





*Alexander Elmer*



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(Mr. Charles Jenkins)

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# ONCE AND AGAIN.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“COUSIN STELLA,” “WHO BREAKS—PAYS,”

ETC. ETC.

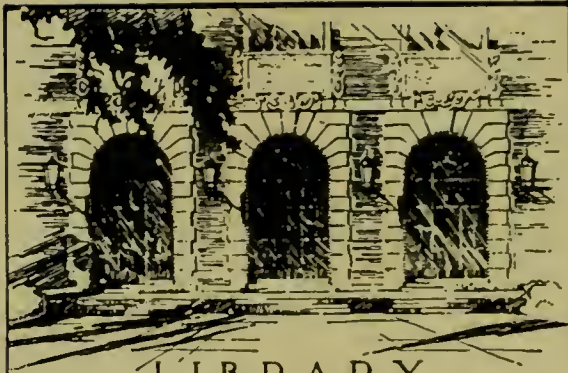
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# ONCE AND AGAIN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A THREE-TWISTED TWIST.

A LOUD fanfare on a cow's-horn ushered in the day; and as the crowing of one cock is succeeded by defiant answers from all the cocks within hearing, so was that first loud, discordant bray followed by an infinity of equally loud, equally ear-splitting sounds. Horns, trumpets, fifes, whistles, large and small, or of a happy middle size, composed of brass, of tin, of wood, of bone, vied in their efforts to wake the popu-



lation of Paris to the knowledge that the last day of the carnival of that year of Louis Philippe's reign had dawned.

Monsieur le Marquis de Blacourt, startled out of his morning's slumbers, rang his bell, and inquired if there was a change of dynasty?

Denis, his valet, gravely reminded Monsieur le Marquis that it was Shrove Tuesday. The "bœuf gras" was to pay his visit to the Tuileries at noon precisely.

The marquis replaced his head on the pillow, and as he enjoyed perplexing Denis's wits, he uttered his thoughts aloud:—

"Ah! philosophers and progressionists of the nineteenth century, I wish you joy of your success in the improvement of mankind. Here we are in the year 183—, as we were centuries ago, in full paganism,—crowds rushing after a fat ox destined for the shambles, blowsy women, brutal men, feathers, spangles, drums, glitter, noise, drink, and all the rest. If I were King of the French—which, I thank God, I am not—I would decree that the first man who blew a blast on

a cow's-horn in the streets of my capital, should be hanged and quartered."

Denis, who had been busy choosing what clothes his master should wear that day, took, as the marquis meant he should, this tirade in earnest. He turned, and remonstrated:—

"Monsieur will be so good as to remember that the police only allow of the blowing of these detestable trumpets for three days at this season."

"You mistake, Denis," said the marquis drily, "they patronize it also at the *Mi-Carême*; three weeks hence we shall have it again."

"As monsieur pleases."

A noise indoors, just over his head, attracted M. de Blacourt's attention. In the room immediately above his there now began a quick succession of pit-a-pat steps, accompanied by some heavy footfalls.

"They have awakened even that poor child," he observed.

Denis answered:—

"Children wake at dawn, like birds. It is *Félicie* who is the most to be pitied; *Mdlle.*

Louisa lets no one sleep after she opens her eyes.”

“Beautiful eyes they are,” muttered the marquis.

The very young person thus alluded to was the daughter of a Mrs. Templar, an English lady who occupied the apartments above those of M. de Blacourt. Mdlle. Louisa was the despotic queen of the house. From the porter and his wife, the natural enemies of all the lodgers, up to the professor and his family in the garret, every one had a smile and a word of love for this beautiful little mortal of eight years old.

As the marquis had now no hope of a comfortable nap, and was past the age when it is a joy to lie awake in bed, and let fancy weave webs of bright unearthly hues, he got up, and proceeded to dress.

“Does monsieur ever think—but monsieur is always reading——”

“Do I ever think of what?”

“How droll it is that every morning one must put on one’s clothes, and every night take them off?”

“In spite of my reading, I have pondered that question,” replied the marquis, “but come to no conclusion. Perhaps you have.”

“Well, no, monsieur. I reflect, and I say to myself, ‘What is life?—dressing, eating, and undressing.’”

“You do not contemplate suicide, I trust, Denis?”

