt, not to overweight the frail house.

One rainy morning in the month of March, a young man, carefully wrapped in his cloak, stood under the awning of a shop opposite this old house, which he was studying with the enthusiasm of an antiquary. In point of fact, this relic of the civic life of the sixteenth century offered more than one problem to the consideration of an observer. Each story presented some singularity; on the first floor four tall, narrow windows, close together, were filled as to the lower panes with boards, so as to produce the doubtful light by which a clever salesman can ascribe to his goods the color his customers inquire for. The young man seemed very scornful of this part of the house; his eyes had not yet rested on it. The windows of the second floor, where the Venetian blinds were drawn up, revealing little dingy muslin curtains behind the large Bohemian glass panes, did not interest him either. His attention was attracted to the third floor, to the modest sash-frames of wood, so clumsily wrought that they might have found a place in the Museum of Arts and Crafts to illustrate the early efforts of French carpentry. These windows were glazed with small squares of glass so green that, but for his good eyes, the young man could not have seen the blue-checked cotton curtains which screened the mysteries of the room from profane eyes. Now and then the watcher, weary of his fruitless contemplation, or of the silence in which the house was buried, like the whole neighborhood, dropped his eyes towards the lower regions. An involuntary smile parted his lips each time he looked at the shop, where, in fact, there were some laughable details.

A formidable wooden beam, resting on four pillars, which appeared to have bent under the weight of the decrepit house, had been encrusted with as

many coats of different paint as there are of rouge on an old duchess' cheek. In the middle of this broad and fantastically carved joist there was an old painting representing a cat playing rackets. This picture was what moved the young man to mirth. But it must be said that the wittiest of modern painters could not invent so comical a caricature. The animal held in one of its forepaws a racket as big as itself, and stood on its hind legs to aim at hitting an enormous ball, returned by a man in a fine embroidered coat. Drawing, color, and accessories, all were treated in such a way as to suggest that the artist had meant to make game of the shop-owner and of the passing observer. Time, while impairing this artless painting, had made it yet more grotesque by introducing some uncertain features which must have puzzled the conscientious idler. For instance, the cat's tail had been eaten into in such a way that it might now have been taken for the figure of a spectator—so long, and thick, and furry were the tails of our forefathers' cats. To the right of the picture, on an azure field which ill-disguised the decay of the wood, might be read the name "Guillaume," and to the left, "Successor to Master Chevrel." Sun and rain had worn away most of the gilding parsimoniously applied to the letters of this superscription, in which the Us and Vs had changed places in obedience to the laws of old-world orthography.

To quench the pride of those who believe that the world is growing cleverer day by day, and that modern humbug surpasses everything, it may be observed that these signs, of which the origin seems so whimsical to many Paris merchants, are the dead pictures of once living pictures by which our roguish ancestors contrived to tempt customers into their houses. Thus the Spinning Sow, the Green Monkey, and others, were animals in cages whose skills astonished the passer-by, and whose accomplishments prove the patience of the fifteenth-century artisan. Such curiosities did more to enrich their fortunate owners than the signs of "Providence," "Good-faith," "Grace of God," and "Decapitation of John the Baptist," which may still be seen in the Rue Saint-Denis.

However, our stranger was certainly not standing there to admire the cat, which a minute's attention sufficed to stamp on his memory. The young man himself had his peculiarities. His cloak, folded after the manner of an antique drapery, showed a smart pair of shoes, all the more remarkable in the midst of the Paris mud, because he wore white silk stockings, on which the splashes betrayed his impatience. He had just come, no doubt, from a wedding or a ball; for at this early hour he had in his hand a pair of white gloves, and his black hair, now out of curl, and flowing over his shoulders, showed that it had been dressed a la Caracalla, a fashion introduced as much by David's school of painting as by the mania for Greek and Roman styles which characterized the early years of this century.

In spite of the noise made by a few market gardeners, who, being late, rattled past towards the great market-place at a gallop, the busy street lay in a stillness of which the magic charm is known only to those who have wandered through deserted Paris at the hours when its roar, hushed for a moment, rises and spreads in the distance like the great voice of the sea. This strange young man must have seemed as curious to the shopkeeping folk of the "Cat and Racket" as the "Cat and Racket" was to him. A dazzlingly white cravat made his anxious face look even paler than it really was. The fire that flashed in his black eyes, gloomy and sparkling by turns, was in harmony with the singular outline of his features, with his wide, flexible mouth, hardened into a smile. His forehead, knit with violent annoyance, had a stamp of doom. Is not the forehead the most prophetic feature of a man? When the stranger's brow expressed passion the furrows formed in it were terrible in their strength and energy; but when he recovered his calmness, so easily upset, it beamed with a luminous grace which gave great attractiveness to a countenance in which joy, grief, love, anger, or scorn blazed out so contagiously that the coldest man could not fail to be impressed.

He was so thoroughly vexed by the time when the dormer-window of the loft was suddenly flung open, that he did not observe the apparition of three laughing faces, pink and white and chubby, but as vulgar as the face of Commerce as it is seen in sculpture on certain monuments. These three faces, framed by the window, recalled the puffy cherubs floating among the clouds that surround God the Father. The apprentices snuffed up the exhalations of the street with an eagerness that showed how hot and poisonous the atmosphere of their garret must be. After pointing to the singular sentinel, the most jovial, as he seemed, of the apprentices retired and came back holding an instrument whose hard metal pipe is now superseded by a leather tube; and they all grinned with mischief as they looked down on the loiterer, and sprinkled him with a fine white shower of which the scent proved that three chins had just been shaved. Standing on tiptoe, in the farthest corner of their loft, to enjoy their victim's rage, the lads ceased laughing on seeing the haughty indifference with which the young man shook his cloak, and the intense contempt expressed by his face as he glanced up at the empty window-frame.

At this moment a slender white hand threw up the lower half of one of the clumsy windows on the third floor by the aid of the sash runners, of which the pulley so often suddenly gives way and releases the heavy panes it ought to hold up. The watcher was then rewarded for his long waiting. The face of a young girl appeared, as fresh as one of the white cups that bloom on the bosom of the waters, crowned by a frill of tumbled muslin, which gave her head a look of exquisite innocence. Though wrapped in brown stuff, her neck and shoulders gleamed here and there through little openings left by her

movements in sleep. No expression of embarrassment detracted from the candor of her face, or the calm look of eyes immortalized long since in the sublime works of Raphael; here were the same grace, the same repose as in those Virgins, and now proverbial. There was a delightful contrast between the cheeks of that face on which sleep had, as it were, given high relief to a superabundance of life, and the antiquity of the heavy window with its clumsy shape and black sill. Like those day-blowing flowers, which in the early morning have not yet unfurled their cups, twisted by the chills of night, the girl, as yet hardly awake, let her blue eyes wander beyond the neighboring roofs to look at the sky; then, from habit, she cast them down on the gloomy depths of the street, where they immediately met those of her adorer. Vanity, no doubt, distressed her at being seen in undress; she started back, the worn pulley gave way, and the sash fell with the rapid run, which in our day has earned for this artless invention of our forefathers an odious name, Fenetre a la Guillotine. The vision had disappeared. To the young man the most radiant star of morning seemed to be hidden by a cloud.

During these little incidents the heavy inside shutters that protected the slight windows of the shop of the "Cat and Racket" had been removed as if by magic. The old door with its knocker was opened back against the wall of the entry by a man-servant, apparently coeval with the sign, who, with a shaking hand, hung upon it a square of cloth, on which were embroidered in yellow silk the words: "Guillaume, successor to Chevrel." Many a passer-by would have found it difficult to guess the class of trade carried on by Monsieur Guillaume. Between the strong iron bars which protected his shop windows on the outside, certain packages, wrapped in brown linen, were hardly visible, though as numerous as herrings swimming in a shoal. Notwithstanding the primitive aspect of the Gothic front, Monsieur Guillaume, of all the merchant clothiers in Paris, was the one whose stores were always the best provided, whose connections were the most extensive, and whose commercial honesty never lay under the slightest suspicion. If some of his brethren in business made a contract with the Government, and had not the required quantity of cloth, he was always ready to deliver it, however large the number of pieces tendered for. The wily dealer knew a thousand ways of extracting the largest profits without being obliged, like them, to court patrons, cringing to them, or making them costly presents. When his fellow-tradesmen could only pay in good bills of long date, he would mention his notary as an accommodating man, and managed to get a second profit out of the bargain, thanks to this arrangement, which had made it a proverb among the traders of the Rue Saint-Denis: "Heaven preserve you from Monsieur Guillaume's notary!" to signify a heavy discount.

The old merchant was to be seen standing on the threshold of his shop, as if by a miracle, the instant the servant withdrew. Monsieur Guillaume looked

at the Rue Saint-Denis, at the neighboring shops, and at the weather, like a man disembarking at Havre, and seeing France once more after a long voyage. Having convinced himself that nothing had changed while he was asleep, he presently perceived the stranger on guard, and he, on his part, gazed at the patriarchal draper as Humboldt may have scrutinized the first electric eel he saw in America. Monsieur Guillaume wore loose black velvet breeches, pepper-and-salt stockings, and square toed shoes with silver buckles. His coat, with square-cut fronts, square-cut tails, and square-cut collar clothed his slightly bent figure in greenish cloth, finished with white metal buttons, tawny from wear. His gray hair was so accurately combed and flattened over his yellow pate that it made it look like a furrowed field. His little green eyes, that might have been pierced with a gimlet, flashed beneath arches faintly tinged with red in the place of eyebrows. Anxieties had wrinkled his forehead with as many horizontal lines as there were creases in his coat. This colorless face expressed patience, commercial shrewdness, and the sort of wily cupidity which is needful in business. At that time these old families were less rare than they are now, in which the characteristic habits and costume of their calling, surviving in the midst of more recent civilization, were preserved as cherished traditions, like the antediluvian remains found by Cuvier in the quarries.

The head of the Guillaume family was a notable upholder of ancient practices; he might be heard to regret the Provost of Merchants, and never did he mention a decision of the Tribunal of Commerce without calling it the Sentence of the Consuls. Up and dressed the first of the household, in obedience, no doubt, to these old customs, he stood sternly awaiting the appearance of his three assistants, ready to scold them in case they were late. These young disciples of Mercury knew nothing more terrible than the wordless assiduity with which the master scrutinized their faces and their movements on Monday in search of evidence or traces of their pranks. But at this moment the old clothier paid no heed to his apprentices; he was absorbed in trying to divine the motive of the anxious looks which the young man in silk stockings and a cloak cast alternately at his signboard and into the depths of his shop. The daylight was now brighter, and enabled the stranger to discern the cashier's corner enclosed by a railing and screened by old green silk curtains, where were kept the immense ledgers, the silent oracles of the house. The too inquisitive gazer seemed to covet this little nook, and to be taking the plan of a dining-room at one side, lighted by a skylight, whence the family at meals could easily see the smallest incident that might occur at the shop-door. So much affection for his dwelling seemed suspicious to a trader who had lived long enough to remember the law of maximum prices; Monsieur Guillaume naturally thought that this sinister personage had an eye to the till of the Cat and Racket. After quietly observing the mute duel which was going on between his master and the stranger, the eldest of the apprentices, having

seen that the young man was stealthily watching the windows of the third floor, ventured to place himself on the stone flag where Monsieur Guillaume was standing. He took two steps out into the street, raised his head, and fancied that he caught sight of Mademoiselle Augustine Guillaume in hasty retreat. The draper, annoyed by his assistant's perspicacity, shot a side glance at him; but the draper and his amorous apprentice were suddenly relieved from the fears which the young man's presence had excited in their minds. He hailed a hackney cab on its way to a neighboring stand, and jumped into it with an air of affected indifference. This departure was a balm to the hearts of the other two lads, who had been somewhat uneasy as to meeting the victim of their practical joke.

"Well, gentlemen, what ails you that you are standing there with your arms folded?" said Monsieur Guillaume to his three neophytes. "In former days, bless you, when I was in Master Chevrel's service, I should have overhauled more than two pieces of cloth by this time."

"Then it was daylight earlier," said the second assistant, whose duty this was.

The old shopkeeper could not help smiling. Though two of these young fellows, who were confided to his care by their fathers, rich manufacturers at Louviers and at Sedan, had only to ask and to have a hundred thousand francs the day when they were old enough to settle in life, Guillaume regarded it as his duty to keep them under the rod of an old-world despotism, unknown nowadays in the showy modern shops, where the apprentices expect to be rich men at thirty. He made them work like Negroes. These three assistants were equal to a business which would harry ten such clerks as those whose sybaritical tastes now swell the columns of the budget. Not a sound disturbed the peace of this solemn house, where the hinges were always oiled, and where the meanest article of furniture showed the respectable cleanliness which reveals strict order and economy. The most waggish of the three youths often amused himself by writing the date of its first appearance on the Gruyere cheese which was left to their tender mercies at breakfast, and which it was their pleasure to leave untouched. This bit of mischief, and a few others of the same stamp, would sometimes bring a smile on the face of the younger of Guillaume's daughters, the pretty maiden who has just now appeared to the bewitched man in the street.

Though each of these apprentices, even the eldest, paid a round sum for his board, not one of them would have been bold enough to remain at the master's table when dessert was served. When Madame Guillaume talked of dressing the salad, the hapless youths trembled as they thought of the thrift with which her prudent hand dispensed the oil. They could never think of spending a night away from the house without having given, long before, a plausible reason for

such an irregularity. Every Sunday, each in his turn, two of them accompanied the Guillaume family to Mass at Saint-Leu, and to vespers. Mesdemoiselles Virginie and Augustine, simply attired in cotton print, each took the arm of an apprentice and walked in front, under the piercing eye of their mother, who closed the little family procession with her husband, accustomed by her to carry two large prayer-books, bound in black morocco. The second apprentice received no salary. As for the eldest, whose twelve years of perseverance and discretion had initiated him into the secrets of the house, he was paid eight hundred francs a year as the reward of his labors. On certain family festivals he received as a gratuity some little gift, to which Madame Guillaume's dry and wrinkled hand alone gave value—netted purses, which she took care to stuff with cotton wool, to show off the fancy stitches, braces of the strongest make, or heavy silk stockings. Sometimes, but rarely, this prime minister was admitted to share the pleasures of the family when they went into the country, or when, after waiting for months, they made up their mind to exert the right acquired by taking a box at the theatre to command a piece which Paris had already forgotten.

As to the other assistants, the barrier of respect which formerly divided a master draper from his apprentices was that they would have been more likely to steal a piece of cloth than to infringe this time-honored etiquette. Such reserve may now appear ridiculous; but these old houses were a school of honesty and sound morals. The masters adopted their apprentices. The young man's linen was cared for, mended, and often replaced by the mistress of the house. If an apprentice fell ill, he was the object of truly maternal attention. In a case of danger the master lavished his money in calling in the most celebrated physicians, for he was not answerable to their parents merely for the good conduct and training of the lads. If one of them, whose character was unimpeachable, suffered misfortune, these old tradesmen knew how to value the intelligence he had displayed, and they did not hesitate to entrust the happiness of their daughters to men whom they had long trusted with their fortunes. Guillaume was one of these men of the old school, and if he had their ridiculous side, he had all their good qualities; and Joseph Lebas, the chief assistant, an orphan without any fortune, was in his mind destined to be the husband of Virginie, his elder daughter. But Joseph did not share the symmetrical ideas of his master, who would not for an empire have given his second daughter in marriage before the elder. The unhappy assistant felt that his heart was wholly given to Mademoiselle Augustine, the younger. In order to justify this passion, which had grown up in secret, it is necessary to inquire a little further into the springs of the absolute government which ruled the old cloth-merchant's household.

Guillaume had two daughters. The elder, Mademoiselle Virginie, was the very image of her mother. Madame Guillaume, daughter of the Sieur Chevrel,

sat so upright in the stool behind her desk, that more than once she had heard some wag bet that she was a stuffed figure. Her long, thin face betrayed exaggerated piety. Devoid of attractions or of amiable manners, Madame Guillaume commonly decorated her head—that of a woman near on sixty—with a cap of a particular and unvarying shape, with long lappets, like that of a widow. In all the neighborhood she was known as the "portress nun." Her speech was curt, and her movements had the stiff precision of a semaphore. Her eye, with a gleam in it like a cat's, seemed to spite the world because she was so ugly. Mademoiselle Virginie, brought up, like her younger sister, under the domestic rule of her mother, had reached the age of eight-and-twenty. Youth mitigated the graceless effect which her likeness to her mother sometimes gave to her features, but maternal austerity had endowed her with two great qualities which made up for everything. She was patient and gentle. Mademoiselle Augustine, who was but just eighteen, was not like either her father or her mother. She was one of those daughters whose total absence of any physical affinity with their parents makes one believe in the adage: "God gives children." Augustine was little, or, to describe her more truly, delicately made. Full of gracious candor, a man of the world could have found no fault in the charming girl beyond a certain meanness of gesture or vulgarity of attitude, and sometimes a want of ease. Her silent and placid face was full of the transient melancholy which comes over all young girls who are too weak to dare to resist their mother's will.

The two sisters, always plainly dressed, could not gratify the innate vanity of womanhood but by a luxury of cleanliness which became them wonderfully, and made them harmonize with the polished counters and the shining shelves, on which the old man-servant never left a speck of dust, and with the old-world simplicity of all they saw about them. As their style of living compelled them to find the elements of happiness in persistent work, Augustine and Virginie had hitherto always satisfied their mother, who secretly prided herself on the perfect characters of her two daughters. It is easy to imagine the results of the training they had received. Brought up to a commercial life, accustomed to hear nothing but dreary arguments and calculations about trade, having studied nothing but grammar, book-keeping, a little Bible-history, and the history of France in Le Ragois, and never reading any book but what their mother would sanction, their ideas had not acquired much scope. They knew perfectly how to keep house; they were familiar with the prices of things; they understood the difficulty of amassing money; they were economical, and had a great respect for the qualities that make a man of business. Although their father was rich, they were as skilled in darning as in embroidery; their mother often talked of having them taught to cook, so that they might know how to order a dinner and scold a cook with due knowledge. They knew nothing of the pleasures of the world; and, seeing how their

parents spent their exemplary lives, they very rarely suffered their eyes to wander beyond the walls of their hereditary home, which to their mother was the whole universe. The meetings to which family anniversaries gave rise filled in the future of earthly joy to them.

When the great drawing-room on the second floor was to be prepared to receive company—Madame Roguin, a Demoiselle Chevrel, fifteen months younger than her cousin, and bedecked with diamonds; young Rabourdin, employed in the Finance Office; Monsieur Cesar Birotteau, the rich perfumer, and his wife, known as Madame Cesar; Monsieur Camusot, the richest silk mercer in the Rue des Bourdonnais, with his father-in-law, Monsieur Cardot, two or three old bankers, and some immaculate ladies—the arrangements, made necessary by the way in which everything was packed away—the plate, the Dresden china, the candlesticks, and the glass—made a variety in the monotonous lives of the three women, who came and went and exerted themselves as nuns would to receive their bishop. Then, in the evening, when all three were tired out with having wiped, rubbed, unpacked, and arranged all the gauds of the festival, as the girls helped their mother to undress, Madame Guillaume would say to them, "Children, we have done nothing today."

When, on very great occasions, "the portress nun" allowed dancing, restricting the games of boston, whist, and backgammon within the limits of her bedroom, such a concession was accounted as the most unhoped felicity, and made them happier than going to the great balls, to two or three of which Guillaume would take the girls at the time of the Carnival.

And once a year the worthy draper gave an entertainment, when he spared no expense. However rich and fashionable the persons invited might be, they were careful not to be absent; for the most important houses on the exchange had recourse to the immense credit, the fortune, or the time-honored experience of Monsieur Guillaume. Still, the excellent merchant's daughters did not benefit as much as might be supposed by the lessons the world has to offer to young spirits. At these parties, which were indeed set down in the ledger to the credit of the house, they wore dresses the shabbiness of which made them blush. Their style of dancing was not in any way remarkable, and their mother's surveillance did not allow of their holding any conversation with their partners beyond Yes and No. Also, the law of the old sign of the Cat and Racket commanded that they should be home by eleven o'clock, the hour when balls and fetes begin to be lively. Thus their pleasures, which seemed to conform very fairly to their father's position, were often made insipid by circumstances which were part of the family habits and principles.

As to their usual life, one remark will sufficiently paint it. Madame Guillaume required her daughters to be dressed very early in the morning, to come down every day at the same hour, and she ordered their employments

with monastic regularity. Augustine, however, had been gifted by chance with a spirit lofty enough to feel the emptiness of such a life. Her blue eyes would sometimes be raised as if to pierce the depths of that gloomy staircase and those damp store-rooms. After sounding the profound cloistral silence, she seemed to be listening to remote, inarticulate revelations of the life of passion, which accounts feelings as of higher value than things. And at such moments her cheek would flush, her idle hands would lay the muslin sewing on the polished oak counter, and presently her mother would say in a voice, of which even the softest tones were sour, "Augustine, my treasure, what are you thinking about?" It is possible that two romances discovered by Augustine in the cupboard of a cook Madame Guillaume had lately discharged—Hippolyte Comte de Douglas and Le Comte de Comminges—may have contributed to develop the ideas of the young girl, who had devoured them in secret, during the long nights of the past winter.

And so Augustine's expression of vague longing, her gentle voice, her jasmine skin, and her blue eyes had lighted in poor Lebas' soul a flame as ardent as it was reverent. From an easily understood caprice, Augustine felt no affection for the orphan; perhaps she did not know that he loved her. On the other hand, the senior apprentice, with his long legs, his chestnut hair, his big hands and powerful frame, had found a secret admirer in Mademoiselle Virginie, who, in spite of her dower of fifty thousand crowns, had as yet no suitor. Nothing could be more natural than these two passions at cross-purposes, born in the silence of the dingy shop, as violets bloom in the depths of a wood. The mute and constant looks which made the young people's eyes meet by sheer need of change in the midst of persistent work and cloistered peace, was sure, sooner or later, to give rise to feelings of love. The habit of seeing always the same face leads insensibly to our reading there the qualities of the soul, and at last effaces all its defects.

"At the pace at which that man goes, our girls will soon have to go on their knees to a suitor!" said Monsieur Guillaume to himself, as he read the first decree by which Napoleon drew in advance on the conscript classes.

From that day the old merchant, grieved at seeing his eldest daughter fade, remembered how he had married Mademoiselle Chevrel under much the same circumstances as those of Joseph Lebas and Virginie. A good bit of business, to marry off his daughter, and discharge a sacred debt by repaying to an orphan the benefit he had formerly received from his predecessor under similar conditions! Joseph Lebas, who was now three-and-thirty, was aware of the obstacle which a difference of fifteen years placed between Augustine and himself. Being also too clear-sighted not to understand Monsieur Guillaume's purpose, he knew his inexorable principles well enough to feel sure that the second would never marry before the elder. So the hapless assistant, whose

heart was as warm as his legs were long and his chest deep, suffered in silence.

This was the state of the affairs in the tiny republic which, in the heart of the Rue Saint-Denis, was not unlike a dependency of La Trappe. But to give a full account of events as well as of feelings, it is needful to go back to some months before the scene with which this story opens. At dusk one evening, a young man passing the darkened shop of the Cat and Racket, had paused for a moment to gaze at a picture which might have arrested every painter in the world. The shop was not yet lighted, and was as a dark cave beyond which the dining-room was visible. A hanging lamp shed the yellow light which lends such charm to pictures of the Dutch school. The white linen, the silver, the cut glass, were brilliant accessories, and made more picturesque by strong contrasts of light and shade. The figures of the head of the family and his wife, the faces of the apprentices, and the pure form of Augustine, near whom a fat chubby-cheeked maid was standing, composed so strange a group; the heads were so singular, and every face had so candid an expression; it was so easy to read the peace, the silence, the modest way of life in this family, that to an artist accustomed to render nature, there was something hopeless in any attempt to depict this scene, come upon by chance. The stranger was a young painter, who, seven years before, had gained the first prize for painting. He had now just come back from Rome. His soul, full-fed with poetry; his eyes, satiated with Raphael and Michael Angelo, thirsted for real nature after long dwelling in the pompous land where art has everywhere left something grandiose. Right or wrong, this was his personal feeling. His heart, which had long been a prey to the fire of Italian passion, craved one of those modest and meditative maidens whom in Rome he had unfortunately seen only in painting. From the enthusiasm produced in his excited fancy by the living picture before him, he naturally passed to a profound admiration for the principal figure; Augustine seemed to be pensive, and did not eat; by the arrangement of the lamp the light fell full on her face, and her bust seemed to move in a circle of fire, which threw up the shape of her head and illuminated it with almost supernatural effect. The artist involuntarily compared her to an exiled angel dreaming of heaven. An almost unknown emotion, a limpid, seething love flooded his heart. After remaining a minute, overwhelmed by the weight of his ideas, he tore himself from his bliss, went home, ate nothing, and could not sleep.

The next day he went to his studio, and did not come out of it till he had placed on canvas the magic of the scene of which the memory had, in a sense, made him a devotee; his happiness was incomplete till he should possess a faithful portrait of his idol. He went many times past the house of the Cat and Racket; he even ventured in once or twice, under a disguise, to get a closer view of the bewitching creature that Madame Guillaume covered with her

wing. For eight whole months, devoted to his love and to his brush, he was lost to the sight of his most intimate friends forgetting the world, the theatre, poetry, music, and all his dearest habits. One morning Girodet broke through all the barriers with which artists are familiar, and which they know how to evade, went into his room, and woke him by asking, "What are you going to send to the Salon?" The artist grasped his friend's hand, dragged him off to the studio, uncovered a small easel picture and a portrait. After a long and eager study of the two masterpieces, Girodet threw himself on his comrade's neck and hugged him, without speaking a word. His feelings could only be expressed as he felt them—soul to soul.

"You are in love?" said Girodet.

They both knew that the finest portraits by Titian, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci, were the outcome of the enthusiastic sentiments by which, indeed, under various conditions, every masterpiece is engendered. The artist only bent his head in reply.

"How happy are you to be able to be in love, here, after coming back from Italy! But I do not advise you to send such works as these to the Salon," the great painter went on. "You see, these two works will not be appreciated. Such true coloring, such prodigious work, cannot yet be understood; the public is not accustomed to such depths. The pictures we paint, my dear fellow, are mere screens. We should do better to turn rhymes, and translate the antique poets! There is more glory to be looked for there than from our luckless canvases!"

Notwithstanding this charitable advice, the two pictures were exhibited. The Interior made a revolution in painting. It gave birth to the pictures of genre which pour into all our exhibitions in such prodigious quantity that they might be supposed to be produced by machinery. As to the portrait, few artists have forgotten that lifelike work; and the public, which as a body is sometimes discerning, awarded it the crown which Girodet himself had hung over it. The two pictures were surrounded by a vast throng. They fought for places, as women say. Speculators and moneyed men would have covered the canvas with double napoleons, but the artist obstinately refused to sell or to make replicas. An enormous sum was offered him for the right of engraving them, and the print-sellers were not more favored than the amateurs.

Though these incidents occupied the world, they were not of a nature to penetrate the recesses of the monastic solitude in the Rue Saint-Denis. However, when paying a visit to Madame Guillaume, the notary's wife spoke of the exhibition before Augustine, of whom she was very fond, and explained its purpose. Madame Roguin's gossip naturally inspired Augustine with a wish to see the pictures, and with courage enough to ask her cousin secretly to take

her to the Louvre. Her cousin succeeded in the negotiations she opened with Madame Guillaume for permission to release the young girl for two hours from her dull labors. Augustine was thus able to make her way through the crowd to see the crowned work. A fit of trembling shook her like an aspen leaf as she recognized herself. She was terrified, and looked about her to find Madame Roguin, from whom she had been separated by a tide of people. At that moment her frightened eyes fell on the impassioned face of the young painter. She at once recalled the figure of a loiterer whom, being curious, she had frequently observed, believing him to be a new neighbor.

"You see how love has inspired me," said the artist in the timid creature's ear, and she stood in dismay at the words.

She found supernatural courage to enable her to push through the crowd and join her cousin, who was still struggling with the mass of people that hindered her from getting to the picture.

"You will be stifled!" cried Augustine. "Let us go."

But there are moments, at the Salon, when two women are not always free to direct their steps through the galleries. By the irregular course to which they were compelled by the press, Mademoiselle Guillaume and her cousin were pushed to within a few steps of the second picture. Chance thus brought them, both together, to where they could easily see the canvas made famous by fashion, for once in agreement with talent. Madame Roguin's exclamation of surprise was lost in the hubbub and buzz of the crowd; Augustine involuntarily shed tears at the sight of this wonderful study. Then, by an almost unaccountable impulse, she laid her finger on her lips, as she perceived quite near her the ecstatic face of the young painter. The stranger replied by a nod, and pointed to Madame Roguin, as a spoil-sport, to show Augustine that he had understood. This pantomime struck the young girl like hot coals on her flesh; she felt quite guilty as she perceived that there was a compact between herself and the artist. The suffocating heat, the dazzling sight of beautiful dresses, the bewilderment produced in Augustine's brain by the truth of coloring, the multitude of living or painted figures, the profusion of gilt frames, gave her a sense of intoxication which doubled her alarms. She would perhaps have fainted if an unknown rapture had not surged up in her heart to vivify her whole being, in spite of this chaos of sensations. She nevertheless believed herself to be under the power of the Devil, of whose awful snares she had been warned of by the thundering words of preachers. This moment was to her like a moment of madness. She found herself accompanied to her cousin's carriage by the young man, radiant with joy and love. Augustine, a prey to an agitation new to her experience, an intoxication which seemed to abandon her to nature, listened to the eloquent voice of her heart, and looked again and again at the young painter, betraying the emotion that came over her.

Never had the bright rose of her cheeks shown in stronger contrast with the whiteness of her skin. The artist saw her beauty in all its bloom, her maiden modesty in all its glory. She herself felt a sort of rapture mingled with terror at thinking that her presence had brought happiness to him whose name was on every lip, and whose talent lent immortality to transient scenes. She was loved! It was impossible to doubt it. When she no longer saw the artist, these simple words still echoed in her ear, "You see how love has inspired me!" And the throbs of her heart, as they grew deeper, seemed a pain, her heated blood revealed so many unknown forces in her being. She affected a severe headache to avoid replying to her cousin's questions concerning the pictures; but on their return Madame Roguin could not forbear from speaking to Madame Guillaume of the fame that had fallen on the house of the Cat and Racket, and Augustine quaked in every limb as she heard her mother say that she should go to the Salon to see her house there. The young girl again declared herself suffering, and obtained leave to go to bed.

"That is what comes of sight-seeing," exclaimed Monsieur Guillaume—"a headache. And is it so very amusing to see in a picture what you can see any day in your own street? Don't talk to me of your artists! Like writers, they are a starveling crew. Why the devil need they choose my house to flout it in their pictures?"

"It may help to sell a few ells more of cloth," said Joseph Lebas.

This remark did not protect art and thought from being condemned once again before the judgment-seat of trade. As may be supposed, these speeches did not infuse much hope into Augustine, who, during the night, gave herself up to the first meditations of love. The events of the day were like a dream, which it was a joy to recall to her mind. She was initiated into the fears, the hopes, the remorse, all the ebb and flow of feeling which could not fail to toss a heart so simple and timid as hers. What a void she perceived in this gloomy house! What a treasure she found in her soul! To be the wife of a genius, to share his glory! What ravages must such a vision make in the heart of a girl brought up among such a family! What hopes must it raise in a young creature who, in the midst of sordid elements, had pined for a life of elegance! A sunbeam had fallen into the prison. Augustine was suddenly in love. So many of her feelings were soothed that she succumbed without reflection. At eighteen does not love hold a prism between the world and the eyes of a young girl? She was incapable of suspecting the hard facts which result from the union of a loving woman with a man of imagination, and she believed herself called to make him happy, not seeing any disparity between herself and him. To her the future would be as the present. When, next day, her father and mother returned from the Salon, their dejected faces proclaimed some disappointment. In the first place, the painter had removed the two pictures;

and then Madame Guillaume had lost her cashmere shawl. But the news that the pictures had disappeared from the walls since her visit revealed to Augustine a delicacy of sentiment which a woman can always appreciate, even by instinct.

On the morning when, on his way home from a ball, Theodore de Sommervieux—for this was the name which fame had stamped on Augustine's heart—had been squirted on by the apprentices while awaiting the appearance of his artless little friend, who certainly did not know that he was there, the lovers had seen each other for the fourth time only since their meeting at the Salon. The difficulties which the rule of the house placed in the way of the painter's ardent nature gave added violence to his passion for Augustine.

How could he get near to a young girl seated in a counting-house between two such women as Mademoiselle Virginie and Madame Guillaume? How could he correspond with her when her mother never left her side? Ingenious, as lovers are, to imagine woes, Theodore saw a rival in one of the assistants, to whose interests he supposed the others to be devoted. If he should evade these sons of Argus, he would yet be wrecked under the stern eye of the old draper or of Madame Guillaume. The very vehemence of his passion hindered the young painter from hitting on the ingenious expedients which, in prisoners and in lovers, seem to be the last effort of intelligence spurred by a wild craving for liberty, or by the fire of love. Theodore wandered about the neighborhood with the restlessness of a madman, as though movement might inspire him with some device. After racking his imagination, it occurred to him to bribe the blowsy waiting-maid with gold. Thus a few notes were exchanged at long intervals during the fortnight following the ill-starred morning when Monsieur Guillaume and Theodore had so scrutinized one another. At the present moment the young couple had agreed to see each other at a certain hour of the day, and on Sunday, at Saint-Leu, during Mass and vespers. Augustine had sent her dear Theodore a list of the relations and friends of the family, to whom the young painter tried to get access, in the hope of interesting, if it were possible, in his love affairs, one of these souls absorbed in money and trade, to whom a genuine passion must appear a quite monstrous speculation, a thing unheard-of. Nothing meanwhile, was altered at the sign of the Cat and Racket. If Augustine was absent-minded, if, against all obedience to the domestic code, she stole up to her room to make signals by means of a jar of flowers, if she sighed, if she were lost in thought, no one observed it, not even her mother. This will cause some surprise to those who have entered into the spirit of the household, where an idea tainted with poetry would be in startling contrast to persons and things, where no one could venture on a gesture or a look which would not be seen and analyzed. Nothing, however, could be more natural: the quiet barque that navigated the stormy waters of the Paris Exchange, under the flag of the Cat and Racket, was just now in the toils of

one of these tempests which, returning periodically, might be termed equinoctial. For the last fortnight the five men forming the crew, with Madame Guillaume and Mademoiselle Virginie, had been devoting themselves to the hard labor, known as stock-taking.

Every bale was turned over, and the length verified to ascertain the exact value of the remnant. The ticket attached to each parcel was carefully examined to see at what time the piece had been bought. The retail price was fixed. Monsieur Guillaume, always on his feet, his pen behind his ear, was like a captain commanding the working of the ship. His sharp tones, spoken through a trap-door, to inquire into the depths of the hold in the cellar-store, gave utterance to the barbarous formulas of trade-jargon, which find expression only in cipher. "How much H. N. Z.?"—"All sold."—"What is left of Q. X.?"—"Two ells."—"At what price?"—"Fifty-five three."—"Set down A. at three, with all of J. J., all of M. P., and what is left of V. D. O."—A hundred other injunctions equally intelligible were spouted over the counters like verses of modern poetry, quoted by romantic spirits, to excite each other's enthusiasm for one of their poets. In the evening Guillaume, shut up with his assistant and his wife, balanced his accounts, carried on the balance, wrote to debtors in arrears, and made out bills. All three were busy over this enormous labor, of which the result could be stated on a sheet of foolscap, proving to the head of the house that there was so much to the good in hard cash, so much in goods, so much in bills and notes; that he did not owe a sou; that a hundred or two hundred thousand francs were owing to him; that the capital had been increased; that the farmlands, the houses, or the investments were extended, or repaired, or doubled. Whence it became necessary to begin again with increased ardor, to accumulate more crown-pieces, without its ever entering the brain of these laborious ants to ask—"To what end?"

Favored by this annual turmoil, the happy Augustine escaped the investigations of her Argus-eyed relations. At last, one Saturday evening, the stock-taking was finished. The figures of the sum-total showed a row of 0's long enough to allow Guillaume for once to relax the stern rule as to dessert which reigned throughout the year. The shrewd old draper rubbed his hands, and allowed his assistants to remain at table. The members of the crew had hardly swallowed their thimbleful of some home-made liqueur, when the rumble of a carriage was heard. The family party were going to see Cendrillon at the Varietes, while the two younger apprentices each received a crown of six francs, with permission to go wherever they chose, provided they were in by midnight.

Notwithstanding this debauch, the old cloth-merchant was shaving himself at six next morning, put on his maroon-colored coat, of which the glowing lights afforded him perennial enjoyment, fastened a pair of gold buckles on the

knee-straps of his ample satin breeches; and then, at about seven o'clock, while all were still sleeping in the house, he made his way to the little office adjoining the shop on the first floor. Daylight came in through a window, fortified by iron bars, and looking out on a small yard surrounded by such black walls that it was very like a well. The old merchant opened the iron-lined shutters, which were so familiar to him, and threw up the lower half of the sash window. The icy air of the courtyard came in to cool the hot atmosphere of the little room, full of the odor peculiar to offices.

The merchant remained standing, his hand resting on the greasy arm of a large cane chair lined with morocco, of which the original hue had disappeared; he seemed to hesitate as to seating himself. He looked with affection at the double desk, where his wife's seat, opposite his own, was fitted into a little niche in the wall. He contemplated the numbered boxes, the files, the implements, the cash box—objects all of immemorial origin, and fancied himself in the room with the shade of Master Chevrel. He even pulled out the high stool on which he had once sat in the presence of his departed master. This stool, covered with black leather, the horse-hair showing at every corner—as it had long done, without, however, coming out—he placed with a shaking hand on the very spot where his predecessor had put it, and then, with an emotion difficult to describe, he pulled a bell, which rang at the head of Joseph Lebas' bed. When this decisive blow had been struck, the old man, for whom, no doubt, these reminiscences were too much, took up three or four bills of exchange, and looked at them without seeing them.

Suddenly Joseph Lebas stood before him.

"Sit down there," said Guillaume, pointing to the stool.

As the old master draper had never yet bid his assistant be seated in his presence, Joseph Lebas was startled.

"What do you think of these notes?" asked Guillaume.

"They will never be paid."

"Why?"

"Well, I heard the day before yesterday Etienne and Co. had made their payments in gold."

"Oh, oh!" said the draper. "Well, one must be very ill to show one's bile. Let us speak of something else.—Joseph, the stock-taking is done."

"Yes, monsieur, and the dividend is one of the best you have ever made."

"Do not use new-fangled words. Say the profits, Joseph. Do you know, my boy, that this result is partly owing to you? And I do not intend to pay you a salary any longer. Madame Guillaume has suggested to me to take you into

partnership.—'Guillaume and Lebas;' will not that make a good business name? We might add, 'and Co.' to round off the firm's signature."

Tears rose to the eyes of Joseph Lebas, who tried to hide them.

"Oh, Monsieur Guillaume, how have I deserved such kindness? I only do my duty. It was so much already that you should take an interest in a poor orph ____"

He was brushing the cuff of his left sleeve with his right hand, and dared not look at the old man, who smiled as he thought that this modest young fellow no doubt needed, as he had needed once on a time, some encouragement to complete his explanation.

"To be sure," said Virginie's father, "you do not altogether deserve this favor, Joseph. You have not so much confidence in me as I have in you." (The young man looked up quickly.) "You know all the secrets of the cash-box. For the last two years I have told you almost all my concerns. I have sent you to travel in our goods. In short, I have nothing on my conscience as regards you. But you—you have a soft place, and you have never breathed a word of it." Joseph Lebas blushed. "Ah, ha!" cried Guillaume, "so you thought you could deceive an old fox like me? When you knew that I had scented the Lecocq bankruptcy?"

"What, monsieur?" replied Joseph Lebas, looking at his master as keenly as his master looked at him, "you knew that I was in love?"

"I know everything, you rascal," said the worthy and cunning old merchant, pulling the assistant's ear. "And I forgive you—I did the same myself."

"And you will give her to me?"

"Yes—with fifty thousand crowns; and I will leave you as much by will, and we will start on our new career under the name of a new firm. We will do good business yet, my boy!" added the old man, getting up and flourishing his arms. "I tell you, son-in-law, there is nothing like trade. Those who ask what pleasure is to be found in it are simpletons. To be on the scent of a good bargain, to hold your own on 'Change, to watch as anxiously as at the gaming-table whether Etienne and Co. will fail or no, to see a regiment of Guards march past all dressed in your cloth, to trip your neighbor up—honestly of course!—to make the goods cheaper than others can; then to carry out an undertaking which you have planned, which begins, grows, totters, and succeeds! to know the workings of every house of business as well as a minister of police, so as never to make a mistake; to hold up your head in the midst of wrecks, to have friends by correspondence in every manufacturing town; is not that a perpetual game, Joseph? That is life, that is! I shall die in

that harness, like old Chevrel, but taking it easy now, all the same."

In the heat of his eager rhetoric, old Guillaume had scarcely looked at his assistant, who was weeping copiously. "Why, Joseph, my poor boy, what is the matter?"

"Oh, I love her so! Monsieur Guillaume, that my heart fails me; I believe ____"

"Well, well, boy," said the old man, touched, "you are happier than you know, by God! For she loves you. I know it."

And he blinked his little green eyes as he looked at the young man.

"Mademoiselle Augustine! Mademoiselle Augustine!" exclaimed Joseph Lebas in his rapture.

He was about to rush out of the room when he felt himself clutched by a hand of iron, and his astonished master spun him round in front of him once more.

"What has Augustine to do with this matter?" he asked, in a voice which instantly froze the luckless Joseph.

"Is it not she that—that—I love?" stammered the assistant.

Much put out by his own want of perspicacity, Guillaume sat down again, and rested his long head in his hands to consider the perplexing situation in which he found himself. Joseph Lebas, shamefaced and in despair, remained standing.

"Joseph," the draper said with frigid dignity, "I was speaking of Virginie. Love cannot be made to order, I know. I know, too, that you can be trusted. We will forget all this. I will not let Augustine marry before Virginie.—Your interest will be ten per cent."

The young man, to whom love gave I know not what power of courage and eloquence, clasped his hand, and spoke in his turn—spoke for a quarter of an hour, with so much warmth and feeling, that he altered the situation. If the question had been a matter of business the old tradesman would have had fixed principles to guide his decision; but, tossed a thousand miles from commerce, on the ocean of sentiment, without a compass, he floated, as he told himself, undecided in the face of such an unexpected event. Carried away by his fatherly kindness, he began to beat about the bush.

"Deuce take it, Joseph, you must know that there are ten years between my two children. Mademoiselle Chevrel was no beauty, still she has had nothing to complain of in me. Do as I did. Come, come, don't cry. Can you be so silly? What is to be done? It can be managed perhaps. There is always some way out

of a scrape. And we men are not always devoted Celadons to our wives—you understand? Madame Guillaume is very pious. ... Come. By Gad, boy, give your arm to Augustine this morning as we go to Mass."

These were the phrases spoken at random by the old draper, and their conclusion made the lover happy. He was already thinking of a friend of his as a match for Mademoiselle Virginie, as he went out of the smoky office, pressing his future father-in-law's hand, after saying with a knowing look that all would turn out for the best.

"What will Madame Guillaume say to it?" was the idea that greatly troubled the worthy merchant when he found himself alone.

At breakfast Madame Guillaume and Virginie, to whom the draper had not yet confided his disappointment, cast meaning glances at Joseph Lebas, who was extremely embarrassed. The young assistant's bashfulness commended him to his mother-in-law's good graces. The matron became so cheerful that she smiled as she looked at her husband, and allowed herself some little pleasantries of time-honored acceptance in such simple families. She wondered whether Joseph or Virginie were the taller, to ask them to compare their height. This preliminary fooling brought a cloud to the master's brow, and he even made such a point of decorum that he desired Augustine to take the assistant's arm on their way to Saint-Leu. Madame Guillaume, surprised at this manly delicacy, honored her husband with a nod of approval. So the procession left the house in such order as to suggest no suspicious meaning to the neighbors.

"Does it not seem to you, Mademoiselle Augustine," said the assistant, and he trembled, "that the wife of a merchant whose credit is as good as Monsieur Guillaume's, for instance, might enjoy herself a little more than Madame your mother does? Might wear diamonds—or keep a carriage? For my part, if I were to marry, I should be glad to take all the work, and see my wife happy. I would not put her into the counting-house. In the drapery business, you see, a woman is not so necessary now as formerly. Monsieur Guillaume was quite right to act as he did—and besides, his wife liked it. But so long as a woman knows how to turn her hand to the book-keeping, the correspondence, the retail business, the orders, and her housekeeping, so as not to sit idle, that is enough. At seven o'clock, when the shop is shut, I shall take my pleasures, go to the play, and into company.—But you are not listening to me."

"Yes, indeed, Monsieur Joseph. What do you think of painting? That is a fine calling."

"Yes. I know a master house-painter, Monsieur Lourdois. He is well-to-do."

Thus conversing, the family reached the Church of Saint-Leu. There Madame Guillaume reasserted her rights, and, for the first time, placed Augustine next herself, Virginie taking her place on the fourth chair, next to Lebas. During the sermon all went well between Augustine and Theodore, who, standing behind a pillar, worshiped his Madonna with fervent devotion; but at the elevation of the Host, Madame Guillaume discovered, rather late, that her daughter Augustine was holding her prayer-book upside down. She was about to speak to her strongly, when, lowering her veil, she interrupted her own devotions to look in the direction where her daughter's eyes found attraction. By the help of her spectacles she saw the young artist, whose fashionable elegance seemed to proclaim him a cavalry officer on leave rather than a tradesman of the neighborhood. It is difficult to conceive of the state of violent agitation in which Madame Guillaume found herself—she, who flattered herself on having brought up her daughters to perfection—on discovering in Augustine a clandestine passion of which her prudery and ignorance exaggerated the perils. She believed her daughter to be cankered to the core.

"Hold your book right way up, miss," she muttered in a low voice, tremulous with wrath. She snatched away the tell-tale prayer-book and returned it with the letter-press right way up. "Do not allow your eyes to look anywhere but at your prayers," she added, "or I shall have something to say to you. Your father and I will talk to you after church."

These words came like a thunderbolt on poor Augustine. She felt faint; but, torn between the distress she felt and the dread of causing a commotion in church she bravely concealed her anguish. It was, however, easy to discern the stormy state of her soul from the trembling of her prayer-book, and the tears which dropped on every page she turned. From the furious glare shot at him by Madame Guillaume the artist saw the peril into which his love affair had fallen; he went out, with a raging soul, determined to venture all.

"Go to your room, miss!" said Madame Guillaume, on their return home; "we will send for you, but take care not to quit it."

The conference between the husband and wife was conducted so secretly that at first nothing was heard of it. Virginie, however, who had tried to give her sister courage by a variety of gentle remonstrances, carried her good nature so far as to listen at the door of her mother's bedroom where the discussion was held, to catch a word or two. The first time she went down to the lower floor she heard her father exclaim, "Then, madame, do you wish to kill your daughter?"

"My poor dear!" said Virginie, in tears, "papa takes your part."

"And what do they want to do to Theodore?" asked the innocent girl.

Virginie, inquisitive, went down again; but this time she stayed longer; she learned that Joseph Lebas loved Augustine. It was written that on this memorable day, this house, generally so peaceful, should be a hell. Monsieur Guillaume brought Joseph Lebas to despair by telling him of Augustine's love for a stranger. Lebas, who had advised his friend to become a suitor for Mademoiselle Virginie, saw all his hopes wrecked. Mademoiselle Virginie, overcome by hearing that Joseph had, in a way, refused her, had a sick headache. The dispute that had arisen from the discussion between Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, when, for the third time in their lives, they had been of antagonistic opinions, had shown itself in a terrible form. Finally, at half-past four in the afternoon, Augustine, pale, trembling, and with red eyes, was haled before her father and mother. The poor child artlessly related the too brief tale of her love. Reassured by a speech from her father, who promised to listen to her in silence, she gathered courage as she pronounced to her parents the name of Theodore de Sommervieux, with a mischievous little emphasis on the aristocratic de. And yielding to the unknown charm of talking of her feelings, she was brave enough to declare with innocent decision that she loved Monsieur de Sommervieux, that she had written to him, and she added, with tears in her eyes: "To sacrifice me to another man would make me wretched."

"But, Augustine, you cannot surely know what a painter is?" cried her mother with horror.

"Madame Guillaume!" said the old man, compelling her to silence. —"Augustine," he went on, "artists are generally little better than beggars. They are too extravagant not to be always a bad sort. I served the late Monsieur Joseph Vernet, the late Monsieur Lekain, and the late Monsieur Noverre. Oh, if you could only know the tricks played on poor Father Chevrel by that Monsieur Noverre, by the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, and especially by Monsieur Philidor! They are a set of rascals; I know them well! They all have a gab and nice manners. Ah, your Monsieur Sumer—, Somm——"

"De Sommervieux, papa."

"Well, well, de Sommervieux, well and good. He can never have been half so sweet to you as Monsieur le Chevalier de Saint-Georges was to me the day I got a verdict of the consuls against him. And in those days they were gentlemen of quality."

"But, father, Monsieur Theodore is of good family, and he wrote me that he is rich; his father was called Chevalier de Sommervieux before the Revolution."

At these words Monsieur Guillaume looked at his terrible better half, who, like an angry woman, sat tapping the floor with her foot while keeping sullen

silence; she avoided even casting wrathful looks at Augustine, appearing to leave to Monsieur Guillaume the whole responsibility in so grave a matter, since her opinion was not listened to. Nevertheless, in spite of her apparent self-control, when she saw her husband giving way so mildly under a catastrophe which had no concern with business, she exclaimed:

"Really, monsieur, you are so weak with your daughters! However——"

The sound of a carriage, which stopped at the door, interrupted the rating which the old draper already quaked at. In a minute Madame Roguin was standing in the middle of the room, and looking at the actors in this domestic scene: "I know all, my dear cousin," said she, with a patronizing air.

Madame Roguin made the great mistake of supposing that a Paris notary's wife could play the part of a favorite of fashion.

"I know all," she repeated, "and I have come into Noah's Ark, like the dove, with the olive-branch. I read that allegory in the Genie du Christianisme," she added, turning to Madame Guillaume; "the allusion ought to please you, cousin. Do you know," she went on, smiling at Augustine, "that Monsieur de Sommervieux is a charming man? He gave me my portrait this morning, painted by a master's hand. It is worth at least six thousand francs." And at these words she patted Monsieur Guillaume on the arm. The old draper could not help making a grimace with his lips, which was peculiar to him.

"I know Monsieur de Sommervieux very well," the Dove ran on. "He has come to my evenings this fortnight past, and made them delightful. He has told me all his woes, and commissioned me to plead for him. I know since this morning that he adores Augustine, and he shall have her. Ah, cousin, do not shake your head in refusal. He will be created Baron, I can tell you, and has just been made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, by the Emperor himself, at the Salon. Roguin is now his lawyer, and knows all his affairs. Well! Monsieur de Sommervieux has twelve thousand francs a year in good landed estate. Do you know that the father-in-law of such a man may get a rise in life—be mayor of his arrondissement, for instance. Have we not seen Monsieur Dupont become a Count of the Empire, and a senator, all because he went as mayor to congratulate the Emperor on his entry into Vienna? Oh, this marriage must take place! For my part, I adore the dear young man. His behavior to Augustine is only met with in romances. Be easy, little one, you shall be happy, and every girl will wish she were in your place. Madame la Duchesse de Carigliano, who comes to my 'At Homes,' raves about Monsieur de Sommervieux. Some spiteful people say she only comes to me to meet him; as if a duchesse of yesterday was doing too much honor to a Chevrel, whose family have been respected citizens these hundred years!

"Augustine," Madame Roguin went on, after a short pause, "I have seen

the portrait. Heavens! How lovely it is! Do you know that the Emperor wanted to have it? He laughed, and said to the Deputy High Constable that if there were many women like that in his court while all the kings visited it, he should have no difficulty about preserving the peace of Europe. Is not that a compliment?"

The tempests with which the day had begun were to resemble those of nature, by ending in clear and serene weather. Madame Roguin displayed so much address in her harangue, she was able to touch so many strings in the dry hearts of Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, that at last she hit on one which she could work upon. At this strange period commerce and finance were more than ever possessed by the crazy mania for seeking alliance with rank; and the generals of the Empire took full advantage of this desire. Monsieur Guillaume, as a singular exception, opposed this deplorable craving. His favorite axioms were that, to secure happiness, a woman must marry a man of her own class; that every one was punished sooner or later for having climbed too high; that love could so little endure under the worries of a household, that both husband and wife needed sound good qualities to be happy, that it would not do for one to be far in advance of the other, because, above everything, they must understand each other; if a man spoke Greek and his wife Latin, they might come to die of hunger. He had himself invented this sort of adage. And he compared such marriages to old-fashioned materials of mixed silk and wool. Still, there is so much vanity at the bottom of man's heart that the prudence of the pilot who steered the Cat and Racket so wisely gave way before Madame Roguin's aggressive volubility. Austere Madame Guillaume was the first to see in her daughter's affection a reason for abdicating her principles and for consenting to receive Monsieur de Sommervieux, whom she promised herself she would put under severe inquisition.

The old draper went to look for Joseph Lebas, and inform him of the state of affairs. At half-past six, the dining-room immortalized by the artist saw, united under its skylight, Monsieur and Madame Roguin, the young painter and his charming Augustine, Joseph Lebas, who found his happiness in patience, and Mademoiselle Virginie, convalescent from her headache. Monsieur and Madame Guillaume saw in perspective both their children married, and the fortunes of the Cat and Racket once more in skilful hands. Their satisfaction was at its height when, at dessert, Theodore made them a present of the wonderful picture which they had failed to see, representing the interior of the old shop, and to which they all owed so much happiness.

"Isn't it pretty!" cried Guillaume. "And to think that any one would pay thirty thousand francs for that!"

"Because you can see my lappets in it," said Madame Guillaume.

"And the cloth unrolled!" added Lebas; "you might take it up in your hand."

"Drapery always comes out well," replied the painter. "We should be only too happy, we modern artists, if we could touch the perfection of antique drapery."

"So you like drapery!" cried old Guillaume. "Well, then, by Gad! shake hands on that, my young friend. Since you can respect trade, we shall understand each other. And why should it be despised? The world began with trade, since Adam sold Paradise for an apple. He did not strike a good bargain though!" And the old man roared with honest laughter, encouraged by the champagne, which he sent round with a liberal hand. The band that covered the young artist's eyes was so thick that he thought his future parents amiable. He was not above enlivening them by a few jests in the best taste. So he too pleased every one. In the evening, when the drawing-room, furnished with what Madame Guillaume called "everything handsome," was deserted, and while she flitted from the table to the chimney-piece, from the candelabra to the tall candlesticks, hastily blowing out the wax-lights, the worthy draper, who was always clear-sighted when money was in question, called Augustine to him, and seating her on his knee, spoke as follows:—

"My dear child, you shall marry your Sommervieux since you insist; you may, if you like, risk your capital in happiness. But I am not going to be hoodwinked by the thirty thousand francs to be made by spoiling good canvas. Money that is lightly earned is lightly spent. Did I not hear that hare-brained youngster declare this evening that money was made round that it might roll. If it is round for spendthrifts, it is flat for saving folks who pile it up. Now, my child, that fine gentleman talks of giving you carriages and diamonds! He has money, let him spend it on you; so be it. It is no concern of mine. But as to what I can give you, I will not have the crown-pieces I have picked up with so much toil wasted in carriages and frippery. Those who spend too fast never grow rich. A hundred thousand crowns, which is your fortune, will not buy up Paris. It is all very well to look forward to a few hundred thousand francs to be yours some day; I shall keep you waiting for them as long as possible, by Gad! So I took your lover aside, and a man who managed the Lecocq bankruptcy had not much difficulty in persuading the artist to marry under a settlement of his wife's money on herself. I will keep an eye on the marriage contract to see that what he is to settle on you is safely tied up. So now, my child, I hope to be a grandfather, by Gad! I will begin at once to lay up for my grandchildren; but swear to me, here and now, never to sign any papers relating to money without my advice; and if I go soon to join old Father Chevrel, promise to consult young Lebas, your brother-in-law."

"Yes, father, I swear it."

At these words, spoken in a gentle voice, the old man kissed his daughter on both cheeks. That night the lovers slept as soundly as Monsieur and Madame Guillaume.

Some few months after this memorable Sunday the high altar of Saint-Leu was the scene of two very different weddings. Augustine and Theodore appeared in all the radiance of happiness, their eyes beaming with love, dressed with elegance, while a fine carriage waited for them. Virginie, who had come in a good hired fly with the rest of the family, humbly followed her younger sister, dressed in the simplest fashion like a shadow necessary to the harmony of the picture. Monsieur Guillaume had exerted himself to the utmost in the church to get Virginie married before Augustine, but the priests, high and low, persisted in addressing the more elegant of the two brides. He heard some of his neighbors highly approving the good sense of Mademoiselle Virginie, who was making, as they said, the more substantial match, and remaining faithful to the neighborhood; while they fired a few taunts, prompted by envy of Augustine, who was marrying an artist and a man of rank; adding, with a sort of dismay, that if the Guillaumes were ambitious, there was an end to the business. An old fan-maker having remarked that such a prodigal would soon bring his wife to beggary, father Guillaume prided himself in petto for his prudence in the matter of marriage settlements. In the evening, after a splendid ball, followed by one of those substantial suppers of which the memory is dying out in the present generation, Monsieur and Madame Guillaume remained in a fine house belonging to them in the Rue du Colombier, where the wedding had been held; Monsieur and Madame Lebas returned in their fly to the old home in the Rue Saint-Denis, to steer the good ship Cat and Racket. The artist, intoxicated with happiness, carried off his beloved Augustine, and eagerly lifting her out of their carriage when it reached the Rue des Trois-Freres, led her to an apartment embellished by all the arts.

The fever of passion which possessed Theodore made a year fly over the young couple without a single cloud to dim the blue sky under which they lived. Life did not hang heavy on the lovers' hands. Theodore lavished on every day inexhaustible fioriture of enjoyment, and he delighted to vary the transports of passion by the soft languor of those hours of repose when souls soar so high that they seem to have forgotten all bodily union. Augustine was too happy for reflection; she floated on an undulating tide of rapture; she thought she could not do enough by abandoning herself to sanctioned and sacred married love; simple and artless, she had no coquetry, no reserves, none of the dominion which a worldly-minded girl acquires over her husband by ingenious caprice; she loved too well to calculate for the future, and never imagined that so exquisite a life could come to an end. Happy in being her husband's sole delight, she believed that her inextinguishable love would

always be her greatest grace in his eyes, as her devotion and obedience would be a perennial charm. And, indeed, the ecstasy of love had made her so brilliantly lovely that her beauty filled her with pride, and gave her confidence that she could always reign over a man so easy to kindle as Monsieur de Sommervieux. Thus her position as a wife brought her no knowledge but the lessons of love.

In the midst of her happiness, she was still the simple child who had lived in obscurity in the Rue Saint-Denis, and who never thought of acquiring the manners, the information, the tone of the world she had to live in. Her words being the words of love, she revealed in them, no doubt, a certain pliancy of mind and a certain refinement of speech; but she used the language common to all women when they find themselves plunged in passion, which seems to be their element. When, by chance, Augustine expressed an idea that did not harmonize with Theodore's, the young artist laughed, as we laugh at the first mistakes of a foreigner, though they end by annoying us if they are not corrected.

In spite of all this love-making, by the end of this year, as delightful as it was swift, Sommervieux felt one morning the need for resuming his work and his old habits. His wife was expecting their first child. He saw some friends again. During the tedious discomforts of the year when a young wife is nursing an infant for the first time, he worked, no doubt, with zeal, but he occasionally sought diversion in the fashionable world. The house which he was best pleased to frequent was that of the Duchesse de Carigliano, who had at last attracted the celebrated artist to her parties. When Augustine was quite well again, and her boy no longer required the assiduous care which debars a mother from social pleasures, Theodore had come to the stage of wishing to know the joys of satisfied vanity to be found in society by a man who shows himself with a handsome woman, the object of envy and admiration.

To figure in drawing-rooms with the reflected lustre of her husband's fame, and to find other women envious of her, was to Augustine a new harvest of pleasures; but it was the last gleam of conjugal happiness. She first wounded her husband's vanity when, in spite of vain efforts, she betrayed her ignorance, the inelegance of her language, and the narrowness of her ideas. Sommervieux's nature, subjugated for nearly two years and a half by the first transports of love, now, in the calm of less new possession, recovered its bent and habits, for a while diverted from their channel. Poetry, painting, and the subtle joys of imagination have inalienable rights over a lofty spirit. These cravings of a powerful soul had not been starved in Theodore during these two years; they had only found fresh pasture. As soon as the meadows of love had been ransacked, and the artist had gathered roses and cornflowers as the children do, so greedily that he did not see that his hands could hold no more,

the scene changed. When the painter showed his wife the sketches for his finest compositions he heard her exclaim, as her father had done, "How pretty!" This tepid admiration was not the outcome of conscientious feeling, but of her faith on the strength of love.

Augustine cared more for a look than for the finest picture. The only sublime she knew was that of the heart. At last Theodore could not resist the evidence of the cruel fact—his wife was insensible to poetry, she did not dwell in his sphere, she could not follow him in all his vagaries, his inventions, his joys and his sorrows; she walked groveling in the world of reality, while his head was in the skies. Common minds cannot appreciate the perennial sufferings of a being who, while bound to another by the most intimate affections, is obliged constantly to suppress the dearest flights of his soul, and to thrust down into the void those images which a magic power compels him to create. To him the torture is all the more intolerable because his feeling towards his companion enjoins, as its first law, that they should have no concealments, but mingle the aspirations of their thought as perfectly as the effusions of their soul. The demands of nature are not to be cheated. She is as inexorable as necessity, which is, indeed, a sort of social nature. Sommervieux took refuge in the peace and silence of his studio, hoping that the habit of living with artists might mould his wife and develop in her the dormant germs of lofty intelligence which some superior minds suppose must exist in every being. But Augustine was too sincerely religious not to take fright at the tone of artists. At the first dinner Theodore gave, she heard a young painter say, with the childlike lightness, which to her was unintelligible, and which redeems a jest from the taint of profanity, "But, madame, your Paradise cannot be more beautiful than Raphael's Transfiguration!—Well, and I got tired of looking at that."

