

AROUND TABLE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE FRENCH CATHOLIC & AGNOSTICISTS



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A ROUND TABLE

OF THE

REPRESENTATIVE

FRENCH CATHOLIC NOVELISTS,

AT WHICH IS SERVED A FEAST OF EXCELLENT STORIES

BY

RENÉ BAZIN,
MME. BLANC,

MME. CARO,

CHAMPOL,

CHARLES LE GOFFIC,

PIÈRE L'ERMITE,

A. DE LAMOTHE,

M. MARYON,

RAOUL DE NAVERY,

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COMTE DE VILLEBOIS-MAREUIL.

With Portraits, Biographical Sketches, and Bibliography.



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RENÉ BAZIN.

RENÉ BAZIN is a professor of criminal law who occupies some of his leisure in describing provincial life. He was born at Angers in 1853; his great grandfather fought in the war of La Vendée as an officer, under Stofflet. After a brilliant course of legal studies he was soon called to occupy a chair at the college of Angers, where he still teaches.

He has written all his life, but he did not begin to publish until 1883. The list of his books is long; among them we name: "Ma Tante Giron," "Les Noellets," "La Sarcelle

Bleue," " Sicile," " Madame Corentine," " Les Italiens d'Aujourd'hui," " Humble Amour," " Terre d'Espagne," " En Province," " De Toute son Ame." He was crowned by the French Academy in 1888 for " Une Tache d'Encre ;" in 1893 for " Sicile," and for all his works in 1896.

He brings three qualities to novel-writing: tenderness, the love of provincial life, and elevation of mind. Those who suffer with dignity and without complaint naturally attract him; his sympathies are with unhappy souls, with those who live in their affections; he is at home with those who are accustomed to resignation and sacrifice. He goes in search of the afflicted, especially in his good land of Anjou. He has studied the western provinces of France—Brittany, Anjou, Vendée, the Landes, and as far as the Basque country—under all their aspects. Moreover, his romances react against the prevalent " naturalism " of the day. In nearly all of them M Bazin shows us young girls who are at the farthest remove from the " ingénues " of the theatre; girls who are capable of will, even of obstinacy, in what is good; who take a great place in the household without seeming to be aware of it; who exert a great and beneficent influence without making it too evident. And it is by this that we recognize his heroines as lovable and true.

Donatienne.

BY RENÉ BAZIN.

I.

THE man and woman were sitting on the door-sill of the farmhouse at the top of the hill, with their heads resting in the palms of their hands. He was very tall and she very little, and both were Bretons of the old stock. It was nightfall. A red streak, slender as a spindle but many leagues in length, barely encroached upon at intervals by far-off undulations of the ground, hinted at the immensity of the horizon stretching before them. But it shed very little light either on the flaky clouds that barred the sky, or on the forest of Lorges, whose hills and dales seemed to blend and flee away in billows. Banks of cloud in the sky, banks of fog in the breaks of the foliage, were moving in the same direction, and all things slept. An acrid odor, the nocturnal breathing of the forest, swept by at intervals. At the end of the woods, some three hundred yards from the house, a bit of moorland looked like a brown stain. Then came a scanty field of harvested buckwheat, and nearer still the little stony roadside hill dotted with gorse, on which stood the enclosure of Ros Grignon.

They were poor people. After serving his term in

the army the man had married a sailor's daughter, a servant in the parish of Yffiniac, which is not far from that of Plœuc. Besides several hundred francs of savings she had a pair of very bright and innocent dark eyes under her Brittany cap with its wings like cyclamen flowers. He had nothing. Could more be expected from a soldier returning from his regiment? Yet it was certainly less for her money that he had chosen her than because she pleased him. And as he had the reputation of an industrious man and a good worker, he had been able to hire ten acres of poor land, a score of apple-trees, and a house which sheltered under the same thick roof of moss-grown thatch the cow in her stable and the sleeping family in their single room. Still he did not pay his rent well. Three children had been born during the six years of their marriage, the youngest of whom, Johel, was only five months old. The mother could scarcely be of much use in the long days of digging, sowing, weeding, and mowing. Then the oats brought a wretched price, the buckwheat was nearly all consumed at home, and what with the shade of the forest and the deep roots of the oaks and gorse the harvest was scanty.

The night promised to be mild and humid, as befitted the end of September. Inside the room behind Jean Louarn and his wife a cradle was rocking monotonously in obedience to a cord pulled by five-year-old Noémi, who was putting Johel to sleep. The parents did not stir. One might have thought their vague eyes were watching the red streak grow smaller above the forest. Drops of dew from the stems of thatch trickled into the man's neck without disturbing him. They were breath-

ing in the fresh air and resting without a thought, unless it were the ever-present, incommunicable dream which every one shapes for himself when poverty has lasted too long.

The creaking stopped, and the child, only half asleep, began to cry. The woman looked back into the room.

“Rock, Noémi! Why don’t you keep on rocking?”

No answer. The soft noise produced by the wicker cradle began again. But the father, emerging from his dream, said slowly:

“We must sell the cow.”

“Yes,” assented the wife, “we must sell her.”

It was not the first time they had spoken of taking to market the only beast in their stable. But they had never made up their minds to it, always hoping for some means of escape, they knew not what.

“We must sell her before winter,” added Louarn.

Then he was silent. Little Johel was asleep. Not a sound rose from the enclosure, nor from the immense open country outside. In the west the light still lingered, fine as a thread. It was the hour when beasts of prey, wolves, foxes, weasels, rising from the thickets, stretch their necks, smell the night, and all at once, shaking their paws, begin to run through narrow ways into the open.

“Good evening!” said a hoarse voice.

The man and woman started up. Instinctively Louarn made a step forward, so as to be between her and the newcomer. For a moment he remained in that attitude, peering into the shadows of the stony declivity, his arms brought close to his body in readiness for a fight. Then in the feeble ray of light coming through

the doorway and opening a narrow passage through the mist a head appeared, followed by a heavy body, seeming still more ponderous by reason of the full-gathered blouse that covered it.

“It’s I, Louarn ; don’t be scared. I have a letter for you.”

“All the same it is no hour to be running about the roads,” said Louarn.

“You live so far away !” said the postman. “I came after the letters were collected. Here it is.”

The farmer put out his hand and took the letter with a dreary laugh. What did a letter more or less from Attorney Guillon, Mlle. de Penhoat’s agent, matter to him ? Since he was unable to pay, it was useless to dun him.

“Will you come in ?” said he. “Will you have a bowl of cider ?”

“Not this evening—another time.”

The round blouse had disappeared by the time the man had taken three strides, for the mist was thickening.

“Let us go in,” said Louarn.

While he was closing the door and pushing home the wooden bolt, slippery with long use, his wife, more curious than he, had picked up from the floor the lighted candle stuck into the neck of a bottle. Setting it on the table, she looked at him with shining eyes.

“Say, Jean, where does it come from ?”

Standing on the other side of the table, he turned the envelope over two or three times, brought it close to his face, which was regular, thin, and clean-shaven except for a little bunch of whiskers near the hair, and,

not recognizing Lawyer Guillon's writing, he passed it across to her.

"Here, you read it, Donatienne. It isn't from him. I can't make out that fine handwriting."

It was his turn now to watch the little woman. She read fast, her head swaying from side to side as she followed the lines, blushing, trembling, and at last saying as she lifted her eyes, moist with tears and yet smiling:

"They want me to go as nurse."

Louarn looked gloomy. His thin cheeks, the color of the poor ground he worked, sank in.

"Who wants you?"

"Some people I don't know—their name is there. But the doctor is the one at Saint-Brieuc."

"And when are you to go?"

Observing how greatly Louarn was distressed, she looked down at the table.

"To-morrow morning. They say I must take the first train. Honestly, I had given up expecting it."

It had, in fact, occurred to them before Johel's birth that Donatienne, like many of her relatives and neighbors, might find a place as nurse, and the young wife had gone to see the physician of Saint-Brieuc, who had taken her name and address. But that was eight months ago, and hearing nothing they had supposed the request forgotten. The husband alone had mentioned it once or twice, but only to say, in harvest time: "How lucky they never wanted you, Donatienne! How could I have got along all alone?"

"I had given up expecting it," repeated the little

Bretonne, her face lighted up from below by the candle. "No, truly, this takes me by surprise."

And then in spite of herself her heart began to thump. The blood rushed into her face. A vague joy she was ashamed of seemed coming to her from the white paper she was still looking at but without reading a word. A truce to her poverty had been offered her—a deliverance from the cares of life as a peasant woman, obliged to feed men and occupy herself with children and animals. The weight of fatigue and dullness that rested upon both of them seemed already growing lighter. The stories told by the women of Plœuc of the indulgence shown to nurses in the cities; rapid visions of embroidered linen, silk ribbons, rolls of money; the proud thought, also, that the doctor was sending her to a great house in Paris—all these things passed confusedly through her mind. It embarrassed her, and, turning away to the two cradles standing side by side, she pretended to be straightening the sheets that covered Lucienne and Johel.

"It is true it will be very sad, Jean. But, you see, it won't last forever."

Not a word in reply, and no shadow but her own moved on the wall. She heard two drops of water fall outside on the stones from the thatched roof.

"And then I shall earn money," she went on, "and I will send it to you. Those people must be rich. Maybe they will give me the leading-strings the children need so much."

Silence resumed possession of the room, and for a moment it seemed a dead thing, blotted out, like the woods, the grass, the moorlands, by the heavy dew of

this September night. Donatienne felt that the kind of joy she had been unable to repress was abating, that there was no longer any expression in her face which could wound her husband, and she looked at him.

He had not moved. The candle lighted up the depths of his blue eyes, like flecks of pale mist under the thicket of his eyebrows, from which came the troubled glance of a creature bewildered by too great a sorrow. They had followed Donatienne's movements without noting either the smile, the color in her cheeks, or the slowness of her manœuvring about the cradles. He was conscious of a feeling of despair and of nothing beyond that; already she seemed a distant image, separated from him by leagues and leagues. Sailors have the same expression when a sail they have been watching on the horizon descends towards the infinitude of the sea.

“Jean,” said she; “Jean Louarn!”

He moved slowly round the table as far as Johel's cradle, where Donatienne stood motionless. He took her hand, and together in the shadow they looked at the sleeping infants, their fair heads turned towards each other and half covered by the points of the pillow curving over them.

“You will be careful of them?” said she. “He is so little! Lucienne is so cunning! One can't tell where she goes, she runs so fast, and I am often afraid because of the well. You will tell her when she comes——”

The man gave a nod of comprehension.

“I thought of that, too,” resumed Donatienne. “You might go to-morrow morning to Plœuc for Annette

Domerc. I think she would do for a servant. Would you like that ?”

“What do you want me to like ? I will try.”

“And I know you will succeed. You must not be too sad about it. Everybody in this country goes away just like me. I have even stayed at home a good deal longer than the others. Just think, I am twenty-four years old !”

She rattled on very fast, giving instructions which he did not hear, suggesting formulas of resignation he did not find consoling. Then her clear voice fell into a more muffled tone; her heart beat faster in her velvet-laced bodice; she comprehended that all had not yet been said, and she murmured :

“Jean, my poor Jean, I feel just as you do !”

He lifted her up—little creature that she was compared to him—with one arm, and carried her over to the left side of the fireplace, where a bench was set under the overhanging mantel-shelf for winter evenings. There he sank down and, placing her on his knees, drew her little head to his shoulder, as she remembered his having done one evening soon after their marriage. Then he had found but one word to express his tenderness, and now, as he held her close, he repeated it as alone sufficient for his present sorrow : “Wife, wife !” He did not kiss her, he did not even try to see her face; he only put all the giant strength with which he dug the earth into the embrace with which he enfolded the little creature who was his, and yielded himself to that supreme sweetness of a farewell whose moments are numbered. “O, wife !” he repeated. All his passion found voice in that lament, all

his uneasy jealousy, all the self-pity excited by the sight of the things scattered about the room in the dim candle-light: the cradles, the bed, the clothes-chest, even the stable, from which came now and again the thud of a heavy body against the planks—all that without her would be so dismal.

Above them rose the chimney, wide, and black with soot, and open to the slowly descending mists.

Donatienne had tried to free herself. But he held her fast. Then she remained quiet, letting herself be cherished, and seized in her turn with a dread of the unknown. "If only I could see where you are going!" Louarn had said. But neither of them knew. She was going, and he remaining; but no effort of memory, no hint afforded by barrack-room talk or the gossip of the wives of Plœuc, gave even an imperfect notion of the mysterious place where Donatienne, the mother of Noémi, Lucienne, and Johel, would be to-morrow.

After a long while a gust of wind rustled the letter lying on the table. Jean Louarn raised his head. Through the top of the chimney he saw that the sky was dust-colored. "The moon is coming up over the woods," said he. "It is after ten, Donatienne."

They came out from under the chimney-piece, he to undress and go to bed, she to attend to Johel, who was waking up. And presently the night unfolded itself above the five beings sleeping in Ros Grignon. One by one its stars moved high above the mists that were moistening the forest, the hillock, and the harvest field, and went on towards other fields, other solitary dwellings in nameless moorlands. It was deep midnight; the roads were deserted, the windows closed,

the villages, even the far inland ones, linked together by the distant thunder of the waves. All human joys were slumbering in souls and nearly all human sorrows and the hard anxiety for daily bread. Out in the offing only, all round the Breton peninsula, rays of light from vessels crossed each other in the darkness. But earth for a moment had ceased to complain. Jean Louarn's close was mute. The man slept, shaken at times by the terror of a dream. Donatienne, all pink and white, and delicate compared with him, looked when a moon-beam fell across the bed like one of those images of brides dressed out in shellwork which they sell in the poor little shops down yonder.

II.

THE dawn was not brilliant. The clouds covering the sky simply grew paler by slow degrees, so that one could not tell just where the sun rose. An hour earlier Jean Louarn had set off to the market town of Plœuc to find the servant Annette Domerc, and some one who would lend him a cart. Donatienne was dressing, and so was Noémi, who had begun to help her in the mornings. But, sitting on the side of her bed, the hair falling into her half-shut eyes, the dazed little one had stopped pulling on her stockings and lacing her frock, and now sat motionless, her head nodding sleepily forward.

The mother was all ready and stood looking at her children, one after the other, without a word. Maternal affection had seized upon and taken complete possession of her the moment she heard Louarn saying: "It is five o'clock; it is daytime." The thought that she was

going to abandon these three beings whom she had brought into the world, and above all the youngest, who was not yet weaned, clutched at her heart. A terrible secret foreboding that she would never see them all again, that one would be gone when she returned, oppressed her. Which one? One dares not fathom such fears. Yet the babe who had determined her present step always seemed to her the one obscurely menaced.

“Noémi,” she said in a hushed voice, “go and give the cow a handful of straw; I hear her trying to get it.”

Smiling in spite of herself, she bent over the nursing in the cradle, and, picking him up, pressed him to her breast. She put him down, but, unable to leave him yet, stood smiling as happily as on other days, when suddenly she remembered the hour. Noémi came in through the stable door, with wisps of straw sticking in her hair. Donatienne ran to the chest where she kept her own and the children’s spare clothes—an armful of woollens and a little coarse linen—and hastily folded an old skirt, a fichu, a chemise, and a cap in a towel, the ends of which she lapped over and fastened with two pins. It was all she was going to take. The country women had advised her to leave the rest behind, because her employers would give her whatever she needed. Even those who were not so poor as she did the same.

“Listen!” said she, inclining her head to one side. Noémi, who was running, stood still. The noise of wheels came up towards Ros Grignon. The cart had to cross the stony part of the road three hundred yards

from the house. Donatienne had time to finish dressing. She looked well in her best black gown with the thousand pleats, her white wimple cut low in front and at the nape of the neck, her thick bands of fair hair tucked under the cap with outspread wings.

The husband came in, followed by a puny, round-shouldered girl with eyes almost the color of her sunburnt skin, who looked fifteen but was two years older.

“Good day, Mistress Louarn,” said she.

Donatienne made no reply. Two large tears were blinding her eyes. She kissed Johel, who did not move, and Lucienne, who turned over in her cradle. Then she lifted up Noémi, who had drawn near, attracted by tears which she did not understand.

“My little one, my dear little one, you will help take care of your brother and sister, won't you? Never run far away with them. I am coming back. . . . Adieu!”

She set the child down, took the packet of clothes and a blue cotton umbrella, passed in front of the stupid servant, and climbed into the cart, while Louarn held the horse by the bridle.

A minute later they had descended the hill. The doorway of the house outlined itself like a black hole underneath the thatch, framing a little brown figure vanishing in that darkness, a phantom child already fading. A turn in the road soon hid Ros Grignon, and Donatienne saw nothing more but the uninteresting fields of neighbors, succeeded by those of strangers, and those by trees and sunken roads of which she had no knowledge. Louarn seemed entirely absorbed in his driving. They were going to the Hermitage station,

the nearest to Ros Grignon, through a dense morning mist hanging so low that it made the tops of the oak and apple trees look ghostly.

Jean Louarn drew up at a hill some hundred yards from the town. He leaned over his wife and kissed her forehead. "You will write and let me know where you are?" said he. "I shall be in great trouble about you, Donatienne."

"Be sure I will," replied the young wife. She did not kiss him, restrained by the austere tradition of Brittany and the fear that somebody might be peering between the young trees.

The cart stopped in front of the station as the half-past nine train arrived from Pontivy. They had just time to run to the wicket, the man carrying the bundle, Donatienne tugging at the clasps of the old purse.

They hurried through the waiting-room, lurching against each other in the passages, though neither had much to carry, and Donatienne got into the third-class compartment, the door of which was held open by an official.

"Adieu!" said Louarn.

She did not hear him. He saw the pretty, blooming face, the brown eyes, the moving wings of her cap pass behind the shining glass door of the car, and remained motionless on the platform, watching the flying train that carried Donatienne away.

III.

THE months went by, their days filled with incessant labor which tired Jean all the more because he

seldom heard from Donatienne. Towards the end of July the sheriff, who had come a week earlier to notify Louarn to pay his back rent, returned to seize his furniture. When he saw him and his two witnesses coming up the road Louarn stopped mowing the ripe buckwheat, of which he had cut but a single row. Thrusting the end of his sickle into the ground, he walked to the further end of the moorland, where he leaned against the foot of a colossal gorse, one of the last left standing, on the edge of the forest. There, as he lay with crossed arms, his glance embraced the close, the ten acres which comprised so much labor, so much suffering, all the affection he had ever known, and what still remained to him of hope.

Leaving his companions at the foot of the hill, the sheriff walked towards the tenant of the close. With his old jacket and cracked felt hat he looked as poor as the peasant he had come to distrain. He meandered about between the ridges, occasionally lifting his gaunt head, framed in a pair of white whiskers, to see whether Louarn really meant to make him walk to the end of the field without stirring a step to meet him. But Louarn remained motionless, and it was only when there was no more than the breadth of two furrows between them that he straightened up with a shove of the shoulder from which the gorse did not soon get over trembling, and said between teeth shut tight upon his emotion:

“Then you have come back to seize my goods?”

“Yes; Mlle. de Penhoat sent me——”

“I’m not blaming you,” interrupted Louarn. “You’re all right; that’s your business. But I want to tell you something, so that you can judge; you are a

man. Look round you, to left and right, as far as the slope."

The sheriff, astonished, looked first at this tall peasant, whose attitude was so unlike that of other debtors, and then down at the ground, through which pierced the sharp roots that had been cut off by a bill-hook.

"For the last three months I have been at work in this brushwood which has ruined my hands. Now look behind you at the coppice I cut last winter. Look at my ripe wheat and my buckwheat. You would not say I have been idle, would you?"

"No."

"Well, I did all that for my children, and also for my wife, who is with employers in Paris. Don't you understand that she can't let me be sold out now like a beggar?"

"She ought to pay, that's a fact," said the sheriff.

"How much more time will you give me?"

"This is Tuesday, Mr. Louarn. I will advertise the sale for Sunday week."

"You will be paid," said Louarn; "I will send her a dispatch—and she will reply."

He was trembling from head to foot as he spoke, and the words, "She will reply," came in a voice made harsh by tears. Yet he did not weep. He merely lifted his head a little in the direction of Ros Grignon. Unable to look him any longer in the eyes, the sheriff was making ready to read some part of the process when he felt the tenant's hand laid heavily on his shoulder.

"Don't read your papers," said Louarn. "I will hear nothing and sign nothing. I know that I owe Mlle. de Penhoat and several other people in the town of

Plœuc who have given me credit. Go up by yourself to my house.”

“But I need you, Mr. Louarn.”

“No; you don’t need me. Mark down whatever you find in your books: the bed, the table, the cow——”

“But you have a right to keep——”

“I tell you to mark down everything,” said the tenant, growing irritated and pointing towards Ros Grignon. “Mark down the chairs, the gilt frames, and the wedding clothes, the silk apron in the chest——”

“Mr. Louarn, I never saw anybody who——”

“Mark the two caps she bought a month before she went away with the money from her thread, and her spinning-wheel, which is hanging on the beams. All of them came to me from Donatienne, and now that you know what I have done for her, you understand, sheriff, that I cannot keep anything I have taken from her hand. No, in truth, I will not keep a thing as big as my heart which is there. Mark down everything!”

The sheriff shrugged his shoulders; divining a misery beyond the common and vaguely affected by it, but not knowing what to say, he moved off, folding his papers as he went. Louarn called after him :

“There is but one thing I will keep—the portrait hanging on the wall. No one has any right to it but me.”

The man nodded an affirmative without turning, and went on towards Ros Grignon. He climbed the hill with some difficulty. Little Noémi, standing in the doorway, ran in, crying with fear. Louarn was striding across roads to Plœuc.

By the time he reached the first houses the women

who saw him coming in haste, looking straight in front of him like a man who is dreaming and paying no attention to his route, began to come out of their doors. They knew that the sheriff had gone to Ros Grignon. Many of them said nothing, and looked compassionate after he had gone by. But others, especially the young ones, jested in an undertone. A concert of scandal and malicious allusions rose behind him like a cloud of dust. News of Donatienne, news of which he had heard nothing, had gone the round of the village, and people were curious as to where the man was going. He heard nothing.

Fate willed that at the square, just as Louarn was turning in the direction of the post-office, the baker's wife, who was newly married and inconsiderate in her speech, said almost aloud, in a group of people :

“Poor fellow ! He must have learned that the child is dead, and that Donatienne——”

At the sound of his wife's name Louarn seemed to wake from a dream, and the look he gave the little shopkeeper was so stupid with astonishment that she reddened up to the wings of her cap and went back into her shop. Louarn hesitated a moment as if about to stop. But the men who were standing about, all of whom he knew, also turned away and separated to avoid being accosted.

“The child is dead !” That phrase was engraved on Louarn's heart. “The child is dead !” When did it die ? They must surely mean the child in Paris, the child of the employers who had taken Donatienne. Why had she not written ? If it was dead why had she not come back ? Had he understood correctly ? Or

was it, perhaps, that the child had just died and Donatienne was coming back? But then, why did the baker's wife say: "Poor fellow"? And yet that was the most likely thing. Yes, the child must have just died. . . . Donatienne had not written because she was in so much trouble at seeing her nursling ill. Or perhaps she had written to others, fearing that her husband might reproach her. . . . Reproaches! Oh, no, never from him! He knew she must have done her very best for the little one that died. She must have wanted to tell him herself just how the misfortune had happened without her fault. She had sent news of her return. The letter . . . or perhaps Donatienne was already on the road home! . . . "The child is dead! . . . The child is dead!"

These ideas had passed through Louarn's mind one after another and been rejected, some because they accused Donatienne, the rest because the embarrassed glances of those he met had made him conscious that a disaster had befallen him. "The child is dead!"

He was so pale when he rapped at the wicket in the post-office that the employee, a young girl, asked him:

"Has there been an accident at your house, Mr. Louarn?"

"Nothing but the execution."

"Oh, the execution; one gets over that. My own father has been sold out, and he did an excellent business afterwards."

Nothing in the world would have tempted Louarn to avow the frightful doubt that had taken possession of him. But he looked through the little window at the kind and tranquil countenance of the girl, and was

somewhat consoled at finding in it not a trace of irony. She wrote the message for him: "All has been seized at Ros Grignon. All will be sold Sunday week. I beg you to send money and news. Jean." She read it over, he paid for it, and as he still looked at her she said gently: "That is all," and closed the window. Jean Louarn left the town by a side street where none but poor people lived and which led directly into the fields.

He reached Ros Grignon just as the sheriff and the witnesses of the execution were leaving the house. They saluted him from the threshold as he was swinging up the hill by the crooked footpath. Louarn touched the velvet border of his hat and stood aside to let them pass.

"You mentioned Sunday week for the sale," said he to the sheriff. "But that is too far off. Can't you make it next Sunday?"

"Why, yes, that *can* be done, since you agree and there is so little."

"Next Sunday," went on Louarn; "she will have plenty of time to answer, and for me, I shall know my life——"

This phrase, which opened a glimpse into the unknown, made the two men in blouses, who had moved on, turn round. For a minute they looked steadily into Louarn's hard face, and something of the cold unconcern in their own seemed disturbed. It did not last. Presently their voices were heard at the foot of the hill, then upon the stony road, in loud laughter over some cheap jest.

There was no one in the house at Ros Grignon. Louarn was almost pleased not to meet either the chil-

dren or Annette Domerc ; he saw that nothing had been displaced, and, more tired than if he had been mowing, he threw himself down on a pile of hay in the stable. The cow was sleeping before the empty rack; the flies were buzzing and circling above her in the sunlight from the low window; a heavy and stupefying heat accumulated under the beams loaded with branches, fishing-rods, and dilapidated hen-coops; occasionally a bit of overheated bark snapped off. Louarn slept several hours. He was awakened by the touch of a small hand upon his own. He sat up, surprised, without knowing who had touched him, whether Annette Domerc, sitting close beside him, or Noémi, whom she held upon her lap. The servant seemed to be playing with the child.

“What are you doing there?” said the peasant.

She began to laugh, that artificial laughter which disquieted Louarn.

“Me? I came to tell you that the buckwheat porridge has been ready this half hour, and as you were sleeping so sound I waited. It is past seven o’clock.”

“You might have stayed in the room and called me,” said Louarn, rising.

She followed him with her eyes and murmured, her pale lips scarcely open :

“And then I was troubled about you, Master Louarn.”

He made no answer, was more silent than usual at supper, and wandered about outdoors for a long time afterwards. When he went to bed everything was quiet in Ros Grignon. The soft breathing of the children

responded from one bed to the other. The father listened to them for hours, unable to sleep under those curtains, already seized and on the point of being sold. He was surprised not to hear the respiration of the servant also, and it often seemed to him that in the dark corner where Annette's bed stood there were two open eyes—two eyes like yellow points—which were looking at him.

During the next three days he hardly made his appearance at Ros Grignon. He no longer ate anything but a bit of bread, which he cut off and swallowed standing. All his time was spent in following the roads, especially that of Plœuc, not walking on the highway, but in the fields behind the hedges. He was on the watch for the postman or the half-dropsical woman who carried telegrams to the villages or the farms. No one but the postman went by, and he never suspected with what profound anguish his movements were espied. Would he look from a distance at the thatched roof of Ros Grignon like one who must presently halt and is measuring the known distance? Would he open the leather cover of his sack before reaching the turn? Would he go in between the two sickly sorb-trees which stood at the entrance of the close? Alas! he went by with lowered head, with his always tired but unflagging gait. He brushed against the two sorbs as he would have brushed against any other trees. He went on his way towards happy people who did not expect his coming and perhaps would not bless him for it. Then Louarn fell back on the hope of some unknown messenger, some chance comer, some bearer of news who, knowing his misery, would take the road to his house.

But the carts went by without stopping, and the pedestrians pursued their way.

* * *

On the evening of Saturday Jean comprehended that Donatienne would not return, that she was lost to him.

IV.

THE bells sounded in the clearing atmosphere, bleached out with recent rains. The people of Plœuc, gathered in groups round the church doors, were chatting noisily after the High Mass. A few servant-maids whose mistresses were expecting them, a few mothers hurrying to relieve from duty the husband taking care of the children, were scattered along the streets and roads. A noise of clattering sabots, of opening doors, of drawling voices, of furtive laughter, rose and fell with the pealing of the bells.

All night long Louarn had been wandering in the fields alone with a suffering vast as the sombre sky. In the morning, worn out with fatigue, ashamed of his muddy clothes and his wretched appearance, he made his way as far as the entrance of the road leading from Plœuc to Moncontour almost without meeting a soul. There he climbed four steps which cut across a garden wall, passed alongside a hornbeam hedge, and went without knocking into the dining-room of the Abbé Hourtier, formerly a rector on the coast, and resembling those rocks in which one traces the likeness of a man, who was now on the retired list in the parish of Plœuc. The abbé had just sung Mass and was resting on a straw chair, his elbows leaning on the table made

ready for his dinner. The glare through the window would have blinded any eyes but his, eyes of a fisherman, limpid as sea-water, under eyelids tired of opening. When Louarn sat down near him it was evident that these men were of the same height, the same race, almost the same soul.

They had loved each other long, and saluted each other without speaking when they met on the roads. Hence the abbé was not surprised that Louarn had come to tell him of his trouble. He had listened to and consoled so many of these griefs—deaths of wives or husbands, desertions, premature loss of children, crews and boats swallowed up together by the sea, the ruin of fortunes, of friendships, of love—that in the depths of his clear eyes a trace of them remained, a nameless pity never absent even when they rested on the happy. Jean Louarn felt this compassionate glance fall upon him like a balm.

“Jean,” said the abbé, “you don’t need to tell me; that will only make it worse. Believe me, it is best to say nothing; I know all.”

“I don’t know all,” said the peasant, “and I am so unhappy! See, I suffer like Him who is there on the cross!”

With a gesture of the head he designated the little plaster crucifix hanging on the wall near the window, the solitary ornament of the bare, white room.

M. Hourtier looked at the image with the same air of growing compassion, and said:

“To resemble Him by anguish is not all, my poor Louarn. Do you also resemble Him by forgiveness?”

“I dare not say so. What has she done that I should forgive her?”

“What do we do ourselves, my friend? Nothing but remain weak and prone to evil. Ah! the poor girls who go away from us at twenty to nurse the children of others! It is not to pain you that I speak in this way, Jean Louarn, but I have often thought that there is no wretchedness like that! When I see houses like yours, where the husband and children are alone, I tell you truly my greatest pity is for the wife who has gone away.”

“And we?” said Louarn.

“You others stay in Brittany, in your homes, and you still have some near you whom you love. You have Noémi, you have Lucienne and Johel; you had the fields where you grew your food. She was separated from everything in a moment and tossed down yonder. . . . If you should sow a handful of buckwheat in your waste land, Jean Louarn, would you bear it a grudge for perishing? I am sure that your Donatienne has struggled; I am sure that she has been led away for lack of your assistance and because she knew nothing of the wickedness of life. If she should come back. . . .”

The peasant made a great effort to reply, and two tears, the first, rose to his eyelids.

“No,” said he; “she will not come back for me. I begged her. She would rather let me be sold out!”

“Louarn,” said the abbé gently, “she is also a mother. Perhaps one day. . . . I will write to her. . . . I will try. . . . I promise you.”

“In my trouble,” said Louarn, “I have thought that

they might bring her back. She always loved them better than me. Only we shall be far away."

"Where are you going?"

The man stretched out his arm towards the window.

"To Vendée, Monsieur Hourtier. It seems there is work for the poor there when it is time to dig potatoes. I am going to Vendée."

For Louarn, as for many other Bretons, Vendée is the rest of France, the country which begins at the east of Brittany.

"Then, if she comes, one will not know where to write you."

A sad smile, a sort of infantine expression, flitted across the peasant's sorrowful countenance.

"That is just it," said Louarn. "I have her portrait, which I would not let them take. I cannot carry it with me any longer; it would get broken on the road. I thought perhaps you would keep it. You can put the letters you receive from her behind it, until I write. If she should come back she would still find something from her home."

He had moved towards the chimney-piece. He had taken from his pocket the little shell-colored frame containing the photograph of his wife, taken the day after their marriage, and set it on the shelf. His rough hand, seamed with scars, tried to slip into the angle formed by the frame and the wall.

"Put them there," said he, "behind the picture."

The abbé was standing, as tall as Louarn, and broader in the shoulders. These two giants, accustomed to trouble, affected by each other, embraced for a moment as if they had closed for a struggle.

“I promise everything,” said the abbé gravely.

Many things that neither said had been understood and covenanted between soul and soul. Without another word they parted in the garden with faces as expressionless as if they had been two strangers passing each other in the road, without a tie in common.

V.

THE next morning, in the pale light of dawn, at the hour when the first shutters open at the twittering of the sparrows, a man was passing through Plœuc to take the Moncontour road. It was Louarn, whose goods had been sold the day before. He had left Ros Grignon without having had time to give a parting glance at his apple-trees, his bit of moor and woodland. He carried with him all he had left in the world. Noémi walked beside him, with a little packet tied to her elbow. He was dragging a wooden cart in which Lucienne and Johel were sleeping, face to face. Between them was a black basket which had belonged to Donatienne. The handle of a spade rose above the back of the cart and shook with every jog in the road.

Many of the inhabitants of the town were still asleep. Those who were leaning over the lower half of the doors laughed no longer, but kept silence, for misfortune accompanied and dignified the unhappy peasant.

Louarn no longer hid himself. He was beginning to follow the unknown road, with no goal before him and with no probable return. He had become the vagrant to whom no one clings and for whom no one is respon-

sible. But he had won the pity of those who beheld him.

When he had passed the corner of the square near the baker's shop a very young woman came out and, approaching the cart without a word, placed a large loaf between the two infants. Louarn may have noticed that he had a somewhat heavier load to draw, but he did not turn round.

A hundred yards further, on the road leading from Plœuc, another person was waiting for Louarn to pass. This one was walking up and down along the garden wall without raising his eyes. As long as the regular footsteps of the man and the grinding of the wooden wheels could be heard the tall shadow outlined beneath the hornbeams remained motionless. But when the group of travellers, diminished by distance and half hidden by the hedges, was about to disappear the Abbé Hourtier, thinking of the strangers who had ruined Donatienne, of the far-away people, great and small, who had caused Louarn's misfortune, raised his hand as if in malediction towards the sun, which was reddening the lower branches of his lilacs. And then, remembering what he had said the day before, his gesture ended in a benediction on those who were departing.

The man disappeared behind the trees. The joy of clear mornings sang above the fields of Plœuc. Brittany had but one poor man the less.

At present he is a man without work. I have told how misfortune befell him. If you meet him, have pity !



TH. BENTZON.

THE above is the pseudonym of Madame Marie Therese Blanc, *née* de Solons, who was born in 1840. Persistent study, during long and extensive travel, developed her mind and formed her taste. Her career as an author began in 1872, just after the Franco-Prussian war, and although the time was anything but propitious, her work did not pass unnoticed. Her writings appeal to a refined taste, and many of them have been crowned by the Academy.

From a literary point of view her work resembles that of Octave Feuillet, save in two respects: she excels in sketches of rustic life, such as "Desirée Turpin," "Le Violin de Job," etc., and she draws largely from foreign countries material which she adapts for French readers.

For more than a quarter of a century she has presented in her critical writings the best of English and American literature. This has led her to make two visits to America where she stayed some time. The result of her visits was her book "Les Americaines Chez Elles." which created quite a sensation, and was followed by a second volume "Choses et Gens d'Amerique." Besides being on the staff of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Madame Blanc has been a contributor to a number of American magazines among them *The Century*, *The Forum*, and *The Outlook*; she has also published two or three stories of American life for young people, two of them, "Zisti," a story of a young creole, and "Geneviève Delmas," having met with great success.

Madame Blanc has never shown any sympathy for the so-called Woman Movement, her strong Catholic feeling forbidding this.

It has often been claimed that George Sand was her literary sponsor, but in fact, M. Caro, a genuine Catholic philosopher, contributed more perhaps than any one else to the directing of her genius to the proper channels.

Her Only Love.

BY MME. BLANC.

SHE is a tall, dark girl whose beauty disappeared long before she was thirty, driven away by her painful thinness; she is an old maid, for already more than one silver thread shows itself in the smooth bands framing her forehead in the old-fashioned way. Yet her black eyes burn more ardently than ever under the long lashes that sweep her pale cheek like a silken fringe, and her smile, which was always slow and rare, has assumed an indefinitely pathetic expression which makes one pause and ponder.

I knew that smile when it was a mere child's smile, and from year to year I have noticed all the sadness, as well as all the sweetness, that experience has added to it.

Louise Férou, Mademoiselle Louise, as they call her in her neighborhood, ordinarily says very little, except when a great tide of feeling carries her away; but all her words would say less about her secret than the involuntary avowal of her sensitive lips, which quiver, palpitate, and tremble so easily; thereby, in spite of her silence, betraying all that she would wish to hide.

That poor workwoman in her shabby clothes leads a

sublime and agitated life alongside of her apparent daily one, in which nothing ever happens. In short, she has loved, she still loves after the manner of those mystics possessed with the madness of the cross; but this love, all made up of self-sacrifice, did not wing its way to God, nor did it alight on a man; it assumed all the characteristics of the most exalted motherhood in this girl, expecting no reward and receiving none.

A very simple story, this of Louise, and, alas! a too frequent one: wretchedness in a joyless home; a father who was neither good nor bad, a skilful workman at times, but he kept on drinking more and more, and when drunk he fell below the level of brutes. Then the mother went about lamenting, confiding her griefs to her neighbors. Little Louise had heard the same refrain ever since she could catch the sense of the words: "All was going from bad to worse. His money, as fast as he earned it, went for drink—bad stuff that poisoned him; everything is so adulterated nowadays!" And she—the wife—was beaten, insulted; her puny children died while they were out at nurse, no one knew why! Even those she had tried to nurse herself had died.

"It was no wonder, considering her everlasting troubles!" she said. She never had a moment's quiet or peace. There was hardly any one except the little one to bring home a few sous regularly—a brave little girl. The woman to whom she was apprenticed, while she got more out of the child than was her due—employers are never just—still sometimes gave her a trifle; and, besides, errands to customers' houses now and then put a small coin in the way of those who run them.

Louise, bareheaded in all sorts of weather, ran about enough to wear out her feet, while waiting to be allowed to wear out her little, red, chilblained fingers with sewing; and all her little gains were handed over, without the subtraction of the least coin, to Madame Férou, who always limited herself to the same thanks: "Ah! if your father only cared!"

"Yes, if father only cared!" the child would repeat, when, tired out at night, she tumbled on her corded bed. And a dull rage against her unworthy father's vices used to overcome her, mixed with a sort of contempt for her ever-complaining and inefficient mother's weakness. She knew how to protect her, nevertheless, for the drunkard was afraid of nothing but the unflinching look of two big black eyes fixed on him as on a mad dog, and that little voice which said: "Come! Get to bed quickly, and let us sleep; you can finish smashing the chairs to-morrow!" That confident and intrepid little voice, though it was so shrill and thin, covered up his oaths and stammerings, and made him obey.

What became of filial respect in the midst of all this? Alas! it had never entered into consideration. The plain law, "Honor thy father and thy mother," is a beautiful law, but it is not always practicable. Louise would have found it more difficult to carry out than any one else, although she was ready to kill herself working to feed those who so little deserved to be honored. Besides, work was not disagreeable to her—on the contrary. Her daily task took her away from her sordid lodgings, where a worn-out woman's carelessness allowed disorder and untidiness to reign supreme.

It was a treat to breathe fresh air while running on errands, even with a heavy box on her arm, especially when she could manage to spend five minutes of delicious loitering on the bridges. For, all unconsciously, Louise felt the beauty of the incomparable quays along the Seine and their changing aspects at all the various hours of the day. She often leaned on the parapet to look around with a strange delight in her heart, now glancing at the gray outline of the towers and belfries of old Paris in the gray mist, now at red sunsets against which false minarets loomed in bold Oriental relief—she did not call them minarets, yet their strange look made her travel very far—oh, so far! But what she preferred above all else was the river itself, the water with its silent agitation and its great swirls of *moiré* widening and multiplying in the sun. Long afterwards she acknowledged this. “Yes, it was the river that made me lose most time; there is no worse counsellor; one could grow numb for hours at a time just looking at it glide past, so softly, without anything hurrying it. It seemed to get into my eyes, into my head, and carried me away like a straw.”

The river and flowers. . . . In spring, when the chestnut-trees unfurled their white plumes, Louise used to go far out of her way to greet their appearance in the Luxembourg and Tuileries gardens, and then found fault with herself for having robbed her mistress of her time; for she had those qualms of scrupulous honesty which, in default of other delicate feelings, are much more frequent among common people than in society. She loved flowers too much! The perfume of invisible lilacs breathed over a garden wall was

enough to make her feel happy, and the few pennies levied on her salary for her personal expenses at very distant intervals never went but one way—for the little bouquet of violets which rolled by so temptingly in a hand-cart. She used to keep it a whole week in the folds of her dress, even when it was faded and withered; it represented all that was delicious, all inaccessible superfluity.

Many things that Louise has unconsciously told me, in her often incorrect language, which at times nevertheless contained perfect discoveries in picturesque expression, about what was beautiful and poetic in her neglected childhood, might seem improbable to those who do not know how near the Parisian workwoman is to being an artist, by the keenness of her impressions and the subtlety of her taste.

Her years of apprenticeship were not her worst; far from it. The badly ventilated, overheated workroom, with its heavy atmosphere, its unwholesome contacts, came later on. And every evening there was that abhorred return to the hideousness of family life. If the sound of a quarrel did not reach her as soon as she came to the staircase, Louise made up her mind, with all the calmness of accepted habit, either that her father was dead drunk, or else had not come home, which meant that she would have to run to the station-house next morning and claim him. More frequently Férou was making a racket, and she had to save her mother from being beaten black and blue, though she was so tiresome, she had to confess it to herself, so wearing with her everlasting and useless recriminations! To do that she would boldly thrust herself between

the victim and the raised fist, which, however, had never fallen on her slender little person. The black eyes certainly had a magnetic power. Still, while she protected her mother against her father and her father against himself, Louise, her heart sickened with disgust, loved neither of them.

Yet she knew what it was to love. She had loved with all her heart a tame sparrow, which would perch on her shoulder and come hopping to get a crumb of bread from her lips; she had loved it and bemoaned its loss, for, frightened by the father's stupid anger, the poor little thing had flown away one day, and was not able to recognize, once it was out in the dark yard framed by uniform buildings, the window where its cage swung. Louise could still remember long afterwards, with an intensity which brought the tears to her eyes, the despair she felt at finding the empty cage, and the heartbreaking uselessness of the bunch of chickweed brought home as a tidbit, and the sleepless nights during which her lively imagination had pictured all the perils, all the tortures, which await a tame sparrow pursued by cats and pecking at every window-pane. For months she thought she recognized her pet in every sparrow she met; and then she swore to herself that she would never have another companion—she had suffered too much at losing it.

That sparrow had her first love; she thought that it alone had deserved it. Her workroom associates did not please her much; she did not like the secrets they whispered to each other so suspiciously, nor the vulgar songs, nor the ugly stories which seemed to be their favorite pastime. She was but vaguely acquainted with

good and evil, but certain beings have an instinctive moral cleanliness. Nothing had developed this instinct in Louise; no religious instruction, nor any other. She just knew how to read, write, and count. One needs time for learning one's catechism, and time was what she had least of, little as she had of other things. True, she did at times, while running her errands, go into some beautiful church to get warm, to rest a bit, to enjoy the strange peace which she found there only, in the silence, the solitude, and the semi-darkness just pierced by the vacillating gleams of golden lamps. And if, perchance, the organ's solemn voice filled the great nave, she would burst into sobs; yet she never would have dreamed of calling these fugitive impressions piety. Her father had always sneered at pious people in her presence, and the anti-clerical newspapers on the table on which he slept off his drunkenness, resting his head on his folded arms, were not calculated to teach her that she had a soul. Her mother went to Mass once or twice a year, but only on condition of having a Sunday dress; so the little girl naturally took to thinking that the practice of religion was the exclusive privilege of well-dressed people. Where would this total absence of principles have led her in time, if the great love which suddenly came to fill her life had not intervened? No one knows. However it may have been, up to her fifteenth year Louise had too many worries—"head-breakers," as she called them—to become acquainted with temptation, save at the rare moments when a ray of sunshine, a flower, a bird, had made her feel that she would have loved to play the truant.

The beauty of things confusedly felt in a glimpse

of nature, by means of one of those impressions of art which arise from the mere sight of the streets of Paris, now and then helped her to forget that which made her suffer more than anything else—shame—the worst of all tortures for the proud—the shame of having to say to one's self, "That drunkard reeling along against the walls and hooted at by the boys is my father; that chatterer, who betrays all our saddest secrets to every one she meets, is my mother"—this shame is more unbearable than cold and hunger or long hours of over-work!