“I, sir? Why?”

“Because your words remind me of a certain Prince of Denmark, who meditating as to whether it was worth while to live, talked in your vein.”

“Monsieur is laughing at me.” And Denis was silent.

The few minutes’ lull in the morning’s clamour was broken by an organ-grinder coming into the court, and beginning to grind away at the bridal chorus from *Der Freischutz*.

“Another nuisance,” grumbled the marquis.

Two or three seconds afterwards, he opened the window and threw out some money, saying,—

“I hope now he will cease to give me a headache.”



“If monsieur always gives to all the street musicians and to beggars, it is not reasonable to expect they won't disturb monsieur.”

“Denis, I must explain to you that when I give to those you call beggars, I am paying a debt.”

“As monsieur pleases,” said Denis, convinced that his master was unusually out of sorts.

“Ah! Mademoiselle Louisa is in one of her tempers,” said the marquis, as a child's scream reached his ears. “Go, Denis, and see what has happened; she may be hurt.”

Denis returned, and announced that mademoiselle was naughty—very naughty, and that Felicie had gone to fetch Monsieur Marc—“that little young man could do more with mademoiselle than any one else.”

This Marc de Lantry was a lad of seventeen, and a pupil of Professor Gastineau, who lived at the top of the house. In reply to Felicie's call for help, Gustave Gastineau, the professor's eldest boy, said that Marc could not go downstairs just then, he was busy. Marc was at that moment



in his own room, receiving the trembling Madame Gastineau's confidence, that she had no bread, no milk, no coffee for the morning's breakfast, and no money to buy any. "The professor will beat me," was how the poor woman wound up her speech, and her face turned the colour of lead.

Marc knew she did not exaggerate, for he had once had to half-strangle the professor to make him release his wife's throat. You would not have expected this sort of courage from Marc; he had such soft serious brown eyes and feminine features; his manners, too, were gentle. He now answered Madame Gastineau sorrowfully,—“I gave you my last five-franc piece on Saturday; my monthly allowance is not due for ten days.”

Madame Gastineau pushed her rough black hair still further off her forehead, stared at him, at the rickety worm-eaten chairs and tables, at the bed, at the books, as though calculating how they could be turned into food; and her hungry eyes remained fixed on a black coat hanging on a peg behind the door. Marc said, as if in reply

to her thought, "It is the only decent one I have to attend lectures in."

All at once, Madame Gastineau threw her arms above her head, and rushed to hide herself behind the scanty red-checked bed-curtains. Gastineau's voice was resounding through the garret, asking, "Why breakfast was not ready, and where Madame Gastineau had hidden herself?"

Marc, without a further word, took down his best coat, rolled it into as small a bundle as he could, and inquired, "Where shall I take it to?"

"There is a branch of the Mont de Piété in the Rue Faubourg Montmartre, 157," was whispered back.

He peeped out; the ogre was not in sight; he slipped swiftly through the house-door, and was already as far down as the second story, when he heard Louisa's screams. There was such a sound of pain in the cries, that, in haste as he was, he could not pass without stopping to see what was wrong. He rang the bell, and the door was instantly opened. Louisa was in the

ante-room, stamping and shrieking,—a very little fury.

“Is she hurt?” asked Marc.

“No, sir,” replied Félicie. “Mademoiselle has just found out that her mamma is gone away. Madame is gone to England for a few days.”

“Mammas should not leave their little girls without telling them,” sobbed the child; “it is naughty—it is very naughty.”

The marquis, also alarmed by the shrieks, now appeared on the scene.

“Ah! my Louisa, since your mamma leaves you, come to me; you will be better with me.”

Louisa’s sobs stopped, her large black eyes flashed fiercely at the speaker. She said, in a resolute voice,—

“Give me back my ring directly—directly.” She alluded to a ring of beads she had herself made and presented to the marquis as a love-gage a few days before. “I won’t love you, if you speak so of my mamma.”

While Louisa was still in her defiant attitude, with head thrown back and one arm outstretched,

there was the sound of a quick, unsteady step ascending the stairs, and, in another moment, a tall, thin, fair man came on the little group. Neither looking to the right nor the left, and only slightly raising his hat, he passed, as if by right, into Mrs. Templar's apartment.