Thus Augustine came among this sparkling set in a spirit of distrust which no one could fail to see. She was a restraint on their freedom. Now an artist who feels restraint is pitiless; he stays away, or laughs it to scorn. Madame Guillaume, among other absurdities, had an excessive notion of the dignity she considered the prerogative of a married woman; and Augustine, though she had often made fun of it, could not help a slight imitation of her mother's primness. This extreme propriety, which virtuous wives do not always avoid, suggested a few epigrams in the form of sketches, in which the harmless jest was in such good taste that Sommervieux could not take offence; and even if they had been more severe, these pleasantries were after all only reprisals from his friends. Still, nothing could seem a trifle to a spirit so open as Theodore's to impressions from without. A coldness insensibly crept over him, and inevitably spread. To attain conjugal happiness we must climb a hill whose summit is a narrow ridge, close to a steep and slippery descent: the painter's love was falling down it. He regarded his wife as incapable of appreciating the

moral considerations which justified him in his own eyes for his singular behavior to her, and believed himself quite innocent in hiding from her thoughts she could not enter into, and peccadilloes outside the jurisdiction of a bourgeois conscience. Augustine wrapped herself in sullen and silent grief. These unconfessed feelings placed a shroud between the husband and wife which could not fail to grow thicker day by day. Though her husband never failed in consideration for her, Augustine could not help trembling as she saw that he kept for the outer world those treasures of wit and grace that he formerly would lay at her feet. She soon began to find sinister meaning in the jocular speeches that are current in the world as to the inconstancy of men. She made no complaints, but her demeanor conveyed reproach.

Three years after her marriage this pretty young woman, who dashed past in her handsome carriage, and lived in a sphere of glory and riches to the envy of heedless folk incapable of taking a just view of the situations of life, was a prey to intense grief. She lost her color; she reflected; she made comparisons; then sorrow unfolded to her the first lessons of experience. She determined to restrict herself bravely within the round of duty, hoping that by this generous conduct she might sooner or later win back her husband's love. But it was not so. When Sommervieux, fired with work, came in from his studio, Augustine did not put away her work so quickly but that the painter might find his wife mending the household linen, and his own, with all the care of a good housewife. She supplied generously and without a murmur the money needed for his lavishness; but in her anxiety to husband her dear Theodore's fortune, she was strictly economical for herself and in certain details of domestic management. Such conduct is incompatible with the easy-going habits of artists, who, at the end of their life, have enjoyed it so keenly that they never inquire into the causes of their ruin.

It is useless to note every tint of shadow by which the brilliant hues of their honeymoon were overcast till they were lost in utter blackness. One evening poor Augustine, who had for some time heard her husband speak with enthusiasm of the Duchesse de Carigliano, received from a friend certain malignantly charitable warnings as to the nature of the attachment which Sommervieux had formed for this celebrated flirt of the Imperial Court. At one-and-twenty, in all the splendor of youth and beauty, Augustine saw herself deserted for a woman of six-and-thirty. Feeling herself so wretched in the midst of a world of festivity which to her was a blank, the poor little thing could no longer understand the admiration she excited, or the envy of which she was the object. Her face assumed a different expression. Melancholy, tinged her features with the sweetness of resignation and the pallor of scorned love. Ere long she too was courted by the most fascinating men; but she remained lonely and virtuous. Some contemptuous words which escaped her husband filled her with incredible despair. A sinister flash showed her the

breaches which, as a result of her sordid education, hindered the perfect union of her soul with Theodore's; she loved him well enough to absolve him and condemn herself. She shed tears of blood, and perceived, too late, that there are mesalliances of the spirit as well as of rank and habits. As she recalled the early raptures of their union, she understood the full extent of that lost happiness, and accepted the conclusion that so rich a harvest of love was in itself a whole life, which only sorrow could pay for. At the same time, she loved too truly to lose all hope. At one-and-twenty she dared undertake to educate herself, and make her imagination, at least, worthy of that she admired. "If I am not a poet," thought she, "at any rate, I will understand poetry."

Then, with all the strength of will, all the energy which every woman can display when she loves, Madame de Sommervieux tried to alter her character, her manners, and her habits; but by dint of devouring books and learning undauntedly, she only succeeded in becoming less ignorant. Lightness of wit and the graces of conversation are a gift of nature, or the fruit of education begun in the cradle. She could appreciate music and enjoy it, but she could not sing with taste. She understood literature and the beauties of poetry, but it was too late to cultivate her refractory memory. She listened with pleasure to social conversation, but she could contribute nothing brilliant. Her religious notions and home-grown prejudices were antagonistic to the complete emancipation of her intelligence. Finally, a foregone conclusion against her had stolen into Theodore's mind, and this she could not conquer. The artist would laugh, at those who flattered him about his wife, and his irony had some foundation; he so overawed the pathetic young creature that, in his presence, or alone with him, she trembled. Hampered by her too eager desire to please, her wits and her knowledge vanished in one absorbing feeling. Even her fidelity vexed the unfaithful husband, who seemed to bid her do wrong by stigmatizing her virtue as insensibility. Augustine tried in vain to abdicate her reason, to yield to her husband's caprices and whims, to devote herself to the selfishness of his vanity. Her sacrifices bore no fruit. Perhaps they had both let the moment slip when souls may meet in comprehension. One day the young wife's too sensitive heart received one of those blows which so strain the bonds of feeling that they seem to be broken. She withdrew into solitude. But before long a fatal idea suggested to her to seek counsel and comfort in the bosom of her family.

So one morning she made her way towards the grotesque facade of the humble, silent home where she had spent her childhood. She sighed as she looked up at the sash-window, whence one day she had sent her first kiss to him who now shed as much sorrow as glory on her life. Nothing was changed in the cavern, where the drapery business had, however, started on a new life. Augustine's sister filled her mother's old place at the desk. The unhappy young

woman met her brother-in-law with his pen behind his ear; he hardly listened to her, he was so full of business. The formidable symptoms of stock-taking were visible all round him; he begged her to excuse him. She was received coldly enough by her sister, who owed her a grudge. In fact, Augustine, in her finery, and stepping out of a handsome carriage, had never been to see her but when passing by. The wife of the prudent Lebas, imagining that want of money was the prime cause of this early call, tried to keep up a tone of reserve which more than once made Augustine smile. The painter's wife perceived that, apart from the cap and lappets, her mother had found in Virginie a successor who could uphold the ancient honor of the Cat and Racket. At breakfast she observed certain changes in the management of the house which did honor to Lebas' good sense; the assistants did not rise before dessert; they were allowed to talk, and the abundant meal spoke of ease without luxury. The fashionable woman found some tickets for a box at the Francais, where she remembered having seen her sister from time to time. Madame Lebas had a cashmere shawl over her shoulders, of which the value bore witness to her husband's generosity to her. In short, the couple were keeping pace with the times. During the two-thirds of the day she spent there, Augustine was touched to the heart by the equable happiness, devoid, to be sure, of all emotion, but equally free from storms, enjoyed by this well-matched couple. They had accepted life as a commercial enterprise, in which, above all, they must do credit to the business. Not finding any great love in her husband, Virginie had set to work to create it. Having by degrees learned to esteem and care for his wife, the time that his happiness had taken to germinate was to Joseph Lebas a guarantee of its durability. Hence, when Augustine plaintively set forth her painful position, she had to face the deluge of commonplace morality which the traditions of the Rue Saint-Denis furnished to her sister.

"The mischief is done, wife," said Joseph Lebas; "we must try to give our sister good advice." Then the clever tradesman ponderously analyzed the resources which law and custom might offer Augustine as a means of escape at this crisis; he ticketed every argument, so to speak, and arranged them in their degrees of weight under various categories, as though they were articles of merchandise of different qualities; then he put them in the scale, weighed them, and ended by showing the necessity for his sister-in-law's taking violent steps which could not satisfy the love she still had for her husband; and, indeed, the feeling had revived in all its strength when she heard Joseph Lebas speak of legal proceedings. Augustine thanked them, and returned home even more undecided than she had been before consulting them. She now ventured to go to the house in the Rue du Colombier, intending to confide her troubles to her father and mother; for she was like a sick man who, in his desperate plight, tries every prescription, and even puts faith in old wives' remedies.

The old people received their daughter with an effusiveness that touched

her deeply. Her visit brought them some little change, and that to them was worth a fortune. For the last four years they had gone their way like navigators without a goal or a compass. Sitting by the chimney corner, they would talk over their disasters under the old law of maximum, of their great investments in cloth, of the way they had weathered bankruptcies, and, above all, the famous failure of Lecocq, Monsieur Guillaume's battle of Marengo. Then, when they had exhausted the tale of lawsuits, they recapitulated the sum total of their most profitable stock-takings, and told each other old stories of the Saint-Denis quarter. At two o'clock old Guillaume went to cast an eye on the business at the Cat and Racket; on his way back he called at all the shops, formerly the rivals of his own, where the young proprietors hoped to inveigle the old draper into some risky discount, which, as was his wont, he never refused point-blank. Two good Normandy horses were dying of their own fat in the stables of the big house; Madame Guillaume never used them but to drag her on Sundays to high Mass at the parish church. Three times a week the worthy couple kept open house. By the influence of his son-in-law Sommervieux, Monsieur Guillaume had been named a member of the consulting board for the clothing of the Army. Since her husband had stood so high in office, Madame Guillaume had decided that she must receive; her rooms were so crammed with gold and silver ornaments, and furniture, tasteless but of undoubted value, that the simplest room in the house looked like a chapel. Economy and expense seemed to be struggling for the upper hand in every accessory. It was as though Monsieur Guillaume had looked to a good investment, even in the purchase of a candlestick. In the midst of this bazaar, where splendor revealed the owner's want of occupation, Sommervieux's famous picture filled the place of honor, and in it Monsieur and Madame Guillaume found their chief consolation, turning their eyes, harnessed with eye-glasses, twenty times a day on this presentment of their past life, to them so active and amusing. The appearance of this mansion and these rooms, where everything had an aroma of staleness and mediocrity, the spectacle offered by these two beings, cast away, as it were, on a rock far from the world and the ideas which are life, startled Augustine; she could here contemplate the sequel of the scene of which the first part had struck her at the house of Lebas—a life of stir without movement, a mechanical and instinctive existence like that of the beaver; and then she felt an indefinable pride in her troubles, as she reflected that they had their source in eighteen months of such happiness as, in her eyes, was worth a thousand lives like this; its vacuity seemed to her horrible. However, she concealed this not very charitable feeling, and displayed for her parents her newly-acquired accomplishments of mind, and the ingratiating tenderness that love had revealed to her, disposing them to listen to her matrimonial grievances. Old people have a weakness for this kind of confidence. Madame Guillaume wanted to know the most trivial

details of that alien life, which to her seemed almost fabulous. The travels of Baron da la Houtan, which she began again and again and never finished, told her nothing more unheard-of concerning the Canadian savages.

"What, child, your husband shuts himself into a room with naked women! And you are so simple as to believe that he draws them?"

As she uttered this exclamation, the grandmother laid her spectacles on a little work-table, shook her skirts, and clasped her hands on her knees, raised by a foot-warmer, her favorite pedestal.

"But, mother, all artists are obliged to have models."

"He took good care not to tell us that when he asked leave to marry you. If I had known it, I would never had given my daughter to a man who followed such a trade. Religion forbids such horrors; they are immoral. And at what time of night do you say he comes home?"

"At one o'clock—two——"

The old folks looked at each other in utter amazement.

"Then he gambles?" said Monsieur Guillaume. "In my day only gamblers stayed out so late."

Augustine made a face that scorned the accusation.

"He must keep you up through dreadful nights waiting for him," said Madame Guillaume. "But you go to bed, don't you? And when he has lost, the wretch wakes you."

"No, mamma, on the contrary, he is sometimes in very good spirits. Not unfrequently, indeed, when it is fine, he suggests that I should get up and go into the woods."

"The woods! At that hour? Then have you such a small set of rooms that his bedroom and his sitting-room are not enough, and that he must run about? But it is just to give you cold that the wretch proposes such expeditions. He wants to get rid of you. Did one ever hear of a man settled in life, a well-behaved, quiet man galloping about like a warlock?"

"But, my dear mother, you do not understand that he must have excitement to fire his genius. He is fond of scenes which——"

"I would make scenes for him, fine scenes!" cried Madame Guillaume, interrupting her daughter. "How can you show any consideration to such a man? In the first place, I don't like his drinking water only; it is not wholesome. Why does he object to see a woman eating? What queer notion is that! But he is mad. All you tell us about him is impossible. A man cannot leave his home without a word, and never come back for ten days. And then

he tells you he has been to Dieppe to paint the sea. As if any one painted the sea! He crams you with a pack of tales that are too absurd."

Augustine opened her lips to defend her husband; but Madame Guillaume enjoined silence with a wave of her hand, which she obeyed by a survival of habit, and her mother went on in harsh tones: "Don't talk to me about the man! He never set foot in church excepting to see you and to be married. People without religion are capable of anything. Did Guillaume ever dream of hiding anything from me, of spending three days without saying a word to me, and of chattering afterwards like a blind magpie?"

"My dear mother, you judge superior people too severely. If their ideas were the same as other folks', they would not be men of genius."

"Very well, then let men of genius stop at home and not get married. What! A man of genius is to make his wife miserable? And because he is a genius it is all right! Genius, genius! It is not so very clever to say black one minute and white the next, as he does, to interrupt other people, to dance such rigs at home, never to let you know which foot you are to stand on, to compel his wife never to be amused unless my lord is in gay spirits, and to be dull when he is dull."

"But, mother, the very nature of such imaginations——"

"What are such 'imaginations'?" Madame Guillaume went on, interrupting her daughter again. "Fine ones his are, my word! What possesses a man that all on a sudden, without consulting a doctor, he takes it into his head to eat nothing but vegetables? If indeed it were from religious motives, it might do him some good—but he has no more religion than a Huguenot. Was there ever a man known who, like him, loved horses better than his fellow-creatures, had his hair curled like a heathen, laid statues under muslin coverlets, shut his shutters in broad day to work by lamp-light? There, get along; if he were not so grossly immoral, he would be fit to shut up in a lunatic asylum. Consult Monsieur Loraux, the priest at Saint Sulpice, ask his opinion about it all, and he will tell you that your husband, does not behave like a Christian."

"Oh, mother, can you believe——?"

"Yes, I do believe. You loved him, and you can see none of these things. But I can remember in the early days after your marriage. I met him in the Champs-Elysees. He was on horseback. Well, at one minute he was galloping as hard as he could tear, and then pulled up to a walk. I said to myself at that moment, 'There is a man devoid of judgement.'"

"Ah, ha!" cried Monsieur Guillaume, "how wise I was to have your money settled on yourself with such a queer fellow for a husband!"

When Augustine was so imprudent as to set forth her serious grievances against her husband, the two old people were speechless with indignation. But the word "divorce" was ere long spoken by Madame Guillaume. At the sound of the word divorce the apathetic old draper seemed to wake up. Prompted by his love for his daughter, and also by the excitement which the proceedings would bring into his uneventful life, father Guillaume took up the matter. He made himself the leader of the application for a divorce, laid down the lines of it, almost argued the case; he offered to be at all the charges, to see the lawyers, the pleaders, the judges, to move heaven and earth. Madame de Sommervieux was frightened, she refused her father's services, said she would not be separated from her husband even if she were ten times as unhappy, and talked no more about her sorrows. After being overwhelmed by her parents with all the little wordless and consoling kindnesses by which the old couple tried in vain to make up to her for her distress of heart, Augustine went away, feeling the impossibility of making a superior mind intelligible to weak intellects. She had learned that a wife must hide from every one, even from her parents, woes for which it is so difficult to find sympathy. The storms and sufferings of the upper spheres are appreciated only by the lofty spirits who inhabit there. In any circumstance we can only be judged by our equals.

Thus poor Augustine found herself thrown back on the horror of her meditations, in the cold atmosphere of her home. Study was indifferent to her, since study had not brought her back her husband's heart. Initiated into the secret of these souls of fire, but bereft of their resources, she was compelled to share their sorrows without sharing their pleasures. She was disgusted with the world, which to her seemed mean and small as compared with the incidents of passion. In short, her life was a failure.

One evening an idea flashed upon her that lighted up her dark grief like a beam from heaven. Such an idea could never have smiled on a heart less pure, less virtuous than hers. She determined to go to the Duchesse de Carigliano, not to ask her to give her back her husband's heart, but to learn the arts by which it had been captured; to engage the interest of this haughty fine lady for the mother of her lover's children; to appeal to her and make her the instrument of her future happiness, since she was the cause of her present wretchedness.

So one day Augustine, timid as she was, but armed with supernatural courage, got into her carriage at two in the afternoon to try for admittance to the boudoir of the famous coquette, who was never visible till that hour. Madame de Sommervieux had not yet seen any of the ancient and magnificent mansions of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. As she made her way through the stately corridors, the handsome staircases, the vast drawing-rooms—full of flowers, though it was in the depth of winter, and decorated with the taste

peculiar to women born to opulence or to the elegant habits of the aristocracy, Augustine felt a terrible clutch at her heart; she coveted the secrets of an elegance of which she had never had an idea; she breathed in an air of grandeur which explained the attraction of the house for her husband. When she reached the private rooms of the Duchess she was filled with jealousy and a sort of despair, as she admired the luxurious arrangement of the furniture, the draperies and the hangings. Here disorder was a grace, here luxury affected a certain contempt of splendor. The fragrance that floated in the warm air flattered the sense of smell without offending it. The accessories of the rooms were in harmony with a view, through plate-glass windows, of the lawns in a garden planted with evergreen trees. It was all bewitching, and the art of it was not perceptible. The whole spirit of the mistress of these rooms pervaded the drawing-room where Augustine awaited her. She tried to divine her rival's character from the aspect of the scattered objects; but there was here something as impenetrable in the disorder as in the symmetry, and to the simple-minded young wife all was a sealed letter. All that she could discern was that, as a woman, the Duchess was a superior person. Then a painful thought came over her.

"Alas! And is it true," she wondered, "that a simple and loving heart is not all-sufficient to an artist; that to balance the weight of these powerful souls they need a union with feminine souls of a strength equal to their own? If I had been brought up like this siren, our weapons at least might have been equal in the hour of struggle."

"But I am not at home!" The sharp, harsh words, though spoken in an undertone in the adjoining boudoir, were heard by Augustine, and her heart beat violently.

"The lady is in there," replied the maid.

"You are an idiot! Show her in," replied the Duchess, whose voice was sweeter, and had assumed the dulcet tones of politeness. She evidently now meant to be heard.

Augustine shyly entered the room. At the end of the dainty boudoir she saw the Duchess lounging luxuriously on an ottoman covered with brown velvet and placed in the centre of a sort of apse outlined by soft folds of white muslin over a yellow lining. Ornaments of gilt bronze, arranged with exquisite taste, enhanced this sort of dais, under which the Duchess reclined like a Greek statue. The dark hue of the velvet gave relief to every fascinating charm. A subdued light, friendly to her beauty, fell like a reflection rather than a direct illumination. A few rare flowers raised their perfumed heads from costly Sevres vases. At the moment when this picture was presented to Augustine's astonished eyes, she was approaching so noiselessly that she

caught a glance from those of the enchantress. This look seemed to say to some one whom Augustine did not at first perceive, "Stay; you will see a pretty woman, and make her visit seem less of a bore."

On seeing Augustine, the Duchess rose and made her sit down by her.

"And to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, madame?" she said with a most gracious smile.

"Why all the falseness?" thought Augustine, replying only with a bow.

Her silence was compulsory. The young woman saw before her a superfluous witness of the scene. This personage was, of all the Colonels in the army, the youngest, the most fashionable, and the finest man. His face, full of life and youth, but already expressive, was further enhanced by a small moustache twirled up into points, and as black as jet, by a full imperial, by whiskers carefully combed, and a forest of black hair in some disorder. He was whisking a riding whip with an air of ease and freedom which suited his self-satisfied expression and the elegance of his dress; the ribbons attached to his button-hole were carelessly tied, and he seemed to pride himself much more on his smart appearance than on his courage. Augustine looked at the Duchesse de Carigliano, and indicated the Colonel by a sidelong glance. All its mute appeal was understood.

"Good-bye, then, Monsieur d'Aiglemont, we shall meet in the Bois de Boulogne."

These words were spoken by the siren as though they were the result of an agreement made before Augustine's arrival, and she winged them with a threatening look that the officer deserved perhaps for the admiration he showed in gazing at the modest flower, which contrasted so well with the haughty Duchess. The young fop bowed in silence, turned on the heels of his boots, and gracefully quitted the boudoir. At this instant, Augustine, watching her rival, whose eyes seemed to follow the brilliant officer, detected in that glance a sentiment of which the transient expression is known to every woman. She perceived with the deepest anguish that her visit would be useless; this lady, full of artifice, was too greedy of homage not to have a ruthless heart.

"Madame," said Augustine in a broken voice, "the step I am about to take will seem to you very strange; but there is a madness of despair which ought to excuse anything. I understand only too well why Theodore prefers your house to any other, and why your mind has so much power over his. Alas! I have only to look into myself to find more than ample reasons. But I am devoted to my husband, madame. Two years of tears have not effaced his image from my heart, though I have lost his. In my folly I dared to dream of a

contest with you; and I have come to you to ask you by what means I may triumph over yourself. Oh, madame," cried the young wife, ardently seizing the hand which her rival allowed her to hold, "I will never pray to God for my own happiness with so much fervor as I will beseech Him for yours, if you will help me to win back Sommervieux's regard—I will not say his love. I have no hope but in you. Ah! tell me how you could please him, and make him forget the first days——" At these words Augustine broke down, suffocated with sobs she could not suppress. Ashamed of her weakness, she hid her face in her handkerchief, which she bathed with tears.

"What a child you are, my dear little beauty!" said the Duchess, carried away by the novelty of such a scene, and touched, in spite of herself, at receiving such homage from the most perfect virtue perhaps in Paris. She took the young wife's handkerchief, and herself wiped the tears from her eyes, soothing her by a few monosyllables murmured with gracious compassion. After a moment's silence the Duchess, grasping poor Augustine's hands in both her own—hands that had a rare character of dignity and powerful beauty—said in a gentle and friendly voice: "My first warning is to advise you not to weep so bitterly; tears are disfiguring. We must learn to deal firmly with the sorrows that make us ill, for love does not linger long by a sick-bed. Melancholy, at first, no doubt, lends a certain attractive grace, but it ends by dragging the features and blighting the loveliest face. And besides, our tyrants are so vain as to insist that their slaves should be always cheerful."

"But, madame, it is not in my power not to feel. How is it possible, without suffering a thousand deaths, to see the face which once beamed with love and gladness turn chill, colorless, and indifferent? I cannot control my heart!"

"So much the worse, sweet child. But I fancy I know all your story. In the first place, if your husband is unfaithful to you, understand clearly that I am not his accomplice. If I was anxious to have him in my drawing-room, it was, I own, out of vanity; he was famous, and he went nowhere. I like you too much already to tell you all the mad things he has done for my sake. I will only reveal one, because it may perhaps help us to bring him back to you, and to punish him for the audacity of his behavior to me. He will end by compromising me. I know the world too well, my dear, to abandon myself to the discretion of a too superior man. You should know that one may allow them to court one, but marry them—that is a mistake! We women ought to admire men of genius, and delight in them as a spectacle, but as to living with them? Never.—No, no. It is like wanting to find pleasure in inspecting the machinery of the opera instead of sitting in a box to enjoy its brilliant illusions. But this misfortune has fallen on you, my poor child, has it not? Well, then, you must try to arm yourself against tyranny."

"Ah, madame, before coming in here, only seeing you as I came in, I

already detected some arts of which I had no suspicion."

"Well, come and see me sometimes, and it will not be long before you have mastered the knowledge of these trifles, important, too, in their way. Outward things are, to fools, half of life; and in that matter more than one clever man is a fool, in spite of all his talent. But I dare wager you never could refuse your Theodore anything!"

"How refuse anything, madame, if one loves a man?"

"Poor innocent, I could adore you for your simplicity. You should know that the more we love the less we should allow a man, above all, a husband, to see the whole extent of our passion. The one who loves most is tyrannized over, and, which is worse, is sooner or later neglected. The one who wishes to rule should——"

"What, madame, must I then dissimulate, calculate, become false, form an artificial character, and live in it? How is it possible to live in such a way? Can you——" she hesitated; the Duchess smiled.

"My dear child," the great lady went on in a serious tone, "conjugal happiness has in all times been a speculation, a business demanding particular attention. If you persist in talking passion while I am talking marriage, we shall soon cease to understand each other. Listen to me," she went on, assuming a confidential tone. "I have been in the way of seeing some of the superior men of our day. Those who have married have for the most part chosen quite insignificant wives. Well, those wives governed them, as the Emperor governs us; and if they were not loved, they were at least respected. I like secrets—especially those which concern women—well enough to have amused myself by seeking the clue to the riddle. Well, my sweet child, those worthy women had the gift of analyzing their husbands' nature; instead of taking fright, like you, at their superiority, they very acutely noted the qualities they lacked, and either by possessing those qualities, or by feigning to possess them, they found means of making such a handsome display of them in their husbands' eyes that in the end they impressed them. Also, I must tell you, all these souls which appear so lofty have just a speck of madness in them, which we ought to know how to take advantage of. By firmly resolving to have the upper hand and never deviating from that aim, by bringing all our actions to bear on it, all our ideas, our cajolery, we subjugate these eminently capricious natures, which, by the very mutability of their thoughts, lend us the means of influencing them."

"Good heavens!" cried the young wife in dismay. "And this is life. It is a warfare——"

"In which we must always threaten," said the Duchess, laughing. "Our

power is wholly factitious. And we must never allow a man to despise us; it is impossible to recover from such a descent but by odious manoeuvring. Come," she added, "I will give you a means of bringing your husband to his senses."

She rose with a smile to guide the young and guileless apprentice to conjugal arts through the labyrinth of her palace. They came to a back-staircase, which led up to the reception rooms. As Madame de Carigliano pressed the secret springlock of the door she stopped, looking at Augustine with an inimitable gleam of shrewdness and grace. "The Duc de Carigliano adores me," said she. "Well, he dare not enter by this door without my leave. And he is a man in the habit of commanding thousands of soldiers. He knows how to face a battery, but before me,—he is afraid!"

Augustine sighed. They entered a sumptuous gallery, where the painter's wife was led by the Duchess up to the portrait painted by Theodore of Mademoiselle Guillaume. On seeing it, Augustine uttered a cry.

"I knew it was no longer in my house," she said, "but—here!——"

"My dear child, I asked for it merely to see what pitch of idiocy a man of genius may attain to. Sooner or later I should have returned it to you, for I never expected the pleasure of seeing the original here face to face with the copy. While we finish our conversation I will have it carried down to your carriage. And if, armed with such a talisman, you are not your husband's mistress for a hundred years, you are not a woman, and you deserve your fate."

Augustine kissed the Duchess' hand, and the lady clasped her to her heart, with all the more tenderness because she would forget her by the morrow. This scene might perhaps have destroyed for ever the candor and purity of a less virtuous woman than Augustine, for the astute politics of the higher social spheres were no more consonant to Augustine than the narrow reasoning of Joseph Lebas, or Madame Guillaume's vapid morality. Strange are the results of the false positions into which we may be brought by the slightest mistake in the conduct of life! Augustine was like an Alpine cowherd surprised by an avalanche; if he hesitates, if he listens to the shouts of his comrades, he is almost certainly lost. In such a crisis the heart steels itself or breaks.

Madame de Sommervieux returned home a prey to such agitation as it is difficult to describe. Her conversation with the Duchesse de Carigliano had roused in her mind a crowd of contradictory thoughts. Like the sheep in the fable, full of courage in the wolf's absence, she preached to herself, and laid down admirable plans of conduct; she devised a thousand coquettish stratagems; she even talked to her husband, finding, away from him, all the springs of true eloquence which never desert a woman; then, as she pictured to herself Theodore's clear and steadfast gaze, she began to quake. When she

asked whether monsieur were at home her voice shook. On learning that he would not be in to dinner, she felt an unaccountable thrill of joy. Like a criminal who has appealed against sentence of death, a respite, however short, seemed to her a lifetime. She placed the portrait in her room, and waited for her husband in all the agonies of hope. That this venture must decide her future life, she felt too keenly not to shiver at every sound, even the low ticking of the clock, which seemed to aggravate her terrors by doling them out to her. She tried to cheat time by various devices. The idea struck her of dressing in a way which would make her exactly like the portrait. Then, knowing her husband's restless temper, she had her room lighted up with unusual brightness, feeling sure that when he came in curiosity would bring him there at once. Midnight had struck when, at the call of the groom, the street gate was opened, and the artist's carriage rumbled in over the stones of the silent courtyard.

"What is the meaning of this illumination?" asked Theodore in glad tones, as he came into her room.

Augustine skilfully seized the auspicious moment; she threw herself into her husband's arms, and pointed to the portrait. The artist stood rigid as a rock, and his eyes turned alternately on Augustine, on the accusing dress. The frightened wife, half-dead, as she watched her husband's changeful brow—that terrible brow—saw the expressive furrows gathering like clouds; then she felt her blood curdling in her veins when, with a glaring look, and in a deep hollow voice, he began to question her:

"Where did you find that picture?"

"The Duchess de Carigliano returned it to me."

"You asked her for it?"

"I did not know that she had it."

The gentleness, or rather the exquisite sweetness of this angel's voice, might have touched a cannibal, but not an artist in the clutches of wounded vanity.

"It is worthy of her!" exclaimed the painter in a voice of thunder. "I will be avenged!" he cried, striding up and down the room. "She shall die of shame; I will paint her! Yes, I will paint her as Messalina stealing out at night from the palace of Claudius."

"Theodore!" said a faint voice.

"I will kill her!"

"My dear——"

"She is in love with that little cavalry colonel, because he rides well——"

"Theodore!"

"Let me be!" said the painter in a tone almost like a roar.

It would be odious to describe the whole scene. In the end the frenzy of passion prompted the artist to acts and words which any woman not so young as Augustine would have ascribed to madness.

At eight o'clock next morning Madame Guillaume, surprising her daughter, found her pale, with red eyes, her hair in disorder, holding a handkerchief soaked with tears, while she gazed at the floor strewn with the torn fragments of a dress and the broken fragments of a large gilt picture-frame. Augustine, almost senseless with grief, pointed to the wreck with a gesture of deep despair.

"I don't know that the loss is very great!" cried the old mistress of the Cat and Racket. "It was like you, no doubt; but I am told that there is a man on the boulevard who paints lovely portraits for fifty crowns."

"Oh, mother!"

"Poor child, you are quite right," replied Madame Guillaume, who misinterpreted the expression of her daughter's glance at her. "True, my child, no one ever can love you as fondly as a mother. My darling, I guess it all; but confide your sorrows to me, and I will comfort you. Did I not tell you long ago that the man was mad! Your maid has told me pretty stories. Why, he must be a perfect monster!"

Augustine laid a finger on her white lips, as if to implore a moment's silence. During this dreadful night misery had led her to that patient resignation which in mothers and loving wives transcends in its effects all human energy, and perhaps reveals in the heart of women the existence of certain chords which God has withheld from men.

An inscription engraved on a broken column in the cemetery at Montmartre states that Madame de Sommervieux died at the age of twenty-seven. In the simple words of this epitaph one of the timid creature's friends can read the last scene of a tragedy. Every year, on the second of November, the solemn day of the dead, he never passes this youthful monument without wondering whether it does not need a stronger woman than Augustine to endure the violent embrace of genius?

"The humble and modest flowers that bloom in the valley," he reflects, "perish perhaps when they are transplanted too near the skies, to the region where storms gather and the sun is scorching."

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THE BALL AT SCEAUX

The Comte de Fontaine, head of one of the oldest families in Poitou, had served the Bourbon cause with intelligence and bravery during the war in La Vendee against the Republic. After having escaped all the dangers which threatened the royalist leaders during this stormy period of modern history, he was wont to say in jest, "I am one of the men who gave themselves to be killed on the steps of the throne." And the pleasantry had some truth in it, as spoken by a man left for dead at the bloody battle of Les Quatre Chemins. Though ruined by confiscation, the staunch Vendeen steadily refused the lucrative posts offered to him by the Emperor Napoleon. Immovable in his aristocratic faith, he had blindly obeyed its precepts when he thought it fitting to choose a companion for life. In spite of the blandishments of a rich but revolutionary parvenu, who valued the alliance at a high figure, he married Mademoiselle de Kergarouet, without a fortune, but belonging to one of the oldest families in Brittany.

When the second revolution burst on Monsieur de Fontaine he was encumbered with a large family. Though it was no part of the noble gentlemen's views to solicit favors, he yielded to his wife's wish, left his country estate, of which the income barely sufficed to maintain his children, and came to Paris. Saddened by seeing the greediness of his former comrades in the rush for places and dignities under the new Constitution, he was about to return to his property when he received a ministerial despatch, in which a well-known magnate announced to him his nomination as marechal de camp, or brigadier-general, under a rule which allowed the officers of the Catholic armies to count the twenty submerged years of Louis XVIII.'s reign as years of service. Some days later he further received, without any solicitation, ex officio, the crosses of the Legion of Honor and of Saint-Louis.

Shaken in his determination by these successive favors, due, as he supposed, to the monarch's remembrance, he was no longer satisfied with taking his family, as he had piously done every Sunday, to cry "Vive le Roi" in the hall of the Tuileries when the royal family passed through on their way to chapel; he craved the favor of a private audience. The audience, at once granted, was in no sense private. The royal drawing-room was full of old adherents, whose powdered heads, seen from above, suggested a carpet of snow. There the Count met some old friends, who received him somewhat coldly; but the princes he thought ADORABLE, an enthusiastic expression which escaped him when the most gracious of his masters, to whom the Count had supposed himself to be known only by name, came to shake hands with

him, and spoke of him as the most thorough Vendeen of them all. Notwithstanding this ovation, none of these august persons thought of inquiring as to the sum of his losses, or of the money he had poured so generously into the chests of the Catholic regiments. He discovered, a little late, that he had made war at his own cost. Towards the end of the evening he thought he might venture on a witty allusion to the state of his affairs, similar, as it was, to that of many other gentlemen. His Majesty laughed heartily enough; any speech that bore the hall-mark of wit was certain to please him; but he nevertheless replied with one of those royal pleasantries whose sweetness is more formidable than the anger of a rebuke. One of the King's most intimate advisers took an opportunity of going up to the fortune-seeking Vendeen, and made him understand by a keen and polite hint that the time had not yet come for settling accounts with the sovereign; that there were bills of much longer standing than his on the books, and there, no doubt, they would remain, as part of the history of the Revolution. The Count prudently withdrew from the venerable group, which formed a respectful semi-circle before the august family; then, having extricated his sword, not without some difficulty, from among the lean legs which had got mixed up with it, he crossed the courtyard of the Tuileries and got into the hackney cab he had left on the quay. With the restive spirit, which is peculiar to the nobility of the old school, in whom still survives the memory of the League and the day of the Barricades (in 1588), he bewailed himself in his cab, loudly enough to compromise him, over the change that had come over the Court. "Formerly," he said to himself, "every one could speak freely to the King of his own little affairs; the nobles could ask him a favor, or for money, when it suited them, and nowadays one cannot recover the money advanced for his service without raising a scandal! By Heaven! the cross of Saint-Louis and the rank of brigadier-general will not make good the three hundred thousand livres I have spent, out and out, on the royal cause. I must speak to the King, face to face, in his own room."

This scene cooled Monsieur de Fontaine's ardor all the more effectually because his requests for an interview were never answered. And, indeed, he saw the upstarts of the Empire obtaining some of the offices reserved, under the old monarchy, for the highest families.

"All is lost!" he exclaimed one morning. "The King has certainly never been other than a revolutionary. But for Monsieur, who never derogates, and is some comfort to his faithful adherents, I do not know what hands the crown of France might not fall into if things are to go on like this. Their cursed constitutional system is the worst possible government, and can never suit France. Louis XVIII. and Monsieur Beugnot spoiled everything at Saint Ouen."

The Count, in despair, was preparing to retire to his estate, abandoning,

with dignity, all claims to repayment. At this moment the events of the 20th March (1815) gave warning of a fresh storm, threatening to overwhelm the legitimate monarch and his defenders. Monsieur de Fontaine, like one of those generous souls who do not dismiss a servant in a torrent of rain; borrowed on his lands to follow the routed monarchy, without knowing whether this complicity in emigration would prove more propitious to him than his past devotion. But when he perceived that the companions of the King's exile were in higher favor than the brave men who had protested, sword in hand, against the establishment of the republic, he may perhaps have hoped to derive greater profit from this journey into a foreign land than from active and dangerous service in the heart of his own country. Nor was his courtier-like calculation one of these rash speculations which promise splendid results on paper, and are ruinous in effect. He was—to quote the wittiest and most successful of our diplomates—one of the faithful five hundred who shared the exile of the Court at Ghent, and one of the fifty thousand who returned with it. During the short banishment of royalty, Monsieur de Fontaine was so happy as to be employed by Louis XVIII., and found more than one opportunity of giving him proofs of great political honesty and sincere attachment. One evening, when the King had nothing better to do, he recalled Monsieur de Fontaine's witticism at the Tuileries. The old Vendeen did not let such a happy chance slip; he told his history with so much vivacity that a king, who never forgot anything, might remember it at a convenient season. The royal amateur of literature also observed the elegant style given to some notes which the discreet gentleman had been invited to recast. This little success stamped Monsieur de Fontaine on the King's memory as one of the loyal servants of the Crown.

At the second restoration the Count was one of those special envoys who were sent throughout the departments charged with absolute jurisdiction over the leaders of revolt; but he used his terrible powers with moderation. As soon as the temporary commission was ended, the High Provost found a seat in the Privy Council, became a deputy, spoke little, listened much, and changed his opinions very considerably. Certain circumstances, unknown to historians, brought him into such intimate relations with the Sovereign, that one day, as he came in, the shrewd monarch addressed him thus: "My friend Fontaine, I shall take care never to appoint you to be director-general, or minister. Neither you nor I, as employees, could keep our place on account of our opinions. Representative government has this advantage; it saves Us the trouble We used to have, of dismissing Our Secretaries of State. Our Council is a perfect inn-parlor, whither public opinion sometimes sends strange travelers; however, We can always find a place for Our faithful adherents."

This ironical speech was introductory to a rescript giving Monsieur de Fontaine an appointment as administrator in the office of Crown lands. As a consequence of the intelligent attention with which he listened to his royal

Friend's sarcasms, his name always rose to His Majesty's lips when a commission was to be appointed of which the members were to receive a handsome salary. He had the good sense to hold his tongue about the favor with which he was honored, and knew how to entertain the monarch in those familiar chats in which Louis XVIII. delighted as much as in a well-written note, by his brilliant manner of repeating political anecdotes, and the political or parliamentary tittle-tattle—if the expression may pass—which at that time was rife. It is well known that he was immensely amused by every detail of his Gouvernementabilite—a word adopted by his facetious Majesty.

Thanks to the Comte de Fontaine's good sense, wit, and tact, every member of his numerous family, however young, ended, as he jestingly told his Sovereign, in attaching himself like a silkworm to the leaves of the Pay-List. Thus, by the King's intervention, his eldest son found a high and fixed position as a lawyer. The second, before the restoration a mere captain, was appointed to the command of a legion on the return from Ghent; then, thanks to the confusion of 1815, when the regulations were evaded, he passed into the bodyguard, returned to a line regiment, and found himself after the affair of the Trocadero a lieutenant-general with a commission in the Guards. The youngest, appointed sous-prefet, ere long became a legal official and director of a municipal board of the city of Paris, where he was safe from changes in Legislature. These bounties, bestowed without parade, and as secret as the favor enjoyed by the Count, fell unperceived. Though the father and his three sons each had sinecures enough to enjoy an income in salaries almost equal to that of a chief of department, their political good fortune excited no envy. In those early days of the constitutional system, few persons had very precise ideas of the peaceful domain of the civil service, where astute favorites managed to find an equivalent for the demolished abbeys. Monsieur le Comte de Fontaine, who till lately boasted that he had not read the Charter, and displayed such indignation at the greed of courtiers, had, before long, proved to his august master that he understood, as well as the King himself, the spirit and resources of the representative system. At the same time, notwithstanding the established careers open to his three sons, and the pecuniary advantages derived from four official appointments, Monsieur de Fontaine was the head of too large a family to be able to re-establish his fortune easily and rapidly.

His three sons were rich in prospects, in favor, and in talent; but he had three daughters, and was afraid of wearying the monarch's benevolence. It occurred to him to mention only one by one, these virgins eager to light their torches. The King had too much good taste to leave his work incomplete. The marriage of the eldest with a Receiver-General, Planat de Baudry, was arranged by one of those royal speeches which cost nothing and are worth millions. One evening, when the Sovereign was out of spirits, he smiled on hearing of the existence of another Demoiselle de Fontaine, for whom he

found a husband in the person of a young magistrate, of inferior birth, no doubt, but wealthy, and whom he created Baron. When, the year after, the Vendeen spoke of Mademoiselle Emilie de Fontaine, the King replied in his thin sharp tones, "Amicus Plato sed magis amica Natio." Then, a few days later, he treated his "friend Fontaine" to a quatrain, harmless enough, which he styled an epigram, in which he made fun of these three daughters so skilfully introduced, under the form of a trinity. Nay, if report is to be believed, the monarch had found the point of the jest in the Unity of the three Divine Persons.

"If your Majesty would only condescend to turn the epigram into an epithalamium?" said the Count, trying to turn the sally to good account.

"Though I see the rhyme of it, I fail to see the reason," retorted the King, who did not relish any pleasantry, however mild, on the subject of his poetry.

From that day his intercourse with Monsieur de Fontaine showed less amenity. Kings enjoy contradicting more than people think. Like most youngest children, Emilie de Fontaine was a Benjamin spoilt by almost everybody. The King's coolness, therefore, caused the Count all the more regret, because no marriage was ever so difficult to arrange as that of this darling daughter. To understand all the obstacles we must make our way into the fine residence where the official was housed at the expense of the nation. Emilie had spent her childhood on the family estate, enjoying the abundance which suffices for the joys of early youth; her lightest wishes had been law to her sisters, her brothers, her mother, and even her father. All her relations doted on her. Having come to years of discretion just when her family was loaded with the favors of fortune, the enchantment of life continued. The luxury of Paris seemed to her just as natural as a wealth of flowers or fruit, or as the rural plenty which had been the joy of her first years. Just as in her childhood she had never been thwarted in the satisfaction of her playful desires, so now, at fourteen, she was still obeyed when she rushed into the whirl of fashion.

Thus, accustomed by degrees to the enjoyment of money, elegance of dress, of gilded drawing-rooms and fine carriages, became as necessary to her as the compliments of flattery, sincere or false, and the festivities and vanities of court life. Like most spoiled children, she tyrannized over those who loved her, and kept her blandishments for those who were indifferent. Her faults grew with her growth, and her parents were to gather the bitter fruits of this disastrous education. At the age of nineteen Emilie de Fontaine had not yet been pleased to make a choice from among the many young men whom her father's politics brought to his entertainments. Though so young, she asserted in society all the freedom of mind that a married woman can enjoy. Her beauty was so remarkable that, for her, to appear in a room was to be its queen; but,

like sovereigns, she had no friends, though she was everywhere the object of attentions to which a finer nature than hers might perhaps have succumbed. Not a man, not even an old man, had it in him to contradict the opinions of a young girl whose lightest look could rekindle love in the coldest heart.

She had been educated with a care which her sisters had not enjoyed; painted pretty well, spoke Italian and English, and played the piano brilliantly; her voice, trained by the best masters, had a ring in it which made her singing irresistibly charming. Clever, and intimate with every branch of literature, she might have made folks believe that, as Mascarille says, people of quality come into the world knowing everything. She could argue fluently on Italian or Flemish painting, on the Middle Ages or the Renaissance; pronounced at haphazard on books new or old, and could expose the defects of a work with a cruelly graceful wit. The simplest thing she said was accepted by an admiring crowd as a fetfah of the Sultan by the Turks. She thus dazzled shallow persons; as to deeper minds, her natural tact enabled her to discern them, and for them she put forth so much fascination that, under cover of her charms, she escaped their scrutiny. This enchanting veneer covered a careless heart; the opinion—common to many young girls—that no one else dwelt in a sphere so lofty as to be able to understand the merits of her soul; and a pride based no less on her birth than on her beauty. In the absence of the overwhelming sentiment which, sooner or later, works havoc in a woman's heart, she spent her young ardor in an immoderate love of distinctions, and expressed the deepest contempt for persons of inferior birth. Supremely impertinent to all newly-created nobility, she made every effort to get her parents recognized as equals by the most illustrious families of the Saint-Germain quarter.

These sentiments had not escaped the observing eye of Monsieur de Fontaine, who more than once, when his two elder girls were married, had smarted under Emilie's sarcasm. Logical readers will be surprised to see the old Royalist bestowing his eldest daughter on a Receiver-General, possessed, indeed, of some old hereditary estates, but whose name was not preceded by the little word to which the throne owed so many partisans, and his second to a magistrate too lately Baronified to obscure the fact that his father had sold firewood. This noteworthy change in the ideas of a noble on the verge of his sixtieth year—an age when men rarely renounce their convictions—was due not merely to his unfortunate residence in the modern Babylon, where, sooner or later, country folks all get their corners rubbed down; the Comte de Fontaine's new political conscience was also a result of the King's advice and friendship. The philosophical prince had taken pleasure in converting the Vendeen to the ideas required by the advance of the nineteenth century, and the new aspect of the Monarchy. Louis XVIII. aimed at fusing parties as Napoleon had fused things and men. The legitimate King, who was not less clever perhaps than his rival, acted in a contrary direction. The last head of the

House of Bourbon was just as eager to satisfy the third estate and the creations of the Empire, by curbing the clergy, as the first of the Napoleons had been to attract the grand old nobility, or to endow the Church. The Privy Councillor, being in the secret of these royal projects, had insensibly become one of the most prudent and influential leaders of that moderate party which most desired a fusion of opinion in the interests of the nation. He preached the expensive doctrines of constitutional government, and lent all his weight to encourage the political see-saw which enabled his master to rule France in the midst of storms. Perhaps Monsieur de Fontaine hoped that one of the sudden gusts of legislation, whose unexpected efforts then startled the oldest politicians, might carry him up to the rank of peer. One of his most rigid principles was to recognize no nobility in France but that of the peerage—the only families that might enjoy any privileges.

"A nobility bereft of privileges," he would say, "is a tool without a handle."

As far from Lafayette's party as he was from La Bourdonnaye's, he ardently engaged in the task of general reconciliation, which was to result in a new era and splendid fortunes for France. He strove to convince the families who frequented his drawing-room, or those whom he visited, how few favorable openings would henceforth be offered by a civil or military career. He urged mothers to give their boys a start in independent and industrial professions, explaining that military posts and high Government appointments must at last pertain, in a quite constitutional order, to the younger sons of members of the peerage. According to him, the people had conquered a sufficiently large share in practical government by its elective assembly, its appointments to law-offices, and those of the exchequer, which, said he, would always, as heretofore, be the natural right of the distinguished men of the third estate.

These new notions of the head of the Fontaines, and the prudent matches for his eldest girls to which they had led, met with strong resistance in the bosom of his family. The Comtesse de Fontaine remained faithful to the ancient beliefs which no woman could disown, who, through her mother, belonged to the Rohans. Although she had for a while opposed the happiness and fortune awaiting her two eldest girls, she yielded to those private considerations which husband and wife confide to each other when their heads are resting on the same pillow. Monsieur de Fontaine calmly pointed out to his wife, by exact arithmetic that their residence in Paris, the necessity for entertaining, the magnificence of the house which made up to them now for the privations so bravely shared in La Vendee, and the expenses of their sons, swallowed up the chief part of their income from salaries. They must therefore seize, as a boon from heaven, the opportunities which offered for settling their girls with such wealth. Would they not some day enjoy sixty—eighty—a

hundred thousand francs a year? Such advantageous matches were not to be met with every day for girls without a portion. Again, it was time that they should begin to think of economizing, to add to the estate of Fontaine, and re-establish the old territorial fortune of the family. The Countess yielded to such cogent arguments, as every mother would have done in her place, though perhaps with a better grace; but she declared that Emilie, at any rate, should marry in such a way as to satisfy the pride she had unfortunately contributed to foster in the girl's young soul.

Thus events, which ought to have brought joy into the family, had introduced a small leaven of discord. The Receiver-General and the young lawyer were the objects of a ceremonious formality which the Countess and Emilie contrived to create. This etiquette soon found even ampler opportunity for the display of domestic tyranny; for Lieutenant-General de Fontaine married Mademoiselle Mongenod, the daughter of a rich banker; the President very sensibly found a wife in a young lady whose father, twice or thrice a millionaire, had traded in salt; and the third brother, faithful to his plebeian doctrines, married Mademoiselle Grossetete, the only daughter of the Receiver-General at Bourges. The three sisters-in-law and the two brothers-in-law found the high sphere of political bigwigs, and the drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, so full of charm and of personal advantages, that they united in forming a little court round the overbearing Emilie. This treaty between interest and pride was not, however, so firmly cemented but that the young despot was, not unfrequently, the cause of revolts in her little realm. Scenes, which the highest circles would not have disowned, kept up a sarcastic temper among all the members of this powerful family; and this, without seriously diminishing the regard they professed in public, degenerated sometimes in private into sentiments far from charitable. Thus the Lieutenant-General's wife, having become a Baronne, thought herself quite as noble as a Kergarouet, and imagined that her good hundred thousand francs a year gave her the right to be as impertinent as her sister-in-law Emilie, whom she would sometimes wish to see happily married, as she announced that the daughter of some peer of France had married Monsieur So-and-So with no title to his name. The Vicomtesse de Fontaine amused herself by eclipsing Emilie in the taste and magnificence that were conspicuous in her dress, her furniture, and her carriages. The satirical spirit in which her brothers and sisters sometimes received the claims avowed by Mademoiselle de Fontaine roused her to wrath that a perfect hailstorm of sharp sayings could hardly mitigate. So when the head of the family felt a slight chill in the King's tacit and precarious friendship, he trembled all the more because, as a result of her sisters' defiant mockery, his favorite daughter had never looked so high.

In the midst of these circumstances, and at a moment when this petty domestic warfare had become serious, the monarch, whose favor Monsieur de

Fontaine still hoped to regain, was attacked by the malady of which he was to die. The great political chief, who knew so well how to steer his bark in the midst of tempests, soon succumbed. Certain then of favors to come, the Comte de Fontaine made every effort to collect the elite of marrying men about his youngest daughter. Those who may have tried to solve the difficult problem of settling a haughty and capricious girl, will understand the trouble taken by the unlucky father. Such an affair, carried out to the liking of his beloved child, would worthily crown the career the Count had followed for these ten years at Paris. From the way in which his family claimed salaries under every department, it might be compared with the House of Austria, which, by intermarriage, threatens to pervade Europe. The old Vendeen was not to be discouraged in bringing forward suitors, so much had he his daughter's happiness at heart, but nothing could be more absurd than the way in which the impertinent young thing pronounced her verdicts and judged the merits of her adorers. It might have been supposed that, like a princess in the Arabian Nights, Emilie was rich enough and beautiful enough to choose from among all the princes in the world. Her objections were each more preposterous than the last: one had too thick knees and was bow-legged, another was short-sighted, this one's name was Durand, that one limped, and almost all were too fat. Livelier, more attractive, and gayer than ever after dismissing two or three suitors, she rushed into the festivities of the winter season, and to balls, where her keen eyes criticised the celebrities of the day, delighted in encouraging proposals which she invariably rejected.

Nature had bestowed on her all the advantages needed for playing the part of Celimene. Tall and slight, Emilie de Fontaine could assume a dignified or a frolicsome mien at her will. Her neck was rather long, allowing her to affect beautiful attitudes of scorn and impertinence. She had cultivated a large variety of those turns of the head and feminine gestures, which emphasize so cruelly or so happily a hint of a smile. Fine black hair, thick and strongly-arched eyebrows, lent her countenance an expression of pride, to which her coquettish instincts and her mirror had taught her to add terror by a stare, or gentleness by the softness of her gaze, by the set of the gracious curve of her lips, by the coldness or the sweetness of her smile. When Emilie meant to conquer a heart, her pure voice did not lack melody; but she could also give it a sort of curt clearness when she was minded to paralyze a partner's indiscreet tongue. Her colorless face and alabaster brow were like the limpid surface of a lake, which by turns is rippled by the impulse of a breeze and recovers its glad serenity when the air is still. More than one young man, a victim to her scorn, accused her of acting a part; but she justified herself by inspiring her detractors with the desire to please her, and then subjecting them to all her most contemptuous caprice. Among the young girls of fashion, not one knew better than she how to assume an air of reserve when a man of talent was

introduced to her, or how to display the insulting politeness which treats an equal as an inferior, and to pour out her impertinence on all who tried to hold their heads on a level with hers. Wherever she went she seemed to be accepting homage rather than compliments, and even in a princess her airs and manner would have transformed the chair on which she sat into an imperial throne.

Monsieur de Fontaine discovered too late how utterly the education of the daughter he loved had been ruined by the tender devotion of the whole family. The admiration which the world is at first ready to bestow on a young girl, but for which, sooner or later, it takes its revenge, had added to Emilie's pride, and increased her self-confidence. Universal subservience had developed in her the selfishness natural to spoilt children, who, like kings, make a plaything of everything that comes to hand. As yet the graces of youth and the charms of talent hid these faults from every eye; faults all the more odious in a woman, since she can only please by self-sacrifice and unselfishness; but nothing escapes the eye of a good father, and Monsieur de Fontaine often tried to explain to his daughter the more important pages of the mysterious book of life. Vain effort! He had to lament his daughter's capricious indocility and ironical shrewdness too often to persevere in a task so difficult as that of correcting an ill-disposed nature. He contented himself with giving her from time to time some gentle and kind advice; but he had the sorrow of seeing his tenderest words slide from his daughter's heart as if it were of marble. A father's eyes are slow to be unsealed, and it needed more than one experience before the old Royalist perceived that his daughter's rare caresses were bestowed on him with an air of condescension. She was like young children, who seem to say to their mother, "Make haste to kiss me, that I may go to play." In short, Emilie vouchsafed to be fond of her parents. But often, by those sudden whims, which seem inexplicable in young girls, she kept aloof and scarcely ever appeared; she complained of having to share her father's and mother's heart with too many people; she was jealous of every one, even of her brothers and sisters. Then, after creating a desert about her, the strange girl accused all nature of her unreal solitude and her wilful griefs. Strong in the experience of her twenty years, she blamed fate, because, not knowing that the mainspring of happiness is in ourselves, she demanded it of the circumstances of life. She would have fled to the ends of the earth to escape a marriage such as those of her two sisters, and nevertheless her heart was full of horrible jealousy at seeing them married, rich, and happy. In short, she sometimes led her mother—who was as much a victim to her vagaries as Monsieur de Fontaine—to suspect that she had a touch of madness.

But such aberrations are quite inexplicable; nothing is commoner than this unconfessed pride developed in the heart of young girls belonging to families high in the social scale, and gifted by nature with great beauty. They are

almost all convinced that their mothers, now forty or fifty years of age, can neither sympathize with their young souls, nor conceive of their imaginings. They fancy that most mothers, jealous of their girls, want to dress them in their own way with the premeditated purpose of eclipsing them or robbing them of admiration. Hence, often, secret tears and dumb revolt against supposed tyranny. In the midst of these woes, which become very real though built on an imaginary basis, they have also a mania for composing a scheme of life, while casting for themselves a brilliant horoscope; their magic consists in taking their dreams for reality; secretly, in their long meditations, they resolve to give their heart and hand to none but the man possessing this or the other qualification; and they paint in fancy a model to which, whether or no, the future lover must correspond. After some little experience of life, and the serious reflections that come with years, by dint of seeing the world and its prosaic round, by dint of observing unhappy examples, the brilliant hues of their ideal are extinguished. Then, one fine day, in the course of events, they are quite astonished to find themselves happy without the nuptial poetry of their day-dreams. It was on the strength of that poetry that Mademoiselle Emilie de Fontaine, in her slender wisdom, had drawn up a programme to which a suitor must conform to be excepted. Hence her disdain and sarcasm.

"Though young and of an ancient family, he must be a peer of France," said she to herself. "I could not bear not to see my coat-of-arms on the panels of my carriage among the folds of azure mantling, not to drive like the princes down the broad walk of the Champs-Elysees on the days of Longchamps in Holy Week. Besides, my father says that it will someday be the highest dignity in France. He must be a soldier—but I reserve the right of making him retire; and he must bear an Order, that the sentries may present arms to us."

And these rare qualifications would count for nothing if this creature of fancy had not the most amiable temper, a fine figure, intelligence, and, above all, if he were not slender. To be lean, a personal grace which is but fugitive, especially under a representative government, was an indispensable condition. Mademoiselle de Fontaine had an ideal standard which was to be the model. A young man who at the first glance did not fulfil the requisite conditions did not even get a second look.

"Good Heavens! see how fat he is!" was with her the utmost expression of contempt.

To hear her, people of respectable corpulence were incapable of sentiment, bad husbands, and unfit for civilized society. Though it is esteemed a beauty in the East, to be fat seemed to her a misfortune for a woman; but in a man it was a crime. These paradoxical views were amusing, thanks to a certain liveliness of rhetoric. The Count felt nevertheless that by-and-by his daughter's affections, of which the absurdity would be evident to some women who were

not less clear-sighted than merciless, would inevitably become a subject of constant ridicule. He feared lest her eccentric notions should deviate into bad style. He trembled to think that the pitiless world might already be laughing at a young woman who remained so long on the stage without arriving at any conclusion of the drama she was playing. More than one actor in it, disgusted by a refusal, seemed to be waiting for the slightest turn of ill-luck to take his revenge. The indifferent, the lookers-on were beginning to weary of it; admiration is always exhausting to human beings. The old Vendeen knew better than any one that if there is an art in choosing the right moment for coming forward on the boards of the world, on those of the Court, in a drawing-room or on the stage, it is still more difficult to quit them in the nick of time. So during the first winter after the accession of Charles X., he redoubled his efforts, seconded by his three sons and his sons-in-law, to assemble in the rooms of his official residence the best matches which Paris and the various deputations from departments could offer. The splendor of his entertainments, the luxury of his dining-room, and his dinners, fragrant with truffles, rivaled the famous banquets by which the ministers of that time secured the vote of their parliamentary recruits.

The Honorable Deputy was consequently pointed at as a most influential corrupter of the legislative honesty of the illustrious Chamber that was dying as it would seem of indigestion. A whimsical result! his efforts to get his daughter married secured him a splendid popularity. He perhaps found some covert advantage in selling his truffles twice over. This accusation, started by certain mocking Liberals, who made up by their flow of words for their small following in the Chamber, was not a success. The Poitevin gentleman had always been so noble and so honorable, that he was not once the object of those epigrams which the malicious journalism of the day hurled at the three hundred votes of the centre, at the Ministers, the cooks, the Directors-General, the princely Amphitryons, and the official supporters of the Villele Ministry.

At the close of this campaign, during which Monsieur de Fontaine had on several occasions brought out all his forces, he believed that this time the procession of suitors would not be a mere dissolving view in his daughter's eyes; that it was time she should make up her mind. He felt a certain inward satisfaction at having well fulfilled his duty as a father. And having left no stone unturned, he hoped that, among so many hearts laid at Emilie's feet, there might be one to which her caprice might give a preference. Incapable of repeating such an effort, and tired, too, of his daughter's conduct, one morning, towards the end of Lent, when the business at the Chamber did not demand his vote, he determined to ask what her views were. While his valet was artistically decorating his bald yellow head with the delta of powder which, with the hanging "ailes de pigeon," completed his venerable style of hairdressing, Emilie's father, not without some secret misgivings, told his old

servant to go and desire the haughty damsel to appear in the presence of the head of the family.

"Joseph," he added, when his hair was dressed, "take away that towel, draw back the curtains, put those chairs square, shake the rug, and lay it quite straight. Dust everything.—Now, air the room a little by opening the window."

The Count multiplied his orders, putting Joseph out of breath, and the old servant, understanding his master's intentions, aired and tidied the room, of course the least cared for of any in the house, and succeeded in giving a look of harmony to the files of bills, the letter-boxes, the books and furniture of this sanctum, where the interests of the royal demesnes were debated over. When Joseph had reduced this chaos to some sort of order, and brought to the front such things as might be most pleasing to the eye, as if it were a shop front, or such as by their color might give the effect of a kind of official poetry, he stood for a minute in the midst of the labyrinth of papers piled in some places even on the floor, admired his handiwork, jerked his head, and went.

The anxious sinecure-holder did not share his retainer's favorable opinion. Before seating himself in his deep chair, whose rounded back screened him from draughts, he looked round him doubtfully, examined his dressing-gown with a hostile expression, shook off a few grains of snuff, carefully wiped his nose, arranged the tongs and shovel, made the fire, pulled up the heels of his slippers, pulled out his little queue of hair which had lodged horizontally between the collar of his waistcoat and that of his dressing-gown restoring it to its perpendicular position; then he swept up the ashes of the hearth, which bore witness to a persistent catarrh. Finally, the old man did not settle himself till he had once more looked all over the room, hoping that nothing could give occasion to the saucy and impertinent remarks with which his daughter was apt to answer his good advice. On this occasion he was anxious not to compromise his dignity as a father. He daintily took a pinch of snuff, cleared his throat two or three times, as if he were about to demand a count out of the House; then he heard his daughter's light step, and she came in humming an air from Il Barbiere.

"Good-morning, papa. What do you want with me so early?" Having sung these words, as though they were the refrain of the melody, she kissed the Count, not with the familiar tenderness which makes a daughter's love so sweet a thing, but with the light carelessness of a mistress confident of pleasing, whatever she may do.

"My dear child," said Monsieur de Fontaine, gravely, "I sent for you to talk to you very seriously about your future prospects. You are at this moment under the necessity of making such a choice of a husband as may secure your durable happiness——"

"My good father," replied Emilie, assuming her most coaxing tone of voice to interrupt him, "it strikes me that the armistice on which we agreed as to my suitors is not yet expired."

"Emilie, we must to-day forbear from jesting on so important a matter. For some time past the efforts of those who most truly love you, my dear child, have been concentrated on the endeavor to settle you suitably; and you would be guilty of ingratitude in meeting with levity those proofs of kindness which I am not alone in lavishing on you."

As she heard these words, after flashing a mischievously inquisitive look at the furniture of her father's study, the young girl brought forward the armchair which looked as if it had been least used by petitioners, set it at the side of the fireplace so as to sit facing her father, and settled herself in so solemn an attitude that it was impossible not to read in it a mocking intention, crossing her arms over the dainty trimmings of a pelerine a la neige, and ruthlessly crushing its endless frills of white tulle. After a laughing side glance at her old father's troubled face, she broke silence.

"I never heard you say, my dear father, that the Government issued its instructions in its dressing-gown. However," and she smiled, "that does not matter; the mob are probably not particular. Now, what are your proposals for legislation, and your official introductions?"

"I shall not always be able to make them, headstrong girl!—Listen, Emilie. It is my intention no longer to compromise my reputation, which is part of my children's fortune, by recruiting the regiment of dancers which, spring after spring, you put to rout. You have already been the cause of many dangerous misunderstandings with certain families. I hope to make you perceive more truly the difficulties of your position and of ours. You are two-and-twenty, my dear child, and you ought to have been married nearly three years since. Your brothers and your two sisters are richly and happily provided for. But, my dear, the expenses occasioned by these marriages, and the style of housekeeping you require of your mother, have made such inroads on our income that I can hardly promise you a hundred thousand francs as a marriage portion. From this day forth I shall think only of providing for your mother, who must not be sacrificed to her children. Emilie, if I were to be taken from my family Madame de Fontaine could not be left at anybody's mercy, and ought to enjoy the affluence which I have given her too late as the reward of her devotion in my misfortunes. You see, my child, that the amount of your fortune bears no relation to your notions of grandeur. Even that would be such a sacrifice as I have not hitherto made for either of my children; but they have generously agreed not to expect in the future any compensation for the advantage thus given to a too favored child."