Though silent, Louise's active imagination embroidered ceaselessly on this sad theme, when she was not busy with the more material problems which weighed upon her daily; the rent to pay, the baker's bill, the serious question of coal in winter, the money for the nurse where the little sister boarded. This little sister had come late, when no one wanted her, and was still vegetating in a distant village, given up to those mercenary hands who carry off the Parisian workmen's children pell-mell with hospital waifs.

"She'll die like the rest, no doubt, and the money will be lost," thought Louise; "but, at least, she won't die through any fault of mine."

A woman she met in the workroom had told her that babies who were not well paid for were often so neglected that they died, and this thought haunted her. The workwoman referred to had left her child with decent people in the neighborhood of Paris; she liked to speak of what was evidently her pride, the aim of her life, and Louise never wearied of listening to her. This woman inspired her with more sympathy and

confidence than the others; she never judged her, never considered as her fault the embarrassment in which she was placed by the abandonment of a good-for-nothing husband; she simply said to herself that the woman had had no luck. The fact that a mother should deprive herself of all in order to bring up her child seemed to her to be a duty, one of those natural duties, the only ones she understood, although she herself, somewhat later, was unconsciously to rise so far above them.

One Sunday, seized with a singular curiosity, she proposed to accompany the young mother to see "her little one." This was a memorable day in Louise's life. The sort of a suburb they went to deserved at most the modest name of outskirts of the town, but for one who has never left her squalid street it is quite an ocean voyage to go down the Seine in a steamboat, and a group of trees at the edge of a dusty road has all the enchantment of a forest. Louise went to the country for the first time in her life that day; the intoxication of the open air, the immensity of the sky, no longer broken by lines of roofs or the smoke of chimneys, the fresh perfume of the new-mown hay, the twittering under leafy coverts, the buzz of insects crazed by the sunlight—all these new things had their share in the ineradicable impression she brought away with her. To have a child to take care of, to kiss, to spoil! What a delight! How much happier this poor woman, whom every one pitied, was than she, who had nothing but her parents! . . . And a passionate aspiration carried her wholly towards her little absent sister. The child must come home, she must! But how could she assume this new

responsibility? Everything depended on her even now. Her father worked only now and then, when he felt like it—accidentally, as it were—and even then . . . Louise had finally given up going to take him out of the station-house.

“Oh, if he could only stay there for good and all!”

She expressed this somewhat undutiful sentiment to a kind person who had brought the toper home and asked something for his trouble:

“Upon my word, I’d rather give you twice as much to keep him!”

Louise, however, was beginning to earn good wages, and her authority was increasing in that home, between a mother who had no will at all and a degraded father. So she was listened to when she declared that she had made up her mind to have her little sister home.

“As for what awaits her in life, it’s a great pity that she got along better than the others!” said Férou, philosophically, for he sometimes found a certain kind of pessimism that he made use of in his cups. Nevertheless, he went and got drunk to celebrate the growth of the family circle.

Madame Férou was loud in her exclamations on finding the little thing so frail. She was sure that she “wouldn’t live two days!” But Louise felt the maternal thrill, which is the deepest thrill of love, before that unwashed, badly dressed, and undeveloped creature that was in rags and could hardly talk even in a rude country dialect. She threw her arms around the little, frightened, screaming savage, carried her off to her room, with a wild joy at being the only one to ap-

preciate her, put her in her own bed, caressed and appeased her, and, while she slept, swore faithfully that she should never know all that had made her, Louise, suffer so much; that she should never be hungry or cold, never be present at those brutal scenes which seem like murder to children, never have to run home alone, in rain or snow, through the streets from the workshop; that she should have something else to do besides drawing a needle and thread ten and twelve hours at a stretch in a stuffy place, next to vicious little girls of the worst type; she swore that she should be happy, and educated, and well dressed, and well married to wind up with; in a word, that she should have all that her big sister never had had. And from that moment it seemed to her that the big sister's person was put in the background; that she no longer had a real, personal life, that her sole part was to defend, protect, and adore the *other one*. She abdicated early. Not long ago, remembering the regular profile, the thick tresses of former days, her slenderness, and her active gait, I could not help saying to her :

“A good many persons must have thought you pretty, my poor Louise !”

Shrugging her shoulders, she answered :

“Certainly; there are always plenty of fellows on the street ready to speak to girls.”

“I don't mean those.”

“Oh, you mean something serious ? Bah ! as if one ever had time to think of such things !”

It was just as it had been with religion. Always the same lack of time.

“Were you never romantic, Louise ?”

“There is no romance for such as I am. They sometimes used to lend me novels at the shop. And I wouldn't have let my little sister read them, you may be sure! But there were always beautiful ladies in them, rich ladies, who had nothing else to do but listen to the sweet things told them. Oh, it must be very nice as long as it lasts, but, after all, it's much the same as with poor girls like us, when they let themselves go. I've seen too many of those stories in my life to care for looking for them in books. No, I never made much of novels. What I would have liked, if I could have had it, if I had known enough, was music. . . . Yes, music and verses.”

“What kind of verses? Tell me about them.”

“Well, there were four. . . . You'll laugh, but I've said them over and over again to myself as I sat sewing, until I really imagined they were my own; they used to beat with my heart, come and go with my breath; they seemed to give me air and a breeze in the middle of summer. . . . I couldn't do without them.”

And in a dreamy voice Louise recited:

“ ‘ Butterflies, white as the snow,
 Are flying in swarms o'er the sea ;
 When can I—do let me know—
 Wing the air's blue roadway with ye? ’ ”

“I caught many others like that in newspapers, by chance, forgetting the beginnings and the ends; I kept just the parts I needed—for instance, just enough to imagine the ocean, or to fancy I really saw the butterflies going by. ‘Wing the air's blue roadway’—is that not lovely?”

“Don't you know whose they are?”

“No, and I don't care. I know nothing at all. It's been said to me often enough!” And a great sigh raised her hollow chest.

“You'll never make me believe that you could not have married if you had wished to, Louise.”

Her expressive eyebrows contracted slightly, her lips parted hesitatingly.

“Yes, perhaps . . . once . . . I was no longer very young. But it would have separated us. I didn't want to . . .”

And I understood that it was only one more sacrifice made to the idol. This idol's name, by predestination no doubt, was Aimée, a tiny idol, the most fragile one ever surrounded by offerings and incense—one of those delicate Parisian blossoms that sometimes, by a miracle, bloom on a dung-heap. To look at her one would have said that in that slight little blonde, with her convex forehead, her determined chin, her somewhat hard manners and physiognomy, the brain was being developed at the expense of the heart; but the very rarity of her proofs of affection made them all the more precious to Louise's mind. When Aimée kissed her or merely seemed pleased with a gift, she felt that this was enough to do wonders for; and, in fact, she did wonders all the time, working nights as she did all day, and always ready when there was a question of overtime. If her eyes closed with fatigue over her work, she saw a rosy little face that once was so pale, a child's face that owed her its dimples and its pretty color, smile at her, crying: “Work, work! go on, anyway—it's for me!” And her needle would start afresh and run on like a

horse that generously gives his speed though he be half foundered, when he knows that the victory depends on him. An iron constitution upheld her in her fatigue. When Louise was born, Férou had not yet destroyed his herculean strength by alcohol, and his wife was still young, though now it seemed difficult to think that she had ever been so.

“Everything goes to that young one now,” growled the drunkard. “No one else in the house counts for anything. She’d let her father go without tobacco to give her a toy!”

In reality Louise allowed no one to make any sacrifices but herself. Under the pretext that she now had “customers,” and that it was impossible for her to try on dresses in a den, she rented an independent room on the same story of the house, furnished it neatly, and put her little sister in it, as in an ivory tower, where she would be sheltered from everything—from misery, bad influences, the brawling of her parents, whom she would not let the child see unless they were in “fit condition.” Before going to school, Aimée had her chocolate, while her sister breakfasted hastily, unnoticed by the little one, on a piece of bread and cheese. To make up for this, Louise used to turn and darn for herself an old alpaca dress that was all rusty, and which she wore winter and summer alike. For a time she thought she liked pretty clothes; for a short period of frivolity she had enjoyed the luxury of a ribbon or a pair of cuffs, but henceforward her only coquetry was for Aimée.

Aimée had come at the decisive hour when her big sister had felt herself even more alone than formerly.

Alone ! Louise never found any other word to express the emptiness of her starved heart or the differences of nature which separated her from her surroundings. And now she was no longer alone. It was quite natural that Aimée should never dream of thanking her, because all the obligations, all the causes for gratitude, were on her side. She owed her this delicious plenitude, and the darling had such lovely qualities ! Louise went into ecstasies over her perfections.

“As if all children were not alike,” moaned Madame Férou, incredulously. “It’s all your fancy. It won’t do her much good going to school all the time ! It would do better to train her to take my place little by little, now that I’m not able to do housework for others.”

“Housework !” retorted Louise, indignantly. “No housework, nor dressmaking ! She’s above all that. Don’t you see that she’s always at the head of her class ? Her teachers say that she learns all she wants to without any trouble. Such a good, reasonable, studious child ! She’ll . . . Yes, you’ll succeed, my treasure !” she would say to her little sister.

And in reality the latter had made up her mind to succeed. She had a firm will, and a character to match. The tender, foolish, and passionate things that Louise said to her wearied her a little as being exaggerations to which it would have been impossible for her to respond ; but, none the less, she felt that her sister’s affection was a power that it was in her interest to treat carefully, and she allowed herself to be caressed in the somewhat impatient, nervous fashion of a kitten, that is seeking a means of escape even while enduring your

caresses. As for Aimée being ambitious and persevering, she measured the journey of her life by the success she gained; as her sister had said, she got on, thanks to the facilities nowadays granted to poor girls to obtain an education. The day she gained her first diploma, Férou, who had wanted to celebrate the event in his way, had a terrible attack, followed by many others, during which he saw rats racing about, and so passed from inoffensive to furious delirium. He had to be taken to a hospital. Aimée's pride suffered much more than her heart from this. She let Louise go to see their father all alone, and take him a thousand little dainties, and she let her bury him alone, too, when he died, burnt up by brandy.

Louise bought and made up all the family mourning; paid all the funeral expenses, and nursed her mother, who had taken to her bed and would not be comforted now she was no longer beaten.

Her sister, however, watched her without any show of feeling—nay, even with a certain kind of haughty pity. That fatiguing life, devoted to manual labor, seemed to her the most distasteful in the world; the horror and contempt she felt for it contributed not a little to stimulate her efforts in another direction.

“It is strange,” she said, “that in wearing yourself out as you do, my poor Louise, you have never succeeded in laying anything aside.”

And Louise, out of delicacy, never explained why she had not been able to economize; why she had not taken advantage of certain opportunities for bettering her position, which would have made her leave her family.

“My daughter Aimée wants to enter the Normal

School," said Madame Férou, on the other hand, to her neighbors. "She knows how to manage better than her sister, who was not stupid either, but who, after all, will never be anything but a seamstress on day's wages, unable to put aside a penny."

While her tears still continued to flow under the majestic crape head-dress she now wore, Madame Férou no longer remembered her former objections to science; she had been told that education paid. The little one had been right in going in for an education, for she was just about to succeed. As for attributing any of the merit of this success to Louise's efforts, it never entered her mind; nor did it ever enter Aimée's. Proud and quite sure of herself, she considered life a game to be won, and found herself a very skilful player. And in this she was quite right. It was a wonder to find so much clear common sense and ability in the daughter of a drunkard. Aimée would have given a vigorous contradiction to the theories of atavism, if her physical strength had equalled her intellectual powers. Threatened with a nervous disease, she needed expensive medicines, special baths and food, and Louise's fairy needle provided all that, and provided so well that she ended by paying for her little sister's health with her own; growing old before her time, losing her freshness and her flesh, she became actually homely.

"She neglects herself too much; but, after all, how could she, at her age and with such a face, have a proper taste for dress?" thought Aimée, every time Louise tried a new dress on her.

She ought to have noticed that one can feel cold at any age, and that her sister did without a winter cloak.

“All habit,” mused Aimée, with her hands in her muff.

After a difficult examination, Aimée’s overstrained, over-excited nerves felt the effort—she became anæmic. The physicians advised sea-bathing, and Louise thought she would go mad when she recognized that these were beyond her means. She would have signed a covenant with Satan to have the invalid suddenly transported to some sea-beach; she cast looks of hatred upon all unknown young girls who seemed to her rich enough to procure this luxury; she had anarchistic violences of feeling against all who owned anything. Her despair softened even Aimée, who, consoling her in her peculiar way, would say:

“Poor sister! What’s to be done?—it’s not your fault that you earn so little!” in a tone which implied: “If *I* were you, I should be able to earn more.”

A wonderful piece of good luck came to help them. In her odd moments, which means at times when others rest and sleep, Louise used to work for a former saleswoman, who had become the housekeeper of her now wealthy and retired employers. While trying on the voluminous waist of this buxom matron, she learned that “the family” were about to start for Treport, and looking for a person “with a diploma,” who would teach the children during the vacation, for her board and lodging. Louise nearly drove the scissors into her customer’s skin as she was cutting out the neck of her dress, but managed to stammer:

“I think I’ve got what you want.”

And she enumerated in detail all the talents and merits of a “very nice young lady” she knew. Two

days later—how long those days and nights seemed to Louise!—the providential agent returned, bringing good news :

“Madame thought the person might suit, but would like to see her.” And then only did Louise confess that she had spoken of her sister.

“Now listen to me, my girl,” said the fat woman, very plainly. “I’ll be frank with you; this may spoil everything. They’ll be afraid that the teacher has not learned good enough manners in a workman’s family, and all the more as your father . . . In short, as you understand—let me manage the whole thing, and don’t you appear in it.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Louise, “I won’t breathe. Make up any story you please. As long as my sister has what she needs !”

She never suspected with what pleasure Aimée had consented to keep quiet about her humble origin and her relationship to the seamstress at the same time.

There was one thing that Louise’s honest soul could not conceive, which, however, should have struck her long before, if she had not been going on in a dream of self-denial. A barrier, imperceptible at first, but which grew day by day, was rising between the one who had stripped herself of all, and the chosen one to whom she had given all. Aimée no longer spoke to Louise of her studies, feeling sure that she would not be understood; it pained her to have to live with a person who had read so little and spelled so poorly, and who made grammatical mistakes in conversation; unconsciously she gently pushed her back to the inferior rank of purveyor and servant; she sought her equals—

young girls provided with that semi-culture which makes great demands and great pretensions; in short, she impatiently awaited her admission to the Normal School, which would permit her to withdraw from her family for good.

The day that Aimée attained the goal so ardently desired, she said to the persons who congratulated her :

“Yes, the future belongs to me ! It is a great satisfaction to owe nothing to any one but yourself ! I can well say that I have made myself whatever I am !”

Louise thought that Aimée was right, after all, and that she had gained everything at the point of the sword, as it were. At most, all that had been done in her behalf was to keep off some material cares from her, and not force her to think of the mean necessities of every-day life.

It was something, no doubt, but so little when one considered retrospectively the amount of accomplished work ! Had even she, Louise herself, been much more than the fly on the wagon-shaft ? . . . Yes, she had loved her, ah ! loved her so much ! Love is the great supporter in this world. And she had certainly given her that. But Mademoiselle Férou, the Normal School student, could not rest content with her sister's devotion; she had new friends : her classmates, her equals, persons on her own level. The past was the past.

“She thinks everything can be learned from books,” said Louise to me, the only time I ever discovered a certain bitterness in her thoughts. “Thinking counts for something, too, and a woman who lives by her needle thinks more than you may suppose. I knew how to be interested in all she was doing. If she had only wanted

to take a little pains, just a little, to raise me, even by doing nothing more than talking to me, the distance between us would not be so great to-day. I asked her to try, but she laughed and said, 'There would be too much to do! You are too old!' And it's true, I am too old," added Louise, quite disheartened.

She grew very homesick when separated from her darling.

"You see, Aimée has slipped out of my hands, just as my sparrow did long ago. But there's a difference; it's for her welfare, and it was my wish!"

Seeing her grow weaker and weaker, I forced her to consult a physician. He ordered much quiet, a complete rest of mind, and behind her back he said to me:

"Another hysterical woman! That woman ought to have had all the care of her own household, a husband and children, a natural life, without excessive ambitions. She has reached for the unattainable, and has broken her neck."

"Another hysterical woman!" It is so easy to say that. The day when there shall be none but well-balanced minds in the world, it will be all over for all kinds of heroism. That hysterical woman was, however, perfectly able to control herself. She choked down her jealousy, her humiliations; she never confessed them to a soul; never acknowledged what a terrible blow the departure of her sister had been—that sister who was her child as well. That discreet and somewhat timid girl took no end of steps, made all sorts of requests, to gain "protection" for the new teacher. She worried those among her customers who happened to know influential people; she, who never

would have asked for anything on her own account, exposed herself to rebuffs, nearly became an intriguer. And when she came home and found herself face to face with her old mother, now very nearly idiotic, yet the only thing left to her, she tried to conjure up the vanished image of little Aimée just back from the country, so pale, so weak, so dependent on her loving-kindness; then she would bury her face in the pillow on which that fair head had rested, and kiss all the old dolls and early picture-books, as if they were so many sacred relics.

Aimée Férou has advanced rapidly in her chosen career, however crowded the paths of education may be. Nevertheless, she is always talking of injustice and the unfair advancement of others, never finding her merits sufficiently recognized. She has married a young man "on her own level," in Louise's words—a gentleman in a good situation in a bank. He earns less than she does, but, on the other hand, he belongs to a good family, and consented to a union with the Férous only on the condition of taking his wife away from such surroundings.

Aimée, influenced by him, although she has very fixed ideas on the rights of women and equality in marriage, no longer finds her sister a good enough seamstress to intrust her with her best dresses.

"I made her wedding dress, all the same," Louise often says, beaming anew at the recollection. "A white satin dress that I had so often, so *very* often, seen and made up in my dreams. Perhaps it could have fitted better, but with her pretty figure everything looks well. However, I remember that there was a fault somewhere

near the shoulder that I could not correct. It made her angry for a moment, just a little moment, she is so quick; but then, good gracious! it is so natural to want to look one's very best on such a day as that! Yet I was so nervous from having worked too hard those last few weeks, so as to get everything ready, that I was stupid enough to burst out crying. Then the thought struck me, all of a sudden, that I *ought* to be happy, that I was happier than many others; more than many rich people, who in spite of all their money haven't what they want—for all my life I had wanted but one thing, always the same one, and it happened that very morning."

To have an ideal and realize it is, in fact, a rare favor of fate, and we cannot pay too dearly for it, even were it to cost every drop of blood in our veins; but it seemed marvellous to me that this simple creature should have understood it. I looked at her with respect, without daring to tell her how far she rose, in my eyes, above the vulgar diploma-winners who despised her; and she went on explaining things to me:

"Of course my sister cannot see us, mother and me, as often as she would like to; she has so much to do; her school, first of all, and then obligations of all kinds, things that we have no means of understanding, having always led such a very different life from hers. But I know very well that she thinks of us. She even said to me the other day: 'If you hadn't been there to take charge of mother, my marriage never would have come about.' It is no doubt much easier to attend to one's family duties when every one is not watching you, when you haven't a position to keep up. Oh! she has so

much judgment, and cleverness, and courage! You'll see how she'll succeed. All I'm afraid of is that she'll wear herself out. I cannot help her any more. I am really of no use at all to her. And that makes me feel that I am so lonely now! So awfully lonely!"

Coming back to the word that had been the artless and mournful lament of her childhood, Louise hid her face in her hands. But almost immediately her poor needle-pricked finger brushed away a tear that would obstinately persist in starting, and she added, with her patient smile:

"But how I rattle on! Excuse me. All this is no one's fault . . . It's just life."



MADAME CARO.

CAROLINE CASSIN, who married the famous philosopher Edme Caro, spent all the early part of her life in the country. Her father was a functionary in the University, and while still young was carried off by an epidemic of typhoid which he had faced in order to set an example, as rector, to his subordinates. From this time on, and even amidst the joys of a brilliant marriage, she beheld death making havoc in her family. A brother and sister followed her father within a few months. Long afterwards her only child, a charming young girl, had just married a distinguished literary man, M Bourdeau, when she fell into a decline and died at the age of twenty-three. Then Ma-

dame Caro's mother succumbed, and finally her husband (1887); and she alone remains standing amidst the ruins.

In happier days she had written four novels under a fictitious name: "Le Péché de Madeleine," "Flamen," "Histoire de Souci," "Les Nouvelles Amours d'Hermann et de Dorothée." Fifteen years afterwards she resumed her pen and published: "Amour de Jeune Fille," "Complice!" "Fausse Route," "Fruits Amers," "L'Idole," "Les Lendemain." The tale that follows is extracted from the latter volume. It is a sort of autobiography which describes with singular delicacy of touch and penetrating analysis both a special case and a general state of mind. It is the best way in which to give an idea of the remarkably talented woman who published in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, in 1897 the attractive and much admired story called "Pas à Pas"

After the Harvest.

BY MME. CARO.

SHE was very small and slender. Her once fair hair, now faded and growing gray, curled about the delicate face whose transparent skin left visible the tracery of veins upon her temples. Her eyes were soft and brown, and her expression of passive, somewhat subdued, resignation was intensified by the fichu of black gauze encircling her head and shoulders. Now and then a furtive smile would flit across her firm and still red lips and vanish, as if arrested midway, giving meanwhile a glimpse of white and regular teeth. On the pale face, veiled in mourning, this swift, almost timid, smile had the mysterious sweetness of an apparition; it was like the phantom of a too soon departed past, and to an attentive eye it seemed the epitome of a vanished youth, of a gayety buried under the ruins of happiness and love.

She was alone near the window, before a table on which lay scattered papers, half-finished drawings, porcelain cups, and all the outfit of an artist in water-colors. Occasionally she would remove her glasses and lean back to judge of an effect, and then resume her brush to add a line or deepen a tint, working fast, because day was declining and the rosy glow cast on the windows by the

slanting rays was swiftly fading. Her eyes were tired. She laid down her brushes, dried them, washed the tips of her slender fingers, rubbed her hands together with a chilly gesture, and leaned back in her armchair, where she remained motionless. Twilight slowly invaded the salon, shrouding one by one in its shadows the objects it contained: the chairs, the tables, the Louis Seize bookcase with its gilt copper escutcheons, the Italian mirror with the open-work wooden frame, the modest cabinet displaying neatly arranged and precious souvenirs, miniatures collected in other days, finely chased snuff-boxes, glasses, enamels, all blending together in the grayness and the gloom.

But the old lady's half-shut eyes remained fixed on the portrait of a man hanging on the opposite wall, growing dim in the shadows like everything else, yet as visible to her soul as if daylight still illumined the dark, expressive face, the piercing eyes under eyebrows drawn together by the habit of a concentrated gaze, the white, robust young throat emerging from a deep red woollen jacket. What need had she of light? Did she not know every line of the face—the dreamy forehead, the firm and smiling mouth? Obscurity favored the illusion of life; it was no longer the portrait, it was the absent one himself who was near her. Together they went back through the vanished years; scenes and memories succeeded each other, confused and hurried, like a stream that overflows its bed and meanders before returning thither. And from these fluctuating visions at last arose a fresh and luminous landscape, a bright spring day, an indefinable odor of freshly turned earth, of balm and honey diffused in the atmosphere; a quiet house at the top of

a garden in which peach and plum trees bloomed in pink and white. Below lay the calm, clear river, reflecting the green hills around it; and all about the joyous cries of birds and children, songs, shouts, calls—a very fanfare of young and healthy pleasure.

She was there on the lawn, the eldest of the family, stretching out her arms to protect the noisy, trembling flock of sheep and lambs behind her. She was the shepherdess, and it was her duty to defend them against the hungry wolf, a big boy of fourteen or fifteen, who played his part in earnest and gave her a great deal to do. And what a fluttering in the flock, swaying and undulating in her train; what piercing cries of terror and pleasure when the wolf, baffling her vigilance, contrived by some skilful feint to seize one of the hindmost of the band! He too was there, the young and still unknown artist whom a country curate had summoned to repair the old statues in the church, and who still lingered in this valley, although his task was ended, detained by the innocent grace of a fair and delicate young girl, so naïve that she did not even suspect that any one could love her. She remembered that she wore a woollen dress that day, the gray-blue color of the flax flower, and that its surplice waist gave a glimpse, between two folds of lawn, of the spring of her throat, and that its wide sleeves showed her round and white but rather thin arms at every movement she made. She had stopped short, out of breath and laughing, her two hands crossed on her heaving breast, and demanding a respite, when she felt the pressure of two fingers laid gently on her waist. Turning her head, she saw him behind her, and their eyes met as the fingers lying on the slender waist

pressed it a trifle more closely. In the depths, in the very depths of the glance which seemed to envelop her in a caress, she read something she did not comprehend, something which till then she had not guessed; she read that he loved her passionately, and that for her the games of childhood were over.

Oh! the happy days of love, of rapturous confidence, of invincible hope! And the first steps in the double life, so humble indeed, so laborious and poor, yet made so beautiful by affection! How they both had worked,—he in his studio, carving stone and marble to win renown; she to keep in spotless order and even in elegance their modest nest on the heights of Montmartre! Thence they surveyed the great city, populous and magnificent, lying at their feet. When the laborious day was ended they went to sit in a little deserted square, exchanging their dreams of modest ambition,—innocent dreams, free from all envy,—which hovered sweetly obscure between the peaceful, inaccessible stars and the swarming, twinkling gaslights of the city. Oh! the cherished joys of the poor fireside, the glorious conquests, one by one achieved, of some long-desired object wherewith to embellish the humble apartment! The surprise of a piece of embroidery wrought in secret throughout long months and suddenly displayed to the amazed eyes of the artist! And that poor little cradle, so tenderly adorned by unaccustomed hands, with what artless pride they had placed their first-born in it! How they had cherished the beautiful child, how they had kissed and caressed it until that day,—that fatal day, above all abhorred—when death benumbed the boy, when he breathed his last sigh, when the fresh and sup-

ple limbs stiffened in the last convulsion ! Ah ! God ! . . . God ! . . . after so many years, so many sorrows, why does that ineffaceable hour obstinately and forever revive ? Why must she go back again to wander round that cradle like a soul in pain, to see once more the little angel, his little face, the color of violets, drowned in the pale gold of his long hair ? Was it not enough to have endured that martyrdom once ? Could she never detach her mind and heart from it ?

A sigh, pathetic as a sob, escaped her. And although she was pious, profoundly rooted in religious faith, resigned without a murmur to the Almighty Power which determines life and death, yet she asked a reason why. Why had he been reclaimed, that beloved being, so glad to live, and so much beloved ? Was it, perhaps, that he was too much loved ? Yes ; perhaps. God will not admit of idols . . . And yet, others cherish their sons and still keep them ! . . . The poor head grew weary of trying to solve this painful problem . . . Perhaps life would have been too hard or too dangerous for this tender child, and He who knows all, the present and the future, had mercifully withdrawn him from it before putting him to the test, when as yet he knew nothing but kisses and innocent smiles. This thought consoled her. Incomprehensible as the designs of God might be to her feeble heart, she found it sweet to believe that all is decreed and willed, sorrow as well as joy ; that her tribulations had a reason and a purpose ; that her tears did not fall at hazard into the void ; that evil as well as good is a gift from the Invisible Love, the Sovereign Intelligence which seems beyond time, which knows what all science ignores, and which judges righteous

judgment. "Thy will be done!" she murmured, looking up to the sky, where the first stars were beginning to appear.

Softly as she had spoken, her voice awoke a small water-spaniel sleeping on his cushion at her feet. He got up, yawned, stretched his paws, and came slowly to her side, resting his cool, moist muzzle against her hand, which he occasionally licked.

"Poor Lelio, is it you? My good dog, my little comrade!"

She drew her hand gently through the spaniel's silky hair, and emboldened by her caresses he jumped up on her lap, stretched his back to invite kisses, and then, after two or three attempts to find a position that suited him, ended by curling himself into a ball with loud sighs of satisfaction. His mistress continued to pass her hand absently through his hair, but her thoughts were elsewhere. They had followed their accustomed bent; they had returned to the days that were gone, the days so swiftly flown, when she had loved, trembled, hoped.

These were no longer the days of Montmartre. Time had gone on, fame had come, yet not without anxiety and hard work, not without struggles, vexations, repugnances. The young artist had been industrious, had struggled severely against hostile cliques, jealous rivalries, and every device by which keen-eyed dealers seek to exploit the inexperienced. In the end he had conquered, won splendid medals, and finally the cross. The Institute opened its doors to him; he received orders from government, and his least works brought high prices.

They occupied a charming apartment, elegantly furnished, in the Rue Bacbet-de-Jouy, not far from the studio where he worked all day. She had assisted him much by her courage and tenderness in the difficult ascent towards success, and now she did him honor by her grace and beauty; for she had been pretty and much admired. She remembered it with a sort of tender pity for herself; yes, pretty, admired, surrounded with homage. She turned a sad glance into the solitary obscurity of her apartment, and her trembling hand caressed the spaniel on her knees, the sole frequenter of her widowhood. The time was over when her salon had been besieged by an eager crowd, the most fashionable women and the most famous men deeming it an honor to be admitted, and the street, on her reception days, thronged with carriages, and the antechamber with majestic footmen. How long ago it seemed, that fleeting intoxication of success, of prosperity at last attained! Was it true? was it real? Had they truly lived in an ease and happiness which would have been perfect but for that empty cradle which had never again been filled?

At this moment the door of the salon opened and a servant put in her head.

“Shall I bring the lamp, Madame? It is not good for Madame to remain here in the dark.” Lelio had sprung to the floor and begun to bark; then, recognizing the maid, and ashamed of his excessive zeal, he wagged his tail in cheerful apology.

“Yes, Virginie, bring the lamp and make up the fire.”

“Shall I make tea? This is Tuesday.”

“Unnecessary! No one will come on Christmas Eve.”

“Oh!” grumbled Virginie, “for all that come on other days it is not worth troubling one’s self. Madame’s friends are not very nice to her, truly.”

“Bring the lamp and rekindle the fire,” gently repeated the old lady.

Drawing up the curtain she looked at the nocturnal sky, where a faint new moon was sailing like a mysterious ship, very pale, in dimmest outline. And as all things, always, plunged her irrevocably into the past,—her soul flying instinctively from the gloomy present and the implacable future,—she recurred to it now with a great shiver . . . Once more she seems to hear that tumultuous crowd disturbing the silence of a quiet street, those confused voices, the door of the court opening with a bang, a human flood surging underneath her windows with muffled noises, with heavy tread. . . . Amazed but not disturbed, though conscious of a vague emotion, she draws the curtain, and, in the cold light of the rising moon, she beholds a rigid mass, a heavy burden borne by men. Then the bell rings loudly, there is a stifled murmur in the antechamber, broken exclamations, and a sudden silence. With a heart wrenched by unexpected anguish she springs forward, and sees before her, bleeding, prone, inanimate, him who is all her life! . . . “O God! O God! How often must I re-live that hour? How many times shall I drain anew that chalice? I saw that,—and yet I live! I endured that martyrdom,—and yet I live! . . . What is my heart made of that it can resist such tortures?”

He had gone out in the morning, strong and joyous;

he was just then blocking in a group commemorative of the National Defence. It was a work of inspiration; it was fine ! He was confident that it would be his masterpiece. In the midst of his work, exultant and in full possession of himself, death had seized him, rudely and by surprise. A sudden dizziness had caused him to lose his balance; his spine had been broken in falling from the high scaffolding. He had been taken up unconscious from the ground . . . That was twelve years ago ! Twelve minutes or twelve centuries ! time remained stationary, it was always present to the inconsolable widow. The details of life, the petty incidents of every-day necessities, pressing interest, might distract her from that scene, but nothing could obliterate it. The moment that she was alone the unhappy woman again beheld him, sometimes brave and tender, perhaps excited; sometimes flung rudely from the heights of his youthful glory, bleeding and broken at her feet. Always and by every road she came back to her Calvary.

Meanwhile the servant brought the lamp and set it on the table. The little salon emerged from the shadows and assumed a comfortable and joyous air under the wavering reflections of the newly-kindled wood fire, whose restless, unequal flames rose and fell, crackled and ran from one corner of the hearth to the other as if chased by some gay sprite. The little dog yapped, pricked his ears, fixed his great, intelligent eyes on his mistress with an expression of intense desire; his voice commanded; his breast touching the floor, his back raised as if ready to jump, he plainly expected to be obeyed. Nor did he wait long; those two understood each other so well ! “ Oh ! Lelio wants to play ? He

has been very good, and it is right to amuse him a little."

She took a ball from her work-basket,—a modest, penny ball, whose multicolored surface bore the marks of the puppy's teeth. Then began a long game. She threw the ball; the dog, watchful of her movements, caught it as it flew and carried it to a sofa, where his mistress pretended to take it from him. He defended it, squeezed tight between his paws, growling, his chops drawn away from his teeth, his ears flat, his eyes wicked, until, satisfied with his fine defence, he pushed it back himself that his mistress might begin the play anew.

The doorbell rang and put an end to their sport, Virginie presently ushered in an old man, slightly bald, whose fine and gifted face was encircled by a white beard trimmed to a point. Nothing in his manner or his evening dress betrayed that he was a physician. Nevertheless he was a doctor of the Faculty of Paris, and for many years had directed an important department in one of the great hospitals. Rich and a bachelor, he had now withdrawn from "the swim," and no longer practised except as a friend. It was in this capacity that he presented himself at the home of his old neighbor.

"Ah! doctor, I was very sure it was you who rang my bell. Who else would think of coming in this bitter cold? You are the only one who is kind enough."

"Dear friend, there is no kindness in doing what we find pleasant. You know I always like to chat beside your fire, especially when I find you alone . . . and I was pretty sure no one would come to-night, because it

is Christmas Eve. People are running to the churches, and——”

“ You think of everything, dear doctor. You said to yourself that these festival days are the saddest of all to a solitary like me.”

She held out her hand with an affectionate movement, and made him take the large armchair beside her. Her callers were few, except at those customary seasons when people pay their conventional debts by a brief and formal visit.

* * *

There had been a lively movement of sympathy, a sort of emulation as to who should show the widow most attention and respect after the catastrophe that had overwhelmed her husband in mid-career. The tragic death of the brilliant artist had disarmed envy and jealous rivalries and excited profound emotion among his friends and admirers, as well as among men of the world who had derived a certain lustre from intimacy with him, and fashionable women whose beauty he had reproduced, or who still hoped to inspire a work of his and so count for something in his fame. People had made it a duty, almost a title of honor, not to desert the gloomy house. For a time it had been a fashionable diversion, a matter of good taste, to make a pilgrimage to Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, and to be punctual in attendance at the tiny apartment to which the sorrowing widow had withdrawn when deprived of the competence assured by her husband's genius.

In the first period of her grief the unhappy woman had been indifferent to this attention, almost annoyed

by it, but in the end the universal good will had consoled her almost unawares. When her nerves had somewhat recovered from the horror of the tragedy; when the fatigue, the bitter disgust arising from material obligations, indispensable decisions, finally gave place to profound, concentrated, and incurable sorrow, she was touched by the sympathy that had remained active around her, by the numerous hands outstretched to meet her own; it seemed as if the absent were still protecting her. Was it not a ray of his glory falling upon her from the tomb, which relumed the mournful solitude of her hearth with the pure reflection of immortality? It was he, the noble artist who had gone, who now came near to meet these testimonies of affection and respect. And she forced herself to respond in some measure to the friendships which had remained faithful, to confine to the mute desolation of her own breast the complaints which had at first revealed her despair. She thought it unjust to reject a too painful kindness, and accused herself of having yielded too much to the egoism of her grief. Life and society, henceforth devoid of interest to her, retained their prestige for others more highly favored; she could not ask them to descend with her into the desolate limbo of her painful past.

Her patient soul had never conceived either bitterness or envy. She reproached herself for the involuntary sadness caused by the sight of an aged couple, a happy mother proud of her son, a brilliant and enduring prosperity, but at such times she never permitted herself to speak of her painful past, her ruined happiness. Hence it was possible to approach her without putting

on an expression for the occasion, without feeling obliged to enter the narrow circle of her pain; the amusements and gayeties of life could be spoken of in her presence without the dread of seeming malapropos. She could compassionate the lightest griefs, sympathize with cares less heavy than her own, receive idle confidences, dissuade from frivolous passions. In the kindly mildness of her own soul she found an affectionate pity for mortified vanity and disappointed ambition, for the disillusionings of deceived friendships and loves betrayed. She proved herself a sure and discreet adviser. And yet the day came when the fervor of her friends abated. Little by little their numbers grew less, until of all the throng of other days none remained but this physician who sat slowly sipping his tea in silence . . .

When her old friend departed she sat down before the brightly polished silver chafing dish on a little stand carefully arranged for her evening meal. She had retained a taste for such refinements. But she was not hungry; her animation was gone; the melancholy of desolation and the tyranny of memory had resumed their usual sway in spite of the noisy pleasure of the dog, excited by the preparations for eating, in spite of his coaxing, the artless greediness of his beautiful eyes and the characteristic movements of his tail and ears. But she smiled and caressed him, incapable of resistance. It was he that dined rather than she. After dinner she took up a coarse woollen petticoat she was crocheting and wished to finish before the next day for one of her *protégées*. Her long task was scarcely ended when the bell rang for midnight Mass, which she attended, accompanied by her servant. She was well wrapped up in a fur-lined man-

tle, for the cold was sharp. But on leaving the church towards one o'clock, she found the air less keen; the weather had softened, and a sort of thick mist absorbed the light of the gas jets; the stars and the slender sickle of the moon had vanished from the uniformly sombre sky. The foggy night, the gloomy return with a servant, made other Christmas mornings shine out in her memory, one especially, at the beginning of their married life, a brilliant midnight Mass at the Madeleine, a dazzling glow amidst the lights and chants, the crowd prostrate in the vast nave. And afterwards the gay midnight supper at the Maison d'Or with friends of their own age! How simple it seemed then to be happy! Very likely they never gave it a thought; they had health, youth, hope, love, and yet sometimes they complained! They thought fortune niggardly, success slow in coming; they counted what they still lacked, and forgot all the good things that had been granted them. Ah! my God, does one ever know all the happiness one has? What would she not give for one of those Noels, even the saddest of all, the one after the death of the child, when, leaning on each other, they dared not pass in front of the crib, and turned away so as not to see the little Jesus in His Mother's arms! Yes, even when her heart wept tears of blood and she seemed to have sounded the depths of human woe, at least she did not weep alone; they were together. She cast a heartrending glance around the desert of the foggy street,—how like her life it was!—where her servant's heavy step alone escorted hers; she shuddered, and her eyes were blurred. “Now, at least . . . yes, now I have touched the last extreme of mortal sorrow . . . all has

been torn from me; all affections and all blessings." In one swift, foreboding glance she beheld herself forever isolated, forsaken, without child or husband, almost without kin, with not even one of those resources by which fortune combats the terrors of old age, and forced to work in order to afford the modest luxury of a trifling alms!

In this way she reached her house, too absorbed even to heed Virginie's advice not to climb the stairs too fast. Lelio sprang to meet her and gave her a grand reception, but her grief was so engrossing that she barely noticed him.

* * *

The next day the sun contrived to pierce through the mists which had condensed thick clouds of livid yellow.

"That means snow," prophesied Virginie.

Notwithstanding this prediction, the old lady took her crocheted petticoat after lunch, and, accompanied by Lelio, turned towards the dwelling of the poor woman whom she had befriended for many years. Mother Flugans lived at the back of a blind alley near the Britte-aux-bailles, a distant and wretched quarter of the city. She was the widow of a galley-slave, but no one knew this except her benefactress, to whom she had confided this heavy secret one day when she saw her weeping behind her widow's veil.

The visitor unfolded the fine petticoat in the miserable hovel and laid it on her pensioner's knees. Then she drew from her purse the money she gave her every quarter for her rent, adding a little this time on account of Christmas; and after allowing herself to be embraced several times by the old woman, who anx-

iously inquired if she were "sure, very sure, that this gift would not incommode her, because for her own part she was used to poverty and unwilling that her protectress should deprive herself on her account," she rose and went away. December days are short, and she did not like to linger in dangerous quarters. Keeping close to the wall she went down the dark staircase, preceded by Lelio. He had already found the visit far too long, and manifested his impatience in most expressive pantomime, seizing Madame's umbrella crosswise between his teeth, and standing with his head turned to the door.

By degrees the sky had grown heavy with clouds of livid gray, and light flakes of snow were whirling about and powdering the streets and roofs with white. The old lady quickened her steps, foreseeing that walking would soon be difficult. Trying to make a short cut, she lost herself in a maze of lanes and passages which she seldom entered, and came out in the middle of the Rue des Gobelins, in a direction exactly the reverse of that she wished to take. Just then a troop of boys from a neighboring street came running through the snow, singing the Marseillaise at the top of their lungs. One of them, inspired by the impish cruelty of childhood, conceived the spiteful idea of flinging a heavy snowball at Lelio, who had taken his tail between his legs and crept close to his mistress, frightened by their noise. He gave a yelp of pain and fled whining, pursued by voices, laughs, and songs, and under a rain of missiles. In an instant he had disappeared, in spite of the appeals of his mistress, whose feeble voice was soon lost in the clamor. She began to run as fast as her age and strength permitted, her feet sinking in the

already deep snow. She lost her breath, slipped, and fell heavily to the ground. A passer-by picked her up, and seeing that she was not injured, went quickly on.

She was alone in the wide, empty street. Lelio and his persecutors had disappeared. She listened, trying to direct herself by the songs and cries which, half-stifled by distance, had guided her thus far; but now the silence was unbroken. Then she called her little companion in a distressed voice, which found no echo in the soft atmosphere, thick with snow. Two policemen passed her, melancholy as wandering ghosts in this icy desert; trembling she asked if they had met a little dog pursued by a troop of urchins; they took her for a crazy woman and shrugged their shoulders. She had been hoping that Lelio would turn on his tracks and try to find her; but in this snow she left no trace not speedily obliterated. Perhaps he had run into some open courtyard, some shop whose door had closed upon him. She went into wine shops, bakers' shops, everywhere that she saw a light, asking, describing, and was everywhere dismissed, sometimes rudely. Tired out at last and hopeless, she was at last obliged to go home alone, benumbed with cold and aching with fatigue.

"Lord! what has happened?" cried Virginie at sight of her mistress, pale, worn, scarcely able to stand in her dripping garments.

"I have lost Lelio!" she replied and fell half-fainting into a chair.

The evening was terribly sad. She missed sorely the restlessness and caresses of Lelio; his empty basket had a deserted air which chilled her heart; she recalled his tricks and the affectionate, almost human glances she

sometimes surprised fixed upon her with so loving an attention. Where was he now, the gentle, inoffensive little animal? For what misery, what torture was he reserved? The absence of this humble life, dependent for several years upon her own, left her with an incredible sense of desolation. Often during the evening she fancied she heard him outside, and Virginie had to go down in order to assure her that he had not returned. But it was no use peering into the white street. Lelio was not there.

“Madame must try to console herself! Of course it is too bad that he is not here. One gets attached to a beast. But after all, he is only a dog!”

“No doubt he is only a dog,” thought the poor lady, “and I have gone through many other griefs!” She was amazed at being so profoundly afflicted by the loss of this poor animal. Was it impossible, then, to wear out the faculty of suffering? She had lost her child, the fair little angel so well beloved; she had lost an adored husband; she had passed through many bitter trials; and still she could find tears for a miserable little dog! Only that morning she had thought herself so lonely that it seemed as if she had nothing more to lose, having already been deprived of all that made life worth living . . . And yet her wretchedness had been increased!

She lay awake all night, haunted by echoes of that ferocious Marseillaise, shouted by the discordant voices of the cruel boys. She had taken cold and was feverish; her thoughts wandered like buzzing flies she could not catch. Her imagination represented Lelio lost in the snow, benumbed, perhaps ripped open, freez-

ing to death in some corner. And always the *Marseillaise* ! “ The bloody flag ! ” “ To butcher our comrades and our sons ! ” The very prayers of her chaplet fell into the measure of this fatal rhythm. It was torment.

Virginie went early in the morning to the pound to claim the dog or leave a description of him if he had not already been brought in. The day passed in idle waiting. The old lady tried to work, but could not. Her apartment seemed to her like a cold and silent tomb, now that Lelio no longer animated it with his dear and vigilant bark. As on the previous day, she could eat no dinner, and, in spite of her efforts, she could not refrain from tears. Whereupon Virginie mounted her high horse and freed her mind. “ Madame was really not acting right ! To be so vexed about a dog ! If it were a child there might be some excuse ; one understands a mother’s grief. But to make one’s self sick for a brute beast ! How can such a pious Christian as Madame make such a fuss over an animal ? That was a sin, for certain . . . Praying so much, and visiting churches and going to confession don’t amount to much if one can’t be resigned in such a case as this. For her part, it scandalized her.” She talked so long on this theme that at last her mistress got provoked and begged her to attend to her own conscience.