“Come here, Louisa,” he called out in English; “I have something for you.” Hitherto all the conversation had been in French, which Louisa spoke with the same facility as English.

“Go in, Mademoiselle Louisa,” said Félicie, “and behave like a lady to Monsieur Granson.”

With her finger in her mouth, and a drooping head, Louisa obeyed her nurse, without a glance or a word to her friends, the marquis and Marc.

M. de Blacourt went downstairs again, followed by the brown-eyed youth with the bundle. Marc had a momentary impulse to tell the marquis that there was a family starving under the same roof with his noble self. But Marc was deterred by a certain look which belongs to men who have always exercised authority over the mass of their fellow-creatures by right of superiority of rank



and wealth. In another three-quarters of an hour, young De Lautry returning minus his package, met little Miss Templar in the fancy dress of a Bernese peasant, going out, accompanied by the tall, fair, thin man, whom Félicie called M. Granson.

This was a Tuesday, the day for M. de Blacourt's visit to his cousin's widow, Madame de Villemont. Lately, this lady had become uneasy about the marquis's partiality for Louisa; among her intimates she laughed at what she called her cousin's mania, ridiculed and caricatured his praises of the child, but in her heart she both feared and hated that child. A dread had seized her, that either the marquis loved Louisa for Mrs. Templar's sake; or might marry the mother for the sake of the daughter. Madame de Villemont knew of an instance in point—a man as disinclined to matrimony as M. de Blacourt had actually married a woman to avoid a separation from her child.

As the proverb says, "Where the tooth aches,



there goes the tongue," so never did Madame de Villemont meet M. de Blacourt, without turning the conversation on Louisa; she could always easily lead him to descant on the perfections of his pet, and she did so on this particular Tuesday. "Yes, she is exquisite," he said, with that visible relaxing of his whole person, which takes place in us all as soon as we enter on a conversation in which we need not be on our guard, but feel that we are free to be ourselves.

"Whether she pouts, or whether she smiles," he went on, "she is grace personified. There may by possibility be handsomer children to be found; but nothing like Louisa."

"She is certainly very happily gifted," observed the lady, twirling her bracelet round her wrist.

"Happily gifted for what?" exclaimed the marquis, jarred by the conventional tone.

"Do my words need explanation? happily gifted, means happily gifted, of course."

"An answer which leaves my question where it was."

"I mean, what everybody means," replied the

lady; "when a girl is beautiful and clever, she is called happily gifted."

"Be it so, but for what; to secure her own happiness? I doubt it: there are heavy taxes laid on great possessions. Destiny sports rather with what is high than low, as the storm does with the loftiest trees; you couldn't point out to me, if you tried for a week, three instances of a happy tranquil life falling to the lot of superlative beauty, or genius, or even to one possessed of a character greatly superior to his generation. Mankind generally revenges this last species of excellence by bestowing on it the death of a criminal."

"This is one of your speeches which puzzles but does not convince me," returned Madame de Villemont. "I do not pretend to argue with you—what chance has a woman in an argument with a man?" The lady was one of that class who flatter men by eternally acknowledging the inferiority of her own sex; she continued: "You might make your catalogue as long as Don Juan's famous *mille e tre*, and women would still covet

beauty as the best gift. Now, confess, suppose you were choosing a wife, would your choice fall on a plain woman?"

"If I were in the enjoyment of my reason, I should certainly not take for a wife one whose beauty would make every idle fellow buzz round her. I am not one of those, madame, who could be flattered by men turning to stare after my wife as she passed, nor at beholding dozens of opera-glasses levelled at her in a theatre; quite sufficient for me, if I found her to my taste."

"Ah! then your taste probably inclines to the plain: does not some one say that if you wish to be loved well and with constancy, select an ugly woman?"

The marquis smiled. He guessed where his companion's thoughts were. As she received no reply to her last inuendo, madame added, "You take an inordinate interest in that child?"

"I do," he said firmly; "I told you why,—I augur ill of her future."

"And consequently you would like to watch over her—guard her? Come, tell me, confide

in me, as a friend and relation, when is it to be?"

"My marriage with Louisa? I am forty and she is only eight years old."

"But Louisa has a mother."

"To be sure she has; I had forgotten that condemnatory circumstance."

"Though you will not treat me with the confidence to which I think I have a right, you may depend on my good offices."