"In their position!" said Emilie, with an ironical toss of her head.

"My dear, do not so depreciate those who love you. Only the poor are generous as a rule; the rich have always excellent reasons for not handing over twenty thousand francs to a relation. Come, my child, do not pout, let us talk rationally.—Among the young marrying men have you noticed Monsieur de Manerville?"

"Oh, he minces his words—he says Zules instead of Jules; he is always looking at his feet, because he thinks them small, and he gazes at himself in the glass! Besides, he is fair. I don't like fair men."

"Well, then, Monsieur de Beaudenord?"

"He is not noble! he is ill made and stout. He is dark, it is true.—If the two gentlemen could agree to combine their fortunes, and the first would give his name and his figure to the second, who should keep his dark hair, then—perhaps——"

"What can you say against Monsieur de Rastignac?"

"Madame de Nucingen has made a banker of him," she said with meaning.

"And our cousin, the Vicomte de Portenduere?"

"A mere boy, who dances badly; besides, he has no fortune. And, after all, papa, none of these people have titles. I want, at least, to be a countess like my mother."

"Have you seen no one, then, this winter——"

"No, papa."

"What then do you want?"

"The son of a peer of France.

"My dear girl, you are mad!" said Monsieur de Fontaine, rising.

But he suddenly lifted his eyes to heaven, and seemed to find a fresh fount of resignation in some religious thought; then, with a look of fatherly pity at his daughter, who herself was moved, he took her hand, pressed it, and said with deep feeling: "God is my witness, poor mistaken child, I have conscientiously discharged my duty to you as a father—conscientiously, do I say? Most lovingly, my Emilie. Yes, God knows! This winter I have brought before you more than one good man, whose character, whose habits, and whose temper were known to me, and all seemed worthy of you. My child, my task is done. From this day forth you are the arbiter of your fate, and I consider myself both happy and unhappy at finding myself relieved of the heaviest of paternal functions. I know not whether you will for any long time, now, hear a

voice which, to you, has never been stern; but remember that conjugal happiness does not rest so much on brilliant qualities and ample fortune as on reciprocal esteem. This happiness is, in its nature, modest, and devoid of show. So now, my dear, my consent is given beforehand, whoever the son-in-law may be whom you introduce to me; but if you should be unhappy, remember you will have no right to accuse your father. I shall not refuse to take proper steps and help you, only your choice must be serious and final. I will never twice compromise the respect due to my white hairs."

The affection thus expressed by her father, the solemn tones of his urgent address, deeply touched Mademoiselle de Fontaine; but she concealed her emotion, seated herself on her father's knees—for he had dropped all tremulous into his chair again—caressed him fondly, and coaxed him so engagingly that the old man's brow cleared. As soon as Emilie thought that her father had got over his painful agitation, she said in a gentle voice: "I have to thank you for your graceful attention, my dear father. You have had your room set in order to receive your beloved daughter. You did not perhaps know that you would find her so foolish and so headstrong. But, papa, is it so difficult to get married to a peer of France? You declared that they were manufactured by dozens. At least, you will not refuse to advise me."

"No, my poor child, no;—and more than once I may have occasion to cry, 'Beware!' Remember that the making of peers is so recent a force in our government machinery that they have no great fortunes. Those who are rich look to becoming richer. The wealthiest member of our peerage has not half the income of the least rich lord in the English Upper Chamber. Thus all the French peers are on the lookout for great heiresses for their sons, wherever they may meet with them. The necessity in which they find themselves of marrying for money will certainly exist for at least two centuries.

"Pending such a fortunate accident as you long for—and this fastidiousness may cost you the best years of your life—your attractions might work a miracle, for men often marry for love in these days. When experience lurks behind so sweet a face as yours it may achieve wonders. In the first place, have you not the gift of recognizing virtue in the greater or smaller dimensions of a man's body? This is no small matter! To so wise a young person as you are, I need not enlarge on all the difficulties of the enterprise. I am sure that you would never attribute good sense to a stranger because he had a handsome face, or all the virtues because he had a fine figure. And I am quite of your mind in thinking that the sons of peers ought to have an air peculiar to themselves, and perfectly distinctive manners. Though nowadays no external sign stamps a man of rank, those young men will have, perhaps, to you the indefinable something that will reveal it. Then, again, you have your heart well in hand, like a good horseman who is sure his steed cannot bolt. Luck be

with you, my dear!"

"You are making game of me, papa. Well, I assure you that I would rather die in Mademoiselle de Conde's convent than not be the wife of a peer of France."

She slipped out of her father's arms, and proud of being her own mistress, went off singing the air of Cara non dubitare, in the "Matrimonio Segreto."

As it happened, the family were that day keeping the anniversary of a family fete. At dessert Madame Planat, the Receiver-General's wife, spoke with some enthusiasm of a young American owning an immense fortune, who had fallen passionately in love with her sister, and made through her the most splendid proposals.

"A banker, I rather think," observed Emilie carelessly. "I do not like money dealers."

"But, Emilie," replied the Baron de Villaine, the husband of the Count's second daughter, "you do not like lawyers either; so that if you refuse men of wealth who have not titles, I do not quite see in what class you are to choose a husband."

"Especially, Emilie, with your standard of slimness," added the Lieutenant-General.

"I know what I want," replied the young lady.

"My sister wants a fine name, a fine young man, fine prospects, and a hundred thousand francs a year," said the Baronne de Fontaine. "Monsieur de Marsay, for instance."

"I know, my dear," retorted Emilie, "that I do not mean to make such a foolish marriage as some I have seen. Moreover, to put an end to these matrimonial discussions, I hereby declare that I shall look on anyone who talks to me of marriage as a foe to my peace of mind."

An uncle of Emilie's, a vice-admiral, whose fortune had just been increased by twenty thousand francs a year in consequence of the Act of Indemnity, and a man of seventy, feeling himself privileged to say hard things to his grand-niece, on whom he doted, in order to mollify the bitter tone of the discussion now exclaimed:

"Do not tease my poor little Emilie; don't you see she is waiting till the Duc de Bordeaux comes of age!"

The old man's pleasantry was received with general laughter.

"Take care I don't marry you, old fool!" replied the young girl, whose last words were happily drowned in the noise.

"My dear children," said Madame de Fontaine, to soften this saucy retort, "Emilie, like you, will take no advice but her mother's."

"Bless me! I shall take no advice but my own in a matter which concerns no one but myself," said Mademoiselle de Fontaine very distinctly.

At this all eyes were turned to the head of the family. Every one seemed anxious as to what he would do to assert his dignity. The venerable gentleman enjoyed much consideration, not only in the world; happier than many fathers, he was also appreciated by his family, all its members having a just esteem for the solid qualities by which he had been able to make their fortunes. Hence he was treated with the deep respect which is shown by English families, and some aristocratic houses on the continent, to the living representatives of an ancient pedigree. Deep silence had fallen; and the guests looked alternately from the spoilt girl's proud and sulky pout to the severe faces of Monsieur and Madame de Fontaine.

"I have made my daughter Emilie mistress of her own fate," was the reply spoken by the Count in a deep voice.

Relations and guests gazed at Mademoiselle de Fontaine with mingled curiosity and pity. The words seemed to declare that fatherly affection was weary of the contest with a character that the whole family knew to be incorrigible. The sons-in-law muttered, and the brothers glanced at their wives with mocking smiles. From that moment every one ceased to take any interest in the haughty girl's prospects of marriage. Her old uncle was the only person who, as an old sailor, ventured to stand on her tack, and take her broadsides, without ever troubling himself to return her fire.

When the fine weather was settled, and after the budget was voted, the whole family—a perfect example of the parliamentary families on the northern side of the Channel who have a footing in every government department, and ten votes in the House of Commons—flew away like a brood of young birds to the charming neighborhoods of Aulnay, Antony, and Chatenay. The wealthy Receiver-General had lately purchased in this part of the world a country-house for his wife, who remained in Paris only during the session. Though the fair Emilie despised the commonalty, her feeling was not carried so far as to scorn the advantages of a fortune acquired in a profession; so she accompanied her sister to the sumptuous villa, less out of affection for the members of her family who were visiting there, than because fashion has ordained that every woman who has any self-respect must leave Paris in the summer. The green seclusion of Sceaux answered to perfection the requirements of good style and of the duties of an official position.

As it is extremely doubtful that the fame of the "Bal de Sceaux" should ever have extended beyond the borders of the Department of the Seine, it will

be necessary to give some account of this weekly festivity, which at that time was important enough to threaten to become an institution. The environs of the little town of Sceaux enjoy a reputation due to the scenery, which is considered enchanting. Perhaps it is quite ordinary, and owes its fame only to the stupidity of the Paris townsfolk, who, emerging from the stony abyss in which they are buried, would find something to admire in the flats of La Beauce. However, as the poetic shades of Aulnay, the hillsides of Antony, and the valley of the Bieve are peopled with artists who have traveled far, by foreigners who are very hard to please, and by a great many pretty women not devoid of taste, it is to be supposed that the Parisians are right. But Sceaux possesses another attraction not less powerful to the Parisian. In the midst of a garden whence there are delightful views, stands a large rotunda open on all sides, with a light, spreading roof supported on elegant pillars. This rural baldachino shelters a dancing-floor. The most stuck-up landowners of the neighborhood rarely fail to make an excursion thither once or twice during the season, arriving at this rustic palace of Terpsichore either in dashing parties on horseback, or in the light and elegant carriages which powder the philosophical pedestrian with dust. The hope of meeting some women of fashion, and of being seen by them—and the hope, less often disappointed, of seeing young peasant girls, as wily as judges—crowds the ballroom at Sceaux with numerous swarms of lawyers' clerks, of the disciples of Aesculapius, and other youths whose complexions are kept pale and moist by the damp atmosphere of Paris back-shops. And a good many bourgeois marriages have had their beginning to the sound of the band occupying the centre of this circular ballroom. If that roof could speak, what love-stories could it not tell!

This interesting medley gave the Sceaux balls at that time a spice of more amusement than those of two or three places of the same kind near Paris; and it had incontestable advantages in its rotunda, and the beauty of its situation and its gardens. Emilie was the first to express a wish to play at being COMMON FOLK at this gleeful suburban entertainment, and promised herself immense pleasure in mingling with the crowd. Everybody wondered at her desire to wander through such a mob; but is there not a keen pleasure to grand people in an incognito? Mademoiselle de Fontaine amused herself with imagining all these town-bred figures; she fancied herself leaving the memory of a bewitching glance and smile stamped on more than one shopkeeper's heart, laughed beforehand at the damsels' airs, and sharpened her pencils for the scenes she proposed to sketch in her satirical album. Sunday could not come soon enough to satisfy her impatience.

The party from the Villa Planat set out on foot, so as not to betray the rank of the personages who were about to honor the ball with their presence. They dined early. And the month of May humored this aristocratic escapade by one of its finest evenings. Mademoiselle de Fontaine was quite surprised to find in

the rotunda some quadrilles made up of persons who seemed to belong to the upper classes. Here and there, indeed, were some young men who look as though they must have saved for a month to shine for a day; and she perceived several couples whose too hearty glee suggested nothing conjugal; still, she could only glean instead of gathering a harvest. She was amused to see that pleasure in a cotton dress was so very like pleasure robed in satin, and that the girls of the middle class danced quite as well as ladies—nay, sometimes better. Most of the women were simply and suitably dressed. Those who in this assembly represented the ruling power, that is to say, the country-folk, kept apart with wonderful politeness. In fact, Mademoiselle Emilie had to study the various elements that composed the mixture before she could find any subject for pleasantry. But she had not time to give herself up to malicious criticism, or opportunity for hearing many of the startling speeches which caricaturists so gladly pick up. The haughty young lady suddenly found a flower in this wide field—the metaphor is reasonable—whose splendor and coloring worked on her imagination with all the fascination of novelty. It often happens that we look at a dress, a hanging, a blank sheet of paper, with so little heed that we do not at first detect a stain or a bright spot which afterwards strikes the eye as though it had come there at the very instant when we see it; and by a sort of moral phenomenon somewhat resembling this, Mademoiselle de Fontaine discovered in a young man the external perfection of which she had so long dreamed.

Seated on one of the clumsy chairs which marked the boundary line of the circular floor, she had placed herself at the end of the row formed by the family party, so as to be able to stand up or push forward as her fancy moved her, treating the living pictures and groups in the hall as if she were in a picture gallery; impertinently turning her eye-glass on persons not two yards away, and making her remarks as though she were criticising or praising a study of a head, a painting of genre. Her eyes, after wandering over the vast moving picture, were suddenly caught by this figure, which seemed to have been placed on purpose in one corner of the canvas, and in the best light, like a person out of all proportion with the rest.

The stranger, alone and absorbed in thought, leaned lightly against one of the columns that supported the roof; his arms were folded, and he leaned slightly on one side as though he had placed himself there to have his portrait taken by a painter. His attitude, though full of elegance and dignity, was devoid of affectation. Nothing suggested that he had half turned his head, and bent it a little to the right like Alexander, or Lord Byron, and some other great men, for the sole purpose of attracting attention. His fixed gaze followed a girl who was dancing, and betrayed some strong feeling. His slender, easy frame recalled the noble proportions of the Apollo. Fine black hair curled naturally over a high forehead. At a glance Mademoiselle de Fontaine observed that his

linen was fine, his gloves fresh, and evidently bought of a good maker, and his feet were small and well shod in boots of Irish kid. He had none of the vulgar trinkets displayed by the dandies of the National Guard or the Lovelaces of the counting-house. A black ribbon, to which an eye-glass was attached, hung over a waistcoat of the most fashionable cut. Never had the fastidious Emilie seen a man's eyes shaded by such long, curled lashes. Melancholy and passion were expressed in this face, and the complexion was of a manly olive hue. His mouth seemed ready to smile, unbending the corners of eloquent lips; but this, far from hinting at gaiety, revealed on the contrary a sort of pathetic grace. There was too much promise in that head, too much distinction in his whole person, to allow of one's saying, "What a handsome man!" or "What a fine man!" One wanted to know him. The most clear-sighted observer, on seeing this stranger, could not have helped taking him for a clever man attracted to this rural festivity by some powerful motive.

All these observations cost Emilie only a minute's attention, during which the privileged gentleman under her severe scrutiny became the object of her secret admiration. She did not say to herself, "He must be a peer of France!" but "Oh, if only he is noble, and he surely must be——" Without finishing her thought, she suddenly rose, and followed by her brother the General, she made her way towards the column, affecting to watch the merry quadrille; but by a stratagem of the eye, familiar to women, she lost not a gesture of the young man as she went towards him. The stranger politely moved to make way for the newcomers, and went to lean against another pillar. Emilie, as much nettled by his politeness as she might have been by an impertinence, began talking to her brother in a louder voice than good taste enjoined; she turned and tossed her head, gesticulated eagerly, and laughed for no particular reason, less to amuse her brother than to attract the attention of the imperturbable stranger. None of her little arts succeeded. Mademoiselle de Fontaine then followed the direction in which his eyes were fixed, and discovered the cause of his indifference.

In the midst of the quadrille, close in front of them, a pale girl was dancing; her face was like one of the divinities which Girodet has introduced into his immense composition of French Warriors received by Ossian. Emilie fancied that she recognized her as a distinguished milady who for some months had been living on a neighboring estate. Her partner was a lad of about fifteen, with red hands, and dressed in nankeen trousers, a blue coat, and white shoes, which showed that the damsel's love of dancing made her easy to please in the matter of partners. Her movements did not betray her apparent delicacy, but a faint flush already tinged her white cheeks, and her complexion was gaining color. Mademoiselle de Fontaine went nearer, to be able to examine the young lady at the moment when she returned to her place, while the side couples in their turn danced the figure. But the stranger went up to the pretty

dancer, and leaning over, said in a gentle but commanding tone:

"Clara, my child, do not dance any more."

Clara made a little pouting face, bent her head, and finally smiled. When the dance was over, the young man wrapped her in a cashmere shawl with a lover's care, and seated her in a place sheltered from the wind. Very soon Mademoiselle de Fontaine, seeing them rise and walk round the place as if preparing to leave, found means to follow them under pretence of admiring the views from the garden. Her brother lent himself with malicious good-humor to the divagations of her rather eccentric wanderings. Emilie then saw the attractive couple get into an elegant tilbury, by which stood a mounted groom in livery. At the moment when, from his high seat, the young man was drawing the reins even, she caught a glance from his eye such as a man casts aimlessly at the crowd; and then she enjoyed the feeble satisfaction of seeing him turn his head to look at her. The young lady did the same. Was it from jealousy?

"I imagine you have now seen enough of the garden," said her brother. "We may go back to the dancing."

"I am ready," said she. "Do you think the girl can be a relation of Lady Dudley's?"

"Lady Dudley may have some male relation staying with her," said the Baron de Fontaine; "but a young girl!—No!"

Next day Mademoiselle de Fontaine expressed a wish to take a ride. Then she gradually accustomed her old uncle and her brothers to escorting her in very early rides, excellent, she declared for her health. She had a particular fancy for the environs of the hamlet where Lady Dudley was living. Notwithstanding her cavalry manoeuvres, she did not meet the stranger so soon as the eager search she pursued might have allowed her to hope. She went several times to the "Bal de Sceaux" without seeing the young Englishman who had dropped from the skies to pervade and beautify her dreams. Though nothing spurs on a young girl's infant passion so effectually as an obstacle, there was a time when Mademoiselle de Fontaine was on the point of giving up her strange and secret search, almost despairing of the success of an enterprise whose singularity may give some idea of the boldness of her temper. In point of fact, she might have wandered long about the village of Chatenay without meeting her Unknown. The fair Clara—since that was the name Emilie had overheard—was not English, and the stranger who escorted her did not dwell among the flowery and fragrant bowers of Chatenay.

One evening Emilie, out riding with her uncle, who, during the fine weather, had gained a fairly long truce from the gout, met Lady Dudley. The

distinguished foreigner had with her in her open carriage Monsieur Vandenesse. Emilie recognized the handsome couple, and her suppositions were at once dissipated like a dream. Annoyed, as any woman must be whose expectations are frustrated, she touched up her horse so suddenly that her uncle had the greatest difficulty in following her, she had set off at such a pace.

"I am too old, it would seem, to understand these youthful spirits," said the old sailor to himself as he put his horse to a canter; "or perhaps young people are not what they used to be. But what ails my niece? Now she is walking at a foot-pace like a gendarme on patrol in the Paris streets. One might fancy she wanted to outflank that worthy man, who looks to me like an author dreaming over his poetry, for he has, I think, a notebook in his hand. My word, I am a great simpleton! Is not that the very young man we are in search of!"

At this idea the old admiral moderated his horse's pace so as to follow his niece without making any noise. He had played too many pranks in the years 1771 and soon after, a time of our history when gallantry was held in honor, not to guess at once that by the merest chance Emilie had met the Unknown of the Sceaux gardens. In spite of the film which age had drawn over his gray eyes, the Comte de Kergarouet could recognize the signs of extreme agitation in his niece, under the unmoved expression she tried to give to her features. The girl's piercing eyes were fixed in a sort of dull amazement on the stranger, who quietly walked on in front of her.

"Ay, that's it," thought the sailor. "She is following him as a pirate follows a merchantman. Then, when she has lost sight of him, she will be in despair at not knowing who it is she is in love with, and whether he is a marquis or a shopkeeper. Really these young heads need an old fogy like me always by their side..."

He unexpectedly spurred his horse in such a way as to make his niece's bolt, and rode so hastily between her and the young man on foot that he obliged him to fall back on to the grassy bank which rose from the roadside. Then, abruptly drawing up, the Count exclaimed:

"Couldn't you get out of the way?"

"I beg your pardon, monsieur. But I did not know that it lay with me to apologize to you because you almost rode me down."

"There, enough of that, my good fellow!" replied the sailor harshly, in a sneering tone that was nothing less than insulting. At the same time the Count raised his hunting-crop as if to strike his horse, and touched the young fellow's shoulder, saying, "A liberal citizen is a reasoner; every reasoner should be prudent."

The young man went up the bankside as he heard the sarcasm; then he crossed his arms, and said in an excited tone of voice, "I cannot suppose, monsieur, as I look at your white hairs, that you still amuse yourself by provoking duels——"

"White hairs!" cried the sailor, interrupting him. "You lie in your throat. They are only gray."

A quarrel thus begun had in a few seconds become so fierce that the younger man forgot the moderation he had tried to preserve. Just as the Comte de Kergarouet saw his niece coming back to them with every sign of the greatest uneasiness, he told his antagonist his name, bidding him keep silence before the young lady entrusted to his care. The stranger could not help smiling as he gave a visiting card to the old man, desiring him to observe that he was living at a country-house at Chevreuse; and, after pointing this out to him, he hurried away.

"You very nearly damaged that poor young counter-jumper, my dear," said the Count, advancing hastily to meet Emilie. "Do you not know how to hold your horse in?—And there you leave me to compromise my dignity in order to screen your folly; whereas if you had but stopped, one of your looks, or one of your pretty speeches—one of those you can make so prettily when you are not pert—would have set everything right, even if you had broken his arm."

"But, my dear uncle, it was your horse, not mine, that caused the accident. I really think you can no longer ride; you are not so good a horseman as you were last year.—But instead of talking nonsense——"

"Nonsense, by Gad! Is it nothing to be so impertinent to your uncle?"

"Ought we not to go on and inquire if the young man is hurt? He is limping, uncle, only look!"

"No, he is running; I rated him soundly."

"Oh, yes, uncle; I know you there!"

"Stop," said the Count, pulling Emilie's horse by the bridle, "I do not see the necessity of making advances to some shopkeeper who is only too lucky to have been thrown down by a charming young lady, or the commander of La Belle-Poule."

"Why do you think he is anything so common, my dear uncle? He seems to me to have very fine manners."

"Every one has manners nowadays, my dear."

"No, uncle, not every one has the air and style which come of the habit of frequenting drawing-rooms, and I am ready to lay a bet with you that the

young man is of noble birth."

"You had not long to study him."

"No, but it is not the first time I have seen him."

"Nor is it the first time you have looked for him," replied the admiral with a laugh.

Emilie colored. Her uncle amused himself for some time with her embarrassment; then he said: "Emilie, you know that I love you as my own child, precisely because you are the only member of the family who has the legitimate pride of high birth. Devil take it, child, who could have believed that sound principles would become so rare? Well, I will be your confidant. My dear child, I see that his young gentleman is not indifferent to you. Hush! All the family would laugh at us if we sailed under the wrong flag. You know what that means. We two will keep our secret, and I promise to bring him straight into the drawing-room."

"When, uncle?"

"To-morrow."

"But, my dear uncle, I am not committed to anything?"

"Nothing whatever, and you may bombard him, set fire to him, and leave him to founder like an old hulk if you choose. He won't be the first, I fancy?"

"You ARE kind, uncle!"

As soon as the Count got home he put on his glasses, quietly took the card out of his pocket, and read, "Maximilien Longueville, Rue de Sentier."

"Make yourself happy, my dear niece," he said to Emilie, "you may hook him with any easy conscience; he belongs to one of our historical families, and if he is not a peer of France, he infallibly will be."

"How do you know so much?"

"That is my secret."

"Then do you know his name?"

The old man bowed his gray head, which was not unlike a gnarled oak-stump, with a few leaves fluttering about it, withered by autumnal frosts; and his niece immediately began to try the ever-new power of her coquettish arts. Long familiar with the secret of cajoling the old man, she lavished on him the most childlike caresses, the tenderest names; she even went so far as to kiss him to induce him to divulge so important a secret. The old man, who spent his life in playing off these scenes on his niece, often paying for them with a present of jewelry, or by giving her his box at the opera, this time amused

himself with her entreaties, and, above all, her caresses. But as he spun out this pleasure too long, Emilie grew angry, passed from coaxing to sarcasm and sulks; then, urged by curiosity, she recovered herself. The diplomatic admiral extracted a solemn promise from his niece that she would for the future be gentler, less noisy, and less wilful, that she would spend less, and, above all, tell him everything. The treaty being concluded, and signed by a kiss impressed on Emilie's white brow, he led her into a corner of the room, drew her on to his knee, held the card under the thumbs so as to hide it, and then uncovered the letters one by one, spelling the name of Longueville; but he firmly refused to show her anything more.

This incident added to the intensity of Mademoiselle de Fontaine's secret sentiment, and during chief part of the night she evolved the most brilliant pictures from the dreams with which she had fed her hopes. At last, thanks to chance, to which she had so often appealed, Emilie could now see something very unlike a chimera at the fountain-head of the imaginary wealth with which she gilded her married life. Ignorant, as all young girls are, of the perils of love and marriage, she was passionately captivated by the externals of marriage and love. Is not this as much as to say that her feeling had birth like all the feelings of extreme youth—sweet but cruel mistakes, which exert a fatal influence on the lives of young girls so inexperienced as to trust their own judgment to take care of their future happiness?

Next morning, before Emilie was awake, her uncle had hastened to Chevreuse. On recognizing, in the courtyard of an elegant little villa, the young man he had so determinedly insulted the day before, he went up to him with the pressing politeness of men of the old court.

"Why, my dear sir, who could have guessed that I should have a brush, at the age of seventy-three, with the son, or the grandson, of one of my best friends. I am a vice-admiral, monsieur; is not that as much as to say that I think no more of fighting a duel than of smoking a cigar? Why, in my time, no two young men could be intimate till they had seen the color of their blood! But 'sdeath, sir, last evening, sailor-like, I had taken a drop too much grog on board, and I ran you down. Shake hands; I would rather take a hundred rebuffs from a Longueville than cause his family the smallest regret."

However coldly the young man tried to behave to the Comte de Kergarouet, he could not resist the frank cordiality of his manner, and presently gave him his hand.

"You were going out riding," said the Count. "Do not let me detain you. But, unless you have other plans, I beg you will come to dinner to-day at the Villa Planat. My nephew, the Comte de Fontaine, is a man it is essential that you should know. Ah, ha! And I propose to make up to you for my clumsiness

by introducing you to five of the prettiest women in Paris. So, so, young man, your brow is clearing! I am fond of young people, and I like to see them happy. Their happiness reminds me of the good times of my youth, when adventures were not lacking, any more than duels. We were gay dogs then! Nowadays you think and worry over everything, as though there had never been a fifteenth and a sixteenth century."

"But, monsieur, are we not in the right? The sixteenth century only gave religious liberty to Europe, and the nineteenth will give it political lib——"

"Oh, we will not talk politics. I am a perfect old woman—ultra you see. But I do not hinder young men from being revolutionary, so long as they leave the King at liberty to disperse their assemblies."

When they had gone a little way, and the Count and his companion were in the heart of the woods, the old sailor pointed out a slender young birch sapling, pulled up his horse, took out one of his pistols, and the bullet was lodged in the heart of the tree, fifteen paces away.

"You see, my dear fellow, that I am not afraid of a duel," he said with comical gravity, as he looked at Monsieur Longueville.

"Nor am I," replied the young man, promptly cocking his pistol; he aimed at the hole made by the Comte's bullet, and sent his own close to it.

"That is what I call a well-educated man," cried the admiral with enthusiasm.

During this ride with the youth, whom he already regarded as his nephew, he found endless opportunities of catechizing him on all the trifles of which a perfect knowledge constituted, according to his private code, an accomplished gentleman.

"Have you any debts?" he at last asked of his companion, after many other inquiries.

"No, monsieur."

"What, you pay for all you have?"

"Punctually; otherwise we should lose our credit, and every sort of respect."

"But at least you have more than one mistress? Ah, you blush, comrade! Well, manners have changed. All these notions of lawful order, Kantism, and liberty have spoilt the young men. You have no Guimard now, no Duthe, no creditors—and you know nothing of heraldry; why, my dear young friend, you are not fully fledged. The man who does not sow his wild oats in the spring sows them in the winter. If I have but eighty thousand francs a year at the age

of seventy, it is because I ran through the capital at thirty. Oh! with my wife—in decency and honor. However, your imperfections will not interfere with my introducing you at the Pavillon Planat. Remember, you have promised to come, and I shall expect you."

"What an odd little old man!" said Longueville to himself. "He is so jolly and hale; but though he wishes to seem a good fellow, I will not trust him too far."

Next day, at about four o'clock, when the house party were dispersed in the drawing-rooms and billiard-room, a servant announced to the inhabitants of the Villa Planat, "Monsieur DE Longueville." On hearing the name of the old admiral's protege, every one, down to the player who was about to miss his stroke, rushed in, as much to study Mademoiselle de Fontaine's countenance as to judge of this phoenix of men, who had earned honorable mention to the detriment of so many rivals. A simple but elegant style of dress, an air of perfect ease, polite manners, a pleasant voice with a ring in it which found a response in the hearer's heart-strings, won the good-will of the family for Monsieur Longueville. He did not seem unaccustomed to the luxury of the Receiver-General's ostentatious mansion. Though his conversation was that of a man of the world, it was easy to discern that he had had a brilliant education, and that his knowledge was as thorough as it was extensive. He knew so well the right thing to say in a discussion on naval architecture, trivial, it is true, started by the old admiral, that one of the ladies remarked that he must have passed through the Ecole Polytechnique.

"And I think, madame," he replied, "that I may regard it as an honor to have got in."

In spite of urgent pressing, he refused politely but firmly to be kept to dinner, and put an end to the persistency of the ladies by saying that he was the Hippocrates of his young sister, whose delicate health required great care.

"Monsieur is perhaps a medical man?" asked one of Emilie's sisters-in-law with ironical meaning.

"Monsieur has left the Ecole Polytechnique," Mademoiselle de Fontaine kindly put in; her face had flushed with richer color, as she learned that the young lady of the ball was Monsieur Longueville's sister.

"But, my dear, he may be a doctor and yet have been to the Ecole Polytechnique—is it not so, monsieur?"

"There is nothing to prevent it, madame," replied the young man.

Every eye was on Emilie, who was gazing with uneasy curiosity at the fascinating stranger. She breathed more freely when he added, not without a

smile, "I have not the honor of belonging to the medical profession; and I even gave up going into the Engineers in order to preserve my independence."

"And you did well," said the Count. "But how can you regard it as an honor to be a doctor?" added the Breton nobleman. "Ah, my young friend, such a man as you——"

"Monsieur le Comte, I respect every profession that has a useful purpose."

"Well, in that we agree. You respect those professions, I imagine, as a young man respects a dowager."

Monsieur Longueville made his visit neither too long nor too short. He left at the moment when he saw that he had pleased everybody, and that each one's curiosity about him had been roused.

"He is a cunning rascal!" said the Count, coming into the drawing-room after seeing him to the door.

Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who had been in the secret of this call, had dressed with some care to attract the young man's eye; but she had the little disappointment of finding that he did not bestow on her so much attention as she thought she deserved. The family were a good deal surprised at the silence into which she had retired. Emilie generally displayed all her arts for the benefit of newcomers, her witty prattle, and the inexhaustible eloquence of her eyes and attitudes. Whether it was that the young man's pleasing voice and attractive manners had charmed her, that she was seriously in love, and that this feeling had worked a change in her, her demeanor had lost all its affectations. Being simple and natural, she must, no doubt, have seemed more beautiful. Some of her sisters, and an old lady, a friend of the family, saw in this behavior a refinement of art. They supposed that Emilie, judging the man worthy of her, intended to delay revealing her merits, so as to dazzle him suddenly when she found that she pleased him. Every member of the family was curious to know what this capricious creature thought of the stranger; but when, during dinner, every one chose to endow Monsieur Longueville with some fresh quality which no one else had discovered, Mademoiselle de Fontaine sat for some time in silence. A sarcastic remark of her uncle's suddenly roused her from her apathy; she said, somewhat epigrammatically, that such heavenly perfection must cover some great defect, and that she would take good care how she judged so gifted a man at first sight.

"Those who please everybody, please nobody," she added; "and the worst of all faults is to have none."

Like all girls who are in love, Emilie cherished the hope of being able to hide her feelings at the bottom of her heart by putting the Argus-eyes that watched on the wrong tack; but by the end of a fortnight there was not a

member of the large family party who was not in this little domestic secret. When Monsieur Longueville called for the third time, Emilie believed it was chiefly for her sake. This discovery gave her such intoxicating pleasure that she was startled as she reflected on it. There was something in it very painful to her pride. Accustomed as she was to be the centre of her world, she was obliged to recognize a force that attracted her outside herself; she tried to resist, but she could not chase from her heart the fascinating image of the young man.

Then came some anxiety. Two of Monsieur Longueville's qualities, very adverse to general curiosity, and especially to Mademoiselle de Fontaine's, were unexpected modesty and discretion. He never spoke of himself, of his pursuits, or of his family. The hints Emilie threw out in conversation, and the traps she laid to extract from the young fellow some facts concerning himself, he could evade with the adroitness of a diplomatist concealing a secret. If she talked of painting, he responded as a connoisseur; if she sat down to play, he showed without conceit that he was a very good pianist; one evening he delighted all the party by joining his delightful voice to Emilie's in one of Cimarosa's charming duets. But when they tried to find out whether he were a professional singer, he baffled them so pleasantly that he did not afford these women, practised as they were in the art of reading feelings, the least chance of discovering to what social sphere he belonged. However boldly the old uncle cast the boarding-hooks over the vessel, Longueville slipped away cleverly, so as to preserve the charm of mystery; and it was easy to him to remain the "handsome Stranger" at the Villa, because curiosity never overstepped the bounds of good breeding.

Emilie, distracted by this reserve, hoped to get more out of the sister than the brother, in the form of confidences. Aided by her uncle, who was as skilful in such manoeuvres as in handling a ship, she endeavored to bring upon the scene the hitherto unseen figure of Mademoiselle Clara Longueville. The family party at the Villa Planat soon expressed the greatest desire to make the acquaintance of so amiable a young lady, and to give her some amusement. An informal dance was proposed and accepted. The ladies did not despair of making a young girl of sixteen talk.

Notwithstanding the little clouds piled up by suspicion and created by curiosity, a light of joy shone in Emilie's soul, for she found life delicious when thus intimately connected with another than herself. She began to understand the relations of life. Whether it is that happiness makes us better, or that she was too fully occupied to torment other people, she became less caustic, more gentle, and indulgent. This change in her temper enchanted and amazed her family. Perhaps, at last, her selfishness was being transformed to love. It was a deep delight to her to look for the arrival of her bashful and

unconfessed adorer. Though they had not uttered a word of passion, she knew that she was loved, and with what art did she not lead the stranger to unlock the stores of his information, which proved to be varied! She perceived that she, too, was being studied, and that made her endeavor to remedy the defects her education had encouraged. Was not this her first homage to love, and a bitter reproach to herself? She desired to please, and she was enchanting; she loved, and she was idolized. Her family, knowing that her pride would sufficiently protect her, gave her enough freedom to enjoy the little childish delights which give to first love its charm and its violence. More than once the young man and Mademoiselle de Fontaine walked, tete-a-tete, in the avenues of the garden, where nature was dressed like a woman going to a ball. More than once they had those conversations, aimless and meaningless, in which the emptiest phrases are those which cover the deepest feelings. They often admired together the setting sun and its gorgeous coloring. They gathered daisies to pull the petals off, and sang the most impassioned duets, using the notes set down by Pergolesi or Rossini as faithful interpreters to express their secrets.

The day of the dance came. Clara Longueville and her brother, whom the servants persisted in honoring with the noble DE, were the principle guests. For the first time in her life Mademoiselle de Fontaine felt pleasure in a young girl's triumph. She lavished on Clara in all sincerity the gracious petting and little attentions which women generally give each other only to excite the jealousy of men. Emilie, had, indeed, an object in view; she wanted to discover some secrets. But, being a girl, Mademoiselle Longueville showed even more mother-wit than her brother, for she did not even look as if she were hiding a secret, and kept the conversation to subjects unconnected with personal interests, while, at the same time, she gave it so much charm that Mademoiselle de Fontaine was almost envious, and called her "the Siren." Though Emilie had intended to make Clara talk, it was Clara, in fact, who questioned Emilie; she had meant to judge her, and she was judged by her; she was constantly provoked to find that she had betrayed her own character in some reply which Clara had extracted from her, while her modest and candid manner prohibited any suspicion of perfidy. There was a moment when Mademoiselle de Fontaine seemed sorry for an ill-judged sally against the commonalty to which Clara had led her.

"Mademoiselle," said the sweet child, "I have heard so much of you from Maximilien that I had the keenest desire to know you, out of affection for him; but is not a wish to know you a wish to love you?"

"My dear Clara, I feared I might have displeased you by speaking thus of people who are not of noble birth."

"Oh, be quite easy. That sort of discussion is pointless in these days. As for

me, it does not affect me. I am beside the question."

Ambitious as the answer might seem, it filled Mademoiselle de Fontaine with the deepest joy; for, like all infatuated people, she explained it, as oracles are explained, in the sense that harmonized with her wishes; she began dancing again in higher spirits than ever, as she watched Longueville, whose figure and grace almost surpassed those of her imaginary ideal. She felt added satisfaction in believing him to be well born, her black eyes sparkled, and she danced with all the pleasure that comes of dancing in the presence of the being we love. The couple had never understood each other as well as at this moment; more than once they felt their finger tips thrill and tremble as they were married in the figures of the dance.

The early autumn had come to the handsome pair, in the midst of country festivities and pleasures; they had abandoned themselves softly to the tide of the sweetest sentiment in life, strengthening it by a thousand little incidents which any one can imagine; for love is in some respects always the same. They studied each other through it all, as much as lovers can.

"Well, well; a flirtation never turned so quickly into a love match," said the old uncle, who kept an eye on the two young people as a naturalist watches an insect in the microscope.

The speech alarmed Monsieur and Madame Fontaine. The old Vendeen had ceased to be so indifferent to his daughter's prospects as he had promised to be. He went to Paris to seek information, and found none. Uneasy at this mystery, and not yet knowing what might be the outcome of the inquiry which he had begged a Paris friend to institute with reference to the family of Longueville, he thought it his duty to warn his daughter to behave prudently. The fatherly admonition was received with mock submission spiced with irony.

"At least, my dear Emilie, if you love him, do not own it to him."

"My dear father, I certainly do love him; but I will await your permission before I tell him so."

"But remember, Emilie, you know nothing of his family or his pursuits."

"I may be ignorant, but I am content to be. But, father, you wished to see me married; you left me at liberty to make my choice; my choice is irrevocably made—what more is needful?"

"It is needful to ascertain, my dear, whether the man of your choice is the son of a peer of France," the venerable gentleman retorted sarcastically.

Emilie was silent for a moment. She presently raised her head, looked at her father, and said somewhat anxiously, "Are not the Longuevilles——?"

"They became extinct in the person of the old Duc de Rostein-Limbourg, who perished on the scaffold in 1793. He was the last representative of the last and younger branch."

"But, papa, there are some very good families descended from bastards. The history of France swarms with princes bearing the bar sinister on their shields."

"Your ideas are much changed," said the old man, with a smile.

The following day was the last that the Fontaine family were to spend at the Pavillon Planat. Emilie, greatly disturbed by her father's warning, awaited with extreme impatience the hour at which young Longueville was in the habit of coming, to wring some explanation from him. She went out after dinner, and walked alone across the shrubbery towards an arbor fit for lovers, where she knew that the eager youth would seek her; and as she hastened thither she considered of the best way to discover so important a matter without compromising herself—a rather difficult thing! Hitherto no direct avowal had sanctioned the feelings which bound her to this stranger. Like Maximilien, she had secretly enjoyed the sweetness of first love; but both were equally proud, and each feared to confess that love.

Maximilien Longueville, to whom Clara had communicated her not unfounded suspicions as to Emilie's character, was by turns carried away by the violence of a young man's passion, and held back by a wish to know and test the woman to whom he would be entrusting his happiness. His love had not hindered him from perceiving in Emilie the prejudices which marred her young nature; but before attempting to counteract them, he wished to be sure that she loved him, for he would no sooner risk the fate of his love than of his life. He had, therefore, persistently kept a silence to which his looks, his behavior, and his smallest actions gave the lie.

On her side, the self-respect natural to a young girl, augmented in Mademoiselle de Fontaine by the monstrous vanity founded on her birth and beauty, kept her from meeting the declaration half-way, which her growing passion sometimes urged her to invite. Thus the lovers had instinctively understood the situation without explaining to each other their secret motives. There are times in life when such vagueness pleases youthful minds. Just because each had postponed speaking too long, they seemed to be playing a cruel game of suspense. He was trying to discover whether he was beloved, by the effort any confession would cost his haughty mistress; she every minute hoped that he would break a too respectful silence.

Emilie, seated on a rustic bench, was reflecting on all that had happened in these three months full of enchantment. Her father's suspicions were the last that could appeal to her; she even disposed of them at once by two or three of

those reflections natural to an inexperienced girl, which, to her, seemed conclusive. Above all, she was convinced that it was impossible that she should deceive herself. All the summer through she had not been able to detect in Maximilien a single gesture, or a single word, which could indicate a vulgar origin or vulgar occupations; nay more, his manner of discussing things revealed a man devoted to the highest interests of the nation. "Besides," she reflected, "an office clerk, a banker, or a merchant, would not be at leisure to spend a whole season in paying his addresses to me in the midst of woods and fields; wasting his time as freely as a nobleman who has life before him free of all care."

She had given herself up to meditations far more interesting to her than these preliminary thoughts, when a slight rustling in the leaves announced to her than Maximilien had been watching her for a minute, not probably without admiration.

"Do you know that it is very wrong to take a young girl thus unawares?" she asked him, smiling.

"Especially when they are busy with their secrets," replied Maximilien archly.

"Why should I not have my secrets? You certainly have yours."

"Then you really were thinking of your secrets?" he went on, laughing.

"No, I was thinking of yours. My own, I know."

"But perhaps my secrets are yours, and yours mine," cried the young man, softly seizing Mademoiselle de Fontaine's hand and drawing it through his arm.

After walking a few steps they found themselves under a clump of trees which the hues of the sinking sun wrapped in a haze of red and brown. This touch of natural magic lent a certain solemnity to the moment. The young man's free and eager action, and, above all, the throbbing of his surging heart, whose hurried beating spoke to Emilie's arm, stirred her to an emotion that was all the more disturbing because it was produced by the simplest and most innocent circumstances. The restraint under which the young girls of the upper class live gives incredible force to any explosion of feeling, and to meet an impassioned lover is one of the greatest dangers they can encounter. Never had Emilie and Maximilien allowed their eyes to say so much that they dared never speak. Carried a way by this intoxication, they easily forgot the petty stipulations of pride, and the cold hesitancies of suspicion. At first, indeed, they could only express themselves by a pressure of hands which interpreted their happy thoughts.

After slowing pacing a few steps in long silence, Mademoiselle de Fontaine spoke. "Monsieur, I have a question to ask you," she said trembling, and in an agitated voice. "But, remember, I beg, that it is in a manner compulsory on me, from the rather singular position I am in with regard to my family."

A pause, terrible to Emilie, followed these sentences, which she had almost stammered out. During the minute while it lasted, the girl, haughty as she was, dared not meet the flashing eye of the man she loved, for she was secretly conscious of the meanness of the next words she added: "Are you of noble birth?"

As soon as the words were spoken she wished herself at the bottom of a lake.

"Mademoiselle," Longueville gravely replied, and his face assumed a sort of stern dignity, "I promise to answer you truly as soon as you shall have answered in all sincerity a question I will put to you!"—He released her arm, and the girl suddenly felt alone in the world, as he said: "What is your object in questioning me as to my birth?"

She stood motionless, cold, and speechless.

"Mademoiselle," Maximilien went on, "let us go no further if we do not understand each other. I love you," he said, in a voice of deep emotion. "Well, then," he added, as he heard the joyful exclamation she could not suppress, "why ask me if I am of noble birth?"

"Could he speak so if he were not?" cried a voice within her, which Emilie believed came from the depths of her heart. She gracefully raised her head, seemed to find new life in the young man's gaze, and held out her hand as if to renew the alliance.

"You thought I cared very much for dignities?" said she with keen archness.

"I have no titles to offer my wife," he replied, in a half-sportive, half-serious tone. "But if I choose one of high rank, and among women whom a wealthy home has accustomed to the luxury and pleasures of a fine fortune, I know what such a choice requires of me. Love gives everything," he added lightly, "but only to lovers. Once married, they need something more than the vault of heaven and the carpet of a meadow."

"He is rich," she reflected. "As to titles, perhaps he only wants to try me. He has been told that I am mad about titles, and bent on marrying none but a peer's son. My priggish sisters have played me that trick."—"I assure you, monsieur," she said aloud, "that I have had very extravagant ideas about life

and the world; but now," she added pointedly, looking at him in a perfectly distracting way, "I know where true riches are to be found for a wife."

"I must believe that you are speaking from the depths of your heart," he said, with gentle gravity. "But this winter, my dear Emilie, in less than two months perhaps, I may be proud of what I shall have to offer you if you care for the pleasures of wealth. This is the only secret I shall keep locked here," and he laid his hand on his heart, "for on its success my happiness depends. I dare not say ours."

"Yes, yes, ours!"

Exchanging such sweet nothings, they slowly made their way back to rejoin the company. Mademoiselle de Fontaine had never found her lover more amiable or wittier: his light figure, his engaging manners, seemed to her more charming than ever, since the conversation which had made her to some extent the possessor of a heart worthy to be the envy of every woman. They sang an Italian duet with so much expression that the audience applauded enthusiastically. Their adieux were in a conventional tone, which concealed their happiness. In short, this day had been to Emilie like a chain binding her more closely than ever to the Stranger's fate. The strength and dignity he had displayed in the scene when they had confessed their feelings had perhaps impressed Mademoiselle de Fontaine with the respect without which there is no true love.

When she was left alone in the drawing-room with her father, the old man went up to her affectionately, held her hands, and asked her whether she had gained any light at to Monsieur Longueville's family and fortune.

"Yes, my dear father," she replied, "and I am happier than I could have hoped. In short, Monsieur de Longueville is the only man I could ever marry."

"Very well, Emilie," said the Count, "then I know what remains for me to do."

"Do you know of any impediment?" she asked, in sincere alarm.

"My dear child, the young man is totally unknown to me; but unless he is not a man of honor, so long as you love him, he is as dear to me as a son."

"Not a man of honor!" exclaimed Emilie. "As to that, I am quite easy. My uncle, who introduced him to us, will answer for him. Say, my dear uncle, has he been a filibuster, an outlaw, a pirate?"

"I knew I should find myself in this fix!" cried the old sailor, waking up. He looked round the room, but his niece had vanished "like Saint-Elmo's fires," to use his favorite expression.

"Well, uncle," Monsieur de Fontaine went on, "how could you hide from

us all you knew about this young man? You must have seen how anxious we have been. Is Monsieur de Longueville a man of family?"

"I don't know him from Adam or Eve," said the Comte de Kergarouet. "Trusting to that crazy child's tact, I got him here by a method of my own. I know that the boy shoots with a pistol to admiration, hunts well, plays wonderfully at billiards, at chess, and at backgammon; he handles the foils, and rides a horse like the late Chevalier de Saint-Georges. He has a thorough knowledge of all our vintages. He is as good an arithmetician as Bareme, draws, dances, and sings well. The devil's in it! what more do you want? If that is not a perfect gentleman, find me a bourgeois who knows all this, or any man who lives more nobly than he does. Does he do anything, I ask you? Does he compromise his dignity by hanging about an office, bowing down before the upstarts you call Directors-General? He walks upright. He is a man.—However, I have just found in my waistcoat pocket the card he gave me when he fancied I wanted to cut his throat, poor innocent. Young men are very simple-minded nowadays! Here it is."

"Rue du Sentier, No. 5," said Monsieur de Fontaine, trying to recall among all the information he had received, something which might concern the stranger. "What the devil can it mean? Messrs. Palma, Werbrust & Co., wholesale dealers in muslins, calicoes, and printed cotton goods, live there.—Stay, I have it: Longueville the deputy has an interest in their house. Well, but so far as I know, Longueville has but one son of two-and-thirty, who is not at all like our man, and to whom he gave fifty thousand francs a year that he might marry a minister's daughter; he wants to be made a peer like the rest of 'em.—I never heard him mention this Maximilien. Has he a daughter? What is this girl Clara? Besides, it is open to any adventurer to call himself Longueville. But is not the house of Palma, Werbrust & Co. half ruined by some speculation in Mexico or the Indies? I will clear all this up."

"You speak a soliloquy as if you were on the stage, and seem to account me a cipher," said the old admiral suddenly. "Don't you know that if he is a gentleman, I have more than one bag in my hold that will stop any leak in his fortune?"

"As to that, if he is a son of Longueville's, he will want nothing; but," said Monsieur de Fontaine, shaking his head from side to side, "his father has not even washed off the stains of his origin. Before the Revolution he was an attorney, and the DE he has since assumed no more belongs to him than half of his fortune."

"Pooh! pooh! happy those whose fathers were hanged!" cried the admiral gaily.

Three or four days after this memorable day, on one of those fine mornings

in the month of November, which show the boulevards cleaned by the sharp cold of an early frost, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, wrapped in a new style of fur cape, of which she wished to set the fashion, went out with two of her sisters-in-law, on whom she had been wont to discharge her most cutting remarks. The three women were tempted to the drive, less by their desire to try a very elegant carriage, and wear gowns which were to set the fashion for the winter, than by their wish to see a cape which a friend had observed in a handsome lace and linen shop at the corner of the Rue de la Paix. As soon as they were in the shop the Baronne de Fontaine pulled Emilie by the sleeve, and pointed out to her Maximilien Longueville seated behind the desk, and engaged in paying out the change for a gold piece to one of the workwomen with whom he seemed to be in consultation. The "handsome stranger" held in his hand a parcel of patterns, which left no doubt as to his honorable profession.

Emilie felt an icy shudder, though no one perceived it. Thanks to the good breeding of the best society, she completely concealed the rage in her heart, and answered her sister-in-law with the words, "I knew it," with a fulness of intonation and inimitable decision which the most famous actress of the time might have envied her. She went straight up to the desk. Longueville looked up, put the patterns in his pocket with distracting coolness, bowed to Mademoiselle de Fontaine, and came forward, looking at her keenly.

"Mademoiselle," he said to the shopgirl, who followed him, looking very much disturbed, "I will send to settle that account; my house deals in that way. But here," he whispered into her ear, as he gave her a thousand-franc note, "take this—it is between ourselves.—You will forgive me, I trust, mademoiselle," he added, turning to Emilie. "You will kindly excuse the tyranny of business matters."

"Indeed, monsieur, it seems to me that it is no concern of mine," replied Mademoiselle de Fontaine, looking at him with a bold expression of sarcastic indifference which might have made any one believe that she now saw him for the first time.

"Do you really mean it?" asked Maximilien in a broken voice.

Emilie turned her back upon him with amazing insolence. These words, spoken in an undertone, had escaped the ears of her two sisters-in-law. When, after buying the cape, the three ladies got into the carriage again, Emilie, seated with her back to the horses, could not resist one last comprehensive glance into the depths of the odious shop, where she saw Maximilien standing with his arms folded, in the attitude of a man superior to the disaster that has so suddenly fallen on him. Their eyes met and flashed implacable looks. Each hoped to inflict a cruel wound on the heart of a lover. In one instant they were

as far apart as if one had been in China and the other in Greenland.

Does not the breath of vanity wither everything? Mademoiselle de Fontaine, a prey to the most violent struggle that can torture the heart of a young girl, reaped the richest harvest of anguish that prejudice and narrow-mindedness ever sowed in a human soul. Her face, but just now fresh and velvety, was streaked with yellow lines and red patches; the paleness of her cheeks seemed every now and then to turn green. Hoping to hide her despair from her sisters, she would laugh as she pointed out some ridiculous dress or passer-by; but her laughter was spasmodic. She was more deeply hurt by their unspoken compassion than by any satirical comments for which she might have revenged herself. She exhausted her wit in trying to engage them in a conversation, in which she tried to expend her fury in senseless paradoxes, heaping on all men engaged in trade the bitterest insults and witticisms in the worst taste.

On getting home, she had an attack of fever, which at first assumed a somewhat serious character. By the end of a month the care of her parents and of the physician restored her to her family.

Every one hoped that this lesson would be severe enough to subdue Emilie's nature; but she insensibly fell into her old habits and threw herself again into the world of fashion. She declared that there was no disgrace in making a mistake. If she, like her father, had a vote in the Chamber, she would move for an edict, she said, by which all merchants, and especially dealers in calico, should be branded on the forehead, like Berri sheep, down to the third generation. She wished that none but nobles should have the right to wear the antique French costume, which was so becoming to the courtiers of Louis XV. To hear her, it was a misfortune for France, perhaps, that there was no outward and visible difference between a merchant and a peer of France. And a hundred more such pleasantries, easy to imagine, were rapidly poured out when any accident brought up the subject.

But those who loved Emilie could see through all her banter a tinge of melancholy. It was clear that Maximilien Longueville still reigned over that inexorable heart. Sometimes she would be as gentle as she had been during the brief summer that had seen the birth of her love; sometimes, again, she was unendurable. Every one made excuses for her inequality of temper, which had its source in sufferings at once secret and known to all. The Comte de Kergarouet had some influence over her, thanks to his increased prodigality, a kind of consolation which rarely fails of its effect on a Parisian girl.

The first ball at which Mademoiselle de Fontaine appeared was at the Neapolitan ambassador's. As she took her place in the first quadrille she saw, a few yards away from her, Maximilien Longueville, who nodded slightly to her

partner.

"Is that young man a friend of yours?" she asked, with a scornful air.

"Only my brother," he replied.

Emilie could not help starting. "Ah!" he continued, "and he is the noblest soul living——"

"Do you know my name?" asked Emilie, eagerly interrupting him.

"No, mademoiselle. It is a crime, I confess, not to remember a name which is on every lip—I ought to say in every heart. But I have a valid excuse. I have but just arrived from Germany. My ambassador, who is in Paris on leave, sent me here this evening to take care of his amiable wife, whom you may see yonder in that corner."

"A perfect tragic mask!" said Emilie, after looking at the ambassadress.

"And yet that is her ballroom face!" said the young man, laughing. "I shall have to dance with her! So I thought I might have some compensation." Mademoiselle de Fontaine courtesied. "I was very much surprised," the voluble young secretary went on, "to find my brother here. On arriving from Vienna I heard that the poor boy was ill in bed; and I counted on seeing him before coming to this ball; but good policy will always allow us to indulge family affection. The Padrona della case would not give me time to call on my poor Maximilien."

"Then, monsieur, your brother is not, like you, in diplomatic employment."

"No," said the attache, with a sigh, "the poor fellow sacrificed himself for me. He and my sister Clara have renounced their share of my father's fortune to make an eldest son of me. My father dreams of a peerage, like all who vote for the ministry. Indeed, it is promised him," he added in an undertone. "After saving up a little capital my brother joined a banking firm, and I hear he has just effected a speculation in Brazil which may make him a millionaire. You see me in the highest spirits at having been able, by my diplomatic connections, to contribute to his success. I am impatiently expecting a dispatch from the Brazilian Legation, which will help to lift the cloud from his brow. What do you think of him?"

"Well, your brother's face does not look to me like that of a man busied with money matters."

The young attache shot a scrutinizing glance at the apparently calm face of his partner.

"What!" he exclaimed, with a smile, "can young ladies read the thoughts of love behind the silent brow?"

"Your brother is in love, then?" she asked, betrayed into a movement of curiosity.

"Yes; my sister Clara, to whom he is as devoted as a mother, wrote to me that he had fallen in love this summer with a very pretty girl; but I have had no further news of the affair. Would you believe that the poor boy used to get up at five in the morning, and went off to settle his business that he might be back by four o'clock in the country where the lady was? In fact, he ruined a very nice thoroughbred that I had just given him. Forgive my chatter, mademoiselle; I have but just come home from Germany. For a year I have heard no decent French, I have been weaned from French faces, and satiated with Germans, to such a degree that, I believe, in my patriotic mania, I could talk to the chimeras on a French candlestick. And if I talk with a lack of reserve unbecoming in a diplomatist, the fault is yours, mademoiselle. Was it not you who pointed out my brother? When he is the theme I become inexhaustible. I should like to proclaim to all the world how good and generous he is. He gave up no less than a hundred thousand francs a year, the income from the Longueville property."

If Mademoiselle de Fontaine had the benefit of these important revelations, it was partly due to the skill with which she continued to question her confiding partner from the moment when she found that he was the brother of her scorned lover.

"And could you, without being grieved, see your brother selling muslin and calico?" asked Emilie, at the end of the third figure of the quadrille.

"How do you know that?" asked the attache. "Thank God, though I pour out a flood of words, I have already acquired the art of not telling more than I intend, like all the other diplomatic apprentices I know."

"You told me, I assure you."

Monsieur de Longueville looked at Mademoiselle de Fontaine with a surprise that was full of perspicacity. A suspicion flashed upon him. He glanced inquiringly from his brother to his partner, guessed everything, clasped his hands, fixed his eyes on the ceiling, and began to laugh, saying, "I am an idiot! You are the handsomest person here; my brother keeps stealing glances at you; he is dancing in spite of his illness, and you pretend not to see him. Make him happy," he added, as he led her back to her old uncle. "I shall not be jealous, but I shall always shiver a little at calling you my sister——"

The lovers, however, were to prove as inexorable to each other as they were to themselves. At about two in the morning, refreshments were served in an immense corridor, where, to leave persons of the same coterie free to meet each other, the tables were arranged as in a restaurant. By one of those

accidents which always happen to lovers, Mademoiselle de Fontaine found herself at a table next to that at which the more important guests were seated. Maximilien was of the group. Emilie, who lent an attentive ear to her neighbors' conversation, overheard one of those dialogues into which a young woman so easily falls with a young man who has the grace and style of Maximilien Longueville. The lady talking to the young banker was a Neapolitan duchess, whose eyes shot lightning flashes, and whose skin had the sheen of satin. The intimate terms on which Longueville affected to be with her stung Mademoiselle de Fontaine all the more because she had just given her lover back twenty times as much tenderness as she had ever felt for him before.

"Yes, monsieur, in my country true love can make every kind of sacrifice," the Duchess was saying, in a simper.

"You have more passion than Frenchwomen," said Maximilien, whose burning gaze fell on Emilie. "They are all vanity."

"Monsieur," Emilie eagerly interposed, "is it not very wrong to calumniate your own country? Devotion is to be found in every nation."

"Do you imagine, mademoiselle," retorted the Italian, with a sardonic smile, "that a Parisian would be capable of following her lover all over the world?"

"Oh, madame, let us understand each other. She would follow him to a desert and live in a tent but not to sit in a shop."

A disdainful gesture completed her meaning. Thus, under the influence of her disastrous education, Emile for the second time killed her budding happiness, and destroyed its prospects of life. Maximilien's apparent indifference, and a woman's smile, had wrung from her one of those sarcasms whose treacherous zest always let her astray.

"Mademoiselle," said Longueville, in a low voice, under cover of the noise made by the ladies as they rose from the table, "no one will ever more ardently desire your happiness than I; permit me to assure you of this, as I am taking leave of you. I am starting for Italy in a few days."

"With a Duchess, no doubt?"

"No, but perhaps with a mortal blow."

"Is not that pure fancy?" asked Emilie, with an anxious glance.

"No," he replied. "There are wounds which never heal."

"You are not to go," said the girl, imperiously, and she smiled.

"I shall go," replied Maximilien, gravely.

"You will find me married on your return, I warn you," she said coquettishly.

"I hope so."

"Impertinent wretch!" she exclaimed. "How cruel a revenge!"

A fortnight later Maximilien set out with his sister Clara for the warm and poetic scenes of beautiful Italy, leaving Mademoiselle de Fontaine a prey to the most vehement regret. The young Secretary to the Embassy took up his brother's quarrel, and contrived to take signal vengeance on Emilie's disdain by making known the occasion of the lovers' separation. He repaid his fair partner with interest all the sarcasm with which she had formerly attacked Maximilien, and often made more than one Excellency smile by describing the fair foe of the counting-house, the amazon who preached a crusade against bankers, the young girl whose love had evaporated before a bale of muslin. The Comte de Fontaine was obliged to use his influence to procure an appointment to Russia for Auguste Longueville in order to protect his daughter from the ridicule heaped upon her by this dangerous young persecutor.

Not long after, the Ministry being compelled to raise a levy of peers to support the aristocratic party, trembling in the Upper Chamber under the lash of an illustrious writer, gave Monsieur Guiraudin de Longueville a peerage, with the title of Vicomte. Monsieur de Fontaine also obtained a peerage, the reward due as much to his fidelity in evil days as to his name, which claimed a place in the hereditary Chamber.

About this time Emilie, now of age, made, no doubt, some serious reflections on life, for her tone and manners changed perceptibly. Instead of amusing herself by saying spiteful things to her uncle, she lavished on him the most affectionate attentions; she brought him his stick with a persevering devotion that made the cynical smile, she gave him her arm, rode in his carriage, and accompanied him in all his drives; she even persuaded him that she liked the smell of tobacco, and read him his favorite paper La Quotidienne in the midst of clouds of smoke, which the malicious old sailor intentionally blew over her; she learned piquet to be a match for the old count; and this fantastic damsel even listened without impatience to his periodical narratives of the battles of the Belle-Poule, the manoeuvres of the Ville de Paris, M. de Suffren's first expedition, or the battle of Aboukir.

Though the old sailor had often said that he knew his longitude and latitude too well to allow himself to be captured by a young corvette, one fine morning Paris drawing-rooms heard the news of the marriage of Mademoiselle de Fontaine to the Comte de Kergarouet. The young Countess gave splendid entertainments to drown thought; but she, no doubt, found a void at the bottom

of the whirlpool; luxury was ineffectual to disguise the emptiness and grief of her sorrowing soul; for the most part, in spite of the flashes of assumed gaiety, her beautiful face expressed unspoken melancholy. Emilie appeared, however, full of attentions and consideration for her old husband, who, on retiring to his rooms at night, to the sounds of a lively band, would often say, "I do not know myself. Was I to wait till the age of seventy-two to embark as pilot on board the Belle Emilie after twenty years of matrimonial galleys?"

The conduct of the young Countess was marked by such strictness that the most clear-sighted criticism had no fault to find with her. Lookers on chose to think that the vice-admiral had reserved the right of disposing of his fortune to keep his wife more tightly in hand; but this was a notion as insulting to the uncle as to the niece. Their conduct was indeed so delicately judicious that the men who were most interested in guessing the secrets of the couple could never decide whether the old Count regarded her as a wife or as a daughter. He was often heard to say that he had rescued his niece as a castaway after shipwreck; and that, for his part, he had never taken a mean advantage of hospitality when he had saved an enemy from the fury of the storm. Though the Countess aspired to reign in Paris and tried to keep pace with Mesdames the Duchesses de Maufrigneuse and du Chaulieu, the Marquises d'Espard and d'Aiglemont, the Comtesses Feraud, de Montcornet, and de Restaud, Madame de Camps, and Mademoiselle des Touches, she did not yield to the addresses of the young Vicomte de Portenduere, who made her his idol.