“ The animals,” said she in an exasperated tone, “ are creatures of God as well as you and I. What impiety is there in admiring the works of the Lord ? Great saints have set us the example ! St. Jerome, St. Francis of Assisi, and many others. Was not Jesus Himself born between an ox and an ass ? ”

A trifle disconcerted but not vanquished, Virginie withdrew, grumbling: "Upon my word, some people cry more over a dog than they do over a husband!"

Indignant at first, the old lady kept silent. What was the use of answering? Could such a girl know that there are griefs which sink below the reach of tears, arid griefs which penetrate into the depths of the heart and become a part of it, not to be uprooted without uprooting life? What do tears prove? They flow and flow away.

This night was worse than its predecessor, disturbed like that had been by fever and incoherence. When Virginie saw her mistress so pale and changed on entering the room next morning she groaned aloud.

"Good heaven! Is it possible to work one's self into such states! I am going for the doctor."

"What is the use? He will not bring back Lelio."

"Madame may listen to him, perhaps! As for me, all I say goes for nothing. Madame takes it in bad part."

The poor lady sank back into her pillows without replying. After all, she would not be sorry to see her physician, if only to hear a friendly voice and be consoled by kindly words. Shortly after the door opened, and Virginie exclaimed:

"Here he is!"

With an instinctive gesture Madame put up her hand to smooth her hair, so as to present a less disagreeable aspect to the doctor. But before she could turn her head, something heavy jumped on the bed, a soft, moist breath caressed her face.

"Oh! it is you! It is you, my poor little pet!" she

cried, hugging the wet and muddy dog, who covered her face with damp caresses, and in sweet, inarticulate murmurs seemed to be telling her a thousand consoling things.

Meanwhile Virginie was loquaciously explaining her surprise, her shock, and the various and complicated arguments by which she had explained Lelio's presence, shivering and scratching at the kitchen door, when she certainly thought he must be at the bottom of the river with a stone round his neck.

The old lady drew a long breath, as if relieved of a stifling burden. Her fingers trembled with emotion as she untied from the spaniel's neck the end of a broken cord, the sign of the slavery he had undergone. And she thought how the reaper, after he has gathered in his harvest, leaves a few grains for the birds in the stripped fields, a scanty ear for the poor, a wild flower here and there, spared by the scythe, to refresh the weary gaze of the passing traveller. And lifting her eyes to heaven, she joined her hands and thanked God for the humble friend He had restored to her.

CHAMPOL.

THE life of this French novelist has been uneventful: he has had neither adventures nor "a state of soul." All that concerns him is summed up in the history of his family. Until the death of his father he enjoyed extreme prosperity; after that he became acquainted with adversity, the villainous little insect called the phylloxera having devoured the best part of his inheritance. Fortunately, God left in his hand an implement of labor, his pen. Champol's pen is a magician's wand, and, the worthy son of a vine-growing nobleman, he has cultivated his own vineyard with unflagging ardor.

We regret our inability to furnish a photograph of this writer. None exists, Champol having a horror of the photographic lens, and, as he writes us, "giving it the horrors, *for he has two heads*, and they have not been too many to write a score of volumes within eight years."

His first important success from the bookseller's point of view was the "Roman d'un Egoïste;" then he gave *Le Correspondant* "Amour d'Antan," which appeared last June in book form with other novels; "Le Mari de Simone," "La Conquête du Bonheur," "Les Justes." These are the titles of his other talés: "Noëlle," "Les Pointes Noires," "L'Argent des Autres," "L'Heureux Dominique," "Sophie

ma plus Jeune," "L'Homme Blanc" "Le Voeu d'André."
"Le Droit d'Aïnesse," "Anais Evrard" "En Deux Mots"
"Le Duc Jean" (for children), "Le Plus Fort," and "Péril
d'Amour." The greater part of his books have been trans-
lated abroad and all in Germany. Moreover they have been
often reprinted by the newspapers of Paris and the prov-
inces and those of Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and
Italy.

The Keg and the Sword.

BY CHAMPOL.

UP to the age of thirty-five Mme. Eugénie Mitanchet had led the useful, modest existence of an honest legume which grows as well as it can in the spot where it was planted. Destiny had made her grow in a little hardware shop, narrow, damp and dusty, situated in the Rue de Beaune. There her childhood and youth had slipped away in an insipid calm between packets and nails, a tiresome book of accounts and her crocheting. Now and then a workman in a peaked cap, pipe in mouth, would cross the threshold of the shop, and thereupon would ensue a great racket of old iron and a cloud of dust as it was moved about. Such were the only diversions of Eugénie up to the day when M. Mitanchet transplanted her to his grocery, a few doors further down the same street.

It was not lightly that M. Mitanchet, a serious, well-established man with a big square head, whiskers, and a Greek cap, had confided his happiness and his herrings to the care of his young neighbor. His choice had been determined by two principal motives: the round sum of money amassed by the paternal ironmonger and the good principles instilled into her daughter by the maternal one.

One could define a whole poem of rigid virtue in the existence of Mme. Mitanchet merely from looking at the bands of hair which adorned her austere forehead; such little bands, so flat, drawn back so tightly, so thin, so tidy, so unbecoming, and half-concealed by a white silk handkerchief which was knotted beneath her chin and seemed to shelter an inveterate cold in the head. Her skirts, sometimes black and sometimes gray, were plain and hung in stiff folds; her bodices were old-fashioned, her aprons blue; she always sat in the same corner on the same straw chair, and her eyes, always cast down, never had any horizon but the paternal hardware shop.

Her installation at the grocery had been an illumination to her. The clean, well-lighted shop had seemed as splendid as a palace of the Arabian Nights when she came there from the dusty hole where her father's old iron lay. Mme. Mitanchet spent her honeymoon delightfully in piling up boxes of sardines, ranging mustard-pots in rows, making pyramids of biscuits and colonnades of chocolate. What an honor, and what a pleasure also, to have clever and talkative housewives for customers, and to see occasionally even cooks from good houses!

So much splendor and so much talk finally roused Mme. Mitanchet from her torpor, and one fine morning she threw off her silk handkerchief, like a butterfly its chrysalis, to the great scandal of the mother ironmonger, who on that day alarmed M. Mitanchet by her gloomy predictions.

Several years elapsed, and as the predictions had not been fulfilled, the worthy man ceased to be uneasy. The

bandeaux, moreover, had always remained in place, severe and reassuring. A noble family inheritance, they already disfigured the blond head of a little five-year-old girl, tranquil, discreet, and silent, who was learning to crochet. If Mme. Mitanchet's second daughter had not yet begun to follow these honorable traditions it was because she was scarcely seven months old and had not more than three locks of hair. Everything, then, was going on in a manner satisfactory to the grocer; especially as his nearest business rival had gone into bankruptcy and his father-in-law had just died, leaving goodly savings behind him.

But it is often at the moment when she overwhelms them with gifts that fortune deserts her favorites.

Towards the end of Lent, during which an unhopedor quantity of codfish and macaroni had been sold, Mme. Mitanchet suddenly began to droop. Her husband experienced the painful surprise of one whose watch, until then excellent, should suddenly get out of order. He tried every means of restoring her waning activity, of rekindling her enthusiasm for those preserves, that molasses which she had loved so much; he drew a tragic picture of the depredations impudently committed by the two young clerks left without supervision. All was in vain. The mainspring was broken.

Mme. Mitanchet grew visibly thin and pale; her figure bent, her eyes were dim, her hands hung idle, and her only answer to anxious inquiries was: "I feel tired!" But must one fall sick in order to be tired when there are cases to unpack and money to gain? thought M. Mitanchet in consternation.

He sought medical advice. The doctor prescribed diversions.

As something must be done to put an end to this malady which was ruining his business, he did not hesitate to try this remedy, strange as it seemed to him. But what sort of recreation? After thinking long and hard, he took his wife to the Chamber of Deputies. They were in luck! a magnificent debate on the tax on alcohols was in progress. While M. Mitanchet was listening to it with all his ears, his wife went to sleep. On their return three pots of preserves had disappeared. What was the good of paying so dear for pleasures so poorly appreciated! The attempt to divert her was abandoned, and Mme. Mitanchet continued to wander up and down her grocery like a soul in pain.

Summer came, a very hot one. Scorching, nauseating fumes rose from the asphalt; the air was stifling; the implacable sun blinded the eyes; every house was a hot-air bath. In the evenings the shopkeepers sat in chairs outside their doors to get a breath of air.

Now, there was a high wall just opposite the grocery, over the top of which rose, thick-foliaged and green, some old trees garlanded with ivy. They grew in the park of an ancient and rather dilapidated mansion, the front of which was on the Rue de Verneuil. On the Rue de Beaune side a gate gave access to the stables. But this gate had long been closed, the stables were empty, the window-blinds of the great house were shut. The life once animating this stately dwelling no longer manifested itself save in the weeds growing rank in the alleys, the green leaves of trees and the mosses invading the perron.

The Duke de Faverolles, the last heir of the old mansion, wounded in his affections and interests by the fall of the Bourbons in 1839, had sought a shelter for his ruin and distress at his country seat, where his remaining means enabled him to lead a sufficiently ample and pleasant life. The sacrilegious idea of selling the Faverolles mansion had never even crossed a mind formed by a father who had emigrated, and an aunt who was a canoness, and the deserted house had become sad and silent, like that of the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood.

But in this world nothing is lost. The flower-laden acacias diffused throughout the street the charm and perfume disdained by their legitimate owner. Mme. Mitanchet received her share, and under their gentle spell she began one fine evening to dream of that nature which she did not know and until then had never thought of; of those country places which people said were full of trees and flowers, those streams described as clear and limpid, those green meadows where one could roam at liberty, with all the air one wanted and all the space one's eyes could take in. How beautiful all that must be, if only to judge by what she could see of the tops of the trees above the wall! What mysterious joys must be theirs who could enter that privileged enclosure, and how different they doubtless were from common mortals who move about painfully in the stifling atmosphere of the streets!

At this moment M. Mitanchet gave her a sharp poke with his elbow, inquiring:

“Why don't you say something? What are you doing?”

“I am thinking.”

“What a curious idea! What are you thinking about?”

“I do not know.”

The grocer shrugged his shoulders.

“You certainly are very unwell. Let us go to bed.”

They went in. A storm was brewing. The heat was oppressive. The grocery exhaled a strong and disgusting odor.

Mme. Mitanchet had a nightmare in which she beheld herself in a delightful garden pursued by a monstrous red herring that wanted to devour her. The next day she had a fever, the beginning of a serious illness of which she nearly died.

Her convalescence was long. Confined to her arm-chair, the poor woman had leisure to dream of the wonderful garden while contemplating from her window the tall trees, slowly parting with their leaves to the winds of autumn.

How could those who had a right to live there shut themselves out of that Eden? Of what did those souls think who were so far above her? Certainly nothing that she knew anything about. Sometimes she tried to fancy what the master of that aristocratic mansion might be like, the majestic noble whom exile and mystery surrounded with a dim and alluring halo.

Meantime her health continued to improve. M. Mitanchet, who had despaired of her life and been anxiously wondering by whom he should replace her, was not sorry to see himself freed from so embarrassing a choice by her recovery.

“One knows what one has, and one does not know what one takes,” he kept repeating to himself as he

invariably did to the drummers who tried to persuade him to exchange an old jobber for a new one. Hence he spared no pains to expedite the restoration of his wife, on whom her mother experimented successively with all the hygienic recipes bequeathed her by her forbears. But in spite of her admirable attentions strength did not return, and Mme. Mitanchet was very slow in crossing the distance which separates convalescence from complete recovery.

In such cases one grows very weary. A friend of Mme. Mitanchet, a chambermaid in a noble mansion, understood this very well, and it was she who suggested to the invalid, one fine Sunday, the ingenious idea of seeking some quiet recreation in reading. Mme. Mitanchet took to it very kindly; since she left school she had read nothing but her prayer-book, her account books, and the advertisements of wholesale grocers.

The next day she was put in possession of several volumes, the remnants of a circulating library long ago deserted by its last customer. Decidedly, she had no luck; she happened on the four volumes of a novel translated from the English. The volumes were thick, the characters many, and it needed all the ennui of a prison to induce one to follow the four-score-and-fourteen personages who moved confusedly through the intrigues of a hopelessly entangled plot. There were some to suit all tastes: young misses who taught Sunday school, pastors who married the young misses, old ladies who drank gin, old lords who gambled, bankers who ruined the old lords, convicts who assassinated the bankers, policemen who got on the track of the assassins after ten years by the simple clue afforded by a gaiter button, very rich uncles

who hid their last wills in the trunks of trees, very poor nephews who were imprisoned for debt, very clever lawyers who got them out after a trial lasting from twenty to thirty years, wives whom their husbands immured in caverns in order to marry some one else, and, amid all this, a stuffer of frogs who wanted to become a member of Parliament, and the daughter of a count who was absolutely bent on marrying this artist.

Finally, in the last paragraph, Mme. Mitanchet learned to her great satisfaction that the frog-stuffer had been changed at nurse, that he was the real nephew of the count, and that he married his cousin.

She felt as if freed from a painful task. But at the same time she experienced a frightful void, as if all the beings by whom she had been surrounded had suddenly disappeared. The new and powerful interest which had quickened her life was gone, and she fell heavily back into the daily round which had stifled her for so many years. She feverishly asked for other books, and this time chance served her as kindly as possible. The first she opened was a romance of sword and gown. The very sight of the title delighted her: *Renault le Terrible!* There was something that sounded well and promised more dramatic scenes than that long English story in which tea and slices of bread and butter played the chief part. That lovely name "Renault the Terrible," thrilled Mme. Mitanchet's veins with a delicious little tremor of alarm.

And, as a matter of fact, the book kept its promises. It opened with the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day; the conscientious author omitted not a musket stroke nor a broken head. Afterwards the hero made his ap-

pearance, a Duke de Faverolles, companion of the ferocious Montluc.

Mme. Mitanchet's interest knew no bounds. To find in history an ancestor of her mysterious neighbor ! and what an ancestor ! A man who never spitted less than a dozen Huguenots at a time ! and that with such good grace and elegance that even the spitted themselves felt flattered by it ; who sprang from the top of a wall thirty feet high as easily as Mme. Mitanchet sat down in her chair ; who gave away rivers of diamonds for nothing at all, and sword thrusts for still less ; who made his dinner of a whole sheep washed down by a tun of wine, or fasted for whole weeks according to the necessities of the case ; who let himself fall from the top of a tower, was assassinated, burned, poisoned or drowned at the end of each chapter, in order to reappear in the next fresh and nimble, well girt in his doublet of red velvet, and not having lost even his plumed felt hat ; and all this at seventy years of age at the very least, for Renault had a son and a grandson who was making many others ! But all the same, it was the old duke who monopolized the affections of Mme. Mitanchet.

In private life, too, what a distinguished man he was !

The grocer's wife re-read perhaps twenty times the interesting scene where, after dinner, he poniards the traitors sitting at his table ; that in which he drowns in the pond in the park the duchess who has denounced the conspirators ; and above all the passage in Chapter XXII. where the old duke, finding himself face to face with the guilty son whom he has sworn never to see again, puts out his own eyes with his sword in order not to break his oath.

These exploits filled the soul of Mme. Mitanchet with incredible joy. A new world, different from all that she had seen or could imagine, revealed itself to her, intoxicated, enchanted her, and absorbed all her thoughts. Her crochet needle was lost; her hair, cut short while she was ill, was growing again in tangled curls; her dressing gown had lace on it. At night she used to rise stealthily to go to the storeroom for candles, which she burned without counting them until she was so sleepy that the book fell from her hands.

Unhappily, everything has an end. On the last greasy page of the last volume, Renault the Terrible, who has just learned that his daughter is to marry a Huguenot, sits down in the vault of his ancestors and, after a few affecting words, lets himself die of grief, without even taking time to indicate the spot where he has hidden the treasure of Mandragore, bequeathed to his forbears by the Templars.

The heroic Renault was at least sincerely wept for by Mme. Mitanchet. Then she began to feel very proud of having known him so intimately, of still living in the neighborhood of his dwelling, and it was with an ever-growing interest that she looked at the tall trees with their now denuded boughs.

Hence it was that a profound emotion pervaded her entire being when a carriage laden with baggage stopped one morning before the gate. She leaned out of the window so suddenly that she nearly fell from it, and saw in a flash a rather poorly dressed old man alight. The gate turned unwillingly on its rusty hinges, and closed at once upon the carriage. An hour later the blinds of the old house opened of a sudden, like the eyes of a sleeper awaking with a start.

The quarter remained stupefied. The old trees seemed perfectly joyous.

Who could have returned if not the Duke de Faveroles ?

But it was impossible that this simple old man was the descendant of Renault the Terrible !

And why not enter by the grand porte-cochère ?

Mme. Mitanchet was in a veritable fever of curiosity. Her illness disappeared. She went down into the shop, where she had not been seen for weeks, and set everything in order. If the duke should pass, he must acknowledge that all was as it should be.

It was only towards evening that she learned how it was from a gossip of the neighborhood, the cousin of a sister-in-law of the lockmaker who had been sent for to examine the locks, badly damaged by rust.

“ Yes, that’s the way it is, my good dame. It is the duke’s intendant who had come to make things ready.”

“ Is the duke coming back ? ”

“ So they say. For my part, my good lady, I’m not anxious to see it; for all that my creamery’ll gain by it ! And then I don’t like the nobles. They are very proud, and often they haven’t a sou ! ”

“ The duke is coming back ! ” repeated Mme. Mitanchet dreamily. “ Do you know why ? ”

“ They say it is because his son has married a big money-bag. Those people have all the luck ! Give me a quarter of coffee and a half of chicory.”

“ Whom did he marry ? ”

“ The daughter of a manufacturer of pasteboard-plaster. As if one should say a manufacturer of stones which are not made of stone ! And then, with the

dowry, they are going to rebuild, repair, make a great fuss, give grand dinners. And all that with the sweat of the people !”

“Ignorant !” said Mme. Mitanchet to herself after the gossip had departed. She felt personally offended. “The duke has found the treasure, that is all; only, he does not mention it because he is still looking for the sword of the grand master, which is hidden on one side, in a snakeskin.”

The duke had doubtless given up the search, for he arrived not long after, and there was never any talk of this talisman. And, for that matter, he could not have made much use of it if he had found it, seeing that he had to be wheeled about in a little carriage, well surrounded by cushions and wrapped in rich coverings with armorial bearings on the four corners. Many times did Mme. Mitanchet roundly rebuke the ill-natured people who alleged gout as the cause of this sad condition, the evident consequence of glorious wounds. Nevertheless, she suffered greatly for Renault the Terrible, who must be profoundly affected by this degeneracy of his race.

In the spring she was consoled.

The young duke came back with the swallows from Italy, where he had spent his honeymoon. A perfume of lilacs exhaled from the garden, a ray of sunshine inundated the street. Amidst this perfume and this ray he passed on horseback, tall, slender, fair, his bearing gallant and his forehead dreamy.

Mme. Mitanchet felt a joy stifled by respect.

The vision had taken form; the legend had become reality; her dream passed close beside her.

Every time she saw the noble cavalier she experienced

the same sweet and profound emotion. And she saw him often. She knew almost the very hour for his daily ride and watched for it with hungry eyes. The waiting for or the remembrance of that ride gave a charm to her daily occupations. This contemplation afforded sufficient nourishment to all the ideality she possessed.

Peaceable and sweet, her romance unfolded discreetly and slowly in the depths of her heart; so discreetly that she herself did not suspect its existence, so slowly that it lasted all her life.

It had two principal adventures.

In the first place she was present at the interment of the old duke, a long and very solemn ceremony, and wept there so heartily that the man who took charge thought she must be a poor relation and placed her near the family.

Another time the children of the young duke stopped in front of her shop.

With a beating heart she looked at them, smiling, rosy, roguish, considering her wares with scorn.

Suddenly she thought she was going to faint away.

One of them, the tallest, detaching himself from the group astonished by his audacity, opened the door of the grocery and entered.

“Monsieur Renault! Monsieur Renault!” cried the nurse.

The child answered by a cunning gesture, and, taking off his little toque politely, said to the groceress:

“Madame, I want some little red sugar-dogs, like those in front, and some cocks, and some sheep, and everything there is.”

Mme. Mitanchet sprang forward, unpacked the finest

that she had, and then remained in contemplation, brooding over M. Renault with her eyes while he was tranquilly making his choice.

He resembled his father; these were the same pensive eyes, the same delicate and graceful profile, the same proud carriage of the head.

M. Renault went away triumphant.

“You are forgetting your ball!” cried the nurse.

“I did not forget it, I left it behind.”

“But wasn’t it your father who gave you that?”

“He will give me another; that one is cracked.”

The group departed, and Mme. Mitanchet took possession of the ball.

So she had a relic of her idol!

She hid it elaborately in her wardrobe, where every day she came on the sly to look at it.

This was the greatest joy of her life.

* * * * *

Poor Mme. Mitanchet died last week.

Her end had been sweetened by one consoling thought: that it was the coachman of M. le Duc, driving at full speed, who had given her such an unlucky fall that the doctors said she was too old to recover.

And she died murmuring:

“Perhaps, on account of the circumstances, M. le Duc will come to my funeral!”



CHARLES LE GOFFIC.

CHARLES LE GOFFIC was born in 1863 in the little town of Lannion, which, a quarter of a century ago was still like a town of the Middle Ages. He spent long hours on the docks, watching the lazy waters of the Léguer indolently caress the black hulls of coasters and fishing smacks. He played his earliest games in its steep streets in the shade of the old red houses with carved beams, and walls vested in slates, suggestive of a blue and sombre coat of arms. He ran across the bridge near the mill, with its breakwaters and ogival arch, which begins the road to Plouaret. Afterwards he studied

His first volume, "Amour Breton," obtained a notable success. It was followed by a collection of poems. con-

ected by a single link, which, with few exceptions, are pervaded by the melancholy native to the Breton character. Twenty generations do not efface the impression made by that misty sky, and Le Goffic who springs directly from that region, imparts it in all its primal freshness. He clothes its feelings and its dreams in language of incomparable beauty and with a strength of emotion veritably uncommon. The poet of "Amour Breton" is one of those to whom matter and form are reciprocally essential.

In addition to two volumes of more special interest, "Extraits de Saint-Simon" (in collaboration with Tellier), and "Nouveau Traité de Versification" (with M. Thieulin), M. Charles Le Goffic has devoted to contemporary novelists a fine book, "Romanciers d'Aujourd'hui," which carries weight by reason of its judicious criticisms and ingenious deductions. His name beginning to be known, he soon joined example to precept by publishing, "Le Crucifié de Keraliès," a novel which the French Academy honored with one of its prizes in full agreement with the desire of men of letters. This remarkable study of characters and environment revealed in M. Le Goffic both a delicate and faithful painter of wild and rugged landscapes and a penetrating analyst of human passions. Here too the artist and the observer go hand in hand.

Tales of the Assumption.

BY CHARLES LE GOFFIC.

THE CLOUD.

AT the Saintes-Maries, in Camargue ; a little, low, badly lighted house, built against the fortress-like gable of the old church. . . . The door is open, and yet one would suppose that no one is within. On this afternoon of May a deathlike peace which paralyzes even the hopping blackbird in its cage near the window is already falling on the house of Jimonde the sacristan.

Savinien knows well what to think of this peace and silence. Old Jimonde is in the church, which he is stripping of its flowers and ornaments, and no one is at home but his granddaughter, Lazarine, who for months has been shaking with fever. Yesterday she was unable to rise, even for the feast of the saints.

Yet, as Savinien enters, she sits up and looks at him with the soft eyes of other days. Then, remembering that the little shepherd of the Enganos has come to bid her good-bye, she says mournfully:

“Are you going to-morrow?”

Savinien is so troubled that he cannot answer. He simply nods. He sits down on a stool beside Lazarine's little bed and takes her hand, fondling it as he looks

at her. He wants very much to cry; but he refrains, so as not to give her too much pain. How changed she is ! Can this be the pretty, delicate little Lazarine, whose color was as soft as the inside of a shell, and whose eyes were like the narcissus on the shores? She would never again come with him to the hut of the Enganos, nor on the moor, in the cluster of wild goose-foot where they used to watch the sheep feeding, nor on Sundays to the processions and the dances of the saints. One can see through her hands already ; her great eyes are beaten like the stormy seas, and when she speaks her voice grates atrociously in her throat. Lazarine will not out-live the summer.

“ You will not find me when you come back,” she says to Savinien, who is still looking at her without a word.

“ My own, my own,” cries the little shepherd, “ do not say that. I would not go so soon, but the master is sending me and two other *pastrihoun* * with the sheep to Queyras. We shall come back when the days begin to shorten in September. You will be here then.”

“ No,” says Lazarine, “ I will not be here; and what grieves me is that I shall not see you again. . . . All the same,” she goes on presently, as if pursuing a thought she had not spoken, “ if I knew where Queyras is ! ”

“ It is a long way off in the mountain,” says Savinien. “ It will take us at least ten days. We have to go through many towns, Arles, Fontvielle, Venasque, Gap, Embrun, and then climb straight up. There are roads

* Pasturers. Provincial French.

no wider than a splinter, with an abyss on one side and a mountain on the other as steep as a wall. This year the master has hired Bric-Frappier for us. It is a new pasture where there have never been any sheep. The village is below, and once a week the *pastrihoun* have to go down there to bake bread. . . . But you have not told me what you would do if you knew where Queyras is."

"Wait," says Lazarine. "You must go to Arles, you say, and then turn toward Fontvielle and Venasque. . . . I believe I follow it. . . . Very well, that is how it is. . . . Kiss me once more, my own, and let us comfort each other. The day I die I will go round by the mountain and contrive to pass beside you on my way to Paradise."

"How shall I know?" asks Savinien in a trembling voice.

"I will call you," says Lazarine. "Savinien! Savinien! twice."

"And then you will disappear forever. . . . Ah!" entreats the little shepherd, "if you could only take me with you!"

"I would like to very much," says Lazarine. "But see how weak I am now. Nothing but a leaf. I will try, but maybe I cannot do it."

II.

The caravan of pasture-changers is on its way to Bric-Frappier. The chief shepherd, the *beile*, is at the head in his long brown pilgrim's cape; then come the *menoun*, the leaders of the he-goats, the she-goats, and

the gray, infinite surge of fleeces; on either side, short, meagre little shadows leaping around this wave as if to prevent its overflowing into the fields; behind, the *pastrihoun* and the she-asses with the baggage; shouts, barks, bleating of lambkins, tinkling of big bells on the necks of the goats. Eight days they have been travelling in this way. Gap has been passed, and Embrun. Now they are among the Alps and the climb is about to begin. So long it is, so slow, so dreary; the last hamlet left behind, then the last forest, the mastic trees, the dwarf arbutus; then nothing but short grass, the aromatic turf of the second acclivities; and then, at the very top of the mamelon, in a feathery mass of clouds, Bric-Frappier, in a white nightcap. There it is.

There, in the eternal silence of time.

Savinien, his chin in his hands and his hands crossed on the knob of his iron-tipped staff, contemplates, motionless, the silver Alps, the sky where eagles hover, and the sluggish mass of clouds in the valley. He is thinking of Lazarine. He has heard nothing since he left her; but, if she is dead, at least she has not come near him. He shuts his eyes and once more sees the Saintes-Maries, the Romanesque church like a fortress, with Jimonde's house clinging to the gable; and all round about the moor, rough and sunburnt between white-hot stones; the patch of goose-foot near the hut of the Enganos; the distant sea in the crude blue of noonday. Ah! that Camargue country, a delirium of light, and in the midst, on a background of gold, the pale silhouette of Lazarine! Is it really all over? will he never see her again but in his dreams? never with the adoration of his eyes?

The stroke of a church bell comes up from the valley, then a second, then a third, and then a whole peal of chimes. Savinien, who has lost track of time, turns to the chief shepherd, standing sentry on the height, and waits. The *beile* makes a great sign of the cross; the nearest *pastrihoun* repeats it, and it passes from one to another until it reaches Savinien, who still waits motionless. "Eh! *pastrihoun*," shouts the *beile*, "are you dreaming, or must one tell you that it is Assumption Day before you cross yourself?"

III.

Assumption Day! Savinien shivers without knowing why. It is the word Assumption which disturbs him. All night he has been dreaming of it, and now when the stars are setting one by one, and dawn has come, he is dreaming still.

Assumption Day, the Virgin's feast, the anniversary of her miraculous translation into heaven! Verses from the hymn sing to his inward ear, phrases come back from catechism and sermon in the days when he was a choir boy: "*Alleluia! Mary is taken up into heaven and the angelic host rejoices. . . . It was in Ephesus, and Mary was in her seventy-second year, and when the time was come she was caught up to heaven, and the angels, rejoicing, blessed the Lord.*" . . . Ah! Mary! Mary! if Lazarine were not dead, and you would permit her to share in your glorious Assumption, to be one of the little white angels who are your escort, and who will presently rise with you from this valley of tears!

It is a bright August day; the sky is infinitely blue. The clouds have all gone down into the valley, and that

is why one can no longer hear the church bells except as a distant murmur.

“There is a storm under our feet,” says the *beile*.

It is true. One cannot see ten yards below him. The clouds, piled up and close, make a horizontal layer of monotonous gray above the whole valley. The peaks emerge and the upper part of the second slopes, but all the rest is swamped in dulness, and while the great golden sun is overhead, and the vast inviolate azure, the feet seem to be on the brink of a nameless polar gulf, a lethargic sea, colorless, indifferent, even hostile to the light above. Not a breath of air. The church bells no longer pierce this sea of shadow. And suddenly, a shock. The whole mass is now one enormous sheet, blue, electric, a plain of rolling fire.

“Lightning!” says the *beile*.

It strikes with a formidable crash, from which Bric-Frappier reels. And it is over. The thick layer that hid the valley is broken up, scattered into myriad clouds of every shape, rising into upper air or caught and laid to sleep by the east wind in crevices of the rock. Savinien watches them floating towards him in the light breeze.

“Savinien! Savinien!” murmurs a small voice.

Savinien trembles in every limb. Who spoke? He looks round him. No one is there but the *beile* and the *pastrihoun*, and he knows well that the voice did not come from them. The sheep are browsing; the donkeys sleeping; the goats are tied up; the dogs are making their rounds in the pasture.

“Savinien! Savinien!” repeats the voice, nearer still.

This time he is not doubtful; he hears it plainly; the call comes from below. He looks, and in the white procession rising towards him from the valley he discovers a cloud that is smaller than the others, a cloud of pale and liquid gold that looks at a distance like some dazzling fabric. And underneath the tissue of gold there seems a fair and charming face, hands joined in prayer, a pearly, delicate, virginal body. The cloud still rises. And in the face, drawn nearer now, Savinien distinguishes two soft eyes, the color of the narcissus on the shores.

“Lazarine!” cries Savinien, waving his iron-tipped staff in joyous welcome, and running to meet the apparition. “Lazarine!”

The *beile* has also seen the clouds. That ruddy nimbus, glittering like copper from the furnace, carries in it all the remaining electricity of the storm. The *beile* thinks that Savinien has not perceived it.

“’Ware the cloud, *pastrihoun*!” he shouts with all his might. “There is lightning in it. Throw down your spear or you are a dead man!”

But Savinien gives no sign of having heard. He is still running to meet the cloud; he touches it, he opens his arms as if to embrace and disappear with it. The *beile* utters a cry. A flame touches the tip of the iron; a heavy detonation; and on the spot where Savinien stood but now, a little heap of cinders on the dead flowers in the grass.

And of the cloud nothing remains but two little white vapors which lose themselves in the infinite.

THE IMAGE-MAKER OF KERILIS.

“HAVE you forgotten me, Mathurine Rannou, sweet luminary, that you pass me without speaking ?”

Mathurine raised her eyes to the speaker.

“No, Jean Dagorn, I remember you very well. You are the image-maker of Kerilis; you are two years older than I, for you made your third communion when I made my first. We are old friends, for certain. But this is no time for talking. I am thinking of my dead, and I must pray for them.”

“I have my dead, too, Mathurine; only, they are not so exacting as yours. This is the pilgrimage of La Clarté. I never fail to come here and perform my devotions. You may believe that I spend all the time I am in church in praying for them. But you don't mean to say it is forbidden to think of the living on the road ?”

“You are a pagan, Jean Dagorn, a real pagan,” answered Mathurine. And she pulled her cap down over her eyes, sighed, and hastened on.

Mathurine Rannou's father had been drowned one evening in a storm. His cries for help had reached the lighthouse of Becléguer, but the keeper had no boat, the village was far away, and before there was time to go for assistance there was nothing in sight but wrecks. In the morning the coast had been searched from Locquémo to Trégastel, but old Rannou's body was not

found. He must have been carried out by the ebb-tide, and was probably floating between two waves somewhere out yonder, under the angry wind. His place in the cemetery still awaited him. A name, a date, a cross, the simulacra of interment, holy water sprinkled on an empty coffin,—alas ! this was all that could be done for his memory ! The search was continued and extended, but in vain. The farthest rocks on the coast, the uttermost isles were scoured, but of Rannou neither rocks nor islands had kept a trace. So Mathurine, having lost all confidence in man, spent her days in prayer. She said: “ Good Mother of God, patroness of sailors, Our Lady of La Clarté, who art so powerful, grant me to obtain the body of my father, to wash it in fresh water and sew it up in a white sheet ! Bring him back to me, I pray you, with the next tide; lay him gently on the seaweed; let him escape the snares of crabs and cuttlefishes, and may the rocks, through your assistance, also spare him ! If you hear me, good Lady, I will take part in your pilgrimage. I will go three times in succession round the sacred enclosure in my bare feet, with a candle in my hand, reciting your litanies.” And at other times she promised to be more punctual in her attendance at Mass and Vespers, to pay no attention to what her suitors might say, to spend all her savings in Masses for the souls in purgatory. However, on the ninth morning after old Rannou’s disappearance, the fishermen of Locquémo found a body several miles from the coast which they recognized as his, and disregarding their empty nets they stood in for Becléguer as usual. Mathurine was on the jetty. As soon as they caught sight of her they began signalling that there was news.

Then she fell on her knees and in the sincerity of her heart she said: "Praised be Madame Mary! The body of Rannou, my father, is found!"

II.

Now the months of winter passed and the months of spring, and mid-August came, which is consecrated to the Virgin, and Mathurine started for La Clarté in fulfilment of her vow. True, Jean Dagorn would have liked to walk beside her, but she made him understand that she preferred to be alone, and he followed at a distance with a swelling heart. And as he went, mechanically he began to whittle the knob of a thorn-stick he had cut beforehand.

"Eh! that is Jean Dagorn, the image-maker," said a piping voice behind him.

He turned, and in the band of pilgrims recognized the speaker, a hunchback of Locquémo, by trade a shoemaker, and famous far and wide for his acrid and bitter tongue.

"Welcome to our band, Jean Dagorn," said the others. "What have you been doing all this year that you have been absent? What marvels in stone have you accomplished?"

"My images are no great marvels, certainly, and my art is limited. But since you want to know, I have sculptured three men saints and one woman in the front doors of the great portal of Binic. And it was I who repaired the fountain of Kernol by carving a vine around the little granite columns. Besides, if you know the church of Rospez, you will recollect that since I

passed that way it has as many heads of angels as there are months in the year."

"You are a man," said the pilgrims.

But the hunchback said, half smiling :

"Aren't you forgetting something, Jean Dagorn ?"

"Perhaps, because the little things don't count. Here and there I have repaired wayside calvaries, or put a saint on his legs again, or mended the profile of another. But that sort of work doesn't bring in much."

"Empty head," snickered the hunchback, "empty and forgetful ! He draws up his yearly balance-sheet complacently and omits none of his receipts except the most important one of all !"

Jean Dagorn reddened, and his comrades looked at him inquiringly to see what he had to say. But after a long look at the hunchback, he shook his head and answered: "I do not know."

"You do not know ? Just keep your eyes open, comrades, while you are here . . . You will find out why Jean Dagorn's memory is so poor."

They had reached the entrance of the hamlet, and without their noticing it the character of the landscape had changed, for the beach was not far off, and the strong winds abiding there forbade either wheat or oats to flourish in the fields. No more trees. No trace of cultivation. A melancholy dearth of all things, a gray sky hanging low above vast moors, and then the sea, gray likewise. The hamlet did not contain more than four or five houses, and these covered so little space that they passed them almost with one stride, closing their eyes involuntarily, because they looked so gloomy. But

all of a sudden the aspect of things grew pleasanter. There on the height, upright, proud, even a little stiff in its beautiful coat of rose granite, the patronal church tapered towards the sky. Joy of men! Fragrance floated down its nave, and its stained-glass windows caught and held the eye. Nowhere else were the bells such good musicians. Nowhere else did the censers distil such soft intoxication. And to complete these marvels, behold the chisel of Jean Dagorn had carved such an image of Our Lady in the great portal as could nowhere else be found.

“Hey!” said the hunchback, pointing this out to his companions, “is she fine enough, this new Virgin, with her fringed cape and her banded hair, and under her feet the celestial roses which are born and do not die? Why did you disclaim this masterpiece, Jean Dagorn, instead of including it just now in the list of your receipts? If it brought you as much money as it cost you pains, your yearly savings must amount to a pretty penny. What do you think of it, comrades?”

But the others were not listening. They stood on the porch, staring open-mouthed at the statue.

“Jesus God!” murmured one, “what a likeness!”

“Yes, yes,” said another, “it is she.”

“Look at her lips,” put in a third, “and her expression, and the figure is the same.”

And all in chorus:

“It is Mathurine Rannou herself!”

And the hunchback repeated:

“It is Mathurine Rannou, Jean Dagorn’s sweetheart!”

Thereupon Jean Dagorn flew into a great passion.

“Wretched dwarf,” he cried, “what was the need of your troubling yourself to call people’s attention to my work? Am I not free to reproduce any features that I please? If I find one woman more beautiful than others, ought not my chisel to remember her, rather than the one-eyed, mismade shrew who brought you into the world? Don’t be alarmed. As you have eyes for seeing everything, you may admire yourself at your ease one of these days in some granite gargoyle that I will carve into your goat’s profile.”

He talked, and his voice like a torrent rolled and rumbled under the arches, and there was plainly some disaster in the air. Then you appeared, O rector of La Clarté, gentle priest of Madame Mary! and your white locks, the evangelical sweetness of your smile, your hands interposed in the dispute, your eyes, by turns commanding and entreating, made it certain that all wrath must be appeased when you come forth thus armed.

“What are you thinking of, my sons? To profane the sanctuary! I have heard every word, and pagans could act no otherwise. What is the image-maker to you? His image has been blessed and now it should be sacred to you. Whether such or such a one of your wives or daughters resembles this Virgin, I do not know. But this is the Virgin: humble yourselves, my sons, and say your prayers!”

Then he turned to Jean Dagorn.

“Come with me,” said he, “I have something to say to you.”

And they walked up and down together among the graves beside the church.

III.

Meantime Mathurine had taken off her shoes and stockings, lighted a big candle of yellow wax at the sconce in the chapel, and was making the round of the cemetery on her knees. Three times she had stopped at the church door, and three times raised her eyes to Jean Dagorn's statue, and had not recognized herself: for she was a simple soul, and mirrors had not told her of her beauty. She was praying. But while she prayed her mind would revert to the road, and she saw herself and the image-maker at her side, and they walked on, and she remembered her vow, and that the mouth is very ready to entangle the heart.

“*Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!*” said Mathurine for the third time.

At this moment the rector and Jean Dagorn were passing behind her. Their voices joined in the response:

“*That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*”

And as Mathurine had started on recognizing Jean Dagorn's voice, but had not turned her head, the rector tapped her lightly on the shoulder :

“Finish your vow, my child, and come to me in the sacristy.”

“My vow is almost finished,” she replied; “I have only the *Oremus* to recite.”

“Then I will wait for you.”

Then in a still fainter voice :

“*Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that as we have known the Incarnation of*

Christ Thy Son by the message of an angel, so, by His Passion and cross, we may be brought to the glory of His resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord."

"Amen!" responded the rector and Jean Dagorn.

And Mathurine having joined them, they entered the sacristy. The rector first latched the door, so that they might not be disturbed, and then gave Mathurine a seat, Jean Dagorn meanwhile betaking himself to the embrasure of a window with the confused air of a little boy discovered in a fault.

"My daughter," began the rector, "it was for an adieu that I brought you here. Jean Dagorn is going away tomorrow on a very long journey from which he may never return. I have tried in every way to persuade him to remain with us, for as a workman he has no equal; no, not one, though certainly some of his statues are a trifle worldly, considering that they are intended for churches. But he will not listen to me. His heart is affected, and he claims that this climate is not likely to benefit it. Before he goes, however, as he has neither father nor mother, he has asked me as a favor to bring you here that he may say good-bye to you, who are a native of his own parish, and whom he has known from a child. Because he has tried once already this morning to speak to you, but you would not listen, he feels sure that you have made a vow never to speak to him again; and that, my child, is why he is going away."

Mathurine slowly replied :

"How can I regret keeping the vow that I did make? But Jean Dagorn takes to himself alone what was meant for all. Because my past coquetry is perhaps the reason why my father perished,—and that is why I vowed that

if I recovered his body I would be more reserved with young men."

"Right, my child," said the rector.

Then he went to Jean Dagorn, and leading him to Mathurine, who did not raise her eyes, he said :

"Well, that is over with. Say good-bye."

Mathurine rose to obey. But as she put her hand in that of the image-maker, she was overcome by a great weakness and began to sob. And Jean Dagorn sobbed also. They fell into each other's arms and thus remained for a long time, she resting her head on Jean Dagorn's shoulder, and he pressing his dry lips to his sweetheart's beautiful hair.

"Come on!" said the rector. "That is just what I thought. Jean Dagorn will not leave us quite so soon."

The bells in the church steeple began ringing a full peal. He separated the lovers gently, opened the sacristy door, and pointed out to them the wide sandy road beyond the hamlet, bordered with gorse and broom, hung with little yellow blossoms like colored lanterns:

"Take Mathurine home, Jean Dagorn," said he, "for she is too weak to go alone so far as Becléguer. And you, Mathurine, tell your aunt that I am coming over this week to ask if Jean Dagorn is the husband that would suit you."



PIÈRE L'ERMITE.

(Abbé Loutil.)

PIÈRE L'ERMITE is the pen-name of a young member of the Parisian clergy: his real name is Edmond Loutil, a curate at Saint-Roch, one of the great and aristocratic parishes of Paris.

He was born in the Ardennes in 1863; his father was a native of Touraine and his mother an Alsatian. This dual descent explains the complete difference which exists in certain of his stories, ranging from an almost mischievous gayety to a melancholy gravity very suggestive of the

borders of the Rhine. Pièrre l'Ermite has always lived in Paris: ordained priest in 1888, he spent the first six years of his ministry among the artisans of Clichy, St. Vincent de Paul's old parish, just at the doors of Paris, containing at present nearly forty thousand souls. It was his personal knowledge of the frightful evils produced by the irreligious press among the masses of the people that induced him to write his first articles. At present he is the spoiled darling of the French Catholic reading public, whose patronage allows him to sign the press proofs for 20,000 copies of a single work. His books have characteristic titles which attract attention: "Lisez-moi ça!" "Et ça!" "Restez chez nous!" "Et de quatre!"

Pièrre l'Ermite has three distinguishing qualities: a realist, he excels in describing things and persons; dress, furniture, bad habits, idle talk, have been observed by him in the streets and garrets of Paris as well as in its princely houses; by turns you might think yourself listening to a dressmaker, a street boy, a saloon-keeper, or a duchess; in this respect he has an affinity with Daudet. Moreover, his dialogues display a vivacity, spirit, and animation truly marvellous; his humor is thoroughly French. And whatever may be said of the levity of that people, he is also French by the serious side of his articles, their satire. Pièrre l'Ermite is not merely a writer; he is a priest who wishes to do good.

Children and Parents.

BY PIÈRRE L'ERMITE.

FOREVER !

“ A PIN ? ”

“ There are some right there in front of you. *There*, I tell you ! They are sticking into your eyes ! ”

“ Sticking into my eyes ! That's a nice expression ! Couldn't you find one more . . . disagreeable ? ”

“ Indeed . . . disagreeable ! ”

“ I am wearing myself all out handing you your things ! ”

“ There's no occasion for it that I know of ! ”

“ A diver disturbs fewer people when he has to go to the bottom of the channel than a woman when she is getting ready for an evening party ! ”

Standing in front of the psyche-glass, Madame raises to the ceiling a pair of fatigued eyes and a pair of arms, one of the latter equipped with a comb and the other with a brush.

“ To think—that you can't offer me a pleasure—not one !—without wantonly spoiling it by your remarks ! Here have I been counting on this ball for a month ! I might have known it was too good to be true ! It had to be—— ! ”

The salon is as full of chiffons as a fashionable dry-goods shop. Madame sinks down on a sofa beside her pale green satin robe, skilfully extricated by her maid from an irremediable crush. She clasps her head convulsively between her hands. With his own hands in his pockets the husband contemplates his work with an air of consternation. If his wife begins to cry it is all up with her rice powder and cold cream. The whitewashing will have to be done over again and they will be two hours late. And when they do arrive her hair will be abominably dressed, her eyes red, and her young friends will say among themselves: "Look at that big Raoul! He is horrid! He beats his wife! Yes, he does, my dear! Beats her to a mummy!"

And, as usual, Raoul knuckles under to save the situation.

"See here, my dear, you don't take things the right way. . . . You are very nervous this evening."

"Then why don't you remember it, and not exasperate me? Do you suppose I find it amusing to act as lay figure for Annette since three o'clock? . . . And it's all for you that I'm doing it!"

!!! ???

Peace is signed.

Madame faces the mirror and goes on with her toilette. Kneeling in front of her, with a red face, a mouth full of pins, needlefuls of multicolored silks sticking in her corsage, the maid literally sews the dress on the body of her mistress.

"My poor girl, do you want to make me ridiculous?"

—— ?

“It isn't tight, this robe, . . . besides, you have just stitched this cabbage green with white silk! Where are your wits?”

Raoul, with his hands behind his back, walks back and forth like a philosopher, humming a tune:

“This hill a-shelter from the wind,
Warmed by the rising sun;
Like a lizard green!
'Tis my vi-i-neyard!”

“Raoul, I do beg you not to march up and down like that behind my back; you drive me crazy.”

As docile as a good carhorse, Raoul sits down on the piano-stool. And there the heedless wretch strikes three or four chords just to kill time . . . *do—do, mi—mi, do—do, sol. . . .*

“*The trumpet sounds the charge!*”

Bang! crash!

From the far end of the apartment comes a long, savage shriek, the whoop of a Maori on the warpath, a vocal exercise on the high notes. 'Tis the gentle Hélène awaking.

Hélène is the blue-eyed heiress, the pretty plaything, the admired, spoiled darling, worshipped on bended knees in the pink jewel-case of her cradle. It is her portrait you see on the mantelpiece, on the piano, on the music stand, on the easel draped with flame-colored velvet.

Now, you know, when one's physique has been crowned so many times, one has every right to sleep in peace and not to enjoy *Déroulède*. It is this right which

Hélène affirms with louder and louder screams, Madame meanwhile looking with supreme pity at that numskull of a husband who always behaves like this! There are moments when one would like to sink into the ground for a quarter of an hour. Raoul would be content to hide himself in the piano. Standing before him in her light-green satin (which cost Raoul 1200 francs) she shrugs her shoulders with the gesture of an antique goddess.

“One would think you did it on purpose . . . that you had vowed to prevent my getting ready!”

“Come now! How could I suppose . . .?”

“Oh! don’t try to justify yourself.”

!!!!!!

Raoul comes back with the offended in his arms. Hélène, as red as a Lyons sausage, wriggles like a worm, and tugs at the paternal hair and beard.

“Ah! the trumpet sounds the charge!”

Well, Hélène charges, and famously too! Look out for that immaculate starched shirt-front! The neck-tie is already routed, and the gardenia, squeezed between the peevish little fingers, droops pitifully from the buttonhole.

Whereupon the unlucky Raoul feels it essential to hand over his heiress to the maid. But poor Annette is covered with pins and needles, and it is Madame who takes the child. All ready for the ball, she walks up and down with Hélène and rocks her in her gloved arms.

“Sleep . . . sleep . . . baby, sleep!”

Baby will sleep pretty soon.”

Yes, . . . I believe that . . . and drink plenty of water! . . . or rather, to be exact, Hélène will sleep . . . *pretty soon*.

For, in spite of her five years, she is sly, the little thing! She sees everybody dressed . . . the fan, the opera cloak, the aigret, the gloves, the hat, the cloth overcoat spread out on the chairs. Then they are going out—going out *without her!* . . . Help! help! rear-guard of the vocal chords! . . . And the neighbors hear a little duet like this:

“Sleep . . . sleep . . . baby, sleep!
Hi! . . . hi! . . . hi-i-i!! Rrrrr!”

The kitchen, minus the cook, who is out; dinner having been served two hours earlier than usual. Madame, carrying the train of her gown and her child on her left arm, is feverishly turning something round over the gas; a sort of gray infusion. “Nobody has any head here but me! . . . Ah! if I couldn’t go after all! what would the Linets say? . . . We are an hour late already . . .”

Raoul is looking on with the air of a beaten hound. “What are you preparing there?”

“A little opium. She must be got to sleep somehow.”

“Isn’t it dangerous?”

“Dangerous!” And again she looks at her husband with that contemptuous air which some clever women assume towards men less advanced than themselves. Then, stooping her obstinate little head, dressed like a queen’s for the ball, she hurries up the boiling; for, a minute longer *here* means a minute fewer *yonder* . . .

in the fairyland of the ball, the intoxicating atmosphere in which toilettes and the fashionable caprices of the cotillion whirl as in a dream. Ah ! Raoul ! Raoul ! . . .

“Come ! . . . drink it quickly ! It is very sweet.”

But H el ene, a sly-boots, roundly resists.

Then, by force of will, for time is running on, the young woman makes herself insinuating . . . a charmer . . . an enchantress . . . Veiling the hard light in her eyes, burying herself in an easy-chair with H el ene on her breast, she rocks her gently, gently, and seems to give up her plan, like a cat which no longer looks at the thing she is aiming at.

“Naughty papa who wakes up his dear little girl !”

“You shall not go out . . . I will not let you go out !”

“No, my darling, I am not going out . . . I was trying on a dress . . . H el ene shall have one like it.”

“Yes ! . . . you *are* going out.”

“No, my pretty dear, . . . I will not go out . . . just to please you. A little mother does not leave her dear little daughter . . . But you must please mamma too !”

And even while she is speaking the mother slips the cup between the child’s lips: “No, I will not go out . . . only, you must drink this ! Unless you do, little mamma must go out . . . oh ! yes, she will have to go out if H el ene does not drink . . . it is for her throat . . .”

Then, reluctantly, with a suspicious glance, the little girl drinks, fixing her large precocious eyes on those of her mother, who employs all her remaining energy in forcing her own to lie: “No, my beauty, I will not go

out ! There, lay your head down on mamma . . . You will see that she won't go out."

And, in fact, the child's head, heavy with sleep, droops on her mother's shoulder . . . Madame waits a little longer; then, walking very softly on the tips of her ball slippers, she lays the little one in her bed. "Now . . . let us slip out !"

Raoul, disquieted by the speedy results, asks as she is getting into the carriage:

"You did not make the dose too strong, I hope ?"

His wife crouches down in the back of the carriage as if she was chilly.

"The dose ? . . . Oh ! pay attention, will you ? You are stepping on my boa."

* * * * *

Towards seven o'clock next morning, when they returned, knocked up and exhausted, they found little Hélène in her pink and white bed, very pale, her head on the embroidered pillow. Both had already stooped to embrace her when the mother gave a cry of anguish: "How cold she is !"

Then Raoul tried to lift his child; but her stiff arms would not open.

Hélène had been sleeping since the night before . . . forever.

(Et de Quatre !)

SHE HAD LOVED.

THE croupy cough grew louder in the cradle.

The father went quickly across the icy tiles in his bare feet, lifted the child, and brought him close to the candle, stuck into the neck of a bottle.

“He is turning blue!”

“Blue!” shrieked the mother . . . “my poor little one is choking!”

“That’s what! He is choking. He’s got the croup!”

“And what is to be done?” cried the woman, clasping her hands with a threatening gesture, as if to defy the calamity which had invaded the house.

“Yes; what is to be done?”

Then the man, an ironworker with callous hands, a red Revolutionist, a brute in ordinary life, began to walk up and down the room with the child in his arms, softening his harsh voice to say:

“You won’t go away, my little Charlot? We love you very much here, you know! It is you I work for! . . . If you go away, . . . then what?”

The crisis is drawing nearer while he speaks. The child’s body writhes like a trampled worm; the mouth opens wide in a mute, pitiful entreaty for air; the contracted fingers tear at the woollen vest and grow bloody with the pins in the band. And the disordered room seems filled with the dreadful rattle, rising slowly, dimly, interrupted with hiccoughs, which is the maddening supplication of vanquished nature, imploring pity from omnipotent death.

“But . . . that is what the doctors are for!” says the mother, sitting up, wild, all her hair falling into her face.

“The doctor is six miles away; he would not come at this hour. . . . The baker’s wagon passes about four o’clock. I will tell him to fetch the doctor, whatever it costs.”

“ At four o'clock ! The child will be dead ! ”

“ Possible ! ”

“ Certain ! ”

And crouching in a corner at the foot of the cradle, the mother who no longer knows how to pray weeps in impotent anguish, in the attitude of a living and savage statue of Despair, digging her nails into her cheeks as if she would tear them.

* * * * *

The man for his part has gone out on the road without well knowing why.

The wide level country is sleeping under a vast shroud of snow; the sky, black and cold, seems a preordained rejection of every supplication. But praying ? he does not even dream of praying. With his hands in his pockets he looks about him merely for the sake of looking; to cheat himself by movement into the notion that he is doing something; to escape for a moment from the atrocious spectacle of his own little child struggling and stifling under the bony fingers of death.

“ Ah ! if it were the little gypsy up yonder in the château ! . . . All the country would be up, all the windows lighted, the telegraph would be kept going, the express would bring every doctor that could be had from Paris . . . But . . . Charlot ? the workman's brat ? Does he count ? ”

And the man looks through the gloom at the enormous tranquil mass of shadow cast on the opposite hillside by the façade of the château. “ They are all sleeping like dormice over there . . . while he ! . . . Oh ! wretched butchery of poverty ! As if it were not enough to work one's self to death for bread ! ”

And tearing off his peaked cap he flings it on the ground with a furious gesture.

Suddenly there is the sound of a carriage on the creaking snow . . . the distant gallop of two great coach-horses, who are nevertheless kept carefully in the middle of the frosty sparkling road. The jingling of the steel curb-chains, the grinding of the costly harness on the shoulders tugging with all their strength, are already audible.

“That is for the château,” thinks the workman mechanically.

The carriage draws nearer, is slowly passing, when the mother comes out into the luminous trail cast by the lanterns on the snow and the poor dwelling. Her face is drawn and her eyes wild.

“Is that the doctor?”

“The doctor!” The husband shrugs his shoulders with an air of pity. “The doctor? For them? Come now!”

But the glass of the carriage door is unexpectedly let down. A small head, gentle but decided, peeps from a fur collar and looks for a moment at that despairing face, its hair blown about by the wintry wind, and at the man who stands in the shadow, silent and sullen.

“Stop, driver!” says the chatelaine. And she opens the door with a somewhat unskilful hand.

* * * * *

Two women bending over a cradle; a patrician in a rustling silk robe; a working woman, pale and thin, with drawn features. In a corner stands the husband looking on, his hands in his pockets. The chatelaine is speaking quickly, between set teeth.

“Two mustard plasters there . . . on the legs . . . Some water; a plate . . . there . . . like that! . . . Lift his head. Some vinegar! . . . Don't cry. We'll get him over this. I have seen such cases before!”

But, as if to ridicule her presumption, death seems tightening his brutal fingers about the little throat. From blue the child is turning purple. The increasing asphyxia seems pushing the eyes out of the head. And the doctor does not arrive! The road remains empty . . . not the sound of a carriage . . . not the far away gallop of a coming hope!

And while the father looks on in terrible grief—the grief of the strong, which is frightfully silent—the little marquise takes off her veil, her hat, her gloves, and throws her opera cloak on the empty stove.

“A spoon,” she says; “a smaller one; there . . . hold his head still, very still!”

Then Mme. de V. makes a sign of the cross, passes the iron spoon-handle between the shut teeth, opens the mouth, which stiffens like a vise. Then, slowly, mouth against mouth in an atrocious kiss, she sucks up the deadly membranes which obstruct the larynx, and spits them out on the ground under the mother's staring eyes, before the father who looks silently on, always with the same ugly lines about the mouth.

“There! that's the way. I think the little one is better already!”

* * * * *

Standing in front of a three-cornered bit of looking-glass fastened against the wall, Mme. de V. is putting up her hair. Those who surround her are silent: the doctor, the wife, the husband who is looking at the

ground, embarrassed. The only sound in the room is the tuneful, almost merry, plaint of the saved infant. The chatelaine soon finishes her toilette. The Sister of Charity merges into the fashionable woman.

“Thank you, doctor, for coming so soon. Come, madame, say a little prayer for me, and to-morrow I will send for news of the child.”

Then, going up to the ironworker, she holds out her little white-gloved hand . . .

“No! mine are too dirty. Go away from me! . . . I am a sot!” And the man turned aside almost roughly.

* * * * *

But, when Mme. de V. had re-entered her coupé wadded with blue; when the smoking horses, after a delay of three hours, had resumed the road to the château; when night's deep silence had fallen upon all things, one might have made out in the shadow a human figure bowing down on the road and kissing something . . . the fine tracks of a private carriage.

* * * * *

Ten days later, at the château.

The doctor had just gone; and after trying to evade it for half an hour, he has declared his secret; it is all over with the little marquise. The croup she contracted down yonder at the ironworker's has yielded to the strong dose of serum injected, but only to give place to meningitis. The difference is that in one case death had a hundred chances to one; in the other, only ninety-eight. Madame de V. has lost! That is all there is about it.

“Jeanne, bring me Germaine.”

Germaine is a favorite writing-desk which the mar-
quise has named thus in honor of the friend who gave
it to her.

And all she holds sacred, all that is good, all her heart,
is in that pretty desk of ebony and crystal. The last
letters from her husband . . . the first—the only—
writing-book of her son . . . two rosaries . . . a cruci-
fix, some jewels, some sketch-books, an *Imitation*, some
photographs, but very few . . .

And every one of them has a tongue; they recount
her life. “Do you remember?” murmurs each as it
slips between her fevered fingers. “Do you remem-
ber?”

Does she remember!

And that is why she is almost smiling as she thinks of
departure.

Those whom God loves die young . . . Why gather
up the crumbs when in a few hours the banquet of life
will be royal!

* * * * *

When the last anointings are over she thanks the
priest:

“Will you pray a little for me?” she murmurs.

“A great deal!”

“Yes . . . that is it . . . a great deal! . . . Oh!
to think that it is over! . . . over at last! . . . Oh!
thanks, my God! Monsieur l'Abbé, have you ever medi-
tated on that saying of St. Paul: *I thirst for death?*
Well, I too . . . but perhaps . . . I ought not to say
that? . . . Oh! how I suffer!”

And her head falls back on her pillow, very pale,
amidst the dark gold of her hair. Then she begins

talking to herself, losing for a moment the sense of surrounding things: . . . “And if there were nothing . . . afterwards? . . . Nothing . . . non-existence? I would have loved, suffered . . . embellished my soul . . . for nothing! . . . No . . . I am tempted . . . like Thee, O my God, at Gethsemane. Yes! I believe in Thee. Thou art there . . . close to me . . . invisible. You are there, mysterious angels of the death agony! . . . You too . . . the well-beloved! . . . oh! one would think my head was going to split! My God! have mercy on me! . . . pity me!”

And as her fingers contract on the embroideries of the bed, the priest takes her hand. Mme. de V. opens her eyes but speaks no more. Fastening them on heaven, she seems to be listening to sweet voices: “Come, dear little sister. . . . Come! for Christ calls thee to His Paradise. . . . And we are hovering above thy soul to carry it there . . . very far . . . into the infinity of the blue skies.”

* * * * *

The funeral takes place at ten o'clock one morning, in a winter mist which produces the illusion of night. The workmen make a double line reaching from the château down into the town. “What did she die of?” everybody asks. Down in the works they had scarcely known that she was ill.

Very far behind all the rest marches a workman, cap in hand . . . his expression is brutal, yet it shows emotion; he walks like one crushed by a heavy burden.

This woman they are burying . . . this gypsy as he called her . . . it is for him . . . for his, that she died.

It was not done through pride. . . . She told nobody . . . she even obliged the doctor to keep silence !

Then ? . . . Yes, there must be a God to inspire . . . to reward such sublime actions ! Because who is he, he ? . . .

And as a ray of sunlight lifts a glittering drop of water from the mire and carries it, invisible, into the depths of the blue sky, . . . so self-devotion, passing over this embittered soul, disengaged it from its filth and cast it, in one superb flight, at the feet of Jesus Christ.

Where now were his objections, his hatreds, his rancor ? . . . She had taken them all away, the poor little thing, in her narrow oaken coffin. She had given an answer to them all . . . *she had loved*;—and for that, she had died !

Besides, “*l'amour*,” “*la mort*,” how the two words resemble and respond to each other ! . . . hardly the difference of a letter between them !

* * * * *

It is three years since these things happened.

And now, if you go into the little cemetery of ——— in fact, I prefer not to give the name—all exquisite things hide themselves;—but if you go into that cemetery, an island of peace and verdure amidst the black ground of the ironworks, you will see in a corner on the left side a small and graceful chapel, completely white, bearing the crest of the de V. . . .

In the interior you will see at first nothing but a great, impressive crucifix above the altar. But look closely . . . there, in a corner,—as if it wished to hide itself from all eyes,—and you will discover a very small

bunch of flowers, always fresh, and renewed every other day for the last three years. Even when it freezes, and there are no flowers in the town, still Mme. de V. . . . in spite of everything, has that mysterious bouquet of remembrance on the marble of her tomb.

“But,” the keeper explains to me, “the chatelaine had none but friends; hence, from time to time, I see a sort of workman . . . an ironfounder, an anarchist once on a time, prowling around her chapel, and looking at her tomb in a very . . . yes . . . a very singular fashion.”

(*Et de Quatre.*)

TOTO.

THE apartment was so-so; the salon a commonplace red; the dining-room Henri Deux; naturally,—like all dining-rooms.

Madame dressed herself in the style of the Louvre fashion-plates, Monsieur obediently varied the shape of his overcoats, splitting them up the middle or on the sides according to the exigencies of the mode.

The nurse came from an employment agency near by; twenty-five years old, vaccinated successfully.

It is noonday. Monsieur is going up-stairs, mechanically counting the steps: sixteen . . . seventeen . . . eighteen. Suddenly he stops, hearing distinctly certain accustomed howls, badly stifled by the hangings.

“That’s fine! Toto, always Toto! what is the matter with the boy that he leads us such a life already?”

Toto is the heir, THE ONLY, naturally; bethink yourself,—they have so little room! . . . And, as he is

the only one, by a logical sequence he is the petted, the spoiled, in every sense of the word; the little tyrant whom every one obeys in trembling.

Imagine . . . what if they should lose him? . . . And anything could kill him; a draught, a fishbone, a mere contradiction!

Toto is very well aware that anything might kill him; therefore, if anything is refused him the rascal begins to redden like a lobster, holds his breath, then, with one dash, takes his key famously! one of his savage yells in the high chords which brings the doorkeepers upstairs and fetches the neighbors to the windows, saying: "It's the little boy on the third floor; what a tyke! . . . Lord! what a little tyke!"

This is the case to-day; hence it is with a hand already unnerved that the father pulls the bell.

"Don't ring so hard! Thanks, your son is making noise enough without that."

And to confirm the words the voice of a professor on the second floor is heard coming up through the air-shaft: "No! that isn't a son! that's an iguanodon."

* * * * *

"Come, my little duck, that's all over. . . . Claire is naughty . . . she'll eat her bread without any butter . . ." and mamma smoothes the silky locks, pats the fair ringlets blown about apparently by a gale of wind, wipes the tears hanging like pearls on the long eyelashes and running down the flushed cheeks.

"Now, you are going to eat your soup . . . Oh! the good soup! . . . you know, soup makes you grow big! Come now, give mamma a little smile!"

Toto remains impassible.

“Come, my deary, take it . . . oh! the nice spoon!”

Toto, exhausted, loses his first tricks. Then, whoop! the spoon goes straight through the middle of the buffet glass.

“Won’t have any, na-a!”

“None of that, Toto,” says the father, doing the impossible to restrain himself, “enough of that, you know. You are going to eat your soup, or you will have a little business to transact with me!”

Toto’s only answer is to look his father straight in the face, and then take his plate and send it to rejoin the spoon.

“Won’t have any, na-a!”

In the twinkling of an eye, in less time than it takes to tell it, Toto is picked up, carried off, and installed in a rubbish closet between a pile of old bottles and his grandmother’s collection of waterproofs.

“At least we shall eat in peace,” says the father as he closes the door. Then, looking at the mother, who lowers her grief-stricken eyes:

“See here, have I done wrong? Must we wait till he begins to spit in our faces?”

She.—“Stop! Be quiet! you revolt me! It isn’t a question of spitting in faces; it is a question of a child who doesn’t like soup, and whom you want to force to eat it. You don’t like calf’s head yourself; if I should insist on your taking some every day what would you say? And you are going to ask a child to do what you won’t do yourself! Oh! men!”

He.— . . .

She.—“The fact that business doesn’t go to suit you

at the office is no reason why you should take it out on your son !”

He.—“ Then I did wrong ? ”

She.—“ Wait ! Hear that ! ”

And, in fact, the urchin, calculating that there were two doors to deaden his voice, was yelling like a polecat.

He.—“ Oh ! go and get him ; that brat will make me take my leave. ”

* * * * *

Mamma comes back with her son in her arms, Toto fuming with rage, his face congested, and squirming like a bunch of fleas.

“ The poor child ! You see, his blood is all in a whirl ; if it is with scenes like these that you pretend to strengthen him ! . . . ”

He.—“ Enough ! enough ! you hear ; I’m in it over my head . . . ring for Claire . . . Claire, bring the second dish ; it wants a quarter of one, I have only time . . . ”

“ Do you want that piece there, my big white wolf, with white sauce around it ? ”

“ No ! ”

“ To please little mother ? ”

“ No ! ”

And Toto pushes away his plate.

“ Then what do you want, my pet ? ”

“ Want that. ”

And Toto points his finger at a pot of English cement, black and sticky, standing on the edge of the buffet.

“ Oh ! but that’s the sticky stuff, my rabbit ; what we mended the vase with that Toto broke yesterday. ”

“Want some of it.”

The Father.—“What’s that he’s chanting?”

She.—“He wants some cement.”

He.—“That . . . ?” (*angrily*). “Ah, that! he is a fool!”

She.—“That’s fine! bad words as usual; the crisis was over, it had to begin again! Once more, I beg you to remember that he is a child; pretend, at least, to give him some.”

He.—“Some glue?”

She.—“But since he wants it!”

He.—“Oh! very well, here it is!”

And the father, dumfounded, takes the pot, and pours a coffee-spoonful into a plate: “Drink that, and stick your insides together with it. I wash my hands of it! If it would only fasten up your mouth!”

She.—“Heartless! go away!”

Toto once more begins to sob. The father, plate in one hand, jar in the other, looks about him, heaving exhausted sighs. “See here, what does that animal want now?”

She.—“Oh! that animal!”

Toto is sketching in a scheme of yells.

He (restraining himself).—“So that is going to begin again? Look here, Toto, my little Toto, what is it you want?”

Toto.—“Want you to eat some first.”

He.—“Want me to eat? what?”

Toto.—“The glue.”

He.—“Me to eat the glue!”

She.—“Yes, if he asks you to eat some first; I am sure it can’t be so bad as all that.”

He.—"Thanks. . . ."

She.—"Pretend to, anyway."

He.—"Ah! really, truly . . ."

Toto.—"Yah! yah! yah! ya-ah!"

She.—"Go on! you are exasperating; take a spoonful anyway, you can spit it out afterwards . . ."

The father, defeated, passes a spoon over *the surface* of the paste; and making a horrible grimace, puts it in his mouth, but without swallowing its contents.

The triumphant mother gives Toto a long embrace.

"Are you satisfied, my pet? You see how nice papa is!"

Toto throws himself back in a rage, his face swells up, and between two roars:

"He's taken all the cream . . . all the foamy part . . . and I wanted it!"

(*Lisez-moi ça.*)

WHY NOT A BOILED DINNER?

A COMMONPLACE dining-room, eight o'clock in the morning of the last day of December. The maid has just served the early breakfast. Madame, in a mauve wrapper and with her hair in a braid down her back, is pensively buttering her toast.

As for Monsieur, he is not thinking at all. With his spoon upright in his hand, like a candle, he is allowing his chocolate to cool under its thick layer of cream. And beside him, his hindquarters on the tablecloth and his tail curled garterwise around his paws, Rackmahoue is waiting with that indefinable air pertaining to cats

and comprehensible only to those who frequent their company.

“Say, my dear, shall Clara bring you an empty bowl?”

“No; . . . chocolate, you know, is like an omelette . . . you must wait for it!”

“Wait! . . . but we haven’t time! It is going to be stifling in the shops.”

“And you want to scald me on that account? . . . I prefer to stifle!”

“Oh! you big baby,” said she, biting hard into her toast . . . “be serious; it is nine o’clock already. We must get to the Louvre by ten at latest; there will be a furious crowd. Return at noon; lunch; train at 2:15 to go and fetch Mad from the academy; return at six o’clock; dinner. You will go walking with your little daughter for an hour on the boulevards, just long enough for me to lay out her New-Year’s presents . . . do you see?”

“All right, we’ll scald ourselves!”

And with the gesture of a sacrificer he plunges his spoon into the boiling chocolate.

* * * * *

Mad . . . she is the little heiress. To the mother she is also the jewel, the treasure, the lovely beauty, the sweet darling, etc. . . .

To the father, the dear cabbage, the adored rabbit, the little dear, the ducky darling, etc. . . .

On her account they have even treated the grandmother with coolness because she wanted to have her grandchild called prosaically Madeline . . . like everybody else! Whereas Mad! . . . Consider such a name

as that . . . Mad ! . . . Mad ! . . . what a contraction, what a title, what an essence of poetry ! . . . Mad ! . . .

At three years old Mad was pretty ! . . . charming ! A tiny little white thing with great blue eyes and thin golden hair . . . dimpled all over, cheeks, chin, hands; a little bit of a creature from up yonder . . . from the land of the angels . . . an angel herself without knowing it, who smiled on everybody . . .

“ Letting her amazed, enraptured glance roam everywhere, Offering on all sides her young soul to life ! ”

And there was nobody but the floor-polisher who said, when he lifted her up: “ *Vougri de vougri !* * That child ! . . . Her back is crooked ! . . . And she weighs about twenty-five pounds, as sure as you live ! ”

At present Mad is eight years old, she follows the courses at the academy, knows the square of the hypotenuse, plays Le Coupey's twentieth *étude* on the piano, takes quinine, and wears her hair in a toupee on her forehead. And nowadays the polisher says when he sees her passing: “ It is curious all the same, *vougri !* How puny that little miss is growing ! ”

* * * * *

“ And what shall we give Mad for her eight years and her New-Year's present ? ” asks the father, swallowing his last spoonful.

“ It must be something nice . . . very nice, ” responds the mother with a wide smile of pleasure. “ Have you any ideas yourself ? ”

“ Why ! . . . if my girl were a boy . . . ”

* An Auvergnat expression.

“Lord ! how stupid you are !”

“ . . . !!! . . . ”

“ A doll ? . . . She is too old for that.”

“ Too old ? Mad ? She is eight years old ! ”

“ Nowadays a girl of eight years no longer amuses herself with dolls.”

“ So much the worse for her ! ” . . . (*rather thoughtfully*), “ and for us too.”

“ A paint box ? ”

“ So that she may suck the tubes ? ”

“ Your daughter is not so stupid as all that ! ”

“ Buy her a linen press, then. . . . Anyway, we’ll see when we get there ! ”

* * * * *

The last night of the year. The mother has been lovingly arranging her little Mad’s chamber. Everything in it is white and pink: the bed, the curtains, the carpet, the toilette-table, the fireplace. And in this fireplace two new boxes, wide open, stand opposite each other: one of inlaid wood, filled with ribbons and “ notions,” and furnished with lock and key; the other a work-box, running over with pretty patterns, skeins of lovely silks, in the midst of which shine scissors, knitting needles, crochet hooks of all shapes but in small sizes.

The bell rings.

Light as a bird the mother escapes, closes one door, opens another: “ Happy New-Year, my dear little Mad ! Happy New-Year ! ”

Her two hands in her muff, the pale little girl presents her cheek to her mother with a preoccupied air: “ How cold you are,” says the mother.

“ Indeed ! it is not cold.”

“ Oh, well ! go and warm yourself in your room. . . . I have had such a good fire made on the hearth ! ”

Mad gives her mother a rather bored look . . . Then, as if to be done as soon as possible with a poorly appreciated pleasantry, she opens the door.

Her little chamber is all illuminated by the rosy glow filtering through the lampshade; and in this light, like a smile of good-natured welcome, gleam the two boxes of iridescent silks . . .

Muffling their steps on the rug at the doorway, the happy parents are holding their breath. They are expecting a cry of delight . . . a flash of joy brightening two beloved eyes . . . two arms in an embrace of gratitude.

But Mad comes out tranquilly, without a word.

“ Well, deary, did you see ? ”

“ What ? Père Bugeaud’s peaked cap ? ”

“ No,” says the mother, already saddened, “ your New-Year’s gifts.”

“ Oh, well . . . yes, my New-Year’s gifts,” answers the little girl, letting down the hair which is tiring her temples. . . . “ You did it to give me pleasure . . . so I have nothing to say ! ”

“ But those boxes are superb ! ”

“ Bah ! . . . boxes of chiffons ! . . . That would make a little seamstress happy. But for me ! . . . you know . . . I am trying for a certificate already.”

“ And you would have preferred ? . . . ”

“ Yes, something suitable to me; the new illustrated *Trigo* * for children, or Mulbach’s table of logarithms.

* Trigonometry.

But needles! . . . thread! . . . Why not a boiled dinner?"

SLAPPED!

HE followed his mother from room to room.

"Then you won't do it?"

"But, my dear child, I bought you a pair of trousers last month and a hat this month; and now you want me to pay twenty-nine cents for a pistol? No, you are unreasonable; just think, your father has to work three hours to earn as much as that!"

But paying no attention, he contradicted, coaxed, raged by turns, clinging to her gown and whining:

"Say yes?"

"No."

"René has one, and so has Henri!"

"That shows that their parents have more pennies than yours."

"Yes! you have got some pennies!"

"So I have; but to buy bread with."

"Won't you buy it for me?"

"Let me be! Go and do your lessons!"

* * * * *

He went, his hands in his pockets, dragging his slippers over the bricks, contorting himself in a way that made his mother impatient.

In a few minutes he was back again in the kitchen, beginning anew in a whimpering voice the same rigmorole: "Say! buy it for me, say!"

She felt herself growing angry and would not answer. The child saw it, and kept on in a cold rage, apparently

making it a point to exasperate and drive her to extremities.

He was determined to have an answer . . . he got one, a superb slap in the face; after which he said no more.

* * * * *

Alone !

Still with his hands in his pockets, he goes to the window and through the glass looks down into the street. There his mother is ! . . . she who slapped him in the face ! She is down there, not thinking about it; she crosses the street with her basket in her hand; she chats a moment with a neighbor and disappears round a corner of the market, making haste, for it will soon close.

Then he turns back into the room, dragging his feet, and drops down into a chair, his legs sticking straight out in front of him. Silently he stares at the floor, hypnotized by a sudden thought which germinates, rises, grows like a sinister weed, frightful to see.

His little hands come out of his pockets damp and trembling; he rises, takes down the mirror and looks at his cheek. . . . "Ah ! you slapped my face !" . . . and he works himself up, repeating in shriller and shriller tone of fury: "Ah ! you slapped my face !" . . . And he stretches his fist in the direction of the market where *she* perhaps is telling the tale to the mother of some playmate of his; his foot taps the bricks; tears of rage start from his eyes and roll down his cheeks. "Ah ! you gave me a slap. . . . Well ! you'll see !"

* * * * *

And as if afraid of recoiling from the horrible project,

he runs to the bedroom and straight to the commode in which his father keeps his things.

It is in the first drawer, the thing he is looking for. "Chut! it is locked!" and his nails scratch against the moldings of the piece of furniture. Ah! everything is against him; very well! he will have it all the same!

He looks all round the chamber and sees the tongs in the fireplace. He pries with them, the commode resists, cracks at the edges, the veneer loosens . . . already the bolt of the lock is visible. And now, urchin, you must go on; otherwise it is not a slap you will receive this evening. When your father sees this fine piece of work it will be a regular flogging . . . and that, never! . . . a hundred times never!

The drawer is open. The revolver lies there like some malignant beast, with its cold steely reflections. . . . "You'll see if your son has any courage! . . . Shall I write a line, like the fellow in Jules Verne? . . . No, I have no time, she would only have to come in, the shrew, and I should be balked!"

Then he climbed on a chair, to select a good position and to recall some passages in the newspaper stories. . . . "No muzzle against the breast . . . it wouldn't go off! Nor hold it too far off . . . my hand would tremble and it would miss! Must take a rule . . . exactly, I have one in my satchel . . . and anyway, why the breast? it isn't necessary to aim at the breast! . . . That's it! . . . In the ear! . . . That will be braver! . . . where is the glass? . . ."

* * * * *

"Hold my basket a minute, Mother Rivalot, while I look for my keys."

And all out of breath with the four pairs of stairs, the young woman fumbles in her pockets. Not there! . . . Suddenly she recollects! The keys are in the bottom of her basket. And as she empties it out on the landing, Mother Rivalot looks at the provisions.

“What rich salad you have there; how much?”

“Four cents!”

“It isn't given away. What! a pistol?”

And suddenly interested, Mother Rivalot brings her sharp little eyes to bear on the object; eyes in which one reads the experience of a life which has lasted three quarters of a century. “Is this your boy's birthday that you are buying such a machine as that?”

“His birthday, no! but he has been in such a rage that I would give him the moon if he asked for it to escape scenes which wear me out.”

And as Mother Rivalot returned the pistol with a mocking smile, the young woman grew rather hot and out of temper: “After all, children will be children! . . . What is one to do when they get so angry that it makes them sick? It is very fine to criticise from the outside; one would like to see, Mother Rivalot, what you would do with a lad like that!”

Here the old woman drew herself up. . . . “But I have raised ten of them,” said she . . . “only” . . .

“Only what?” resumed the other.

“There was religion where we lived: parents honored God and children respected their parents; they had prayers every morning and night, the children went to catechism and to Mass; all that, you know, is a great help, and I have a right to tell you so, because I am an old woman. . . .”

“Possible! but every one has his own ideas; the father is intractable about that; there was no use even talking to him of presenting Eugene for his first communion.”

“And he made his own?”

“Naturally.”

Mother Rivalot raised her eyes with a look of supreme commiseration. “You know, my little beauty, those things pay. All children who make their first communion do not become saints; there’s the one on the third floor, for instance, who doesn’t amount to much. But at any rate, they have at least a great souvenir of their childhood; they know what is good and what is bad; and especially that there is some One above who always sees them, and who will ask an account of everything. But to try to get along without religion . . . oh, well! that is enough . . . there is your salad and I wish you joy with your . . .”

“With your . . .?” repeated the other, quite offended.

“Your . . . Eugene!”

* * * * *

The coolness seeming likely to last till evening, she went directly into the kitchen and began to pick the salad; then she lighted the fire, prepared the stew, and suddenly observed that she had no salt.

Obliged to keep on stirring, that the sauce might not burn at the bottom, she was obliged to send Eugene on the errand, and that rather annoyed her; however, she decided on it.

“Eugene! Eugene!”

Her voice sounded through the empty rooms as if in the silence of death.

“ Eugene ! ”

And suddenly a wild anguish laid hold upon her. Still stirring the sauce, she called the third time: “ Eugene ! Eugene ! ” a strange sound seemed to answer her. . . .

With one bound she crossed the dining-room; . . . and there on the threshold of the bedroom . . . God of God ! . . . what did she see ! . . .

There was her child, his body on the floor and his feet still on the chair; his big eyes, bloodshot, staring in mad terror; a little thread of already coagulating blood trickling from the temple; and spitting out his little teeth on the carpet, Eugene was dying, yet not ceasing to repeat: “ Mamma ! oh ! mamma ! ”

(Et ça ?)

THE DOLL.

SHE carried herself very erect, haughty, indifferent, almost disdainful, her hands in her little muff of real astrakhan held very low, at the extremity of its cord.

To see her passing, buttoned up tight in her costly otter jacket, down which the heavy tresses of her hair tumbled in floods of pallid gold, one would have divined a little girl very sure of herself, sure that her parents were distinguished persons, and in spite of her eleven years entirely persuaded that she was rich, beautiful, and highly esteemed.

A little girl. . . . But was she really one ?

Could a young woman have walked with a firmer step? could she have had a more faultless gait? could she

have corrected the stiffness of her figure more admirably by the pose of her head? could her expression have been more cleverly unconcerned?

Preceding her mother, she turned the corner of the Rue du Louvre, pushed the door open unhesitatingly with her beautifully gloved hand, and entered the *Paradise of Children* with a leisurely gait, taking in everything with a comprehensive glance, her under lip slightly protruded in the correct expression of disdain; all that she understood already!

* * * * *

“Madame wishes to buy something?”

“*Mon Dieu!* we do not know yet? Have you anything new?”

With an Olympian gesture the employee pointed to the shelves, where, under the dusty glow of the newly lighted electric lamps, the gilding and bright colors of costly playthings began to shine on all sides at once.

The mother looked questioningly at her daughter, but met with no response.

The shopgirl became more active. Divining a rich buyer, she laid aside the ordinary article, the one that says: *Papa, mamma*, when you squeeze its stomach, or that cries: *Long live Russia!*—and brought her hands full of all the most coquettish, richest, and prettiest yearly created by Parisian ingenuity.

“Would you like some dolls of the very latest style, with ‘divorce hats,’ or with hair dressed like Valti or Loie Fuller?”

“No, no dolls,” said the child, “something more serious . . . *it is for me!*”

And absently, without a sparkle in her eyes or a wish

parting her lips, she passes through fairylike splendors that when we were little would have made us clap our hands and shout with joy.

Once she raises her muff and points with it at a little writing-desk, very pretty and finely carved; but then, suddenly disgusted, gives her mother, who had begun to hope, a gentle push forward.

* * * * *

She goes on through splendid displays; and to the observing eye there is everything in the expression of her face.

One divines in it the unconscious melancholy of an unfortunate precocity, in the good sense of the word; providing, however, that it can have a good one! The parents have not left time for the child's young sensations to learn the part which Providence would have taught them. Anticipating nature without the least necessity, they have brought others on the scene which have interrupted the prattlings of their predecessors!

And, skimming over all things but penetrating none, inhaling the odor of each flower only long enough to lose desire for it, the child has devoured her happiness in the germ, just as her parents sit down without appetite to the early fruits and vegetables by which the rich forestall the seasons.

* * * * *

It seems very stupid to you, little one, does it not? all this display of glaring colors, these big dolls with chubby cheeks, superb complexions, scarlet lips and great, innocent eyes, blue as the Rhine, where they first saw the light? There is a wide difference between their healthy-looking faces, such as Rubens admired, and your

little aristocratic profile, your pallid skin, your too-penetrating eyes, and your lips whose enigmatic wrinkle seems to me still more painful than it is proud.

He makes you shrug your shoulders, does he not? this black-bearded imp who springs out of his box with an avenging club? I know a good many children who have gone fraternally to bed with him on Christmas night, hugging with the other hand a clown as white as he is black; and lying between those two apostles they had very rosy dreams, which shows that tastes and colors are not to be disputed.

But then, those children did not know to take a seat as faultlessly as you do; they were fond of making pies in the sand, they loved to straddle their papa:

“Horseback on my dada!
When he runs he makes us jump.
Houp! Houp!”

and occasionally I have known them to rip open their Toto to see whether his body was really a superior article, or whether he came from a Jewish house.

And more particularly, I have seen them cut their clown in two, across or lengthwise, according as each one pleased, and offer half to a less fortunate playmate; they knew it would give pleasure, and thus, in their little heads, they solved the social question after the fashion of Alexander!

But you, dear little one, you do not comprehend such trivialities as these! Presently, when you are going out, a poor child at the door of the shop will perhaps fasten on you great eyes full of longing. And then, be-

cause you are kind, you will draw out your little blue cardcase, and, picking out some soup tickets, sweetly present them with an inclination of your head, without observing what eyes have scrutinized the elegant packet you have consented to carry, because it is late and you will not meet either Hélène de B... or Simone L...

In my time little Jean de X... would have taken the poor child by the hand and brought her, shamefaced, into the shop, and said squarely: "*Which do you want, the red one, or the one you must squeeze in the stomach? Come on! tell me!*"

(Lisez-moi ça !)



A. DE LAMOTHE.

THE popular novelist, Alexandre de Lamothé, was born at Périgueux in 1823. In 1851 he left L'Ecole des Chartes de Paris, and during ten years was intrusted with various missions in Europe, Africa and Asia, being afterwards appointed archivist at Nîmes. He has published a certain number of learned works on special topics, but he has been most prolific as a novelist. Among his more important books in this line are : "L'Auberge de la Mort," "Les Camisards," "La Fille du Bandit," "Fedora la Nihiliste," "Le Fou de Vesuve," "Histoire d'un dernier d'Or," "Histoire d'une Pipe," "Legendes de tous Pays," "Marpha,"

‘ Les Métiers Infames,’ ‘ La Reine des Brumes,’ ‘ Le Roi de la Nuit,’ ‘ Le Puits Sanglant,’ ‘ Patrick O’Bryn ’
One of his stories has been translated into English and published under the title of ‘ The Outlaw of Camargue.’”

Happiness Villa.

BY A. DE LAMOTHE.

“EH ! eh ! business has not been so bad this year !” exclaimed Athanase Polydore Le Comte, wholesale and retail dealer in chiffons, entering, on the last day of December, 1867, the little salon, rather dark, although it was eighty-six steps above the pavement of Rue Childebert, of the tiny apartment occupied by him as tenant of the unfurnished house No. 218.

“Yes, not at all bad,” he added, rubbing his hands after throwing his hat on the green damask sofa near which his only daughter, Mlle. Palmyre, a tall slip of fourteen, her hair hanging down her back, was perched upon a piano stool, executing a series of exasperating scales, while her mother, Mme. Elodie Polydore, a plump little woman bordering on fifty, was reading near the window a novel in octavo bearing on its greasy back the imprint of the most fashionable circulating library on Maubert Place.

“A clear gain of 22,587 francs 63½ centimes on the sale of white and colored chiffons is not bad! not bad!”

And, with his hands in the pockets of his black and gray checked trousers, the consequential little trader began to walk up and down, humming a popular air which

he interrupted only to plant himself squarely, in the attitude of the Colossus of Rhodes, in front of his wife, to whom he said once more :

“A fine profit, eh ! what do you say to it, Elodie ?”

Instead of answering, Elodie dropped her book on her knees with a discouraged air, and heaved a sigh powerful enough to turn a windmill.

Athanase Polydore nevertheless maintained a half-stooping position which made him not unlike an interrogation point.

“What’s the good of it ?” murmured the afflicted beauty, sinking back in her armchair and relinquishing her hold on the novel, which slid to the floor.

“What’s the good of it ?” repeated Palmyre like a plaintive echo, running her short, thick fingers over the sobbing piano.

“What’s the good of 22,587 francs 63½ centimes !” exclaimed the dealer, drawing himself up with the majesty of a dancing-master who takes the third position at the first squeak of the bow; “but are you well aware that, added to the rest, it represents 418,000 francs 12 centimes of capital, or, at the present rate of interest, 20,157 francs 8 centimes of income ?”

“Oh ! what do figures matter to poor victims obliged to waste away in the obscurity of a dark dungeon ?” sobbed Elodie.

“Waste away ! waste away !” exclaimed Polydore with bitterness, “it does not appear to me that you are in such bad condition; you weigh 220 pounds, and in spite of your fifty years you are as red as . . .”

“Go on, add gross insults now to the other tortures you inflict upon us, sir; say before your daughter, with-

out any respect for her youthful modesty, that her mother is old, obese, ugly, deformed; go on, sir, crush under the weight of your contempt a poor creature whose only fault is to have married a man who is heartless and incapable of understanding her."

And Mme. Polydore hid her luxuriant countenance between a pair of large fat hands.

Accustomed to these scenes, Palmyre went on playing her scales.

"Dear child, give me my *cau de Carme*," murmured her mother.

"It is on the mantelpiece behind you," answered the sweet young girl crossly, "it is not worth my while to get up."

The merchant had resumed his promenade. At the third turn he halted and said :

"In short, what will satisfy you ?"

"Oh ! nothing, absolutely nothing," she replied. "I am so happy."

"See here, that is no answer," said he in an almost supplicating tone; "what do you want ?"

"Nothing, sir, since you have decided to keep us always shut up in a dungeon, unless that you would not add insults to ill-treatment."