Two years after her marriage, in one of the old drawing-rooms in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where she was admired for her character, worthy of the old school, Emilie heard the Vicomte de Longueville announced. In the corner of the room where she was sitting, playing piquet with the Bishop of Persepolis, her agitation was not observed; she turned her head and saw her former lover come in, in all the freshness of youth. His father's death, and then that of his brother, killed by the severe climate of Saint-Petersburg, had placed on Maximilien's head the hereditary plumes of the French peer's hat. His fortune matched his learning and his merits; only the day before his youthful and fervid eloquence had dazzled the Assembly. At this moment he stood before the Countess, free, and graced with all the advantages she had formerly required of her ideal. Every mother with a daughter to marry made amiable advances to a man gifted with the virtues which they attributed to him, as they admired his attractive person; but Emilie knew, better than any one, that the Vicomte de Longueville had the steadfast nature in which a wise woman sees a guarantee of happiness. She looked at the admiral who, to use his favorite expression, seemed likely to hold his course for a long time yet, and cursed the follies of her youth.

At this moment Monsieur de Persepolis said with Episcopal grace: "Fair

lady, you have thrown away the king of hearts—I have won. But do not regret your money. I keep it for my little seminaries."

PARIS, December 1829.

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THE PURSE

For souls to whom effusiveness is easy there is a delicious hour that falls when it is not yet night, but is no longer day; the twilight gleam throws softened lights or tricksy reflections on every object, and favors a dreamy mood which vaguely weds itself to the play of light and shade. The silence which generally prevails at that time makes it particularly dear to artists, who grow contemplative, stand a few paces back from the pictures on which they can no longer work, and pass judgement on them, rapt by the subject whose most recondite meaning then flashes on the inner eye of genius. He who has never stood pensive by a friend's side in such an hour of poetic dreaming can hardly understand its inexpressible soothingness. Favored by the clear-obscure, the material skill employed by art to produce illusion entirely disappears. If the work is a picture, the figures represented seem to speak and walk; the shade is shadow, the light is day; the flesh lives, eyes move, blood flows in their veins, and stuffs have a changing sheen. Imagination helps the realism of every detail, and only sees the beauties of the work. At that hour illusion reigns despotically; perhaps it wakes at nightfall! Is not illusion a sort of night to the mind, which we people with dreams? Illusion then unfolds its wings, it bears the soul aloft to the world of fancies, a world full of voluptuous imaginings, where the artist forgets the real world, yesterday and the morrow, the future—everything down to its miseries, the good and the evil alike.

At this magic hour a young painter, a man of talent, who saw in art nothing but Art itself, was perched on a step-ladder which helped him to work at a large high painting, now nearly finished. Criticising himself, honestly admiring himself, floating on the current of his thoughts, he then lost himself in one of those meditative moods which ravish and elevate the soul, soothe it, and comfort it. His reverie had no doubt lasted a long time. Night fell. Whether he meant to come down from his perch, or whether he made some ill-judged movement, believing himself to be on the floor—the event did not allow of his remembering exactly the cause of his accident—he fell, his head struck a footstool, he lost consciousness and lay motionless during a space of time of which he knew not the length.

A sweet voice roused him from the stunned condition into which he had sunk. When he opened his eyes the flash of a bright light made him close them again immediately; but through the mist that veiled his senses he heard the whispering of two women, and felt two young, two timid hands on which his head was resting. He soon recovered consciousness, and by the light of an old-fashioned Argand lamp he could make out the most charming girl's face he had ever seen, one of those heads which are often supposed to be a freak of the brush, but which to him suddenly realized the theories of the ideal beauty which every artist creates for himself and whence his art proceeds. The features of the unknown belonged, so to say, to the refined and delicate type of Prudhon's school, but had also the poetic sentiment which Girodet gave to the inventions of his phantasy. The freshness of the temples, the regular arch of the eyebrows, the purity of outline, the virginal innocence so plainly stamped on every feature of her countenance, made the girl a perfect creature. Her figure was slight and graceful, and frail in form. Her dress, though simple and neat, revealed neither wealth nor penury.

As he recovered his senses, the painter gave expression to his admiration by a look of surprise, and stammered some confused thanks. He found a handkerchief pressed to his forehead, and above the smell peculiar to a studio, he recognized the strong odor of ether, applied no doubt to revive him from his fainting fit. Finally he saw an old woman, looking like a marquise of the old school, who held the lamp and was advising the young girl.

"Monsieur," said the younger woman in reply to one of the questions put by the painter during the few minutes when he was still under the influence of the vagueness that the shock had produced in his ideas, "my mother and I heard the noise of your fall on the floor, and we fancied we heard a groan. The silence following on the crash alarmed us, and we hurried up. Finding the key in the latch, we happily took the liberty of entering, and we found you lying motionless on the ground. My mother went to fetch what was needed to bathe your head and revive you. You have cut your forehead—there. Do you feel it?"

"Yes, I do now," he replied.

"Oh, it will be nothing," said the old mother. "Happily your head rested against this lay-figure."

"I feel infinitely better," replied the painter. "I need nothing further but a hackney cab to take me home. The porter's wife will go for one."

He tried to repeat his thanks to the two strangers; but at each sentence the elder lady interrupted him, saying, "Tomorrow, monsieur, pray be careful to put on leeches, or to be bled, and drink a few cups of something healing. A fall may be dangerous."

The young girl stole a look at the painter and at the pictures in the studio. Her expression and her glances revealed perfect propriety; her curiosity seemed rather absence of mind, and her eyes seemed to speak the interest which women feel, with the most engaging spontaneity, in everything which causes us suffering. The two strangers seemed to forget the painter's works in the painter's mishap. When he had reassured them as to his condition they left, looking at him with an anxiety that was equally free from insistence and from familiarity, without asking any indiscreet questions, or trying to incite him to any wish to visit them. Their proceedings all bore the hall-mark of natural refinement and good taste. Their noble and simple manners at first made no great impression on the painter, but subsequently, as he recalled all the details of the incident, he was greatly struck by them.

When they reached the floor beneath that occupied by the painter's studio, the old lady gently observed, "Adelaide, you left the door open."

"That was to come to my assistance," said the painter, with a grateful smile.

"You came down just now, mother," replied the young girl, with a blush.

"Would you like us to accompany you all the way downstairs?" asked the mother. "The stairs are dark."

"No, thank you, indeed, madame; I am much better."

"Hold tightly by the rail."

The two women remained on the landing to light the young man, listening to the sound of his steps.

In order to set forth clearly all the exciting and unexpected interest this scene might have for the young painter, it must be told that he had only a few days since established his studio in the attics of this house, situated in the darkest and, therefore, the most muddy part of the Rue de Suresnes, almost opposite the Church of the Madeleine, and quite close to his rooms in the Rue des Champs-Elysees. The fame his talent had won him having made him one of the artists most dear to his country, he was beginning to feel free from want, and to use his own expression, was enjoying his last privations. Instead of going to his work in one of the studios near the city gates, where the moderate rents had hitherto been in proportion to his humble earnings, he had gratified a wish that was new every morning, by sparing himself a long walk, and the loss of much time, now more valuable than ever.

No man in the world would have inspired feelings of greater interest than Hippolyte Schinner if he would ever have consented to make acquaintance; but he did not lightly entrust to others the secrets of his life. He was the idol of

a necessitous mother, who had brought him up at the cost of the severest privations. Mademoiselle Schinner, the daughter of an Alsatian farmer, had never been married. Her tender soul had been cruelly crushed, long ago, by a rich man, who did not pride himself on any great delicacy in his love affairs. The day when, as a young girl, in all the radiance of her beauty and all the triumph of her life, she suffered, at the cost of her heart and her sweet illusions, the disenchantment which falls on us so slowly and yet so quickly—for we try to postpone as long as possible our belief in evil, and it seems to come too soon—that day was a whole age of reflection, and it was also a day of religious thought and resignation. She refused the alms of the man who had betrayed her, renounced the world, and made a glory of her shame. She gave herself up entirely to her motherly love, seeking in it all her joys in exchange for the social pleasures to which she bid farewell. She lived by work, saving up a treasure for her son. And, in after years, a day, an hour repaid her amply for the long and weary sacrifices of her indigence.

At the last exhibition her son had received the Cross of the Legion of Honor. The newspapers, unanimous in hailing an unknown genius, still rang with sincere praises. Artists themselves acknowledged Schinner as a master, and dealers covered his canvases with gold pieces. At five-and-twenty Hippolyte Schinner, to whom his mother had transmitted her woman's soul, understood more clearly than ever his position in the world. Anxious to restore to his mother the pleasures of which society had so long robbed her, he lived for her, hoping by the aid of fame and fortune to see her one day happy, rich, respected, and surrounded by men of mark. Schinner had therefore chosen his friends among the most honorable and distinguished men. Fastidious in the selection of his intimates, he desired to raise still further a position which his talent had placed high. The work to which he had devoted himself from boyhood, by compelling him to dwell in solitude—the mother of great thoughts—had left him the beautiful beliefs which grace the early days of life. His adolescent soul was not closed to any of the thousand bashful emotions by which a young man is a being apart, whose heart abounds in joys, in poetry, in virginal hopes, puerile in the eyes of men of the world, but deep because they are single-hearted.

He was endowed with the gentle and polite manners which speak to the soul, and fascinate even those who do not understand them. He was well made. His voice, coming from his heart, stirred that of others to noble sentiments, and bore witness to his true modesty by a certain ingenuousness of tone. Those who saw him felt drawn to him by that attraction of the moral nature which men of science are happily unable to analyze; they would detect in it some phenomenon of galvanism, or the current of I know not what fluid, and express our sentiments in a formula of ratios of oxygen and electricity.

These details will perhaps explain to strong-minded persons and to men of fashion why, in the absence of the porter whom he had sent to the end of the Rue de la Madeleine to call him a coach, Hippolyte Schinner did not ask the man's wife any questions concerning the two women whose kindness of heart had shown itself in his behalf. But though he replied Yes or No to the inquiries, natural under the circumstances, which the good woman made as to his accident, and the friendly intervention of the tenants occupying the fourth floor, he could not hinder her from following the instinct of her kind; she mentioned the two strangers, speaking of them as prompted by the interests of her policy and the subterranean opinions of the porter's lodge.

"Ah," said she, "they were, no doubt, Mademoiselle Leseigneur and her mother, who have lived here these four years. We do not know exactly what these ladies do; in the morning, only till the hour of noon, an old woman who is half deaf, and who never speaks any more than a wall, comes in to help them; in the evening, two or three old gentlemen, with loops of ribbon, like you, monsieur, come to see them, and often stay very late. One of them comes in a carriage with servants, and is said to have sixty thousand francs a year. However, they are very quiet tenants, as you are, monsieur; and economical! they live on nothing, and as soon as a letter is brought they pay for it. It is a queer thing, monsieur, the mother's name is not the same as the daughter's. Ah, but when they go for a walk in the Tuileries, mademoiselle is very smart, and she never goes out but she is followed by a lot of young men; but she shuts the door in their face, and she is quite right. The proprietor would never allow ____"

The coach having come, Hippolyte heard no more, and went home. His mother, to whom he related his adventure, dressed his wound afresh, and would not allow him to go to the studio next day. After taking advice, various treatments were prescribed, and Hippolyte remained at home three days. During this retirement his idle fancy recalled vividly, bit by bit, the details of the scene that had ensued on his fainting fit. The young girl's profile was clearly projected against the darkness of his inward vision; he saw once more the mother's faded features, or he felt the touch of Adelaide's hands. He remembered some gesture which at first had not greatly struck him, but whose exquisite grace was thrown into relief by memory; then an attitude, or the tones of a melodious voice, enhanced by the distance of remembrance, suddenly rose before him, as objects plunging to the bottom of deep waters come back to the surface.

So, on the day when he could resume work, he went early to his studio; but the visit he undoubtedly had a right to pay to his neighbors was the true cause of his haste; he had already forgotten the pictures he had begun. At the moment when a passion throws off its swaddling clothes, inexplicable

pleasures are felt, known to those who have loved. So some readers will understand why the painter mounted the stairs to the fourth floor but slowly, and will be in the secret of the throbs that followed each other so rapidly in his heart at the moment when he saw the humble brown door of the rooms inhabited by Mademoiselle Leseigneur. This girl, whose name was not the same as her mother's, had aroused the young painter's deepest sympathies; he chose to fancy some similarity between himself and her as to their position, and attributed to her misfortunes of birth akin to his own. All the time he worked Hippolyte gave himself very willingly to thoughts of love, and made a great deal of noise to compel the two ladies to think of him, as he was thinking of them. He stayed late at the studio and dined there; then, at about seven o'clock, he went down to call on his neighbors.

No painter of manners has ventured to initiate us—perhaps out of modesty—into the really curious privacy of certain Parisian existences, into the secret of the dwellings whence emerge such fresh and elegant toilets, such brilliant women, who rich on the surface, allow the signs of very doubtful comfort to peep out in every part of their home. If, here, the picture is too boldly drawn, if you find it tedious in places, do not blame the description, which is, indeed, part and parcel of my story; for the appearance of the rooms inhabited by his two neighbors had a great influence on the feelings and hopes of Hippolyte Schinner.

The house belonged to one of those proprietors in whom there is a foregone and profound horror of repairs and decoration, one of the men who regard their position as Paris house-owners as a business. In the vast chain of moral species, these people hold a middle place between the miser and the usurer. Optimists in their own interests, they are all faithful to the Austrian status quo. If you speak of moving a cupboard or a door, of opening the most indispensable air-hole, their eyes flash, their bile rises, they rear like a frightened horse. When the wind blows down a few chimney-pots they are quite ill, and deprive themselves of an evening at the Gymnase or the Porte-Saint-Martin Theatre, "on account of repairs." Hippolyte, who had seen the performance gratis of a comical scene with Monsieur Molineux as concerning certain decorative repairs in his studio, was not surprised to see the dark greasy paint, the oily stains, spots, and other disagreeable accessories that varied the woodwork. And these stigmata of poverty are not altogether devoid of poetry in an artist's eyes.

Mademoiselle Leseigneur herself opened the door. On recognizing the young artist she bowed, and at the same time, with Parisian adroitness, and with the presence of mind that pride can lend, she turned round to shut the door in a glass partition through which Hippolyte might have caught sight of some linen hung by lines over patent ironing stoves, an old camp-bed, some

wood-embers, charcoal, irons, a filter, the household crockery, and all the utensils familiar to a small household. Muslin curtains, fairly white, carefully screened this lumber-room—a capharnaum, as the French call such a domestic laboratory,—which was lighted by windows looking out on a neighboring yard.

Hippolyte, with the quick eye of an artist, saw the uses, the furniture, the general effect and condition of this first room, thus cut in half. The more honorable half, which served both as ante-room and dining-room, was hung with an old salmon-rose-colored paper, with a flock border, the manufacture of Reveillon, no doubt; the holes and spots had been carefully touched over with wafers. Prints representing the battles of Alexander, by Lebrun, in frames with the gilding rubbed off were symmetrically arranged on the walls. In the middle stood a massive mahogany table, old-fashioned in shape, and worn at the edges. A small stove, whose thin straight pipe was scarcely visible, stood in front of the chimney-place, but the hearth was occupied by a cupboard. By a strange contrast the chairs showed some remains of former splendor; they were of carved mahogany, but the red morocco seats, the gilt nails and reeded backs, showed as many scars as an old sergeant of the Imperial Guard.

This room did duty as a museum of certain objects, such as are never seen but in this kind of amphibious household; nameless objects with the stamp at once of luxury and penury. Among other curiosities Hippolyte noticed a splendidly finished telescope, hanging over the small discolored glass that decorated the chimney. To harmonize with this strange collection of furniture, there was, between the chimney and the partition, a wretched sideboard of painted wood, pretending to be mahogany, of all woods the most impossible to imitate. But the slippery red quarries, the shabby little rugs in front of the chairs, and all the furniture, shone with the hard rubbing cleanliness which lends a treacherous lustre to old things by making their defects, their age, and their long service still more conspicuous. An indescribable odor pervaded the room, a mingled smell of the exhalations from the lumber room, and the vapors of the dining-room, with those from the stairs, though the window was partly open. The air from the street fluttered the dusty curtains, which were carefully drawn so as to hide the window bay, where former tenants had testified to their presence by various ornamental additions—a sort of domestic fresco.

Adelaide hastened to open the door of the inner room, where she announced the painter with evident pleasure. Hippolyte, who, of yore, had seen the same signs of poverty in his mother's home, noted them with the singular vividness of impression which characterizes the earliest acquisitions of memory, and entered into the details of this existence better than any one else would have done. As he recognized the facts of his life as a child, the kind

young fellow felt neither scorn for disguised misfortune nor pride in the luxury he had lately conquered for his mother.

"Well, monsieur, I hope you no longer feel the effects of your fall," said the old lady, rising from an antique armchair that stood by the chimney, and offering him a seat.

"No, madame. I have come to thank you for the kind care you gave me, and above all mademoiselle, who heard me fall."

As he uttered this speech, stamped with the exquisite stupidity given to the mind by the first disturbing symptoms of true love, Hippolyte looked at the young girl. Adelaide was lighting the Argand lamp, no doubt that she might get rid of a tallow candle fixed in a large copper flat candlestick, and graced with a heavy fluting of grease from its guttering. She answered with a slight bow, carried the flat candlestick into the ante-room, came back, and after placing the lamp on the chimney shelf, seated herself by her mother, a little behind the painter, so as to be able to look at him at her ease, while apparently much interested in the burning of the lamp; the flame, checked by the damp in a dingy chimney, sputtered as it struggled with a charred and badly-trimmed wick. Hippolyte, seeing the large mirror that decorated the chimney-piece, immediately fixed his eyes on it to admire Adelaide. Thus the girl's little stratagem only served to embarrass them both.

While talking with Madame Leseigneur, for Hippolyte called her so, on the chance of being right, he examined the room, but unobtrusively and by stealth.

The Egyptian figures on the iron fire-dogs were scarcely visible, the hearth was so heaped with cinders; two brands tried to meet in front of a sham log of fire-brick, as carefully buried as a miser's treasure could ever be. An old Aubusson carpet, very much faded, very much mended, and as worn as a pensioner's coat, did not cover the whole of the tiled floor, and the cold struck to his feet. The walls were hung with a reddish paper, imitating figured silk with a yellow pattern. In the middle of the wall opposite the windows the painter saw a crack, and the outline marked on the paper of double-doors, shutting off a recess where Madame Leseigneur slept no doubt, a fact ill disguised by a sofa in front of the door. Facing the chimney, above a mahogany chest of drawers of handsome and tasteful design, was the portrait of an officer of rank, which the dim light did not allow him to see well; but from what he could make out he thought that the fearful daub must have been painted in China. The window-curtains of red silk were as much faded as the furniture, in red and yellow worsted work, [as] if this room "contrived a double debt to pay." On the marble top of the chest of drawers was a costly malachite tray, with a dozen coffee cups magnificently painted and made, no doubt, at Sevres. On the chimney shelf stood the omnipresent Empire clock: a

warrior driving the four horses of a chariot, whose wheel bore the numbers of the hours on its spokes. The tapers in the tall candlesticks were yellow with smoke, and at each corner of the shelf stood a porcelain vase crowned with artificial flowers full of dust and stuck into moss.

In the middle of the room Hippolyte remarked a card-table ready for play, with new packs of cards. For an observer there was something heartrending in the sight of this misery painted up like an old woman who wants to falsify her face. At such a sight every man of sense must at once have stated to himself this obvious dilemma—either these two women are honesty itself, or they live by intrigue and gambling. But on looking at Adelaide, a man so pure-minded as Schinner could not but believe in her perfect innocence, and ascribe the incoherence of the furniture to honorable causes.

"My dear," said the old lady to the young one, "I am cold; make a little fire, and give me my shawl."

Adelaide went into a room next the drawing-room, where she no doubt slept, and returned bringing her mother a cashmere shawl, which when new must have been very costly; the pattern was Indian; but it was old, faded and full of darns, and matched the furniture. Madame Leseigneur wrapped herself in it very artistically, and with the readiness of an old woman who wishes to make her words seem truth. The young girl ran lightly off to the lumber-room and reappeared with a bundle of small wood, which she gallantly threw on the fire to revive it.

It would be rather difficult to reproduce the conversation which followed among these three persons. Hippolyte, guided by the tact which is almost always the outcome of misfortune suffered in early youth, dared not allow himself to make the least remark as to his neighbors' situation, as he saw all about him the signs of ill-disguised poverty. The simplest question would have been an indiscretion, and could only be ventured on by old friendship. The painter was nevertheless absorbed in the thought of this concealed penury, it pained his generous soul; but knowing how offensive every kind of pity may be, even the friendliest, the disparity between his thoughts and his words made him feel uncomfortable.

The two ladies at first talked of painting, for women easily guess the secret embarrassment of a first call; they themselves feel it perhaps, and the nature of their mind supplies them with a thousand devices to put an end to it. By questioning the young man as to the material exercise of his art, and as to his studies, Adelaide and her mother emboldened him to talk. The indefinable nothings of their chat, animated by kind feeling, naturally led Hippolyte to flash forth remarks or reflections which showed the character of his habits and of his mind. Trouble had prematurely faded the old lady's face, formerly

handsome, no doubt; nothing was left but the more prominent features, the outline, in a word, the skeleton of a countenance of which the whole effect indicated great shrewdness with much grace in the play of the eyes, in which could be discerned the expression peculiar to women of the old Court; an expression that cannot be defined in words. Those fine and mobile features might quite as well indicate bad feelings, and suggest astuteness and womanly artifice carried to a high pitch of wickedness, as reveal the refined delicacy of a beautiful soul.

Indeed, the face of a woman has this element of mystery to puzzle the ordinary observer, that the difference between frankness and duplicity, the genius for intrigue and the genius of the heart, is there inscrutable. A man gifted with the penetrating eye can read the intangible shade of difference produced by a more or less curved line, a more or less deep dimple, a more or less prominent feature. The appreciation of these indications lies entirely in the domain of intuition; this alone can lead to the discovery of what everyone is interested in concealing. The old lady's face was like the room she inhabited; it seemed as difficult to detect whether this squalor covered vice or the highest virtue, as to decide whether Adelaide's mother was an old coquette accustomed to weigh, to calculate, to sell everything, or a loving woman, full of noble feeling and amiable qualities. But at Schinner's age the first impulse of the heart is to believe in goodness. And indeed, as he studied Adelaide's noble and almost haughty brow, as he looked into her eyes full of soul and thought, he breathed, so to speak, the sweet and modest fragrance of virtue. In the course of the conversation he seized an opportunity of discussing portraits in general, to give himself a pretext for examining the frightful pastel, of which the color had flown, and the chalk in many places fallen away.

"You are attached to that picture for the sake of the likeness, no doubt, mesdames, for the drawing is dreadful?" he said, looking at Adelaide.

"It was done at Calcutta, in great haste," replied the mother in an agitated voice.

She gazed at the formless sketch with the deep absorption which memories of happiness produce when they are roused and fall on the heart like a beneficent dew to whose refreshing touch we love to yield ourselves up; but in the expression of the old lady's face there were traces too of perennial regret. At least, it was thus that the painter chose to interpret her attitude and countenance, and he presently sat down again by her side.

"Madame," he said, "in a very short time the colors of that pastel will have disappeared. The portrait will only survive in your memory. Where you will still see the face that is dear to you, others will see nothing at all. Will you allow me to reproduce the likeness on canvas? It will be more permanently

recorded then than on that sheet of paper. Grant me, I beg, as a neighborly favor, the pleasure of doing you this service. There are times when an artist is glad of a respite from his greater undertakings by doing work of less lofty pretensions, so it will be a recreation for me to paint that head."

The old lady flushed as she heard the painter's words, and Adelaide shot one of those glances of deep feeling which seem to flash from the soul. Hippolyte wanted to feel some tie linking him with his two neighbors, to conquer a right to mingle in their life. His offer, appealing as it did to the liveliest affections of the heart, was the only one he could possibly make; it gratified his pride as an artist, and could not hurt the feelings of the ladies. Madame Leseigneur accepted, without eagerness or reluctance, but with the self-possession of a noble soul, fully aware of the character of bonds formed by such an obligation, while, at the same time, they are its highest glory as a proof of esteem.

"I fancy," said the painter, "that the uniform is that of a naval officer."

"Yes," she said, "that of a captain in command of a vessel. Monsieur de Rouville—my husband—died at Batavia in consequence of a wound received in a fight with an English ship they fell in with off the Asiatic coast. He commanded a frigate of fifty-six guns and the Revenge carried ninety-six. The struggle was very unequal, but he defended his ship so bravely that he held out till nightfall and got away. When I came back to France Bonaparte was not yet in power, and I was refused a pension. When I applied again for it, quite lately, I was sternly informed that if the Baron de Rouville had emigrated I should not have lost him; that by this time he would have been a rear-admiral; finally, his Excellency quoted I know not what degree of forfeiture. I took this step, to which I was urged by my friends, only for the sake of my poor Adelaide. I have always hated the idea of holding out my hand as a beggar in the name of a grief which deprives a woman of voice and strength. I do not like this money valuation for blood irreparably spilt——"

"Dear mother, this subject always does you harm."

In response to this remark from Adelaide, the Baronne Leseigneur bowed, and was silent.

"Monsieur," said the young girl to Hippolyte, "I had supposed that a painter's work was generally fairly quiet?"

At this question Schinner colored, remembering the noise he had made. Adelaide said no more, and spared him a falsehood by rising at the sound of a carriage stopping at the door. She went into her own room, and returned carrying a pair of tall gilt candlesticks with partly burnt wax candles, which she quickly lighted, and without waiting for the bell to ring, she opened the

door of the outer room, where she set the lamp down. The sound of a kiss given and received found an echo in Hippolyte's heart. The young man's impatience to see the man who treated Adelaide with so much familiarity was not immediately gratified; the newcomers had a conversation, which he thought very long, in an undertone, with the young girl.

At last Mademoiselle de Rouville returned, followed by two men, whose costume, countenance, and appearance are a long story.

The first, a man of about sixty, wore one of the coats invented, I believe, for Louis XVIII., then on the throne, in which the most difficult problem of the sartorial art had been solved by a tailor who ought to be immortal. That artist certainly understood the art of compromise, which was the moving genius of that period of shifting politics. Is it not a rare merit to be able to take the measure of the time? This coat, which the young men of the present day may conceive to be fabulous, was neither civil nor military, and might pass for civil or military by turns. Fleurs-de-lis were embroidered on the lapels of the back skirts. The gilt buttons also bore fleurs-de-lis; on the shoulders a pair of straps cried out for useless epaulettes; these military appendages were there like a petition without a recommendation. This old gentleman's coat was of dark blue cloth, and the buttonhole had blossomed into many colored ribbons. He, no doubt, always carried his hat in his hand—a three cornered cocked hat, with a gold cord—for the snowy wings of his powdered hair showed not a trace of its pressure. He might have been taken for not more than fifty years of age, and seemed to enjoy robust health. While wearing the frank and loyal expression of the old emigres, his countenance also hinted at the easy habits of a libertine, at the light and reckless passions of the Musketeers formerly so famous in the annals of gallantry. His gestures, his attitude, and his manner proclaimed that he had no intention of correcting himself of his royalism, of his religion, or of his love affairs.

A really fantastic figure came in behind this specimen of "Louis XIV.'s light infantry"—a nickname given by the Bonapartists to these venerable survivors of the Monarchy. To do it justice it ought to be made the principal object in the picture, and it is but an accessory. Imagine a lean, dry man, dressed like the former, but seeming to be only his reflection, or his shadow, if you will. The coat, new on the first, on the second was old; the powder in his hair looked less white, the gold of the fleurs-de-lis less bright, the shoulder straps more hopeless and dog's eared; his intellect seemed more feeble, his life nearer the fatal term than in the former. In short, he realized Rivarol's witticism on Champcenetz, "He is the moonlight of me." He was simply his double, a paler and poorer double, for there was between them all the difference that lies between the first and last impressions of a lithograph.

This speechless old man was a mystery to the painter, and always remained

a mystery. The Chevalier, for he was a Chevalier, did not speak, nobody spoke to him. Was he a friend, a poor relation, a man who followed at the old gallant's heels as a lady companion does at an old lady's? Did he fill a place midway between a dog, a parrot, and a friend? Had he saved his patron's fortune, or only his life? Was he the Trim to another Captain Toby? Elsewhere, as at the Baronne de Rouville's, he always piqued curiosity without satisfying it. Who, after the Restoration, could remember the attachment which, before the Revolution, had bound this man to his friend's wife, dead now these twenty year?

The leader, who appeared the least dilapidated of these wrecks, came gallantly up to Madame de Rouville, kissed her hand, and sat down by her. The other bowed and placed himself not far from his model, at a distance represented by two chairs. Adelaide came behind the old gentleman's armchair and leaned her elbows on the back, unconsciously imitating the attitude given to Dido's sister by Guerin in his famous picture.

Though the gentleman's familiarity was that of a father, his freedom seemed at the moment to annoy the young girl.

"What, are you sulky with me?" he said.

Then he shot at Schinner one of those side-looks full of shrewdness and cunning, diplomatic looks, whose expression betrays the discreet uneasiness, the polite curiosity of well-bred people, and seems to ask, when they see a stranger, "Is he one of us?"

"This is our neighbor," said the old lady, pointing to Hippolyte. "Monsieur is a celebrated painter, whose name must be known to you in spite of your indifference to the arts."

The old man saw his friend's mischievous intent in suppressing the name, and bowed to the young man.

"Certainly," said he. "I heard a great deal about his pictures at the last Salon. Talent has immense privileges." he added, observing the artist's red ribbon. "That distinction, which we must earn at the cost of our blood and long service, you win in your youth; but all glory is of the same kindred," he said, laying his hand on his Cross of Saint-Louis.

Hippolyte murmured a few words of acknowledgment, and was silent again, satisfied to admire with growing enthusiasm the beautiful girl's head that charmed him so much. He was soon lost in contemplation, completely forgetting the extreme misery of the dwelling. To him Adelaide's face stood out against a luminous atmosphere. He replied briefly to the questions addressed to him, which, by good luck, he heard, thanks to a singular faculty of the soul which sometimes seems to have a double consciousness. Who has

not known what it is to sit lost in sad or delicious meditation, listening to its voice within, while attending to a conversation or to reading? An admirable duality which often helps us to tolerate a bore! Hope, prolific and smiling, poured out before him a thousand visions of happiness; and he refused to consider what was going on around him. As confiding as a child, it seemed to him base to analyze a pleasure.

After a short lapse of time he perceived that the old lady and her daughter were playing cards with the old gentleman. As to the satellite, faithful to his function as a shadow, he stood behind his friend's chair watching his game, and answering the player's mute inquiries by little approving nods, repeating the questioning gestures of the other countenance.

"Du Halga, I always lose," said the gentleman.

"You discard badly," replied the Baronne de Rouville.

"For three months now I have never won a single game," said he.

"Have you the aces?" asked the old lady.

"Yes, one more to mark," said he.

"Shall I come and advise you?" said Adelaide.

"No, no. Stay where I can see you. By Gad, it would be losing too much not to have you to look at!"

At last the game was over. The gentleman pulled out his purse, and, throwing two louis d'or on the table, not without temper—

"Forty francs," he exclaimed, "the exact sum.—Deuce take it! It is eleven o'clock."

"It is eleven o'clock," repeated the silent figure, looking at the painter.

The young man, hearing these words rather more distinctly than all the others, thought it time to retire. Coming back to the world of ordinary ideas, he found a few commonplace remarks to make, took leave of the Baroness, her daughter, and the two strangers, and went away, wholly possessed by the first raptures of true love, without attempting to analyze the little incidents of the evening.

On the morrow the young painter felt the most ardent desire to see Adelaide once more. If he had followed the call of his passion, he would have gone to his neighbor's door at six in the morning, when he went to his studio. However, he still was reasonable enough to wait till the afternoon. But as soon as he thought he could present himself to Madame de Rouville, he went downstairs, rang, blushing like a girl, shyly asked Mademoiselle Leseigneur, who came to let him in, to let him have the portrait of the Baron.

"But come in," said Adelaide, who had no doubt heard him come down from the studio.

The painter followed, bashful and out of countenance, not knowing what to say, happiness had so dulled his wit. To see Adelaide, to hear the rustle of her skirt, after longing for a whole morning to be near her, after starting up a hundred time—"I will go down now"—and not to have gone; this was to him life so rich that such sensations, too greatly prolonged, would have worn out his spirit. The heart has the singular power of giving extraordinary value to mere nothings. What joy it is to a traveler to treasure a blade of grass, an unfamiliar leaf, if he has risked his life to pluck it! It is the same with the trifles of love.

The old lady was not in the drawing-room. When the young girl found herself there, alone with the painter, she brought a chair to stand on, to take down the picture; but perceiving that she could not unhook it without setting her foot on the chest of drawers, she turned to Hippolyte, and said with a blush:

"I am not tall enough. Will you get it down?"

A feeling of modesty, betrayed in the expression of her face and the tones of her voice, was the real motive of her request; and the young man, understanding this, gave her one of those glances of intelligence which are the sweetest language of love. Seeing that the painter had read her soul, Adelaide cast down her eyes with the instinct of reserve which is the secret of a maiden's heart. Hippolyte, finding nothing to say, and feeling almost timid, took down the picture, examined it gravely, carrying it to the light of the window, and then went away, without saying a word to Mademoiselle Leseigneur but, "I will return it soon."

During this brief moment they both went through one of those storms of agitation of which the effects in the soul may be compared to those of a stone flung into a deep lake. The most delightful waves of thought rise and follow each other, indescribable, repeated, and aimless, tossing the heart like the circular ripples, which for a long time fret the waters, starting from the point where the stone fell.

Hippolyte returned to the studio bearing the portrait. His easel was ready with a fresh canvas, and his palette set, his brushes cleaned, the spot and the light carefully chosen. And till the dinner hour he worked at the painting with the ardor artists throw into their whims. He went again that evening to the Baronne de Rouville's, and remained from nine till eleven. Excepting the different topics of conversation, this evening was exactly like the last. The two old men arrived at the same hour, the same game of piquet was played, the same speeches made by the players, the sum lost by Adelaide's friend was not

less considerable than on the previous evening; only Hippolyte, a little bolder, ventured to chat with the young girl.

A week passed thus, and in the course of it the painter's feelings and Adelaide's underwent the slow and delightful transformations which bring two souls to a perfect understanding. Every day the look with which the girl welcomed her friend grew more intimate, more confiding, gayer, and more open; her voice and manner became more eager and more familiar. They laughed and talked together, telling each other their thoughts, speaking of themselves with the simplicity of two children who have made friends in a day, as much as if they had met constantly for three years. Schinner wished to be taught piquet. Being ignorant and a novice, he, of course, made blunder after blunder, and like the old man, he lost almost every game. Without having spoken a word of love the lovers knew that they were all in all to one another. Hippolyte enjoyed exerting his power over his gentle little friend, and many concessions were made to him by Adelaide, who, timid and devoted to him, was quite deceived by the assumed fits of temper, such as the least skilled lover and the most guileless girl can affect; and which they constantly play off, as spoilt children abuse the power they owe to their mother's affection. Thus all familiarity between the girl and the old Count was soon put a stop to. She understood the painter's melancholy, and the thoughts hidden in the furrows on his brow, from the abrupt tone of the few words he spoke when the old man unceremoniously kissed Adelaide's hands or throat.

Mademoiselle Leseigneur, on her part, soon expected her lover to give a short account of all his actions; she was so unhappy, so restless when Hippolyte did not come, she scolded him so effectually for his absence, that the painter had to give up seeing his other friends, and now went nowhere. Adelaide allowed the natural jealousy of women to be perceived when she heard that sometimes at eleven o'clock, on quitting the house, the painter still had visits to pay, and was to be seen in the most brilliant drawing-rooms of Paris. This mode of life, she assured him, was bad for his health; then, with the intense conviction to which the accent, the emphasis and the look of one we love lend so much weight, she asserted that a man who was obliged to expend his time and the charms of his wit on several women at once could not be the object of any very warm affection. Thus the painter was led, as much by the tyranny of his passion as by the exactions of a girl in love, to live exclusively in the little apartment where everything attracted him.

And never was there a purer or more ardent love. On both sides the same trustfulness, the same delicacy, gave their passion increase without the aid of those sacrifices by which many persons try to prove their affection. Between these two there was such a constant interchange of sweet emotion that they knew not which gave or received the most.

A spontaneous affinity made the union of their souls a close one. The progress of this true feeling was so rapid that two months after the accident to which the painter owed the happiness of knowing Adelaide, their lives were one life. From early morning the young girl, hearing footsteps overhead, could say to herself, "He is there." When Hippolyte went home to his mother at the dinner hour he never failed to look in on his neighbors, and in the evening he flew there at the accustomed hour with a lover's punctuality. Thus the most tyrannical woman or the most ambitious in the matter of love could not have found the smallest fault with the young painter. And Adelaide tasted of unmixed and unbounded happiness as she saw the fullest realization of the ideal of which, at her age, it is so natural to dream.

The old gentleman now came more rarely; Hippolyte, who had been jealous, had taken his place at the green table, and shared his constant ill-luck at cards. And sometimes, in the midst of his happiness, as he considered Madame de Rouville's disastrous position—for he had had more than one proof of her extreme poverty—an importunate thought would haunt him. Several times he had said to himself as he went home, "Strange! twenty francs every evening?" and he dared not confess to himself his odious suspicions.

He spent two months over the portrait, and when it was finished, varnished, and framed, he looked upon it as one of his best works. Madame la Baronne de Rouville had never spoken of it again. Was this from indifference or pride? The painter would not allow himself to account for this silence. He joyfully plotted with Adelaide to hang the picture in its place when Madame de Rouville should be out. So one day, during the walk her mother usually took in the Tuileries, Adelaide for the first time went up to Hippolyte's studio, on the pretext of seeing the portrait in the good light in which it had been painted. She stood speechless and motionless, but in ecstatic contemplation, in which all a woman's feelings were merged. For are they not all comprehended in boundless admiration for the man she loves? When the painter, uneasy at her silence, leaned forward to look at her, she held out her hand, unable to speak a word, but two tears fell from her eyes. Hippolyte took her hand and covered it with kisses; for a minute they looked at each other in silence, both longing to confess their love, and not daring. The painter kept her hand in his, and the same glow, the same throb, told them that their hearts were both beating wildly. The young girl, too greatly agitated, gently drew away from Hippolyte, and said, with a look of the utmost simplicity:

"You will make my mother very happy."

"What, only your mother?" he asked.

"Oh, I am too happy."

The painter bent his head and remained silent, frightened at the vehemence

of the feelings which her tones stirred in his heart. Then, both understanding the perils of the situation, they went downstairs and hung up the picture in its place. Hippolyte dined for the first time with the Baroness, who, greatly overcome, and drowned in tears, must needs embrace him.

In the evening the old emigre, the Baron de Rouville's old comrade, paid the ladies a visit to announce that he had just been promoted to the rank of vice-admiral. His voyages by land over Germany and Russia had been counted as naval campaigns. On seeing the portrait he cordially shook the painter's hand, and exclaimed, "By Gad! though my old hulk does not deserve to be perpetuated, I would gladly give five hundred pistoles to see myself as like as that is to my dear old Rouville."

At this hint the Baroness looked at her young friend and smiled, while her face lighted up with an expression of sudden gratitude. Hippolyte suspected that the old admiral wished to offer him the price of both portraits while paying for his own. His pride as an artist, no less than his jealousy perhaps, took offence at the thought, and he replied:

"Monsieur, if I were a portrait-painter I should not have done this one."

The admiral bit his lip, and sat down to cards.

The painter remained near Adelaide, who proposed a dozen hands of piquet, to which he agreed. As he played he observed in Madame de Rouville an excitement over her game which surprised him. Never before had the old Baroness manifested so ardent a desire to win, or so keen a joy in fingering the old gentleman's gold pieces. During the evening evil suspicions troubled Hippolyte's happiness, and filled him with distrust. Could it be that Madame de Rouville lived by gambling? Was she playing at this moment to pay off some debt, or under the pressure of necessity? Perhaps she had not paid her rent. The old man seemed shrewd enough not to allow his money to be taken with impunity. What interest attracted him to this poverty-stricken house, he who was rich? Why, when he had formerly been so familiar with Adelaide, had he given up the rights he had acquired, and which were perhaps his due?

These involuntary reflections prompted him to watch the old man and the Baroness, whose meaning looks and certain sidelong glances cast at Adelaide displeased him. "Am I being duped?" was Hippolyte's last idea—horrible, scathing, for he believed it just enough to be tortured by it. He determined to stay after the departure of the two old men, to confirm or dissipate his suspicions. He drew out his purse to pay Adelaide; but carried away by his poignant thoughts, he laid it on the table, falling into a reverie of brief duration; then, ashamed of his silence, he rose, answered some commonplace question from Madame de Rouville, and went close up to her to examine the withered features while he was talking to her.

He went away, racked by a thousand doubts. He had gone down but a few steps when he turned back to fetch the forgotten purse.

"I left my purse here!" he said to the young girl.

"No," she said, reddening.

"I thought it was there," and he pointed to the card-table. Not finding it, in his shame for Adelaide and the Baroness, he looked at them with a blank amazement that made them laugh, turned pale, felt his waistcoat, and said, "I must have made a mistake. I have it somewhere no doubt."

In one end of the purse there were fifteen louis d'or, and in the other some small change. The theft was so flagrant, and denied with such effrontery, that Hippolyte no longer felt a doubt as to his neighbors' morals. He stood still on the stairs, and got down with some difficulty; his knees shook, he felt dizzy, he was in a cold sweat, he shivered, and found himself unable to walk, struggling, as he was, with the agonizing shock caused by the destruction of all his hopes. And at this moment he found lurking in his memory a number of observations, trifling in themselves, but which corroborated his frightful suspicions, and which, by proving the certainty of this last incident, opened his eyes as to the character and life of these two women.

Had they really waited till the portrait was given them before robbing him of his purse? In such a combination the theft was even more odious. The painter recollected that for the last two or three evenings Adelaide, while seeming to examine with a girl's curiosity the particular stitch of the worn silk netting, was probably counting the coins in the purse, while making some light jests, quite innocent in appearance, but no doubt with the object of watching for a moment when the sum was worth stealing.

"The old admiral has perhaps good reasons for not marrying Adelaide, and so the Baroness has tried——"

But at this hypothesis he checked himself, not finishing his thought, which was contradicted by a very just reflection, "If the Baroness hopes to get me to marry her daughter," thought he, "they would not have robbed me."

Then, clinging to his illusions, to the love that already had taken such deep root, he tried to find a justification in some accident. "The purse must have fallen on the floor," said he to himself, "or I left it lying on my chair. Or perhaps I have it about me—I am so absent-minded!" He searched himself with hurried movements, but did not find the ill-starred purse. His memory cruelly retraced the fatal truth, minute by minute. He distinctly saw the purse lying on the green cloth; but then, doubtful no longer, he excused Adelaide, telling himself that persons in misfortune should not be so hastily condemned. There was, of course, some secret behind this apparently degrading action. He

would not admit that that proud and noble face was a lie.

At the same time the wretched rooms rose before him, denuded of the poetry of love which beautifies everything; he saw them dirty and faded, regarding them as emblematic of an inner life devoid of honor, idle and vicious. Are not our feelings written, as it were, on the things about us?

Next morning he rose, not having slept. The heartache, that terrible malady of the soul, had made rapid inroads. To lose the bliss we dreamed of, to renounce our whole future, is a keener pang than that caused by the loss of known happiness, however complete it may have been; for is not Hope better than Memory? The thoughts into which our spirit is suddenly plunged are like a shoreless sea, in which we may swim for a moment, but where our love is doomed to drown and die. And it is a frightful death. Are not our feelings the most glorious part of our life? It is this partial death which, in certain delicate or powerful natures, leads to the terrible ruin produced by disenchantment, by hopes and passions betrayed. Thus it was with the young painter. He went out at a very early hour to walk under the fresh shade of the Tuileries, absorbed in his thoughts, forgetting everything in the world.

There by chance he met one of his most intimate friends, a school-fellow and studio-mate, with whom he had lived on better terms than with a brother.

"Why, Hippolyte, what ails you?" asked Francois Souchet, the young sculptor who had just won the first prize, and was soon to set out for Italy.

"I am most unhappy," replied Hippolyte gravely.

"Nothing but a love affair can cause you grief. Money, glory, respect—you lack nothing."

Insensibly the painter was led into confidences, and confessed his love. The moment he mentioned the Rue de Suresnes, and a young girl living on the fourth floor, "Stop, stop," cried Souchet lightly. "A little girl I see every morning at the Church of the Assumption, and with whom I have a flirtation. But, my dear fellow, we all know her. The mother is a Baroness. Do you really believe in a Baroness living up four flights of stairs? Brrr! Why, you are a relic of the golden age! We see the old mother here, in this avenue, every day; why, her face, her appearance, tell everything. What, have you not known her for what she is by the way she holds her bag?"

The two friends walked up and down for some time, and several young men who knew Souchet or Schinner joined them. The painter's adventure, which the sculptor regarded as unimportant, was repeated by him.

"So he, too, has seen that young lady!" said Souchet.

And then there were comments, laughter, innocent mockery, full of the

liveliness familiar to artists, but which pained Hippolyte frightfully. A certain native reticence made him uncomfortable as he saw his heart's secret so carelessly handled, his passion rent, torn to tatters, a young and unknown girl, whose life seemed to be so modest, the victim of condemnation, right or wrong, but pronounced with such reckless indifference. He pretended to be moved by a spirit of contradiction, asking each for proofs of his assertions, and their jests began again.

"But, my dear boy, have you seen the Baroness' shawl?" asked Souchet.

"Have you ever followed the girl when she patters off to church in the morning?" said Joseph Bridau, a young dauber in Gros' studio.

"Oh, the mother has among other virtues a certain gray gown, which I regard as typical," said Bixiou, the caricaturist.

"Listen, Hippolyte," the sculptor went on. "Come here at about four o'clock, and just study the walk of both mother and daughter. If after that you still have doubts! well, no one can ever make anything of you; you would be capable of marrying your porter's daughter."

Torn by the most conflicting feelings, the painter parted from his friends. It seemed to him that Adelaide and her mother must be superior to these accusations, and at the bottom of his heart he was filled with remorse for having suspected the purity of this beautiful and simple girl. He went to his studio, passing the door of the rooms where Adelaide was, and conscious of a pain at his heart which no man can misapprehend. He loved Mademoiselle de Rouville so passionately that, in spite of the theft of the purse, he still worshiped her. His love was that of the Chevalier des Grieux admiring his mistress, and holding her as pure, even on the cart which carries such lost creatures to prison. "Why should not my love keep her the purest of women? Why abandon her to evil and to vice without holding out a rescuing hand to her?"

The idea of this mission pleased him. Love makes a gain of everything. Nothing tempts a young man more than to play the part of a good genius to a woman. There is something inexplicably romantic in such an enterprise which appeals to a highly-strung soul. Is it not the utmost stretch of devotion under the loftiest and most engaging aspect? Is there not something grand in the thought that we love enough still to love on when the love of others dwindles and dies?

Hippolyte sat down in his studio, gazed at his picture without doing anything to it, seeing the figures through tears that swelled in his eyes, holding his brush in his hand, going up to the canvas as if to soften down an effect, but not touching it. Night fell, and he was still in this attitude. Roused from his

moodiness by the darkness, he went downstairs, met the old admiral on the way, looked darkly at him as he bowed, and fled.

He had intended going in to see the ladies, but the sight of Adelaide's protector froze his heart and dispelled his purpose. For the hundredth time he wondered what interest could bring this old prodigal, with his eighty thousand francs a year, to this fourth story, where he lost about forty francs every evening; and he thought he could guess what it was.

The next and following days Hippolyte threw himself into his work, and to try to conquer his passion by the swift rush of ideas and the ardor of composition. He half succeeded. Study consoled him, though it could not smother the memories of so many tender hours spent with Adelaide.

One evening, as he left his studio, he saw the door of the ladies' rooms half open. Somebody was standing in the recess of the window, and the position of the door and the staircase made it impossible that the painter should pass without seeing Adelaide. He bowed coldly, with a glance of supreme indifference; but judging of the girl's suffering by his own, he felt an inward shudder as he reflected on the bitterness which that look and that coldness must produce in a loving heart. To crown the most delightful feast which ever brought joy to two pure souls, by eight days of disdain, of the deepest and most utter contempt!—A frightful conclusion. And perhaps the purse had been found, perhaps Adelaide had looked for her friend every evening.

This simple and natural idea filled the lover with fresh remorse; he asked himself whether the proofs of attachment given him by the young girl, the delightful talks, full of the love that had so charmed him, did not deserve at least an inquiry; were not worthy of some justification. Ashamed of having resisted the promptings of his heart for a whole week, and feeling himself almost a criminal in this mental struggle, he called the same evening on Madame de Rouville.

All his suspicions, all his evil thoughts vanished at the sight of the young girl, who had grown pale and thin.

"Good heavens! what is the matter?" he asked her, after greeting the Baroness.

Adelaide made no reply, but she gave him a look of deep melancholy, a sad, dejected look, which pained him.

"You have, no doubt, been working hard," said the old lady. "You are altered. We are the cause of your seclusion. That portrait had delayed some pictures essential to your reputation."

Hippolyte was glad to find so good an excuse for his rudeness.

"Yes," he said, "I have been very busy, but I have been suffering——"

At these words Adelaide raised her head, looked at her lover, and her anxious eyes had now no hint of reproach.

"You must have thought us quite indifferent to any good or ill that may befall you?" said the old lady.

"I was wrong," he replied. "Still, there are forms of pain which we know not how to confide to any one, even to a friendship of older date than that with which you honor me."

"The sincerity and strength of friendship are not to be measured by time. I have seen old friends who had not a tear to bestow on misfortune," said the Baroness, nodding sadly.

"But you—what ails you?" the young man asked Adelaide.

"Oh, nothing," replied the Baroness. "Adelaide has sat up late for some nights to finish some little piece of woman's work, and would not listen to me when I told her that a day more or less did not matter——"

Hippolyte was not listening. As he looked at these two noble, calm faces, he blushed for his suspicions, and ascribed the loss of his purse to some unknown accident.

This was a delicious evening to him, and perhaps to her too. There are some secrets which young souls understand so well. Adelaide could read Hippolyte's thoughts. Though he could not confess his misdeeds, the painter knew them, and he had come back to his mistress more in love, and more affectionate, trying thus to purchase her tacit forgiveness. Adelaide was enjoying such perfect, such sweet happiness, that she did not think she had paid too dear for it with all the grief that had so cruelly crushed her soul. And yet, this true concord of hearts, this understanding so full of magic charm, was disturbed by a little speech of Madame de Rouville's.

"Let us have our little game," she said, "for my old friend Kergarouet will not let me off."

These words revived all the young painter's fears; he colored as he looked at Adelaide's mother, but he saw nothing in her countenance but the expression of the frankest good-nature; no double meaning marred its charm; its keenness was not perifidious, its humor seemed kindly, and no trace of remorse disturbed its equanimity.

He sat down to the card-table. Adelaide took side with the painter, saying that he did not know piquet, and needed a partner.

All through the game Madame de Rouville and her daughter exchanged

looks of intelligence, which alarmed Hippolyte all the more because he was winning; but at last a final hand left the lovers in the old lady's debt.

To feel for some money in his pocket the painter took his hands off the table, and he then saw before him a purse which Adelaide had slipped in front of him without his noticing it; the poor child had the old one in her hand, and, to keep her countenance, was looking into it for the money to pay her mother. The blood rushed to Hippolyte's heart with such force that he was near fainting.

The new purse, substituted for his own, and which contained his fifteen gold louis, was worked with gilt beads. The rings and tassels bore witness to Adelaide's good taste, and she had no doubt spent all her little hoard in ornamenting this pretty piece of work. It was impossible to say with greater delicacy that the painter's gift could only be repaid by some proof of affection.

Hippolyte, overcome with happiness, turned to look at Adelaide and her mother, and saw that they were tremulous with pleasure and delight at their little trick. He felt himself mean, sordid, a fool; he longed to punish himself, to rend his heart. A few tears rose to his eyes; by an irresistible impulse he sprang up, clasped Adelaide in his arms, pressed her to his heart, and stole a kiss; then with the simple heartiness of an artist, "I ask for her for my wife!" he exclaimed, looking at the Baroness.

Adelaide looked at him with half-wrathful eyes, and Madame de Rouville, somewhat astonished, was considering her reply, when the scene was interrupted by a ring at the bell. The old vice-admiral came in, followed by his shadow, and Madame Schinner. Having guessed the cause of the grief her son vainly endeavored to conceal, Hippolyte's mother had made inquiries among her friends concerning Adelaide. Very justly alarmed by the calumnies which weighed on the young girl, unknown to the Comte de Kergarouet, whose name she learned from the porter's wife, she went to report them to the vice-admiral; and he, in his rage, declared "he would crop all the scoundrels' ears for them."

Then, prompted by his wrath, he went on to explain to Madame Schinner the secret of his losing intentionally at cards, because the Baronne's pride left him none but these ingenious means of assisting her.

When Madame Schinner had paid her respects to Madame de Rouville, the Baroness looked at the Comte de Kergarouet, at the Chevalier du Halga—the friend of the departed Comtesse de Kergarouet—at Hippolyte, and Adelaide, and said, with the grace that comes from the heart, "So we are a family party this evening."

PARIS, May 1832

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VENDETTA

CHAPTER I. PROLOGUE

In the year 1800, toward the close of October, a foreigner, accompanied by a woman and a little girl, was standing for a long time in front of the palace of the Tuileries, near the ruins of a house recently pulled down, at the point where in our day the wing begins which was intended to unite the chateau of Catherine de Medici with the Louvre of the Valois.

The man stood there with folded arms and a bowed head, which he sometimes raised to look alternately at the consular palace and at his wife, who was sitting near him on a stone. Though the woman seemed wholly occupied with the little girl of nine or ten years of age, whose long black hair she amused herself by handling, she lost not a single glance of those her companion cast on her. Some sentiment other than love united these two beings, and inspired with mutual anxiety their movements and their thoughts. Misery is, perhaps, the most powerful of all ties.

The stranger had one of those broad, serious heads, covered with thick hair, which we see so frequently in the pictures of the Caracci. The jet black of the hair was streaked with white. Though noble and proud, his features had a hardness which spoiled them. In spite of his evident strength, and his straight, erect figure, he looked to be over sixty years of age. His dilapidated clothes were those of a foreign country. Though the faded and once beautiful face of the wife betrayed the deepest sadness, she forced herself to smile, assuming a calm countenance whenever her husband looked at her.

The little girl was standing, though signs of weariness were on the youthful face, which was tanned by the sun. She had an Italian cast of countenance and bearing, large black eyes beneath their well arched brows, a native nobleness, and candid grace. More than one of those who passed them felt strongly moved by the mere aspect of this group, who made no effort to conceal a despair which seemed as deep as the expression of it was simple. But the flow of this fugitive sympathy, characteristic of Parisians, was dried immediately; for as soon as the stranger saw himself the object of attention, he looked at his observer with so savage an air that the boldest lounger hurried his step as though he had trod upon a serpent.

After standing for some time undecided, the tall stranger suddenly passed his hand across his face to brush away, as it were, the thoughts that were

ploughing furrows in it. He must have taken some desperate resolution. Casting a glance upon his wife and daughter, he drew a dagger from his breast and gave it to his companion, saying in Italian:—

"I will see if the Bonapartes remember us."

Then he walked with a slow, determined step toward the entrance of the palace, where he was, naturally, stopped by a soldier of the consular guard, with whom he was not permitted a long discussion. Seeing this man's obstinate determination, the sentinel presented his bayonet in the form of an ultimatum. Chance willed that the guard was changed at that moment, and the corporal very obligingly pointed out to the stranger the spot where the commander of the post was standing.

"Let Bonaparte know that Bartolomeo di Piombo wishes to speak with him," said the Italian to the captain on duty.

In vain the officer represented to Bartolomeo that he could not see the First Consul without having previously requested an audience in writing; the Italian insisted that the soldier should go to Bonaparte. The officer stated the rules of the post, and refused to comply with the order of this singular visitor. Bartolomeo frowned heavily, casting a terrible look at the captain, as if he made him responsible for the misfortunes that this refusal might occasion. Then he kept silence, folded his arms tightly across his breast, and took up his station under the portico which serves as an avenue of communication between the garden and the court-yard of the Tuileries. Persons who will things intensely are very apt to be helped by chance. At the moment when Bartolomeo di Piombo seated himself on one of the stone posts which was near the entrance, a carriage drew up, from which Lucien Bonaparte, minister of the interior, issued.

"Ah, Loucian, it is lucky for me I have met you!" cried the stranger.

These words, said in the Corsican patois, stopped Lucien at the moment when he was springing under the portico. He looked at his compatriot, and recognized him. At the first word that Bartolomeo said in his ear, he took the Corsican away with him.

Murat, Lannes, and Rapp were at that moment in the cabinet of the First Consul. As Lucien entered, followed by a man so singular in appearance as Piombo, the conversation ceased. Lucien took Napoleon by the arm and led him into the recess of a window. After exchanging a few words with his brother, the First Consul made a sign with his hand, which Murat and Lannes obeyed by retiring. Rapp pretended not to have seen it, in order to remain where he was. Bonaparte then spoke to him sharply, and the aide-de-camp, with evident unwillingness, left the room. The First Consul, who listened for

Rapp's step in the adjoining salon, opened the door suddenly, and found his aide-de-camp close to the wall of the cabinet.

"Do you choose not to understand me?" said the First Consul. "I wish to be alone with my compatriot."

"A Corsican!" replied the aide-de-camp. "I distrust those fellows too much to—"

The First Consul could not restrain a smile as he pushed his faithful officer by the shoulders.

"Well, what has brought you here, my poor Bartolomeo?" said Napoleon.

"To ask asylum and protection from you, if you are a true Corsican," replied Bartolomeo, roughly.

"What ill fortune drove you from the island? You were the richest, the most —"

"I have killed all the Portas," replied the Corsican, in a deep voice, frowning heavily.

The First Consul took two steps backward in surprise.

"Do you mean to betray me?" cried Bartolomeo, with a darkling look at Bonaparte. "Do you know that there are still four Piombos in Corsica?"

Lucien took an arm of his compatriot and shook it.

"Did you come here to threaten the savior of France?" he said.

Bonaparte made a sign to Lucien, who kept silence. Then he looked at Piombo and said:—

"Why did you kill the Portas?"

"We had made friends," replied the man; "the Barbantis reconciled us. The day after we had drunk together to drown our quarrels, I left home because I had business at Bastia. The Portas remained in my house, and set fire to my vineyard at Longone. They killed my son Gregorio. My daughter Ginevra and my wife, having taken the sacrament that morning, escaped; the Virgin protected them. When I returned I found no house; my feet were in its ashes as I searched for it. Suddenly they struck against the body of Gregorio; I recognized him in the moonlight. 'The Portas have dealt me this blow,' I said; and, forthwith, I went to the woods, and there I called together all the men whom I had ever served,—do you hear me, Bonaparte?—and we marched to the vineyard of the Portas. We got there at five in the morning; at seven they were all before God. Giacomo declares that Eliza Vanni saved a child, Luigi. But I myself bound him to his bed before setting fire to the house. I have left

the island with my wife and child without being able to discover whether, indeed, Luigi Porta is alive."

Bonaparte looked with curiosity at Bartolomeo, but without surprise.

"How many were there?" asked Lucien.

"Seven," replied Piombo. "All of them were your persecutors in the olden times."

These words roused no expression of hatred on the part of the two brothers.

"Ha! you are no longer Corsicans!" cried Piombo, with a sort of despair. "Farewell. In other days I protected you," he added, in a reproachful tone. "Without me, your mother would never have reached Marseille," he said, addressing himself to Bonaparte, who was silent and thoughtful, his elbow resting on a mantel-shelf.

"As a matter of duty, Piombo," said Napoleon at last, "I cannot take you under my wing. I have become the leader of a great nation; I command the Republic; I am bound to execute the laws."

"Ha! ha!" said Bartolomeo, scornfully.

"But I can shut my eyes," continued Bonaparte. "The tradition of the Vendetta will long prevent the reign of law in Corsica," he added, as if speaking to himself. "But it must be destroyed, at any cost."

Bonaparte was silent for a few moments, and Lucien made a sign to Piombo not to speak. The Corsican was swaying his head from right to left in deep disapproval.

"Live here, in Paris," resumed the First Consul, addressing Bartolomeo; "we will know nothing of this affair. I will cause your property in Corsica to be bought, to give you enough to live on for the present. Later, before long, we will think of you. But, remember, no more vendetta! There are no woods here to fly to. If you play with daggers, you must expect no mercy. Here, the law protects all citizens; and no one is allowed to do justice for himself."

"He has made himself the head of a singular nation," said Bartolomeo, taking Lucien's hand and pressing it. "But you have both recognized me in misfortune, and I am yours, henceforth, for life or death. You may dispose as you will of the Piombos."

With these words his Corsican brow unbent, and he looked about him in satisfaction.

"You are not badly off here," he said, smiling, as if he meant to lodge there himself. "You are all in red, like a cardinal."

"Your success depends upon yourself; you can have a palace, also," said Bonaparte, watching his compatriot with a keen eye. "It will often happen that I shall need some faithful friend in whom I can confide."

A sigh of joy heaved the vast chest of the Corsican, who held out his hand to the First Consul, saying:—

"The Corsican is in you still."

Bonaparte smiled. He looked in silence at the man who brought, as it were, a waft of air from his own land,—from that isle where he had been so miraculously saved from the hatred of the "English party"; the land he was never to see again. He made a sign to his brother, who then took Piombo away. Lucien inquired with interest as to the financial condition of the former protector of their family. Piombo took him to a window and showed him his wife and Ginevra, seated on a heap of stones.

"We came from Fontainebleau on foot; we have not a single penny," he said.

Lucien gave his purse to his compatriot, telling him to come to him the next day, that arrangements might be made to secure the comfort of the family. The value of Piombo's property in Corsica, if sold, would scarcely maintain him honorably in Paris.

Fifteen years elapsed between the time of Piombo's arrival with his family in Paris and the following event, which would be scarcely intelligible to the reader without this narrative of the foregoing circumstances.

CHAPTER II. THE STUDIO

Servin, one of our most distinguished artists, was the first to conceive of the idea of opening a studio for young girls who wished to take lessons in painting.

About forty years of age, a man of the purest morals, entirely given up to his art, he had married from inclination the dowerless daughter of a general. At first the mothers of his pupils bought their daughters themselves to the studio; then they were satisfied to send them alone, after knowing the master's principles and the pains he took to deserve their confidence.

It was the artist's intention to take no pupils but young ladies belonging to rich families of good position, in order to meet with no complaints as to the composition of his classes. He even refused to take girls who wished to become artists; for to them he would have been obliged to give certain

instructions without which no talent could advance in the profession. Little by little his prudence and the ability with which he initiated his pupils into his art, the certainty each mother felt that her daughter was in company with none but well-bred young girls, and the fact of the artist's marriage, gave him an excellent reputation as a teacher in society. When a young girl wished to learn to draw, and her mother asked advice of her friends, the answer was, invariably: "Send her to Servin's."