"Truly, dear Elodie, you are unjust; it was you who selected this dungeon a dozen years ago, at Michaelmas; a fine apartment, convenient, well-arranged, a perfect gem, which I have always kept in repair, handsome papers, carpets, mirrors, clocks, and everything; a salon facing south, with a balcony covered with flowers, a light and roomy kitchen, two domestics . . ."

"Oh ! certainly, a real earthly paradise, an Eden, is

it not ?” interrupted the prisoner with a doleful laugh; “that is an excellent description to give of a horrible lodging which can only be reached by means of a frightful staircase; as to the balcony, one cannot go out on it without becoming dizzy, and the pure air one breathes there is nothing but an infected and pestilential breeze laden with emanations from filthy sewers; you know that I am not hard to please, sir; you are not ignorant of the privations of every sort which I impose upon myself; but to lower myself to the point of allowing you, in my presence, to call a lodging which I cannot enter without blushing a charming apartment—oh, no! that is impossible.”

“Great heavens! my dear, I do not claim that the house has no inconveniences,” replied the merchant, moderating his voice; “still, I do not in the least understand why you should blush at it.”

“Ah! you do not understand? really I am amazed at that. Have you never read the ignoble inscription over the door of your offices on the ground floor?”

“I have never seen anything but our sign there.”

“And have you read that sign?”

“Why, certainly, I even had it regilded not three months ago, and it produces an excellent effect at a distance, I assure you, with these words in large letters:

“*Chiffons at wholesale, Maison Polydore Le Comte.*”

“That is precisely what ought to fill you with confusion and makes me die of shame. Listen, it was only the other day that I was coming in with Palmyre; we had been to a baptism, the baptism of the youngest child

of Mme. Raymbaud, a fashionable lady. Of course, we were obliged, contrary to our usual custom, to be a little careful about our dress; I had on my yellow silk robe with currant-colored trimmings and my green bonnet with white feathers; assuredly, that is simple enough, or I do not understand such things. A young man passed very near us with two ladies, and I do not say it to boast, but I heard with my own ears that gentleman ask one of the ladies: ‘Do you know who that elegant and distinguished person is?’

“‘Oh!’ said the impertinent thing, with a sarcastic laugh, ‘that is the wife of M. Le Comte; you will see her go into her mansion presently.’

“‘Bah! are there any mansions in this street?’

“‘Certainly, my dear, see for yourself,’ and she pointed to your offices; ‘there is the palace of M. Le Comte de la Chiffonerie,’ and all three of them laughed.

Mme. Elodie hid her head in her hands and her bosom heaved with sobs.

“If this insult recoiled only upon me,” she murmured between her fingers, “I could endure it, but to think that it falls back upon our only child, upon that dear Palmyre, so timid, so artlessly sensitive, it breaks my heart.”

All this time the too sensitive Palmyre was pounding out on her piano the stupid melody of the song: “Ah! I Will Tell You, Mamma” . . . this clever morceau and her scales comprising the whole of her musical repertory.

Less philosophical than his daughter, Athanase listened pitifully to his wife’s complaints. The poor man

did not know what to do. He was unable to resist her tears, and madame, who knew the power of her lamentations, had opened all the floodgates of her woe. The unfortunate Athanase did not even pretend to struggle against this inundation; the water was gaining on him, he lost his footing and begged her pardon.

Madame only wept the harder, making her little calculations very coolly all the while. The motto of this sensitive heart was : Woe to the vanquished.

Her big, good-natured husband, weak like all men of his sort, grasped at every twig by which he might hope to save himself. As bases for a truce he offered all that he supposed might calm the aggrieved beauty.

A voluminous chignon of the most beautiful black.

A dress of the newest style of silk.

A box at the Bobino Theatre.

A fortnight in the country on the banks of the Morne.

A season at Trouville.

A journey through Switzerland.

Nothing availed. The sensitive creature was bound to die. The more alluring the propositions, the more disdainfully did she reject them. What was the good ? Death alone could put an end to her moral tortures.

“What the devil can she want ?” wondered the defeated man, rumpling his thick whiskers, and he went on magnifying his offers.

“An apartment on the Chaussée d’Antin ? It is a little dear,—if, however . . .”

“No, it is useless, I want nothing, and an apartment in this horrid Paris less than anything else.”

“Well, then, a cottage at Chatou or Passy.”

“We are not rich enough,” sighed she.

“But if we hired it for three months . . .”

“Another lodging,” cried she in a suffocating voice; “I will not have one.”

And her voice died away in a sob so deep that M. Polydore hastily unfastened some hooks, fearing that she would stifle.

Elodie allowed herself to fall half-fainting into the arms of her tormentor.

“What do you want, my dearest? tell me, I will give you everything,” cried he in consternation.

“I want a house of my own,” she said in a voice so feeble that one would have thought it the last sigh of a dying woman.

“Consent to live and I swear that you shall have it, my adored angel!” said he, totally beside himself.

The adored angel made no answer, but a smile of gratitude hovered over her lips, very red lips, to be sure, for a dying woman, and a light pressure of the hand conveyed to the husband the assurance that his victim forgave him.

“My God!” he murmured, “if only it is not too late.”

Well, no! Monsieur Athanase, it was not too late, and the proof is that half an hour later, when the blond Zenobie, a tall girl who used to call herself Julienne, plain and simple, before she entered the service of Elodie, came to announce dinner, Madame was able to walk into the dining-room even without leaning on the arm of her ninny of a husband, who followed her with a hang-dog expression, sadly meditating on the fatal consequences of a rash vow.

As may be easily imagined, the conversation turned

all through dinner on the house to be purchased by the big darling; a little white house with green shutters, of course,—one knows one's Rousseau; they would choose it near Paris, on a hill; there must be water, shade, flowers, a little garden where mornings, in a wrapper, one could cultivate climbing plants, the white clematis and the wisteria with its long violet clusters. Monsieur would keep his offices in Paris, but would let the fourth floor at the best possible price. What was the use of retaining it? One room would be enough, and the big darling would come to dine and sleep in the country.

Palmyre clapped her hands, which, considering their meagreness, produced a somewhat disagreeable effect of castanets; she wanted to go at once, but where?

When such a great matter as buying a house is in question, it is at least necessary to make an agreeable and suitable choice, for such a thing cannot be exchanged like a pair of gloves.

“Is not that so, my Loulou?”

In times of peace Athanase was Loulou, or big darling; in times of war, Monsieur.

For the moment he was superlatively Loulou, for Madame had laid aside all her weapons and smiled with her twenty-eight natural teeth; she would have preferred thirty-two, but . . .

“Mamma, if we were to buy that pretty red brick house over towards Pantin, you know, where we stopped for breakfast coming back from the country.”

“Shocking! the plain is frightful, and nothing but the recollection of Tropmann kept me from going to sleep.”

“But since he is dead, mamma; you know very well

that we read the account of his execution, it was even very amusing."

"He is dead, but his accomplices, for I am sure he had accomplices; my big darling, do you know, I would prefer the Avenue de Neuilly."

"Montrouge would probably be cheaper."

"We might look in the direction of Passy."

"Or of Clichy-la-Garenne."

"Foh! a marsh."

"Better look in the suburbs."

"That is what I will do to-morrow, with Palmyre; you will accompany us, will you not, Loulou?"

"We might put it off until spring, dear soul; December is a dismal month to judge of the country."

"On the contrary, my dear, in choosing at once we would have time to make the repairs. Zenobie, bring the coffee."

Zenobie obeyed with a bad grace; she detested the country and would keenly regret the neighborhood of the Jardin des Plantes, her favorite walk.

For a week M. Athanase had the pleasure of driving round the fortifications of Paris, stopping here and there to visit villas from whose balconies hung advertisements signifying the desire of their owners to rid themselves as quickly as possible of these unfurnished dwellings.

Finally Mme. Elodie decided on a villa situated at Sèvres, on the slope of a stony hill, with a microscopic garden surrounded with high walls like the yard of a prison. A week later, by a deed signed in presence of Lawyer Grigoutin, M. Athanase Polydore Le Comte became legitimate owner of the villa at a round sum of

35,637 francs, centimes not included, and the empty house was at once entered by masons, plasterers, painters, and paperhangers. The repairs had already cost 9800 francs when the family went there to install themselves in May.

After long deliberations it had been decided that the new habitation should bear the significant title of Happiness Villa.

The villa had by this time cost 45,437 francs. It was rather dear. But then, what a situation! A house within reach of everything! A real Paris in the country, ten omnibuses, an American railway, and the Seine boats. One had only the embarrassment of choosing.

What a charming arrangement! The cook could go to market every morning, madame and mademoiselle visit their friends and do their shopping; as to M. Athanase, from his garden gate to the boat and from the quay to his offices, he had not a kilometre to walk. One could not be otherwise than happy under this roof covered with varnished tiles.

The first week was really delightful, the weather was superb, the newly planted flowers enamelled the borders, beautiful ivy twined around the lanceolated bars of the grille; madame, in a filmy muslin wrapper and a broad-brimmed hat of Italian straw, shepherdess fashion, distributed water from her fountain to the blue periwinkles, and biscuit crumbs to the gold fishes in a pond a trifle larger than an ordinary bath-tub.

Palmyre was not less enraptured, and M. Le Comte de Sèvres took his new fief as well as his new title seriously.

A house within reach of everything is so charming !

The following Sunday the proprietors of Happiness Villa were able to appreciate this. Madame de Sèvres had issued invitations for that day to a few intimate friends, a very few, you understand, because the garden was not large and the dining-room very small. It would only accommodate eight at table; with nine one was crowded, and, as was remarked by Athanase, who took a place and a half by himself, where there is a crowd there is no pleasure.

The dejeuner was to be at ten.

At eight, the omnibus stopped at the grille; Madame was finishing a cream and was not dressed; Palmyre, in short petticoats, was scraping potatoes, and the Comte de Sèvres, without cravat or waistcoat, was energetically brushing a boot in which his arm was plunged up to the elbow.

This was scarcely aristocratic, but in the absence of the cook, who had been sent to market and had not returned, Mlle. Zenobie had too much to do to pay attention to all the details.

Some one rang the garden bell.

“Go and open the gate, Palmyre,” cried Elodie; “doubtless it is Irene.”

And she went on whipping her cream, Polydore, meanwhile, under the veranda, continuing to brush with a flourish of the arm.

It was not Irene the cook.

The door, on opening, gave ingress to the fashionable Mme. Raymbaud, an affected lady with a fluty voice, followed by two loves of children, Richard and Isabelle. M. Raymbaud, a grave, self-contained man in a white

cravat, black coat and varnished pumps, closed the procession.

Surprised in her cruel undress, the bony Talmyra screamed and took to flight, but not so quickly that her mother, irritated by the cook's delay, had not time enough to advance, her dish of cream in her hand, crying in a sharp voice: "It is ridiculous to come so late and leave me to do all your work. I ought . . . Oh! Madame, a thousand pardons, really I am in such a state. . . . I am confused. . . My cook . . . Will you not enter? . . . You are too kind . . ."

Embarrassed by her dish of cream, she could neither salute them nor beat a retreat, and she reddened to the whites of her eyes.

"Why, no, dear Madame, on the contrary, it is charming, quite the local color," simpered Mme. Raymbaud, inwardly delighted at the scrape in which she had caught her excellent friend. "It is I who ought to excuse myself for arriving at such an unseasonable hour; but the truth is, I was impatient to hear the nightingales singing in your park," she added, looking with a mean air of hypocritical admiration at the three leafless plane trees, with trunks about the size of a broomstick, which might have been mistaken for the clothes-poles on which laundresses support their heavy lines. "It is a real Bois de Boulogne in miniature. Do you know that in Paris people talk of nothing but the new park of M. Le Comte de Sèvres . . ."

While this rattling discharge of ironical compliments was going on, the unhappy count, his right arm still entangled in his boot and his left trying to conceal the brush, was trying to back out of sight. This bold

manœuvre would doubtless have succeeded but for an unlucky tub of water into which the misguided servant had placed a pile of china plates, intending to restore them to their pristine brilliancy.

A scraping on the ground, followed at once by a misstep, drew the attention of the visitors to the fugitive just as he sat down, more than precipitately, in the tub, sending up jets of water around him in all directions accompanied by the clatter of broken china.

“Imbecile ! that’s the way you always act !” cried Elodie, but this time in a perfectly natural tone, and with a gesture of despair which had the unintentional effect of sprinkling her with all the cream of her beaten eggs.

“Well ! it was not my fault, my dear woman,” responded the husband, who was vainly trying to extricate himself from the sitz-bath in which he was incrustated.

By this time Mme. Raymbaud was laughing until she cried, even while struggling to retain her gravity; her husband meantime, the ceremonious M. Raymbaud, perceiving his host for the first time, was advancing towards him, hat in hand, to inquire after his health and present his humble compliments.

“Thousand millions of chiffons !” (it was his favorite imprecation) roared Athanase, “help me to get out of this machine ; these bits of plates stick into you like needles.”

“Where are you wounded, my dear sir ?”

“Where am I wounded ? Well ! you may fancy that it is not in my face,” angrily replied M. Le Comte, dragging himself out of his cellular prison.

Richard and Isabelle were screaming with delight,

clapping their hands and trampling on the blue periwinkles. Under these circumstances M. Raymbaud thought it his duty to intervene and address some philosophical remarks to the children on the fatal inconveniences of precipitation, and also on the impropriety of laughing at the accidents which happen to others; since this is to expose ourselves to raillery when the like occur to us, and who knows, seeing the instability of fortune, if . . .

He turned towards M. Le Comte, intending to summon him as a witness to the truth of these remarks, and stood lost in amazement at no longer seeing either him or Mme. Elodie.

To leave visitors alone, more especially when Mme. Raymbaud was included in their number, seemed to him the utmost impoliteness, and he haughtily signified as much by expressing his intention to withdraw. But Mme. Raymbaud, conscious that she had been at fault, calmed her husband's wounded susceptibilities and made him comprehend that in such circumstances it is quite proper to leave everything in order to repair as soon as possible the disorders of one's dress.

A good intention is always rewarded. Hardly was the plea of the charitable lady in favor of her dear friends completed when the bell rang again and three new arrivals invaded the garden. We hasten to remark that of these three two were retail wine dealers, and the third a hunting-dog not yet trained.

“Eh! good morning, dear M. Auguste,” exclaimed Mme. Raymbaud, shaking hands, English fashion, with the younger of the two brothers, a charming young man, much sought after in certain circles for his way of sing-

ing little songs and making caricatures; "I did not know you were to be with us."

"But we did not even know it ourselves; we came out for a stroll, a good wind blew us this way, and my faith, when we were passing the door of that good fellow Athanase, I said to Sigismond: 'Let us go in to see the estate of M. Le Comte de Sèvres, and ask him to give us some breakfast.'"

"Which idea," interrupted Sigismond, putting his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, "having seemed to me both economical and succulent, we entered like one man."

"We entered!" cried Mme. Raymbaud, with an adorable air, "there is no one but M. Sigismond for using such words; what do you think of it, M. Raymbaud?"

"It is the first person plural of the preterite definite," replied the learned man.

"Will you sing us something, M. Auguste?"

"Madame, I lay at your feet my repertory and my . . ." He laid his hand on his heart.

This gesture made Madame blush.

"Young man, young man, moderate your expressions," said M. Raymbaud.

"I will sing you the 'Sire de Framboisy,' it is the very latest style," cried Auguste, running his hand through his hair. "Oh! oh! behold the noble strangers who seem to be coming towards this rural oasis."

"From what direction?"

"There, look, those who are coming off the steam-boat."

“Philemon and Baucis, with the meagre Astyanax pressing close upon their tracks.”

“Whom are you baptizing with those burlesque names?”

“Madame, I decorate with them those to whom they are due: the Coquenards and their offspring.”

“Dear me! the tiresome people; they would have done much better not to come,” smirked Mme. Raymbaud.

“Console yourself, Madame, they are not alone; here come, by the omnibus, Raymond, called Tancred, and his sister, Madame Mitouflar.”

“They are amusing at all events, but the villa will never contain us all; there is not room for more than eight at table, and if I count correctly, three and four make seven, and two nine, and three twelve, and two fourteen. What is to become of us?”

“In war as warriors do, is not that so, M. Raymbaud? If the dining-room is not large enough, we will camp outside, under the heavy shade of these four sticks which represent the palms of the Orient; I will be the very first to take possession of that post.”

“Take care, you are crushing that poor geranium, and that is cruelty.”

“No, Madame, I am putting an end to the sufferings of this poor and sickly plant, and that is philogeraniomy.”

“Attention!” exclaimed Auguste, “the enemy is mounting to the assault, let us be amiable.” And he ran to meet Mme. Coquenard and offer his arm as if he had been requested to do the honors of the villa. But the old coquette abandoned him almost at once to

embrace her very dear Mme. Raymbaud on both cheeks, and to be overwhelmed in return with compliments and kindness. The *melée* presently became general; there was no more question of following walks or paying attention to borders.

When Mme. Elodie, in white muslin and currant-colored headdress, reappeared on the threshold of her villa, with a smile complacently studied in the mirror, the garden was sacked. An invasion of barbarians would not have been more fatal. While the elders of the party were trampling down periwinkles and verbenas, Richard, Isabelle, and Médor were executing the most disastrous charges at the top of their speed over the square formed by the potted plants supplied by the gardener for the inauguration of the terrestrial paradise. The square had been broken into and the ground was strewn with the *débris* of vases. Two superb double pink carnations had alone escaped disaster, and now bloomed in the buttonholes of Auguste and Sigismond. Miserable wretches who had not even been invited!

Ah! if only Athanase were at hand, but Athanase was shaving himself. He was certain to take his time about it. Not so much, indeed, as the cook who had not yet put in an appearance. Mme. Polydore would willingly have barricaded herself in her house to defend it with no matter what projectiles; but Mme. Coquenard had caught sight of her and was now approaching, disguising—or at least she thought so—the stiffness of her right leg by an ungraceful attempt at a skip. She was obliged to put up with the greeting of the old woman who presented her ninny of a son.

“Of course I knew you did not invite him, but that was because you thought him at college; we went there for him this morning to give you a surprise.”

An agreeable surprise! thought Elodie, but she contented herself with replying: “I fear we shall be a little crowded.”

“Oh! there is always plenty of room in the country,” said Mme. Coquenard with a silly laugh.

“And I, too, took the liberty of bringing Tancred,” sighed Mme. Mitouflar; “my husband has an engagement this morning, but he will take his revenge this evening and come to ask you for some dinner.”

“That is really very kind, but still, I would not like M. Mitouflar to disturb himself for us.”

“What a joke, my dearest, but your hermitage is close to Paris, and there are so many facilities for coming that it makes a charming terminus for an outing; all your friends will be sure to avail themselves of it and to pass the word to their acquaintances.”

“That, Madame, is what we have done this morning already,” interrupted M. Sigismond advancing, monocle in place and the wind blowing through his hair; “my brother and I have stormed your gates, perfectly sure in advance of your gracious amnesty, and we beg of you a little place at your friendly banquet.”

“The truth is, sir, that the banquet will be rather meagre.”

“Oh! I am ready to wager that it will be nothing of the sort,” squeaked Mme. Coquenard, “we know your way of making things, and then, at such a distance from Paris, one has only to put out one’s hand for whatever one chooses.”

We have not even bread, thought Elodie, who was ready to cry.

At last Athanase and Palmyre came to the rescue.

Sorry auxiliaries.

In consequence of his morning's mishap M. Polydore limped a little, and at sight of his ravaged garden his face lengthened until it was almost unrecognizable. On perceiving this crowd trampling over his flowers he thought at first of a riot or a fire; but when he beheld himself turned topsy-turvy by his too numerous friends, he recognized that the disaster was still greater than he had believed.

Nevertheless he had to submit to the pleasantries of Auguste, who punched him in the stomach and inquired about his accident, and of Sigismond who begged him to repeat the performance for the benefit of the ladies.

Again the bell rang.

“*Encore !*” vociferated Athanase, beside himself.

This exclamation was uttered with such an unmistakable note of reality that Tancred could not help shouting: “Perfect ! perfect ! what a splendid *encore !* This joker of an Athanase was born for tragedy; he cuts you out altogether, Auguste, my good fellow; you could not say like that : Saved ! my father, saved !”

“That is true; I never believed you so much of an artist, M. Athanase; you are amazing in interjections,” said Auguste with a respectful inclination.

Athanase had altogether too much to do to listen; he was anxiously awaiting the appearance of the new visitor.

“At last !” he exclaimed, beholding Irene the cook, groaning under the weight of a basket of provisions.

At this moment the *cordon bleu* * was really a *cordon rouge*; she was blowing like a sea-calf hard-pressed by an enemy, and her complexion vied in color with the stuff fashionable for a brief period under the name of *Eruption of Vesuvius*.

The unfortunate woman had not made the proper connection with the omnibus. As one knows, it is easier to go by foot to the moon than by transfer to Sèvres on a fine Sunday in May. At the omnibus office the distributor of tickets had given her number 3198. Without looking at it she rushed towards the vehicle which had just drawn up; the clock of the Palais-Royal marked half-past nine o'clock, and the breakfast was to be at half-past ten. Not a minute was to be lost. People were hustling each other round the omnibus, the object of all desires. She charged into the crowd with her basket as a Turko does with a bayonet. This despairing effort brought her close to the step.

“Number 98!” cried the conductor.

“Here is 98,” said Irene, and a butter-woman from the market, a powerful matron weighing about 300 pounds, five more than Irene.

“Hullo there! only these two babies for one place!” bawled a street arab already perched on the top of the omnibus.

“Tell us then, you up yonder,” shouted another voice, the possessor of which, his cap on one side and his hands in his pockets, was enjoying the gratuitous

* Colloquial French for a professional female cook. The *cordon bleu* is the blue ribbon of the Order of the Holy Ghost; the *cordon rouge* the red ribbon of the Order of St. Louis. *Tr.*

spectacle of packing the travellers in the deal box, "which of the two is the mother, and which shall take the other on her lap?"

"98!" repeated the conductor, returning her ticket to the cook, "you will go when your turn comes, this evening, mother."

"How? this evening? I have 98."

"You have 3198, my good woman."

"Ho, ho! a famous number for the conscription," vociferated the urchin; "if you have that, you are sure not to go."

"Cooks never go," echoed a voice from the pavement, "they are all supporters of families."

"Bad boy!" said Irene, furious, making a thrust at him.

"Mind your eggs!" retorted the gamin, kicking the sides of the basket, and making off.

Without examining the interior damage done by this shock, the enraged cook went on her way. It was not until she had at last been able to procure a cab that she undertook the painful examination. It was then too late to retrace her steps.

"You arrive rather late, my child," said Elodie sweetly, but withering her with a glance, "it is nearly quarter past ten."

"Another time I will not come back at all," said Irene, intentionally grazing Mme. Raymbaud's beautiful dress with her basket before entering her kitchen like a fury.

"Allow me, dear, to go and give a glance at our breakfast," smiled Elodie.

"The glance of the master," remarked M. Raymbaud.

“The good La Fontaine,” continued he, addressing himself to Raymond, called Tancred, “wrote a fable on this subject which our dear Richard recites wonderfully; it is his mother, Mme. Raymbaud, who . . .”

“Heavens!” minced the young fashionable, “what ails you that you look at me like that?”

“What ails me, Madame Raymbaud, what ails me? but look at yourself!”

“O Lord! what a horrible spot! It was that impertinent creature who . . . Eggs, butter, and oil, what a horror!”

“It is frightful! she has done the same to me,” cried Mme. Mitouflar. “A dress which I put on for the first time. Ah! don’t talk to me about these parties in the country; one always comes back from them in such states . . .”

“With benzine,” said Mme. Coquenard, “you could . . .”

“Eh! Madame, do you suppose I have any with me?”

“I do not say so, dear Madame, but in the house . . . Where, pray, is M. Le Comte?”

“His sweet companion just now called him to turn the spit or bread the cutlets,” remarked Sigismond.

“A husband ought to have talents,” added Auguste, “especially when he wishes to live at a distance from all resources in a Happiness Villa.”

“Oh! sir, can you say so? I assure you that M. Coquenard would never condescend to such servile employments; I would not permit him,” exclaimed Mme. Coquenard; “the feather dealer of the Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, 52 bis, the second above the ground floor, those are my relations who . . .”

“Because M. Coquenard, knowing how to be amiable, is dispensed from being useful, dear madame,” said Mme. Mitouflar in a thick voice.

“While this poor rich Athanase,” resumed Sigismond, “only knowing how to be tiresome as a November rain, is specially commissioned to black boots, wipe dishes, and turn the spit.”

“Hush ! sir, you are cruel.”

“I, Madame ? Never ! Oh ! cruelty is not the prerogative of our sex,” sighed the handsome Sigismond, casting at the prim maker of artificial flowers a glance of soft reproach.

Meanwhile a tempest had broken out inside, whence Athanase emerged like a whipped hound through a little back door, on his way to order, at no matter what cookshop, the means to improvise a breakfast for his too numerous friends.

“Anything is good enough for people whom one has not invited,” Elodie had exclaimed; “beefsteaks of sole leather, fried gudgeons, rabbit stew, bread, plenty of bread, some saveloys, and blue wine. We are disgraced, but they will be poisoned. Cursed be the villa !”

“But, dearest, it was you who . . .”

“Run, monster, run ! This villa is a contemptible treachery, an abominable tavern, in which you assemble the whole rabble of your acquaintances ; I shall die of the shame of it, that is certain. But then, it is my fault. Oh ! why was it that in spite of myself . . .”

Without waiting for the peroration, Athanase rushed off in the direction of a public-house well known to boatmen and wreckers under the name of the Stewed Rabbit.

A fine painting, or rather a symbolic fresco, on which

neither Horace Vernet nor Delacroix had worked, decorated the exterior of this modest establishment.

Athanase had counted on reaching there without being seen. He had reckoned without his friend Gillibert Pharamond, a long-haired painter of the Courbet school and a rising artist.

“By the pipe of my ancestors! whither are you hastening with furtive steps, opulent chiffonier in wholesale and retail?” cried the giant, rising suddenly from the bench on which, stretched at full length, he was smoking his cutty-pipe in a picturesque undress.

“I . . . I was going . . . good morning . . . I am very happy . . .”

“Would it be the brilliancy of my red-stuff jacket or the broad flaps of my shady sombrero that have produced on your senses this effect of stunning paralysis? Answer, O man of the black frock-coat and the cravat as immaculate as that of a would-be bridegroom on his way to entreat the city magistrate to fasten around his neck the training-collar of Hymen!”

“No, assuredly, I am very glad to see you, I . . . am taking a walk.”

“Without a hat and in a swallow-tail coat, with shaven chin and in pumps like two comets pursuing each other?” roared Gillibert, shaking his fawn-colored mane. “Whom do you want to delude here, Polydore?”

“*Mon Dieu!* I am going to tell you about it. I have some friends to breakfast, and as our provisions ran a little short . . .”

“That’s right; now you are talking. Come to my arms, Lucullus, my providence; I am one of your guests, I invite myself and you make me promise. I was just

putting myself this question: How can I make a good meal on ten centimes? Athanase, thou art not merely a man, as Victor Hugo says, thou art a solution; I was shadow, you are light; I was hungry, you will satisfy me."

"It is only that we have a great many."

"An additional reason, my dear; you had numbers, I bring individuality. The crowd is made for the genius; it is darkness, he is a torch; but for me, no one would have spoken of your commonplace reunion; I come there, and this evening every one in Paris will be saying: Pharamond was there! I shall associate you with my fame. Has your repast been ordered?"

"My wife drew up the *menu*."

"Let me have the handling of it; we will do the picturesque."

"Impossible for to-day."

"To-day? Then you come here sometimes?"

"Why . . . I live here."

"You live here," cried Pharamond, "and I did not know it; so do I, I live here, I came to study nature; for lack of something better I have established myself here; but from to-morrow, from this very evening, I transport my Penates to your house, and like the ivy to the elm, I attach myself to your person. Gontran, my friend Gontran, is camping at Sèvres; I will bring him to you; your villa will be the temple of the arts."

"Sapristi, nothing was lacking but that!" sighed the lucky proprietor, while the artist was pounding on the table to summon the host, busy with his kitchen ranges.

"Coming!" responded a loud voice from within.

"No need, I prefer to enter," said Athanase, who had already formed a clever plan of escape.

“Then we will go in together,” exclaimed Gillibert; “I am not the man to forsake a friend,” and he seized his arm.

General stupefaction ensued when the guests at the villa saw Athanase returning escorted by this species of giant with flowing hair and beard whom no one knew.

“It must be one of Garibaldi’s drum-majors,” murmured Mme. Raymbaud.

“Or rather a brigand of the Apennines, Fra Diavolo, for example,” whispered Mme. Mitouflar in reply.

M. Coquenard was prudence personified; he put his watch-chain inside his vest and buttoned up his coat. Mme. Raymbaud, noticing this manœuvre, found it prudent to take out her earrings, which she confided to her husband.

“Perhaps you might as well go and notify the police,” said Mme. Mitouflar to Auguste.

As for Palmyre, to whom her father had read the last number of the *Petit Journal*, she rushed into the house screaming in terror: “The pirates! the pirates!”

“Zenobie, hide away the silver and get out the carving knife,” said Elodie in a curt and commanding tone; she always recovered her coolness in emergencies.

At last everything was explained. Athanase presented his friend. Mme. Polydore graciously vouchsafed him a smile, but she beckoned to her husband.

“Come with me, Pharamond,” said the latter trembling.

But the artist, already attracted by the graces of Mme. Raymbaud, paid no further attention to his luckless friend. Polydore went into the house alone.

“Sir,” said his wife, “this evening I shall return to

my mother's house with my daughter, and to-morrow I will lay my complaint before the public prosecutor."

"Do not be angry, my dear Elodie, it was not my fault. The moment I entered the Stewed Rabbit . . ."

"Leave me, sir, leave me at once," said Elodie, stamping her foot, "go back to your friend the brigand!"

"But indeed . . ."

"Go out, abominable creature, or I will call for assistance. Ah! great God! what is that? He is assassinating my daughter. . . ."

And she rushed into the garden, where Palmyre was screaming at the top of her lungs.

"There! ah! brigand! ah! wretch!" Auguste and Sigismonde were shouting as they ran through the garden beds. Pharamond was frisking among them, using his red jacket as a toreador does his cape.

"What is it? what has happened?" cried the distracted mother.

"It is the dog who is running off with the green chicken," vociferated Richard and Isabelle, delighted with such a pretty trick.

"What! what green chicken?"

"My poor paroquet!" sobbed Palmyre.

"Hurrah!" shouted Pharamond, who had just caught Médor in his red jacket like a fish in a net; "the ravisher is in my power. Approach, young girl, I have delivered your interesting bird from his teeth."

"And has he not torn him to pieces, sir? Will he live?"

"I have every reason to believe that it will be difficult to heal him, my dear young lady, for a piece of him is lacking."

“A wing, perhaps?”

“No, mademoiselle, nothing but the head,” said the artist, drawing the corpse of the decapitated bird from under his jacket.

“Poor bird, he died in consequence of his wounds,” cried Auguste; “I propose that we give him civil burial.”

This funereal pleasantry was not altogether a success; M. Le Comte would not hear of his daughter’s grief being turned into ridicule. Hence there resulted a slight coolness among the guests, singularly augmented by the demands of the stomach. It was noon, and no signs of the *dejeuner* promised for half-past ten.

“It is an invitation to fast instead of to break-fast,” said Mme. Raymbaud to Sigismond in an undertone.

“So I think,” he replied.

Irene, Athanase, and the blond Zenobie were going back and forth from the dining-room to the little gate where they expected the cutlets and fried gudgeons. With a courage beyond her sex, Elodie was trying to keep up a conversation that more than languished. Palmyre was in her room weeping over the paroquet whose head Médor was meanwhile digesting. The group assembled in Happiness Villa looked about as cheerful as the guests invited to a funeral.

At last the *dejeuner* arrived. But although appetite may be justly called the best seasoning for a feast, the culinary products of the Stewed Rabbit inn were so execrable that there ensued a general consternation. Pharamond alone, thanks to the strength of his Merovingian jaws, succeeded in triumphing over the beef-steak which took the edge off the knives. As to the

gudgeons, forgotten in the frying-pan, they were transformed into carbon fossils. The artist cut off the tail of one with his knife and used it as a pencil in sketching on the table-cloth the charge of his amphitryon. This jest in doubtful taste did not succeed in smoothing out the frowning foreheads of the guests. Its author was not surprised; such people were not on a sufficiently high level to comprehend him.

The dishes prepared beforehand, and on which Elodie chiefly relied to sustain her reputation as a housekeeper, were far too microscopic for fifteen guests instead of seven; there was just enough to whet the appetite and occasion regret. It was Mme. Raymbaud who made this piquant remark.

On the other hand, there were plenty of potatoes.

“There is more smoke than butter in them,” said to his charming neighbor the handsome Sigismond, who fancied that he had wit enough to pay his scot. Mme. Raymbaud had fallen furiously on the spinach, and did not discover until afterwards that it was sorrel. That annoyed, almost irritated her, for she pretended to detest it.

In a word, everybody except Pharamond was horribly dissatisfied, and even to the intruders there was not one who did not think he had a right to complain and to sneer. Mme. Polydore surprised more than one malevolent smile upon their lips. Alas ! she could not disguise from herself that for an invited repast the breakfast was ridiculous. Her self-love was in tortures. Poor Athanase stealthily regarded her with alarm ; he was awaiting with terror the second act and would gladly have detained his guests until evening.

But, with the exception of Pharamond, all were in haste to get away as soon as possible from Happiness Villa and to laugh at their ease over the receptions of M. Le Comte de Sèvres and what the charming Auguste described as the servitors of Mme. la Comtesse de la Chiffonerie.

By three o'clock in the afternoon there was no one in the villa but the owners, since Pharamond had gone to look for Gontran. Madame was packing her trunks and Athanase striding up and down in his devastated park. He was trying to work himself into a rage by the sight of the ruined place, in order to gain courage to support the coming storm.

Just as he was beginning to consider himself well panoplied, he heard the voice of Elodie summoning him from the window, and his legs bent beneath him.

“What do you wish?” said he.

“Fetch me up the cover of that packing-case and some paste,” answered she in a tone of unalterable decision.

And then he recalled the threat she had made in the morning of a legal separation. He went upstairs trembling.

“Paste this on that board and go and fasten it on the gate,” said his wife, handing him a sheet of paper on which were written in large letters these three words :

VILLA TO LET.

“Do you wish to leave the villa?” asked he, astounded.

“I shall leave it on the instant, sir,” replied Elodie

with firmness; "it is for you to say whether you will keep it, because it belongs to you, but I warn you that after what has just occurred it is impossible for me to comply any longer with your tyrannical caprices by living in the country, which I detest, or by burying myself in a desert denuded of *all resources* and frequented solely by the vagabonds who are the accomplices of your vices. You say that you cannot dispense with a country-seat and . . ."

"But, on the contrary, my dear Elodie, it is I who am sacrificing myself for . . ."

"Hold your tongue, sir, and allow your victim for once, at least, to make her sad voice heard. It is time that this insupportable tyranny should cease; I declare to you that I am determined to emerge from this prison which you have the infamous irony to call the Villa of Happiness, and where you have to-day plunged so deep into the fathomless ocean of ridicule that your daughter and I have been splashed with the ineffaceable mud of your fall. Reply, sir, reply!"

"If your decision is irrevocably taken, dear Elodie, to return to your parents, I will not oppose it."

"Not I alone, but Palmyre, do you understand? Palmyre, whom you call by the sweet name of daughter and whom you will never see again."

"Palmyre may go too," replied M. Polydore, suddenly bracing up.

"Then you have completely decided to separate yourself from two beings who . . ."

"Who wish to leave me; why, yes, since it is for their happiness."

"And you will make them a considerable allowance?"

“I will return your dowry, madame, and I am ready to assure my daughter an income of twelve hundred francs.”

“Twelve hundred francs ! But I owe more than that to my dressmaker.”

“You will have your dowry.”

“My dowry, Athanase,” answered Mme. Elodie, bursting into tears, “you thought considerable when you came in nankeen pantaloons and a blue frock-coat to ask my mother for my hand. I was young and I was beautiful at that time, and you rated my innocence and my beauty above money. Times have changed very much, Polydore !”

Like many others, the sensible Elodie thought that fortune was not destitute of charms, and the idea of renouncing not only opulence but ease to live in privation in a family where affectation found no admirers always inspired her with salutary reflections.

Athanase, on his part, sincerely loved his wife and daughter with, or rather in spite of, all their faults. Thanks to mutual concessions, peace was restored. Happiness Villa alone was sacrificed. Elodie showed herself intractable on one point only. She insisted that her husband should admit that he, and he alone, had had the idea of coming to live in that unlucky habitation. He consented with joy on condition of leaving it at once.

This, moreover, was the condition *sine quâ non* insisted on by Irene and Zenobie, who could not endure the country. As to Palmyre, she was promised another paroquet and a glass globe for her goldfishes.

The treaty of peace being concluded, they began get-

ting ready to move. Irene went in advance, to prepare dinner that very evening in Paris.

At half-past six in the evening the whole family joyfully quitted that house, within reach of everything, which they had entered a week before in triumph.

Three persons only experienced real annoyance from this hasty break-up: M. Mitouflar, Pharamond, and Gontran, who, instead of the dinner they hoped for, encountered at the ex-Happiness Villa nothing but the sign announcing that it was to let.

“Another happiness eclipsed!” exclaimed Pharamond; “I did well to take my part of it in advance; let us look somewhere else.”

At that very hour, Elodie, sinking down on her side of the fire, was exclaiming:

“Oh! how well off one is here! Frankly, Loulou, this apartment is charming; all it lacks is a fine mirror.”

“And my paroquet,” said Palmyre.

“You shall have all that to-morrow,” cried Athanase.

“And at last we have found happiness, my big darling,” replied Mme. Polydore.



M. MARYON.

(Mme. Deschard.)

M. MARYON is the pseudonym of Mme. Marie Deschard, born in Brest in 1847. The daughter of a sea captain, she married in 1868 M. Albert Deschard, now commissioner resident of the navy at Brest. A true Bretonne, the daughter, grand-daughter and sister of sailors, she has spent her life between Paris, where she has resided for many years, Saint-Servan, and Brest. The idea of writing occurred to her as a means of facilitating the education and establishment of her numerous children; but, before pub-

lishing anything, she prayed God not to permit her effort to succeed if her pen were ever likely to go astray. The initial difficulties, always so severe, were smoothed away in her case, and at present M. Maryon is one of the authors most widely read by young girls. The dominant idea in her works is forgetfulness of self for the love of God and one's neighbor; it is this prolific thought which has made her produce forty-eight works among which we name the following: "Le Roman d'une Héritière," "La Cousine Esther," "Une Cousine Pauvre," "Une Dette d'Honneur," "L'Hôtel Saint-François," "La Feuilleraie," "La Maison de Famille," "Le Mystère de Kerhir," "Le Pont sur l'Oiselle," "Un Portrait de Famille," "Primavera," "Le Secret de Solange," "Les Tuteurs de Mérée," "Un Nom," "Ce que ne Peut l'Argent," "Les Chemins de la Vie," "Chez les Autres," "Clémentine de la Fresnaye," "En Poitou," "La Fortune des Montlignè," "Kate," "Lady Frida," "Un Legs," "Mlle. de Kervalles," "Un Mariage de Convenance," "Petite Reine," "Le Prieuré," and "Pupille de Tante Claire."

The Hursling of the Countess.

BY M. MARYON (MME. DESCHARD).

I.

THE spinning-mill was situated at a little distance from the town, and its buildings and white walls blended with the trees of the valley. The ground rose on either side in gentle acclivities, forming a double chain of hills crowned with woods and tapestried with intensely green meadows. In the background the town spread out its houses and tiled roofs, dominated by the square tower of the Romanesque church and a remnant of ramparts whose crumbling walls were half hidden by ivy.

Around the works were little houses, preceded by a scrap of carefully cultivated garden, and inhabited by the overseers of the factory and the better-off laborers. Further away, at the entrance to the town, the very poorest—those who could scarcely save the price of their rent from their weekly wage—found shelter in large, dilapidated buildings.

Finally, near the factory, but isolated from its immediate noise and smoke, stood the little château where the proprietor sometimes came, chiefly in the hunting season, to put in an appearance, order necessary repairs, and regulate the *ensemble* of the works, but never other-

wise prolonging his visits, and leaving the director with plenary powers.

All the windows were wide open to the sun one fine May day. The alleys had been carefully raked, the flower-beds shone in the grassy lawns, and the young verdure of the trees mingled its delicately varied tones with the roseate tints of cherry-blossoms, the gold of laburnums, and the white and blue panicles of lilacs in flower. The monumental gate, whose silvered spires glittered in the sunlight, was open, and the gate-keeper stood at the door of the lodge. It was noonday—the hour when the workmen left the factory to eat their dinners, and on the road which passed the château a young woman, dark-haired and blooming, was dividing her attention between the throngs issuing from the mill and the little park, whose artistically grouped trees left visible the white walls, the gilded balconies, the slender turrets, and the high blue roofs, all streaming with sunshine.

She was dressed like a working woman in comfortable circumstances, without pretension but not without taste, and she wore a charming little muslin cap, more modest and becoming than the quickly soiled bonnets adopted by the majority of her companions.

The bell suddenly rang out on the quiet air, and at once a human flood rushed through the large entrance of the factory. The women first, presenting all the contrasts to be found in human agglomerations: some modest, others bold; some sad and weary, dull and wan, others gay and ruddy, and making the echoes ring with their gleeful chatter.

Many greetings were addressed to the young woman

in the little muslin cap—greetings that varied in tone and intimacy.

“You are proud, *la Rose*, since your Stephen has discovered that you are too much of a fine lady to work in the spinning-mill,” said a thin, yellow-faced woman in a bitter tone.

“Proud! Oh, no! I would willingly go back among you, but my husband says that his arms are strong enough for two, and then . . .”

“Good-day, *Rose*! Still faithful to the little bonnet, like our grandmothers? A coquette knows very well what is becoming to her!”

Rose smiled and answered gayly. It is true she was spoiled by her Stephen, who worked for two, and had taken his pretty, delicate little wife away from her tasks in the mill. He was proud, he said, to be able to leave her installed like a lady in her pleasant house. And as she had nothing to do but to keep her room as neat as a pin, he thought all day long of the pleasure of going home, and pitied the comrades whose wives, obliged to labor, went back at night to an untidy room, an extinct fire, and who must wait, hungry as they were, for a badly cooked or perhaps a cold dinner.

The bell rang again and the men came out. Stephen was one of the first, and *Rose*'s heart beat with pleasure as she saw his tall figure detach itself from a group of workmen. His glance sought the road, and his eyes shone as they rested on his wife. Their pretty dwelling was close by. Oh, it was not grand! Two beds of vegetables, bordered by common flowers, were divided by the path leading to the little house, consisting of two rooms on either side. And one of these sides, with

its vegetable bed, was the home of Rose and Stephen—the home which was the woman's pride and the man's delight.

“Really, I was ashamed to be there like a millionaire, watching the people leaving the factory,” said Rose, smiling.

But she was not at all ashamed. She was simply delighted to be spoiled. Stephen laughed.

“I am going to have a raise pretty soon, Rose. So we won't notice that there will be one more mouth to feed.”

“I have been working for *him!* You will see what a pretty little cap I finished this morning.”

They had just passed the château when the sound of wheels was heard.

“It is the young lady!” cried Rose. “Oh, Stephen! you won't get your dinner so soon; but won't you stay and see her? I have known her since she was so little! It will be so droll to see her married!”

Stephen halted to give her pleasure, but the smile vanished from his lips and a somewhat hard expression seemed to contract his features.

“Why is it any more droll to see her grown up than it is yourself? She is made of flesh and blood like you, I think, and she is not prettier, for sure, on account of wearing a bonnet instead of a white cap.”

Rose barely listened to him. Her curious eyes were watching the rapidly advancing carriage. It was a light victoria, drawn by two trotters. A coachman and a footman were on the seat, and on the inside a couple whose appearance somewhat surprised those who were watching, for the simplicity of their travelling apparel did

not correspond to the picture painted of them by fancy. However, the young husband raised his hat to return the salutes lavished upon them from every side, and his wife took off her gauze veil in order to enjoy more fully the perfumed breeze wafted through the lilacs. She was fair and tall and slender, and her eyes were the blue of the trailing myrtle. He looked delicate, smaller than she, with a pale face and irregular features.

“Is that a count?” cried Stephen, disdainfully, glancing proudly at his own robust arms. “I could upset him with one snap of my finger!”

“How pretty she is! and so simple!” said Rose with admiration, her eyes following the carriage which was entering the park.

“No prettier than you!” replied Stephen, dryly. “Come on! come! I haven’t too much time to eat my soup. Those people can afford to waste two hours at table, but they measure my time as well as my bread.”

Rose looked at her husband with astonishment.

“Oh, Stephen! what have they done to you?” she asked, naïvely.

“To me? Oh, nothing more than they have to others! But sometimes one wonders why some people have everything and the others nothing.”

“Nothing! We are comfortable, and happy, too. Their dinner won’t taste better than the cabbage-soup that is waiting for you. I wouldn’t give our house for a château, Stephen, dear!”

Rose chatted gayly, and the frown contracting Stephen’s forehead gradually relaxed. He never entered his pretty room without pleasure. It was so clean, with its white and blue paper, its deep red tiles, its

shining cherry-wood furniture, its snowy muslin curtains. He loved every one of its details, from the wooden clock painted black to imitate marble, and supporting, under a globe, Rose's wedding garland, to the bouquet of wild flowers placed in a blue vase; from the crystal candlesticks to the cups painted with roses which stood on the dresser.

The table was set. There was a white table-cloth, shining steel knives and forks, delf plates, and at his place a glass adorned with gilding—a souvenir of the last festival at a neighboring village.

His gayety returned, and he told the news of the spinning-mill; then he looked at his watch—a big silver watch, of which he was somewhat vain—and kissed his wife.

“Until this evening, Rose!”

“Until this evening!”

She hesitated for a minute, and then detained him.

“You do not see Laurent very often, do you?” she asked in a somewhat trembling voice.

“Why do you ask me that?”

And he looked at her, suddenly suspicious.

“I suppose I have a right to speak to him, and especially to listen to him, for he talks like a book.”

“He says horrible things about—the masters, Stephen.”

“What he says is true. Why are there any masters?”

“But . . . To pay you, Stephen; you and the others.”

“To wear out our lives, rather, and to gain their own shameless luxury at the cost of the wretched mouthful

of bread they give us. Who works the hardest here, the master or I? He does nothing but sign his name."

"But he used to work, Stephen. His father left him money. If we should leave some by and by to . . . to the little one, surely it would be his!"

"We shall never leave anything to that fellow or to any others so long as the rich exploit the working men. You don't understand anything about that. Till this evening."

After he left, Rose remained thoughtful and somewhat disturbed, not knowing how to answer Stephen, who talked better than she, yet conscious of something within which rightfully protested against his frequent bitter denunciation of his employer and, more than that, she began to fear.

II.

Three years have elapsed. The little house and garden are still there, but it is an aged couple who lean out of the windows of a summer's evening. Stephen and Rose have emigrated to the town of narrow streets and blackened houses, and when Rose seeks a little air on hot evenings, heavy stenches rise from a close and filthy court resounding with oaths and lamentations.

She has lost her bloom, her faded robe hangs loosely over her wasted form, there are white threads running through her dark tresses, and in the frills of her little cap there is no longer a pink or flame-colored knot of ribbon.

There is no paper on the walls of the room. No curtains on the windows or the bed. The wardrobe is still

there, but the dresser on which were ranged the cups and flowers has disappeared, as well as the clock which once sounded the happy hours.

Poor Rose no longer spends her days in sweet household occupations. She has gone back to the spinning-mill. And she sometimes comes home alone. Stephen does not have a full day's work now, and if regard were not had for his former reputation and the entreaties of his wife, he would be dismissed.

In the evenings he goes out, and Rose watches for him until late at night. He comes in excited and sometimes drunk. He never maltreats her, but he scolds and says that a wretched room and a crying wife are not what a man finds charming. Poor Rose ! Is it her fault that they left the little house ? She endures everything, however, with that sad submission of the women of the people who have seen their mothers weep and are resigned to misfortune in advance. She still loves this big Stephen who gave her so many joys before he was led away by bad companions. She knows that he would have been an industrious man and a good husband if others had not roused evil passions in him. She bears him no grudge ; rather, she pities him ; for, after all, was not he also happier when they both sat before their door, down there in the country, watching the night softly descending upon all nature ?

Moreover, the vexations, anxieties, and fatigues consequent on excessive labor have impaired Rose's health. She is now looking for the coming of a little one. How she prays that it may come happily into the world, for she builds great hopes upon this fragile creature. If Stephen had not been courageous enough to resist his

dangerous friends on her account, would he not at least be so for the child? One must give good example to these darlings. What a fine thing it would be to let them see their father deserting the work-shop and living on the earnings of a woman! And would Stephen ever dare to appear before his son when his mind was confused and his gait altered by liquor? Would he not be ashamed to use in his presence such language as that which made Rose tremble almost every evening?

Oh! that was the bitterest drop in her chalice. Brought up as she had been in the fear of God, she respected the right. She shuddered in listening to the hateful declamations of him she loved so well. The violence with which he turned against the rich, against the holders of "infamous capital," increased in proportion as he became less industrious and more addicted to the terrible vice of drunkenness. It almost seemed as if, conscious of the degradation towards which he was rushing at full speed, he felt the need of translating the disgust inspired in him by his own conduct into hatred of others. And, intoxicated by the speeches he heard, as well as by alcohol, he listened to talk about the day of vengeance, the formation of sinister schemes, the stirring up of strikes and riots, and familiarized himself with views which would once have revolted his instincts as an honest man.

Of what avail were the simplicity and ignorance of Rose against these sophisms? She tried to plead the cause of religion and justice, but he silenced her with great sonorous words which she did not comprehend. But she would not be convinced. She remained firm in her faith in the love of God.

Rose was busy now with her needle, sitting up late at night, preparing for the expected little one. Stephen was sometimes affectionate when she spoke of the baby. She began to hope again. He did not leave her alone so often. He would wait outside the mill so that she might lean on his arm in going home, and she recovered her gayety, prattling as of old as they walked along the roads which autumn was despoiling.

“Stephen,” said she one evening, “I had two hours’ rest to-day. The foreman told me to go out in the air, and I went to see my cousin at the château lodge.”

“Does she like it there?” asked Stephen somewhat dryly.

“Oh, yes! they are so kind to her. And I saw the carriages passing to the baptism.”

He made no answer.

“It was so beautiful. You know they had only given the baby private baptism, and the young countess brought it here. There were carriages, and beautiful ladies, and the pretty young mother with her children—the little curly-haired two-year-old and the new-born, so lovely! The nurse lifted him up as she went by to show him to my cousin. I would like ours to be like that.”

“Ours! That fellow won’t go in a carriage to be baptized!”

“He won’t be any the less loved.”

“No, but not more happy. And what has the child of those people got more than ours? He is another whom they will teach that working men are less than the dust on their shoes!”

“Stephen! Stephen!”

“ See here ! Be quiet, and don't talk to me any more about them. I hate them ! ”

“ You do not know them ! ”

“ I will know them the day when we come face to face—we, the workers, the hungry, and they, the capitalists, the well-filled !—the day when things will have to be evened up ! ”

“ Stephen, my heart jumps when you repeat those things ! ”

“ Well, why ? Would it not be just that the hundred-thousands of francs produced by our labor should be divided among us ? ”

“ The mill belongs to the masters. ”

“ It will be ours sooner than they think for, ” muttered Stephen.

The first houses of the town were lengthening their black shadows, and seemed to extinguish the last rays of the sun. The young woman was quietly weeping.

III.

Rose's baby is born, so little, so feeble, that the neighbor who is taking care of him shakes her head and tells the father that after languishing awhile he will go away. Rose does not know how extremely delicate he is. She broods delightedly over the small, white face, wrapped in a cap far too large.

Stephen is disappointed. He does not quite understand it, but he thought that his son would be strong, ruddy, and have a piercing voice. He remains silent before the weakly infant, half-humiliated, half-pitiful,

aware of a thrilling something in his heart as he listens to the feeble wail that issues from the purple lips. When the neighbor signs to him that it will not live he turns away that Rose may not see his face, and an idea transfixes his soul like a sword: would not his child be stronger if the mother had worked less and—wept less?

“He must be baptized,” says Rose. “You will send your boy to my cousin, who is portress at the *château*, will you not, *Mme. Duvert*? She will stand for him with your husband. Stephen has had his half-day.”

“Bah! they can go to the church very well without me,” says Stephen in a surly tone. “I don’t go to such places any more; and if it were not for you, Rose, I would insist that the child should dispense with such mummeries.”

“There! make your wife cry!” exclaimed *Mme. Duvert*, angry and amazed. “You—afterwards—if she has the fever!”

Ashamed of himself, Stephen stooped down to embrace Rose as in the good old times.

“Come, it was a joke! Does anybody want to annoy you? I am going to put on my coat and get myself hooted at by my comrades. Does that satisfy you?”

“Yes, and it will you, after you have done what your dead mother wished. *Mme. Duvert*, can’t I nurse the baby?”

“Oh, that can wait! I have given him a little milk and lime-flower tea.”

Poor Rose! The neighbor thought she would not have much milk, but that the infant would not need it.

He went to the baptism in a borrowed cloak, looking

like a little wax doll. The godmother was already at the church.

“Mercy ! how little it is !” exclaimed she, seized with compassion the moment she raised the handkerchief covering the child. “My poor Stephen, the countess’s baby would make three of this one !”

“He will not live,” said Stephen bitterly. “So much the better, after all ; the children of the poor have nothing better to do.”

“Bah ! we are here to give them bread. You were not unlucky, Stephen, when you worked instead of visiting the saloons and the anarchists.”

The priest arrived. Stephen moved aside, more affected than he was willing to appear. The holy water flowed over the child’s forehead, imprinting on it a character before which, in the great day of eternity, all the titles that men cringe to here below will seem insignificant. The feeble body had become the temple of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom ransomed by the blood of the Redeemer.

While the portress was readjusting the little cap, a young and elegant woman came to pray, accompanied by a servant carrying a baby covered with embroideries. Seeing the group before the font she drew near with interest.

“Are you godmother, Guillemette ? Show me the baby.”

“Alas ! Madame the Countess, I shall not be one long. Look at the poor little thing !”

Stephen looked angrily at the beautiful face leaning over his son. His blood boiled ; he was offended by the interest of the young mother, which he described as cruel curiosity.

She watched it a long time. The servant had drawn near, and Stephen's wrath was increased by the contrast between the beautiful child in its silk cloak and his own almost dying baby.

"He wants a good nurse," murmured the young woman. "If his mother needs tonics, you know, Guillemette, that I would be only too happy." She looked at Stephen with a timid, questioning glance. He turned livid.

"Let us get out," said he aloud and rudely. "I have had enough of being in this musty church. I have no need of anybody. The child is mine until he goes into the ground."

He went out without turning round, and the young woman, trembling, looked at Guillemette.

"I have wounded him," said she gently. "Can't I do anything, Guillemette?"

"He is a bad man," murmured the latter, revolted. "And his wife is so sweet!"

The countess sadly re-entered her carriage.

Two days have passed, and every morning she alights at the lodge.

"Guillemette, how is your godson getting on?"

"Always growing more feeble, Madame the Countess. His mother has no milk yet, and he is not strong enough to wait."

"I would pay for a nurse if the father is willing."

"He is too proud, Madame."

The countess turned away; then she thought better of it.

"Guillemette, that child haunts me. It seems to me as if there were something providential in that meeting

in the church, and that God would bless my baby if I helped the other one to live. I would like to see the mother, only I am afraid of the man."

"He works until noon. How good Madame is!"

"Is it far?"

"At the entrance of the town, Rue Neuve, No. 10, Rose Lemoine."

An hour later Madeline's coupé stopped at the beginning of Rue Neuve.

"Wait here, James; I have an errand close by."

The coachman looked down the dark and narrow street, wondering what could attract his mistress thither. She went into the wretched house. Damp and dirty walls, banister and stairs shaky and covered with dry mud, a heavy smell—all brutally revealed to her the existence of a world hitherto unknown.

"Oh! if people knew what poverty is!" she said to herself, with mingled alarm and remorse. Before the door she paused a moment to overcome a vague fear, and then knocked.

"Come in!"

Weak, gentle voice! She entered and saw Rose alone, sitting on her bed with her baby in her arms. She was pale and sorrowful, for she saw the spark of life that had so feebly animated her infant going out.

She started, and at first remained silent. Was she dreaming? It was the embarrassment of her visitor which recalled her to reality.

"Mademoiselle Madeline! Madame the Countess! Is it possible?"

Madeline regained courage on seeing the artless admiration expressed by those sunken eyes.

“You must not think me indiscreet,” she said in a kindly voice. “I was at the baptism the other day. My baby was there, too, so strong and well that I thought . . . In a word, I am pursued by the pale little face of this darling. You know a nurse must have good nourishment. I know it very well, for I nurse my big Jacques. You won’t take it ill of me?”

“Take it ill!” said Rose, clasping her hands. “I loved you without knowing you. I have dreamed of talking with you. And you are in my house!”

“Will you let me assist you?”

Rose came out of her ecstasy.

“We are not paupers, Madame. My husband would not accept anything. Oh, I know that he has been insolent to you!” and she burst into tears. “But pardon him! He was grieved to see his child dying!”

“Dying! No, no!” cried Madeline. “Doesn’t he take the breast?” And she bent over the baby.

“My milk has not come yet, and he is too feeble to suck.”

Madeline took the child and looked at it attentively. Its little head moved slightly and its lips also. A great spasm of pity convulsed the heart of the young woman. Spontaneously she sat down and opened her corsage. And before Rose could say a word, the little living bundle wrapped in coarse linen was nestled in the silken robe of Madeline, and the poor, discolored, hungry mouth was receiving like a warm rain the drops of milk thus stolen from her own child.

“Madame!”

“Chut! He is going to drink!”

Both of them bent over, breathless; they lived a cen-

ture in one minute. Suddenly the eyes of the countess, beaming with intense joy, were raised to the tear-dimmed eyes of the working woman.

“Hark!”

The baby’s lips were moving regularly; his pale cheeks were gaining a slight color. And one could hear the sound of the milk dropping into that little dry throat.

All was silent in the room. A maternal sentiment awoke in Madeline towards the infant into whom she was infusing a part of her life, and the mother expressed her thanks only by the intensity of the joy which transfigured her. And so it was that, absorbed in the hope which unified their two souls, they did not hear the door open behind the old screen.

Minutes went by. The child grew drowsy, but when they sought to remove him he began to suck again, and an infinite sweetness enwrapped the young woman.

A sob suddenly broke the silence, and Madeline beheld Stephen on his knees, pressing his lips to the hem of her robe.

“Stephen! He may live!”

Rose held out her arms to him in a delirium of joy.

“Madame! Oh, Madame!”

He kept her dress in his hands and kissed it convulsively.

“Stand up! You must be calm for your wife’s sake, and for mine, too. I could not help it. It seemed as if it were my own baby who was uttering that sad plaint. And now this one is mine, too; something stirs within me when I look at him. I will come back. Only,” said she with a smile, “you must not tell anybody. At

home they are always afraid that I shall tire myself."

"But you are a saint!" cried Stephen, with almost savage violence. "And after I had been so rude to you!"

"You were in trouble; I saw that very plainly."

"Ah! I shall shout all through the mill what you have done!"

"I forbid you," said she quickly; "it is only on that condition that I will return. And you must let me spoil your wife as I was spoiled myself in my recent trial."

She kissed the sleeping infant and went away, inebriated by these first delights of charity.

IV.

She came back the same day, and again in the evening, and the next day also three times more.

This was to be the end of her task. It was seven o'clock when she mounted breathlessly to find out that the child was gaining, and that Rose's milk had come. She sat down to fulfil for the last time her rôle as mother. Rose looked at her with clasped hands. Stephen was weeping in a dark corner. All the stiffened fibres of his heart had relaxed. Divine charity had thrown a bridge across the abyss which his envious eye had deemed impassable. He was thinking of the moment when he would go to say to his friends of yesterday: "I no longer belong to you. My son has sucked the milk of her whom you thought heartless."

Rose, returned to the little house, once more sits in the rose-embowered window, watching without anguish for Stephen's return, or expecting the arrival of Madeline. When she comes they exchange babies, and the countess murmurs in the ear of little Stephen: "You are mine, too, my nursling!"

RAOUL DE NAVERY.

IF you should ask any young French child if he knew Marie de Saffron, who married M. David, he would open wide his eyes and tell you no; but ask if he knows Raoul de Navery and you will see his eyes light up and his countenance sparkle with pleasure. The woman who won a reputation under this pseudonym was born at Ploërmel, in Brittany, in 1831. She died in 1881. She began to write in 1867 and published not less than sixty romances, of which we subjoin a list of the most important: "Patra," "La Péruvienne," "Les Petits," "Poèmes Populaires," "Le Procès de la Reine," "Les Robinsons de Paris," "La Route de l'Abîme," "Le Serment du Corsaire," "Le Trésor de l'Abbaye," "Une Erreur Fatale," "Le Val Perdu," "Les Vautours du Bosphore," "Viatrice," "Les Victimes," "Zacharie le Maître d'Ecole," "Aventures de Martin Tromp," "Coeurs Vaillants," "Une Erreur Judiciaire," "Causes Sacrées," "Fille du Roi Dagobert," "Landry," "Legendes de la Vierge," "Madeleine Miller," "Rameur de Galères," "Souvenirs du Pensionnat," "Témoin du Meurtre," "Voyage autour de Soi-même," "Coiffes de Ste. Catherine," "Les Dupes," "Les Iles Sauvages," "La Veuve du Garde," "Confession de la

Reine," "La Filleule de l'Evêque," "Le martyr d'un
Secret," "Le Missionnaire de la Terre," "Les Naufra
geurs." "Tonie," and "Tomine et Noga "

The Missal of Abbot Gelasius.

BY RAOUL DE NAVERY.

AMONG the monasteries which were the glory of ancient Germany, the abbey of St. Willibert, directed by the Abbot Gelasius, held the first rank. It was a splendid, holy and learned dwelling. The art of sculptors and painters was displayed in the naves, on the colonnades of the cloister, and in the least details of chapels enriched with marvellous reliquaries.

Amid the treasures with which they had been endowed by the munificence of emperors the monks led a laborious and simple life. Their days were divided between prayer and study, and the hours of slumber which they took at night were broken by the recitation of psalms.

From the convent of St. Willibert proceeded those admirable manuscripts, those priceless volumes which awaken both our admiration and the sentiment of our own inability to rival them. Doubtless the art of painting has grown instead of dwindling; but thought moves too quickly nowadays for men to have the patience to undertake such works, even did they not also lack the artless simplicity of the illuminators and sculptors of the olden time.

Abbot Gelasius, both learned and humble, attached great importance to the labors of the monks and novices. He consulted them, directed them with wisdom and kindness, and it was in his convent that was executed the famous golden book (*codex aureus*) which Adda, the sister of Charlemagne, presented to the monks of Saint-Maximin.

No convent possessed clerics more skilful in the art of transcribing and painting manuscripts than those who were directed by the Abbot Gelasius. Twenty monks spent every day in the scriptorium of the monastery. They labored in silence, and to secure them from interruption, nobody was allowed to enter their hall except the abbot, the prior, the sub-prior and the librarian. A sun-dial, a clepsydra or water-clock, some ingenious lamps which supplied themselves with oil and shed a vivid light, some tables and stools, were all the furniture this hall contained.

The manifold labors involved in the copying, ornamentation and finishing of a manuscript were divided among several groups of Religious. Each had his own determinate task. Here one cut the leaves of parchment; there they were polished by another. Some traced the lines which the writer was to follow; others cut or mended the pens. Each leaf passed at once from the hands of the copyist into those of other monks, whose duty it was to read them and correct the errors which might have slipped in by inadvertence. Here one traced the ordinary letters; there one designed the capitals. Further on, one was employed in distributing over the vellum the marks of punctuation then in use. When these preliminary labors were accomplished the

leaves were at once delivered to the painters, who illuminated them with a taste of which our age has lost the secret. Finally, the pages were collected, verified, sewed together, and thus remitted to the bookbinding Brothers, who completed with the utmost magnificence the adornment of those splendid masterpieces of which the sovereigns and princes of the Church disputed the possession.

Of all the monks in the abbey of St. Willibert, Friar Angel alone possessed the triple talent of copyist, miniature painter, and illuminator. The most varied, the most exuberant fancy played over the vellum enriched by his brush. Flowers, fruits, plants, animals, vignettes, armorial bearings, blended and intertwined, displaying gold, red lead and ultramarine in their ingenious caprices.

Love and patience had gone into his painting of the holy pictures which adorned the missal of the Abbot Gelasius. Remembering a pious legend which affirms that each letter of a prayer-book copied by a monk is equivalent to an act of virtue, he put into the execution of this task the faith of a saint and the perseverance of an artist. When he had finished it, Abbot Gelasius made him write on the last leaf this formula, which is also found at the end of the Alexandrian *codex*, a manuscript of the fourth century, now in the British Museum: "He who seizes it shall be excluded from the Church and from communion."

At a period when the time and knowledge required for their execution gave manuscripts an enormous value, divine and human laws united to defend them against theft and profanation. Nearly all manuscripts of the

early centuries contain a malediction against the foolhardy person who should lay a sacrilegious hand upon them with the intent of taking possession.

When the book of the Gospels, bound in deerskin and adorned with silver clasps, had been presented to Abbot Gelasius by the modest Friar Angel, the superior said to him:

“To-morrow we will lay this volume on a desk in our chapel with great pomp; it will remain there expressly in order that those who wish to instruct themselves in the truths of faith may consult it at all times.”

And after Mass, in fact, Abbot Gelasius, followed by the monks of St. Willibert, placed the manuscript at the right side of the altar; it was fastened to the desk by a small iron chain, and the monks left the chapel.

Hardly had they crossed the threshold when a young man with a pale face and features worn by vigils and illness approached the sacred book and turned its pages with a fevered hand. He looked, he admired, he muttered exclamations; then, after long intervals of silence, came sighs of regret and anguish. He seemed totally prostrated, and his enfeebled gaze appeared to lose itself in empty space.

A struggle was going on within him; his forehead suddenly became pale; then he reddened as if shame had breathed upon him.

“Oh! that book!” he said at last, “that book in the hands of Joël would be worth eighteen golden *écus!*” And he repeated in a lower tone: “Eighteen golden *écus!*”

Doubtless he regained a little courage, for he drew a piece of parchment from his pocket and began to sketch

rapidly the arabesques which adorned the open pages before him. He worked for two hours.

“I could never copy all these drawings,” said he. “I should waste a hundred days without any result. I ought to have this manuscript in front of me, on my table, so as to study and reproduce it faithfully and at my ease!”

Otto was a skilful copyist. Brought up and educated by his father, he had studied with him the secrets of the librarian’s art. But the old painter died. As he made none but masterpieces, he had produced little; hence the only fortune he bequeathed his son was an honored name and a worshipped mother.

Otto vowed to devote himself to his mother, and, loyal to this duty, he had for years labored beside her, gaining money enough to live in modest comfort, until his mother’s illness, while doubling his expenses, prevented him from applying himself to his tasks with the same assiduity.

With what courage he struggled against misfortune! Copying at night, painting by day, he performed miracles of filial love. But a day came when fever laid hold upon him; his faltering hand let fall the brush; he felt as if he too were dying . . . And yet he must live, live and labor; if not, bread would be lacking, bread and the remedies indispensable to the poor invalid.

Joël the Jew had at this time given Otto an order for a costly missal, on behalf of a wealthy noble who wished to present it to an abbey, and for which he promised to pay twenty gold *écus* on the express condition that it should be delivered to him at the end of a year. But his mother’s illness became more serious, and the care

he was obliged to give her soon deprived him of all leisure.

Time went rapidly; he had finished only ten leaves of the book; he needed money, but six months must elapse before receiving any! Poor Otto strove in vain to collect his wandering thoughts; the power to create had departed from him. The power of imagination indispensable to new conceptions failed him utterly. His blood overheated and his eyes reddened by long vigils, his heart a prey to anxiety, he wondered what was to become of his mother until the day when Joël should receive the manuscript.

It was when his trouble and distress were at their height that he learned that Friar Angel, his rival in the art of illuminating, had completed the admirable book of the Gospels on which he had been engaged for ten years.

Otto was doubly glad: first, because he would see a fine work, and was too much of an artist not to be delighted by it; secondly, because he reflected that while admiring the volume of the monk of St. Willibert he would be inspired by motives of ornamentation and design which would enable him to resume his own task. Doubtless this would be a falling off for him, who could invent in a day more arabesques and fancy letters than would be required to cover all the leaves of parchment in the convent. But at present sorrow absorbed all his energies, it crushed, it overwhelmed him. Nothing was left in the poor studio, whose walls poverty had stripped piecemeal, but a disconsolate son beside a dying mother.

“Be tranquil, mother,” said Otto as he went out, “to-

morrow it will be easy for me to work, and we shall be all right."

"Oh!" replied the invalid, "it is I who have taken all your health and genius; may God give back to you in blessings all that you have sacrificed for me!"

And Otto set off for the monastery.

We have seen the impression produced upon him by the missal. When night came he was still leaning against one of the pillars of the chapel. The monks entered to chant the evening office and Otto hid himself.

Why did he not leave the church, since, in presence of Christ, stretching His arms towards him from the altar, he did not pray?

The silver lamp burning in front of the sanctuary shed but a feeble light on the stone statues and the ornaments of the tabernacle. The calm of the holy place filled the soul with ineffable peace, and he who crossed its threshold ought to leave outside all worldly cares.

Kneeling in his oaken stall the Abbot Gelasius found himself alone in the chapel. His voluminous brown habit and the cowl that covered his venerable head made him almost indistinguishable from the statues of saints ornamenting the magnificent choir in which the monks of St. Willibert assembled to chant the office. He was praying; he was imploring the Lord to grant him the light and inspiration necessary to guide in the difficult path of perfection the souls of the friars whom he was called to direct.

Abbot Gelasius heard a slight noise in the chapel; he thought it was a young novice coming to prostrate himself once more before Mary's image, and did not raise his head.

But a monk would not steal thus along the walls, a pious novice would not cast uneasy glances on every side, as if he were afraid to see above his head the scourges with which the angels drove Heliodorus from the temple, or the flaming sword of the guardian of the terrestrial Paradise.

The man who was advancing towards the niche containing the desk on which the manuscript lay, paused for a moment; his burning eyes fastened upon the book; he put out his hand, drew back alarmed, and then, with sacrilegious courage, cut the chain which attached it to its desk and fled from the chapel of the convent of St. Willibert without any of the precautions prudence would have demanded, and as if he feared to be arrested by the avenging hands of the seraphim prostrate before the tabernacle.

When the robber of the precious manuscript had disappeared, Abbot Gelasius went to throw himself down before the altar, and kissing the board on which had lain the book of the Gospels, he said to God:

“Lord, Thou didst pardon a penitent thief, bring this one back to Thee in Thine infinite mercy. I will not forestall the hour of Thy justice. Who knows, O my God, Thy designs concerning this man? am I sinless that I should cast the first stone at him? Ah! if the divine book which he is taking away is graven on my heart, I recall at this moment but one of its maxims: Ye must pardon seventy times seven!”

Abbot Gelasius prayed and watched the greater part of the night. The next day he went to the scriptorium.

“Friar Angel,” said he, “you are to undertake a new copy of the holy Gospels.”

The priest abandoned the illuminations of the first page of Genesis and recommenced the labor of years.

On leaving the monastery, Otto, urged by fear, had regained his dwelling in all haste. His mother, alarmed by his long absence, embraced him with a fervor which gave him his first pang of remorse. He reassured her with many kisses, and then, his head burning and his hands feverish, he turned over the manuscript of Friar Angel. Each page drew from him exclamations of surprise. The flowered letters, the capitals adorned with garlands, the birds nested in leafy branches, the brilliant colors, the taste with which the ornaments had been selected, all contributed to increase the guilty joy he felt in possessing such a treasure.

“ Oh ! ” said he, “ what headway I shall make in my task now . . . before six months are over I shall have copied the manuscript of St. Willibert . . . copied ! once I created . . . sickness and poverty have changed the artist into a manufacturer . . . no matter, it is for my mother ! For my mother . . . that name must reassure and absolve me . . . My dying father said to me : ‘ Give your life to her if it is necessary ’ . . . I have done more, I have sacrificed my honor and my conscience ; I have robbed, I have robbed God ! . . . But no,” he went on in a tone less bitter, “ I have borrowed this book without asking permission . . . Friar Angel, who has nothing to disturb or torture him, will find many other subjects for his work and plenty of designs for new books, while I . . . Oh ! poverty ! poverty ! ”

He returned to the manuscript, and his hungry eyes sought one by one its beauties with mingled joy and suffering.

“It will take me four months to complete my task,” said he. “I will ask Joël to advance me some money.”

When Otto reached the last leaf of the volume and saw the malediction written there, a convulsive shudder seized him. He closed the book, pushed it from him, and resting his forehead in his hands he sought to recover lucidity of mind . . . he was afraid of going mad !

Oh ! the days when he was young and innocent, and when a kind and indulgent mother explained to him the pictures painted on vellum by his father ! Then his infantine lips repeated the verses written in letters of gold; each capital glittered like a star; the birds flew from their nests in the chalices of flowers; the Virgin smiled upon him; angels moved their wings in the blue, and he seemed to see heaven opening to receive his artless and fervent adoration.

And now, the Church laid him under a ban; he was no longer numbered among the faithful. He seemed to hear the leaflets of the manuscript rising, moving, rustling in accusation. The faces of the saints assumed a threatening expression, the fantastic animals, the heads of demons made grimaces at him.

He could not sleep.

An unknown voice recited the Gospels; the letters of gold, carmine, and silver moved and ran together, then separated to write furious curses on him.

For a moment he thought of taking the book, hastening to the monastery, restoring it to Abbot Gelasius, and confessing his fault. But the terrible words of the formula of excommunication were ringing in his ears; his mother lay on her bed pale as a corpse. Oh ! cer-

tainly, he would not have the courage to keep the stolen manuscript in his house; but he needed money for her who had nourished, cared for and loved him, and who, if she had known what a struggle was going on in the heart of her child, would have preferred the agonies of hunger to the loss of his honor and his soul.

When morning came Otto went to Joël.

“Here is the book,” said he; “a beautiful book, and God knows what it has cost me . . . pay me, Joël, I am punctual, and my mother cannot wait!”

The Jew examined the manuscript for a long time and then asked the young man:

“How much did I promise you?”

“Twenty gold *écus*.”

“That is a great deal, really, it is a great deal of money . . . but when I promised it I thought it would take a great deal longer to complete the work . . . It seems to me that six months’ work . . .”

“Give me eighteen *écus*, Master Joël, and be done with it; I tell you again, my mother is dying.”

“You are in a great hurry, young man . . . but the fact is that I am not obliged to pay you until the time agreed on in our bargain . . . Now, it suits you to bring me the manuscript six months earlier; but it is not in accordance with my business habits to pay out money before it is due.”

“But don’t you understand that my mother and I are in want of everything!”

“Come back to-morrow,” said the Jew dryly, “and leave me the manuscript.”

Otto went out.

So he had gained nothing by the crime he had com-

mitted. He went home, and taking the seven leaves of vellum containing the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, surrounded by symbols and enchanting faces,—leaflets intended for the volume which he was not to finish, he sold them for an *écu*. It had taken him two months to illuminate them.

Joël wrapped up carefully the manuscript which Otto had left with him, and set off for the convent of St. Willibert.

“Reverend Father,” said he to Abbot Gelasius, taking off the silken veil which surrounded his treasure, “a person has asked me to buy this work and will let me have it for eighteen gold *écus*; do you think it is worth it?”

The old man smiled.

“Certainly,” said he, “it is an excellent book, admirably written and ornamented; you can pay that price without running any risk, and when you have completed the bargain come to see me; perhaps I will take it for my convent.”

Joël went away from Abbot Gelasius enchanted.

The next day Otto presented himself at the house of the merchant. Still more anxious, more uneasy than on the previous day, he asked him in a trembling voice what he had concluded to do.

“I can only offer you sixteen *écus*,” said Joël, “it is not worth more.”

“Sixteen *écus*!” repeated the young man.

“I have shown it to a man who understands such things, and he assures me that in paying you so much I should make nothing by my bargain. But you have

often worked for me, I esteemed your father, and I am well pleased to be of use to you."

"You have shown this book?" asked Otto in alarm.

"Oh! don't be frightened; it was to a very enlightened and benevolent man, the Abbot Gelasius."

"To Abbot Gelasius! you have shown this book to Abbot Gelasius!" repeated Otto in a broken voice.

"Yes."

"And he said to you . . ."

"That this manuscript was worth sixteen *écus*."

"It is not the money I want to speak of, Joël . . . did he say nothing to you about the volume . . . about the artist who brought it to you?"

"No."

"That is sufficient," replied Otto; and he added in an undertone: "Oh! how grand and magnanimous!"

"Well!" asked Joël, "will you conclude the bargain? . . . Sixteen *écus* in ready money?"

"No," replied the illuminator resolutely.

"You are wrong; this volume is not worth more."

Otto snatched the manuscript from his hands, shut the clasps, and put it under his arm.

The astonished merchant said to him:

"What! You decidedly refuse?"

"I refuse."

"There! there! young man, have a little patience. In business things have to be discussed a little before you make up your mind. Your hand is ready and skilful, but your head is too quick . . . I shall have to make up on something else what you are making me lose to-day . . . You may have eighteen *écus*."

"Oh! keep them, Master Joël," said Otto, in a voice

that trembled, yet was vibrant with emotion, "I do not mean to sell it, and all the money you possess would not be enough to pay for it."

"There are your twenty *écus!*" said Joël, throwing the gold pieces on the table; "twenty perfectly new *écus* . . . I am treating you as a friend."

But without looking at the Jew's gold Otto ran hastily out of the shop and turned, not to his mother's house, but to the convent of St. Willibert. There he asked for Abbot Gelasius, who came to him with a calm but smiling countenance. On seeing him, Otto fell on his knees.

"O my father! my father!" said he.

Without another word, but blushing with confusion, he presented the book of the Gospels to the old man. The monk took it, kissed it, and returned it to the young man.

"I have sinned against heaven and against you," said Otto between his sobs.

"I forgive you, my son."

"If you knew," resumed the unhappy youth, "how I struggled and suffered before falling into the pit . . . My mother is dying; for two years I have been going, day and night, from the table where I work to the bed on which she suffers; the light scorched my eyes, fever laid hold upon me . . . a prey to despair, worn out by repeated sorrows, I found my creative force first growing weaker and becoming extinct . . . and yet I must have books . . . I had promised . . . and we had no bread. . . . When I saw this missal a thought flashed on me, a fixed idea took possession of my mind: to copy it! Then I would take it to Joël; I would receive twenty *écus* for

it, and my mother would be saved . . . but I had not seen the last page then ! I did not know that to lay hands upon this book was an unpardonable sin . . . and I never wanted to see it again . . . I ran to sell it . . . Oh ! take it back again, this book which contains our life and which has launched against me a sentence of death."

"But, my son, it is now I who present the book to you."

"Oh ! I entreat you, my father, take it back, or I shall believe that you will not forget my crime . . . When I learned from Joël that you had kept silence, covering the guilty with your pardon in advance, I was seized with such repentance, and your charity so enlightened my mind and kindled my heart, that I dared to come and humble myself before you and beg you to intercede for me with God."

"My son," said the monk, "I was in my stall in the choir, opposite the desk on which this volume lay . . . I saw everything, your fear, your hesitation, your fault . . . Something at the bottom of my heart told me that you would return, and I prayed the holy Virgin to obtain from her Son that the malediction invoked in this volume on any one who should attempt to seize it should not be incurred by you . . ."

"O my father ! what goodness !" stammered Otto, kissing the monk's hand respectfully. "What penance will you give me by which I may expiate so great a crime ? Ah ! believe me, if I were alone in the world, I would say to you: You know what a great sinner I am; I repent—will you admit me among your novices ?"

"My son," said Abbot Gelasius, "your mother needs

you, go to her. I demand from you an entire obedience, and here is my command: You will begin a copy of this book; your sole punishment shall be to have it before your eyes. Gently and by degrees the holy words of the Gospel will penetrate into your soul; they will tranquillize it and in the end restore your confidence. When this work is done, bring it back to me. Go, my son, during all the time you employ on this work you will receive monthly from the community a gold *écu* for your mother."

"My father! my father!" cried Otto, his voice broken by emotion.

"The first virtue of a Religious is obedience. Adieu, my son!"

Otto left him, his eyes bathed in tears. Three years afterwards he rapped once more at the door of the convent of St. Willibert.

"I have no mother now," said he to Abbot Gelasius. The old man drew him gently into the chapel.

"Otto," said he, "you have courageously endured the trials to which I subjected you . . . God has made a saint of a Christian mother; let us adore His divine decrees . . . Put back with your own hand this book of the Gospels on its desk, and may the Virgin bless you and restore you to the divine fold."

The young man kneeled down and placed the book on the desk. The iron chains came together and united of themselves. The next day, in presence of the whole community, Abbot Gelasius said to Friar Angel:

"Place beside you in the hall of the copyists Otto the illuminator, who now forms a part of the community of St. Willibert."



VICOMTE DE POLI.

M. LE VICOMTE DE POLI, born at Rochefort, May 12, 1838, is a scion of a very ancient family of Comtort-Venaissin which took a lofty rank in the Crusades. Having enlisted in the Pontifical Zouaves, he received three severe wounds at Castelfidardo. In 1865 he married Mlle. de Choiseul-Gouffier, great-grand-daughter of the ambassador of France at Constantinople under Louis XVI. During the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 he was a lieutenant in a marching battalion. He was afterwards appointed sub-prefect and subsequently prefect of Cantal, but the ardor of his

temperament cost him his dismissal along with eighty-eight of his colleagues, and his compulsory return to private life in 1877.

Endowed with prodigious activity he devoted himself to incessant labor. By turns he has been historian, romancer, pamphleteer, biographer, traveler, archaeologist; and always an ardent Catholic, whether in politics or literature. It would be a serious task to enumerate all his works; the principal are "Fleur de Lys," "Jean Poigne d'Acier," which has reached a fifth edition, "Le Mosque de Fer," "Un Regiment d'Autrefois," "Voyage au Royaume de Naples," "Les Zouaves Pontificaux," "Le Capitaine Phébus," "Petit Capet." M. de Poli is a dignitary of several orders. With a view to actual and sincere genealogical researches, the results of which should be totally unpurchasable, he founded the Heraldic Council of France of which he is president, and which has adopted the motto: *Labor et probitas*, a device which its labors have realized perfectly. He is erudite above all things, and now that the fires of youth are extinguished, this is his dominant quality. A great facility in writing without effort or research, a fine imagination which enables him to reproduce bygone times with their local color, their passion, their manners and their ideas, are his chief qualities as a story-teller.

Friar Timothy.

BY VICOMTE DE POLI.

I ARRIVED from Palermo, the beautiful capital of Sicily, so attractive with its Oriental aspect on the border of its azure gulf, framed so splendidly in orange and lemon trees, in palms and cacti.

As a conscientious tourist I had visited all its monuments: the famous cathedral which time has wrapped as it were in an immense mantle of gold, and in which rests the venerated body of St. Rosalie under an altar of massive silver; the vast and sumptuous church of St. Dominic, and its oratory adorned with masterpieces of Vandyck, Morrealese and Giordano; the church and monastery of the Martorano, decorated with precious mosaics of the twelfth century, in which can be seen King Roger dressed in a Byzantine costume and crowned by Our Saviour Jesus Christ; then the Royal Palace and its marvellous palatine chapel, and twenty other palaces, public or private, rich museums and elegant villas.

And I thought I had seen everything until the Marquis Z... kindly advised me not to go away without visiting the Capuchin convent, a mile from Palermo. "You will see there," said he, "one of the most singular curiosities in all the world."

This was enticing, and within an hour a *carrozzella* deposited me at the door of the convent. I thought the church gloomy and not singular in any respect. I was about to withdraw in some vexation when a good Brother asked whether I did not wish to visit the cemetery. I hastened to accept this invitation, foreboding that there was what one ought to see.

Without boasting, I may say that I had thought my courage sufficiently well fortified; I had seen death at close quarters, and, God assisting, without weakness; but in this vast subterranean city of the dead, my eyes had no sooner become accustomed to the dim penumbra than my whole being began to shudder and I felt my forehead dripping with cold perspiration.

Imagine spacious catacombs, divided into several streets, lighted by airholes, and in which dried corpses, symmetrically ranged in different tiers and dressed in their worldly costumes, were suspended in niches all along the wall, with labels by way of brief epitaph.

The men,—some of them in the gallant costume of nobles of the time of Louis XIV., plumed felt hat over the ear, hand on the hilt of a court sword,—look at you as you pass with terrifying sarcastic grins; stiff in their funereal dryness, their mocking immobility, their deathly silence, they seem to be living none the less, to be exchanging frightful smiles, to be whispering in your shuddering ears the dreadful prediction of Cosimo Ridolfi, rolling through the Florence of the sixteenth century on the chariot of death, costumed as a fleshless corpse, surrounded by skeletons, shrouds and bones, and crying to the frightened crowds in sepulchral tones:

“We have been as you are; you shall be like us! We

are dead, as you see; we shall see you dead, as dead as we are !”

The women were in chests padded with black velvet, under glass, and for the most part clad in splendid gowns. From beneath silken skirts emerged feet shod in satin. Surrounded by flowers, jewels, laces, grinned faces that were black, shrivelled, apelike, frightful . . .

When I got back into sunlight and open air it seemed as if I were reborn to liberty and life, and I shook myself like a wet dog to drive away the phantoms, the miasms, and the memory of the vision of death. But it haunts me even now that I have returned to Rome, the sacred capital of the Catholic world, which for the last twenty-seven years especially I have never seen without murmuring those fine lines, solemn as a prophetic warning:

“ Ah! garde-nous longtemps, veuve des nations,
 Garde au pieux respect des generations
 Ces titres mutilés de la grandeur de l’homme
 Qu’on retrouve à tes pieds dans la cendre de Rome.
 Respect tout de toi, jusques à tes lambeaux !
 Ne porte point envie à des destins plus beaux.” *

I communicated to Commander Boccapaduli the formidable impression made upon me by the Sicilian catacombs. “ But,” said he with an inflection of voice which betrayed a parochial vanity, “ you need not have

* Ah ! widow of the nations. guard us long,
 Guard for the generations’ filial awe,
 These mutilated vouchers of man’s greatness.
 Found at thy feet in the ashes of old Rome.
 All that is thine respect, even thy rags,
 And envy not the happier destinies.

Lamartine, *Harmonies*.

gone to Rome to see that; we have something almost finer at Rome.”

“Almost finer?”

“Yes. We have our Capuchin cemetery too, and if you have the courage, I will gladly conduct you thither.”

I had a flash of hesitation, and across my interlocutor's face flitted a somewhat sarcastic smile. At once I was afraid of seeming frightened, and replied in a tone which I sought to give the ring of confidence:

“Thanks for your obliging offer, dear commandant; I accept it.”

* * * * *

We were in front of the marvellous fountain of Trevi, one of the most splendid jewels of Papal Rome.

In a few minutes, by the Way of the Angel Guardian, we gained the Barberini Square, enlivened by the picturesque Triton of Bernini; then turning to the left, in the shadow of a gigantic Calvary, we ascended an easy slope and reached the gloomy church of the Capuchins.

We kneeled down on the threshold of the first chapel, where admiration interferes with prayer, the eyes being dazzled, fascinated by the archangelic beauty of Guido Reni's St. Michael.

My learned companion called my attention to the masterpieces scattered through the other chapels: the Crowning with Thorns, by Gherardo delle Notti; the Transfiguration, by Marco Balassi; St. Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy, by Domenichino; the Prayer in the Garden of Olives, by Baccio Carpi; the Nativity of Jesus Christ, by Lanfranc; St. Paul Healed by Ananias, one of the best

of Peter of Cortona's paintings; St. Anthony Raising a Dead Man, by Andrea Sacchi.

In each chapel, by the pale glimmer of a candle, a monk was kneeling as motionless as a statue, and his ascetic face, the color of wax, his eyes lost in pious meditation, seemed illumined by a ray of ecstasy.

Beside the high altar, Commander Boccapaduli pointed out a sumptuous tomb carved by the sculptor Rusconi.

"Here," said he, "rests in the peace of the Lord, Alexander Sobieski, who died in Rome in the year 1714."

"Was he of royal blood?"

"Yes; his father was the illustrious John III., King of Poland. Like the chevaliers of heroic times, Alexander Sobieski, when he felt death approaching, wished to be buried in the humble habit of the sons of St. Francis and to rest beside them in his last slumber."

"That was a beautiful act of humility on the part of one of the great ones of the earth!"

"Oh! he is not the only 'great one of the earth' whom the humility of pious repentance has inspired to do the same thing! . . . There is one here who bore one of the most illustrious names of your own country, and whose ashes await the divine summons of the resurrection under an incognito which he willed to be absolute and eternal. Here," continued the commander, leading me in front of the high altar, nearly on a level with the holy table, "read and meditate!"

A disk of stone let into the floor of the church bore this mysterious epitaph, the characters of which were already worn by the feet of the faithful:



HIC JACET

PULVIS

CINIS

ET NIHIL.