Servin became, therefore, for feminine art, a specialty; like Herbault for bonnets, Leroy for gowns, and Chevet for eatables. It was recognized that a young woman who had taken lessons from Servin was capable of judging the paintings of the Musee conclusively, of making a striking portrait, copying an ancient master, or painting a genre picture. The artist thus sufficed for the educational needs of the aristocracy. But in spite of these relations with the best families in Paris, he was independent and patriotic, and he maintained among them that easy, brilliant, half-ironical tone, and that freedom of judgment which characterize painters.

He had carried his scrupulous precaution into the arrangements of the locality where his pupils studied. The entrance to the attic above his apartments was walled up. To reach this retreat, as sacred as a harem, it was necessary to go up a small spiral staircase made within his own rooms. The studio, occupying nearly the whole attic floor under the roof, presented to the eye those vast proportions which surprise inquirers when, after attaining sixty feet above the ground-floor, they expect to find an artist squeezed into a gutter.

This gallery, so to speak, was profusely lighted from above, through enormous panes of glass furnished with those green linen shades by means of which all artists arrange the light. A quantity of caricatures, heads drawn at a stroke, either in color or with the point of a knife, on walls painted in a dark gray, proved that, barring a difference in expression, the most distinguished young girls have as much fun and folly in their minds as men. A small stove with a large pipe, which described a fearful zigzag before it reached the upper regions of the roof, was the necessary and infallible ornament of the room. A shelf ran round the walls, on which were models in plaster, heterogeneously placed, most of them covered with gray dust. Here and there, above this shelf, a head of Niobe, hanging to a nail, presented her pose of woe; a Venus smiled; a hand thrust itself forward like that of a pauper asking alms; a few "ecorches," yellowed by smoke, looked like limbs snatched over-night from a graveyard; besides these objects, pictures, drawings, lay figures, frames without paintings, and paintings without frames gave to this irregular apartment that studio physiognomy which is distinguished for its singular jumble of ornament and bareness, poverty and riches, care and neglect. The vast receptacle of an "atelier," where all seems small, even man, has something of the air of an

Opera "coulisse"; here lie ancient garments, gilded armor, fragments of stuffs, machinery. And yet there is something mysteriously grand, like thought, in it; genius and death are there; Diana and Apollo beside a skull or skeleton, beauty and destruction, poesy and reality, colors glowing in the shadows, often a whole drama, motionless and silent. Strange symbol of an artist's head!

At the moment when this history begins, a brilliant July sun was illuminating the studio, and two rays striking athwart it lengthwise, traced diaphanous gold lines in which the dust was shimmering. A dozen easels raised their sharp points like masts in a port. Several young girls were animating the scene by the variety of their expressions, their attitudes, and the differences in their toilets. The strong shadows cast by the green serge curtains, arranged according to the needs of each easel, produced a multitude of contrasts, and the piquant effects of light and shade. This group was the prettiest of all the pictures in the studio.

A fair young girl, very simply dressed, sat at some distance from her companions, working bravely and seeming to be in dread of some mishap. No one looked at her, or spoke to her; she was much the prettiest, the most modest, and, apparently, the least rich among them. Two principal groups, distinctly separated from each other, showed the presence of two sets or cliques, two minds even here, in this studio, where one might suppose that rank and fortune would be forgotten.

But, however that might be, these young girls, sitting or standing, in the midst of their color-boxes, playing with their brushes or preparing them, handling their dazzling palettes, painting, laughing, talking, singing, absolutely natural, and exhibiting their real selves, composed a spectacle unknown to man. One of them, proud, haughty, capricious, with black hair and beautiful hands, was casting the flame of her glance here and there at random; another, light-hearted and gay, a smile upon her lips, with chestnut hair and delicate white hands, was a typical French virgin, thoughtless, and without hidden thoughts, living her natural real life; a third was dreamy, melancholy, pale, bending her head like a drooping flower; her neighbor, on the contrary, tall, indolent, with Asiatic habits, long eyes, moist and black, said but little, and reflected, glancing covertly at the head of Antinous.

Among them, like the "jocoso" of a Spanish play, full of wit and epigrammatic sallies, another girl was watching the rest with a comprehensive glance, making them laugh, and tossing up her head, too lively and arch not to be pretty. She appeared to rule the first group of girls, who were the daughters of bankers, notaries, and merchants,—all rich, but aware of the imperceptible though cutting slights which another group belonging to the aristocracy put upon them. The latter were led by the daughter of one of the King's ushers, a little creature, as silly as she was vain, proud of being the daughter of a man

with "an office at court." She was a girl who always pretended to understand the remarks of the master at the first word, and seemed to do her work as a favor to him. She used an eyeglass, came very much dressed, and always late, and entreated her companions to speak low.

In this second group were several girls with exquisite figures and distinguished features, but there was little in their glance or expression that was simple and candid. Though their attitudes were elegant and their movements graceful, their faces lacked frankness; it was easy to see that they belonged to a world where polite manners form the character from early youth, and the abuse of social pleasures destroys sentiment and develops egotism.

But when the whole class was here assembled, childlike heads were seen among this bevy of young girls, ravishingly pure and virgin, faces with lips half-opened, through which shone spotless teeth, and on which a virgin smile was flickering. The studio then resembled not a studio, but a group of angels seated on a cloud in ether.

By mid-day, on this occasion, Servin had not appeared. For some days past he had spent most of his time in a studio which he kept elsewhere, where he was giving the last touches to a picture for the Exposition. All of a sudden Mademoiselle Amelie Thirion, the leader of the aristocrats, began to speak in a low voice, and very earnestly, to her neighbor. A great silence fell on the group of patricians, and the commercial party, surprised, were equally silent, trying to discover the subject of this earnest conference. The secret of the young ultras was soon revealed.

Amelie rose, took an easel which stood near hers, carried it to a distance from the noble group, and placed it close to a board partition which separated the studio from the extreme end of the attic, where all broken casts, defaced canvases and the winter supply of wood were kept. Amelie's action caused a murmur of surprise, which did not prevent her from accomplishing the change by rolling hastily to the side of the easel the stool, the box of colors, and even the picture by Prudhon, which the absent pupil was copying. After this coup d'etat the Right began to work in silence, but the Left discoursed at length.

"What will Mademoiselle Piombo say to that?" asked a young girl of Mademoiselle Matilde Roguin, the lively oracle of the banking group.

"She's not a girl to say anything," was the reply; "but fifty years hence she'll remember the insult as if it were done to her the night before, and revenge it cruelly. She is a person that I, for one, don't want to be at war with."

"The slight these young ladies mean to put upon her is all the more unkind," said another young girl, "because yesterday, Mademoiselle Ginevra

was very sad. Her father, they say, has just resigned. They ought not to add to her trouble, for she was very considerate of them during the Hundred Days. Never did she say a word to wound them. On the contrary, she avoided politics. But I think our ultras are acting more from jealousy than from party spite."

"I have a great mind to go and get Mademoiselle Piombo's easel and place it next to mine," said Matilde Roguin. She rose, but second thoughts made her sit down again.

"With a character like hers," she said, "one can't tell how she would take a civility; better wait events."

"Ecco la," said the young girl with the black eyes, languidly.

The steps of a person coming up the narrow stairway sounded through the studio. The words: "Here she comes!" passed from mouth to mouth, and then the most absolute silence reigned.

To understand the importance of the ostracism imposed by the act of Amelie Thirion, it is necessary to add that this scene took place toward the end of the month of July, 1815. The second return of the Bourbons had shaken many friendships which had held firm under the first Restoration. At this moment families, almost all divided in opinion, were renewing many of the deplorable scenes which stain the history of all countries in times of civil or religious wars. Children, young girls, old men shared the monarchial fever to which the country was then a victim. Discord glided beneath all roofs; distrust dyed with its gloomy colors the words and the actions of the most intimate friends.

Ginevra Piombo loved Napoleon to idolatry; how, then, could she hate him? The emperor was her compatriot and the benefactor of her father. The Baron di Piombo was among those of Napoleon's devoted servants who had co-operated most effectually in the return from Elba. Incapable of denying his political faith, anxious even to confess it, the old baron remained in Paris in the midst of his enemies. Ginevra Piombo was all the more open to condemnation because she made no secret of the grief which the second Restoration caused to her family. The only tears she had so far shed in life were drawn from her by the twofold news of Napoleon's captivity on the "Bellerophon," and Labedoyere's arrest.

The girls of the aristocratic group of pupils belonged to the most devoted royalist families in Paris. It would be difficult to give an idea of the exaggerations prevalent at this epoch, and of the horror inspired by the Bonapartists. However insignificant and petty Amelie's action may now seem to be, it was at that time a very natural expression of the prevailing hatred.

Ginevra Piombo, one of Servin's first pupils, had occupied the place that was now taken from her since the first day of her coming to the studio. The aristocratic circle had gradually surrounded her. To drive her from a place that in some sense belonged to her was not only to insult her, but to cause her a species of artistic pain; for all artists have a spot of predilection where they work.

Nevertheless, political prejudice was not the chief influence on the conduct of the Right clique of the studio. Ginevra, much the ablest of Servin's pupils, was an object of intense jealousy. The master testified as much admiration for the talents as for the character of his favorite pupil, who served as a conclusion to all his comparisons. In fact, without any one being able to explain the ascendancy which this young girl obtained over all who came in contact with her, she exercised over the little world around her a prestige not unlike that of Bonaparte upon his soldiers.

The aristocracy of the studio had for some days past resolved upon the fall of this queen, but no one had, as yet, ventured to openly avoid the Bonapartist. Mademoiselle Thirion's act was, therefore, a decisive stroke, intended by her to force the others into becoming, openly, the accomplices of her hatred. Though Ginevra was sincerely loved by several of these royalists, nearly all of whom were indoctrinated at home with their political ideas, they decided, with the tactics peculiar to women, that they should do best to keep themselves aloof from the quarrel.

On Ginevra's arrival she was received, as we have said, in profound silence. Of all the young women who had, so far, come to Servin's studio, she was the handsomest, the tallest, and the best made. Her carriage and demeanor had a character of nobility and grace which commanded respect. Her face, instinct with intelligence, seemed to radiate light, so inspired was it with the enthusiasm peculiar to Corsicans,—which does not, however, preclude calmness. Her long hair and her black eyes and lashes expressed passion; the corners of her mouth, too softly defined, and the lips, a trifle too marked, gave signs of that kindliness which strong beings derive from the consciousness of their strength.

By a singular caprice of nature, the charm of her face was, in some degree, contradicted by a marble forehead, on which lay an almost savage pride, and from which seemed to emanate the moral instincts of a Corsican. In that was the only link between herself and her native land. All the rest of her person, her simplicity, the easy grace of her Lombard beauty, was so seductive that it was difficult for those who looked at her to give her pain. She inspired such keen attraction that her old father caused her, as matter of precaution, to be accompanied to and from the studio. The only defect of this truly poetic creature came from the very power of a beauty so fully developed; she looked

a woman. Marriage she had refused out of love to her father and mother, feeling herself necessary to the comfort of their old age. Her taste for painting took the place of the passions and interests which usually absorb her sex.

"You are very silent to-day, mesdemoiselles," she said, after advancing a little way among her companions. "Good-morning, my little Laure," she added, in a soft, caressing voice, approaching the young girl who was painting apart from the rest. "That head is strong,—the flesh tints a little too rosy, but the drawing is excellent."

Laure raised her head and looked tenderly at Ginevra; their faces beamed with the expression of a mutual affection. A faint smile brightened the lips of the young Italian, who seemed thoughtful, and walked slowly to her easel, glancing carelessly at the drawings and paintings on her way, and bidding good-morning to each of the young girls of the first group, not observing the unusual curiosity excited by her presence. She was like a queen in the midst of her court; she paid no attention to the profound silence that reigned among the patricians, and passed before their camp without pronouncing a single word. Her absorption seemed so great that she sat down before her easel, opened her color-box, took up her brushes, drew on her brown sleeves, arranged her apron, looked at her picture, examined her palette, without, apparently, thinking of what she was doing. All heads in the group of the bourgeoises were turned toward her. If the young ladies in the Thirion camp did not show their impatience with the same frankness, their sidelong glances were none the less directed on Ginevra.

"She hasn't noticed it!" said Mademoiselle Roguin.

At this instant Ginevra abandoned the meditative attitude in which she had been contemplating her canvas, and turned her head toward the group of aristocrats. She measured, at a glance, the distance that now separated her from them; but she said nothing.

"It hasn't occurred to her that they meant to insult her," said Matilde; "she neither colored nor turned pale. How vexed these girls will be if she likes her new place as well as the old! You are out of bounds, mademoiselle," she added, aloud, addressing Ginevra.

The Italian pretended not to hear; perhaps she really did not hear. She rose abruptly; walked with a certain deliberation along the side of the partition which separated the adjoining closet from the studio, and seemed to be examining the sash through which her light came,—giving so much importance to it that she mounted a chair to raise the green serge, which intercepted the light, much higher. Reaching that height, her eye was on a level with a slight opening in the partition, the real object of her efforts, for the glance that she cast through it can be compared only to that of a miser

discovering Aladdin's treasure. Then she sprang down hastily and returned to her place, changed the position of her picture, pretended to be still dissatisfied with the light, pushed a table close to the partition, on which she placed a chair, climbed lightly to the summit of this erection, and again looked through the crevice. She cast but one glance into the space beyond, which was lighted through a skylight; but what she saw produced so strong an effect upon her that she tottered.

"Take care, Mademoiselle Ginevra, you'll fall!" cried Laure.

All the young girls gazed at the imprudent climber, and the fear of their coming to her gave her courage; she recovered her equilibrium, and replied, as she balanced herself on the shaking chair:—

"Pooh! it is more solid than a throne!"

She then secured the curtain and came down, pushed the chair and table as far as possible from the partition, returned to her easel, and seemed to be arranging it to suit the volume of light she had now thrown upon it. Her picture, however, was not in her mind, which was wholly bent on getting as near as possible to the closet, against the door of which she finally settled herself. Then she began to prepare her palette in the deepest silence. Sitting there, she could hear, distinctly, a sound which had strongly excited her curiosity the evening before, and had whirled her young imagination across vast fields of conjecture. She recognized the firm and regular breathing of a man whom she had just seen asleep. Her curiosity was satisfied beyond her expectations, but at the same time she felt saddled by an immense responsibility. Through the opening in the wall she had seen the Imperial eagle; and upon the flock bed, faintly lighted from above, lay the form of an officer of the Guard. She guessed all. Servin was hiding a proscribed man!

She now trembled lest any of her companions should come near here to examine her picture, when the regular breathing or some deeper breath might reveal to them, as it had to her, the presence of this political victim. She resolved to keep her place beside that door, trusting to her wits to baffle all dangerous chances that might arise.

"Better that I should be here," thought she, "to prevent some luckless accident, than leave that poor man at the mercy of a heedless betrayal."

This was the secret of the indifference which Ginevra had apparently shown to the removal of her easel. She was inwardly enchanted, because the change had enabled her to gratify her curiosity in a natural manner; besides, at this moment, she was too keenly preoccupied to perceive the reason of her removal.

Nothing is more mortifying to young girls, or, indeed, to all the world, than

to see a piece of mischief, an insult, or a biting speech, miss its effect through the contempt or the indifference of the intended victim. It seems as if hatred to an enemy grows in proportion to the height that enemy is raised above us. Ginevra's behavior was an enigma to all her companions; her friends and enemies were equally surprised; for the former claimed for her all good qualities, except that of forgiveness of injuries. Though, of course, the occasions for displaying that vice of nature were seldom afforded to Ginevra in the life of a studio, still, the specimens she had now and then given of her vindictive disposition had left a strong impression on the minds of her companions.

After many conjectures, Mademoiselle Roguin came to the conclusion that the Italian's silence showed a grandeur of soul beyond all praise; and the banking circle, inspired by her, formed a project to humiliate the aristocracy. They succeeded in that aim by a fire of sarcasms which presently brought down the pride of the Right coterie.

Madame Servin's arrival put a stop to the struggle. With the shrewdness that usually accompanies malice, Amelie Thirion had noticed, analyzed, and mentally commented on the extreme preoccupation of Ginevra's mind, which prevented her from even hearing the bitterly polite war of words of which she was the object. The vengeance Mademoiselle Roguin and her companions were inflicting on Mademoiselle Thirion and her group had, therefore, the fatal effect of driving the young ultras to search for the cause of the silence so obstinately maintained by Ginevra di Piombo. The beautiful Italian became the centre of all glances, and she was henceforth watched by friends and foes alike.

It is very difficult to hide even a slight emotion or sentiment from fifteen inquisitive and unoccupied young girls, whose wits and mischief ask for nothing better than secrets to guess, schemes to create or baffle, and who know how to find too many interpretations for each gesture, glance, and word, to fail in discovering the right one.

At this moment, however, the presence of Madame Servin produced an interlude in the drama thus played below the surface in these various young hearts, the sentiments, ideas, and progress of which were expressed by phrases that were almost allegorical, by mischievous glances, by gestures, by silence even, more intelligible than words. As soon as Madame Servin entered the studio, her eyes turned to the door near which Ginevra was seated. Under present circumstances the fact of this glance was not lost. Though at first none of the pupils took notice of it, Mademoiselle Thirion recollected it later, and it explained to her the doubt, fear, and mystery which now gave something wild and frightened to Madame Servin's eyes.

"Mesdemoiselles," she said, "Monsieur Servin cannot come to-day."

Then she went round complimenting each young girl, receiving in return a volume of those feminine caresses which are given as much by the tones of the voice and by looks as by gestures. She presently reached Ginevra, under the influence of an uneasiness she tried in vain to disguise. They nodded to each other in a friendly way, but said nothing; one painted, the other stood looking at the painting. The breathing of the soldier in the closet could be distinctly heard, but Madame Servin appeared not to notice it; her feigned ignorance was so obvious that Ginevra recognized it at once for wilful deafness. Presently the unknown man turned on his pallet.

The Italian then looked fixedly at Madame Servin, who said, without the slightest change of face:—

"Your copy is as fine as the original; if I had to choose between the two I should be puzzled."

"Monsieur Servin has not taken his wife into his confidence as to this mystery," thought Ginevra, who, after replying to the young wife's speech with a gentle smile of incredulity, began to hum a Corsican "canzonetta" to cover the noise that was made by the prisoner.

It was so unusual a thing to hear the studious Italian sing, that all the other young girls looked up at her in surprise. Later, this circumstance served as proof to the charitable suppositions of jealousy.

Madame Servin soon went away, and the session ended without further events; Ginevra allowed her companions to depart, and seemed to intend to work later. But, unconsciously to herself, she betrayed her desire to be left alone by impatient glances, ill-disguised, at the pupils who were slow in leaving. Mademoiselle Thirion, a cruel enemy to the girl who excelled her in everything, guessed by the instinct of jealousy that her rival's industry hid some purpose. By dint of watching her she was struck by the attentive air with which Ginevra seemed to be listening to sounds that no one else had heard. The expression of impatience she now detected in her companion's eyes was like a flash of light to her.

Amelie was the last of the pupils to leave the studio; from there she went down to Madame Servin's apartment and talked with her for a moment; then she pretended to have left her bag, ran softly back to the studio, and found Ginevra once more mounted on her frail scaffolding, and so absorbed in the contemplation of an unknown object that she did not hear the slight noise of her companion's footsteps. It is true that, to use an expression of Walter Scott, Amelie stepped as if on eggs. She hastily withdrew outside the door and coughed. Ginevra quivered, turned her head, saw her enemy, blushed,

hastened to alter the shade to give meaning to her position, and came down from her perch leisurely. She soon after left the studio, bearing with her, in her memory, the image of a man's head, as beauteous as that of the Endymion, a masterpiece of Girodet's which she had lately copied.

"To banish so young a man! Who can he be? for he is not Marshal Ney—"

These two sentences are the simplest expression of the many ideas that Ginevra turned over in her mind for two days. On the third day, in spite of her haste to be first at the studio, she found Mademoiselle Thirion already there, having come in a carriage.

Ginevra and her enemy observed each other for a long time, but they made their faces impenetrable. Amelie had seen the handsome head of the mysterious man, but, fortunately, and unfortunately also, the Imperial eagles and uniform were so placed that she did not see them through the crevice in the partition. She was lost in conjectures. Suddenly Servin came in, much earlier than usual.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," he said, after glancing round the studio, "why have you placed yourself there? The light is bad. Come nearer to the rest of the young ladies and pull down that curtain a little."

Then he sat down near Laure, whose work deserved his most cordial attention.

"Well, well!" he cried; "here, indeed, is a head extremely well done. You'll be another Ginevra."

The master then went from easel to easel, scolding, flattering, jesting, and making, as usual, his jests more dreaded than his reprimands. Ginevra had not obeyed the professor's order, but remained at her post, firmly resolved not to quit it. She took a sheet of paper and began to sketch in sepia the head of the hidden man. A work done under the impulse of an emotion has always a stamp of its own. The faculty of giving to representations of nature or of thought their true coloring constitutes genius, and often, in this respect, passion takes the place of it. So, under the circumstances in which Ginevra now found herself, the intuition which she owed to a powerful effect upon her memory, or, possibly, to necessity, that mother of great things, lent her, for the moment, a supernatural talent. The head of the young officer was dashed upon the paper in the midst of an awkward trembling which she mistook for fear, and in which a physiologist would have recognized the fire of inspiration. From time to time she glanced furtively at her companions, in order to hide the sketch if any of them came near her. But in spite of her watchfulness, there was a moment when she did not see the eyeglass of the pitiless Amelie turned full upon the drawing from the shelter of a great portfolio. Mademoiselle Thirion,

recognizing the portrait of the mysterious man, showed herself abruptly, and Ginevra hastily covered the sheet of paper.

"Why do you stay there in spite of my advice, mademoiselle?" asked the professor, gravely.

The pupil turned her easel so that no one but the master could see the sketch, which she placed upon it, and said, in an agitated voice:—

"Do you not think, as I do, that the light is very good? Had I not better remain here?"

Servin turned pale. As nothing escapes the piercing eyes of malice, Mademoiselle Thirion became, as it were, a sharer in the sudden emotion of master and pupil.

"You are right," said Servin; "but really," he added, with a forced laugh, "you will soon come to know more than I do."

A pause followed, during which the professor studied the drawing of the officer's head.

"It is a masterpiece! worthy of Salvator Rosa!" he exclaimed, with the energy of an artist.

All the pupils rose on hearing this, and Mademoiselle Thirion darted forward with the velocity of a tiger on its prey. At this instant, the prisoner, awakened, perhaps, by the noise, began to move. Ginevra knocked over her stool, said a few incoherent sentences, and began to laugh; but she had thrown the portrait into her portfolio before Amelie could get to her. The easel was now surrounded; Servin descanted on the beauty of the copy which his favorite pupil was then making, and the whole class was duped by this stratagem, except Amelie, who, slipping behind her companions, attempted to open the portfolio where she had seen Ginevra throw the sketch. But the latter took it up without a word, and placed it in front of her. The two young girls then looked at each other fixedly, in silence.

"Come, mesdemoiselles, take your places," said Servin. "If you wish to do as well as Mademoiselle di Piombo, you mustn't be always talking fashions and balls, and trifling away your time as you do."

When they were all reseated before their easels, Servin sat down beside Ginevra.

"Was it not better that I should be the one to discover the mystery rather than the others?" asked the girl, in a low voice.

"Yes," replied the painter, "you are one of us, a patriot; but even if you were not, I should still have confided the matter to you."

Master and pupil understood each other, and Ginevra no longer feared to ask:—

"Who is he?"

"An intimate friend of Labedoyere, who contributed more than any other man, except the unfortunate colonel, to the union of the 7th regiment with the grenadiers of Elba. He was a major in the Imperial guard and was at Waterloo."

"Why not have burned his uniform and shako, and supplied him with citizen's clothes?" said Ginevra, impatiently.

"He will have them to-night."

"You ought to have closed the studio for some days."

"He is going away."

"Then they'll kill him," said the girl. "Let him stay here with you till the present storm is over. Paris is still the only place in France where a man can be hidden safely. Is he a friend of yours?" she asked.

"No; he has no claim upon me but that of his ill-luck. He came into my hands in this way. My father-in-law, who returned to the army during the campaign, met this young fellow, and very cleverly rescued him from the claws of those who captured Labedoyere. He came here to defend the general, foolish fellow!"

"Do you call him that!" cried Ginevra, casting a glance of astonishment at the painter, who was silent for a moment.

"My father-in-law is too closely watched to be able to keep him in his own house," he resumed. "So he brought him to me, by night, about a week ago. I hoped to keep him out of sight in this corner, the only spot in the house where he could be safe."

"If I can be useful to you, employ me," said Ginevra. "I know the Marechal de Feltre."

"Well, we'll see," replied the painter.

This conversation lasted too long not to be noticed by all the other girls. Servin left Ginevra, went round once more to each easel, and gave such long lessons that he was still there at the hour when the pupils were in the habit of leaving.

"You are forgetting your bag, Mademoiselle Thirion," said the professor, running after the girl, who was now condescending to the work of a spy to satisfy her jealousy.

The baffled pupil returned for the bag, expressing surprise at her carelessness; but this act of Servin's was to her fresh proof of the existence of a mystery, the importance of which was evident. She now ran noisily down the staircase, and slammed the door which opened into the Servins' apartment, to give an impression that she had gone; then she softly returned and stationed herself outside the door of the studio.

CHAPTER III. LABEDOYERE'S FRIEND

When the painter and Ginevra thought themselves alone, Servin rapped in a peculiar manner on the door of the dark garret, which turned at once on its rusty and creaking hinges. Ginevra then saw a tall and well-made young man, whose Imperial uniform set her heart to beating. The officer had one arm in a sling, and the pallor of his face revealed sharp suffering. Seeing an unknown woman, he recoiled.

Amelie, who was unable to look into the room, the door being closed, was afraid to stay longer; she was satisfied with having heard the opening of the garret door, and departed noiselessly.

"Fear nothing," said the painter to the officer. "Mademoiselle is the daughter of a most faithful friend of the Emperor, the Baron di Piombo."

The young soldier retained no doubts as to Ginevra's patriotism as soon as he saw her.

"You are wounded," she said.

"Oh! it is nothing, mademoiselle," he replied; "the wound is healing."

Just at this moment the loud cries of the vendors of newspapers came up from the street: "Condemned to death!" They all trembled, and the soldier was the first to hear a name that turned him pale.

"Labedoyere!" he cried, falling on a stool.

They looked at each other in silence. Drops gathered on the livid forehead of the young man; he seized the black tufts of his hair in one hand with a gesture of despair, and rested his elbow on Ginevra's easel.

"After all," he said, rising abruptly, "Labedoyere and I knew what we were doing. We were certain of the fate that awaited us, whether from triumph or defeat. He dies for the Cause, and here am I, hiding myself!"

He rushed toward the door of the studio; but, quicker than he, Ginevra reached it, and barred his way.

"Can you restore the Emperor?" she said. "Do you expect to raise that giant who could not maintain himself?"

"But what can I do?" said the young man, addressing the two friends whom chance had sent to him. "I have not a relation in the world. Labedoyere was my protector and my friend; without him, I am alone. To-morrow I myself may be condemned; my only fortune was my pay. I spent my last penny to come here and try to snatch Labedoyere from his fate; death is, therefore, a necessity for me. When a man decides to die he ought to know how to sell his life to the executioner. I was thinking just now that the life of an honest man is worth that of two traitors, and the blow of a dagger well placed may give immortality."

This spasm of despair alarmed the painter, and even Ginevra, whose own nature comprehended that of the young man. She admired his handsome face and his delightful voice, the sweetness of which was scarcely lessened by its tones of fury. Then, all of a sudden, she poured a balm upon the wounds of the unfortunate man:—

"Monsieur," she said, "as for your pecuniary distress, permit me to offer you my savings. My father is rich; I am his only child; he loves me, and I am sure he will never blame me. Have no scruple in accepting my offer; our property is derived from the Emperor; we do not own a penny that is not the result of his munificence. Is it not gratitude to him to assist his faithful soldiers? Take the sums you need as indifferently as I offer them. It is only money!" she added, in a tone of contempt. "Now, as for friends,—those you shall have."

She raised her head proudly, and her eyes shone with dazzling brilliancy.

"The head which falls to-morrow before a dozen muskets will save yours," she went on. "Wait till the storm is over; you can then escape and take service in foreign countries if you are not forgotten here; or in the French army, if you are."

In the comfort that women give there is always a delicacy which has something maternal, foreseeing, and complete about it. But when the words of hope and peace are said with grace of gesture and that eloquence of tone which comes from the heart, and when, above all, the benefactress is beautiful, a young man does not resist. The prisoner breathed in love through all his senses. A rosy tinge colored his white cheeks; his eyes lost something of the sadness that dulled them, and he said, in a peculiar tone of voice:—

"You are an angle of goodness—But Labedoyere!" he added. "Oh, Labedoyere!"

At this cry they all three looked at one another in silence, each

comprehending the others' thoughts. No longer friends of twenty minutes only, they were friends of twenty years.

"Dear friend," said Servin, "can you save him?"

"I can avenge him."

Ginevra quivered. Though the stranger was handsome, his appearance had not influenced her; the soft pity in a woman's heart for miseries that are not ignoble had stifled in Ginevra all other emotions; but to hear a cry of vengeance, to find in that proscribed being an Italian soul, devotion to Napoleon, Corsican generosity!—ah! that was, indeed, too much for her. She looked at the officer with a respectful emotion which shook his heart. For the first time in her life a man had caused her a keen emotion. She now, like other women, put the soul of the stranger on a par with the noble beauty of his features and the happy proportions of his figure, which she admired as an artist. Led by accidental curiosity to pity, from pity to a powerful interest, she came, through that interest, to such profound sensations that she felt she was in danger if she stayed there longer.

"Until to-morrow, then," she said, giving the officer a gentle smile by way of a parting consolation.

Seeing that smile, which threw a new light on Ginevra's features, the stranger forgot all else for an instant.

"To-morrow," he said, sadly; "but to-morrow, Labedoyere—"

Ginevra turned, put a finger on her lips, and looked at him, as if to say: "Be calm, be prudent."

And the young man cried out in his own language:

"Ah! Dio! che non vorrei vivere dopo averla veduta?—who would not wish to live after seeing her?"

The peculiar accent with which he pronounced the words made Ginevra quiver.

"Are you Corsican?" she cried, returning toward him with a beating heart.

"I was born in Corsica," he replied; "but I was brought, while very young, to Genoa, and as soon as I was old enough for military service I enlisted."

The beauty of the young man, the mighty charm lent to him by his attachment to the Emperor, his wound, his misfortunes, his danger, all disappeared to Ginevra's mind, or, rather, all were blended in one sentiment,—a new and delightful sentiment. This persecuted man was a child of Corsica; he spoke its cherished language! She stood, for a moment, motionless; held by a magical sensation; before her eyes was a living picture, to which all human

sentiments, united by chance, gave vivid colors. By Servin's invitation, the officer had seated himself on a divan, and the painter, after removing the sling which supported the arm of his guest, was undoing the bandages in order to dress the wound. Ginevra shuddered when she saw the long, broad gash made by the blade of a sabre on the young man's forearm, and a moan escaped her. The stranger raised his head and smiled to her. There was something touching which went to the soul, in the care with which Servin lifted the lint and touched the lacerated flesh, while the face of the wounded man, though pale and sickly, expressed, as he looked at the girl, more pleasure than suffering. An artist would have admired, involuntarily, this opposition of sentiments, together with the contrasts produced by the whiteness of the linen and the bared arm to the red and blue uniform of the officer.

At this moment a soft half-light pervaded the studio; but a parting ray of the evening sunlight suddenly illuminated the spot where the soldier sat, so that his noble, blanched face, his black hair, and his clothes were bathed in its glow. The effect was simple enough, but to the girl's Italian imagination it was a happy omen. The stranger seemed to her a celestial messenger, speaking the language of her own country. He thus unconsciously put her under the spell of childhood's memories, while in her heart there dawned another feeling as fresh, as pure as her own innocence. For a short, very short moment, she was motionless and dreamy, as though she were plunged in boundless thought. Then she blushed at having allowed her absorption to be noticed, exchanged one soft and rapid glance with the wounded man, and fled with the vision of him still before her eyes.

The next day was not a class-day, but Ginevra came to the studio, and the prisoner was free to sit beside her easel. Servin, who had a sketch to finish, played the part of mentor to the two young people, who talked to each other chiefly in Corsican. The soldier related the sufferings of the retreat from Moscow; for, at nineteen years of age, he had made the passage of the Beresins, and was almost the last man left of his regiment. He described, in words of fire, the great disaster of Waterloo. His voice was music itself to the Italian girl. Brought up as a Corsican, Ginevra was, in some sense, a child of Nature; falseness was a thing unknown to her; she gave herself up without reserve to her impressions; she acknowledged them, or, rather, allowed them to be seen without the affectations of petty and calculating coquetry, characteristic of Parisian girlhood. During this day she sat more than once with her palette in one hand, her brushes in another, without touching a color. With her eyes fastened on the officer, and her lips slightly apart, she listened, in the attitude of painting a stroke which was never painted. She was not surprised to see such softness in the eyes of the young man, for she felt that her own were soft in spite of her will to keep them stern and calm. After periods like this she painted diligently, without raising her head, for he was

there, near her, watching her work. The first time he sat down beside her to contemplate her silently, she said, in a voice of some emotion, after a long pause:—

"Does it amuse you to see me paint?"

That day she learned that his name was Luigi. Before separating, it was agreed between them that if, on class-days when they could not see each other, any important political event occurred, Ginevra was to inform him by singing certain Corsican melodies then agreed upon.

The following day Mademoiselle Thirion informed all the members of the class, under pledge of secrecy that Ginevra di Piombo had a lover, a young man who came during the hours for the lesson, and concealed himself in the garret beyond the studio.

"You, who take her part," she said to Mademoiselle Roguin, "watch her carefully, and you will see how she spends her time."

Ginevra was, therefore, observed with diabolical attention. They listened to her songs, they watched her glances. At times, when she supposed that no one saw her, a dozen pairs of eyes were furtively upon her. Thus enlightened, the girls were able to interpret truly the emotions that crossed the features of the beautiful Italian,—her gestures, the peculiar tones in which she hummed a tune, and the attention with which they saw her listen to sounds which only she could hear through the partition.

By the end of a week, Laure was the only one of Servin's fifteen pupils who had resisted the temptation of looking at Luigi through the crevice of the partition; and she, through an instinct of weakness, still defended her beautiful friend. Mademoiselle Roguin endeavored to make her wait on the staircase after the class dispersed, that she might prove to her the intimacy of Ginevra and the young man by entering the studio and surprising them together. But Laure refused to condescend to an act of espial which no curiosity could justify, and she consequently became the object of much reprobation.

Before long Mademoiselle Thirion made known that she thought it improper to attend the classes of a painter whose opinions were tainted with patriotism and Bonapartism (in those days the terms were synonymous), and she ceased her attendance at the studio. But, although she herself forgot Ginevra, the harm she had planted bore fruit. Little by little, the other young girls revealed to their mothers the strange events which were happening at the studio. One day Matilde Roguin did not come; the next day another girl was missing, and so on, till the last three or four who were left came no more. Ginevra and Laure, her little friend, were the sole occupants of the deserted studio for three or four days.

Ginevra did not observe this falling off, nor ask the cause of her companions' absence. As soon as she had invented means of communication with Luigi she lived in the studio in a delightful solitude, alone amid her own world, thinking only of the officer and the dangers that threatened him. Though a sincere admirer of noble characters that never betray their political faiths, she nevertheless urged Luigi to submit himself to the royal authority, that he might be released from his present life and remain in France. But to this he would not consent. If passions are born and nourished, as they say, under the influence of romantic causes, never did so many circumstances of that kind concur in uniting two young souls by one and the same sentiment. The friendship of Ginevra for Luigi and that of Luigi for Ginevra made more progress in a month than a friendship in society would make in ten years. Adversity is the touchstone of character. Ginevra was able, therefore, to study Luigi, to know him; and before long they mutually esteemed each other. The girl, who was older than Luigi, found a charm in being courted by a youth already so grand, so tried by fate,—a youth who joined to the experience of a man the graces of adolescence. Luigi, on his side, felt an unspeakable pleasure in allowing himself to be apparently protected by a woman, now twenty-five years of age. Was it not a proof of love? The union of gentleness and pride, strength and weakness in Ginevra were, to him, irresistible attractions, and he was utterly subjugated by her. In short, before long, they loved each other so profoundly that they felt no need of denying to each other their love, nor yet of telling it.

One day, towards evening, Ginevra heard the accustomed signal. Luigi scratched with a pin on the woodwork in a manner that produced no more noise than a spider might make as he fastened his thread. The signal meant that he wished to come out of his retreat.

Ginevra glanced around the studio, and not seeing Laure, opened the door; but as she did so Luigi caught sight of the little pupil and abruptly retired. Surprised at his action, Ginevra looked round, saw Laure, and said, as she went up to the girl's easel:—

"You are staying late, my dear. That head seems to me finished; you only want a high-light,—see! on that knot of hair."

"You would do me a great kindness," said Laure, in a trembling voice, "if you would give this copy a few touches; for then I could carry away with me something to remind me of you."

"Willingly," said Ginevra, painting a few strokes on the picture. "But I thought it was a long way from your home to the studio, and it is late."

"Oh! Ginevra, I am going away, never to return," cried the poor girl, sadly.

"You mean to leave Monsieur Servin!" exclaimed Ginevra, less affected, however, by this news than she would have been a month earlier.

"Haven't you noticed, Ginevra, that for some days past you and I have been alone in the studio?"

"True," said Ginevra, as if struck by a sudden recollection. "Are all those young ladies ill, or going to be married, or are their fathers on duty at court?"

"They have left Monsieur Servin," replied Laure.

"Why?"

"On your account, Ginevra."

"My account!" repeated the Corsican, springing up, with a threatening brow and her eyes flashing.

"Oh! don't be angry, my kind Ginevra," cried Laure, in deep distress. "My mother insists on my leaving the studio. The young ladies say that you have some intrigue, and that Monsieur Servin allows the young man whom you love to stay in the dark attic. I have never believed these calumnies nor said a word to my mother about them. But last night Madame Roguin met her at a ball and asked her if she still sent me here. When my mother answered yes, Madame Roguin told her the falsehoods of those young ladies. Mamma scolded me severely; she said I must have known it all, and that I had failed in proper confidence between mother and daughter by not telling her. Oh! my dear Ginevra! I, who took you for my model, oh! how grieved I am that I can't be your companion any longer."

"We shall meet again in life; girls marry—" said Ginevra.

"When they are rich," signed Laure.

"Come and see me; my father has a fortune—"

"Ginevra," continued Laure, tenderly. "Madame Roguin and my mother are coming to see Monsieur Servin to-morrow and reproach him; hadn't you better warn him."

A thunderbolt falling at Ginevra's feet could not have astonished her more than this revelation.

"What matter is it to them?" she asked, naively.

"Everybody thinks it very wrong. Mamma says it is immoral."

"And you, Laure, what do you say?"

The young girl looked up at Ginevra, and their thoughts united. Laure could no longer keep back her tears; she flung herself on her friend's breast

and sobbed. At this moment Servin came into the studio.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," he cried, with enthusiasm, "I have finished my picture! it is now being varnished. What have you been doing, meanwhile? Where are the young ladies; are they taking a holiday, or are they in the country?"

Laure dried her tears, bowed to Monsieur Servin, and went away.

"The studio has been deserted for some days," replied Ginevra, "and the young ladies are not coming back."

"Pooh!"

"Oh! don't laugh," said Ginevra. "Listen: I am the involuntary cause of the loss of your reputation—"

The artist smiled, and said, interrupting his pupil:—

"My reputation? Why, in a few days my picture will make it at the Exposition."

"That relates to your talent," replied the girl. "I am speaking of your morality. Those young ladies have told their mothers that Luigi was shut up here, and that you lent yourself—to—our love."

"There is some truth in that, mademoiselle," replied the professor. "The mothers of those young ladies are foolish women; if they had come straight to me I should have explained the matter. But I don't care a straw about it! Life is short, anyhow."

And the painter snapped his fingers above his head. Luigi, who had heard part of the conversation, came in.

"You have lost all your scholars," he cried. "I have ruined you!"

The artist took Luigi's hand and that of Ginevra, and joined them.

"Marry one another, my children," he said, with fatherly kindness.

They both dropped their eyes, and their silence was the first avowal they had made to each other of their love.

"You will surely be happy," said Servin. "There is nothing in life to equal the happiness of two beings like yourselves when bound together in love."

Luigi pressed the hand of his protector without at first being able to utter a word; but presently he said, in a voice of emotion:—

"To you I owe it all."

"Be happy! I bless and wed you," said the painter, with comic unction,

laying his hands upon the heads of the lovers.

This little jest put an end to their strained emotion. All three looked at one another and laughed merrily. Ginevra pressed Luigi's hand in a strong clasp, with a simplicity of action worthy of the customs of her native land.

"Ah ca, my dear children," resumed Servin, "you think that all will go right now, but you are much mistaken."

The lovers looked at him in astonishment.

"Don't be anxious. I'm the only one that your romance will harm. But the fact is, Madame Servin is a little straitlaced; and I don't really see how we are to settle it with her."

"Heavens! and I forgot to tell you," exclaimed Ginevra, "that Madame Roguin and Laure's mother are coming here to-morrow to—"

"I understand," said the painter.

"But you can easily justify yourself," continued the girl, with a proud movement of her head. "Monsieur Luigi," she added, turning to him with an arch look, "will no longer object to entering the royal service. Well, then," after receiving a smile from the young man, "to-morrow morning I will send a petition to one of the most influential persons at the ministry of War,—a man who will refuse nothing to the daughter of the Baron di Piombo. We shall obtain a 'tacit' pardon for Captain Luigi, for, of course, they will not allow him the rank of major. And then," she added, addressing Servin, "you can confound the mothers of my charitable companions by telling them the truth."

"You are an angel!" cried Servin.

While this scene was passing at the studio the father and mother of Ginevra were becoming impatient at her non-return.

"It is six o'clock, and Ginevra not yet home!" cried Bartolomeo.

"She was never so late before," said his wife.

The two old people looked at each other with an anxiety that was not usual with them. Too anxious to remain in one place, Bartolomeo rose and walked about the salon with an active step for a man who was over seventy-seven years of age. Thanks to his robust constitution, he had changed but little since the day of his arrival in Paris, and, despite his tall figure, he walked erect. His hair, now white and sparse, left uncovered a broad and protuberant skull, which gave a strong idea of his character and firmness. His face, seamed with deep wrinkles, had taken, with age, a nobler expression, preserving the pallid tones which inspire veneration. The ardor of passions still lived in the fire of his eyes, while the eyebrows, which were not wholly whitened, retained their

terrible mobility. The aspect of the head was stern, but it conveyed the impression that Piombo had a right to be so. His kindness, his gentleness were known only to his wife and daughter. In his functions, or in presence of strangers, he never laid aside the majesty that time had impressed upon his person; and the habit of frowning with his heavy eyebrows, contracting the wrinkles of his face, and giving to his eyes a Napoleonic fixity, made his manner of accosting others icy.

During the course of his political life he had been so generally feared that he was thought unsocial, and it is not difficult to explain the causes of that opinion. The life, morals, and fidelity of Piombo made him obnoxious to most courtiers. In spite of the fact that delicate missions were constantly intrusted to his discretion which to any other man about the court would have proved lucrative, he possessed an income of not more than thirty thousand francs from an investment in the Grand Livre. If we recall the cheapness of government securities under the Empire, and the liberality of Napoleon towards those of his faithful servants who knew how to ask for it, we can readily see that the Baron di Piombo must have been a man of stern integrity. He owed his plumage as baron to the necessity Napoleon felt of giving him a title before sending him on missions to foreign courts.

Bartolomeo had always professed a hatred to the traitors with whom Napoleon surrounded himself, expecting to bind them to his cause by dint of victories. It was he of whom it is told that he made three steps to the door of the Emperor's cabinet after advising him to get rid of three men in France on the eve of Napoleon's departure for his celebrated and admirable campaign of 1814. After the second return of the Bourbons Bartolomeo ceased to wear the decoration of the Legion of honor. No man offered a finer image of those old Republicans, incorruptible friends to the Empire, who remained the living relics of the two most energetic governments the world has ever seen. Though the Baron di Piombo displeased mere courtiers, he had the Darus, Drouots, and Carnots with him as friends. As for the rest of the politicians, he cared not a whiff of his cigar's smoke for them, especially since Waterloo.

Bartolomeo di Piombo had bought, for the very moderate sum which Madame Mere, the Emperor's mother, had paid him for his estates in Corsica, the old mansion of the Portenduere family, in which he had made no changes. Lodged, usually, at the cost of the government, he did not occupy this house until after the catastrophe of Fontainebleau. Following the habits of simple persons of strict virtue, the baron and his wife gave no heed to external splendor; their furniture was that which they bought with the mansion. The grand apartments, lofty, sombre, and bare, the wide mirrors in gilded frames that were almost black, the furniture of the period of Louis XIV. were in keeping with Bartolomeo and his wife, personages worthy of antiquity.

Under the Empire, and during the Hundred Days, while exercising functions that were liberally rewarded, the old Corsican had maintained a great establishment, more for the purpose of doing honor to his office than from any desire to shine himself. His life and that of his wife were so frugal, so tranquil, that their modest fortune sufficed for all their wants. To them, their daughter Ginevra was more precious than the wealth of the whole world. When, therefore, in May, 1814, the Baron di Piombo resigned his office, dismissed his crowd of servants, and closed his stable door, Ginevra, quiet, simple and unpretending like her parents, saw nothing to regret in the change. Like all great souls, she found her luxury in strength of feeling, and derived her happiness from quietness and work. These three beings loved each other too well for the externals of existence to be of value in their eyes.

Often, and especially after the second dreadful fall of Napoleon, Bartolomeo and his wife passed delightful evenings alone with their daughter, listening while she sang and played. To them there was a vast secret pleasure in the presence, in the slightest word of that child; their eyes followed her with tender anxiety; they heard her step in the court-yard, lightly as she trod. Like lovers, the three would often sit silently together, understanding thus, better than by speech, the eloquence of their souls. This profound sentiment, the life itself of the two old people, animated their every thought. Here were not three existences, but one,—one only, which, like the flame on the hearth, divided itself into three tongues of fire. If, occasionally, some memory of Napoleon's benefits and misfortunes, if the public events of the moment distracted the minds of the old people from this source of their constant solicitude, they could always talk of those interests without affecting their community of thought, for Ginevra shared their political passions. What more natural, therefore, than the ardor with which they found a refuge in the heart of their only child?

Until now the occupations of public life had absorbed the energy of the Baron di Piombo; but after leaving those employments he felt the need of casting that energy into the last sentiment that remained to him. Apart from the ties of parentage, there may have been, unknown to these three despotic souls, another powerful reason for the intensity of their reciprocal love: it was love undivided. Ginevra's whole heart belonged to her father, as Piombo's whole heart belonged to his child; and if it be true that we are bound to one another more by our defects than by our virtues, Ginevra echoed in a marvellous manner the passions of her father. There lay the sole imperfection of this triple life. Ginevra was born unyielding of will, vindictive, and passionate, like her father in his youth.

The Corsican had taken pleasure in developing these savage sentiments in the heart of his daughter, precisely as a lion teaches the lion-cubs to spring

upon their prey. But this apprenticeship to vengeance having no means of action in their family life, it came to pass that Ginevra turned the principle against her father; as a child she forgave him nothing, and he was forced to yield to her. Piombo saw nothing more than childish nonsense in these fictitious quarrels, but the child was all the while acquiring a habit of ruling her parents. In the midst, however, of the tempests which the father was fond of exciting, a look, a word of tenderness, sufficed to pacify their angry souls, and often they were never so near to a kiss as when they were threatening each other vehemently.

Nevertheless, for the last five years, Ginevra, grown wiser than her father, avoided such scenes. Her faithfulness, her devotion, the love which filled her every thought, and her admirable good sense had got the better of her temper. And yet, for all that, a very great evil had resulted from her training; Ginevra lived with her father and mother on the footing of an equality which is always dangerous.

Piombo and his wife, persons without education, had allowed Ginevra to study as she pleased. Following her caprices as a young girl, she had studied all things for a time, and then abandoned them,—taking up and leaving each train of thought at will, until, at last, painting had proved to be her dominant passion. Ginevra would have made a noble woman had her mother been capable of guiding her studies, of enlightening her mind, and bringing into harmony her gifts of nature; her defects came from the fatal education which the old Corsican had found delight in giving her.

After marching up and down the room for some time, Piombo rang the bell; a servant entered.

"Go and meet Mademoiselle Ginevra," said his master.

"I always regret our carriage on her account," remarked the baroness.

"She said she did not want one," replied Piombo, looking at his wife, who, accustomed for forty years to habits of obedience, lowered her eyes and said no more.

Already a septuagenarian, tall, withered, pale, and wrinkled, the baroness exactly resembled those old women whom Schnetz puts into the Italian scenes of his "genre" pictures. She was so habitually silent that she might have been taken for another Mrs. Shandy; but, occasionally, a word, look, or gesture betrayed that her feelings still retained all the vigor and the freshness of their youth. Her dress, devoid of coquetry, was often in bad taste. She usually sat passive, buried in a low sofa, like a Sultana Valide, awaiting or admiring her Ginevra, her pride, her life. The beauty, toilet, and grace of her daughter seemed to have become her own. All was well with her if Ginevra was happy.

Her hair was white, and a few strands only were seen above her white and wrinkled forehead, or beside her hollow cheeks.

"It is now fifteen days," she said, "since Ginevra made a practice of being late."

"Jean is so slow!" cried the impatient old man, buttoning up his blue coat and seizing his hat, which he dashed upon his head as he took his cane and departed.

"You will not get far," said his wife, calling after him.

As she spoke, the porte-cochere was opened and shut, and the old mother heard the steps of her Ginevra in the court-yard. Bartolomeo almost instantly reappeared, carrying his daughter, who struggled in his arms.

CHAPTER IV. LOVE

"Here she is, my Ginevra, Ginevrettina, Ginevrola, mia Ginevra bella!" cried the old man.

"Oh, father, you hurt me!"

Instantly Ginevra was put down with an air of respect. She nodded her head with a graceful movement at her mother, who was frightened by her cry, as if to say, "Don't be alarmed, it was only a trick to get away."

The pale, wan face of the baroness recovered its usual tones, and even assumed a look of gayety. Piombo rubbed his hands violently,—with him the surest symptom of joy; he had taken to this habit at court when he saw Napoleon becoming angry with those of his generals and ministers who served him ill or committed blunders. When, as now, the muscles of his face relaxed, every wrinkle on his forehead expressed benevolence. These two old people presented at this moment precisely the aspect of a drooping plant to which a little water has given fresh life after long dryness.

"Now, to dinner! to dinner!" cried the baron, offering his large hand to his daughter, whom he called "Signora Piombellina,"—another symptom of gayety, to which Ginevra replied by a smile.

"Ah ca!" said Piombo, as they left the table, "your mother has called my attention to the fact that for some weeks you have stayed much longer than usual at the studio. It seems that painting is more to you than your parents—"

"Oh, father!"

"Ginevra is preparing some surprise for us, I think," said the mother.

"A picture of your own! will you bring us that?" cried the Corsican, clapping his hands.

"Yes, I am very much occupied at the studio," replied Ginevra, rather slowly.

"What is the matter, Ginevra? You are turning pale!" cried her mother.

"No!" exclaimed the young girl in a tone of resolution,—"no! it shall never be said that Ginevra Piombo acted a lie."

Hearing this singular exclamation, Piombo and his wife looked at their daughter in astonishment.

"I love a young man," she added, in a voice of emotion.

Then, not venturing to look at her parents, she lowered her large eyelids as if to veil the fire of her eyes.

"Is he a prince?" asked her father, ironically, in a tone of voice which made the mother quail.

"No, father," she said, gently, "he is a young man without fortune."

"Is he very handsome?"

"He is very unfortunate."

"What is he?"

"Labedoyere's comrade; he was proscribed, without a refuge; Servin concealed him, and—"

"Servin is a good fellow, who has done well," cried Piombo; "but you, my daughter, you do wrong to love any man, except your father."

"It does not depend on me to love, or not to love," replied Ginevra, still gently.

"I flattered myself," continued her father, "that my Ginevra would be faithful to me until I died; and that my love and that of her mother would suffice her till then; I did not expect that our tenderness would find a rival in her soul, and—"

"Did I ever reproach you for your fanaticism for Napoleon?" said Ginevra. "Have you never loved any one but me? Did you not leave me for months together when you went on missions. I bore your absence courageously. Life has necessities to which we must all submit."

"Ginevra!"

"No, you don't love me for myself; your reproaches betray your intolerable egotism."

"You dare to blame your father's love!" exclaimed Piombo, his eyes flashing.

"Father, I don't blame you," replied Ginevra, with more gentleness than her trembling mother expected. "You have grounds for your egotism, as I have for my love. Heaven is my witness that no girl has ever fulfilled her duty to her parents better than I have done to you. I have never felt anything but love and happiness where others often see obligation. It is now fifteen years that I have never left your protecting wing, and it has been a most dear pleasure to me to charm your life. But am I ungrateful for all this in giving myself up to the joy of loving; is it ingratitude to desire a husband who will protect me hereafter?"

"What! do you reckon benefits with your father, Ginevra?" said Piombo, in a dangerous tone.

A dreadful pause then followed, during which no one dared to speak. Bartolomeo at last broke the silence by crying out in a heart-rending tone:—

"Oh! stay with us! stay with your father, your old father! I cannot have you love another man. Ginevra, you will not have long to await your liberty."

"But, father, remember that I need not leave you; we shall be two to love you; you will learn to know the man to whose care you bequeath me. You will be doubly cherished by me and by him,—by him who is my other self, by me who am all his."

"Oh! Ginevra, Ginevra!" cried the Corsican, clenching his fists; "why did you not marry when Napoleon brought me to accept the idea? Why did you not take the counts and dukes he presented to you?"

"They loved me to order," said the girl. "Besides, they would have made me live with them, and I did not wish to leave you alone."

"You don't wish to leave me alone," said Piombo, "and yet you marry!—that is leaving me alone. I know you, my daughter; in that case, you would cease to love us. Elisa," he added, looking at his wife, who remained motionless, and as if stupefied, "we have no longer a daughter; she wishes to marry."

The old man sat down, after raising his hands to heaven with a gesture of invoking the Divine power; then he bowed himself over as if weighed down with sorrow.

Ginevra saw his agitation, and the restraint which he put upon his anger touched her to the heart; she expected some violent crisis, some ungovernable fury; she had not armed her soul against paternal gentleness.

"Father," she said, in a tender voice, "no, you shall never be abandoned by your Ginevra. But love her a little for her own sake. If you know how he loves me! Ah! He would never make me unhappy!"

"Comparisons already!" cried Piombo, in a terrible voice. "No, I can never endure the idea of your marriage. If he loved you as you deserve to be loved he would kill me; if he did not love you, I should put a dagger through him."

The hands of the old man trembled, his lips trembled, his body trembled, but his eyes flashed lightnings. Ginevra alone was able to endure his glance, for her eyes flamed also, and the daughter was worthy of the sire.

"Oh! to love you! What man is worthy of such a life?" continued Piombo. "To love you as a father is paradise on earth; who is there worthy to be your husband?"

"He," said Ginevra; "he of whom I am not worthy."

"He?" repeated Piombo, mechanically; "who is he?"

"He whom I love."

"How can he know you enough to love you?"

"Father," said Ginevra, with a gesture of impatience, "whether he loves me or not, if I love him—"

"You love him?" cried Piombo.

Ginevra bent her head softly.

"You love him more than you love us?"

"The two feelings cannot be compared," she replied.

"Is one stronger than the other?"

"I think it is," said Ginevra.

"You shall not marry him," cried the Corsican, his voice shaking the window-panes.

"I shall marry him," replied Ginevra, tranquilly.

"Oh, God!" cried the mother, "how will this quarrel end? Santa Virgina! place thyself between them!"

The baron, who had been striding up and down the room, now seated himself; an icy sternness darkened his face; he looked fixedly at his daughter, and said to her, in a gentle, weakened voice,—

"Ginevra, no! you will not marry him. Oh! say nothing more to-night—let me think the contrary. Do you wish to see your father on his knees, his white

hairs prostrate before you? I supplicate you—"

"Ginevra Piombo does not pass her word and break it," she replied. "I am your daughter."

"She is right," said the baroness. "We are sent into the world to marry."

"Do you encourage her in disobedience?" said the baron to his wife, who, terrified by the word, now changed to marble.

"Refusing to obey an unjust order is not disobedience," said Ginevra.

"No order can be unjust from the lips of your father, my daughter. Why do you judge my action? The repugnance that I feel is counsel from on high, sent, it may be, to protect you from some great evil."

"The only evil could be that he did not love me."

"Always he!"

"Yes, always," she answered. "He is my life, my good, my thought. Even if I obeyed you he would be ever in my soul. To forbid me to marry him is to make me hate you."

"You love us not!" cried Piombo.

"Oh!" said Ginevra, shaking her head.

"Well, then, forget him; be faithful to us. After we are gone—you understand?"

"Father, do you wish me to long for your death?" cried Ginevra.

"I shall outlive you. Children who do not honor their parents die early," said the father, driven to exasperation.

"All the more reason why I should marry and be happy," she replied.

This coolness and power of argument increased Piombo's trouble; the blood rushed violently to his head, and his face turned purple. Ginevra shuddered; she sprang like a bird on her father's knee, threw her arms around his neck, and caressed his white hair, exclaiming, tenderly:—

"Oh, yes, yes, let me die first! I could never survive you, my father, my kind father!"

"Oh! my Ginevra, my own Ginevra!" replied Piombo, whose anger melted under this caress like snow beneath the rays of the sun.

"It was time you ceased," said the baroness, in a trembling voice.

"Poor mother!"

"Ah! Ginevretta! mia bella Ginevra!"

And the father played with his daughter as though she were a child of six. He amused himself by releasing the waving volume of her hair, by dandling her on his knee; there was something of madness in these expressions of his love. Presently his daughter scolded while kissing him, and tried, by jesting, to obtain admission for Luigi; but her father, also jesting, refused. She sulked, then returned to coax once more, and sulked again, until, by the end of the evening, she was forced to be content with having impressed upon her father's mind both her love for Luigi and the idea of an approaching marriage.

The next day she said no more about her love; she was more caressing to her father than she had ever been, and testified the utmost gratitude, as if to thank him for the consent he seemed to have given by his silence. That evening she sang and played to him for a long time, exclaiming now and then: "We want a man's voice for this nocturne." Ginevra was an Italian, and that says all.

At the end of a week her mother signed to her. She went; and Elisa Piombo whispered in her ear:—

"I have persuaded your father to receive him."

"Oh! mother, how happy you have made me!"

That day Ginevra had the joy of coming home on the arm of her Luigi. The officer came out of his hiding-place for the second time only. The earnest appeals which Ginevra made to the Duc de Feltre, then minister of war, had been crowned with complete success. Luigi's name was replaced upon the roll of officers awaiting orders. This was the first great step toward better things. Warned by Ginevra of the difficulties he would encounter with her father, the young man dared not express his fear of finding it impossible to please the old man. Courageous under adversity, brave on a battlefield, he trembled at the thought of entering Piombo's salon. Ginevra felt him tremble, and this emotion, the source of which lay in her, was, to her eyes, another proof of love.

"How pale you are!" she said to him when they reached the door of the house.

"Oh! Ginevra, if it concerned my life only!—"

Though Bartolomeo had been notified by his wife of the formal presentation Ginevra was to make of her lover, he would not advance to meet him, but remained seated in his usual arm-chair, and the sternness of his brow was awful.

"Father," said Ginevra, "I bring you a person you will no doubt be pleased to see,—a soldier who fought beside the Emperor at Mont-Saint-Jean."

The baron rose, cast a sidelong glance at Luigi, and said, in a sardonic tone:—

"Monsieur is not decorated."

"I no longer wear the Legion of honor," replied Luigi, timidly, still standing.

Ginevra, mortified by her father's incivility, dragged forward a chair. The officer's answer seemed to satisfy the old servant of Napoleon. Madame Piombo, observing that her husband's eyebrows were resuming their natural position, said, by way of conversation:

"Monsieur's resemblance to a person we knew in Corsica, Nina Porta, is really surprising."

"Nothing could be more natural," replied the young man, on whose face Piombo's flaming eyes now rested. "Nina was my sister."

"Are you Luigi Porta?" asked the old man.

"Yes."

Bartolomeo rose, tottered, was forced to lean against a chair and beckon to his wife. Elisa Piombo came to him. Then the two old people, silently, each supporting the other, left the room, abandoning their daughter with a sort of horror.

Luigi Porta, bewildered, looked at Ginevra, who had turned as white as a marble statue, and stood gazing at the door through which her father and mother had disappeared. This departure and this silence seemed to her so solemn that, for the first time, in her whole life, a feeling of fear entered her soul. She struck her hands together with great force, and said, in a voice so shaken that none but a lover could have heard the words:—

"What misery in a word!"

"In the name of our love, what have I said?" asked Luigi Porta.

"My father," she replied, "never spoke to me of our deplorable history, and I was too young when we left Corsica to know anything about it."

"Are we in vendetta?" asked Luigi, trembling.

"Yes. I have heard my mother say that the Portas killed my brother and burned our house. My father then massacred the whole family. How is it that you survived?—for you were tied to the posts of the bed before they set fire to the house."

"I do not know," replied Luigi. "I was taken to Genoa when six years old, and given in charge of an old man named Colonna. No detail about my family

was told to me. I knew only that I was an orphan, and without property. Old Colonna was a father to me; and I bore his name until I entered the army. In order to do that, I had to show my certificate of birth in order to prove my identity. Colonna then told me, still a mere child, that I had enemies. And he advised me to take Luigi as my surname, and so evade them."

"Go, go, Luigi!" cried Ginevra. "No, stay; I must go with you. So long as you are in my father's house you have nothing to fear; but the moment you leave it, take care! you will go from danger to danger. My father has two Corsicans in his service, and if he does not lie in wait to kill you, they will."

"Ginevra," he said, "this feud, does it exist between you and me?"

The girl smiled sadly and bowed her head. Presently she raised it, and said, with a sort of pride:—

"Oh, Luigi, our love must be pure and sincere, indeed, to give me strength to tread the path I am about to enter. But it involves a happiness that will last throughout our lives, will it not?"

Luigi answered by a smile, and pressed her hand.

Ginevra comprehended that true love could despise all vulgar protestations at such a moment. This calm and restrained expression of his feelings foreshadowed, in some sense, their strength and their duration.

The destiny of the pair was then and there decided. Ginevra foresaw a cruel struggle, but the idea of abandoning Luigi—an idea which may have floated in her soul—vanished completely. His forever, she dragged him suddenly, with a desperate sort of energy, from her father's house, and did not leave him till she saw him reach the house where Servin had engaged a modest lodging.

By the time she reached home, Ginevra had attained to that serenity which is caused by a firm resolution; no sign in her manner betrayed uneasiness. She turned on her father and mother, whom she found in the act of sitting down to dinner, a glance of exceeding gentleness devoid of hardihood. She saw that her mother had been weeping; the redness of those withered eyelids shook her heart, but she hid her emotion. No one touched the dinner which was served to them. A horror of food is one of the chief symptoms which reveal a great crisis in life. All three rose from table without having addressed a single word to one another.

When Ginevra had placed herself between her father and mother in the great and gloomy salon, Piombo tried to speak, but his voice failed him; he tried to walk, but he had no strength in his legs. He returned to his seat and rang the bell.

"Pietro," he said, at last, to the footman, "light the fire; I am cold."

Ginevra trembled, and looked at her father anxiously. The struggle within him must have been horrible, for his face was distorted. Ginevra knew the extent of the peril before her, but she did not flinch. Bartolomeo, meanwhile, cast furtive glances at his daughter, as if he feared a character whose violence was the work of his own hands.

Between such natures all things must be extreme. The certainty of some impending change in the feelings of father and daughter gave to the worn and weary face of the baroness an expression of terror.

"Ginevra, you love the enemy of your family," said Piombo, at last, not daring to look at his daughter.

"That is true," she replied.

"You must choose between us. Our vendetta is a part of our being. Whoso does not share my vengeance is not a member of my family."

"My choice is made," replied Ginevra, calmly.

His daughter's tranquillity misled Bartolomeo.

"Oh! my dear child!" he cried, letting her see his eyes moistened with tears, the first and only tears he ever shed in life.

"I shall be his wife," said Ginevra, abruptly.

Bartolomeo seemed dazed for a moment, but he recovered his coolness instantly, and replied:—

"The marriage will not take place in my lifetime; I will never consent to it."

Ginevra kept silence.

"Ginevra," continued the baron, "have you reflected that Luigi is the son of the man who killed your brother?"

"He was six years old when that crime was committed; he was, therefore, not guilty of it," she replied.

"He is a Porta!" cried Bartolomeo.

"I have never shared that hatred," said Ginevra, eagerly. "You did not bring me up to think a Porta must be a monster. How could I know that one of those whom you thought you had killed survived? Is it not natural that you should now yield your vendetta to my feelings?"

"A Porta!" repeated Piombo. "If his father had found you in your bed you would not be living now; he would have taken your life a hundred times."

"It may be so," she answered; "but his son has given me life, and more than life. To see Luigi is a happiness without which I cannot live. Luigi has revealed to me the world of sentiments. I may, perhaps, have seen faces more beautiful than his, but none has ever charmed me thus; I may have heard voices—no, no, never any so melodious! Luigi loves me; he will be my husband."

"Never," said Piombo. "I would rather see you in your coffin, Ginevra."

The old Corsican rose and began to stride up and down the salon, dropping the following sentences, one by one, after pauses which betrayed his agitation.

"You think you can bend my will. Undeceive yourself. A Porta shall never be my son; that is my decree. Let there be no further question of this between us. I am Bartolomeo di Piombo; do you hear me, Ginevra?"

"Do you attach some mysterious meaning to those words?" she asked, coldly.

"They mean that I have a dagger, and that I do not fear man's justice. Corsicans explain themselves to God."

"And I," said the daughter, rising, "am Ginevra Piombo, and I declare that within six months I shall be the wife of Luigi Porta. You are a tyrant, my father," she added, after a terrifying pause.

Bartolomeo clenched his fists and struck them on the marble of the chimneypiece.

"Ah! we are in Paris!" he muttered.

Then he was silent, crossed his arms, bowed his head on his breast, and said not another word during the whole evening.

After once giving utterance to her will, Ginevra affected inconceivable coolness. She opened the piano and sang, played charming nocturnes and scherzos with a grace and sentiment which displayed a perfect freedom of mind, thus triumphing over her father, whose darkling face showed no softening. The old man was cruelly hurt by this tacit insult; he gathered in this one moment the bitter fruits of the training he had given to his daughter. Respect is a barrier which protects parents as it does children, sparing grief to the former, remorse to the latter.

The next day, when Ginevra sought to leave the house at the hour when she usually went to the studio, she found the gates of the mansion closed to her. She said nothing, but soon found means to inform Luigi Porta of her father's severity. A chambermaid, who could neither read nor write, was able to carry letters between the lovers. For five days they corresponded thus, thanks to the inventive shrewdness of the youth.

The father and daughter seldom spoke to each other. Both were nursing in the depths of their heart a sentiment of hatred; they suffered, but they suffered proudly, and in silence. Recognizing how strong were the ties of love which bound them to each other, they each tried to break them, but without success. No gentle thought came, as formerly, to brighten the stern features of Piombo when he contemplated his Ginevra. The girl had something savage in her eye when she looked at her father; reproach sat enthroned on that innocent brow; she gave herself up, it is true, to happy thoughts, and yet, at times, remorse seemed to dull her eyes. It was not difficult to believe that she could never enjoy, peacefully, any happiness which caused sorrow to her parents.

With Bartolomeo, as with his daughter, the hesitations of this period caused by the native goodness of their souls were, nevertheless, compelled to give way before their pride and the rancor of their Corsican nature. They encouraged each other in their anger, and closed their eyes to the future. Perhaps they mutually flattered themselves that the one would yield to the other.

At last, on Ginevra's birthday, her mother, in despair at the estrangement which, day by day, assumed a more serious character, meditated an attempt to reconcile the father and daughter, by help of the memories of this family anniversary. They were all three sitting in Bartolomeo's study. Ginevra guessed her mother's intention by the timid hesitation on her face, and she smiled sadly.

At this moment a servant announced two notaries, accompanied by witnesses. Bartolomeo looked fixedly at these persons, whose cold and formal faces were grating to souls so passionately strained as those of the three chief actors in this scene. The old man turned to his daughter and looked at her uneasily. He saw upon her face a smile of triumph which made him expect some shock; but, after the manner of savages, he affected to maintain a deceitful indifference as he gazed at the notaries with an assumed air of calm curiosity. The strangers sat down, after being invited to do so by a gesture of the old man.

"Monsieur is, no doubt, M. le Baron di Piombo?" began the oldest of the notaries.

Bartolomeo bowed. The notary made a slight inclination of the head, looked at Ginevra with a sly expression, took out his snuff-box, opened it, and slowly inhaled a pinch, as if seeking for the words with which to open his errand; then, while uttering them, he made continual pauses (an oratorical manoeuvre very imperfectly represented by the printer's dash—).

"Monsieur," he said, "I am Monsieur Roguin, your daughter's notary, and we have come—my colleague and I—to fulfil the intentions of the law and—

put an end to the divisions which—appear—to exist—between yourself and Mademoiselle, your daughter,—on the subject—of—her—marriage with Monsieur Luigi Porta."

This speech, pedantically delivered, probably seemed to Monsieur Roguin so fine that his hearer could not at once understand it. He paused, and looked at Bartolomeo with that peculiar expression of the mere business lawyer, a mixture of servility with familiarity. Accustomed to feign much interest in the persons with whom they deal, notaries have at last produced upon their features a grimace of their own, which they take on and off as an official "pallium." This mask of benevolence, the mechanism of which is so easy to perceive, irritated Bartolomeo to such an extent that he was forced to collect all the powers of his reason to prevent him from throwing Monsieur Roguin through the window. An expression of anger ran through his wrinkles, which caused the notary to think to himself: "I've produced an effect."

"But," he continued, in a honeyed tone, "Monsieur le baron, on such occasions our duties are preceded by—efforts at—conciliation—Deign, therefore, to have the goodness to listen to me—It is in evidence that Mademoiselle Ginevra di Piombo—attains this very day—the age at which the law allows a respectful summons before proceeding to the celebration of a marriage—in spite of the non-consent of the parents. Now—it is usual in families—who enjoy a certain consideration—who belong to society—who preserve some dignity—to whom, in short, it is desirable not to let the public into the secret of their differences—and who, moreover, do not wish to injure themselves by blasting with reprobation the future of a young couple (for—that is injuring themselves), it is usual, I say—among these honorable families—not to allow these summonses—to take place—or remain—a monument to—divisions which should end—by ceasing—Whenever, monsieur, a young lady has recourse to respectful summons, she exhibits a determination too marked to allow of a father—of a mother," here he turned to the baroness, "hoping or expecting that she will follow their wishes—Paternal resistance being null—by reason of this fact—in the first place—and also from its being nullified by law, it is customary—for every sensible man—after making a final remonstrance to his child—and before she proceeds to the respectful summons—to leave her at liberty to—"

Monsieur Roguin stopped, perceiving that he might talk on for two hours without obtaining any answer; he felt, moreover, a singular emotion at the aspect of the man he was attempting to convert. An extraordinary revolution had taken place on Piombo's face; his wrinkles, contracting into narrow lines, gave him a look of indescribable cruelty, and he cast upon the notary the glance of a tiger. The baroness was mute and passive. Ginevra, calm and resolute, waited silently; she knew that the notary's voice was more potent

than hers, and she seemed to have decided to say nothing. At the moment when Roguin ceased speaking, the scene had become so terrifying that the men who were there as witnesses trembled; never, perhaps, had they known so awful a silence. The notaries looked at each other, as if in consultation, and finally rose and walked to the window.

"Did you ever meet people born into the world like that?" asked Roguin of his brother notary.

"You can't get anything out of him," replied the younger man. "In your place, I should simply read the summons. That old fellow isn't a comfortable person; he is furious, and you'll gain nothing whatever by arguing with him."

Monsieur Roguin then read a stamped paper, containing the "respectful summons," prepared for the occasion; after which he proceeded to ask Bartolomeo what answer he made to it.

"Are there laws in France which destroy paternal authority?—" demanded the Corsican.

"Monsieur—" said Roguin, in his honeyed tones.

"Which tear a daughter from her father?—"

"Monsieur—"

"Which deprive an old man of his last consolation?—"

"Monsieur, your daughter only belongs to you if—"

"And kill him?—"

"Monsieur, permit me—"

There is nothing more horrible than the coolness and precise reasoning of notaries amid the many passionate scenes in which they are accustomed to take part.

The forms that Piombo saw about him seemed, to his eyes, escaped from hell; his repressed and concentrated rage knew no longer any bounds as the calm and fluted voice of the little notary uttered the words: "permit me." By a sudden movement he sprang to a dagger that was hanging to a nail above the fireplace, and rushed toward his daughter. The younger of the two notaries and one of the witnesses threw themselves before Ginevra; but Piombo knocked them violently down, his face on fire, and his eyes casting flames more terrifying than the glitter of the dagger. When Ginevra saw him approach her she looked at him with an air of triumph, and advancing slowly, knelt down. "No, no! I cannot!" he cried, flinging away the weapon, which buried itself in the wainscot.

"Well, then! have mercy! have pity!" she said. "You hesitate to be my death, and you refuse me life! Oh! father, never have I loved you as I do at this moment; give me Luigi! I ask for your consent upon my knees: a daughter can humiliate herself before her father. My Luigi, give me my Luigi, or I die!"

The violent excitement which suffocated her stopped her words, for she had no voice; her convulsive movements showed plainly that she lay, as it were, between life and death. Bartolomeo roughly pushed her from him.

"Go," he said. "The wife of Luigi Porta cannot be a Piombo. I have no daughter. I have not the strength to curse you, but I cast you off; you have no father. My Ginevra Piombo is buried here," he said, in a deep voice, pressing violently on his heart. "Go, leave my house, unhappy girl," he added, after a moment's silence. "Go, and never come into my sight again."

So saying, he took Ginevra by the arm to the gate of the house and silently put her out.

"Luigi!" cried Ginevra, entering the humble lodging of her lover,—"my Luigi, we have no other fortune than our love."

"Then am I richer than the kings of the earth!" he cried.

"My father and my mother have cast me off," she said, in deepest sadness.

"I will love you in place of them."

"Then let us be happy,—we WILL be happy!" she cried, with a gayety in which there was something dreadful.

CHAPTER V. MARRIAGE

The day after Ginevra was driven from her father's house she went to ask Madame Servin for asylum and protection until the period fixed by law for her marriage to Luigi.

Here began for her that apprenticeship to trouble which the world strews about the path of those who do not follow its conventions. Madame Servin received her very coldly, being much annoyed by the harm which Ginevra's affair had inflicted on her husband, and told her, in politely cautious words, that she must not count on her help in future. Too proud to persist, but amazed at a selfishness hitherto unknown to her, the girl took a room in the lodging-house that was nearest to that of Luigi. The son of the Portas passed all his days at the feet of his future wife; and his youthful love, the purity of his words, dispersed the clouds from the mind of the banished daughter; the future

was so beautiful as he painted it that she ended by smiling joyfully, though without forgetting her father's severity.

One morning the servant of the lodging house brought to Ginevra's room a number of trunks and packages containing stuffs, linen, clothes, and a great quantity of other articles necessary for a young wife in setting up a home of her own. In this welcome provision she recognized her mother's foresight, and, on examining the gifts, she found a purse, in which the baroness had put the money belonging to her daughter, adding to it the amount of her own savings. The purse was accompanied by a letter, in which the mother implored the daughter to forego the fatal marriage if it were still possible to do so. It had cost her, she said, untold difficulty to send these few things to her daughter; she entreated her not to think her hard if, henceforth, she were forced to abandon her to want; she feared she could never again assist her; but she blessed her and prayed for her happiness in this fatal marriage, if, indeed, she persisted in making it, assuring her that she should never cease to think of her darling child. Here the falling tears had effaced some words of the letter.

"Oh, mother!" cried Ginevra, deeply moved.

She felt the impulse to rush home, to breathe the blessed air of her father's house, to fling herself at his feet, to see her mother. She was springing forward to accomplish this wish, when Luigi entered. At the mere sight of him her filial emotion vanished; her tears were stopped, and she no longer had the strength to abandon that loving and unfortunate youth. To be the sole hope of a noble being, to love him and then abandon him!—that sacrifice is the treachery of which young hearts are incapable. Ginevra had the generosity to bury her own grief and suffering silently in her soul.

The marriage day arrived. Ginevra had no friend with her. While she was dressing, Luigi fetched the witnesses necessary to sign the certificate of marriage. These witnesses were worthy persons; one, a cavalry sergeant, was under obligations to Luigi, contracted on the battlefield, obligations which are never obliterated from the heart of an honest man; the other, a master-mason, was the proprietor of the house in which the young couple had hired an apartment for their future home. Each witness brought a friend, and all four, with Luigi, came to escort the bride. Little accustomed to social functions, and seeing nothing in the service they were rendering to Luigi but a simple matter of business, they were dressed in their ordinary clothes, without any luxury, and nothing about them denoted the usual joy of a marriage procession.

Ginevra herself was dressed simply, as befitted her present fortunes; and yet her beauty was so noble and so imposing that the words of greeting died away on the lips of the witnesses, who supposed themselves obliged to pay her some usual compliments. They bowed to her with respect, and she returned the

bow; but they did so in silence, looking at her with admiration. This reserve cast a chill over the whole party. Joy never bursts forth freely except among those who are equals. Thus chance determined that all should be dull and grave around the bridal pair; nothing reflected, outwardly, the happiness that reigned within their hearts.

The church and the mayor's office being near by, Luigi and Ginevra, followed by the four witnesses required by law, walked the distance, with a simplicity that deprived of all pomp this greatest event in social life. They saw a crowd of waiting carriages in the mayor's court-yard; and when they reached the great hall where the civil marriages take place, they found two other wedding-parties impatiently awaiting the mayor's arrival.

Ginevra sat down beside Luigi at the end of a long bench; their witnesses remained standing, for want of seats. Two brides, elaborately dressed in white, with ribbons, laces, and pearls, and crowned with orange-blossoms whose satiny petals nodded beneath their veils, were surrounded by joyous families, and accompanied by their mothers, to whom they looked up, now and then, with eyes that were content and timid both; the faces of all the rest reflected happiness, and seemed to be invoking blessings on the youthful pairs. Fathers, witnesses, brothers, and sisters went and came, like a happy swarm of insects disporting in the sun. Each seemed to be impressed with the value of this passing moment of life, when the heart finds itself within two hopes,—the wishes of the past, the promises of the future.

As she watched them, Ginevra's heart swelled within her; she pressed Luigi's arm, and gave him a look. A tear rolled from the eyes of the young Corsican; never did he so well understand the joys that his Ginevra was sacrificing to him. That precious tear caused her to forget all else but him,—even the abandonment in which she sat there. Love poured down its treasures of light upon their hearts; they saw nought else but themselves in the midst of the joyous tumult; they were there alone, in that crowd, as they were destined to be, henceforth, in life. Their witnesses, indifferent to what was happening, conversed quietly on their own affairs.

"Oats are very dear," said the sergeant to the mason.

"But they have not gone up like lime, relatively speaking," replied the contractor.

Then they walked round the hall.

"How one loses time here," said the mason, replacing a thick silver watch in his fob.

Luigi and Ginevra, sitting pressed to one another, seemed like one person. A poet would have admired their two heads, inspired by the same sentiment,

colored in the same tones, silent and saddened in presence of that humming happiness sparkling in diamonds, gay with flowers,—a gayety in which there was something fleeting. The joy of those noisy and splendid groups was visible; that of Ginevra and Luigi was buried in their bosom. On one side the tumult of common pleasure, on the other, the delicate silence of happy souls, —earth and heaven!

But Ginevra was not wholly free from the weaknesses of women. Superstitious as an Italian, she saw an omen in this contrast, and in her heart there lay a sense of terror, as invincible as her love.

Suddenly the office servant, in the town livery, opened a folding-door. Silence reigned, and his voice was heard, like the yapping of a dog, calling Monsieur Luigi da Porta and Mademoiselle Ginevra di Piombo. This caused some embarrassment to the young pair. The celebrity of the bride's name attracted attention, and the spectators seemed to wonder that the wedding was not more sumptuous. Ginevra rose, took Luigi's arm, and advanced firmly, followed by the witnesses. A murmur of surprise, which went on increasing, and a general whispering reminded Ginevra that all present were wondering at the absence of her parents; her father's wrath seemed present to her.

"Call in the families," said the mayor to the clerk whose business it was to read aloud the certificates.

"The father and mother protest," replied the clerk, phlegmatically.

"On both sides?" inquired the mayor.

"The groom is an orphan."

"Where are the witnesses?"

"Here," said the clerk, pointing to the four men, who stood with arms folded, like so many statues.

"But if the parents protest—" began the mayor.

"The respectful summons has been duly served," replied the clerk, rising, to lay before the mayor the papers annexed to the marriage certificate.

This bureaucratic decision had something blighting about it; in a few words it contained the whole story. The hatred of the Portas and the Piombos and their terrible passions were inscribed on this page of the civil law as the annals of a people (contained, it may be, in one word only,—Napoleon, Robespierre) are engraved on a tombstone. Ginevra trembled. Like the dove on the face of the waters, having no place to rest its feet but the ark, so Ginevra could take refuge only in the eyes of Luigi from the cold and dreary waste around her.

The mayor assumed a stern, disapproving air, and his clerk looked up at the couple with malicious curiosity. No marriage was ever so little festal. Like other human beings when deprived of their accessories, it became a simple act in itself, great only in thought.

After a few questions, to which the bride and bridegroom responded, and a few words mumbled by the mayor, and after signing the registers, with their witnesses, duly, Luigi and Ginevra were made one. Then the wedded pair walked back through two lines of joyous relations who did not belong to them, and whose only interest in their marriage was the delay caused to their own wedding by this gloomy bridal. When, at last, Ginevra found herself in the mayor's court-yard, under the open sky, a sigh escaped her breast.

"Can a lifetime of devotion and love suffice to prove my gratitude for your courage and tenderness, my Ginevra?" said Luigi.

At these words, said with tears of joy, the bride forgot her sufferings; for she had indeed suffered in presenting herself before the public to obtain a happiness her parents refused to sanction.

"Why should others come between us?" she said with an artlessness of feeling that delighted Luigi.

A sense of accomplished happiness now made the step of the young pair lighter; they saw neither heaven, nor earth, nor houses; they flew, as it were, on wings to the church. When they reached a dark little chapel in one corner of the building, and stood before a plain undecorated altar, an old priest married them. There, as in the mayor's office, two other marriages were taking place, still pursuing them with pomp. The church, filled with friends and relations, echoed with the roll of carriages, and the hum of beadles, sextons, and priests. Altars were resplendent with sacramental luxury; the wreaths of orange-flowers that crowned the figures of the Virgin were fresh. Flowers, incense, gleaming tapers, velvet cushions embroidered with gold, were everywhere. When the time came to hold above the heads of Luigi and Ginevra the symbol of eternal union,—that yoke of satin, white, soft, brilliant, light for some, lead for most,—the priest looked about him in vain for the acolytes whose place it was to perform that joyous function. Two of the witnesses fulfilled it for them. The priest addressed a hasty homily to the pair on the perils of life, on the duties they must, some day, inculcate upon their children,—throwing in, at this point, an indirect reproach to Ginevra on the absence of her parents; then, after uniting them before God, as the mayor had united them before the law, he left the now married couple.

"God bless them!" said Vergniaud, the sergeant, to the mason, when they reached the church porch. "No two creatures were ever more fitted for one another. The parents of the girl are foolish. I don't know a braver soldier than

Colonel Luigi. If the whole army had behaved like him, 'l'autre' would be here still."

This blessing of the old soldier, the only one bestowed upon their marriage-day, shed a balm on Ginevra's heart.

They parted with hearty shakings of hand; Luigi thanked his landlord.

"Adieu, 'mon brave,'" he said to the sergeant. "I thank you."

"I am now and ever at your service, colonel,—soul, body, horses, and carriages; all that is mine is yours."

"How he loves you!" said Ginevra.

Luigi now hurried his bride to the house they were to occupy. Their modest apartment was soon reached; and there, when the door closed upon them, Luigi took his wife in his arms, exclaiming,—

"Oh, my Ginevra! for now you are mine, here is our true wedding. Here," he added, "all things will smile upon us."

Together they went through the three rooms contained in their lodging. The room first entered served as salon and dining-room in one; on the right was a bedchamber, on the left a large study which Luigi had arranged for his wife; in it she found easels, color-boxes, lay-figures, casts, pictures, portfolios,—in short, the paraphernalia of an artist.

"So here I am to work!" she said, with an expression of childlike happiness.

She looked long at the hangings and the furniture, turning again and again to thank Luigi, for there was something that approached magnificence in the little retreat. A bookcase contained her favorite books; a piano filled an angle of the room. She sat down upon a divan, drew Luigi to her side, and said, in a caressing voice, her hand in his,—

"You have good taste."

"Those words make me happy," he replied.

"But let me see all," said Ginevra, to whom Luigi had made a mystery of the adornment of the rooms.

They entered the nuptial chamber, fresh and white as a virgin.

"Oh! come away," said Luigi, smiling.

"But I wish to see all."

And the imperious Ginevra looked at each piece of furniture with the minute care of an antiquary examining a coin; she touched the silken

hangings, and went over every article with the artless satisfaction of a bride in the treasures of her wedding outfit.

"We begin by ruining ourselves," she said, in a half-joyous, half-anxious tone.

"True! for all my back pay is there," replied Luigi. "I have mortgaged it to a worthy fellow named Gigonnet."

"Why did you do so?" she said, in a tone of reproach, through which could be heard her inward satisfaction. "Do you believe I should be less happy in a garret? But," she added, "it is all charming, and—it is ours!"

Luigi looked at her with such enthusiasm that she lowered her eyes.

"Now let us see the rest," she cried.

Above these three rooms, under the roof, was a study for Luigi, a kitchen, and a servant's-room. Ginevra was much pleased with her little domain, although the view from the windows was limited by the high wall of a neighboring house, and the court-yard, from which their light was derived, was gloomy. But the two lovers were so happy in heart, hope so adorned their future, that they chose to see nothing but what was charming in their hidden nest. They were there in that vast house, lost in the immensity of Paris, like two pearls in their shell in the depths of ocean; to all others it might have seemed a prison; to them it was paradise.

The first few days of their union were given to love. The effort to turn at once to work was too difficult; they could not resist the charm of their own passion. Luigi lay for hours at the feet of his wife, admiring the color of her hair, the moulding of her forehead, the enchanting socket of her eyes, the purity and whiteness of the two arches beneath which the eyes themselves turned slowly, expressing the happiness of a satisfied love. Ginevra caressed the hair of her Luigi, never weary of gazing at what she called his "belta folgorante," and the delicacy of his features. She was constantly charmed by the nobility of his manners, as she herself attracted him by the grace of hers.

They played together, like children, with nothings,—nothings that brought them ever back to their love,—ceasing their play only to fall into a revery of the "far niente." An air sung by Ginevra reproduced to their souls the enchanting lights and shadows of their passion. Together, uniting their steps as they did their souls, they roamed about the country, finding everywhere their love,—in the flowers, in the sky, in the glowing tints of the setting sun; they read it in even the capricious vapors which met and struggled in the ether. Each day resembled in nothing its predecessors; their love increased, and still increased, because it was a true love. They had tested each other in what seemed only a short time; and, instinctively, they recognized that their souls

were of a kind whose inexhaustible riches promised for the future unceasing joys.

Theirs was love in all its artlessness, with its interminable conversations, unfinished speeches, long silences, oriental reposes, and oriental ardor. Luigi and Ginevra comprehended love. Love is like the ocean: seen superficially, or in haste, it is called monotonous by common souls, whereas some privileged beings can pass their lives in admiring it, and in finding, ceaselessly, the varying phenomena that enchant them.

Soon, however, prudence and foresight drew the young couple from their Eden; it was necessary to work to live. Ginevra, who possessed a special talent for imitating old paintings, took up the business of copying, and soon found many customers among the picture-dealers. Luigi, on his side, sought long and actively for occupation, but it was hard for a young officer whose talents had been restricted to the study of strategy to find anything to do in Paris.

At last, weary of vain efforts, his soul filled with despair at seeing the whole burden of their subsistence falling on Ginevra, it occurred to him to make use of his handwriting, which was excellent. With a persistency of which he saw an example in his wife, he went round among the layers and notaries of Paris, asking for papers to copy. The frankness of his manners and his situation interested many in his favor; he soon obtained enough work to be obliged to find young men to assist him; and this employment became, little by little, a regular business. The profits of his office and the sale of Ginevra's pictures gave the young couple a competence of which they were justly proud, for it was the fruit of their industry.

This, to the busy pair, was the happiest period of their lives. The days flowed rapidly by, filled with occupation and the joys of their love. At night, after working all day, they met with delight in Ginevra's studio. Music refreshed their weariness. No expression of regret or melancholy obscured the happy features of the young wife, and never did she utter a complaint. She appeared to her Luigi with a smile upon her lips and her eyes beaming. Each cherished a ruling thought which would have made them take pleasure in a labor still more severe; Ginevra said in her heart that she worked for Luigi, and Luigi the same for Ginevra.

Sometimes, in the absence of her husband, the thought of the perfect happiness she might have had if this life of love could have been lived in the presence of her father and mother overcame the young wife; and then, as she felt the full power of remorse, she dropped into melancholy; mournful pictures passed like shadows across her imagination; she saw her old father alone, or her mother weeping in secret lest the inexorable Piombo should perceive her tears. The two white, solemn heads rose suddenly before her, and the thought

came that never again should she see them except in memory. This thought pursued her like a presentiment.

She celebrated the anniversary of her marriage by giving her husband a portrait he had long desired,—that of his Ginevra, painted by herself. Never had the young artist done so remarkable a work. Aside from the resemblance, the glow of her beauty, the purity of her feelings, the happiness of love were there depicted by a sort of magic. This masterpiece of her art and her joy was a votive offering to their wedded felicity.

Another year of ease and comfort went by. The history of their life may be given in three words: They were happy. No event happened to them of sufficient importance to be recorded.

CHAPTER VI. RETRIBUTION

At the beginning of the year 1819 the picture-dealers requested Ginevra to give them something beside copies; for competition had so increased that they could no longer sell her work to advantage. Madame Porta then perceived the mistake she had made in not exercising her talent for "genre" painting, which might, by this time, have brought her reputation. She now attempted portrait-painting. But here she was forced to compete against a crowd of artists in greater need of money than herself. However, as Luigi and Ginevra had laid by a few savings, they were not, as yet, uneasy about the future.

Toward the end of the winter of that year Luigi worked without intermission. He, too, was struggling against competitors. The payment for writing had so decreased that he found it impossible to employ assistance; he was forced, therefore, to work a much longer time himself to obtain the same emolument. His wife had finished several pictures which were not without merit; but the dealers were scarcely buying those of artists with reputations; consequently, her paintings had little chance. Ginevra offered them for almost nothing, but without success.

The situation of the household now began to be alarming. The souls of the husband and wife floated on the ocean of their happiness, love overwhelmed them with its treasures, while poverty rose, like a skeleton, amid their harvest of joy. Yet, all the while, they hid from each other their secret anxiety. When Ginevra felt like weeping as she watched Luigi's worn and suffering face, she redoubled her caresses; and Luigi, keeping his dark forebodings in the depths of his soul, expressed to his Ginevra the tenderest love. They sought a compensation for their troubles in exalting their feelings; and their words, their

joys, their caresses became suffused, as it were, with a species of frenzy. They feared the future. What feeling can be compared in strength with that of a passion which may cease on the morrow, killed by death or want? When they talked together of their poverty each felt the necessity of deceiving the other, and they fastened with mutual ardor on the slightest hope.

One night Ginevra woke and missed Luigi from her side. She rose in terror. A faint light shining on the opposite wall of the little court-yard revealed to her that her husband was working in his study at night. Luigi was now in the habit of waiting till his wife was asleep, and then going up to his garret to write. Four o'clock struck. Ginevra lay down again, and pretended to sleep. Presently Luigi returned, overcome with fatigue and drowsiness. Ginevra looked sadly on the beautiful, worn face, where toil and care were already drawing lines of wrinkles.

"It is for me he spends his nights in writing," she said to herself, weeping.

A thought dried her tears. She would imitate Luigi. That same day she went to a print-shop, and, by help of a letter of recommendation she had obtained from Elie Magus, one of her picture-dealers, she obtained an order for the coloring of lithographs. During the day she painted her pictures and attended to the cares of the household; then, when night came, she colored the engravings. This loving couple entered their nuptial bed only to deceive each other; both feigned sleep, and left it,—Luigi, as soon as he thought his wife was sleeping, Ginevra as soon as he had gone.

One night Luigi, burning with a sort of fever, induced by a toil under which his strength was beginning to give way, opened the casement of his garret to breathe the morning air, and shake off, for a moment, the burden of his care. Happening to glance downward, he saw the reflection of Ginevra's lamp on the opposite wall, and the poor fellow guessed the truth. He went down, stepping softly, and surprised his wife in her studio, coloring engravings.

"Oh, Ginevra!" he cried.

She gave a convulsive bound in her chair, and blushed.

"Could I sleep while you were wearing yourself out with toil?" she said.

"But to me alone belongs the right to work in this way," he answered.

"Could I be idle," she asked, her eyes filling with tears, "when I know that every mouthful we eat costs a drop of your blood? I should die if I could not add my efforts to yours. All should be in common between us: pains and pleasures, both."

"She is cold!" cried Luigi, in despair. "Wrap your shawl closer round you,

my own Ginevra; the night is damp and chilly."

They went to the window, the young wife leaning on the breast of her beloved, who held her round the waist, and, together, in deep silence, they gazed upward at the sky, which the dawn was slowly brightening. Clouds of a grayish hue were moving rapidly; the East was growing luminous.

"See!" said Ginevra. "It is an omen. We shall be happy."

"Yes, in heaven," replied Luigi, with a bitter smile. "Oh, Ginevra! you who deserved all the treasures upon earth—"

"I have your heart," she said, in tones of joy.

"Ah! I complain no more!" he answered, straining her tightly to him, and covering with kisses the delicate face, which was losing the freshness of youth, though its expression was still so soft, so tender that he could not look at it and not be comforted.

"What silence!" said Ginevra, presently. "Dear friend, I take great pleasure in sitting up. The majesty of Night is so contagious, it awes, it inspires. There is I know not what great power in the thought: all sleep, I wake."

"Oh, my Ginevra," he cried, "it is not to-night alone I feel how delicately moulded is your soul. But see, the dawn is shining,—come and sleep."

"Yes," replied Ginevra, "if I do not sleep alone. I suffered too much that night I first discovered that you were waking while I slept."

The courage with which these two young people fought with misery received for a while its due reward; but an event which usually crowns the happiness of a household to them proved fatal. Ginevra had a son, who was, to use the popular expression, "as beautiful as the day." The sense of motherhood doubled the strength of the young wife. Luigi borrowed money to meet the expenses of Ginevra's confinement. At first she did not feel the fresh burden of their situation; and the pair gave themselves wholly up to the joy of possessing a child. It was their last happiness.

Like two swimmers uniting their efforts to breast a current, these two Corsican souls struggled courageously; but sometimes they gave way to an apathy which resembled the sleep that precedes death. Soon they were obliged to sell their jewels. Poverty appeared to them suddenly,—not hideous, but plainly clothed, almost easy to endure; its voice had nothing terrifying; with it came neither spectres, nor despair, nor rags; but it made them lose the memory and the habits of comfort; it dried the springs of pride. Then, before they knew it, came want,—want in all its horror, indifferent to its rags, treading underfoot all human sentiments.

Seven or eight months after the birth of the little Bartolomeo, it would

have been hard to see in the mother who suckled her sickly babe the original of the beautiful portrait, the sole remaining ornament of the squalid home. Without fire through a hard winter, the graceful outlines of Ginevra's figure were slowly destroyed; her cheeks grew white as porcelain, and her eyes dulled as though the springs of life were drying up within her. Watching her shrunken, discolored child, she felt no suffering but for that young misery; and Luigi had no courage to smile upon his son.

"I have wandered over Paris," he said, one day. "I know no one; can I ask help of strangers? Vergniaud, my old sergeant, is concerned in a conspiracy, and they have put him in prison; besides, he has already lent me all he could spare. As for our landlord, it is over a year since he asked me for any rent."

"But we are not in want," replied Ginevra, gently, affecting calmness.

"Every hour brings some new difficulty," continued Luigi, in a tone of terror.

Another day Luigi took Ginevra's pictures, her portrait, and the few articles of furniture which they could still exist without, and sold them for a miserable sum, which prolonged the agony of the hapless household for a time. During these days of wretchedness Ginevra showed the sublimity of her nature and the extent of her resignation.

Stoically she bore the strokes of misery; her strong soul held her up against all woes; she worked with unfaltering hand beside her dying son, performed her household duties with marvellous activity, and sufficed for all. She was even happy, still, when she saw on Luigi's lips a smile of surprise at the cleanliness she produced in the one poor room where they had taken refuge.

"Dear, I kept this bit of bread for you," she said, one evening, when he returned, worn-out.

"And you?"

"I? I have dined, dear Luigi; I want nothing more."

And the tender look on her beseeching face urged him more than her words to take the food of which she had deprived herself.

Luigi kissed her, with one of those kisses of despair that were given in 1793 between friends as they mounted the scaffold. In such supreme moments two beings see each other, heart to heart. The hapless Luigi, comprehending suddenly that his wife was starving, was seized with the fever which consumed her. He shuddered, and went out, pretending that some business called him; for he would rather have drunk the deadliest poison than escape death by eating that last morsel of bread that was left in his home.

He wandered wildly about Paris; amid the gorgeous equipages, in the

bosom of that flaunting luxury that displays itself everywhere; he hurried past the windows of the money-changers where gold was glittering; and at last he resolved to sell himself to be a substitute for military service, hoping that this sacrifice would save Ginevra, and that her father, during his absence, would take her home.

He went to one of those agents who manage these transactions, and felt a sort of happiness in recognizing an old officer of the Imperial guard.

"It is two days since I have eaten anything," he said to him in a slow, weak voice. "My wife is dying of hunger, and has never uttered one word of complaint; she will die smiling, I think. For God's sake, comrade," he added, bitterly, "buy me in advance; I am robust; I am no longer in the service, and I —"

The officer gave Luigi a sum on account of that which he promised to procure for him. The wretched man laughed convulsively as he grasped the gold, and ran with all his might, breathless, to his home, crying out at times:—

"Ginevra! Oh, my Ginevra!"

It was almost night when he reached his wretched room. He entered very softly, fearing to cause too strong an emotion to his wife, whom he had left so weak. The last rays of the sun, entering through the garret window, were fading from Ginevra's face as she sat sleeping in her chair, and holding her child upon her breast.

"Wake, my dear one," he said, not observing the infant, which shone, at that moment, with supernatural light.

Hearing that voice, the poor mother opened her eyes, met Luigi's look, and smiled; but Luigi himself gave a cry of horror; he scarcely recognized his wife, now half mad. With a gesture of savage energy he showed her the gold. Ginevra began to laugh mechanically; but suddenly she cried, in a dreadful voice:—

"The child, Luigi, he is cold!"

She looked at her son and swooned. The little Bartolomeo was dead. Luigi took his wife in his arms, without removing the child, which she clasped with inconceivable force; and after laying her on the bed he went out to seek help.

"Oh! my God!" he said, as he met his landlord on the stairs. "I have gold, gold, and my child has died of hunger, and his mother is dying, too! Help me!"

He returned like one distraught to his wife, leaving the worthy mason, and also the neighbors who heard him to gather a few things for the needs of so terrible a want, hitherto unknown, for the two Corsicans had carefully hidden it from a feeling of pride.

Luigi had cast his gold upon the floor and was kneeling by the bed on which lay his wife.

"Father! take care of my son, who bears your name," she was saying in her delirium.

"Oh, my angel! be calm," said Luigi, kissing her; "our good days are coming back to us."

"My Luigi," she said, looking at him with extraordinary attention, "listen to me. I feel that I am dying. My death is natural; I suffered too much; besides, a happiness so great as mine has to be paid for. Yes, my Luigi, be comforted. I have been so happy that if I were to live again I would again accept our fate. I am a bad mother; I regret you more than I regret my child—My child!" she added, in a hollow voice.

Two tears escaped her dying eyes, and suddenly she pressed the little body she had no power to warm.

"Give my hair to my father, in memory of his Ginevra," she said. "Tell him I have never blamed him."

Her head fell upon her husband's arm.

"No, you cannot die!" cried Luigi. "The doctor is coming. We have food. Your father will take you home. Prosperity is here. Stay with us, angel!"

But the faithful heart, so full of love, was growing cold. Ginevra turned her eyes instinctively to him she loved, though she was conscious of nought else. Confused images passed before her mind, now losing memory of earth. She knew that Luigi was there, for she clasped his icy hand tightly, and more tightly still, as though she strove to save herself from some precipice down which she feared to fall.

"Dear," she said, at last, "you are cold; I will warm you."

She tried to put his hand upon her heart, but died.

Two doctors, a priest, and several neighbors came into the room, bringing all that was necessary to save the poor couple and calm their despair. These strangers made some noise in entering; but after they had entered, an awful silence filled the room.

While that scene was taking place, Bartolomeo and his wife were sitting in their antique chairs, each at a corner of the vast fireplace, where a glowing fire scarcely warmed the great spaces of their salon. The clock told midnight.

For some time past the old couple had lost the ability to sleep. At the present moment they sat there silent, like two persons in their dotage, gazing about them at things they did not see. Their deserted salon, so filled with

memories to them, was feebly lighted by a single lamp which seemed expiring. Without the sparkling of the flame upon the hearth, they might soon have been in total darkness.

A friend had just left them; and the chair on which he had been sitting, remained where he left it, between the two Corsicans. Piombo was casting glances at that chair,—glances full of thoughts, crowding one upon another like remorse,—for the empty chair was Ginevra's. Elisa Piombo watched the expressions that now began to cross her husband's pallid face. Though long accustomed to divine his feelings from the changeful agitations of his face, they seemed to-night so threatening, and anon so melancholy that she felt she could no longer read a soul that was now incomprehensible, even to her.

Would Bartolomeo yield, at last, to the memories awakened by that chair? Had he been shocked to see a stranger in that chair, used for the first time since his daughter left him? Had the hour of his mercy struck,—that hour she had vainly prayed and waited for till now?

These reflections shook the mother's heart successively. For an instant her husband's countenance became so terrible that she trembled at having used this simple means to bring about a mention of Ginevra's name. The night was wintry; the north wind drove the snowflakes so sharply against the blinds that the old couple fancied that they heard a gentle rustling. Ginevra's mother dropped her head to hide her tears. Suddenly a sigh burst from the old man's breast; his wife looked at him; he seemed to her crushed. Then she risked speaking—for the second time in three long years—of his daughter.

"Ginevra may be cold," she said, softly.

Piombo quivered.

"She may be hungry," she continued.

The old man dropped a tear.

"Perhaps she has a child and cannot suckle it; her milk is dried up!" said the mother, in accents of despair.

"Let her come! let her come to me!" cried Piombo. "Oh! my precious child, thou hast conquered me."

The mother rose as if to fetch her daughter. At that instant the door opened noisily, and a man, whose face no longer bore the semblance of humanity, stood suddenly before them.

"Dead! Our two families were doomed to exterminate each other. Here is all that remains of her," he said, laying Ginevra's long black hair upon the table.

The old people shook and quivered as if a stroke of lightning had blasted them.

Luigi no longer stood before them.

"He has spared me a shot, for he is dead," said Bartolomeo, slowly, gazing on the ground at his feet.

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MADAME FIRMIANI

Many tales, either rich in situations or made dramatic by some of the innumerable tricks of chance, carry with them their own particular setting, which can be rendered artistically or simply by those who narrate them, without their subjects losing any, even the least of their charms. But there are some incidents in human experience to which the heart alone is able to give life; there are certain details—shall we call them anatomical?—the delicate touches of which cannot be made to reappear unless by an equally delicate rendering of thought; there are portraits which require the infusion of a soul, and mean nothing unless the subtlest expression of the speaking countenance is given; furthermore, there are things which we know not how to say or do without the aid of secret harmonies which a day, an hour, a fortunate conjunction of celestial signs, or an inward moral tendency may produce.

Such mysterious revelations are imperatively needed in order to tell this simple history, in which we seek to interest those souls that are naturally grave and reflective and find their sustenance in tender emotions. If the writer, like the surgeon beside his dying friend, is filled with a species of reverence for the subject he is handling, should not the reader share in that inexplicable feeling? Is it so difficult to put ourselves in unison with the vague and nervous sadness which casts its gray tints all about us, and is, in fact, a semi-illness, the gentle sufferings of which are often pleasing? If the reader is of those who sometimes think upon the dear ones they have lost, if he is alone, if the day is waning or the night has come, let him read on; otherwise, he should lay aside this book at once. If he has never buried a good old relative, infirm and poor, he will not understand these pages, which to some will seem redolent of musk, to others as colorless and virtuous as those of Florian. In short, the reader must have known the luxury of tears, must have felt the silent pangs of a passing memory, the vision of a dear yet far-off Shade,—memories which bring regret for all that earth has swallowed up, with smiles for vanished joys.

And now, believe that the writer would not, for the wealth of England,

steal from poesy a single lie with which to embellish this narrative. The following is a true history, on which you may safely spend the treasures of your sensibility—if you have any.

In these days the French language has as many idioms and represents as many idiosyncracies as there are varieties of men in the great family of France. It is extremely curious and amusing to listen to the different interpretations or versions of the same thing or the same event by the various species which compose the genus Parisian,—"Parisian" is here used merely to generalize our remark.

Therefore, if you should say to an individual of the species Practical, "Do you know Madame Firmiani?" he would present that lady to your mind by the following inventory: "Fine house in the rue du Bac, salons handsomely furnished, good pictures, one hundred thousand francs a year, husband formerly receiver-general of the department of Montenotte." So saying, the Practical man, rotund and fat and usually dressed in black, will project his lower lip and wrap it over the upper, nodding his head as if to add: "Solid people, those; nothing to be said against them." Ask no further; Practical men settle everybody's status by figures, incomes, or solid acres,—a phrase of their lexicon.

Turn to the right, and put the same question to that other man, who belongs to the species Lounger. "Madame Firmiani?" he says; "yes, yes, I know her well; I go to her parties; receives Wednesdays; highly creditable house."—Madame Firmiani is metamorphosed into a house! but the house is not a pile of stones architecturally superposed, of course not, the word presents in Lounger's language an indescribable idiom.—Here the Lounger, a spare man with an agreeable smile, a sayer of pretty nothings with more acquired cleverness than native wit, stoops to your ear and adds, with a shrewd glance: "I have never seen Monsieur Firmiani. His social position is that of looking after property in Italy. Madame Firmiani is a Frenchwoman, and spends her money like a Parisian. She has excellent tea. It is one of the few houses where you can amuse yourself; the refreshments are exquisite. It is very difficult to get admitted; therefore, of course, one meets only the best society in her salons." Here the Lounger takes a pinch of snuff; he inhales it slowly and seems to say: "I go there, but don't expect me to present you."

Evidently the Lounger considers that Madame Firmiani keeps a sort of inn, without a sign.

"Why do you want to know Madame Firmiani? Her parties are as dull as the Court itself. What is the good of possessing a mind unless to avoid such salons, where stupid talk and foolish little ballads are the order of the day." You have questioned a being classed Egotist, a species who would like to keep

the universe under lock and key, and let nothing be done without their permission. They are unhappy if others are happy; they forgive nothing but vices, downfalls, frailties, and like none but proteges. Aristocrats by inclination, they make themselves democrats out of spite, preferring to consort with inferiors as equals.

"Oh, Madame Firmiani, my dear fellow! she is one of those adorable women who serve as Nature's excuse for all the ugly ones she creates. Madame Firmiani is enchanting, and so kind! I wish I were in power and possessed millions that I might—" (here a whisper). "Shall I present you?" The speaker is a youth of the Student species, known for his boldness among men and his timidity in a boudoir.

"Madame Firmiani?" cries another, twirling his cane. "I'll tell you what I think of her; she is a woman between thirty and thirty-five; faded complexion, handsome eyes, flat figure, contralto voice worn out, much dressed, rather rouged, charming manners; in short, my dear fellow, the remains of a pretty woman who is still worth the trouble of a passion." This remark is from the species Fop, who has just breakfasted, doesn't weigh his words, and is about to mount his horse. At that particular moment Fops are pitiless.

"Magnificent collection of pictures in her house; go and see them by all means," answers another. "Nothing finer." You have questioned one of the species Connoisseur. He leaves you to go to Perignon's or Tripet's. To him, Madame Firmiani is a collection of painted canvases.

A Woman: "Madame Firmiani? I don't wish you to visit her." This remark is rich in meanings. Madame Firmiani! dangerous woman! a siren! dresses well, has taste; gives other women sleepless nights. Your informant belongs to the genus Spiteful.

An Attache to an embassy: "Madame Firmiani? Isn't she from Antwerp? I saw her ten years ago in Rome; she was very handsome then." Individuals of the species Attache have a mania for talking in the style of Talleyrand. Their wit is often so refined that the point is imperceptible; they are like billiard-players who avoid hitting the ball with consummate dexterity. These individuals are usually taciturn, and when they talk it is only about Spain, Vienna, Italy, or Petersburg. Names of countries act like springs in their mind; press them, and the ringing of their changes begins.

"That Madame Firmiani sees a great deal of the faubourg Saint-Germain, doesn't she?" This from a person who desires to belong to the class Distinguished. She gives the "de" to everybody,—to Monsieur Dupin senior, to Monsieur Lafayette; she flings it right and left and humiliates many. This woman spends her life in striving to know and do "the right thing"; but, for her sins, she lives in the Marais, and her husband is a lawyer,—a lawyer before the

Royal courts, however.

"Madame Firmiani, monsieur? I do not know her." This man belongs to the species Duke. He recognizes none but the women who have been presented at court. Pray excuse him, he was one of Napoleon's creations.

"Madame Firmiani? surely she used to sing at the Opera-house." Species Ninny. The individuals of this species have an answer for everything. They will tell lies sooner than say nothing.

Two old ladies, wives of former magistrates: The First (wears a cap with bows, her face is wrinkled, her nose sharp, voice hard, carries a prayer-book in her hand): "What was that Madame Firmiani's maiden name?"—The Second (small face red as a crab-apple, gentle voice): "She was a Cadignan, my dear, niece of the old Prince de Cadignan, consequently cousin to the present Duc de Maufrigneuse."

Madame Firmiani is a Cadignan. She might have neither virtue, nor wealth, nor youth, but she would still be a Cadignan; it is like a prejudice, always alive and working.

An Original: "My dear fellow, I've seen no galoshes in her antechamber; consequently you can visit her without compromising yourself, and play cards there without fear; if there are any scoundrels in her salons, they are people of quality and come in their carriages; such persons never quarrel."

Old man belonging to the genus Observer: "If you call on Madame Firmiani, my good friend, you will find a beautiful woman sitting at her ease by the corner of her fireplace. She will scarcely rise to receive you,—she only does that for women, ambassadors, dukes, and persons of great distinction. She is very gracious, she possesses charm; she converses well, and likes to talk on many topics. There are many indications of a passionate nature about her; but she has, evidently, so many adorers that she cannot have a favorite. If suspicion rested on two or three of her intimates, we might say that one or other of them was the "cavaliere servente"; but it does not. The lady is a mystery. She is married, though none of us have seen her husband. Monsieur Firmiani is altogether mythical; he is like that third post-horse for which we pay though we never behold it. Madame has the finest contralto voice in Europe, so say judges; but she has never been heard to sing more than two or three times since she came to Paris. She receives much company, but goes nowhere."

The Observer speaks, you will notice, as an Oracle. His words, anecdotes, and quotations must be accepted as truths, under pain of being thought without social education or intelligence, and of causing him to slander you with much zest in twenty salons where he is considered indispensable. The Observer is

forty years of age, never dines at home, declares himself no longer dangerous to women, wears a maroon coat, and has a place reserved for him in several boxes at the "Bouffons." He is sometimes confounded with the Parasite; but he has filled too many real functions to be thought a sponger; moreover he possesses a small estate in a certain department, the name of which he has never been known to utter.

"Madame Firmiani? why, my dear fellow, she was Murat's former mistress." This man belongs to the Contradictors,—persons who note errata in memoirs, rectify dates, correct facts, bet a hundred to one, and are certain about everything. You can easily detect them in some gross blunder in the course of a single evening. They will tell you they were in Paris at the time of Mallet's conspiracy, forgetting that half an hour earlier they had described how they had crossed the Beresina. Nearly all Contradictors are "chevaliers" of the Legion of honor; they talk loudly, have retreating foreheads, and play high.

"Madame Firmiani a hundred thousand francs a year? nonsense, you are crazy! Some people will persist in giving millions with the liberality of authors, to whom it doesn't cost a penny to dower their heroines. Madame Firmiani is simply a coquette, who has lately ruined a young man, and now prevents him from making a fine marriage. If she were not so handsome she wouldn't have a penny."

Ah, that one—of course you recognize him—belongs to the species Envious. There is no need to sketch him; the species is as well known as that of the felis domestica. But how explain the perennial vigor of envy?—a vice that brings nothing in!

Persons in society, literary men, honest folk,—in short, individuals of all species,—were promulgating in the month of January, 1824, so many different opinions about Madame Firmiani that it would be tedious to write them down. We have merely sought to show that a man seeking to understand her, yet unwilling or unable to go to her house, would (from the answers to his inquiries) have had equal reason to suppose her a widow or wife, silly or wise, virtuous or the reverse, rich or poor, soulless or full of feeling, handsome or plain,—in short, there were as many Madame Firmianis as there are species in society, or sects in Catholicism. Frightful reflection! we are all like lithographic blocks, from which an indefinite number of copies can be drawn by criticism,—the proofs being more or less like us according to a distribution of shading which is so nearly imperceptible that our reputation depends (barring the calumnies of friends and the witticisms of newspapers) on the balance struck by our criticisers between Truth that limps and Falsehood to which Parisian wit gives wings.

Madame Firmiani, like other noble and dignified women who make their

hearts a sanctuary and disdain the world, was liable, therefore, to be totally misjudged by Monsieur de Bourbonne, an old country magnate, who had reason to think a great deal about her during the winter of this year. He belonged to the class of provincial Planters, men living on their estates, accustomed to keep close accounts of everything and to bargain with the peasantry. Thus employed, a man becomes sagacious in spite of himself, just as soldiers in the long run acquire courage from routine. The old gentleman, who had come to Paris from Touraine to satisfy his curiosity about Madame Firmiani, and found it not at all assuaged by the Parisian gossip which he heard, was a man of honor and breeding. His sole heir was a nephew, whom he greatly loved, in whose interests he planted his poplars. When a man thinks without annoyance about his heir, and watches the trees grow daily finer for his future benefit, affection grows too with every blow of the spade around her roots. Though this phenomenal feeling is not common, it is still to be met with in Touraine.

This cherished nephew, named Octave de Camps, was a descendant of the famous Abbe de Camps, so well known to bibliophiles and learned men,—who, by the bye, are not at all the same thing. People in the provinces have the bad habit of branding with a sort of decent reprobation any young man who sells his inherited estates. This antiquated prejudice has interfered very much with the stock-jobbing which the present government encourages for its own interests. Without consulting his uncle, Octave had lately sold an estate belonging to him to the Black Band. The chateau de Villaines would have been pulled down were it not for the remonstrances which the old uncle made to the representatives of the "Pickaxe company." To increase the old man's wrath, a distant relative (one of those cousins of small means and much astuteness about whom shrewd provincials are wont to remark, "No lawsuits for me with him!") had, as it were by accident, come to visit Monsieur de Bourbonne, and incidentally informed him of his nephew's ruin. Monsieur Octave de Camps, he said, having wasted his means on a certain Madame Firmiani, was now reduced to teaching mathematics for a living, while awaiting his uncle's death, not daring to let him know of his dissipations. This distant cousin, a sort of Charles Moor, was not ashamed to give this fatal news to the old gentleman as he sat by his fire, digesting a profuse provincial dinner.

But heirs cannot always rid themselves of uncles as easily as they would like to. Thanks to his obstinacy, this particular uncle refused to believe the story, and came out victorious from the attack of indigestion produced by his nephew's biography. Some shocks affect the heart, others the head; but in this case the cousin's blow fell on the digestive organs and did little harm, for the old man's stomach was sound. Like a true disciple of Saint Thomas, Monsieur de Bourbonne came to Paris, unknown to Octave, resolved to make full inquiries as to his nephew's insolvency. Having many acquaintances in the

faubourg Saint-Germain, among the Listomeres, the Lenoncourts, and the Vandenesses, he heard so much gossip, so many facts and falsities, about Madame Firmiani that he resolved to be presented to her under the name of de Rouxellay, that of his estate in Touraine. The astute old gentleman was careful to choose an evening when he knew that Octave would be engaged in finishing a piece of work which was to pay him well,—for this so-called lover of Madame Firmiani still went to her house; a circumstance that seemed difficult to explain. As to Octave's ruin, that, unfortunately, was no fable, as Monsieur de Bourbonne had at once discovered.

Monsieur de Rouxellay was not at all like the provincial uncle at the Gymnase. Formerly in the King's guard, a man of the world and a favorite among women, he knew how to present himself in society with the courteous manners of the olden time; he could make graceful speeches and understand the whole Charter, or most of it. Though he loved the Bourbons with noble frankness, believed in God as a gentleman should, and read nothing but the "Quotidienne," he was not as ridiculous as the liberals of his department would fain have had him. He could hold his own in the court circle, provided no one talked to him of "Moses in Egypt," nor of the drama, or romanticism, or local color, nor of railways. He himself had never got beyond Monsieur de Voltaire, Monsieur le Comte de Buffon, Payronnet, and the Chevalier Gluck, the Queen's favorite musician.

"Madame," he said to the Marquise de Listomere, who was on his arm as they entered Madame Firmiani's salons, "if this woman is my nephew's mistress, I pity him. How can she live in the midst of this luxury, and know that he is in a garret? Hasn't she any soul? Octave is a fool to have given up such an estate as Villaines for a—"

Monsieur de Bourbonne belonged to the species Fossil, and used the language of the days of yore.

"But suppose he had lost it at play?"

"Then, madame, he would at least have had the pleasure of gambling."

"And do you think he has had no pleasure here? See! look at Madame Firmiani."

The brightest memories of the old man faded at the sight of his nephew's so-called mistress. His anger died away at the gracious exclamation which came from his lips as he looked at her. By one of those fortunate accidents which happen only to pretty women, it was a moment when all her beauties shone with peculiar lustre, due perhaps to the wax-lights, to the charming simplicity of her dress, to the ineffable atmosphere of elegance that surrounded her. One must needs have studied the transitions of an evening in a

Parisian salon to appreciate the imperceptible lights and shades which color a woman's face and vary it. There comes a moment when, content with her toilet, pleased with her own wit, delighted to be admired, and feeling herself the queen of a salon full of remarkable men who smile to her, the Parisian woman reaches a full consciousness of her grace and charm; her beauty is enhanced by the looks she gathers in,—a mute homage which she transfers with subtle glances to the man she loves. At moments like these a woman is invested with supernatural power and becomes a magician, a charmer, without herself knowing that she is one; involuntarily she inspires the love that fills her own bosom; her smiles and glances fascinate. If this condition, which comes from the soul, can give attraction even to a plain woman, with what radiance does it not invest a woman of natural elegance, distinguished bearing, fair, fresh, with sparkling eyes, and dressed in a taste that wrings approval from artists and her bitterest rivals.

Have you ever, for your happiness, met a woman whose harmonious voice gives to her speech the same charm that emanates from her manners? a woman who knows how to speak and to be silent, whose words are happily chosen, whose language is pure, and who concerns herself in your interests with delicacy? Her raillery is caressing, her criticism never wounds; she neither discourses nor argues, but she likes to lead a discussion and stop it at the right moment. Her manner is affable and smiling, her politeness never forced, her readiness to serve others never servile; she reduces the respect she claims to a soft shadow; she never wearies you, and you leave her satisfied with her and with yourself. Her charming grace is conveyed to all the things with which she surrounds herself. Everything about her pleases the eye; in her presence you breathe, as it were, your native air. This woman is natural. There is no effort about her; she is aiming at no effect; her feelings are shown simply, because they are true. Frank herself, she does not wound the vanity of others; she accepts men as God made them; pitying the vicious, forgiving defects and absurdities, comprehending all ages, and vexed by nothing, because she has had the sense and tact to foresee all. Tender and gay, she gratifies before she consoles. You love her so well that if this angel did wrong you would be ready to excuse her. If, for your happiness, you have met with such a woman, you know Madame Firmiani.

After Monsieur de Bourbonne had talked with her for ten minutes, sitting beside her, his nephew was forgiven. He perceived that whatever the actual truth might be, the relation between Madame Firmiani and Octave covered some mystery. Returning to the illusions that gild the days of youth, and judging Madame Firmiani by her beauty, the old gentleman became convinced that a woman so innately conscious of her dignity as she appeared to be was incapable of a bad action. Her dark eyes told of inward peace; the lines of her face were so noble, the profile so pure, and the passion he had come to

investigate seemed so little to oppress her heart, that the old man said to himself, while noting all the promises of love and virtue given by that adorable countenance, "My nephew is committing some folly."

Madame Firmiani acknowledged to twenty-five. But the Practicals proved that having married the invisible Firmiani (then a highly respectable individual in the forties) in 1813, at the age of sixteen, she must be at least twenty-eight in 1825. However the same persons also asserted that at no period of her life had she ever been so desirable or so completely a woman. She was now at an age when women are most prone to conceive a passion, and to desire it, perhaps, in their pensive hours. She possessed all that earth sells, all that it lends, all that it gives. The Attaches declared there was nothing of which she was ignorant; the Contradictors asserted that there was much she ought to learn; the Observers remarked that her hands were white, her feet small, her movements a trifle too undulating. But, nevertheless, individuals of all species envied or disputed Octave's happiness, agreeing, for once in a way, that Madame Firmiani was the most aristocratically beautiful woman in Paris.

Still young, rich, a perfect musician, intelligent, witty, refined, and received (as a Cadignan) by the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, that oracle of the noble faubourg, loved by her rivals the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse her cousin, the Marquise d'Espard, and Madame de Macumer,—Madame Firmiani gratified all the vanities which feed or excite love. She was therefore sought by too many men not to fall a victim to Parisian malice and its charming calumnies, whispered behind a fan or in a safe aside. It was necessary to quote the remarks given at the beginning of this history to bring out the true Firmiani in contradistinction to the Firmiani of society. If some women forgave her happiness, others did not forgive her propriety. Now nothing is so dangerous in Paris as unfounded suspicions,—for the reason that it is impossible to destroy them.

This sketch of a woman who was admirably natural gives only a faint idea of her. It would need the pencil of an Ingres to render the pride of that brow, with its wealth of hair, the dignity of that glance, and the thoughts betrayed by the changing colors of her cheeks. In her were all things; poets could have found an Agnes Sorel and a Joan of Arc, also the woman unknown, the Soul within that form, the soul of Eve, the knowledge of the treasures of good and the riches of evil, error and resignation, crime and devotion, the Donna Julia and the Haidee of Lord Byron.

The former guardsman stayed, with apparent impertinence, after the other guests had left the salons; and Madame Firmiani found him sitting quietly before her in an armchair, evidently determined to remain, with the pertinacity of a fly which we are forced to kill to get rid of it. The hands of the clock marked two in the morning.

"Madame," said the old gentlemen, as Madame Firmiani rose, hoping to make him understand that it was her good pleasure he should go, "Madame, I am the uncle of Monsieur Octave de Camps."

Madame Firmiani immediately sat down again, and showed her emotion. In spite of his sagacity the old Planter was unable to decide whether she turned pale from shame or pleasure. There are pleasures, delicious emotions the chaste heart seeks to veil, which cannot escape the shock of startled modesty. The more delicacy a woman has, the more she seeks to hide the joys that are in her soul. Many women, incomprehensible in their tender caprices, long to hear a name pronounced which at other times they desire to bury in their hearts. Monsieur de Bourbonne did not interpret Madame Firmiani's agitation exactly in this way: pray forgive him, all provincials are distrustful.

"Well, monsieur?" said Madame Firmiani, giving him one of those clear, lucid glances in which we men can never see anything because they question us too much.

"Well, madame," returned the old man, "do you know what some one came to tell me in the depths of my province? That my nephew had ruined himself for you, and that the poor fellow was living in a garret while you were in silk and gold. Forgive my rustic sincerity; it may be useful for you to know of these calumnies."

"Stop, monsieur," said Madame Firmiani, with an imperative gesture; "I know all that. You are too polite to continue this subject if I request you to leave it, and too gallant—in the old-fashioned sense of the word," she added with a slight tone of irony—"not to agree that you have no right to question me. It would be ridiculous in me to defend myself. I trust that you will have a sufficiently good opinion of my character to believe in the profound contempt which, I assure you, I feel for money,—although I was married, without any fortune, to a man of immense wealth. It is nothing to me whether your nephew is rich or poor; if I have received him in my house, and do now receive him, it is because I consider him worthy to be counted among my friends. All my friends, monsieur, respect each other; they know that I have not philosophy enough to admit into my house those I do not esteem; this may argue a want of charity; but my guardian-angel has maintained in me to this day a profound aversion for tattle, and also for dishonesty."

Through the ring of her voice was slightly raised during the first part of this answer, the last words were said with the ease and self-possession of Celimene bantering the Misanthrope.