“Here lie dust, ashes and nothing!” . . . said I in an undertone, impressed by the striking brevity of the anonymous epitaph.

“God excepted, I am the only one who knows the secret of this tomb.”

“My I ask, my dear commander, how you came to know it?”

“By means of a bundle of letters preserved in the private archives of the Princes B..”

“Ah! then, do me the favor of telling me as much of the story as you can without violating . . . professional secrecy.”

“Everything may now be told except the name of him who lies under this stone and whose last will ought to be forever respected. Oh! it is a sad story, a romance of tears and follies, brought visibly to a fitting close by the hand of God! . . . But, before I begin my narrative, I want you to see the Capuchin cemetery. Come; you will understand better, after that, the denouement of the story you desire to hear.”

We left the church and crossed the threshold of the adjoining house.

We found ourselves in a spacious court where grass grew thick between the paving stones, where even the light seemed to enter with regret and the atmosphere to be drenched with sadness. Presently a door opened;

a young monk of austere and gentle aspect gave us a kindly welcome.

“Brother,” said the commander, “we wish to visit your cemetery.”

The monk bowed, motioned us to enter, and led us through a damp, dilapidated, dismal corridor. He pushed a door marked with a black cross and stood aside to let us pass. My companion courteously followed suit, and I was the first to enter.

One would need the genius of a Dante or a Holbein to describe in its frightful reality the spectacle which struck my gaze and stupefied my mind with an inexpressible sentiment of anguish, terror and pity. The surprise was so brusque, so poignant and intense, that my feet were as if riveted to the dusty soil, and it was long before I began to recover from it. The death pantomime of the charnel-houses of the Middle Ages, a brutal lesson of the nothingness of man,—brutal yet alleviated by the prestige of painting,—was before me, almost impinging on me, with a triumphant aggravation of horror.

It was the sublimity of the hideous with artistic refinements of funereal ingenuity. In this succession of burial chambers adorned with a profusion of elegant arabesques, brilliant chandeliers, flowered pilasters, slender columns, winged hourglasses, embroidered canopies, storied ceilings, tombs and altars, the actors in the pantomime, fastened to the walls, were not, as in the Christian mythology of Holbein, the work of a skilful brush, but real corpses, dried by a scientific process, dressed in the monastic habit, girdled with the cord of St. Francis, and ranged all along this frightful ossuary like sentinels of Eternity.

From under the brown cowl surrounding their blackened, sunken, wasted faces,—expressive, some of them, of holy resignation, others of an ironic compassion for the passer-by who imagines himself to be living the true life,—their sinister and hollow eyes fix you with a menacing tenacity which makes the boldest shudder.

By degrees the eyes become accustomed to the environment and venture to examine it in detail. A new surprise, followed by an indefinable emotion! These elegant arabesques winding along walls and ceilings, around tombs and altars, in charming festoons, graceful foliage, flowered arches, delicate ogives, superb rosettes, are all composed of human bones! The glowing chandeliers, the winged hourglasses, the pilasters, the colonnettes, the canopies are made of bones. The tombs—modelled on those of the great nobles of other days—are formed of collar-bones and vertebræ, of humeri and fibulæ, of skulls; in the guise of a statue the corpse of a monk in his dusty habit reposes on that heap of human remains, his forehead resting on the wooden cross clasped in his fleshless hands.

The altars themselves, remarkable for a wealth of flowers, foliage and other ornaments, are merely symmetrical piles of bones and skulls. The ornaments, the leaves, the flowers—roses and lilies, marguerites and pansies—are made of toe-and-finger joints.

This prodigy of heroic patience, this marvel of mortuary art, is the work of humble Religious who when in the world were possibly celebrated painters or famous sculptors who had known both vain-glory and true renown before renouncing both and creating this stupefying charnel-house.

What a crushing reminder of the nothingness of things ! In this atmosphere of human dust one feels his soul thrill with a dumb and generous anguish which, if the soul were obliged to define, it might call homesickness for the other life.

In all the mortuary chambers, at the foot of the altars, the brown and finely granulated soil is divided into equal compartments, each displaying a small and humble cross bearing the name of a monk and the date of his departure to the true life. In a few years, this earthy sarcophagus having accomplished its office, the skeletons are removed to give place to new corpses. The dead pass quickly ! . . .

“That is where I shall be !” the young Franciscan said to us with an angelic smile, pointing to one of the tombs.

“Pray for us, Brother !”

* * * * *

On leaving the Capuchin cemetery we walked in silence as far as the Barberini Square; I was meditating, and the commander respected my meditation.

A malicious zephyr blew into our faces the spray from the Triton’s “wreathèd horn.”

“There is something to freshen one’s ideas,” laughed M. Scipio Boccapaduli. “Well, my dear sir, what do you think of what you have just seen ? Does it seem to you that our ossuary is equal to that of the Franciscan Fathers at Palermo ?”

“I confess that I am not less deeply impressed by it; the first sensation of horror which makes weak nature shudder is even keener here than there; but when that thrill subsides and thought revives, reason makes a more

accurate comparison. One comes away from the Palermitan charnel-house with an insurmountable and vivid sentiment of terror. Those bedecked corpses, those dead people in frills and furbelows frighten you by that hideous contrast, they crush you under the whole weight of the formidable nothingness of this transitory life. I hardly dare to say that consecrated place appears to me like some hell that Dante had forgotten, but at least it is a purgatory at the farthest remove from the kingdom of heaven; centuries go by like flashes of lightning in eternity; one feels as if the poor corpses imprisoned in their sarcastic environment, surprised by death in the whirlwind of futilities, stiffened in the horrors of expectation, had lost all hope of seeing the end of their expiation.

“At Rome, on the contrary, the more one listens to his soul the more tranquil he becomes. It is not so much their faults as ours which are expiated by these humble and saintly heroes of Christian renunciation; generously and piously they abdicated all the seductions of the world in order to make themselves the servants and the poor men of Jesus Christ; all their actions were inspired by faith, hope and charity; the soul perceives celestial rays streaming from the crown of their humility. This chambered cemetery, this provisional paradise, as the Christians of the Middle Ages called such places, seemed to them the antechamber of the eternal one; instead of the mephitic vapors of the Palermitan charnel-house, one seems to respire here the keen, pure fragrance of the sublimest virtues.

“But I remember that you promised me a story, my dear commander, and my curiosity is anxious for it.”

“I am a man of my word, and I will keep it. A short and painful story it is! ‘Professional secrecy,’ as you say, commands me to disguise the names of my personages; but apart from that, all that I have the honor to relate to you is absolutely true.

“Count Guy de Montmirail was twenty-three when the Revolution converted the Tower of the Temple into the prison of the royal family. He had just been made captain of a regiment of hussars whose noble officers had all taken the road to Condé’s army.

“Entering the army at seventeen with the rank of ensign, he had never left it; in spite of repeated persuasions, and possibly in consequence of the contempt incurred by his foreseen resolve, he did not leave it even when the staffs began to be invaded by the revolutionary element.

“Howbeit he was the representative of one of the most illustrious families of the old French nobility, titled Count of Montmirail and Châteaubelin, Prince of Roche-sur-Melle, and the owner of rich domains. He was somewhat envied by the officers of his regiment, not simply on account of his great name and ample fortune, but because he was also the favorite of intelligence, courage and beauty.

“Verily he was a model for a painter in his light and elegant white costume as a hussar; no one wore more gracefully than he the pelisse, the braids, and floating curls; his repartees were as prompt and sure as the thrust and parry of a sword in a duel; he was an epicure of the blade, perhaps a trifle too much inclined to fighting, and people no longer counted the duels in which he always came off victorious.

“The soldiers literally adored this handsome and brilliant officer,—a prince, if you like,—as rigid on duty as a bar of iron, but outside the ranks the most agreeable of commanders, spending his immense fortune with inexhaustible liberality, always obliging, and considered a model of bravery in a regiment which had preserved traditions of the foolhardy courage of the hussars of Berchiny, Lauzun and Chamborant.

“And what jolly dogs they were, these former hussars of the King, now hussars of the Republic, breakneck horsemen, capable of anything, even, I think, like the republican grenadiers in Spain, of waltzing in the monastery of Alcobaga with the skeleton of Inez de Castro! And I would not swear that their handsome captain would not have opened the dance! As to any affectation of piety, that was not in his line! . . .

“Guy de Montmirail had had the misfortune to lose his father in early infancy. His mother, a noble and pious woman, after languishing some years in inextinguishable sorrow, had gone, worn out with tears, to rejoin her loving and beloved husband in the tomb and in eternity.

“Still a child, Guy could not comprehend the greatness of this double loss; to complete his misfortune, he fell under the tutelage of an uncle tainted with all the idle follies of the age of Voltaire, a reckless *débauché*, a hardened skeptic, indifferent and even hostile to the holy faith. To say this is enough to show you what were the lessons of this professor of demoralization.

“The pupil was worthy of his master and passed gayly from theory to practice; one might have made a book of the follies of his youth, and what a book!

“ Devoid of political principles, religious ideas and the scruples which they inspire, Count de Montmirail would evidently find himself more at home in a republicanized regiment than in the army of the princes ; but it is proper to note that, thanks doubtless to the influence of atavism, he had at least preserved certain chivalrous qualities, such as the inviolable cult of honor, that human faith of souls which lack the faith that is divine.

* * * * *

“ In 1796, M. de Montmirail was lieutenant-colonel of his regiment, which was sent to Milan to assist in hatching the Cisalpine republic.

“ The hussars behaved valiantly at Montenotte; at Lodi the colonel was mortally wounded, and General Bonaparte, who had good reasons for favoring the young, appointed the handsome Montmirail his successor. A colonel at twenty-eight ! That smacked of the old régime, or I am no judge.

“ In Milan, one evening, at the Scala, he took a notion to quarrel, apropos of nothing, with a spectator of his own age. A provocation was not far to seek.

“ ‘ Very well, sir,’ said the young Italian haughtily; ‘ to-morrow I will be at your service; I am the Prince of Falcognano.’

“ A spurt of aristocratic pride impelled the colonel of the republic to reply in these words:

“ ‘ I am the Prince of Roche-sur-Melle. To-morrow, sir !’

“ A quarrel of princes ! It was speedily adjusted the next morning outside of Milan, in a little wood belonging to the Charterhouse of Garignano, by the death of the Prince of Falcognano.

“That same day the regiment of hussars was ordered to set off for Rome with General Berthier,—an inchoate prince, that fellow.

“Our honest Romans, discontented with the treaty of Tolentino, had risen against the French, who had just confiscated the Romagna, Bologna and Ferrara, and, in order to teach them to ‘hold their tongues without complaining,’ Berthier’s soldiers had abducted Pope Pius VI. and put the Romans in penitence,—or, in other words, in republic.

“The hussars were quartered partly in the Capuchin convent, the vast ground floor of which was converted into stables, and partly in the outhouses of the palace of the Prince de B...

“It was Colonel Montmirail’s habit to quarter with his troopers; he lodged in the first story of the convent, to which access was given by means of a small door leading to the great court through which we just now passed.

“Accustomed to suffer for the Divine Master, the good monks had accepted this mingling with the soldiers as a proof of His will, and confined themselves to that part of the convent which adjoins the church and cemetery.

“One Sunday, through idleness or curiosity, Count de Montmirail entered the church where the Capuchins were just concluding the celebration of High Mass. The pious crowds kneeling on the flags rose and began going out. The lofty stature, the distinguished appearance, and the odd and brilliant uniform of the republican officer attracted every eye.

“A young girl went by, pale and serious, sculp-

turesque in her beauty, the marble whiteness of her skin enhanced by her long mourning garments. Beside her, and also in mourning, walked with feeble steps a tall old man whom the crowd saluted with a respect mingled with profound commiseration.

“When the beautiful young girl passed the colonel, who was visibly struck with admiration, their eyes met; she turned hers quickly away, and M. de Montmirail thought he saw in them a gleam of anger and hatred.

“‘Poor Prince de B...!’ murmured a saddened voice close beside him. ‘Poor Princess Beatrice!’

“He was no longer in doubt: this marvellous type of grace, nobility and beauty was the daughter of the prince in whose palace a part of the regiment was quartered. From that moment the lovely vision never left the thoughts of M. de Montmirail; for the first time in his ill-regulated life his heart was smitten, and well smitten. For the first time, he felt that he also had a soul; in her presence he was ashamed of his aberrations. He suffered inexpressible tortures from the thought that he was unworthy to lift his eyes to an earthly angel.

“Yet, mastered by his nascent and increasing passion, he invented means of seeing the Princess Beatrice again; twenty times a day, under the slightest pretext or without one, he went to the B... palace, and his soldiers did not fail to notice his unusual conduct.

“‘For sure,’ said they, ‘something ails the colonel.’

“But never once did he have the happiness of meeting the princess; the palace remained obstinately closed and seemed uninhabited.

“Sunday came, and the honest Romans were not a little surprised to find that the very first person to make

his appearance at the Capuchin church to assist at High Mass was no other than the colonel of those excommunicated republican troopers. Between ourselves, I think he must have produced much the effect on them of a devil in the holy water stoup.

“The Religious were already at the altar when the entrance of the prince and his daughter gave M. de Montmirail a start.

“He heard Mass with a correctness of deportment which more than one of those present noticed with surprise. At certain moments, in fact, when melodious voices intoned the praises of the Most High, his masculine features betrayed profound emotion; his eyes grew iridescent; the indomitable soldier felt himself once more a little child, as in the long distant days when his saintly mother’s gentle voice spoke to him of loving the good God, and when, kneeling beside her in the manorial pew of the pleasant village church, he received the benediction of the old curé. And when the prior of the Capuchins, the venerable Father Onofrio, lifted his hand to bless those present, Guy de Montmirail once more instinctively bent the knee.

“When he raised his head, the Princess Beatrice was passing with her father, and the colonel thought that she pretended not to see him; but the sombre glance of the young Roman still retained a scarcely concealed expression of anger and hatred.

* * * * *

“The colonel returned repeatedly to the B... palace, but with no greater success. For an instant it occurred to him to quarter himself there; he did not dare, but he found the courage to ask the prince for a brief

interview. The prince replied that he begged the colonel to excuse him, his deep mourning prevented his receiving any visitors, but that in all other respects his steward had been ordered to satisfy all the colonel's requirements.

“ One afternoon, Guy de Montmirail called on Friar Onofrio, who received him with affectionate deference and was not slow to notice the deep and evident trouble of his visitor. And there, without preamble, and with touching vehemence, the young colonel made a general confession of his life and his heart.

“ ‘ I will break my sword, if it is necessary, to be more worthy of *her*. I beg you, whom they call “ father,” I entreat you to assist me who might almost be said never to have had a father ! ’

“ Monks have indulgent and obliging hearts. Friar Onofrio was touched by this loyal repentance and this despairing prayer.

“ ‘ I dare not bid you hope, my son, and that for more than one reason; there is your uniform, in the first place; the prince and his daughter are fervent Catholics and faithful subjects of their lawful sovereign, our unfortunate Pius VI.; then, too, it is almost impossible to approach the prince, who remains in unbroken solitude since he had the unspeakable sorrow of losing his only son, who died under circumstances contrary to the wise precepts of our holy mother the Church; it was one of your countrymen,—I forget his name, which is daily cursed by the prince and his daughter,—one of your countrymen, alas ! who deprived them of a tenderly loved son and brother; and finally, even were all these obstacles surmounted, there would remain social

considerations. His Excellency, Prince de B..., as you know, is one of the greatest lords of the Roman nobility, and it is the traditional and rigorously respected rule of his house to reject what society calls a *mésalliance*.’

“‘I have nothing to fear on that head, Father; my birth is equal to that of the greatest nobles.’

“‘Your name, if I do not mistake, is Colonel Montmirail?’ asked the prior with vague curiosity.

“‘That is my name . . . in war; I am the Count Guy de Montmirail, Prince of Roche-sur-Melle.’

“At this announcement, the venerable old man sprang from his seat, raising his eyes and hands with a poignant expression of surprise and intense anguish.

“‘What ails you, Father?’ stammered the disconcerted colonel, distressed by this sorrowful attitude.

“Then he heard the old monk murmur between his sobs: ‘Ah! poor child! . . . Poor child!’

“‘My father, you are breaking my heart . . . I entreat you to explain to me’ . . .

“‘And so,’ asked Father Onofrio in a tearful voice, ‘you are . . . you truly are the Prince of Roche-sur-Melle?’

“‘But . . . yes.’

“‘Unfortunate child! It is you who killed the son of the Prince de B. . . ., the brother of Beatrice, the Prince of Falcognano!’

“Pale as a corpse, staggering like a drunken man under this terrible blow and insane with grief, Guy de Montmirail bolted out of the cell stammering incoherent words.

“ ‘My God, have pity on him !’ said Friar Onofrio, weeping.

* * * * *

“ And Guy wept also !

“ He wept long, shut up in his chamber. He cursed the day that he was born and every day of his life, crushed now and bruised by suffering. Then, suddenly he burst into a horrible laugh, the signal of satanic revolt against deserved punishment.

“ The sun was going down. He went out to drown his vexation, and to that end did all that he was able in a lamentable orgy to which he had invited all his usual companions. But, do what he might, he could not manage to become more than half-intoxicated; on the other hand, he felt the anguish which pierced his heart becoming keener and more implacable.

“ It was two o’clock of a dark morning as he was making his way back to the convent through dull and empty streets, alone, shouting with laughter and shedding miserable tears, staggering a little, and letting his sword drag and clank behind him on the pavement.

“ The corporal on duty wanted to light him to his door.

“ ‘No,’ said he rudely, ‘give your lantern to me; zounds ! I can see clear enough without you !’

“ ‘Gad !’ thought the corporal, obeying, ‘the colonel’s got his feathers on !’

“ The colonel went towards the back of the court, entered and closed it behind him with a kick. Then he passed into a gloomy corridor, knocking up against dilapidated walls.

“ ‘Good ! Here’s another door !’

“He calmly opened it and resumed his staggering walk.

“An icy breeze struck his face like a whip, his foot trod a soil which seemed moving, the door closed behind him with a dismal creak.

“‘My word! I believe I have lost my way! . . . Where the devil am I?’

“Colonel Montmirail raised his lantern and turned its rays in every direction,—then horror suddenly seized him by the throat.

“What had he seen around him?

“Heaps of dead bodies, skulls, crosses made of bones!

“His dripping forehead struck against a chandelier made of human remains, dust and fragments of which rained upon him.

“Meagre cadavers, dressed in the monastic habit, considered him with shadowy eyes and sarcastic grins. At his feet were newly opened tombs. He raised his eyes: a colossal skeleton, scythe in hand, whose hollow face seemed to grimace a threat of death, appeared ready to fall upon him. He recoiled instinctively—he who had seen death on twenty battle-fields without turning pale—and his movement detached from the wall one of the corpses, which crumbled and fell to pieces on him. The lantern escaped from his trembling hands and under this deadly accolade the wretched man, almost wild with fright, fell heavily on his knees. He tried to call for assistance but his voice failed him.

“O crown of terrors! One of the dead, a monk, stands out from the wall and comes towards him with a rapid step, holding out his arms . . . It was too

much ! Crushed by horrible emotion, Guy de Montmirail closed his eyes and fell swooning on a grave.

“When he opened them the abominable vision had disappeared; he was in his room, on his bed, in the arms of an old monk to whose compassionate voice he listened with filial respect:

“‘My poor child,’ said Father Onofrio to him, ‘I go every night to pray for our departed brethren; God be thanked for having inspired me with this pious custom, since it has enabled me to come to your aid. I comprehend how much you suffer, but we must be brave against anguish, and to do that, my son, we must love our own souls. Remember the saying of your great Bossuet: “Mortify, by the help of your sufferings, all that is left in you of earth !”’

“‘My father,’ replied Colonel Montmirail, ‘all that was left in me of earth is dead. Will you enlist me in your holy army ?’

“The venerable prior gave him the kiss of peace, saying with an accent of pious and paternal gladness:

“‘Yes, God will certainly accept you, my son, for He is as merciful as He is great !’

“That is my story, my dear sir,” said Commander Boccapaduli to me. “I may add that Colonel Montmirail, Prince of Roche-sur-Melle, the humble Friar Timothy, was the most exemplary of Religious.

“Three years after taking his vows, God granted this purified soul the favor of quitting this earth. Before dying, on the pretext that he was unworthy to repose in the sacred charnel-house of the convent, Friar Timothy entreated Father Onofrio to have him buried

in the church of the Capuchins with that epitaph which at present you can easily understand:



HIC JACET

PULVIS

CINIS

ET NIHIL.

“The Princess Beatrice must often have walked over this humble stone without the slightest suspicion that it covered the ashes of a sorrowful romance of which she was the heroine.”



LEON DE TINSEAU.

BORN in the curious city of Autun in 1844, Léon de Tinseau followed at first the administrative career and for some time performed the functions of a sub-prefect. In 1882 he published a society novel, "Robert d'Epirien," which attracted considerable attention. Since then he has produced "Alain de Kérisel," "La Meilleure Part," which was crowned by the French Academy.—"L'Attelage de la Marquise," a tale of originality and penetrating charm, "Madame de Villeféron Jeune," "Montescourt," scenes of rural life enlivened by the vivacity of an electoral contest in an imaginary sub-prefecture, "Dernière Campagne," a collection of short stories, "Charme Rompu," "Ma Cousine Pot-au-feu," "Bouche Close," and "Mon Oncle Alcide," a collection of five tales.

Léon de Tinseau belongs to the same school as Octave Feuillet, so well known through his "Romance of a Poor Young Man." and derives the emotional interest of his romances from nearly identical sources. He has an easy, unobtrusively clever way of telling a story which is yet sufficiently individual, a wit not incisive, but gay and well bred, and a certain pervasive air of aristocratic ease which is agreeable

The scenes of one of his latest tales, "Faut-il-aimer?" are laid partly in the wilds of Canada and partly in the most elegant of Parisian social circles. M. de Tinseau is not at a loss to describe a ranch or a hunt with the lasso, but the scenes of fashionable life which occur in his book possess an easy and piquant grace and are very pleasantly turned. As in its predecessors, there is in this book, along with a great deal of naturally delicate and spontaneous wit, a restrained and penetrating emotion

Let us add that this writer has been in America four times and has many friends in the United States, where several of his books have been issued by different publishers.

The Team of the Marquise.

BY LÉON DE TINSEAU.

I.

A SQUADRON of chasseurs was sent for the autumn manœuvres of 1883 to the little town of G..., situated in the middle of an immense barren tract of Morbihan, between Pontivy and the sea.

G... does not pique itself upon being the home of progress. It is nearly forty-eight miles from the railway, and if the telegraph is there, it was established only in the face of a unanimous vote of the city council refusing the five hundred francs demanded of it by the State as its quota of the expense.

“We don’t want Paris spying upon us,” said these worthy Bretons.

God knows, however, that G... has nothing to conceal. At most, sundry packets of smuggled tobacco, sundry blows a trifle too vigorous on the nights of the *Pardons* in years when the cider crop has been good.

Of course, this distrustful city has kept its ancient ramparts, whose talus slopes, hired out to butchers who raise their own mutton, supply the chief revenues of the municipal strong box. The lighting has remained stationary, and the committee on public highways is somewhat remiss in its duties. After eight o’clock in

the evening the infrequent passer-by takes care to keep in the middle of the street, for certain details of the interior service of the houses are accomplished through the windows, not a very serious inconvenience in a region where it rains on an average three hundred days in the year.

At the time of the Revolution, out of its two thousand souls G. . . . counted twenty-five noble families whose heraldic devices are still to be seen on the sombre granite of their house-fronts. The greater part of these families has disappeared, flown towards the sunlight of a more active civilization, or are lying in endless sleep under the flags of the old church or in the vault of Quiberon, some leagues away. Four or five are dying out where they are, wrapped haughtily in a pride of name which covers their poverty and suffering as with a mantle, and thus managing to exist at the end of the nineteenth century on what would already have been insufficient eighty years earlier.

With the exception of the four privates and the brigadier of the county police, no cavalry had been seen at G... since the risings of 1832. The chasseurs were received with feelings that wavered between curiosity and resignation, but never assumed the shape of enthusiasm. For that matter, the soldiers themselves, and especially the officers, went there as one goes to Purgatory, glad to think that the manœuvres would keep them all day long in the open country, far from a town all black granite and looking like a monastery, where everybody talked *bas-breton*, even to the very tavern signs.

The first day, the squadron entered G... towards

seven in the evening, half dead with hunger and fatigue. The seven or eight officers dismounted in front of the Goaziou hotel, which had taken charge of their mess. After dinner most of them went to bed in the houses where they had been billeted on the inhabitants. They needed rest before the "surprise" to be attempted by the "enemy," according to programme, at about half past two in the morning.

"With whom do you lodge, d'Avricourt?" asked a comrade of the lieutenant bearing that name.

"Really I do not know," he answered, "and I confess I do not care much."

Then, drawing a paper from the pocket of his dolman:

"The devil! The Marquise de la Méaugon! That sounds well. I will send her my card when I go to her house."

"You are the fellow for luck in your lodgings!"

"Oh! luck! because my countrywoman is a marquise? You may be sure that if she were young and pretty as well she would not be living in a hole like this. Well, good-night! Our crazy general would have done well to defer the night alarm to nine o'clock in the morning."

"Yes, and let us be driven from G... by the enemy instead of leaving us here for a week as victors."

II.

The Marquise lived on the public street in a house built in the days of Louis Quinze, but not indicating the period by any architectural ornaments, because it costs

too much to chisel Breton granite into mouldings, spandrels and volutes. Even time had given up trying to indent it.

Raoul d'Avricourt had only to push open the leaves of the heavy oaken door in order to gain admission to the mansion of his noble hostess. The sight that caught his eye in the courtyard by the fading twilight was so strange that, in order to see it better, he concealed himself behind a clump of sweet bay which flanked the entrance on the inside.

An old-fashioned, superannuated chariot, widowed of horses but not of a coachman, for a white-haired old man sat on the box as proudly as if he had under his whip a pair of horses worth five hundred louis, was drawn up in front of the perron. An old woman, leaning upon two younger ones, came down the steps and made ready to enter the vehicle. Before taking her seat she accosted the honorary coachman in a thick and broken voice:

“Are you holding your horses well, Thégonnec?”

“Madame has nothing to fear,” answered the man in a very loud tone, removing his hat as he did so.

“Good, my friend, be careful. You know what a poltroon I am in a carriage.”

Madame de la Méaugon sat down on the back seat of the carriage and her two companions on the front one. Two maids in caps raised the monumental step, and one of them opened the leaves of the porte-cochère. Meanwhile the old coachman, descending noiselessly from his seat, made an authoritative gesture to which two vigorous fellows, hidden in an angle of the wall, responded by coming obediently to take their places at the swingle-

trees. Thégonnec was at the head of the pole; the two maids were at the back, ready to push.

From the inside of the carriage came the voice of the Marquise, commanding:

“To the house of Madame du Faouët!”

At once the human team stiffened its muscles, the equipage shook, crossed the threshold, and disappeared in the street. The lieutenant might well have believed himself the only human being left behind. But, as he was wondering how he was to find his way to his room in this deserted dwelling, a sound of hobnailed boots became audible in the dark court.

“Is that you, Moreau?” called the officer.

“Yes, lieutenant; I was waiting to take you to your room.”

Five minutes later Raoul was making his night toilette in a chamber so vast that the single wax candle only succeeded in casting an uncertain glimmer. Lost in the immense space, the scanty furniture, the whole of which, saving the colossal bed, could have been stowed in a garret, seemed still more scanty. In striking contrast, on the chestnut table, darkened by years, glittered the silver, crystal and ivory of the elegant dressing-case of a man of fashion.

“Oh, come!” said the lieutenant, while the faithful Moreau was pulling off his boots, “what sort of a phantasmagoria have I just been looking at? Are these people fools, or is it the custom of the country to substitute the coachman for the horses? You are not the man to have been here for the last two hours without learning something of the history of the house.”

“As to that,” replied the soldier-valet, “I think I am

pretty well up in it, thanks to the fact that old Thégonnec talks French or something near it. We are in the house of the Marquise de la Méaugon, retired here with her two grand-daughters."

"That does not tell me why she is so careful of her horses."

"Her horses, lieutenant? They have been dragging the stagecoach of Auray for the last two years. But the old lady is blind and three-quarters deaf, and she does not suspect it. She had a son-in-law, Comte de Pordic, who invested all his money in a big bank. The only trouble was that one day there was a . . .

"A crash!"

"That's it, lieutenant. Then everything was cleaned out. The Comte died of vexation, and to prevent their grandmother from doing the same his two daughters have been bamboozling her, saving your presence, for the last two years. You saw the carriage act; for me, I saw the dinner act."

"What do you mean?"

"I had to go into the kitchen to get lukewarm water for Fanfreluche, and I kept an eye on the servants without letting them suspect it, and I saw through the trick, a very simple one anyway. A chicken wing for the old lady and buckwheat cakes for the young ones. It is a tale of poverty in four volumes."

"But how are all those servants paid?"

"Thégonnec and the two maids are all that belong in the house, and it does not cost much to feed servants in this country. As to their wages . . . no danger but what they spend them; you understand me. As for the two polemen, they are nephews of the coachman who

come to give their uncle a hand after their day's work is over."

"What amazes me is that the Marquise has not dispensed herself from lodging soldiers. She had the right."

"She would not. That old lady has courage and pride as high as a mountain. All the same, a little more income would be better . . . My lieutenant needs nothing more?"

"No; go to bed. You must wake me to-night at two o'clock. Take care that some one notifies these ladies, so that they may not be frightened if they hear anything."

III.

The Vicomte d'Avricourt was the son of a noble of ancient lineage and an enormously rich citizen's daughter. Like an intelligent fellow, he had appropriated from this *mésalliance* its best parts, taking from his father his name, character and sentiments, which were those of a man of good blood, and from his mother, who died young, two very handsome dark eyes and one or two solid millions. But, if he made use of his eyes—and very good use, for that matter—he had as yet merely the reversion of the millions. While waiting for his father to leave them to him, he lived on his pay of two hundred and sixteen francs a month, without incurring more debts than were becoming. True, to this somewhat meagre sum the Comte d'Avricourt had the good habit of adding a monthly subsidy of three thousand francs. It is a system which fathers who have

sons in the inferior grades of the army would do well to adopt.

Raoul was the best-hearted fellow in the world. Worn out with want of sleep, he lay down between the sheets of a marquise whose grand-daughters had not the wherewithal to buy meat. Hence he slept badly. When Moreau came to wake him, Raoul was dreaming that the Marquise, accompanied by her grandchildren, was driving in the Bois in a victoria for which he had paid himself.

IV.

At the hour appointed, the enemies, represented by two or three companies of the line, attempted the surprise; but they were received in good style and hotly pursued into their positions with the alternatives of defeat or success. At ten in the morning they were still fighting. A platoon performed at a gallop a turning movement in a sunken road.

“Halt!” commanded d’Avricourt, who led the little troop. The twenty-five chasseurs drew rein. The tired horses stopped at once, though continuing to drive away flies by kicks which made the sheaths of the sabres ring against their dripping flanks.

“To the left, in line of battle!” cried the officer again.

The manœuvre was performed; the platoon drew up in a double line, leaving a narrow enough space between the horses’ heads and the talus of earth surmounted by chestnut trees which bordered the other side of the road.

“What!” grumbled a veteran, “isn’t the day over? What an invention these grand manœuvres are! I’ll bet these flinty-hearted sluggards are going to fire on us again from under cover. And how mean that is, in such roads as this!”

“Come!” said a non-commissioned officer; “shut up, you fellows; don’t make so much disturbance! This is nothing! It is only the good God who is going to pass on the right side.”

In fact, a procession was seen approaching which was in striking contrast with the motionless platoon.

A young fellow marched in front, holding in one hand a lantern fastened to the end of a staff, and ringing with the other a copper bell. Then a Breton in a short jacket, breeches with flaps hanging down to the calf, a large black hat under his arm, his gray hair flowing on his shoulders, led by the bridle a pony with shaggy mane and tail which might have measured four feet across the withers. On this peaceful mount, an old priest in a surplice was going to give the viaticum to some dying person in a neighboring thatched hut. Seven or eight peasant women of all ages followed, reciting their rosaries, and making with their lighted candles and their high caps of the time of the Duchess Anne, the effect of one of those processions which artists of the sixteenth century loved to paint on the church windows of the period.

The rearguard was formed by a servant-maid in a costume more modern but not richer, accompanying her mistress, a graceful young girl with an aristocratic profile, whose carelessly put on black veil covered her admirable hair of pale gold. Her steady, clear blue eyes

possessed, on account of the infinite depth of their gaze, that startling attraction usually exercised by darker ones. They revealed both purity and tenderness, devotion and poetry, melancholy and courage, but above all the glorious radiance of a loyal and intrepid soul. Assuredly, this beautiful personage would have attracted attention anywhere. But, in the depths of this Breton desert, in the mystic frame of this austere landscape, by the dim light shed through the thick foliage on this strange scene, the apparition shone out with the charm of the unexpected and in the harmony of a decoration which seemed to have been made especially for her.

The little procession passed in front of the chasseurs, who presented sabres, while their horses, champing their bits, seemed to be smiling at the sight of the strange congener whose ears, withers and croup formed a horizontal line, and whose light-colored mane almost touched the ground.

The lieutenant had saluted with his sword as the Host went by. But when the beautiful blonde young girl passed him, the shining blade was again lowered to the ground, as if he also were paying homage to this Christian virgin.

And, in the silence scarcely broken by the choir-boy's bell and the knell that was tolling in the distance from an invisible steeple, Raoul d'Avricourt, contemplating the unknown with ecstasy, so far forgot himself as to murmur half inaudibly:

“It ought to do one good to die under the glance of eyes like those!”

The red which sprang to the cheeks of the young girl showed that she had heard these words. Presently the

sacred procession disappeared at a corner of the road, while the horsemen, the sabres returned to the scabbards, continued their march in the opposite direction.

There was not one of these men who had not become more serious. As to the lieutenant, the meeting with these two supreme consolers, religion and woman, on their way to fulfil their sacred mission, had suddenly thrown him into a train of such thoughts as do not usually find lodgment under the kepi of an officer of twenty-eight years.

Once more he saw a death-bed, that of his mother ; a priest was blessing the dying woman. He heard the last words of her whom he had tenderly loved:

“ My son, I hope that God will give you a good wife ! ”

Then, like a living response to the wish of the dead woman, the mysterious apparition of a moment since recurred to his mind with strange persistence. Who was this unknown young girl whom charity was conducting to the death-bed of a pauper ? Certainly, she was a *good woman*, and how beautiful she was !

Yes, thought Raoul d'Avricourt once more, one would be happy to die if wept for by those tender and faithful eyes, and holding that compassionate hand !

Presently the platoon came in sight of the lonely farmhouse where a formidable breakfast had been ordered the day before for the officers of the two armies. Everybody knows how two or three dozen oysters and several glasses of chablis develop the dispositions of a nature already good of itself. Hardly had he returned to his quarters when d'Avricourt made an extremely careful toilette which transformed the dusty warrior

into a cavalier of lofty mien. Then he sent to ask the Marquise if he might have the honor of being received by her. How far we are already from the simple visiting card which the lieutenant had deemed sufficient the previous evening.

The reply took five minutes in arriving, and these Raoul spent in passing himself in review before a mirror somewhat tarnished by humidity. Yet it was a matter of calling upon a blind lady upon whom all this trouble would be wasted. But who knows? Mesdemoiselles de Pordic might be there perhaps, and everything permitted him to hope they had good eyes.

Notified that he would be welcome, Raoul was introduced by Thégonnec, transformed into a valet de chambre, into a salon which was in lamentable harmony with the horseless carriage and the dinner without a roast. One would have said the auctioneer with his hammer had passed through it. On the damasked tapestry of the walls, faded by time, squares of more vivid color everywhere guarded the traces of costly pictures which had recently disappeared. Over each door, a plaster panel spread open like a fatally eloquent white page; everything had been turned into money.

The Marquise entered, led by her grand-daughters. This old woman had a bearing so noble, so sovereignly calm, so perfectly kind, that for an instant Raoul felt as if he were the ruined one, and that this grand lady were about to say to him:

“Poor young man! do not despair. At your age everything comes right in the end.”

On either side of this beautiful figure, a fresh and rosy visage, distinguished and charming, replaces the

absent portraits to advantage. Mesdemoiselles de Pordic did not resemble each other, or did so as the red rose and the white bear mutual likeness. The one blonde, melancholy, dreamy; the other a gay and sprightly brunette, who seemed the elder, but by very little. The three were dressed in black, and one conjectured that the dressmaker who had fitted their gowns lived at no great distance.

“Madame,” said d’Avricourt, bowing half a yard lower than one does nowadays to the duchesses of the left bank, “it must be difficult to avoid cursing your invader. I wanted to lay at your feet, as soon as possible, my excuses for this involuntary disturbance.”

“Involuntary on your part, sir, but not on mine. I am a soldier’s daughter and I have insisted, in spite of my privilege as a defenceless old woman, on bearing my part of the expenses of war. I have been rewarded by having a well-bred man sent to me. Apropos,” added the blind woman with a gayety surprising to any one who knew her history, “it seems we had a fine escape last night. But, thanks to you, I was apprised beforehand that the city would not be taken.”

“It will not be taken for a week; until then you are condemned to the tediousness of our presence.”

“The tediousness could not be great, alas! At least, you are not too badly off in my house? Your horses agree well with mine, I hope. They are not accustomed to seeing strangers; but they are old, and obliged to be peaceable.”

Mesdemoiselles de Pordic became red as cherries in listening to these words. As to Raoul, he had scarcely stopped looking at one of the young girls, the blonde,

and she had kept her eyes obstinately bent on the floor, which is sometimes, for eyes of eighteen years, the best way of seeing very well.

“Pardon, Mademoiselle,” he said at last, “it seems to me that we met this morning.”

“Yes,” she replied, delighted to turn a sadly embarrassing conversation. “Do you know, grandmother? Those soldiers whom we found in the Kergrist road were under Monsieur’s command. How fine it was, all those armed cavaliers in battle array, lowering their sabres before a poor priest who seemed the image of peace!”

“And before you, who seemed the angel of charity, Mademoiselle. I see that you do not dread fatigue when doing good is in question.”

“Alas! it could not fatigue me to return to the house of poor Annie, who leaves little children without bread or shelter.”

“You will deign to receive my alms for your protégés?” said Raoul drawing out his pocketbook.

“Oh!” cried the young girl, her eyes shining with joy, “how good you are! How the dear little things will bless our meeting! They have gained bread for the whole winter from it.”

“And I,” said Raoul softly, feeling once more the emotion of the night before, “have gained from it memories which will last longer than the winter.”

Yvonne made no answer, and for a moment silence reigned in the salon of the Marquise.

“Madame,” the officer said at last to his hostess who with tense neck and watchful ear was waiting for the sequel of the conversation, “I see that it is unfortu-

nately impossible to accompany your grandchildren in their promenades."

"My health will not permit it. All I can do is to get into the carriage three times a week to go and spend the evening with an old neighbor still more to be pitied than I, for she is paralyzed and does not leave her arm-chair."

The conversation continued for some time. The Marquise spoke to the young man of his family. It seemed they had alliances in common.

"Well!" said Madame de la Méaugon, "since we are relatives, or nearly so, you must dine with me to-morrow evening. I had a chef who has left me and whose place has been vacant ever since. But a soldier in the field accommodates himself to everything, and these little ones will do their best to prevent you from famishing."

This time the "little ones" became pale with terror, and four great beseeching eyes were raised to the officer as if to say:

"We hope you will not have the cruelty to accept."

But he seemed not to notice.

"Madame," said he, "a person more discreet than I would feel bound to refuse. For my part, I accept; only, since this is wartime, you must permit me to impose my conditions. My orderly, who could give Vatel points, will take possession of your ovens, and you will share our booty."

"Fie! sir officer. Booty! Can you be conducting yourselves like Prussians or Cossacks?"

"Not at all, although imitation is the order of the day. We made hecatombs of game in our cavalry charges, and I brought back my holsters full of it."

It was the young man's turn to blush at a falsehood which did not deceive Mesdemoiselles de Pordic in the least. Wounded pride was plainly evident in their glances. But in rising Raoul laid his finger on his lips and then pointed to their grandmother, smiling with pleasure in her easy-chair. They understood the gesture, and by a spontaneous movement each offered her hand to the lieutenant. On withdrawing, the latter had a long conference with Moreau, who was an adept in contrivances of all sorts.

That evening, while they were brushing their hair in their common room, Jeanne de Pordic, the brunette, said to her sister, continuing a conversation begun much earlier:

"This Vicomte d'Avricourt is really very good-looking. Did you recognize him at once?"

"The minute he came in. But if you knew how much better he looks on a horse, at the head of his men, not so polished, not so well brushed, more like a soldier, in fact. And then, with all that, such a soft voice!"

"What! such a soft voice! for commanding his squadron?"

Yvonne blushed; but she did not think it more timely now than in the morning to relate what Raoul had said of her eyes.

"How good he is!" she went on without replying. "One hundred francs! Those poor children are quite rich. Richer than we are," she added with a sad smile. "Ah! in spite of everything, this meeting, almost beside a death-bed, frightens me a little. Who knows whether we shall not regret it?"

"Superstitious! Why should we regret it? I never

saw a man who inspired confidence so quickly. He made grandmother smile again; is not that enough to make me adore him?"

"And he will love you. He will take you and I shall remain alone. You will see whether I am wrong; people always say I have the second sight."

"You don't know your trade. If he loves one of us, it will be you. You are blonde, you are of the Gaelic type, and your name is Yvonne: how do you suppose a Parisian could resist all that?"

"There! you have the faculty of laughing at everything! Think that to-morrow we are going to dine on the bounty of this man."

"You will have to get used to it, when you are his wife. You will have, between you, an income of one hundred thousand and five hundred francs, for his groom told Thégonnee that he would have one hundred thousand on his side."

The discussion continued for some time longer. Then, everything was silent in the two white beds. But an eye that could pierce the shadows might have seen that, under the mysterious pinion of the Dream, it was the face of Yvonne, the saddened beauty, which now was smiling.

V.

The next day, when they were at the roast, Madame de la Méaugon said to her guest, after moistening her lips in a glass of old Médoc:

"Sir, I am quite ready to admit that your orderly is

an eminent cook. But own that my poor wine cellar has some fine remains."

It was some time since the remains of the wine cellar of the Marquise had become the property of the hotel-keeper Le Goaziou, who had consented to reconvey several samples of it to Moreau for this occasion. At the old lady's words, the proud Yvonne reddened and bent her head over her plate. She had done nothing but that since dinner began, not to eat, for she had barely touched what was placed before her. One might have fancied she was regretting her buckwheat cakes, and possibly one would not have been wrong.

"I am no connoisseur," said Jeanne, who thought it more dignified to look the situation squarely in the face, "but I would swear that this wine has made more than one journey before arriving here."

"That is what makes it so good," replied Raoul. "I have never tasted any which I liked so well. Madame la Marquise, I drink to your health and to the honor you are doing me at this moment."

The talk became more lively. Raoul was witty. He would have been more so if he had looked less steadily in front of him, at Yvonne that is to say, who was pretty enough to turn a head more solid than that of a lieutenant of chasseurs. When they rose from table, poor d'Avricourt felt so discomfited that it seemed to him Madame de la Méaugon must have perceived it, blind though she was. But the dear woman was pre-occupied with another idea. After they had entered the salon she said to her grand-daughters:

"Children, it is time for you to go to church. M.

d'Avricourt will permit you to leave him alone with me for a quarter of an hour."

Raoul bowed and Mesdemoiselles de Pordic disappeared.

"My dear Vicomte," began the dowager when they were alone, "I seldom have a chance to talk with a man who understands business. Permit me, then, to be confidential with you. My son-in-law, I may as well tell you, understood business about as well as I would understand how to command a drill. I will not criticise him since he is no longer here; but after all he was badly inspired on the day when he put all our fortune into that bank . . . do you know what I wish to speak of?"

"I know, Madame."

"Some people pretend that we have lost everything to the last sou. I do not believe a word of that, myself, for among the officers of the company there are names which are the best of securities. But, however it may be, for the last two years we have not received a copper, and, between you and me, I cannot avoid being very much embarrassed."

"It is only a passing difficulty," said Raoul. "Perhaps you have not claimed it?"

"Yes, assuredly. Only, no one pays much attention to a poor blind woman away off at the end of the world. My grand-daughter Jeanne, who acts as my secretary, has never received any answers to her letters."

Alas! she had received answers! But instead of sending money they demanded it.

"For the moment," continued the Marquise, "some thousands of francs in partial payment on the interest

money would make me patient, and I would leave my debtors tranquil, provisionally. Perhaps, Monsieur, you could point out to me a conscientious man who would undertake to act in my name ?”

“Take my notary, Madame,” said d’Avricourt. “He is an able man who has rendered me a similar service, for, like you, I am interested in these tiresome affairs.”

“And people have let you have money ?”

“A little, yes. It is only a question of showing your teeth. I will write to M. Fossier to-morrow. Will Madame kindly give me some figures ?”

When Mesdemoiselles de Pordic came back from church they found Madame de la Méaugon twenty years younger.

“My children,” said she, “come and embrace me. I am very happy this evening. Without owning it to you, I was somewhat uneasy about your future. But our good old friend here has reassured me. Perhaps your poor father was not so badly inspired after all in the investment of his fortune.”

Once more the young girls raised their large, almost severe eyes, and looked at Raoul. And again he laid his finger on his lips. During this pantomime the blind woman was heard saying:

“Yvonne, let some one go and tell Madame du Faouët not to expect me this evening, because I have somebody at home. Thégonnec may take out the horses.”

Dear noble woman, whose hearth visited by ruin was now deprived of other guests ! You should have heard her broken voice swell joyfully to say:

“I have somebody at home.”

If any one had predicted to Raoul the day before that he would pass one of the most charming evenings of his life opposite a blind woman of seventy and two young girls in black merino gowns, he would have shrugged his shoulders. Which proves that one ought to swear to nothing, especially not to love some day a poor little provincial who deserves it, when one has pretended up to then to love many brilliant Parisiennes who could hardly be said to deserve it.

The Marquise asked d'Avricourt to tell them his history. He obeyed without waiting to be urged, but he suppressed some details . . . The result was a biography so edifying that one wondered why this young man was not in the seminary instead of at the great manœuvres. However, there was one among the three women who would have been sorry enough if Raoul had worn the cassock instead of that fine uniform which became him so well. This one was the fair Yvonne, the melancholy, of whom everybody at G... said :

“There is one who will die a nun.”

When that old tell-tale of a clock essayed to strike eleven, Raoul would have liked to throw it out of the window. The Marquise almost immediately inquired the hour.

“Goodness !” said she; “we are sitting up late tonight. These children must be ready to drop with sleep.”

But no one was inclined to go to sleep.

D'Avricourt kissed the hand of the Marquise and that of Mademoiselle Jeanne. Before the second sister he bowed profoundly, without trying to take her hand. And yet it was Yvonne who was all one blush.

The next morning at dawn, while Raoul was making

war on the neighboring moors, Moreau was galloping towards the nearest railway station to put in the express box an envelope bearing the following address:

M. FOSSIER, Notaire,
Rue de Lille,
Paris.

VI.

The next evening and that which succeeded it resembled that which has been described, a fact which gained for the lieutenant, who had become invisible to his comrades, a storm of pleasantries which he forced himself to take neither badly nor too well.

The fifth morning witnessed a very unusual event. The courier brought a registered letter addressed to the Marquise de la Méaugon! Mademoiselle Jeanne, sent for in great haste, drew from the envelope three notes of a thousand francs each, and a letter from the notary Fossier.

While this letter was being read, Madame de la Méaugon, all radiant, was caressing with meagre fingers the three notes; they, at least, were not impostures.

“You see, my child!” said she to Jeanne de Pordic. “Was I wrong in blaming you for despairing too quickly? But how true it is that one must have friends everywhere! This notary seems to me a very worthy man, and M. d’Avricourt an eminent adviser.”

Jeanne fled, under pretext of going to tell her sister the good news.

“Yvonne, here he is now trying to make grand-

mother believe that we are rich ! But this time it is too much !”

When she had related the sending of the pretended payment on account, Yvonne said:

“Grandmother must be told everything. We cannot touch that man’s money even with a finger.”

“I have been thinking about that already,” replied Jeanne. “This is what I am going to do. I will draw up a receipt which we will both sign. We will repay this sum one day when we are left all alone. We will go out as governesses, if we must. But I have not the courage to undeceive grandmother. For that matter, to see her die tranquilly I feel capable of accepting alms.”

“Then,” said Yvonne slowly, “I will go away myself.”

“Why, sister ? Have you not as much courage as I ?”

“No, I have no more courage. I would rather see all three of us die than take *his* money.”

“I comprehend,” sighed Jeanne. “You love him. Poor Yvonne !”

And the elder sister let her hands fall while her lips murmured:

“Ah ! my God ! make her blind also. Let her not know what she is going to make me suffer !”

During this time, d’Avricourt, while pushing his reconnoitring to right and left, began to be unable to recognize himself. He had arrived at finding Brittany a charming country, the great manœuvres the best conceived of institutions, the women of Paris mere dolls without minds or hearts. His imagination was not called on to build castles in Spain, since it found one

ready-made in Lorraine and very fine; but it installed in the dwelling the most loving of young couples and even the rosiest of babies, which was going rather fast.

The young wife was blonde; a pretty shade. She was called Yvonne, a pretty name which Raoul kept repeating to himself to convince himself of this more fully:

“Yes, my dear Yvonne.—No, my little Yvonne.—Yvonne, have you told the nurse to take your daughter out for a walk?—Yvonne, do you love me?”—To this question Yvonne did not respond, and for cause, and Raoul dared not answer for her.

“In fact,” thought this chasseur, suddenly become timid, “how do I know that she will ever love me! And then what does it matter? To marry her? Come on! Does a man marry at my age when the world is before him and a uniform on his back? Besides, I should be running the risk of making a foolish bargain. I have an income of one hundred thousand francs, and she has nothing. How would I ever know whether she accepted me or the son of my mother?”

Lieutenant d’Avricourt was born under a lucky star, for chance undertook the clearing up of this doubt, ordinarily so easily solved.

As he was dismounting from his horse, in the middle of the afternoon, in the court of Madame de la Méaugon, the two sisters appeared. The elder held a letter and a paper.

“Sir,” said she, “the place is not well chosen for what we have to say to you. But it is essential that our grandmother should know nothing about this interview. In two words, you have lent us three thousand francs,

rather by force. We accept them and are sincerely obliged to you. Here is our receipt, signed by my sister and me."

Raoul would have been glad to be three thousand feet under ground.

"This begins well!" thought he, taking meanwhile, with a very sheepish face, the paper held out to him, for the tone of Mademoiselle Jeanne admitted of no reply.

VII.

That evening the lieutenant had himself announced as usual at the door of the Marquise. He looked shame-faced; but he saw at once that Madame de la Méaugon knew nothing.

"Come here, my guest," said the old lady from the depths of her armchair. "I have a piece of bad news to tell you; the younger of my grandchildren is suffering and her sister is staying with her. So you are condemned to a tête-à-tête."

"Well, Madame, I will profit by it to talk with you of serious matters, for my hours are numbered. Do you not think of marrying your grand-daughters?"

"I think of nothing else. But you are acquainted with our affairs, and you know where the shoe pinches. You know too much of the world for it to be necessary to tell you that suitors do not crowd about our doors. You who work miracles, can you effect that of finding husbands for two young girls whose *dot* is not so easy to prove as their nobility? Have you any subjects in view?"

“I have one, but there are two difficulties. The first one is that my man is thinking of the younger of these young ladies.”

“He knows them then?”

“He knows them. The second obstacle is that Mademoiselle Yvonne must have a very poor idea of him, and that she may well have suspicions of the pretendant.”

“What? She has seen him?”

“Alas! she has seen him but too well . . .”

“But, sir,” interrupted the Marquise, trembling violently, “it is not possible that you wish to speak? . . . How admit that there can be any question? . . . You should aspire to the greatest match in France . . . You can choose among a thousand . . .”

“That is precisely why I choose so well. Unfortunately, I made a bad beginning, and I suspect that if Mademoiselle is indisposed, it is against me that she is so.”

“Against you? but, my dear child, is that possible? If I were fifty years younger I should be mad about you. Ah! Holy Virgin! indisposed against you, Yvonne! She would have to be more blind and deaf than her grandmother.”

“Eh! Madame, who knows?” said Raoul. “But since you take my part, deign to take it in earnest. I have not more than one evening to spend here. Tomorrow I must bid you good-bye. If Mademoiselle has not recovered, I shall comprehend that there is nothing more for me to do. If she finds herself sufficiently well to let herself be seen, I will return to your house in a few weeks, after taking my men to their garrison. Then,

Madame, you will let me know whether you have succeeded in gaining my cause, which I confide to you."

"Would it not be better for you that I should lose it? And are you not very precipitate? A week ago you did not dream of our existence!"

"Ah! don't talk to me of what I was a week ago. I have seen here in less than a week more grandeur, nobleness and real beauty than I ever met before in all my life; and I am twenty-eight years old! That is what you must say to Mademoiselle Yvonne, and if that is not enough, add, Madame, that having lost my mother as she has done, I had not the happiness of seeing her replaced by such a grandmother as I know of."

"You flatter me; that is in keeping with your rôle. But, sir, you have a father. And fathers do not usually seek daughters-in-law without a *dot*. At least, it was so in my time."

"Oh! Madame, it is very different now. My father has told me more than a hundred times that he married a rich woman only that his son might be able to marry to his liking."

"You have an answer for everything. In fine, sir, come back to-morrow. We shall see whether my little Yvonne will leave her room."

Raoul withdrew, well enough contented with his evening. He had hardly departed by one door when Mesdemoiselles de Pordic entered by another.

"My children," said the Marquise, "sit down there. I have great news to tell you."

"Useless trouble, grandmother," replied Jeanne. "We were listening at the keyhole."

"And as I am deaf, M. d'Avricourt talked very loud.

Fie, Mesdemoiselles ! Are you not ashamed to listen at keyholes like chambermaids ? ”

VIII.

The manœuvres were ended. The last review had been held. The next day, before sunrise, the chasseurs were to abandon G... to its solitude.

While the municipal punch was flowing at the town hall and the smoke of deplorably damp cigars was vying in thickness with the eloquence of the toasts, Raoul d'Avricourt, who had excused himself, made his way into the salon of Madame de la Méaugon. She was awaiting him alone.

“ Mademoiselle Yvonne ? . . . ” interrogated he with an emotion for which some one in an adjoining room was very grateful.

“ It must be believed that her indisposition of yesterday was more serious than we thought. She declares that she cannot quit her lounge at this moment without risking her life.”

“ Then she will have nothing to do with me ? ”

“ To tell you the truth, I think she is a little afraid of you. She has ideas about marriage which are provincial to the last degree, and she pretends that she would die of chagrin if, some day, she should find herself deceived.”

“ Eh ! Madame, I beg you to believe that I am just as provincial on that point. But who talks of deceiving or being deceived ? Foh ! what villainous words ! Ought not one to have confidence ? I love your granddaughter with all my heart, and I swear to you that I will make her happy.”

“Confidence? Between ourselves, sir, that is just what Yvonne seems to lack. Oh! if I could guarantee the future to her!”

“No one can guarantee anything; since your granddaughter refuses me, I may become a hundred times worse than before, and it will be her fault. Tell her that my heart had remained good, and that it was hers. You may add that she is the first to whom I have given it.”

At this moment a door opened and Jeanne appeared, pulling her sister by the arm, a trifle too rosy for an invalid.

“Sir,” said the elder sister in a singular tone, “I have perhaps counselled my sister to an imprudence; but I have made her promise not to let you go away without saying good-bye to the guest who has been so attentive to our grandmother.”

“That is good!” seconded the Marquise in an undertone.

Yvonne extended her hand to Raoul, who took it, kneeled and kissed it lingeringly without a word. If this were an adieu, it must be owned that it wonderfully resembled an *au revoir*.

“Eh! well? has no one anything to say?” asked the blind woman, astonished at the silence which prevailed. “What are they doing?”

“They are doing nothing, grandmother,” responded Jeanne, who, very pale, was acting as mistress of ceremonies. “They are on their knees beside your arm-chair, awaiting your blessing. Put out your hands. You will touch their two heads.”

IX.

One evening, two months later, the Marquise entered her open carriage to go as usual to see her friend Madame du Faouët. Only one of her grandchildren was with her. The other had departed with her husband that morning after their nuptial Mass. But, this time, Madame's carriage was drawn by real horses.

"Jeanne," said the old woman when they were on the way, "I shall make you laugh at me. I regret the poor team that your sister has forced me to exchange for a new one. The other drew me more gently."

Without replying, Mademoiselle de Pordic softly pressed her grandmother's hand. Her heart was very heavy, and she was thinking that the blonde and brunette team had been broken forever.

At the end of the year the Marquise died and Jeanne remained alone. Her sister Yvonne wanted to take her home with her.

"Come," said the Vicomtesse d'Avricourt; "I will find you another Raoul. Meanwhile you will have a brother."

But Jeanne determined to remain at G... and not to marry, under the pretext that the name of de Pordic would thus survive for some years longer. But this was only a pretext.

Truth to tell, one would have to be a Bretonne and a daughter of the Chouass to devote one's life to wearing mourning for an unsuspected love.



COMTE DE VILLEBOIS-MAREUIL.

COMTE GEORGES DE VILLEBOIS-MAREUIL, formerly brevet colonel of the French army left Saint-Cyr in 1867 for the marine infantry. Being sent to Cochin China, he was appointed inspector of native affairs and orderly to the governor, and made the surveys for the first map of the country. When the Franco-Prussian war broke out in 1870 he returned to France at his own request in order to enter active service. Wounded honorably mentioned, made captain and decorated at twenty-three, he made the first campaign of Tunis as captain of foot chasseurs, and the second as major of cavalry. Successively chief of staff of the Algiers division, colonel of the One Hundred and Thirtieth, and Sixty-seventh of the line, and of the First Foreign Regiment he

gave in his resignation just as he was on the point of being made general.

While still a soldier he wrote "Sacrifiés," published anonymously in the first place in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, and subsequently by Charpentier under the pen-name of George Simmy. He also wrote "Le Maréchal de Moltke et l'Armée Russe et ses Chefs en 1888." An article of his published in the *Correspondant* at this period, entitled "A la Recherche de la Vérité sur la Retraite de Lang-son," made a great sensation.

In addition to his military and miscellaneous articles, Comte de Villebois-Mareuil has written a novel: "Au-dessus de Tout," which made its first appearance in the *Correspondant*; a very attractive tale, thanks to that vigor of style and knowledge of the heart which are also evident in "The Court-Martial." Yet, notwithstanding his remarkable talent as a writer, M. de Villebois was made for the sword rather than the pen. He has, in the full meaning of the phrase, that "fever for the flag" of which his story speaks, and concerning which he says: "When that once gets into your blood you are liable to relapses all your life!"

Court-Martial.

BY COMTE DE VILLEBOIS-MAREUIL.

THERE were four of us dining in a quiet corner of the immense hall. Three were premeditated idlers who had either attempted nothing or been speedily disenchanted with exertion. The fourth was a born fighter, a man who had tried everything, made three or four superb rushes into danger and risked his life in incredible adventures, always in search of the five-franc piece which gives itself away freely to the stupid, but would have nothing whatever to do with him. André Valjac, a man of exceptional vigor who had made the French campaign almost as soon as he left Saint-Cyr, had also led a trapper's life in the Far West, played the guerrilla in the Carlist camp, conceived the heroic folly of going to Gordon's assistance, and missed Khartoum by a few days only ! We had met him here in search of opportunities rather than of rest, and had annexed him for an evening.

But a persistent melancholy overshadowed the dinner in spite of our efforts to be animated. It had been a wretched day. Under the weeping sky of Biarritz the loyal shower had lashed the beach and blurred with its cross-hatching the scanty light on the edges of all things between a very high sea and very low-hung clouds.

The morning had slipped away in alternate efforts to be brave enough to face the weather and prudent waiting for it to clear up. And as a result of lounging at the window in semi-darkness our ideas had become as indistinct as the Pyrenees on the horizon. Even through pure weariness of this nature in disaster our eyes turned from the cliffs to the hostile darkness, away from that boiling spume which was all the sea delivered of itself.

The afternoon had been devoted to a concert of that savage music which sets the brain into an unearthly whirl. And while the glance wandered over the cosmopolitan audience in search of some diversion, it fell on real princesses above whose saddened destinies hovered the phantoms of vanished thrones.

The evening was to have been spent at a hypnotic séance, and we were preparing to drag ourselves thither through sheer lack of anything else to do, when we suddenly gave way to the dejection caused by the deadly gloom around us. Ah ! that dripping veil extinguishing the sun, those funereal harmonies, those spectral exhumations of the past were enough for once ! Were we not already surrounded by the distressing ruins of history within these sheltering walls ? was the insolence of time ever more glaring than in this hotel, once a palace ?

Little by little the room had become empty and fallen into comparative obscurity. We felt lost, too solitary in too great a space. Yet where could we go ? It was plain that the ambient sadness could not be escaped.

After chewing for awhile the cud of current scandals the conversation languished and died out. At last one of us, yielding to the uneasy languor weighing upon all,

began to speak of the suffering produced by certain impressions which seem to have been driven deep in memory as if to mark a precise and fatal spot, and which none of the succeeding shocks of life is able to remove.

Silence reigned, the unaccustomed effort of wholly superficial persons summoned to look within. Then each spoke in turn, admitting that certain always palpitating souvenirs connected with events that touched them nearly, did keep doleful watch on the high peaks of memory. In the ordinary course of things one has only to choose between the loss of love, a more cruel rupture, a more signal treason ! Yet our eyes interrogated Valjac. Doubtless it was different with him; it must have been something altogether out of the common which had most deeply affected this seeker of adventures. At last he concluded to speak :

“ I have seen death very near at hand and in every sort of shape,” he began; “ by fever in the hot countries, by fire on different occasions, by water in the wreck of the *Amerique* returning from the Far East, when I barely escaped with my life. But it has never impressed me so deeply as in the execution of a private soldier with which I had to do in the capacity of adjutant major as well as by reason of a particularly distressing accident.

“ It was in 1871, just at the end of the war. I belonged to a marching battalion of infantry on its way to a new army that was being created out of fragments to fill the gaps which the retreat of the army of the Loire upon Mans and the flight to Belfort of the army of the East rendered constantly more disquieting. Though we imagined we saw Prussians everywhere ar-

rayed against our improvised armies, there were in fact not nearly so many as our mistaken terror fancied. This is what it made possible for our Twenty-fifth corps to reassemble and solidify not far from Orleans simply under cover of the Loire.

“ We had come that day from Issoudun to Vierzon. The march had been especially painful, under a livid sky and through stretches of snow up to our knees. Our black shadows, curiously hooded by the boss of the knapsack, went stooping across the dismal whiteness, unreal shadows of a defeated army across a deserted country.

“ We marched in silence, the ranks broken over an interminable length, towards a vague destiny, conscious of nothing but the hostile winter which for so many days had held men and things alike in its icy grasp. Often a shadowy horseman would rise above the black depths of the horizon and remain visible and motionless in his heavy dark mantle, the ironic spectator of our column in distress. Shaken from his torpor by the insulting apparition a soldier would sometimes halt, snatch his musket from its strap, and make a show of bringing it to his shoulder. Some one would put it back again. What was the use? A ball lost, even if it hit the man. Did those whose scout he was need to count our disjointed lines to know our whereabouts? Thus by the dying light, through the dismal landscape, the battalion bearing so much misery and human suffering in its train dragged onwards to its destination.

“ When we entered Vierzon night had descended slowly on the desolate scene, as if uncertain of its action on the accumulated shadows of this sky of snow. Through the mere habit of doing things inconsiderately,

we were halted in the principal street in an immensely long line.

“Then began that indecent, that endless waiting which ruins both men and discipline, because it is forbidden to enjoy the halting-place when attained, for lack of a preliminary agreement as to how it shall be divided. Surveillance was at length relaxed, the ranks were deserted, the wine-shops filled, the doors opened, and the inhabitants, resigned to hospitality, began to mingle with the soldiers. Above these groups of sordid uniforms, faded blouses, and ragged tricots reigned a weary silence, crushing in its dread of the morrow, anxious concerning the sufferings yet to come.

“The windows were now all lighted. Benumbed, my feet painfully insensible, my mind vacant, I was looking enviously at these interiors, cheerful with light and the hospitality of fire and shelter. Suddenly my name was called in one of those intonations which remind of military duty and extort the answer: Present!

“It was the adjutant who was looking for me. With a little effort he succeeded in reaching the spot where I was. The adjutant major had been relieved in consequence of having had his leg broken under a worn-out horse. I was appointed to replace him. Moreover, the commandant had sent me word to convoke the court-martial at once for the trial of the chasseur Boussard. Boussard? A name like any other. What had he been guilty of? The adjutant did not remember; it was an old story which the removals of the battalion had prevented from being settled. After all, it was a matter which did not greatly concern me. Mechanically I acquainted myself with the order of convocation, the ad-

jutant lighting me with a taper sheltered from the wind by his kepi. I was one of the judges.

“The affair produced a very special effect on me because it was the first time, and at twenty-two things still retain their gravity. I shook off the icy torpor which glued me to the ground and, after notifying my captain, I went to look for the schoolroom in which the court-martial was to be held. And, stumbling as I went against the chasseurs whom the *assembly* was summoning to quarters, it occurred to me that this nasty business was the fitting crown of a nasty day.

“Captain Chevardier, who was to preside, was wandering about the schoolhouse, unable to find the door, and in a state of exasperation against the fatigue-duty which, by interfering with the hour of absinthe, delayed a rite that he preferred.

“I see him now, his too long hair under his too flat kepi, huddled in a sort of pelisse girded with a blue sash which doubled his sword-belt and looked as incongruous between his sabre and revolver as a civilian between two gendarmes. In the darkness the light of his cigar illuminated his red nose with every breath he drew and made it look like another little lighthouse.

“The others had found the entrance, and were waiting there inertly until a light should be brought. A subaltern at last appeared with a bald, paunchy little being with round eyes encircled with spectacles who said he was the teacher, and brought two lamps with charred wicks. He nearly let them fall through fright when he heard what purpose they were to serve.

“A dark group—the prisoner Boussard between four bayonets—stood at no great distance in the snow.

And above the walls of the school-yard rose dancing flames from the cooking in the streets, piercing the darkness like the reflections of a conflagration.

“When we had taken our seats at the back of the room in front of the blackboard, facing the rows of chairs and desks which the little apprentices to life were wont to occupy, I was wrung with anguish by the disproportion between this school of infancy and the drama of death to be enacted in it. We sat still while Chevardier, who had framed himself between the lamps and was constantly pulling up their wicks in his agony of non-comprehension, was struggling with the documents referring to the case. At last he called over our names, spluttered out the usual questions, and ordered the accused to be brought in.

“The guard halted at the entry, and the chasseur Boussard, unarmed and still in marching uniform, came forward through the aisle dividing the classroom. A handsome fellow, haughty, in full strength and vigor, hair cut short under the kepi set a little to the right, black beard in the shape of a horseshoe, bearing very military.

“His case was simple, one of a sort unfortunately too frequent at the period. While his regiment was being reviewed on a boulevard in Toulouse in the midst of a crowd just before departure, during one of those long waits to which soldiers are so uselessly subjected, the too heavy knapsack, the bitter north wind,—that icy wind from the mountains inhaled by the Garonne in its deep gorge,—the excitement produced by the crowd had been too much for him. He lost his head, fuddled himself with words, declared that he was no

blue, no raw recruit, but could teach those gold-laced fellows their trade; that he had enlisted for the war and intended to give his life, but that *Lascars* were not the sort of officers for him. His lieutenant came up, spoke gently to him at first, and tried to make him keep silence. Encouraged by the crowd and carried away by audacity he refused. Thereupon the officer, who was too young, forgot himself so far as to lift his cane. Dodging the stick, the *chasseur* threatened in his turn with his raised weapon. Some one cried out that the captain was coming. Boussard howled out a filthy insult intended for him, and upon that the scene ended.

“When the witnesses withdrew after their deposition the struggle between the two men, one of whom was defending himself against the other, the soldier and the presiding officer, became painful to witness, because one side, and that not the usual one, had so manifestly the advantage. Disconcerted by the respectful observations of the accused and put in the wrong by his dignified firmness, Chevardier, flushed and flurried, flew into a temper as he did sometimes in a café when asked to pay for three drinks and shown the accusing lines on the decanter. Involuntarily one took the measure of the two men, weighed them in accordance with their human value, and half regretted being unable to put the one in the other’s place.

“Boussard was allowed to defend himself. Without gestures, without emphasis, he said with noble simplicity: ‘Gentlemen, I failed in discipline by making inconsiderate remarks while under arms. Physical suffering, cold, waiting, the unhealthy excitement of the

crowd might serve as my excuse. But when I saw an officer raise his cane to me, to me a former sergeant-major, the whole tradition of the French army fairly lifted me off my feet. I had a right to use my weapon in parrying the insult. French soldiers are not beaten. And if I happened to insult my captain at such a moment it is because I was beside myself, for he had never done anything to me and deserved all my respect. That act was an unconscious one and I regret it sincerely. Any soldier might believe me, for I was free from all military obligation, married and the father of four children, and yet I enlisted for the war. Gentlemen, my only thought was to give my life for my country; permit the sacrifice to be accomplished in front of the enemy and not under the bullets of my comrades.'

“He withdrew while the presiding officer formulated his questions. You are aware that death is the only penalty known to a court-martial, and that it results when the act charged is admitted by a majority of votes. How can you evade a question to which the only possible answer is *yes* or *no*? What use could be made of the provocation offered by the lieutenant when one could vote only about a gesture, without explanation or reservation? Had Boussard been guilty of an act contrary to discipline? What answer could one make to that dry and brutal question which would not be a sentence of death? Possibly the president's discretionary power might permit a different result by limiting the accusation to blows inflicted, and then the answer would be negative and the result acquittal. But our mouths were closed, we were at Chevardier's mercy, and one by one, beginning with the least in rank, as

if under the pressure of fatality, we bowed our heads in acquiescence.

“Recalled, Boussard listened to his sentence without a shudder, turned in military fashion, and with a firm step rejoined his escort, who handed him over to the guard. He was confined in a small room adjoining the guardhouse, lighted by a window from which escape would be easy. A sentry would have been the proper thing. I hesitated, and then decided not to post one. Chance is always Providence, and the justice of God might well be exercised when man’s was so evidently defective.

“I visited the condemned man just as his dinner had been served. Not wishing to disturb him, I attempted to withdraw, saying I would return later, but he would not permit it.

“‘No, lieutenant,’ said he, rising, ‘the march in the snow has been hard and you need rest. You are not at the end of your fatigues like me. There is only one thing of all you came to offer that I will accept: the wherewithal to write to my wife and transmit my last wishes to my children. To-morrow, when all is over, you will have the kindness to forward my letter.’

“And as I insisted with compassionate words and in a voice broken by emotion on procuring for him the usual alleviations, he saw my immense emotion and was affected by it: ‘The thing is done,’ said he; ‘and yet I deserved something better than that!’ But he refused all my offers.

“One of the guard brought writing materials. Boussard thanked me. There was nothing further to be done but to leave him, and I pressed his hand and with-

drew. You can understand that I did not sleep. The step of my orderly on the wooden stairs next morning gave me atrocious agony, and every motion he made about the room in preparing for my rising increased the chill which pervaded my whole being. I shivered while dressing by the light of a solitary candle in the strange room, littered with objects that annoyed me.

“The troops were assembling for the parade of execution : dismal comings and goings on the snow, whispered orders, ranks silent under the pressure of emotion, men and surroundings in mournful correlation. As I reached the guard-house a priest came out of it, the chaplain of a neighboring convent whom I had notified. Scarcely able to speak, he took my hand. ‘A great pity, sir ! those children and that mother whose lives are bound up in his !’ And divining my emotion, he added : ‘Ah ! if he could have another chance !’ I sadly shook my head. I went in.

“No one was speaking in the guard-house and the men looked at me with dejected glances. The sergeant opened Boussard’s door. I found him on his feet, ready to start ; his bed had not been slept in. He took a letter from the table and gave it to me. ‘My last will, lieutenant. At least they must know that I loved them well,’ he muttered. He bowed his head. A great struggle, the final wrench, was going on within. I pressed his hand. He understood me, and drawing himself up, he asked : ‘Are we going ?’ Though he had refused what was offered him he took a cup of black coffee at my entreaty. The cold was intense and I wanted him to put on his hooded cape. ‘Oh ! no,’ said he ; ‘it would look as if I were afraid !’ And he took his place

in the midst of the picket guard, firm and upright, apparently insensible to cold in his short chasseur's jacket.

“The place of execution was rather less than two miles away. Though it was very early, yet the news of a military execution had got about, people were on the alert, the escort had been divined, and the condemned man was accompanied by a concert of lamentations and delayed by public compassion. There was nothing which this march did not convert into a torture.

“The cold, and above all the horror which chills, had paralyzed my brain. Mechanically I followed the fifty bayonets surrounding the unhappy man and received a nervous shock every time that he was halted. We entered a space surrounded by walls, from which the crowd was roughly excluded, and where the battalion formed a square with three faces.

“Boussard, still firm, had again braced himself to confront the honors paid those who are about to be shot. He walked resolutely to the empty space, and now, the escort withdrawn, he stood alone on the fatal spot, facing the troops at some yards distance from the platoon of execution. The commandant and several officers were not far away. I went from him to them with no very clear idea of what I was doing.

“While the sentence was being read his glance wandered over the comrades to whom he was to serve as an example and the military preparations for his burial; then it seemed to concentrate itself further away, on God, or perhaps on the ruined hearth where all his love had centred. His features were contracted with emotion. Yet suddenly he stiffened with a last and terrible effort of will. He had consented to his sacrifice, the

soldier had regained self-possession. He asked to embrace his commandant and also his captain. The scene was becoming too pathetic, the ranks were shaken by a storm of pity, the soldiers with outstretched arms were entreating pardon. The crowd thundered against the walls. A loud imploring cry ascended; another moment and the execution could not have taken place. The commandant made an imperative gesture. Bousard had just embraced me. I said to him, my throat constricted with a sob: 'Show yourself a soldier to the last; don't let discipline be infringed.' A chasseur approached to bind his eyes; he wished to repulse him. 'I beg you,' said I, 'it is duty.'—'Not on my knees, at least; I have well deserved to die on my feet!' he exclaimed in an ardent voice. I insisted no further; I felt mastered, I yielded to the ascendancy of this soul. And as I was led away I gave the signal to the platoon which had drawn near, but without being able to see it.

"The detonation resounded within me as if I had been struck by a thunderbolt. It cost me a terrible effort to raise my eyes. I saw the sergeant hesitate for the coup de grâce and his weapon shaking so that the ball went wild in the body. Nothing lay before us now but a rag of humanity, a breast torn and breathless, but we could file respectfully before these remains which had sheltered the most heroic soul it has ever been granted me to approach. I hope the new army may be able to do as well; as to surpassing the old one in ability to die well, that is something of which humanity is incapable.

"We took the road without returning to the city, the commandant wisely considering that it was neces-

sary to react in military fashion against too poignant an impression. I still had the unfortunate Boussard's letter, and in looking about for some safe person to whom to confide it, my eyes fell upon the sickly rotundity of the school-teacher, lost and haggard in the petrified crowd. I handed over to him my sad deposit, adjuring him to act in conformity with the dead man's wishes; his eyes gave a silent acquiescence, and I hastily rejoined the head of the column, convinced that the letter would reach its destination.

“It took us several days to approach the enemy, either because we hesitated before the opposing forces, or else because it seemed more crafty to keep them in suspense between two different objective points. At last we suddenly decided on Blois, and in spite of our disorganization our attack was so vigorous that we reached the suburbs of Vienne on the heels of the Uhlans charged to scent us out. The fight raged all along the Cosson, unskilfully on our part but numerically overwhelming; so much so that, our artillery in place, by night we were in the faubourg, our bayonets pricking the flying Germans in the reins. They lost a great many in the houses, and also because the Loire bridge blew up before the last of the combatants had evacuated the city. The platform was burning when I arrived with the first chasseurs of the vanguard. We were halted, and for a while firing went on across the Loire above the flames; then it slackened and the river relapsed into the silence of night.

“Time was needed to recover ourselves, to receive and transmit orders, and to recognize each other in the conquered faubourg where the cantonments had been

taken by assault. My orderly had found me a bed and was much more energetic in defending it than sure of a mattress for himself. My arrival released him, and as soon as he was gone I opened the door into a gay and bright little room with a fire of vine branches glowing on the hearth.

“I sank down exhausted, under an attack of bronchitis which alternately chilled and burned me. I had been suffering for days with shivering spells and a cough which grew worse at every station. The cold, the immobility in the snow during the fight, the hasty night marches, had finally got the best of me. I knew myself worn out. Incapable of thought or movement until I should be thoroughly warmed through, I crouched down opposite the fire and let myself be caressed by the sweetness of that sensation and the spotless cleanliness of my surroundings.

“The door opened to admit a young woman in black, whose slender figure and the rebellious locks of whose fair hair gave the impression of a gracious pride. It was an aureole encircling her, that hair, which one felt must be heavy, yet which escaped confinement in little waves of decreasing brightness. Modest and simple, hers was the distinction of a dweller by the Loire, a daughter of that true French blood, that soil of central France which has not been impregnated by a foreign infiltration. Between her two hands, hands of a working-woman, delicate and skilful, she carried a tray on which were a bowl of hot milk and some biscuits. She knew I was ill and she had come at once with all that her arms could hold ! Oh ! the sublime French woman, poor girl or great lady, how she thrills when charity appeals to her heart ! Such

a one I had before me, a pure woman, and I felt all my sufferings relax their hold upon me, my long suffering from cold, my bitter suffering as a vanquished soldier, melting in contact with this tender pity and this consoling flame.

“Between ourselves you and I often take a different tone about French women; we talk lightly, falsely, every one of us. Ah! well, when circumstances permit her to be herself, the true French woman, such as long ages of history have made her, is a being we ought never to name but on our knees!”

Valjac paused for a moment; remembered emotion was too strong for him. It did not occur to any of us to smile. When he resumed speaking it was with a certain lassitude:

“She talked of the sad topics uppermost at the time, for of what else could one speak? The war ever present, ever pushing farther its wave of ruin and invasion, a hackneyed subject but one which to each assumed a special aspect, and was either a misfortune or a menace. To her it had been desertion in the first place, and afterwards dread of the terrible unknown. And yet they had loved each other to distraction. He was foreman to a contractor and she a dressmaker going out by the day; together they made a plentiful living for themselves and the children who were coming fast. The war had begun their troubles by suspending the works and making orders less plentiful, but they had been economical and could afford to wait for awhile. And another torment was spared them, for married men were not liable to military duty. They would have been better off than many others if, unfortunately, he had not been a non-

commissioned officer in Africa, and when that fever for the flag once gets into the blood a man is liable to relapses all his life !

“ So, when the Prussians began to advance he became more gloomy ; he kept saying that things could not go on like that ; however, he resisted, unable to believe it. But when he learned that they were at Orleans, close by ; when he heard that Uhlans had been seen up the Cellettes road ; when he thought it likely that he might see them debouching in his own street some morning ; then he could contain himself no longer.

“ ‘ One day he went away without telling me,’ she said in a faint voice, stifling a sob with her handkerchief. ‘ And the worst of it was that I had known it would end that way, although he loved me as tenderly as I did him, and when he did not come home I divined that it was no use expecting him.’

“ And since ? Ah ! since then she had learned that he went a long way off to enlist, out Bordeaux way, because to find a place in France which was still French one had to go as far as the Garonne, whither every one had drifted who still clung to the rights of the fatherland. She did not know exactly in what corps he served. It must be the chasseurs at least, like ours ; but he had been passed from one depot to another, and then suddenly he was sent away. He was on his way now to the army ; but his letters had stopped coming ; it was a long time since she had heard from him.

“ ‘ He will come back to you,’ said I ; ‘ you deserve it so well.’

“ ‘ If the Prussians leave him to me,’ said she as she withdrew. ‘ But meantime I am so afraid !’

“She went but came back again. I watched her moving about the room, warming the bed, piling the hearth with fine sticks, preparing an infusion over the night lamp, feminine and hospitable, exquisite in simplicity and grace. The children were asleep under the care of my orderly. The house, lighted and closed, likewise slept in peace. One forgot loneliness beside this hearth, the dead bodies lying in the streets, the noise of fighting, the dismal pall of this distressing war. Its bridge broken, the river slipped swiftly through its motionless and sleeping sands, assuring safety to both armies.

“The moderate warmth of the room had lulled me into that gentle torpor to which exhausted bodies yield so readily. Objects began to recede, still glittering with cleanliness yet growing vague, enveloped in a very light cloak of mist. It was the repose, the oblivion of the soul, sweet precursor to that of the body. I was happy and had ceased to suffer.

“Suddenly the door flew open with a violence that brought me to my feet with a shock of surprise, as if the call to arms had sounded. A woman stood there,—not the chaste and gentle apparition which but now had lulled my dreams, but a distracted creature, convulsed by unspeakable anguish, who clung to the doorpost to prevent herself from falling,—a poor bloodless face disfigured by horror. I sprang towards her. Her gesture repelled me, and she spoke in a harsh voice, with sobs and broken words which in my stupor I was slow to comprehend until a name suddenly enlightened me.

“‘The Prussians might perhaps have left him to me, but you ! it was different, you would not pardon him !’ was her breathless plaint. ‘All that was my joy, all I

lived for, you crushed in the snow one morning against a wall, like a thing that was troublesome and good for nothing. Ah! good for nothing, a being like him! But the very brutes would have admired him! They assassinated him! To go and leave everything, the little ones looking for their bread, the poor creature whose whole soul is wrapped up in you, to destroy the home, to outrage nature, and to give yourself up to them that they might stick you against a wall like a mad dog! Yes, Boussard, whom you condemned, was mine! You took him away from Toulouse. And then, on the road, for a word, for a gesture, for a nothing at all, you killed him! He, the beautiful, the strong and brave, killed like a coward within a stone's throw of the enemy! such a soldier as that! Ah! it moves you now to think of it! you tell yourself that it was well done! Yes, you also admit that it was he, he, my own!

“I would have been glad to get away but my will was powerless; I was nailed to the floor. At the name which had evoked this scene I had comprehended the revolting coincidence. There was I, the judge, under my victim's roof; the woman I had widowed had overwhelmed me with the most touching cares; I was dropping asleep beside orphans who were my handiwork. The horrors were too many for my poor head to endure! I was unable to leave the room. Yet there she stood, close pressed against the door, stifling her sobs, wringing her arms as if in malediction. And suddenly the monstrosity of it appeared to her and revolted her. ‘Ah!’ she cried, lifting her head, haggard, wild, ‘were you not one of those who punished him? The man in the other room told me so quite innocently; and while he, the

beloved, lies all bloody in the frozen ground, it is for you that this poor hearth is kindled ! No ! there is no religion which teaches such a duty as that, a duty which does violence to humanity, for it would no longer appeal to men ! No ; the executioner and the wife of the victim cannot sit beside the same fire !' And her hand, raised with convulsive energy, signed me to depart.

“ This time a painful shame restored me to myself. Catching up a garment to throw about me, I made hastily towards the door. And yet I wanted to say something, to give way at least to the agony that tortured me ; my brain was filled with contending images ; but terror of that lifted hand impelled me toward the threshold which my presence profaned.

“ At the moment when I was about to cross it,—was it the pallor of a sick man, the disorder of my dress which I was hastily buttoning across my chest, the wildness of inexpressible anguish speaking through my eyes?—or was it rather that the phantom of the soldier lying stiff in death rose from the tomb of his punishment to inspire his well-beloved with the supreme duty of forgiveness ? For now it was she who stopped me, with hands joined, trembling with grief, terrible with prayer. And when her constricted throat could open, it was an inhuman sob that parted it, a plaint from a too violent despair. She hung upon me, and in a broken voice, passionate with entreaty, she wailed :

“ ‘ Forget it ! I was mad. Ah ! the fatherland, even when it grinds you to powder, it is still the fatherland ! He would have wished it. Stay ! ’

“ But grief had overcome resistance. She made a sign that she could endure no more. She put her hands

to her breast as if to restrain her suffering, and falling on her knees across the threshold, her eyes, fixed and full of poignant entreaty, clung fast to mine, seeking their intention. For me, I obeyed, blinded by tears, and going backward to a chair I sank down upon it and buried my head in my hands.

“ You can understand that I found the night a long one. The next morning I got into the ambulance, and when I rejoined my regiment after the armistice had been signed, it was at Vierzon. My thought had dwelt upon that lost letter of the unfortunate Boussard which was the cause of my frightful meeting with his family. The school teacher might be able to tell me something about it. Ah ! well; the fatality had been complete. The beast had kept the letter, fearing to afflict the family too suddenly ! ”

* * * * *

Valjac ceased speaking and presently retired. It had never seemed to me that anything made a deep impression upon this lifelong fighter. This time I saw him so profoundly sad that I too was afflicted. The suffering of a strong man is all the more affecting in proportion as one has thought him incapable of it, beyond its reach. Unable to sleep, the memory of that powerful glance saddened by distress, as if a tear had just died there, pursued me far into the night, while the angry sea beat against our base of rock and ceased not to affright me with its howling lamentation.

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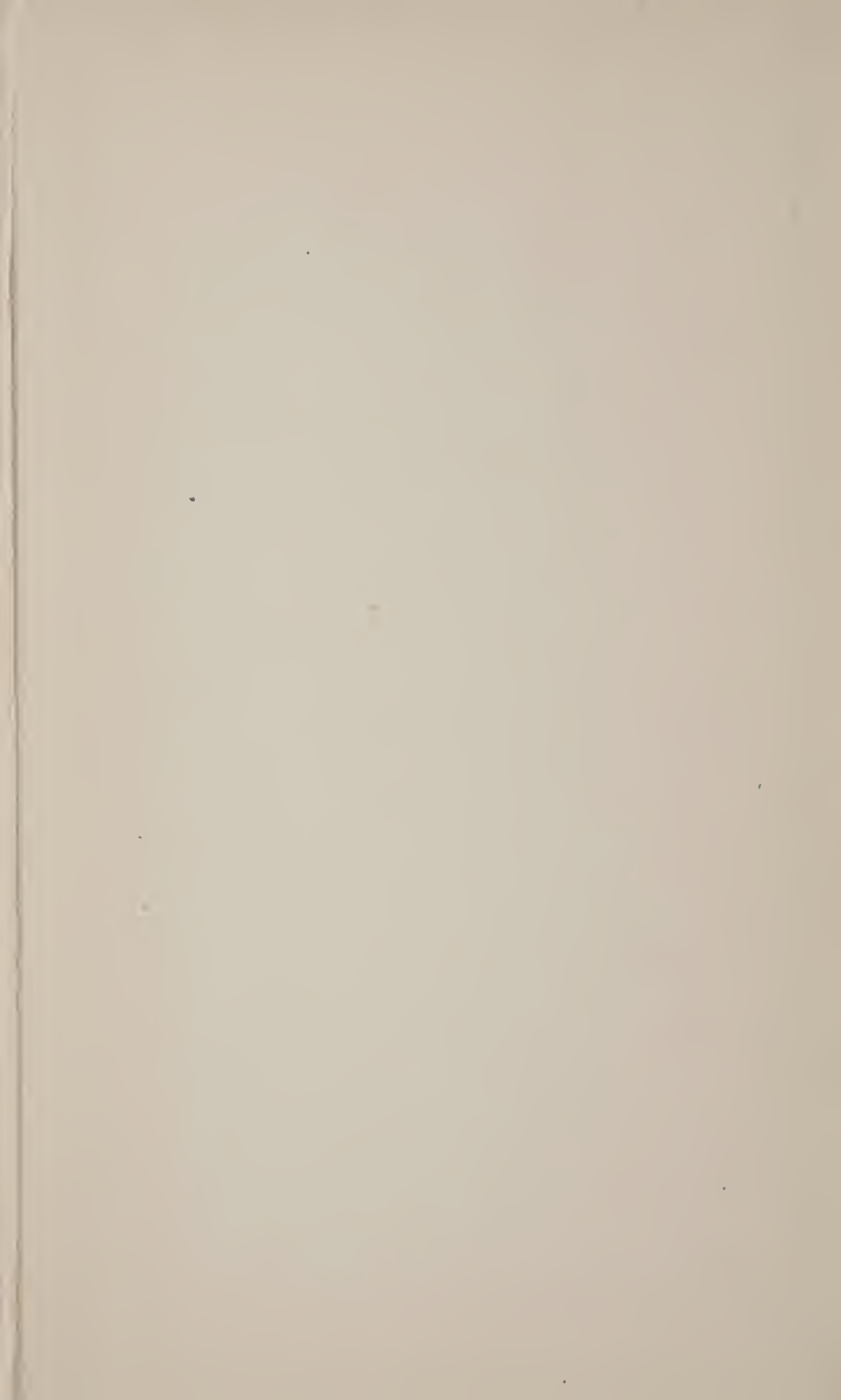
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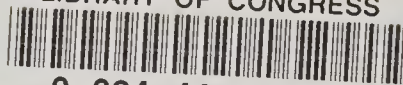
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