"Madame," said Monsieur de Bourbonne, in a voice of some emotion, "I am an old man; I am almost Octave's father, and I ask your pardon most humbly for the question that I shall now venture to put to you, giving you my

word of honor as a loyal gentleman that your answer shall die here,"—laying his hand upon his heart, with an old-fashioned gesture that was truly religious. "Are these rumors true; do you love Octave?"

"Monsieur," she replied, "to any other man I should answer that question only by a look; but to you, and because you are indeed almost the father of Monsieur de Camps, I reply by asking what you would think of a woman if to such a question she answered you? To avow our love for him we love, when he loves us—ah! that may be; but even when we are certain of being loved forever, believe me, monsieur, it is an effort for us, and a reward to him. To say to another!—"

She did not end her sentence, but rose, bowed to the old man, and withdrew into her private apartments, the doors of which, opening and closing behind her, had a language of their own to his sagacious ears.

"Ah! the mischief!" thought he; "what a woman! she is either a sly one or an angel"; and he got into his hired coach, the horses of which were stamping on the pavement of the silent courtyard, while the coachman was asleep on his box after cursing for the hundredth time his tardy customer.

The next morning about eight o'clock the old gentleman mounted the stairs of a house in the rue de l'Observance where Octave de Camps was living. If there was ever an astonished man it was the young professor when he beheld his uncle. The door was unlocked, his lamp still burning; he had been sitting up all night.

"You rascal!" said Monsieur de Bourbonne, sitting down in the nearest chair; "since when is it the fashion to laugh at uncles who have twenty-six thousand francs a year from solid acres to which we are the sole heir? Let me tell you that in the olden time we stood in awe of such uncles as that. Come, speak up, what fault have you to find with me? Haven't I played my part as uncle properly? Did I ever require you to respect me? Have I ever refused you money? When did I shut the door in your face on pretence that you had come to look after my health? Haven't you had the most accommodating and the least domineering uncle that there is in France,—I won't say Europe, because that might be too presumptuous. You write to me, or you don't write,—no matter, I live on pledged affection, and I am making you the prettiest estate in all Touraine, the envy of the department. To be sure, I don't intend to let you have it till the last possible moment, but that's an excusable little fancy, isn't it? And what does monsieur himself do?—sells his own property and lives like a lackey!—"

"Uncle—"

"I'm not talking about uncles, I'm talking nephew. I have a right to your

confidence. Come, confess at once; it is much the easiest way; I know that by experience. Have you been gambling? have you lost money at the Bourse? Say, 'Uncle, I'm a wretch,' and I'll hug you. But if you tell me any lies greater than those I used to tell at your age I'll sell my property, buy an annuity, and go back to the evil ways of my youth—if I can."

"Uncle—"

"I saw your Madame Firmiani yesterday," went on the old fellow, kissing the tips of his fingers, which he gathered into a bunch. "She is charming. You have the consent and approbation of your uncle, if that will do you any good. As to the sanction of the Church I suppose that's useless, and the sacraments cost so much in these days. Come, speak out, have you ruined yourself for her?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Ha! the jade! I'd have wagered it. In my time the women of the court were cleverer at ruining a man than the courtesans of to-day; but this one—I recognized her!—it is a bit of the last century."

"Uncle," said Octave, with a manner that was tender and grave, "you are totally mistaken. Madame Firmiani deserves your esteem, and all the adoration the world gives her."

"Youth, youth! always the same!" cried Monsieur de Bourbonne. "Well, go on; tell me the same old story. But please remember that my experience in gallantry is not of yesterday."

"My dear, kind uncle, here is a letter which will tell you nearly all," said Octave, taking it from an elegant portfolio, her gift, no doubt. "When you have read it I will tell you the rest, and you will then know a Madame Firmiani who is unknown to the world."

"I haven't my spectacles; read it aloud."

Octave began:—

"'My beloved—'"

"Hey, then you are still intimate with her?" interrupted his uncle.

"Why yes, of course."

"You haven't parted from her?"

"Parted!" repeated Octave, "we are married."

"Heavens!" cried Monsieur de Bourbonne, "then why do you live in a garret?"

"Let me go on."

"True—I'm listening."

Octave resumed the letter, but there were passages which he could not read without deep emotion.

"'My beloved Husband,—You ask me the reason of my sadness. Has it, then, passed from my soul to my face; or have you only guessed it?—but how could you fail to do so, one in heart as we are? I cannot deceive you; this may be a misfortune, for it is one of the conditions of happy love that a wife shall be gay and caressing. Perhaps I ought to deceive you, but I would not do it even if the happiness with which you have blessed and overpowered me depended on it.

"'Ah! dearest, how much gratitude there is in my love. I long to love you forever, without limit; yes, I desire to be forever proud of you. A woman's glory is in the man she loves. Esteem, consideration, honor, must they not be his who receives our all? Well, my angel has fallen. Yes, dear, the tale you told me has tarnished my past joys. Since then I have felt myself humiliated in you,—you whom I thought the most honorable of men, as you are the most loving, the most tender. I must indeed have deep confidence in your heart, so young and pure, to make you this avowal which costs me much. Ah! my dear love, how is it that you, knowing your father had unjustly deprived others of their property, that YOU can keep it?

"'And you told me of this criminal act in a room filled with the mute witnesses of our love; and you are a gentleman, and you think yourself noble, and I am yours! I try to find excuses for you; I do find them in your youth and thoughtlessness. I know there is still something of the child about you. Perhaps you have never thought seriously of what fortune and integrity are. Oh! how your laugh wounded me. Reflect on that ruined family, always in distress; poor young girls who have reason to curse you daily; an old father saying to himself each night: "We might not now be starving if that man's father had been an honest man—"'"

"Good heavens!" cried Monsieur de Bourbonne, interrupting his nephew, "surely you have not been such a fool as to tell that woman about your father's affair with the Bourgneufs? Women know more about wasting a fortune than making one."

"They know about integrity. But let me read on, uncle."

"'Octave, no power on earth has authority to change the principles of honor. Look into your conscience and ask it by what name you are to call the action by which you hold your property.'" The nephew looked at the uncle, who lowered his head. "'I will not tell you all the thoughts that assail me; they

can be reduced to one,—this is it: I cannot respect the man who, knowingly, is smirched for a sum of money, whatever the amount may be; five francs stolen at play or five times a hundred thousand gained by a legal trick are equally dishonoring. I will tell you all. I feel myself degraded by the very love which has hitherto been all my joy. There rises in my soul a voice which my tenderness cannot stifle. Ah! I have wept to feel that I have more conscience than love. Were you to commit a crime I would hide you in my bosom from human justice, but my devotion could go no farther. Love, to a woman, means boundless confidence, united to a need of reverencing, of esteeming, the being to whom she belongs. I have never conceived of love otherwise than as a fire in which all noble feelings are purified still more,—a fire which develops them.

"'I have but one thing else to say: come to me poor, and my love shall be redoubled. If not, renounce it. Should I see you no more, I shall know what it means.

"'But I do not wish, understand me, that you should make restitution because I urge it. Consult your own conscience. An act of justice such as that ought not to be a sacrifice made to love. I am your wife and not your mistress, and it is less a question of pleasing me than of inspiring in my soul a true respect.

"'If I am mistaken, if you have ill-explained your father's action, if, in short, you still think your right to the property equitable (oh! how I long to persuade myself that you are blameless), consider and decide by listening to the voice of your conscience; act wholly and solely from yourself. A man who loves a woman sincerely, as you love me, respects the sanctity of her trust in him too deeply to dishonor himself.

"'I blame myself now for what I have written; a word might have sufficed, and I have preached to you! Scold me; I wish to be scolded,—but not much, only a little. Dear, between us two the power is yours—you alone should perceive your own faults.'"

"Well, uncle?" said Octave, whose eyes were full of tears.

"There's more in the letter; finish it."

"Oh, the rest is only to be read by a lover," answered Octave, smiling.

"Yes, right, my boy," said the old man, gently. "I have had many affairs in my day, but I beg you to believe that I too have loved, 'et ego in Arcardia.' But I don't understand yet why you give lessons in mathematics."

"My dear uncle, I am your nephew; isn't that as good as saying that I had dipped into the capital left me by my father? After I had read this letter a sort

of revolution took place within me. I paid my whole arrearage of remorse in one day. I cannot describe to you the state I was in. As I drove in the Bois a voice called to me, 'That horse is not yours'; when I ate my dinner it was saying, 'You have stolen this food.' I was ashamed. The fresher my honesty, the more intense it was. I rushed to Madame Firmiani. Uncle! that day I had pleasures of the heart, enjoyments of the soul, that were far beyond millions. Together we made out the account of what was due to the Bourgneufs, and I condemned myself, against Madame Firmiani's advice, to pay three per cent interest. But all I had did not suffice to cover the full amount. We were lovers enough for her to offer, and me to accept, her savings—"

"What! besides her other virtues does that adorable woman lay by money?" cried his uncle.

"Don't laugh at her, uncle; her position has obliged her to be very careful. Her husband went to Greece in 1820 and died there three years later. It has been impossible, up to the present time, to get legal proofs of his death, or obtain the will which he made leaving his whole property to his wife. These papers were either lost or stolen, or have gone astray during the troubles in Greece,—a country where registers are not kept as they are in France, and where we have no consul. Uncertain whether she might not be forced to give up her fortune, she has lived with the utmost prudence. As for me, I wish to acquire property which shall be mine, so as to provide for my wife in case she is forced to lose hers."

"But why didn't you tell me all this? My dear nephew, you might have known that I love you enough to pay all your good debts, the debts of a gentleman. I'll play the traditional uncle now, and revenge myself!"

"Ah! uncle, I know your vengeance! but let me get rich by my own industry. If you want to do me a real service, make me an allowance of two or three thousand francs a year, till I see my way to an enterprise for which I shall want capital. At this moment I am so happy that all I desire is just the means of living. I give lessons so that I may not live at the cost of any one. If you only knew the happiness I had in making that restitution! I found the Bourgneufs, after a good deal of trouble, living miserably and in need of everything. The old father was a lottery agent; the two daughters kept his books and took care of the house; the mother was always ill. The daughters are charming girls, but they have been cruelly taught that the world thinks little of beauty without money. What a scene it was! I entered their house the accomplice in a crime; I left it an honest man, who had purged his father's memory. Uncle, I don't judge him; there is such excitement, such passion in a lawsuit that even an honorable man may be led astray by them. Lawyers can make the most unjust claims legal; laws have convenient syllogisms to quiet consciences. My visit was a drama. To be Providence itself; actually to fulfil

that futile wish, 'If heaven were to send us twenty thousand francs a year,'—that silly wish we all make, laughing; to bring opulence to a family sitting by the light of one miserable lamp over a poor turf fire!—no, words cannot describe it. My extreme justice seemed to them unjust. Well! if there is a Paradise my father is happy in it now. As for me, I am loved as no man was ever loved yet. Madame Firmiani gives me more than happiness; she has inspired me with a delicacy of feeling I think I lacked. So I call her my dear conscience,—a love-word which expresses certain secret harmonies within our hearts. I find honesty profitable; I shall get rich in time by myself. I've an industrial scheme in my head, and if it succeeds I shall earn millions."

"Ah! my boy, you have your mother's soul," said the old man, his eyes filling at the thought of his sister.

Just then, in spite of the distance between Octave's garret and the street, the young man heard the sound of a carriage.

"There she is!" he cried; "I know her horses by the way they are pulled up."

A few moments more, and Madame Firmiani entered the room.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, with a gesture of annoyance at seeing Monsieur de Bourbonne. "But our uncle is not in the way," she added quickly, smiling; "I came to humbly entreat my husband to accept my fortune. The Austrian Embassy has just sent me a document which proves the death of Monsieur Firmiani, also the will, which his valet was keeping safely to put into my own hands. Octave, you can accept it all; you are richer than I, for you have treasures here" (laying her hand upon his heart) "to which none but God can add." Then, unable to support her happiness, she laid her head upon her husband's breast.

"My dear niece," said the old man, "in my day we made love; in yours, you love. You women are all that is best in humanity; you are not even guilty of your faults, for they come through us."

A SECOND HOME

The Rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, formerly one of the darkest and most tortuous of the streets about the Hotel de Ville, zigzagged round the little gardens of the Paris Prefecture, and ended at the Rue Martroi, exactly at the angle of an old wall now pulled down. Here stood the turnstile to which the street owed its name; it was not removed till 1823, when the Municipality built a ballroom on the garden plot adjoining the Hotel de Ville, for the fete given in

honor of the Duc d'Angouleme on his return from Spain.

The widest part of the Rue du Tourniquet was the end opening into the Rue de la Tixeranderie, and even there it was less than six feet across. Hence in rainy weather the gutter water was soon deep at the foot of the old houses, sweeping down with it the dust and refuse deposited at the corner-stones by the residents. As the dust-carts could not pass through, the inhabitants trusted to storms to wash their always miry alley; for how could it be clean? When the summer sun shed its perpendicular rays on Paris like a sheet of gold, but as piercing as the point of a sword, it lighted up the blackness of this street for a few minutes without drying the permanent damp that rose from the ground-floor to the first story of these dark and silent tenements.

The residents, who lighted their lamps at five o'clock in the month of June, in winter never put them out. To this day the enterprising wayfarer who should approach the Marais along the quays, past the end of the Rue du Chaume, the Rues de l'Homme Arme, des Billettes, and des Deux-Portes, all leading to the Rue du Tourniquet, might think he had passed through cellars all the way.

Almost all the streets of old Paris, of which ancient chronicles laud the magnificence, were like this damp and gloomy labyrinth, where the antiquaries still find historical curiosities to admire. For instance, on the house then forming the corner where the Rue du Tourniquet joined the Rue de la Tixeranderie, the clamps might still be seen of two strong iron rings fixed to the wall, the relics of the chains put up every night by the watch to secure public safety.

This house, remarkable for its antiquity, had been constructed in a way that bore witness to the unhealthiness of these old dwellings; for, to preserve the ground-floor from damp, the arches of the cellars rose about two feet above the soil, and the house was entered up three outside steps. The door was crowned by a closed arch, of which the keystone bore a female head and some time-eaten arabesques. Three windows, their sills about five feet from the ground, belonged to a small set of rooms looking out on the Rue du Tourniquet, whence they derived their light. These windows were protected by strong iron bars, very wide apart, and ending below in an outward curve like the bars of a baker's window.

If any passer-by during the day were curious enough to peep into the two rooms forming this little dwelling, he could see nothing; for only under the sun of July could he discern, in the second room, two beds hung with green serge, placed side by side under the paneling of an old-fashioned alcove; but in the afternoon, by about three o'clock, when the candles were lighted, through the pane of the first room an old woman might be seen sitting on a stool by the fireplace, where she nursed the fire in a brazier, to simmer a stew, such as

porters' wives are expert in. A few kitchen utensils, hung up against the wall, were visible in the twilight.

At that hour an old table on trestles, but bare of linen, was laid with pewter-spoons, and the dish concocted by the old woman. Three wretched chairs were all the furniture of this room, which was at once the kitchen and the dining-room. Over the chimney-piece were a piece of looking-glass, a tinder-box, three glasses, some matches, and a large, cracked white jug. Still, the floor, the utensils, the fireplace, all gave a pleasant sense of the perfect cleanliness and thrift that pervaded the dull and gloomy home.

The old woman's pale, withered face was quite in harmony with the darkness of the street and the mustiness of the place. As she sat there, motionless, in her chair, it might have been thought that she was as inseparable from the house as a snail from its brown shell; her face, alert with a vague expression of mischief, was framed in a flat cap made of net, which barely covered her white hair; her fine, gray eyes were as quiet as the street, and the many wrinkles in her face might be compared to the cracks in the walls. Whether she had been born to poverty, or had fallen from some past splendor, she now seemed to have been long resigned to her melancholy existence.

From sunrise till dark, excepting when she was getting a meal ready, or, with a basket on her arm, was out purchasing provisions, the old woman sat in the adjoining room by the further window, opposite a young girl. At any hour of the day the passer-by could see the needlewoman seated in an old, red velvet chair, bending over an embroidery frame, and stitching indefatigably.

Her mother had a green pillow on her knee, and busied herself with hand-made net; but her fingers could move the bobbin but slowly; her sight was feeble, for on her nose there rested a pair of those antiquated spectacles which keep their place on the nostrils by the grip of a spring. By night these two hardworking women set a lamp between them; and the light, concentrated by two globe-shaped bottles of water, showed the elder the fine network made by the threads on her pillow, and the younger the most delicate details of the pattern she was embroidering. The outward bend of the window had allowed the girl to rest a box of earth on the window-sill, in which grew some sweet peas, nasturtiums, a sickly little honeysuckle, and some convolvulus that twined its frail stems up the iron bars. These etiolated plants produced a few pale flowers, and added a touch of indescribable sadness and sweetness to the picture offered by this window, in which the two figures were appropriately framed.

The most selfish soul who chanced to see this domestic scene would carry away with him a perfect image of the life led in Paris by the working class of women, for the embroideress evidently lived by her needle. Many, as they

passed through the turnstile, found themselves wondering how a girl could preserve her color, living in such a cellar. A student of lively imagination, going that way to cross to the Quartier-Latin, would compare this obscure and vegetative life to that of the ivy that clung to these chill walls, to that of the peasants born to labor, who are born, toil, and die unknown to the world they have helped to feed. A house-owner, after studying the house with the eye of a valuer, would have said, "What will become of those two women if embroidery should go out of fashion?" Among the men who, having some appointment at the Hotel de Ville or the Palais de Justice, were obliged to go through this street at fixed hours, either on their way to business or on their return home, there may have been some charitable soul. Some widower or Adonis of forty, brought so often into the secrets of these sad lives, may perhaps have reckoned on the poverty of this mother and daughter, and have hoped to become the master at no great cost of the innocent work-woman, whose nimble and dimpled fingers, youthful figure, and white skin—a charm due, no doubt, to living in this sunless street—had excited his admiration. Perhaps, again, some honest clerk, with twelve hundred francs a year, seeing every day the diligence the girl gave to her needle, and appreciating the purity of her life, was only waiting for improved prospects to unite one humble life with another, one form of toil to another, and to bring at any rate a man's arm and a calm affection, pale-hued like the flowers in the window, to uphold this home.

Vague hope certainly gave life to the mother's dim, gray eyes. Every morning, after the most frugal breakfast, she took up her pillow, though chiefly for the look of the thing, for she would lay her spectacles on a little mahogany worktable as old as herself, and look out of the window from about half-past eight till ten at the regular passers in the street; she caught their glances, remarked on their gait, their dress, their countenance, and almost seemed to be offering her daughter, her gossiping eyes so evidently tried to attract some magnetic sympathy by manoeuvres worthy of the stage. It was evident that this little review was as good as a play to her, and perhaps her single amusement.

The daughter rarely looked up. Modesty, or a painful consciousness of poverty, seemed to keep her eyes riveted to the work-frame; and only some exclamation of surprise from her mother moved her to show her small features. Then a clerk in a new coat, or who unexpectedly appeared with a woman on his arm, might catch sight of the girl's slightly upturned nose, her rosy mouth, and gray eyes, always bright and lively in spite of her fatiguing toil. Her late hours had left a trace on her face by a pale circle marked under each eye on the fresh rosiness of her cheeks. The poor child looked as if she were made for love and cheerfulness—for love, which had drawn two perfect arches above her eyelids, and had given her such a mass of chestnut hair, that

she might have hidden under it as under a tent, impenetrable to the lover's eye —for cheerfulness, which gave quivering animation to her nostrils, which carved two dimples in her rosy cheeks, and made her quick to forget her troubles; cheerfulness, the blossom of hope, which gave her strength to look out without shuddering on the barren path of life.

The girl's hair was always carefully dressed. After the manner of Paris needlewomen, her toilet seemed to her quite complete when she had brushed her hair smooth and tucked up the little short curls that played on each temple in contrast with the whiteness of her skin. The growth of it on the back of her neck was so pretty, and the brown line, so clearly traced, gave such a pleasing idea of her youth and charm, that the observer, seeing her bent over her work, and unmoved by any sound, was inclined to think of her as a coquette. Such inviting promise had excited the interest of more than one young man, who turned round in the vain hope of seeing that modest countenance.

"Caroline, there is a new face that passes regularly by, and not one of the old ones to compare with it."

These words, spoken in a low voice by her mother one August morning in 1815, had vanquished the young needlewoman's indifference, and she looked out on the street; but in vain, the stranger was gone.

"Where has he flown to?" said she.

"He will come back no doubt at four; I shall see him coming, and will touch your foot with mine. I am sure he will come back; he has been through the street regularly for the last three days; but his hours vary. The first day he came by at six o'clock, the day before yesterday it was four, yesterday as early as three. I remember seeing him occasionally some time ago. He is some clerk in the Prefet's office who has moved to the Marais.—Why!" she exclaimed, after glancing down the street, "our gentleman of the brown coat has taken to wearing a wig; how much it alters him!"

The gentleman of the brown coat was, it would seem, the individual who commonly closed the daily procession, for the old woman put on her spectacles and took up her work with a sigh, glancing at her daughter with so strange a look that Lavater himself would have found it difficult to interpret. Admiration, gratitude, a sort of hope for better days, were mingled with pride at having such a pretty daughter.

At about four in the afternoon the old lady pushed her foot against Caroline's, and the girl looked up quickly enough to see the new actor, whose regular advent would thenceforth lend variety to the scene. He was tall and thin, and wore black, a man of about forty, with a certain solemnity of demeanor; as his piercing hazel eye met the old woman's dull gaze, he made

her quake, for she felt as though he had the gift of reading hearts, or much practice in it, and his presence must surely be as icy as the air of this dank street. Was the dull, sallow complexion of that ominous face due to excess of work, or the result of delicate health?

The old woman supplied twenty different answers to this question; but Caroline, next day, discerned the lines of long mental suffering on that brow that was so prompt to frown. The rather hollow cheeks of the Unknown bore the stamp of the seal which sorrow sets on its victims as if to grant them the consolation of common recognition and brotherly union for resistance. Though the girl's expression was at first one of lively but innocent curiosity, it assumed a look of gentle sympathy as the stranger receded from view, like a last relation following in a funeral train.

The heat of the weather was so great, and the gentleman was so absent-minded, that he had taken off his hat and forgotten to put it on again as he went down the squalid street. Caroline could see the stern look given to his countenance by the way the hair was brushed from his forehead. The strong impression, devoid of charm, made on the girl by this man's appearance was totally unlike any sensation produced by the other passengers who used the street; for the first time in her life she was moved to pity for some one else than herself and her mother; she made no reply to the absurd conjectures that supplied material for the old woman's provoking volubility, and drew her long needle in silence through the web of stretched net; she only regretted not having seen the stranger more closely, and looked forward to the morrow to form a definite opinion of him.

It was the first time, indeed, that a man passing down the street had ever given rise to much thought in her mind. She generally had nothing but a smile in response to her mother's hypotheses, for the old woman looked on every passer-by as a possible protector for her daughter. And if such suggestions, so crudely presented, gave rise to no evil thoughts in Caroline's mind, her indifference must be ascribed to the persistent and unfortunately inevitable toil in which the energies of her sweet youth were being spent, and which would infallibly mar the clearness of her eyes or steal from her fresh cheeks the bloom that still colored them.

For two months or more the "Black Gentleman"—the name they had given him—was erratic in his movements; he did not always come down the Rue du Tourniquet; the old woman sometimes saw him in the evening when he had not passed in the morning, and he did not come by at such regular hours as the clerks who served Madame Crochard instead of a clock; moreover, excepting on the first occasion, when his look had given the old mother a sense of alarm, his eyes had never once dwelt on the weird picture of these two female gnomes. With the exception of two carriage-gates and a dark ironmonger's

shop, there were in the Rue du Tourniquet only barred windows, giving light to the staircases of the neighboring houses; thus the stranger's lack of curiosity was not to be accounted for by the presence of dangerous rivals; and Madame Crochard was greatly piqued to see her "Black Gentleman" always lost in thought, his eyes fixed on the ground, or straight before him, as though he hoped to read the future in the fog of the Rue du Tourniquet. However, one morning, about the middle of September, Caroline Crochard's roguish face stood out so brightly against the dark background of the room, looking so fresh among the belated flowers and faded leaves that twined round the window-bars, the daily scene was gay with such contrasts of light and shade, of pink and white blending with the light material on which the pretty needlewoman was working, and with the red and brown hues of the chairs, that the stranger gazed very attentively at the effects of this living picture. In point of fact, the old woman, provoked by her "Black Gentleman's" indifference, had made such a clatter with her bobbins that the gloomy and pensive passer-by was perhaps prompted to look up by the unusual noise.

The stranger merely exchanged glances with Caroline, swift indeed, but enough to effect a certain contact between their souls, and both were aware that they would think of each other. When the stranger came by again, at four in the afternoon, Caroline recognized the sound of his step on the echoing pavement; they looked steadily at each other, and with evident purpose; his eyes had an expression of kindliness which made him smile, and Caroline colored; the old mother noted them with satisfaction. Ever after that memorable afternoon, the Gentleman in Black went by twice a day, with rare exceptions, which both the women observed. They concluded from the irregularity of the hours of his homecoming that he was not released so early, nor so precisely punctual as a subordinate official.

All through the first three winter months, twice a day, Caroline and the stranger thus saw each other for so long as it took him to traverse the piece of road that lay along the length of the door and three windows of the house. Day after day this brief interview had the hue of friendly sympathy which at last had acquired a sort of fraternal kindness. Caroline and the stranger seemed to understand each other from the first; and then, by dint of scrutinizing each other's faces, they learned to know them well. Ere long it came to be, as it were, a visit that the Unknown owed to Caroline; if by any chance her Gentleman in Black went by without bestowing on her the half-smile of his expressive lips, or the cordial glance of his brown eyes, something was missing to her all day. She felt as an old man does to whom the daily study of a newspaper is such an indispensable pleasure that on the day after any great holiday he wanders about quite lost, and seeking, as much out of vagueness as for want of patience, the sheet by which he cheats an hour of life.

But these brief meetings had the charm of intimate friendliness, quite as much for the stranger as for Caroline. The girl could no more hide a vexation, a grief, or some slight ailment from the keen eye of her appreciative friend than he could conceal anxiety from hers.

"He must have had some trouble yesterday," was the thought that constantly arose in the embroideress' mind as she saw some change in the features of the "Black Gentleman."

"Oh, he has been working too hard!" was a reflection due to another shade of expression which Caroline could discern.

The stranger, on his part, could guess when the girl had spent Sunday in finishing a dress, and he felt an interest in the pattern. As quarter-day came near he could see that her pretty face was clouded by anxiety, and he could guess when Caroline had sat up late at work; but above all, he noted how the gloomy thoughts that dimmed the cheerful and delicate features of her young face gradually vanished by degrees as their acquaintance ripened. When winter had killed the climbers and plants of her window garden, and the window was kept closed, it was not without a smile of gentle amusement that the stranger observed the concentration of the light within, just at the level of Caroline's head. The very small fire and the frosty red of the two women's faces betrayed the poverty of their home; but if ever his own countenance expressed regretful compassion, the girl proudly met it with assumed cheerfulness.

Meanwhile the feelings that had arisen in their hearts remained buried there, no incident occurring to reveal to either of them how deep and strong they were in the other; they had never even heard the sound of each other's voice. These mute friends were even on their guard against any nearer acquaintance, as though it meant disaster. Each seemed to fear lest it should bring on the other some grief more serious than those they felt tempted to share. Was it shyness or friendship that checked them? Was it a dread of meeting with selfishness, or the odious distrust which sunders all the residents within the walls of a populous city? Did the voice of conscience warn them of approaching danger? It would be impossible to explain the instinct which made them as much enemies as friends, at once indifferent and attached, drawn to each other by impulse, and severed by circumstance. Each perhaps hoped to preserve a cherished illusion. It might almost have been thought that the stranger feared lest he should hear some vulgar word from those lips as fresh and pure as a flower, and that Caroline felt herself unworthy of the mysterious personage who was evidently possessed of power and wealth.

As to Madame Crochard, that tender mother, almost angry at her daughter's persistent lack of decisiveness, now showed a sulky face to the "Black

Gentleman," on whom she had hitherto smiled with a sort of benevolent servility. Never before had she complained so bitterly of being compelled, at her age, to do the cooking; never had her catarrh and her rheumatism wrung so many groans from her; finally, she could not, this winter, promise so many ells of net as Caroline had hitherto been able to count on.

Under these circumstances, and towards the end of December, at the time when bread was dearest, and that dearth of corn was beginning to be felt which made the year 1816 so hard on the poor, the stranger observed on the features of the girl whose name was still unknown to him, the painful traces of a secret sorrow which his kindest smiles could not dispel. Before long he saw in Caroline's eyes the dimness attributed to long hours at night. One night, towards the end of the month, the Gentleman in Black passed down the Rue du Tourniquet at the quite unwonted hour of one in the morning. The perfect silence allowed of his hearing before passing the house the lachrymose voice of the old mother, and Caroline's even sadder tones, mingling with the swish of a shower of sleet. He crept along as slowly as he could; and then, at the risk of being taken up by the police, he stood still below the window to hear the mother and daughter, while watching them through the largest of the holes in the yellow muslin curtains, which were eaten away by wear as a cabbage leaf is riddled by caterpillars. The inquisitive stranger saw a sheet of paper on the table that stood between the two work-frames, and on which stood the lamp and the globes filled with water. He at once identified it as a writ. Madame Crochard was weeping, and Caroline's voice was thick, and had lost its sweet, caressing tone.

"Why be so heartbroken, mother? Monsieur Molineux will not sell us up or turn us out before I have finished this dress; only two nights more and I shall take it home to Madame Roguin."

"And supposing she keeps you waiting as usual?—And will the money for the gown pay the baker too?"

The spectator of this scene had long practice in reading faces; he fancied he could discern that the mother's grief was as false as the daughter's was genuine; he turned away, and presently came back. When he next peeped through the hole in the curtain, Madame Crochard was in bed. The young needlewoman, bending over her frame, was embroidering with indefatigable diligence; on the table, with the writ lay a triangular hunch of bread, placed there, no doubt, to sustain her in the night and to remind her of the reward of her industry. The stranger was tremulous with pity and sympathy; he threw his purse in through a cracked pane so that it should fall at the girl's feet; and then, without waiting to enjoy her surprise, he escaped, his cheeks tingling.

Next morning the shy and melancholy stranger went past with a look of

deep preoccupation, but he could not escape Caroline's gratitude; she had opened her window and affected to be digging in the square window-box buried in snow, a pretext of which the clumsy ingenuity plainly told her benefactor that she had been resolved not to see him only through the pane. Her eyes were full of tears as she bowed her head, as much as to say to her benefactor, "I can only repay you from my heart."

But the Gentleman in Black affected not to understand the meaning of this sincere gratitude. In the evening, as he came by, Caroline was busy mending the window with a sheet of paper, and she smiled at him, showing her row of pearly teeth like a promise. Thenceforth the Stranger went another way, and was no more seen in the Rue due Tourniquet.

It was one day early in the following May that, as Caroline was giving the roots of the honeysuckle a glass of water, one Saturday morning, she caught sight of a narrow strip of cloudless blue between the black lines of houses, and said to her mother:

"Mamma, we must go to-morrow for a trip to Montmorency!"

She had scarcely uttered the words, in a tone of glee, when the Gentleman in Black came by, sadder and more dejected than ever. Caroline's innocent and ingratiating glance might have been taken for an invitation. And, in fact, on the following day, when Madame Crochard, dressed in a pelisse of claret-colored merinos, a silk bonnet, and striped shawl of an imitation Indian pattern, came out to choose seats in a chaise at the corner of the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis and the Rue d'Enghien, there she found her Unknown standing like a man waiting for his wife. A smile of pleasure lighted up the Stranger's face when his eye fell on Caroline, her neat feet shod in plum-colored prunella gaiters, and her white dress tossed by a breeze that would have been fatal to an ill-made woman, but which displayed her graceful form. Her face, shaded by a rice-straw bonnet lined with pink silk, seemed to beam with a reflection from heaven; her broad, plum-colored belt set off a waist he could have spanned; her hair, parted in two brown bands over a forehead as white as snow, gave her an expression of innocence which no other feature contradicted. Enjoyment seemed to have made Caroline as light as the straw of her hat; but when she saw the Gentleman in Black, radiant hope suddenly eclipsed her bright dress and her beauty. The Stranger, who appeared to be in doubt, had not perhaps made up his mind to be the girl's escort for the day till this revelation of the delight she felt on seeing him. He at once hired a vehicle with a fairly good horse, to drive to Saint-Leu-Taverny, and he offered Madame Crochard and her daughter seats by his side. The mother accepted without ado; but presently, when they were already on the way to Saint-Denis, she was by way of having scruples, and made a few civil speeches as to the possible inconvenience two women might cause their companion.

"Perhaps, monsieur, you wished to drive alone to Saint-Leu-Taverny," said she, with affected simplicity.

Before long she complained of the heat, and especially of her cough, which, she said, had hindered her from closing her eyes all night; and by the time the carriage had reached Saint-Denis, Madame Crochard seemed to be fast asleep. Her snores, indeed, seemed, to the Gentleman in Black, rather doubtfully genuine, and he frowned as he looked at the old woman with a very suspicious eye.

"Oh, she is fast asleep," said Caroline quilelessly; "she never ceased coughing all night. She must be very tired."

Her companion made no reply, but he looked at the girl with a smile that seemed to say:

"Poor child, you little know your mother!"

However, in spite of his distrust, as the chaise made its way down the long avenue of poplars leading to Eaubonne, the Stranger thought that Madame Crochard was really asleep; perhaps he did not care to inquire how far her slumbers were genuine or feigned. Whether it were that the brilliant sky, the pure country air, and the heady fragrance of the first green shoots of the poplars, the catkins of willow, and the flowers of the blackthorn had inclined his heart to open like all the nature around him; or that any long restraint was too oppressive while Caroline's sparkling eyes responded to his own, the Gentleman in Black entered on a conversation with his young companion, as aimless as the swaying of the branches in the wind, as devious as the flitting of the butterflies in the azure air, as illogical as the melodious murmur of the fields, and, like it, full of mysterious love. At that season is not the rural country as tremulous as a bride that has donned her marriage robe; does it not invite the coldest soul to be happy? What heart could remain unthawed, and what lips could keep its secret, on leaving the gloomy streets of the Marais for the first time since the previous autumn, and entering the smiling and picturesque valley of Montmorency; on seeing it in the morning light, its endless horizons receding from view; and then lifting a charmed gaze to eyes which expressed no less infinitude mingled with love?

The Stranger discovered that Caroline was sprightly rather than witty, affectionate, but ill educated; but while her laugh was giddy, her words promised genuine feeling. When, in response to her companion's shrewd questioning, the girl spoke with the heartfelt effusiveness of which the lower classes are lavish, not guarding it with reticence like people of the world, the Black Gentleman's face brightened, and seemed to renew its youth. His countenance by degrees lost the sadness that lent sternness to his features, and little by little they gained a look of handsome youthfulness which made

Caroline proud and happy. The pretty needlewoman guessed that her new friend had been long weaned from tenderness and love, and no longer believed in the devotion of woman. Finally, some unexpected sally in Caroline's light prattle lifted the last veil that concealed the real youth and genuine character of the Stranger's physiognomy; he seemed to bid farewell to the ideas that haunted him, and showed the natural liveliness that lay beneath the solemnity of his expression.

Their conversation had insensibly become so intimate, that by the time when the carriage stopped at the first houses of the straggling village of Saint-Leu, Caroline was calling the gentleman Monsieur Roger. Then for the first time the old mother awoke.

"Caroline, she has heard everything!" said Roger suspiciously in the girl's ear.

Caroline's reply was an exquisite smile of disbelief, which dissipated the dark cloud that his fear of some plot on the old woman's part had brought to this suspicious mortal's brow. Madame Crochard was amazed at nothing, approved of everything, followed her daughter and Monsieur Roger into the park, where the two young people had agreed to wander through the smiling meadows and fragrant copses made famous by the taste of Queen Hortense.

"Good heavens! how lovely!" exclaimed Caroline when standing on the green ridge where the forest of Montmorency begins, she saw lying at her feet the wide valley with its combes sheltering scattered villages, its horizon of blue hills, its church towers, its meadows and fields, whence a murmur came up, to die on her ear like the swell of the ocean. The three wanderers made their way by the bank of an artificial stream and came to the Swiss valley, where stands a chalet that had more than once given shelter to Hortense and Napoleon. When Caroline had seated herself with pious reverence on the mossy wooden bench where kings and princesses and the Emperor had rested, Madame Crochard expressed a wish to have a nearer view of a bridge that hung across between two rocks at some little distance, and bent her steps towards that rural curiosity, leaving her daughter in Monsieur Roger's care, though telling them that she would not go out of sight.

"What, poor child!" cried Roger, "have you never longed for wealth and the pleasures of luxury? Have you never wished that you might wear the beautiful dresses you embroider?"

"It would not be the truth, Monsieur Roger, if I were to tell you that I never think how happy people must be who are rich. Oh yes! I often fancy, especially when I am going to sleep, how glad I should be to see my poor mother no longer compelled to go out, whatever the weather, to buy our little provisions, at her age. I should like her to have a servant who, every morning

before she was up, would bring her up her coffee, nicely sweetened with white sugar. And she loves reading novels, poor dear soul! Well, and I would rather see her wearing out her eyes over her favorite books than over twisting her bobbins from morning till night. And again, she ought to have a little good wine. In short, I should like to see her comfortable—she is so good."

"Then she has shown you great kindness?"

"Oh yes," said the girl, in a tone of conviction. Then, after a short pause, during which the two young people stood watching Madame Crochard, who had got to the middle of the rustic bridge, and was shaking her finger at them, Caroline went on:

"Oh yes, she has been so good to me. What care she took of me when I was little! She sold her last silver forks to apprentice me to the old maid who taught me to embroider.—And my poor father! What did she not go through to make him end his days in happiness!" The girl shivered at the remembrance, and hid her face in her hands.—"Well! come! let us forget past sorrows!" she added, trying to rally her high spirits. She blushed as she saw that Roger too was moved, but she dared not look at him.

"What was your father?" he asked.

"He was an opera-dancer before the Revolution," said she, with an air of perfect simplicity, "and my mother sang in the chorus. My father, who was leader of the figures on the stage, happened to be present at the siege of the Bastille. He was recognized by some of the assailants, who asked him whether he could not lead a real attack, since he was used to leading such enterprises on the boards. My father was brave; he accepted the post, led the insurgents, and was rewarded by the nomination to the rank of captain in the army of Sambre-et-Meuse, where he distinguished himself so far as to rise rapidly to be a colonel. But at Lutzen he was so badly wounded that, after a year's sufferings, he died in Paris.—The Bourbons returned; my mother could obtain no pension, and we fell into such abject misery that we were compelled to work for our living. For some time past she has been ailing, poor dear, and I have never known her so little resigned; she complains a good deal, and, indeed, I cannot wonder, for she has known the pleasures of an easy life. For my part, I cannot pine for delights I have never known, I have but one thing to wish for."

"And that is?" said Roger eagerly, as if roused from a dream.

"That women may continue to wear embroidered net dresses, so that I may never lack work."

The frankness of this confession interested the young man, who looked with less hostile eyes on Madame Crochard as she slowly made her way back

to them.

"Well, children, have you had a long talk?" said she, with a half-laughing, half-indulgent air. "When I think, Monsieur Roger, that the 'little Corporal' has sat where you are sitting," she went on after a pause. "Poor man! how my husband worshiped him! Ah! Crochard did well to die, for he could not have borne to think of him where they have sent him!"

Roger put his finger to his lips, and the good woman went on very gravely, with a shake of her head:

"All right, mouth shut and tongue still! But," added she, unhooking a bit of her bodice, and showing a ribbon and cross tied round her neck by a piece of black ribbon, "they shall never hinder me from wearing what he gave to my poor Crochard, and I will have it buried with me."

On hearing this speech, which at that time was regarded as seditious, Roger interrupted the old lady by rising suddenly, and they returned to the village through the park walks. The young man left them for a few minutes while he went to order a meal at the best eating-house in Taverny; then, returning to fetch them, he led the way through the alleys cut in the forest.

The dinner was cheerful. Roger was no longer the melancholy shade that was wont to pass along the Rue du Tourniquet; he was not the "Black Gentleman," but rather a confiding young man ready to take life as it came, like the two hard-working women who, on the morrow, might lack bread; he seemed alive to all the joys of youth, his smile was quite affectionate and childlike.

When, at five o'clock, this happy meal was ended with a few glasses of champagne, Roger was the first to propose that they should join the village ball under the chestnuts, where he and Caroline danced together. Their hands met with sympathetic pressure, their hearts beat with the same hopes; and under the blue sky and the slanting, rosy beams of sunset, their eyes sparkled with fires which, to them, made the glory of the heavens pale. How strange is the power of an idea, of a desire! To these two nothing seemed impossible. In such magic moments, when enjoyment sheds its reflections on the future, the soul foresees nothing but happiness. This sweet day had created memories for these two to which nothing could be compared in all their past existence. Would the source prove to be more beautiful than the river, the desire more enchanting than its gratification, the thing hoped for more delightful than the thing possessed?

"So the day is already at an end!" On hearing this exclamation from her unknown friend when the dance was over, Caroline looked at him compassionately, as his face assumed once more a faint shade of sadness.

"Why should you not be as happy in Paris as you are here?" she asked. "Is happiness to be found only at Saint-Leu? It seems to me that I can henceforth never be unhappy anywhere."

Roger was struck by these words, spoken with the glad unrestraint that always carries a woman further than she intended, just as prudery often lends her greater cruelty than she feels. For the first time since that glance, which had, in a way, been the beginning of their friendship, Caroline and Roger had the same idea; though they did not express it, they felt it at the same instant, as a result of a common impression like that of a comforting fire cheering both under the frost of winter; then, as if frightened by each other's silence, they made their way to the spot where the carriage was waiting. But before getting into it, they playfully took hands and ran together down the dark avenue in front of Madame Crochard. When they could no longer see the white net cap, which showed as a speck through the leaves where the old woman was —"Caroline!" said Roger in a tremulous voice, and with a beating heart.

The girl was startled, and drew back a few steps, understanding the invitation this question conveyed; however, she held out her hand, which was passionately kissed, but which she hastily withdrew, for by standing on tiptoe she could see her mother.

Madame Crochard affected blindness, as if, with a reminiscence of her old parts, she was only required to figure as a supernumerary.

The adventures of these two young people were not continued in the Rue du Tourniquet. To see Roger and Caroline once more, we must leap into the heart of modern Paris, where, in some of the newly-built houses, there are apartments that seem made on purpose for newly-married couples to spend their honeymoon in. There the paper and paint are as fresh as the bride and bridegroom, and the decorations are in blossom like their love; everything is in harmony with youthful notions and ardent wishes.

Half-way down the Rue Taitbout, in a house whose stone walls were still white, where the columns of the hall and the doorway were as yet spotless, and the inner walls shone with the neat painting which our recent intimacy with English ways had brought into fashion, there was, on the second floor, a small set of rooms fitted by the architect as though he had known what their use would be. A simple airy ante-room, with a stucco dado, formed an entrance into a drawing-room and dining-room. Out of the drawing-room opened a pretty bedroom, with a bathroom beyond. Every chimney-shelf had over it a fine mirror elegantly framed. The doors were crowded with arabesques in good taste, and the cornices were in the best style. Any amateur would have discerned there the sense of distinction and decorative fitness which mark the work of modern French architects.

For above a month Caroline had been at home in this apartment, furnished by an upholsterer who submitted to an artist's guidance. A short description of the principal room will suffice to give us an idea of the wonders it offered to Caroline's delighted eyes when Roger installed her there. Hangings of gray stuff trimmed with green silk adorned the walls of her bedroom; the seats, covered with light-colored woolen sateen, were of easy and comfortable shapes, and in the latest fashion; a chest of drawers of some simple wood, inlaid with lines of a darker hue, contained the treasures of the toilet; a writing-table to match served for inditing love-letters on scented paper; the bed, with antique draperies, could not fail to suggest thoughts of love by its soft hangings of elegant muslin; the window-curtains, of drab silk with green fringe, were always half drawn to subdue the light; a bronze clock represented Love crowning Psyche; and a carpet of Gothic design on a red ground set off the other accessories of this delightful retreat. There was a small dressing-table in front of a long glass, and here the needlewoman sat, out of patience with Plaisir, the famous hairdresser.

"Do you think you will have done to-day?" said she.

"Your hair is so long and so thick, madame," replied Plaisir.

Caroline could not help smiling. The man's flattery had no doubt revived in her mind the memory of the passionate praises lavished by her lover on the beauty of her hair, which he delighted in.

The hairdresser having done, a waiting-maid came and held counsel with her as to the dress in which Roger would like best to see her. It was the beginning of September 1816, and the weather was cold; she chose a green grenadine trimmed with chinchilla. As soon as she was dressed, Caroline flew into the drawing-room and opened a window, out of which she stepped on to the elegant balcony, that adorned the front of the house; there she stood, with her arms crossed, in a charming attitude, not to show herself to the admiration of the passers-by and see them turn to gaze at her, but to be able to look out on the Boulevard at the bottom of the Rue Taitbout. This side view, really very comparable to the peephole made by actors in the drop-scene of a theatre, enabled her to catch a glimpse of numbers of elegant carriages, and a crowd of persons, swept past with the rapidity of Ombres Chinoises. Not knowing whether Roger would arrive in a carriage or on foot, the needlewoman from the Rue du Tourniquet looked by turns at the foot-passengers, and at the tilburies—light cabs introduced into Paris by the English.

Expressions of refractoriness and of love passed by turns over her youthful face when, after waiting for a quarter of an hour, neither her keen eye nor her heart had announced the arrival of him whom she knew to be due. What disdain, what indifference were shown in her beautiful features for all the

other creatures who were bustling like ants below her feet. Her gray eyes, sparkling with fun, now positively flamed. Given over to her passion, she avoided admiration with as much care as the proudest devote to encouraging it when they drive about Paris, certainly feeling no care as to whether her fair countenance leaning over the balcony, or her little foot between the bars, and the picture of her bright eyes and delicious turned-up nose would be effaced or no from the minds of the passers-by who admired them; she saw but one face, and had but one idea. When the spotted head of a certain bay horse happened to cross the narrow strip between the two rows of houses, Caroline gave a little shiver and stood on tiptoe in hope of recognizing the white traces and the color of the tilbury. It was he!

Roger turned the corner of the street, saw the balcony, whipped the horse, which came up at a gallop, and stopped at the bronze-green door that he knew as well as his master did. The door of the apartment was opened at once by the maid, who had heard her mistress' exclamation of delight. Roger rushed up to the drawing-room, clasped Caroline in his arms, and embraced her with the effusive feeling natural when two beings who love each other rarely meet. He led her, or rather they went by a common impulse, their arms about each other, into the quiet and fragrant bedroom; a settee stood ready for them to sit by the fire, and for a moment they looked at each other in silence, expressing their happiness only by their clasped hands, and communicating their thoughts in a fond gaze.

"Yes, it is he!" she said at last. "Yes, it is you. Do you know, I have not seen you for three long days, an age!—But what is the matter? You are unhappy."

"My poor Caroline—"

"There, you see! 'poor Caroline'—"

"No, no, do not laugh, my darling; we cannot go to the Feydeau Theatre together this evening."

Caroline put on a little pout, but it vanished immediately.

"How absurd I am! How can I think of going to the play when I see you? Is not the sight of you the only spectacle I care for?" she cried, pushing her fingers through Roger's hair.

"I am obliged to go to the Attorney-General's. We have a knotty case in hand. He met me in the great hall at the Palais; and as I am to plead, he asked me to dine with him. But, my dearest, you can go to the theatre with your mother, and I will join you if the meeting breaks up early."

"To the theatre without you!" cried she in a tone of amazement; "enjoy any

pleasure you do not share! O my Roger! you do not deserve a kiss," she added, throwing her arms round his neck with an artless and impassioned impulse.

"Caroline, I must go home and dress. The Marais is some way off, and I still have some business to finish."

"Take care what you are saying, monsieur," said she, interrupting him. "My mother says that when a man begins to talk about his business, he is ceasing to love."

"Caroline! Am I not here? Have I not stolen this hour from my pitiless—"

"Hush!" said she, laying a finger on his mouth. "Don't you see that I am in jest."

They had now come back to the drawing-room, and Roger's eye fell on an object brought home that morning by the cabinetmaker. Caroline's old rosewood embroidery-frame, by which she and her mother had earned their bread when they lived in the Rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, had been refitted and polished, and a net dress, of elaborate design, was already stretched upon it.

"Well, then, my dear, I shall do some work this evening. As I stitch, I shall fancy myself gone back to those early days when you used to pass by me without a word, but not without a glance; the days when the remembrance of your look kept me awake all night. Oh my dear old frame—the best piece of furniture in my room, though you did not give it me!—You cannot think," said she, seating herself on Roger's knees; for he, overcome by irresistible feelings, had dropped into a chair. "Listen.—All I can earn by my work I mean to give to the poor. You have made me rich. How I love that pretty home at Bellefeuille, less because of what it is than because you gave it me! But tell me, Roger, I should like to call myself Caroline de Bellefeuille—can I? You must know: is it legal or permissible?"

As she saw a little affirmative grimace—for Roger hated the name of Crochard—Caroline jumped for glee, and clapped her hands.

"I feel," said she, "as if I should more especially belong to you. Usually a woman gives up her own name and takes her husband's—" An idea forced itself upon her and made her blush. She took Roger's hand and led him to the open piano.—"Listen," said she, "I can play my sonata now like an angel!" and her fingers were already running over the ivory keys, when she felt herself seized round the waist.

"Caroline, I ought to be far from hence!"

"You insist on going? Well, go," said she, with a pretty pout, but she smiled as she looked at the clock and exclaimed joyfully, "At any rate, I have detained

you a quarter of an hour!"

"Good-bye, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille," said he, with the gentle irony of love.

She kissed him and saw her lover to the door; when the sound of his steps had died away on the stairs she ran out on to the balcony to see him get into the tilbury, to see him gather up the reins, to catch a parting look, hear the crack of his whip and the sound of his wheels on the stones, watch the handsome horse, the master's hat, the tiger's gold lace, and at last to stand gazing long after the dark corner of the street had eclipsed this vision.

Five years after Mademoiselle Caroline de Bellefeuille had taken up her abode in the pretty house in the Rue Taitbout, we again look in on one of those home-scenes which tighten the bonds of affection between two persons who truly love. In the middle of the blue drawing-room, in front of the window opening to the balcony, a little boy of four was making a tremendous noise as he whipped the rocking-horse, whose two curved supports for the legs did not move fast enough to please him; his pretty face, framed in fair curls that fell over his white collar, smiled up like a cherub's at his mother when she said to him from the depths of an easy-chair, "Not so much noise, Charles; you will wake your little sister."

The inquisitive boy suddenly got off his horse, and treading on tiptoe as if he were afraid of the sound of his feet on the carpet, came up with one finger between his little teeth, and standing in one of those childish attitudes that are so graceful because they are so perfectly natural, raised the muslin veil that hid the rosy face of a little girl sleeping on her mother's knee.

"Is Eugenie asleep, then?" said he, quite astonished. "Why is she asleep when we are awake?" he added, looking up with large, liquid black eyes.

"That only God can know," replied Caroline, with a smile.

The mother and boy gazed at the infant, only that morning baptized.

Caroline, now about four-and-twenty, showed the ripe beauty which had expanded under the influence of cloudless happiness and constant enjoyment. In her the Woman was complete.

Delighted to obey her dear Roger's every wish, she had acquired the accomplishments she had lacked; she played the piano fairly well, and sang sweetly. Ignorant of the customs of a world that would have treated her as an outcast, and which she would not have cared for even if it had welcomed her —for a happy woman does not care for the world—she had not caught the elegance of manner or learned the art of conversation, abounding in words and devoid of ideas, which is current in fashionable drawing-rooms; on the other

hand, she worked hard to gain the knowledge indispensable to a mother whose chief ambition is to bring up her children well. Never to lose sight of her boy, to give him from the cradle that training of every minute which impresses on the young a love of all that is good and beautiful, to shelter him from every evil influence and fulfil both the painful duties of a nurse and the tender offices of a mother,—these were her chief pleasures.

The coy and gentle being had from the first day so fully resigned herself never to step beyond the enchanted sphere where she found all her happiness, that, after six years of the tenderest intimacy, she still knew her lover only by the name of Roger. A print of the picture of the Psyche lighting her lamp to gaze on Love in spite of his prohibition, hung in her room, and constantly reminded her of the conditions of her happiness. Through all these six years her humble pleasures had never importuned Roger by a single indiscreet ambition, and his heart was a treasure-house of kindness. Never had she longed for diamonds or fine clothes, and had again and again refused the luxury of a carriage which he had offered her. To look out from her balcony for Roger's cab, to go with him to the play or make excursions with him, on fine days in the environs of Paris, to long for him, to see him, and then to long again,—these made up the history of her life, poor in incidents but rich in happiness.

As she rocked the infant, now a few months old, on her knee, singing the while, she allowed herself to recall the memories of the past. She lingered more especially on the months of September, when Roger was accustomed to take her to Bellefeuille and spend the delightful days which seem to combine the charms of every season. Nature is equally prodigal of flowers and fruit, the evenings are mild, the mornings bright, and a blaze of summer often returns after a spell of autumn gloom. During the early days of their love, Caroline had ascribed the even mind and gentle temper, of which Roger gave her so many proofs, to the rarity of their always longed-for meetings, and to their mode of life, which did not compel them to be constantly together, as a husband and wife must be. But now she could remember with rapture that, tortured by foolish fears, she had watched him with trembling during their first stay on this little estate in the Gatinais. Vain suspiciousness of love! Each of these months of happiness had passed like a dream in the midst of joys which never rang false. She had always seen that kind creature with a tender smile on his lips, a smile that seemed to mirror her own.

As she called up these vivid pictures, her eyes filled with tears; she thought she could not love him enough, and was tempted to regard her ambiguous position as a sort of tax levied by Fate on her love. Finally, invincible curiosity led her to wonder for the thousandth time what events they could be that led so tender a heart as Roger's to find his pleasure in clandestine and illicit

happiness. She invented a thousand romances on purpose really to avoid recognizing the true reason, which she had long suspected but tried not to believe in. She rose, and carrying the baby in her arms, went into the dining-room to superintend the preparations for dinner.

It was the 6th of May 1822, the anniversary of the excursion to the Park of Saint-Leu, which had been the turning-point of her life; each year it had been marked by heartfelt rejoicing. Caroline chose the linen to be used, and arranged the dessert. Having attended with joy to these details, which touched Roger, she placed the infant in her pretty cot and went out on to the balcony, whence she presently saw the carriage which her friend, as he grew to riper years, now used instead of the smart tilbury of his youth. After submitting to the first fire of Caroline's embraces and the kisses of the little rogue who addressed him as papa, Roger went to the cradle, looked at his little sleeping daughter, kissed her forehead, and then took out of his pocket a document covered with black writing.

"Caroline," said he, "here is the marriage portion of Mademoiselle Eugenie de Bellefeuille."

The mother gratefully took the paper, a deed of gift of securities in the State funds.

"Buy why," said she, "have you given Eugenie three thousand francs a year, and Charles no more than fifteen hundred?"

"Charles, my love, will be a man," replied he. "Fifteen hundred francs are enough for him. With so much for certain, a man of courage is above poverty. And if by chance your son should turn out a nonentity, I do not wish him to be able to play the fool. If he is ambitious, this small income will give him a taste for work.—Eugenie is a girl; she must have a little fortune."

The father then turned to play with his boy, whose effusive affection showed the independence and freedom in which he was brought up. No sort of shyness between the father and child interfered with the charm which rewards a parent for his devotion; and the cheerfulness of the little family was as sweet as it was genuine. In the evening a magic-lantern displayed its illusions and mysterious pictures on a white sheet to Charles' great surprise, and more than once the innocent child's heavenly rapture made Caroline and Roger laugh heartily.

Later, when the little boy was in bed, the baby woke and craved its limpid nourishment. By the light of a lamp in the chimney corner, Roger enjoyed the scene of peace and comfort, and gave himself up to the happiness of contemplating the sweet picture of the child clinging to Caroline's white bosom as she sat, as fresh as a newly opened lily, while her hair fell in long

brown curls that almost hid her neck. The lamplight enhanced the grace of the young mother, shedding over her, her dress, and the infant, the picturesque effects of strong light and shadow.

The calm and silent woman's face struck Roger as a thousand times sweeter than ever, and he gazed tenderly at the rosy, pouting lips from which no harsh word had ever been heard. The very same thought was legible in Caroline's eyes as she gave a sidelong look at Roger, either to enjoy the effect she was producing on him, or to see what the end of the evening was to be. He, understanding the meaning of this cunning glance, said with assumed regret, "I must be going. I have a serious case to be finished, and I am expected at home. Duty before all things—don't you think so, my darling?"

Caroline looked him in the face with an expression at once sad and sweet, with the resignation which does not, however, disguise the pangs of a sacrifice.

"Good-bye, then," said she. "Go, for if you stay an hour longer I cannot so lightly bear to set you free."

"My dearest," said he with a smile, "I have three days' holiday, and am supposed to be twenty leagues away from Paris."

A few days after this anniversary of the 6th of May, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille hurried off one morning to the Rue Saint-Louis, in the Marais, only hoping she might not arrive too late at a house where she commonly went once a week. An express messenger had just come to inform her that her mother, Madame Crochard, was sinking under a complication of disorders produced by constant catarrh and rheumatism.

While the hackney coach-driver was flogging up his horses at Caroline's urgent request, supported by the promise of a handsome present, the timid old women, who had been Madame Crochard's friends during her later years, had brought a priest into the neat and comfortable second-floor rooms occupied by the old widow. Madame Crochard's maid did not know that the pretty lady at whose house her mistress so often dined was her daughter, and she was one of the first to suggest the services of a confessor, in the hope that this priest might be at least as useful to herself as to the sick woman. Between two games of boston, or out walking in the Jardin Turc, the old beldames with whom the widow gossiped all day had succeeded in rousing in their friend's stony heart some scruples as to her former life, some visions of the future, some fears of hell, and some hopes of forgiveness if she should return in sincerity to a religious life. So on this solemn morning three ancient females had settled themselves in the drawing-room where Madame Crochard was "at home" every Tuesday. Each in turn left her armchair to go to the poor old woman's bedside and sit with her, giving her the false hopes with which people delude

the dying.

At the same time, when the end was drawing near, when the physician called in the day before would no longer answer for her life, the three dames took counsel together as to whether it would not be well to send word to Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. Francoise having been duly informed, it was decided that a commissionaire should go to the Rue Taitbout to inform the young relation whose influence was so disquieting to the four women; still, they hoped that the Auvergnat would be too late in bringing back the person who so certainly held the first place in the widow Crochard's affections. The widow, evidently in the enjoyment of a thousand crowns a year, would not have been so fondly cherished by this feminine trio, but that neither of them, nor Francoise herself knew of her having any heir. The wealth enjoyed by Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille, whom Madame Crochard, in obedience to the traditions of the older opera, never allowed herself to speak of by the affectionate name of daughter, almost justified the four women in their scheme of dividing among themselves the old woman's "pickings."

Presently the one of these three sibyls who kept guard over the sick woman came shaking her head at the other anxious two, and said:

"It is time we should be sending for the Abbe Fontanon. In another two hours she will neither have the wit nor the strength to write a line."

Thereupon the toothless old cook went off, and returned with a man wearing a black gown. A low forehead showed a small mind in this priest, whose features were mean; his flabby, fat cheeks and double chin betrayed the easy-going egotist; his powdered hair gave him a pleasant look, till he raised his small, brown eyes, prominent under a flat forehead, and not unworthy to glitter under the brows of a Tartar.

"Monsieur l'Abbe," said Francoise, "I thank you for all your advice; but believe me, I have taken the greatest care of the dear soul."

But the servant, with her dragging step and woe-begone look, was silent when she saw that the door of the apartment was open, and that the most insinuating of the three dowagers was standing on the landing to be the first to speak with the confessor. When the priest had politely faced the honeyed and bigoted broadside of words fired off from the widow's three friends, he went into the sickroom to sit by Madame Crochard. Decency, and some sense of reserve, compelled the three women and old Francoise to remain in the sitting-room, and to make such grimaces of grief as are possible in perfection only to such wrinkled faces.

"Oh, is it not ill-luck!" cried Francoise, heaving a sigh. "This is the fourth mistress I have buried. The first left me a hundred francs a year, the second a

sum of fifty crowns, and the third a thousand crowns down. After thirty years' service, that is all I have to call my own."

The woman took advantage of her freedom to come and go, to slip into a cupboard, whence she could hear the priest.

"I see with pleasure, daughter," said Fontanon, "that you have pious sentiments; you have a sacred relic round your neck."

Madame Crochard, with a feeble vagueness which seemed to show that she had not all her wits about her, pulled out the Imperial Cross of the Legion of Honor. The priest started back at seeing the Emperor's head; he went up to the penitent again, and she spoke to him, but in such a low tone that for some minutes Francoise could hear nothing.

"Woe upon me!" cried the old woman suddenly. "Do not desert me. What, Monsieur l'Abbe, do you think I shall be called to account for my daughter's soul?"

The Abbe spoke too low, and the partition was too thick for Francoise to hear the reply.

"Alas!" sobbed the woman, "the wretch has left me nothing that I can bequeath. When he robbed me of my dear Caroline, he parted us, and only allowed me three thousand francs a year, of which the capital belongs to my daughter."

"Madame has a daughter, and nothing to live on but an annuity," shrieked Francoise, bursting into the drawing-room.

The three old crones looked at each other in dismay. One of them, whose nose and chin nearly met with an expression that betrayed a superior type of hypocrisy and cunning, winked her eyes; and as soon as Francoise's back was turned, she gave her friends a nod, as much as to say, "That slut is too knowing by half; her name has figured in three wills already."

So the three old dames sat on.

However, the Abbe presently came out, and at a word from him the witches scuttered down the stairs at his heels, leaving Francoise alone with her mistress. Madame Crochard, whose sufferings increased in severity, rang, but in vain, for this woman, who only called out, "Coming, coming—in a minute!" The doors of cupboards and wardrobes were slamming as though Francoise were hunting high and low for a lost lottery ticket.

Just as this crisis was at a climax, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille came to stand by her mother's bed, lavishing tender words on her.

"Oh my dear mother, how criminal I have been! You are ill, and I did not

know it; my heart did not warn me. However, here I am—"

"Caroline—"

"What is it?"

"They fetched a priest—"

"But send for a doctor, bless me!" cried Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. "Francoise, a doctor! How is it that these ladies never sent for a doctor?"

"They sent for a priest——" repeated the old woman with a gasp.

"She is so ill—and no soothing draught, nothing on her table!"

The mother made a vague sign, which Caroline's watchful eye understood, for she was silent to let her mother speak.

"They brought a priest—to hear my confession, as they said.—Beware, Caroline!" cried the old woman with an effort, "the priest made me tell him your benefactor's name."

"But who can have told you, poor mother?"

The old woman died, trying to look knowingly cunning. If Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille had noted her mother's face she might have seen what no one ever will see—Death laughing.

To enter into the interests that lay beneath this introduction to my tale, we must for a moment forget the actors in it, and look back at certain previous incidents, of which the last was closely concerned with the death of Madame Crochard. The two parts will then form a whole—a story which, by a law peculiar to life in Paris, was made up of two distinct sets of actions.

Towards the close of the month of November 1805, a young barrister, aged about six-and-twenty, was going down the stairs of the hotel where the High Chancellor of the Empire resided, at about three o'clock one morning. Having reached the courtyard in full evening dress, under a keen frost, he could not help giving vent to an exclamation of dismay—qualified, however, by the spirit which rarely deserts a Frenchman—at seeing no hackney coach waiting outside the gates, and hearing no noises such as arise from the wooden shoes or harsh voices of the hackney-coachmen of Paris. The occasional pawing of the horses of the Chief Justice's carriage—the young man having left him still playing bouillote with Cambaceres—alone rang out in the paved court, which was scarcely lighted by the carriage lamps. Suddenly the young lawyer felt a friendly hand on his shoulder, and turning round, found himself face to face with the Judge, to whom he bowed. As the footman let down the steps of his carriage, the old gentleman, who had served the Convention, suspected the junior's dilemma.

"All cats are gray in the dark," said he good-humoredly. "The Chief Justice cannot compromise himself by putting a pleader in the right way! Especially," he went on, "when the pleader is the nephew of an old colleague, one of the lights of the grand Council of State which gave France the Napoleonic Code."

At a gesture from the chief magistrate of France under the Empire, the foot-passenger got into the carriage.

"Where do you live?" asked the great man, before the footman who awaited his orders had closed the door.

"Quai des Augustins, monseigneur."

The horses started, and the young man found himself alone with the Minister, to whom he had vainly tried to speak before and after the sumptuous dinner given by Cambaceres; in fact, the great man had evidently avoided him throughout the evening.

"Well, Monsieur de Granville, you are on the high road!"

"So long as I sit by your Excellency's side—"

"Nay, I am not jesting," said the Minister. "You were called two years since, and your defence in the case of Simeuse and Hauteserre had raised you high in your profession."

"I had supposed that my interest in those unfortunate emigres had done me no good."

"You are still very young," said the great man gravely. "But the High Chancellor," he went on, after a pause, "was greatly pleased with you this evening. Get a judgeship in the lower courts; we want men. The nephew of a man in whom Cambaceres and I take great interest must not remain in the background for lack of encouragement. Your uncle helped us to tide over a very stormy season, and services of that kind are not forgotten." The Minister sat silent for a few minutes. "Before long," he went on, "I shall have three vacancies open in the Lower Courts and in the Imperial Court in Paris. Come to see me, and take the place you prefer. Till then work hard, but do not be seen at my receptions. In the first place, I am overwhelmed with work; and besides that, your rivals may suspect your purpose and do you harm with the patron. Cambaceres and I, by not speaking a word to you this evening, have averted the accusation of favoritism."

As the great man ceased speaking, the carriage drew up on the Quai des Augustins; the young lawyer thanked his generous patron for the two lifts he had conferred on him, and then knocked at his door pretty loudly, for the bitter wind blew cold about his calves. At last the old lodgekeeper pulled up the latch; and as the young man passed his window, called out in a hoarse voice,

"Monsieur Granville, here is a letter for you."

The young man took the letter, and in spite of the cold, tried to identify the writing by the gleam of a dull lamp fast dying out. "From my father!" he exclaimed, as he took his bedroom candle, which the porter at last had lighted. And he ran up to his room to read the following epistle:—

"Set off by the next mail; and if you can get here soon enough, your fortune is made. Mademoiselle Angelique Bontems has lost her sister; she is now an only child; and, as we know, she does not hate you. Madame Bontems can now leave her about forty thousand francs a year, besides whatever she may give her when she marries. I have prepared the way.

"Our friends will wonder to see a family of old nobility allying itself to the Bontems; old Bontems was a red republican of the deepest dye, owning large quantities of the nationalized land, that he bought for a mere song. But he held nothing but convent lands, and the monks will not come back; and then, as you have already so far derogated as to become a lawyer, I cannot see why we should shrink from a further concession to the prevalent ideas. The girl will have three hundred thousand francs; I can give you a hundred thousand; your mother's property must be worth fifty thousand crowns, more or less; so if you choose to take a judgeship, my dear son, you are quite in a position to become a senator as much as any other man. My brother-in-law the Councillor of State will not indeed lend you a helping-hand; still, as he is not married, his property will some day be yours, and if you are not senator by your own efforts, you will get it through him. Then you will be perched high enough to look on at events. Farewell.

Yours affectionately."

So young Granville went to bed full of schemes, each fairer than the last. Under the powerful protection of the High Chancellor, the Chief Justice, and his mother's brother—one of the originators of the Code—he was about to make a start in a coveted position before the highest court of the Empire, and he already saw himself a member of the bench whence Napoleon selected the chief functionaries of the realm. He could also promise himself a fortune handsome enough to keep up his rank, for which the slender income of five thousand francs from an estate left him by his mother would be quite insufficient.

To crown his ambitious dreams with a vision of happiness, he called up the guileless face of Mademoiselle Angelique Bontems, the companion of his childhood. Until he came to boyhood his father and mother had made no objection to his intimacy with their neighbor's pretty little daughter; but when, during his brief holiday visits to Bayeux, his parents, who prided themselves on their good birth, saw what friends the young people were, they forbade his

ever thinking of her. Thus for ten years past Granville had only had occasional glimpses of the girl, whom he still sometimes thought of as "his little wife." And in those brief moments when they met free from the active watchfulness of their families, they had scarcely exchanged a few vague civilities at the church door or in the street. Their happiest days had been those when, brought together by one of those country festivities known in Normandy as Assemblees, they could steal a glance at each other from afar.

In the course of the last vacation Granville had twice seen Angelique, and her downcast eyes and drooping attitude had led him to suppose that she was crushed by some unknown tyranny.

He was off by seven next morning to the coach office in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, and was so lucky as to find a vacant seat in the diligence then starting for Caen.

It was not without deep emotion that the young lawyer saw once more the spires of the cathedral at Bayeux. As yet no hope of his life had been cheated, and his heart swelled with the generous feelings that expand in the youthful soul.

After the too lengthy feast of welcome prepared by his father, who awaited him with some friends, the impatient youth was conducted to a house, long familiar to him, standing in the Rue Teinture. His heart beat high when his father—still known in the town of Bayeux as the Comte de Granville—knocked loudly at a carriage gate off which the green paint was dropping in scales. It was about four in the afternoon. A young maid-servant, in a cotton cap, dropped a short curtsey to the two gentlemen, and said that the ladies would soon be home from vespers.

The Count and his son were shown into a low room used as a drawing-room, but more like a convent parlor. Polished panels of dark walnut made it gloomy enough, and around it some old-fashioned chairs covered with worsted work and stiff armchairs were symmetrically arranged. The stone chimney-shelf had no ornament but a discolored mirror, and on each side of it were the twisted branches of a pair of candle-brackets, such as were made at the time of the Peace of Utrecht. Against a panel opposite, young Granville saw an enormous crucifix of ebony and ivory surrounded by a wreath of box that had been blessed. Though there were three windows to the room, looking out on a country-town garden, laid out in formal square beds edged with box, the room was so dark that it was difficult to discern, on the wall opposite the windows, three pictures of sacred subjects painted by a skilled hand, and purchased, no doubt, during the Revolution by old Bontems, who, as governor of the district, had never neglected his opportunities. From the carefully polished floor to the green checked holland curtains everything shone with

conventual cleanliness.

The young man's heart felt an involuntary chill in this silent retreat where Angelique dwelt. The habit of frequenting the glittering Paris drawing-rooms, and the constant whirl of society, had effaced from his memory the dull and peaceful surroundings of a country life, and the contrast was so startling as to give him a sort of internal shiver. To have just left a party at the house of Cambaceres, where life was so large, where minds could expand, where the splendor of the Imperial Court was so vividly reflected, and to be dropped suddenly into a sphere of squalidly narrow ideas—was it not like a leap from Italy into Greenland?—"Living here is not life!" said he to himself, as he looked round the Methodistical room. The old Count, seeing his son's dismay, went up to him, and taking his hand, led him to a window, where there was still a gleam of daylight, and while the maid was lighting the yellow tapers in the candle branches he tried to clear away the clouds that the dreary place had brought to his brow.

"Listen, my boy," said he. "Old Bontems' widow is a frenzied bigot. 'When the devil is old—' you know! I see that the place goes against the grain. Well, this is the whole truth; the old woman is priest-ridden; they have persuaded her that it was high time to make sure of heaven, and the better to secure Saint Peter and his keys she pays before-hand. She goes to Mass every day, attends every service, takes the communion every Sunday God has made, and amuses herself by restoring chapels. She had given so many ornaments, and albs, and chasubles, she has crowned the canopy with so many feathers, that on the occasion of the last Corpus Christi procession as great a crowd came together as to see a man hanged, just to stare at the priests in their splendid dresses and all the vessels regilt. This house too is a sort of Holy Land. It was I who hindered her from giving those three pictures to the Church—a Domenichino, a Correggio, and an Andrea del Sarto—worth a good deal of money."

"But Angelique?" asked the young man.

"If you do not marry her, Angelique is done for," said the Count. "Our holy apostles counsel her to live a virgin martyr. I have had the utmost difficulty in stirring up her little heart, since she has been the only child, by talking to her of you; but, as you will easily understand, as soon as she is married you will carry her off to Paris. There, festivities, married life, the theatres, and the rush of Parisian society, will soon make her forget confessionals, and fasting, and hair shirts, and Masses, which are the exclusive nourishment of such creatures."

"But the fifty thousand francs a year derived from Church property? Will not all that return—"

"That is the point!" exclaimed the Count, with a cunning glance. "In

consideration of this marriage—for Madame Bontems' vanity is not a little flattered by the notion of grafting the Bontems on to the genealogical tree of the Granvilles—the aforenamed mother agrees to settle her fortune absolutely on the girl, reserving only a life-interest. The priesthood, therefore, are set against the marriage; but I have had the banns published, everything is ready, and in a week you will be out of the clutches of the mother and her Abbes. You will have the prettiest girl in Bayeux, a good little soul who will give you no trouble, because she has sound principles. She has been mortified, as they say in their jargon, by fasting and prayer—and," he added in a low voice, "by her mother."

A modest tap at the door silenced the Count, who expected to see the two ladies appear. A little page came in, evidently in a great hurry; but, abashed by the presence of the two gentlemen, he beckoned to a housekeeper, who followed him. Dressed in a blue cloth jacket with short tails, and blue-and-white striped trousers, his hair cut short all round, the boy's expression was that of a chorister, so strongly was it stamped with the compulsory propriety that marks every member of a bigoted household.

"Mademoiselle Gatienne," said he, "do you know where the books are for the offices of the Virgin? The ladies of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart are going in procession this evening round the church."

Gatienne went in search of the books.

"Will they go on much longer, my little man?" asked the Count.

"Oh, half an hour at most."

"Let us go to look on," said the father to his son. "There will be some pretty women there, and a visit to the Cathedral can do us no harm."

The young lawyer followed him with a doubtful expression.

"What is the matter?" asked the Count.

"The matter, father, is that I am sure I am right."

"But you have said nothing."

"No; but I have been thinking that you have still ten thousand francs a year left of your original fortune. You will leave them to me—as long a time hence as possible, I hope. But if you are ready to give me a hundred thousand francs to make a foolish match, you will surely allow me to ask you for only fifty thousand to save me from such a misfortune, and enjoy as a bachelor a fortune equal to what your Mademoiselle Bontems would bring me."

"Are you crazy?"

"No, father. These are the facts. The Chief Justice promised me yesterday

that I should have a seat on the Bench. Fifty thousand francs added to what I have, and to the pay of my appointment, will give me an income of twelve thousand francs a year. And I then shall most certainly have a chance of marrying a fortune, better than this alliance, which will be poor in happiness if rich in goods."

"It is very clear," said his father, "that you were not brought up under the old regime. Does a man of our rank ever allow his wife to be in his way?"

"But, my dear father, in these days marriage is—"

"Bless me!" cried the Count, interrupting his son, "then what my old emigre friends tell me is true, I suppose. The Revolution has left us habits devoid of pleasure, and has infected all the young men with vulgar principles. You, like my Jacobin brother-in-law, will harangue me, I suppose, on the Nation, Public Morals, and Disinterestedness!—Good Heavens! But for the Emperor's sisters, where should we be?"

The still hale old man, whom the peasants on the estate persisted in calling the Signeur de Granville, ended his speech as they entered the Cathedral porch. In spite of the sanctity of the place, and even as he dipped his fingers in the holy water, he hummed an air from the opera of Rose et Colas, and then led the way down the side aisles, stopping by each pillar to survey the rows of heads, all in lines like ranks of soldiers on parade.

The special service of the Sacred Heart was about to begin. The ladies affiliated to that congregation were in front near the choir, so the Count and his son made their way to that part of the nave, and stood leaning against one of the columns where there was least light, whence they could command a view of this mass of faces, looking like a meadow full of flowers. Suddenly, close to young Granville, a voice, sweeter than it seemed possible to ascribe to a human being, broke into song, like the first nightingale when winter is past. Though it mingled with the voices of a thousand other women and the notes of the organ, that voice stirred his nerves as though they vibrated to the too full and too piercing sounds of a harmonium. The Parisian turned round, and, seeing a young figure, though, the head being bent, her face was entirely concealed by a large white bonnet, concluded that the voice was hers. He fancied that he recognized Angelique in spite of a brown merino pelisse that wrapped her, and he nudged his father's elbow.

"Yes, there she is," said the Count, after looking where his son pointed, and then, by an expressive glance, he directed his attention to the pale face of an elderly woman who had already detected the strangers, though her false eyes, deep set in dark circles, did not seem to have strayed from the prayer-book she held.

Angelique raised her face, gazing at the altar as if to inhale the heavy scent of the incense that came wafted in clouds over the two women. And then, in the doubtful light that the tapers shed down the nave, with that of a central lamp and of some lights round the pillars, the young man beheld a face which shook his determination. A white watered-silk bonnet closely framed features of perfect regularity, the oval being completed by the satin ribbon tie that fastened it under her dimpled chin. Over her forehead, very sweet though low, hair of a pale gold color parted in two bands and fell over her cheeks, like the shadow of leaves on a flower. The arches of her eyebrows were drawn with the accuracy we admire in the best Chinese paintings. Her nose, almost aquiline in profile, was exceptionally firmly cut, and her lips were like two rose lines lovingly traced with a delicate brush. Her eyes, of a light blue, were expressive of innocence.

Though Granville discerned a sort of rigid reserve in this girlish face, he could ascribe it to the devotion in which Angelique was rapt. The solemn words of prayer, visible in the cold, came from between rows of pearls, like a fragrant mist, as it were. The young man involuntarily bent over her a little to breathe this diviner air. This movement attracted the girl's notice; her gaze, raised to the altar, was diverted to Granville, whom she could see but dimly in the gloom; but she recognized him as the companion of her youth, and a memory more vivid than prayer brought a supernatural glow to her face; she blushed. The young lawyer was thrilled with joy at seeing the hopes of another life overpowered by those of love, and the glory of the sanctuary eclipsed by earthly reminiscences; but his triumph was brief. Angelique dropped her veil, assumed a calm demeanor, and went on singing without letting her voice betray the least emotion.

Granville was a prey to one single wish, and every thought of prudence vanished. By the time the service was ended, his impatience was so great that he could not leave the ladies to go home alone, but came at once to make his bow to "his little wife." They bashfully greeted each other in the Cathedral porch in the presence of the congregation. Madame Bontems was tremulous with pride as she took the Comte de Granville's arm, though he, forced to offer it in the presence of all the world was vexed enough with his son for his ill-advised impatience.

For about a fortnight, between the official announcement of the intended marriage of the Vicomte de Granville to Mademoiselle Bontems and the solemn day of the wedding, he came assiduously to visit his lady-love in the dismal drawing-room, to which he became accustomed. His long calls were devoted to watching Angelique's character; for his prudence, happily, had made itself heard again in the day after their first meeting. He always found her seated at a little table of some West Indian wood, and engaged in marking

the linen of her trousseau. Angelique never spoke first on the subject of religion. If the young lawyer amused himself with fingering the handsome rosary that she kept in a little green velvet bag, if he laughed as he looked at a relic such as usually is attached to this means of grace, Angelique would gently take the rosary out of his hands and replace it in the bag without a word, putting it away at once. When, now and then, Granville was so bold as to make mischievous remarks as to certain religious practices, the pretty girl listened to him with the obstinate smile of assurance.

"You must either believe nothing, or believe everything the Church teaches," she would say. "Would you wish to have a woman without a religion as the mother of your children?—No.—What man may dare judge as between disbelievers and God? And how can I then blame what the Church allows?"

Angelique appeared to be animated by such fervent charity, the young man saw her look at him with such perfect conviction, that he sometimes felt tempted to embrace her religious views; her firm belief that she was in the only right road aroused doubts in his mind, which she tried to turn to account.

But then Granville committed the fatal blunder of mistaking the enchantment of desire for that of love. Angelique was so happy in reconciling the voice of her heart with that of duty, by giving way to a liking that had grown up with her from childhood, that the deluded man could not discern which of the two spoke the louder. Are not all young men ready to trust the promise of a pretty face and to infer beauty of soul from beauty of feature? An indefinable impulse leads them to believe that moral perfection must co-exist with physical perfection. If Angelique had not been at liberty to give vent to her sentiments, they would soon have dried up in her heart like a plant watered with some deadly acid. How should a lover be aware of bigotry so well hidden?

This was the course of young Granville's feelings during that fortnight, devoured by him like a book of which the end is absorbing. Angelique, carefully watched by him, seemed the gentlest of creatures, and he even caught himself feeling grateful to Madame Bontems, who, by implanting so deeply the principles of religion, had in some degree inured her to meet the troubles of life.

On the day named for signing the inevitable contract, Madame Bontems made her son-in-law pledge himself solemnly to respect her daughter's religious practices, to allow her entire liberty of conscience, to permit her to go to communion, to church, to confession as often as she pleased, and never to control her choice of priestly advisers. At this critical moment Angelique looked at her future husband with such pure and innocent eyes, that Granville did not hesitate to give his word. A smile puckered the lips of the Abbe

Fontanon, a pale man, who directed the consciences of this household. Mademoiselle Bontems, by a slight nod, seemed to promise that she would never take an unfair advantage of this freedom. As to the old Count, he gently whistled the tune of an old song, Va-t-en-voir s'ils viennent ("Go and see if they are coming on!")

A few days after the wedding festivities of which so much is thought in the provinces, Granville and his wife went to Paris, whither the young man was recalled by his appointment as public prosecutor to the Supreme Court of the Seine circuit.

When the young couple set out to find a residence, Angelique used the influence that the honeymoon gives to every wife in persuading her husband to take a large apartment in the ground-floor of a house at the corner of the Vieille Rue du Temple and the Rue Nueve Saint-Francois. Her chief reason for this choice was that the house was close to the Rue d'Orleans, where there was a church, and not far from a small chapel in the Rue Saint-Louis.

"A good housewife provides for everything," said her husband, laughing.

Angelique pointed out to him that this part of Paris, known as the Marais, was within easy reach of the Palais de Justice, and that the lawyers they knew lived in the neighborhood. A fairly large garden made the apartment particularly advantageous to a young couple; the children—if Heaven should send them any—could play in the open air; the courtyard was spacious, and there were good stables.

The lawyer wished to live in the Chaussee d'Antin, where everything is fresh and bright, where the fashions may be seen while still new, where a well-dressed crowd throngs the Boulevards, and the distance is less to the theatres or places of amusement; but he was obliged to give way to the coaxing ways of a young wife, who asked this as his first favor; so, to please her, he settled in the Marais. Granville's duties required him to work hard—all the more, because they were new to him—so he devoted himself in the first place to furnishing his private study and arranging his books. He was soon established in a room crammed with papers, and left the decoration of the house to his wife. He was all the better pleased to plunge Angelique into the bustle of buying furniture and fittings, the source of so much pleasure and of so many associations to most young women, because he was rather ashamed of depriving her of his company more often than the usages of early married life require. As soon as his work was fairly under way, he gladly allowed his wife to tempt him out of his study to consider the effect of furniture or hangings, which he had before only seen piecemeal or unfinished.

If the old adage is true that says a woman may be judged of from her front door, her rooms must express her mind with even greater fidelity. Madame de

Granville had perhaps stamped the various things she had ordered with the seal of her own character; the young lawyer was certainly startled by the cold, arid solemnity that reigned in these rooms; he found nothing to charm his taste; everything was discordant, nothing gratified the eye. The rigid mannerism that prevailed in the sitting-room at Bayeux had invaded his home; the broad panels were hollowed in circles, and decorated with those arabesques of which the long, monotonous mouldings are in such bad taste. Anxious to find excuses for his wife, the young husband began again, looking first at the long and lofty ante-room through which the apartment was entered. The color of the panels, as ordered by his wife, was too heavy, and the very dark green velvet used to cover the benches added to the gloom of this entrance—not, to be sure, an important room, but giving a first impression—just as we measure a man's intelligence by his first address. An ante-room is a kind of preface which announces what is to follow, but promises nothing.

The young husband wondered whether his wife could really have chosen the lamp of an antique pattern, which hung in the centre of this bare hall, the pavement of black and white marble, and the paper in imitation of blocks of stone, with green moss on them in places. A handsome, but not new, barometer hung on the middle of one of the walls, as if to accentuate the void. At the sight of it all, he looked round at his wife; he saw her so much pleased by the red braid binding to the cotton curtains, so satisfied with the barometer and the strictly decent statue that ornamented a large Gothic stove, that he had not the barbarous courage to overthrow such deep convictions. Instead of blaming his wife, Granville blamed himself, accusing himself of having failed in his duty of guiding the first steps in Paris of a girl brought up at Bayeux.

From this specimen, what might not be expected of the other rooms? What was to be looked for from a woman who took fright at the bare legs of a Caryatid, and who would not look at a chandelier or a candle-stick if she saw on it the nude outlines of an Egyptian bust? At this date the school of David was at the height of its glory; all the art of France bore the stamp of his correct design and his love of antique types, which indeed gave his pictures the character of colored sculpture. But none of these devices of Imperial luxury found civic rights under Madame de Granville's roof. The spacious, square drawing-room remained as it had been left from the time of Louis XV., in white and tarnished gold, lavishly adorned by the architect with checkered lattice-work and the hideous garlands due to the uninventive designers of the time. Still, if harmony at least had prevailed, if the furniture of modern mahogany had but assumed the twisted forms of which Boucher's corrupt taste first set the fashion, Angelique's room would only have suggested the fantastic contrast of a young couple in the nineteenth century living as though they were in the eighteenth; but a number of details were in ridiculous discord. The consoles, the clocks, the candelabra, were decorated with the military trophies

which the wars of the Empire commended to the affections of the Parisians; and the Greek helmets, the Roman crossed daggers, and the shields so dear to military enthusiasm that they were introduced on furniture of the most peaceful uses, had no fitness side by side with the delicate and profuse arabesques that delighted Madame de Pompadour.

Bigotry tends to an indescribably tiresome kind of humility which does not exclude pride. Whether from modesty or by choice, Madame de Granville seemed to have a horror of light and cheerful colors; perhaps, too, she imagined that brown and purple beseemed the dignity of a magistrate. How could a girl accustomed to an austere life have admitted the luxurious divans that may suggest evil thoughts, the elegant and tempting boudoirs where naughtiness may be imagined?

The poor husband was in despair. From the tone in which he approved, only seconding the praises she bestowed on herself, Angelique understood that nothing really pleased him; and she expressed so much regret at her want of success, that Granville, who was very much in love, regarded her disappointment as a proof of her affection instead of resentment for an offence to her self-conceit. After all, could he expect a girl just snatched from the humdrum of country notions, with no experience of the niceties and grace of Paris life, to know or do any better? Rather would he believe that his wife's choice had been overruled by the tradesmen than allow himself to own the truth. If he had been less in love, he would have understood that the dealers, always quick to discern their customers' ideas, had blessed Heaven for sending them a tasteless little bigot, who would take their old-fashioned goods off their hands. So he comforted the pretty provincial.

"Happiness, dear Angelique, does not depend on a more or less elegant piece of furniture; it depends on the wife's sweetness, gentleness, and love."

"Why, it is my duty to love you," said Angelique mildly, "and I can have no more delightful duty to carry out."

Nature has implanted in the heart of woman so great a desire to please, so deep a craving for love, that, even in a youthful bigot, the ideas of salvation and a future existence must give way to the happiness of early married life. And, in fact, from the month of April, when they were married, till the beginning of winter, the husband and wife lived in perfect union. Love and hard work have the grace of making a man tolerably indifferent to external matters. Being obliged to spend half the day in court fighting for the gravest interests of men's lives or fortunes, Granville was less alive than another might have been to certain facts in his household.

If, on a Friday, he found none but Lenten fare, and by chance asked for a dish of meat without getting it, his wife, forbidden by the Gospel to tell a lie,

could still, by such subterfuges as are permissible in the interests of religion, cloak what was premeditated purpose under some pretext of her own carelessness or the scarcity in the market. She would often exculpate herself at the expense of the cook, and even go so far as to scold him. At that time young lawyers did not, as they do now, keep the fasts of the Church, the four rogation seasons, and the vigils of festivals; so Granville was not at first aware of the regular recurrence of these Lenten meals, which his wife took care should be made dainty by the addition of teal, moor-hen, and fish-pies, that their amphibious meat or high seasoning might cheat his palate. Thus the young man unconsciously lived in strict orthodoxy, and worked out his salvation without knowing it.

On week-days he did not know whether his wife went to Mass or no. On Sundays, with very natural amiability, he accompanied her to church to make up to her, as it were, for sometimes giving up vespers in favor of his company; he could not at first fully enter into the strictness of his wife's religious views. The theatres being impossible in summer by reason of the heat, Granville had not even the opportunity of the great success of a piece to give rise to the serious question of play-going. And, in short, at the early stage of a union to which a man has been led by a young girl's beauty, he can hardly be exacting as to his amusements. Youth is greedy rather than dainty, and possession has a charm in itself. How should he be keen to note coldness, dignity, and reserve in the woman to whom he ascribes the excitement he himself feels, and lends the glow of the fire that burns within him? He must have attained a certain conjugal calm before he discovers that a bigot sits waiting for love with her arms folded.

Granville, therefore, believed himself happy till a fatal event brought its influence to bear on his married life. In the month of November 1808 the Canon of Bayeux Cathedral who had been the keeper of Madame Bontems' conscience and her daughter's, came to Paris, spurred by the ambition to be at the head of a church in the capital—a position which he regarded perhaps as the stepping-stone to a bishopric. On resuming his former control of this wandering lamb, he was horrified to find her already so much deteriorated by the air of Paris, and strove to reclaim her to his chilly fold. Frightened by the exhortations of this priest, a man of about eight-and-thirty, who brought with him, into the circle of the enlightened and tolerant Paris clergy, the bitter provincial catholicism and the inflexible bigotry which fetter timid souls with endless exactions, Madame de Granville did penance and returned from her Jansenist errors.

It would be tiresome to describe minutely all the circumstances which insensibly brought disaster on this household; it will be enough to relate the simple facts without giving them in strict order of time.

The first misunderstanding between the young couple was, however, a serious one.

When Granville took his wife into society she never declined solemn functions, such as dinners, concerts, or parties given by the Judges superior to her husband in the legal profession; but for a long time she constantly excused herself on the plea of a sick headache when they were invited to a ball. One day Granville, out of patience with these assumed indispositions, destroyed a note of invitation to a ball at the house of a Councillor of State, and gave his wife only a verbal invitation. Then, on the evening, her health being quite above suspicion, he took her to a magnificent entertainment.

"My dear," said he, on their return home, seeing her wear an offensive air of depression, "your position as a wife, the rank you hold in society, and the fortune you enjoy, impose on you certain duties of which no divine law can relieve you. Are you not your husband's pride? You are required to go to balls when I go, and to appear in a becoming manner."

"And what is there, my dear, so disastrous in my dress?"

"It is your manner, my dear. When a young man comes up to speak to you, you look so serious that a spiteful person might believe you doubtful of your own virtue. You seem to fear lest a smile should undo you. You really look as if you were asking forgiveness of God for the sins that may be committed around you. The world, my dearest, is not a convent.—But, as you mentioned your dress, I may confess to you that it is no less a duty to conform to the customs and fashions of Society."

"Do you wish that I should display my shape like those indecent women who wear gowns so low that impudent eyes can stare at their bare shoulders and their—"

"There is a difference, my dear," said her husband, interrupting her, "between uncovering your whole bust and giving some grace to your dress. You wear three rows of net frills that cover your throat up to your chin. You look as if you had desired your dressmaker to destroy the graceful line of your shoulders and bosom with as much care as a coquette would devote to obtaining from hers a bodice that might emphasize her covered form. Your bust is wrapped in so many folds that every one was laughing at your affectation of prudery. You would be really grieved if I were to repeat the ill-natured remarks made on your appearance."

"Those who admire such obscenity will not have to bear the burthen if we sin," said the lady tartly.

"And you did not dance?" asked Granville.

"I shall never dance," she replied.

"If I tell you that you ought to dance!" said her husband sharply. "Yes, you ought to follow the fashions, to wear flowers in your hair, and diamonds. Remember, my dear, that rich people—and we are rich—are obliged to keep up luxury in the State. Is it not far better to encourage manufacturers than to distribute money in the form of alms through the medium of the clergy?"

"You talk as a statesman!" said Angelique.

"And you as a priest," he retorted.

The discussion was bitter. Madame de Granville's answers, though spoken very sweetly and in a voice as clear as a church bell, showed an obstinacy that betrayed priestly influence. When she appealed to the rights secured to her by Granville's promise, she added that her director specially forbade her going to balls; then her husband pointed out to her that the priest was overstepping the regulations of the Church.

This odious theological dispute was renewed with great violence and acerbity on both sides when Granville proposed to take his wife to the play. Finally, the lawyer, whose sole aim was to defeat the pernicious influence exerted over his wife by her old confessor, placed the question on such a footing that Madame de Granville, in a spirit of defiance, referred it by writing to the Court of Rome, asking in so many words whether a woman could wear low gowns and go to the play and to balls without compromising her salvation.

The reply of the venerable Pope Pius VII. came at once, strongly condemning the wife's recalcitrancy and blaming the priest. This letter, a chapter on conjugal duties, might have been dictated by the spirit of Fenelon, whose grace and tenderness pervaded every line.

"A wife is right to go wherever her husband may take her. Even if she sins by his command, she will not be ultimately held answerable." These two sentences of the Pope's homily only made Madame de Granville and her director accuse him of irreligion.

But before this letter had arrived, Granville had discovered the strict observance of fast days that his wife forced upon him, and gave his servants orders to serve him with meat every day in the year. However much annoyed his wife might be by these commands, Granville, who cared not a straw for such indulgence or abstinence, persisted with manly determination.

Is it not an offence to the weakest creature that can think at all to be compelled to do, by the will of another, anything that he would otherwise have done simply of his own accord? Of all forms of tyranny, the most odious is that which constantly robs the soul of the merit of its thoughts and deeds. It

has to abdicate without having reigned. The word we are readiest to speak, the feelings we most love to express, die when we are commanded to utter them.

Ere long the young man ceased to invite his friends, to give parties or dinners; the house might have been shrouded in crape. A house where the mistress is a bigot has an atmosphere of its own. The servants, who are, of course, under her immediate control, are chosen among a class who call themselves pious, and who have an unmistakable physiognomy. Just as the jolliest fellow alive, when he joins the gendarmerie, has the countenance of a gendarme, so those who give themselves over to the habit of lowering their eyes and preserving a sanctimonious mien clothes them in a livery of hypocrisy which rogues can affect to perfection.

And besides, bigots constitute a sort of republic; they all know each other; the servants they recommend and hand on from one to another are a race apart, and preserved by them, as horse-breeders will admit no animal into their stables that has not a pedigree. The more the impious—as they are thought—come to understand a household of bigots, the more they perceive that everything is stamped with an indescribable squalor; they find there, at the same time, an appearance of avarice and mystery, as in a miser's home, and the dank scent of cold incense which gives a chill to the stale atmosphere of a chapel. This methodical meanness, this narrowness of thought, which is visible in every detail, can only be expressed by one word—Bigotry. In these sinister and pitiless houses Bigotry is written on the furniture, the prints, the pictures; speech is bigoted, the silence is bigoted, the faces are those of bigots. The transformation of men and things into bigotry is an inexplicable mystery, but the fact is evident. Everybody can see that bigots do not walk, do not sit, do not speak, as men of the world walk, sit, and speak. Under their roof every one is ill at ease, no one laughs, stiffness and formality infect everything, from the mistress' cap down to her pincushion; eyes are not honest, the folks are more like shadows, and the lady of the house seems perched on a throne of ice.

One morning poor Granville discerned with grief and pain that all the symptoms of bigotry had invaded his home. There are in the world different spheres in which the same effects are seen though produced by dissimilar causes. Dulness hedges such miserable homes round with walls of brass, enclosing the horrors of the desert and the infinite void. The home is not so much a tomb as that far worse thing—a convent. In the center of this icy sphere the lawyer could study his wife dispassionately. He observed, not without keen regret, the narrow-mindedness that stood confessed in the very way that her hair grew, low on the forehead, which was slightly depressed; he discovered in the perfect regularity of her features a certain set rigidity which before long made him hate the assumed sweetness that had bewitched him.

Intuition told him that one day of disaster those thin lips might say, "My dear, it is for your good!"

Madame de Granville's complexion was acquiring a dull pallor and an austere expression that were a kill-joy to all who came near her. Was this change wrought by the ascetic habits of a pharisaism which is not piety any more than avarice is economy? It would be hard to say. Beauty without expression is perhaps an imposture. This imperturbable set smile that the young wife always wore when she looked at Granville seemed to be a sort of Jesuitical formula of happiness, by which she thought to satisfy all the requirements of married life. Her charity was an offence, her soulless beauty was monstrous to those who knew her; the mildness of her speech was an irritation: she acted, not on feeling, but on duty.

There are faults which may yield in a wife to the stern lessons of experience, or to a husband's warnings; but nothing can counteract false ideas of religion. An eternity of happiness to be won, set in the scale against worldly enjoyment, triumphs over everything and makes every pang endurable. Is it not the apotheosis of egotism, of Self beyond the grave? Thus even the Pope was censured at the tribunal of the priest and the young devotee. To be always in the right is a feeling which absorbs every other in these tyrannous souls.

For some time past a secret struggle had been going on between the ideas of the husband and wife, and the young man was soon weary of a battle to which there could be no end. What man, what temper, can endure the sight of a hypocritically affectionate face and categorical resistance to his slightest wishes? What is to be done with a wife who takes advantage of his passion to protect her coldness, who seems determined on being blandly inexorable, prepares herself ecstatically to play the martyr, and looks on her husband as a scourge from God, a means of flagellation that may spare her the fires of purgatory? What picture can give an idea of these women who make virtue hateful by defying the gentle precepts of that faith which Saint John epitomized in the words, "Love one another"?

If there was a bonnet to be found in a milliner's shop that was condemned to remain in the window, or to be packed off to the colonies, Granville was certain to see it on his wife's head; if a material of bad color or hideous design were to be found, she would select it. These hapless bigots are heart-breaking in their notions of dress. Want of taste is a defect inseparable from false pietism.

And so, in the home-life that needs the fullest sympathy, Granville had no true companionship. He went out alone to parties and the theatres. Nothing in his house appealed to him. A huge Crucifix that hung between his bed and Angelique's seemed figurative of his destiny. Does it not represent a murdered

Divinity, a Man-God, done to death in all the prime of life and beauty? The ivory of that cross was less cold than Angelique crucifying her husband under the plea of virtue. This it was that lay at the root of their woes; the young wife saw nothing but duty where she should have given love. Here, one Ash Wednesday, rose the pale and spectral form of Fasting in Lent, of Total Abstinence, commanded in a severe tone—and Granville did not deem it advisable to write in his turn to the Pope and take the opinion of the Consistory on the proper way of observing Lent, the Ember days, and the eve of great festivals.

His misfortune was too great! He could not even complain, for what could he say? He had a pretty young wife attached to her duties, virtuous—nay, a model of all the virtues. She had a child every year, nursed them herself, and brought them up in the highest principles. Being charitable, Angelique was promoted to rank as an angel. The old women who constituted the circle in which she moved—for at that time it was not yet "the thing" for young women to be religious as a matter of fashion—all admired Madame de Granville's piety, and regarded her, not indeed as a virgin, but as a martyr. They blamed not the wife's scruples, but the barbarous philoprogenitiveness of the husband.

Granville, by insensible degrees, overdone with work, bereft of conjugal consolations, and weary of a world in which he wandered alone, by the time he was two-and-thirty had sunk into the Slough of Despond. He hated life. Having too lofty a notion of the responsibilities imposed on him by his position to set the example of a dissipated life, he tried to deaden feeling by hard study, and began a great book on Law.

But he was not allowed to enjoy the monastic peace he had hoped for. When the celestial Angelique saw him desert worldly society to work at home with such regularity, she tried to convert him. It had been a real sorrow to her to know that her husband's opinions were not strictly Christian; and she sometimes wept as she reflected that if her husband should die it would be in a state of final impenitence, so that she could not hope to snatch him from the eternal fires of Hell. Thus Granville was a mark for the mean ideas, the vacuous arguments, the narrow views by which his wife—fancying she had achieved the first victory—tried to gain a second by bringing him back within the pale of the Church.

This was the last straw. What can be more intolerable than the blind struggle in which the obstinacy of a bigot tries to meet the acumen of a lawyer? What more terrible to endure than the acrimonious pin-pricks to which a passionate soul prefers a dagger-thrust? Granville neglected his home. Everything there was unendurable. His children, broken by their mother's frigid despotism, dared not go with him to the play; indeed, Granville could never give them any pleasure without bringing down punishment from their

terrible mother. His loving nature was weaned to indifference, to a selfishness worse than death. His boys, indeed, he saved from this hell by sending them to school at an early age, and insisting on his right to train them. He rarely interfered between his wife and her daughters; but he was resolved that they should marry as soon as they were old enough.

Even if he had wished to take violent measures, he could have found no justification; his wife, backed by a formidable army of dowagers, would have had him condemned by the whole world. Thus Granville had no choice but to live in complete isolation; but, crushed under the tyranny of misery, he could not himself bear to see how altered he was by grief and toil. And he dreaded any connection or intimacy with women of the world, having no hope of finding any consolation.

The improving history of this melancholy household gave rise to no events worthy of record during the fifteen years between 1806 and 1825. Madame de Granville was exactly the same after losing her husband's affection as she had been during the time when she called herself happy. She paid for Masses, beseeching God and the Saints to enlighten her as to what the faults were which displeased her husband, and to show her the way to restore the erring sheep; but the more fervent her prayers, the less was Granville to be seen at home.

For about five years now, having achieved a high position as a judge, Granville had occupied the entresol of the house to avoid living with the Comtesse de Granville. Every morning a little scene took place, which, if evil tongues are to be believed, is repeated in many households as the result of incompatibility of temper, of moral or physical malady, or of antagonisms leading to such disaster as is recorded in this history. At about eight in the morning a housekeeper, bearing no small resemblance to a nun, rang at the Comte de Granville's door. Admitted to the room next to the Judge's study, she always repeated the same message to the footman, and always in the same tone:

"Madame would be glad to know whether Monsieur le Comte has had a good night, and if she is to have the pleasure of his company at breakfast."

"Monsieur presents his compliments to Madame la Comtesse," the valet would say, after speaking with his master, "and begs her to hold him excused; important business compels him to be in court this morning."

A minute later the woman reappeared and asked on madame's behalf whether she would have the pleasure of seeing Monsieur le Comte before he went out.

"He is gone," was always the rely, though often his carriage was still

waiting.

This little dialogue by proxy became a daily ceremonial. Granville's servant, a favorite with his master, and the cause of more than one quarrel over his irreligious and dissipated conduct, would even go into his master's room, as a matter of form, when the Count was not there, and come back with the same formula in reply.

The aggrieved wife was always on the watch for her husband's return, and standing on the steps so as to meet him like an embodiment of remorse. The petty aggressiveness which lies at the root of the monastic temper was the foundation of Madame de Granville's; she was now five-and-thirty, and looked forty. When the count was compelled by decency to speak to his wife or to dine at home, she was only too well pleased to inflict her company upon him, with her acid-sweet remarks and the intolerable dulness of her narrow-minded circle, and she tried to put him in the wrong before the servants and her charitable friends.

When, at this time, the post of President in a provincial court was offered to the Comte de Granville, who was in high favor, he begged to be allowed to remain in Paris. This refusal, of which the Keeper of the Seals alone knew the reasons, gave rise to extraordinary conjectures on the part of the Countess' intimate friends and of her director. Granville, a rich man with a hundred thousand francs a year, belonged to one of the first families of Normandy. His appointment to be Presiding Judge would have been the stepping-stone to a peer's seat; whence this strange lack of ambition? Why had he given up his great book on Law? What was the meaning of the dissipation which for nearly six years had made him a stranger to his home, his family, his study, to all he ought to hold dear? The Countess' confessor, who based his hopes of a bishopric quite as much on the families he governed as on the services he rendered to an association of which he was an ardent propagator, was much disappointed by Granville's refusal, and tried to insinuate calumnious explanations: "If Monsieur le Comte had such an objection to provincial life, it was perhaps because he dreaded finding himself under the necessity of leading a regular life, compelled to set an example of moral conduct, and to live with the Countess, from whom nothing could have alienated him but some illicit connection; for how could a woman so pure as Madame de Granville ever tolerate the disorderly life into which her husband had drifted?" The sanctimonious woman accepted as facts these hints, which unluckily were not merely hypothetical, and Madame de Granville was stricken as by a thunderbolt.

Angelique, knowing nothing of the world, of love and its follies, was so far from conceiving of any conditions of married life unlike those that had alienated her husband as possible, that she believed him to be incapable of the

errors which are crimes in the eyes of any wife. When the Count ceased to demand anything of her, she imagined that the tranquillity he now seemed to enjoy was in the course of nature; and, as she had really given to him all the love which her heart was capable of feeling for a man, while the priest's conjectures were the utter destruction of the illusions she had hitherto cherished, she defended her husband; at the same time, she could not eradicate the suspicion that had been so ingeniously sown in her soul.

These alarms wrought such havoc in her feeble brain that they made her ill; she was worn by low fever. These incidents took place during Lent 1822; she would not pretermit her austerities, and fell into a decline that put her life in danger. Granville's indifference was added torture; his care and attention were such as a nephew feels himself bound to give to some old uncle.

Though the Countess had given up her persistent nagging and remonstrances, and tried to receive her husband with affectionate words, the sharpness of the bigot showed through, and one speech would often undo the work of a week.

Towards the end of May, the warm breath of spring, and more nourishing diet than her Lenten fare, restored Madame de Granville to a little strength. One morning, on coming home from Mass, she sat down on a stone bench in the little garden, where the sun's kisses reminded her of the early days of her married life, and she looked back across the years to see wherein she might have failed in her duty as a wife and mother. She was broken in upon by the Abbe Fontanon in an almost indescribable state of excitement.

"Has any misfortune befallen you, Father?" she asked with filial solicitude.

"Ah! I only wish," cried the Normandy priest, "that all the woes inflicted on you by the hand of God were dealt out to me; but, my admirable friend, there are trials to which you can but bow."

"Can any worse punishments await me than those with which Providence crushes me by making my husband the instrument of His wrath?"

"You must prepare yourself, daughter, to yet worse mischief than we and your pious friends had ever conceived of."

"Then I may thank God," said the Countess, "for vouchsafing to use you as the messenger of His will, and thus, as ever, setting the treasures of mercy by the side of the scourges of His wrath, just as in bygone days He showed a spring to Hagar when He had driven her into the desert."

"He measures your sufferings by the strength of your resignation and the weight of your sins."

"Speak; I am ready to hear!" As she said it she cast her eyes up to heaven.

"Speak, Monsieur Fontanon."

"For seven years Monsieur Granville has lived in sin with a concubine, by whom he has two children; and on this adulterous connection he has spent more than five hundred thousand francs, which ought to have been the property of his legitimate family."

"I must see it to believe it!" cried the Countess.

"Far be it from you!" exclaimed the Abbe. "You must forgive, my daughter, and wait in patience and prayer till God enlightens your husband; unless, indeed, you choose to adopt against him the means offered you by human laws."

The long conversation that ensued between the priest and his penitent resulted in an extraordinary change in the Countess; she abruptly dismissed him, called her servants who were alarmed at her flushed face and crazy energy. She ordered her carriage—countermanded it—changed her mind twenty times in the hour; but at last, at about three o'clock, as if she had come to some great determination, she went out, leaving the whole household in amazement at such a sudden transformation.

"Is the Count coming home to dinner?" she asked of his servant, to whom she would never speak.

"No, madame."

"Did you go with him to the Courts this morning?"

"Yes, madame."

"And to-day is Monday?"

"Yes, madame."

"Then do the Courts sit on Mondays nowadays?"

"Devil take you!" cried the man, as his mistress drove off after saying to the coachman:

"Rue Taitbout."

Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille was weeping: Roger, sitting by her side, held one of her hands between his own. He was silent, looking by turns at little Charles—who, not understanding his mother's grief, stood speechless at the sight of her tears—at the cot where Eugenie lay sleeping, and Caroline's face, on which grief had the effect of rain falling across the beams of cheerful sunshine.

"Yes, my darling," said Roger, after a long silence, "that is the great secret: I am married. But some day I hope we may form but one family. My wife has

been given over ever since last March. I do not wish her dead; still, if it should please God to take her to Himself, I believe she will be happier in Paradise than in a world to whose griefs and pleasures she is equally indifferent."

"How I hate that woman! How could she bear to make you unhappy? And yet it is to that unhappiness that I owe my happiness!"

Her tears suddenly ceased.

"Caroline, let us hope," cried Roger. "Do not be frightened by anything that priest may have said to you. Though my wife's confessor is a man to be feared for his power in the congregation, if he should try to blight our happiness I would find means—"

"What could you do?"

"We would go to Italy: I would fly—"

A shriek that rang out from the adjoining room made Roger start and Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille quake; but she rushed into the drawing-room, and there found Madame de Granville in a dead faint. When the Countess recovered her senses, she sighed deeply on finding herself supported by the Count and her rival, whom she instinctively pushed away with a gesture of contempt. Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille rose to withdraw.

"You are at home, madame," said Granville, taking Caroline by the arm. "Stay."

The Judge took up his wife in his arms, carried her to the carriage, and got into it with her.

"Who is it that has brought you to the point of wishing me dead, of resolving to fly?" asked the Countess, looking at her husband with grief mingled with indignation. "Was I not young? you thought me pretty—what fault have you to find with me? Have I been false to you? Have I not been a virtuous and well-conducted wife? My heart has cherished no image but yours, my ears have listened to no other voice. What duty have I failed in? What have I ever denied you?"

"Happiness, madame," said the Count severely. "You know, madame, that there are two ways of serving God. Some Christians imagine that by going to church at fixed hours to say a Paternoster, by attending Mass regularly and avoiding sin, they may win heaven—but they, madame, will go to hell; they have not loved God for himself, they have not worshiped Him as He chooses to be worshiped, they have made no sacrifice. Though mild in seeming, they are hard on their neighbors; they see the law, the letter, not the spirit.—This is how you have treated me, your earthly husband; you have sacrificed my happiness to your salvation; you were always absorbed in prayer when I came

to you in gladness of heart; you wept when you should have cheered my toil; you have never tried to satisfy any demands I have made on you."

"And if they were wicked," cried the Countess hotly, "was I to lose my soul to please you?"

"It is a sacrifice which another, a more loving woman, has dared to make," said Granville coldly.

"Dear God!" she cried, bursting into tears, "Thou hearest! Has he been worthy of the prayers and penance I have lived in, wearing myself out to atone for his sins and my own?—Of what avail is virtue?"

"To win Heaven, my dear. A woman cannot be at the same time the wife of a man and the spouse of Christ. That would be bigamy; she must choose between a husband and a nunnery. For the sake of future advantage you have stripped your soul of all the love, all the devotion, which God commands that you should have for me, you have cherished no feeling but hatred—"

"Have I not loved you?" she put in.

"No, madame."

"Then what is love?" the Countess involuntarily inquired.

"Love, my dear," replied Granville, with a sort of ironical surprise, "you are incapable of understanding it. The cold sky of Normandy is not that of Spain. This difference of climate is no doubt the secret of our disaster.—To yield to our caprices, to guess them, to find pleasure in pain, to sacrifice the world's opinion, your pride, your religion even, and still regard these offerings as mere grains of incense burnt in honor of the idol—that is love—"

"The love of ballet-girls!" cried the Countess in horror. "Such flames cannot last, and must soon leave nothing but ashes and cinders, regret or despair. A wife ought, in my opinion, to bring you true friendship, equable warmth—"

"You speak of warmth as negroes speak of ice," retorted the Count, with a sardonic smile. "Consider that the humblest daisy has more charms than the proudest and most gorgeous of the red hawthorns that attract us in spring by their strong scent and brilliant color.—At the same time," he went on, "I will do you justice. You have kept so precisely in the straight path of imaginary duty prescribed by law, that only to make you understand wherein you have failed towards me, I should be obliged to enter into details which would offend your dignity, and instruct you in matters which would seem to you to undermine all morality."

"And you dare to speak of morality when you have but just left the house where you have dissipated your children's fortune in debaucheries?" cried the

Countess, maddened by her husband's reticence.

"There, madame, I must correct you," said the Count, coolly interrupting his wife. "Though Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille is rich, it is at nobody's expense. My uncle was master of his fortune, and had several heirs. In his lifetime, and out of pure friendship, regarding her as his niece, he gave her the little estate of Bellefeuille. As for anything else, I owe it to his liberality—"

"Such conduct is only worthy of a Jacobin!" said the sanctimonious Angelique.

"Madame, you are forgetting that your own father was one of the Jacobins whom you scorn so uncharitably," said the Count severely. "Citizen Bontems was signing death-warrants at a time when my uncle was doing France good service."

Madame de Granville was silenced. But after a short pause, the remembrance of what she had just seen reawakened in her soul the jealousy which nothing can kill in a woman's heart, and she murmured, as if to herself —"How can a woman thus destroy her own soul and that of others?"

"Bless me, madame," replied the Count, tired of this dialogue, "you yourself may some day have to answer that question." The Countess was scared. "You perhaps will be held excused by the merciful Judge, who will weigh our sins," he went on, "in consideration of the conviction with which you have worked out my misery. I do not hate you—I hate those who have perverted your heart and your reason. You have prayed for me, just as Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has given me her heart and crowned my life with love. You should have been my mistress and the prayerful saint by turns.—Do me the justice to confess that I am no reprobate, no debauchee. My life was cleanly. Alas! after seven years of wretchedness, the craving for happiness led me by an imperceptible descent to love another woman and make a second home. And do not imagine that I am singular; there are in this city thousands of husbands, all led by various causes to live this twofold life."

"Great God!" cried the Countess. "How heavy is the cross Thou hast laid on me to bear! If the husband Thou hast given me here below in Thy wrath can only be made happy through my death, take me to Thyself!"

"If you had always breathed such admirable sentiments and such devotion, we should be happy yet," said the Count coldly.

"Indeed," cried Angelique, melting into a flood of tears, "forgive me if I have done any wrong. Yes, monsieur, I am ready to obey you in all things, feeling sure that you will desire nothing but what is just and natural; henceforth I will be all you can wish your wife to be."

"If your purpose, madame, is to compel me to say that I no longer love you, I shall find the cruel courage to tell you so. Can I command my heart? Can I wipe out in an instant the traces of fifteen years of suffering?—I have ceased to love.—These words contain a mystery as deep as lies the words I love. Esteem, respect, friendship may be won, lost, regained; but as to love—I might school myself for a thousand years, and it would not blossom again, especially for a woman too old to respond to it."

"I hope, Monsieur le Comte, I sincerely hope, that such words may not be spoken to you some day by the woman you love, and in such a tone and accent —"

"Will you put on a dress a la Grecque this evening, and come to the Opera?"

The shudder with which the Countess received the suggestion was a mute reply.

Early in December 1833, a man, whose perfectly white hair and worn features seemed to show that he was aged by grief rather than by years, was walking at midnight along the Rue Gaillon. Having reached a house of modest appearance, and only two stories high, he paused to look up at one of the attic windows that pierced the roof at regular intervals. A dim light scarcely showed through the humble panes, some of which had been repaired with paper. The man below was watching the wavering glimmer with the vague curiosity of a Paris idler, when a young man came out of the house. As the light of the street lamp fell full on the face of the first comer, it will not seem surprising that, in spite of the darkness, this young man went towards the passer-by, though with the hesitancy that is usual when we have any fear of making a mistake in recognizing an acquaintance.

"What, is it you," cried he, "Monsieur le President? Alone at this hour, and so far from the Rue Saint-Lazare. Allow me to have the honor of giving you my arm.—The pavement is so greasy this morning, that if we do not hold each other up," he added, to soothe the elder man's susceptibilities, "we shall find it hard to escape a tumble."

"But, my dear sir, I am no more than fifty-five, unfortunately for me," replied the Comte de Granville. "A physician of your celebrity must know that at that age a man is still hale and strong."

"Then you are in waiting on a lady, I suppose," replied Horace Bianchon. "You are not, I imagine, in the habit of going about Paris on foot. When a man keeps such fine horses——"

"Still, when I am not visiting in the evening, I commonly return from the Courts or the club on foot," replied the Count.

"And with large sums of money about you, perhaps!" cried the doctor. "It is a positive invitation to the assassin's knife."

"I am not afraid of that," said Granville, with melancholy indifference.

"But, at least, do not stand about," said the doctor, leading the Count towards the boulevard. "A little more and I shall believe that you are bent of robbing me of your last illness, and dying by some other hand than mine."

"You caught me playing the spy," said the Count. "Whether on foot or in a carriage, and at whatever hour of the night I may come by, I have for some time past observed at a window on the third floor of your house the shadow of a person who seems to work with heroic constancy."

The Count paused as if he felt some sudden pain. "And I take as great an interest in that garret," he went on, "as a citizen of Paris must feel in the finishing of the Palais Royal."

"Well," said Horace Bianchon eagerly, "I can tell you—"

"Tell me nothing," replied Granville, cutting the doctor short. "I would not give a centime to know whether the shadow that moves across that shabby blind is that of a man or a woman, nor whether the inhabitant of that attic is happy or miserable. Though I was surprised to see no one at work there this evening, and though I stopped to look, it was solely for the pleasure of indulging in conjectures as numerous and as idiotic as those of idlers who see a building left half finished. For nine years, my young—" the Count hesitated to use a word; then he waved his hand, exclaiming—"No, I will not say friend—I hate everything that savors of sentiment.—Well, for nine years past I have ceased to wonder that old men amuse themselves with growing flowers and planting trees; the events of life have taught them disbelief in all human affection; and I grew old within a few days. I will no longer attach myself to any creature but to unreasoning animals, or plants, or superficial things. I think more of Taglioni's grace than of all human feeling. I abhor life and the world in which I live alone. Nothing, nothing," he went on, in a tone that startled the younger man, "no, nothing can move or interest me."

"But you have children?"

"My children!" he repeated bitterly. "Yes—well, is not my eldest daughter the Comtesse de Vandenesse? The other will, through her sister's connections, make some good match. As to my sons, have they not succeeded? The Viscount was public prosecutor at Limoges, and is now President of the Court at Orleans; the younger is public prosecutor in Paris.—My children have their own cares, their own anxieties and business to attend to. If of all those hearts one had been devoted to me, if one had tried by entire affection to fill up the void I have here," and he struck his breast, "well, that one would have failed in

life, have sacrificed it to me. And why should he? Why? To bring sunshine into my few remaining years—and would he have succeeded? Might I not have accepted such generosity as a debt? But, doctor," and the Count smiled with deep irony, "it is not for nothing that we teach them arithmetic and how to count. At this moment perhaps they are waiting for my money."

"O Monsieur le Comte, how could such an idea enter your head—you who are kind, friendly, and humane! Indeed, if I were not myself a living proof of the benevolence you exercise so liberally and so nobly—"

"To please myself," replied the Count. "I pay for a sensation, as I would to-morrow pay a pile of gold to recover the most childish illusion that would but make my heart glow.—I help my fellow-creatures for my own sake, just as I gamble; and I look for gratitude from none. I should see you die without blinking; and I beg of you to feel the same with regard to me. I tell you, young man, the events of life have swept over my heart like the lavas of Vesuvius over Herculaneum. The town is there—dead."

"Those who have brought a soul as warm and as living as yours was to such a pitch of indifference are indeed guilty!"

"Say no more," said the Count, with a shudder of aversion.

"You have a malady which you ought to allow me to treat," said Bianchon in a tone of deep emotion.

"What, do you know of a cure for death?" cried the Count irritably.

"I undertake, Monsieur le Comte, to revive the heart you believe to be frozen."

"Are you a match for Talma, then?" asked the Count satirically.

"No, Monsieur le Comte. But Nature is as far above Talma as Talma is superior to me.—Listen: the garret you are interested in is inhabited by a woman of about thirty, and in her love is carried to fanaticism. The object of her adoration is a young man of pleasing appearance but endowed by some malignant fairy with every conceivable vice. This fellow is a gambler, and it is hard to say which he is most addicted to—wine or women; he has, to my knowledge, committed acts deserving punishment by law. Well, and to him this unhappy woman sacrificed a life of ease, a man who worshiped her, and the father of her children.—But what is wrong, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Nothing. Go on."

"She has allowed him to squander a perfect fortune; she would, I believe, give him the world if she had it; she works night and day; and many a time she has, without a murmur, seen the wretch she adores rob her even of the money saved to buy the clothes the children need, and their food for the morrow. Only

three days ago she sold her hair, the finest hair I ever saw; he came in, she could not hide the gold piece quickly enough, and he asked her for it. For a smile, for a kiss, she gave up the price of a fortnight's life and peace. Is it not dreadful, and yet sublime?—But work is wearing her cheeks hollow. Her children's crying has broken her heart; she is ill, and at this moment on her wretched bed. This evening they had nothing to eat; the children have not strength to cry, they were silent when I went up."

Horace Bianchon stood still. Just then the Comte de Granville, in spite of himself, as it were, had put his hand into his waistcoat pocket.

"I can guess, my young friend, how it is that she is yet alive if you attend her," said the elder man.

"O poor soul!" cried the doctor, "who could refuse to help her? I only wish I were richer, for I hope to cure her of her passion."

"But how can you expect me to pity a form of misery of which the joys to me would seem cheaply purchased with my whole fortune!" exclaimed the Count, taking his hand out of his pocket empty of the notes which Bianchon had supposed his patron to be feeling for. "That woman feels, she is alive! Would not Louis XV. have given his kingdom to rise from the grave and have three days of youth and life! And is not that the history of thousands of dead men, thousands of sick men, thousands of old men?"

"Poor Caroline!" cried Bianchon.

As he heard the name the Count shuddered, and grasped the doctor's arm with the grip of an iron vise, as it seemed to Bianchon.

"Her name is Caroline Crochard?" asked the President, in a voice that was evidently broken.

"Then you know her?" said the doctor, astonished.

"And the wretch's name is Solvet.—Ay, you have kept your word!" exclaimed Granville; "you have roused my heart to the most terrible pain it can suffer till it is dust. That emotion, too, is a gift from hell, and I always know how to pay those debts."

By this time the Count and the doctor had reached the corner of the Rue de la Chaussee d'Antin. One of those night-birds who wonder round with a basket on their back and crook in hand, and were, during the Revolution, facetiously called the Committee of Research, was standing by the curbstone where the two men now stopped. This scavenger had a shriveled face worthy of those immortalized by Charlet in his caricatures of the sweepers of Paris.

"Do you ever pick up a thousand-franc note?"

"Now and then, master."

"And you restore them?"

"It depends on the reward offered."

"You're the man for me," cried the Count, giving the man a thousand-franc note. "Take this, but, remember, I give it to you on condition of your spending it at the wineshop, of your getting drunk, fighting, beating your wife, blacking your friends' eyes. That will give work to the watch, the surgeon, the druggist —perhaps to the police, the public prosecutor, the judge, and the prison warders. Do not try to do anything else, or the devil will be revenged on you sooner or later."

A draughtsman would need at once the pencil of Charlet and of Callot, the brush of Teniers and of Rembrandt, to give a true notion of this night-scene.

"Now I have squared accounts with hell, and had some pleasure for my money," said the Count in a deep voice, pointing out the indescribable physiognomy of the gaping scavenger to the doctor, who stood stupefied. "As for Caroline Crochard!—she may die of hunger and thirst, hearing the heartrending shrieks of her starving children, and convinced of the baseness of the man she loves. I will not give a sou to rescue her; and because you have helped her, I will see you no more——"

The Count left Bianchon standing like a statue, and walked as briskly as a young man to the Rue Saint-Lazare, soon reaching the little house where he resided, and where, to his surprise, he found a carriage waiting at the door.

"Monsieur, your son, the attorney-general, came about an hour since," said the man-servant, "and is waiting for you in your bedroom."

Granville signed to the man to leave him.

"What motive can be strong enough to require you to infringe the order I have given my children never to come to me unless I send for them?" asked the Count of his son as he went into the room.

"Father," replied the younger man in a tremulous voice, and with great respect, "I venture to hope that you will forgive me when you have heard me."

"Your reply is proper," said the Count. "Sit down," and he pointed to a chair, "But whether I walk up and down, or take a seat, speak without heeding me."

"Father," the son went on, "this afternoon, at four o'clock, a very young man who was arrested in the house of a friend of mine, whom he had robbed to a considerable extent, appealed to you.—He says he is your son."

"His name?" asked the Count hoarsely.

"Charles Crochard."

"That will do," said the father, with an imperious wave of the hand.

Granville paced the room in solemn silence, and his son took care not to break it.

"My son," he began, and the words were pronounced in a voice so mild and fatherly, that the young lawyer started, "Charles Crochard spoke the truth. —I am glad you came to me to-night, my good Eugene," he added. "Here is a considerable sum of money"—and he gave him a bundle of banknotes—"you can make any use of them you think proper in this matter. I trust you implicitly, and approve beforehand whatever arrangements you may make, either in the present or for the future.—Eugene my dear son, kiss me. We part perhaps for the last time. I shall to-morrow crave my dismissal from the King, and I am going to Italy.

"Though a father owes no account of his life to his children, he is bound to bequeath to them the experience Fate sells him so dearly—is it not a part of their inheritance?—When you marry," the count went on, with a little involuntary shudder, "do not undertake it lightly; that act is the most important of all which society requires of us. Remember to study at your leisure the character of the woman who is to be your partner; but consult me too, I will judge of her myself. A lack of union between husband and wife, from whatever cause, leads to terrible misfortune; sooner or later we are always punished for contravening the social law.—But I will write to you on this subject from Florence. A father who has the honor of presiding over a supreme court of justice must not have to blush in the presence of his son. Good-bye."

PARIS, February 1830-January 1842.