"You are too kind, too amiable," he replied.

The lady's temper was getting ruffled; she went on:—

"I shall take care to make the sentiments you have expressed to-day generally known; they will explain what will seem eccentric, to say the least."

The lady's temper *was* ruffled.

"Thank you, for your benevolent intentions; hitherto I have been equal to the task of defending my own opinions and actions." As the marquis spoke, the pretty clock on the chimney-piece, one of his many *étrennes* to his cousin's widow, struck three.



“Already!” exclaimed madame: it was her regular weekly exclamation.

“I have been here an hour,” said M. de Blacourt, testily. “Au revoir.”

As he closed the saloon door behind him, Madame de Villemont felt convinced that her son Raoul had no chance of being the marquis’s heir.

A few words about M. de Blacourt. His was a disjointed life. Ten years prior to this Shrove Tuesday, on the edge of thirty, that age when most men usually turn away from the mere pleasures of existence, and ask for happiness, he had received a blow which had unhinged his whole being; it had given a twist to his intellect, and covered his heart with a crust.

He had loved sincerely and devotedly as strange a compound of good and evil as is to be found even among women. Sophie’s bad actions all appeared to spring from some good source, and—then she was fairest of the fair. Her faults were the exaggerations of virtues. The marquis had adored her in fear and trembling. One day a



chilling frost killed all his budding hopes, and from that period he had looked at the world by the light of his own misadventure.

However, men never entirely change. Jean Marie de Blacourt had been a man of impulse, and a man of impulse he remained. He would say as Voltaire wrote to Rousseau, "Humanity makes me wish to go on all fours," but his heart felt for the misery of individuals. He denied in words, and acknowledged by actions, that mysterious chain of suffering which links man to man; which allows no one to be tranquil while others suffer. In one shape or other, we must share the burdens of mankind; the difference between man and man is, that some seek to ignore any such reciprocity, to secure their own isolation, while others accept their portion of the load.

That he was no egotist, the trifling instance of his visit every Tuesday to Madame de Villemont will show. Of all the people he saw, the two most distasteful to him were his cousin-german's widow, and her son the collegian. At least eighteen times out of the thirty-nine visits he paid

during the months he spent in Paris, he was bored or sleepy. On rising of a Tuesday morning, he deplored the impending event of the day, yet he always went. If by chance he was prevented, he made good his visit on another day: never was a man so naïvely conscientious as to his word. He had made the promise in her first sorrow, and he held to it, the more so that she was comparatively poor, and her salons were not so full in the Rue St. Lazare, as they had been in the Rue de Courcelles.

In the dusk of that same evening, Louisa rang at the marquis's door. He had just dined, and was taking his coffee before going to his club.

The little visitor asked Denis if she might go in and see her "bon ami."

"Here I am," she said, as she was ushered into the dining-room; a slight embarrassment was to be traced in her demeanour.

"Ah! how splendid we are!" exclaimed the marquis.

"Yes, my mamma left this costume for me, and

bid M. Granson take me out to see the Bœuf Gras !  
My mamma is very, very kind.”

“ Very,” returned the gentleman.

Louisa was leaning on his knee. She did what she pleased with him ; climbed on his lap while he was reading ; stood by his writing-table while he was writing, touched his pens, his paper, his seals, destroyed the perfection of his shirt-collars by her demonstrations of affection, and though he often rebuked her in his severest tones, she knew she need not heed him.

“ I have been very much amused,” went on Louisa. “ I had a good sight of the big oxen ; one was white, he was the handsomest ; he was on a cart which had no sides, and men in long white gowns, like ladies’ dressing-gowns, and with green leaves round their heads, and great knives in their hands, stood by him, to keep him from tumbling out, I suppose ; and there were other men in velvet cloaks and white feathers in their hats, and satin trowsers, on prancing horses, before and behind the cart, just as there are when the king goes out ; and there was a band, a band



of real music, and not a sham, and there was a great waggon full of women with odd things in their hair; one had a little castle, and another a new moon, and they were going to see the king and queen, and the princes and princesses. I didn't think them nice; they had dirty red faces, but a great many people called *me* a pretty little girl."

"Indeed! You ought to be very much obliged to your mamma's friend for taking you out."

"No, I am not obliged to him; I hate him."

"Mdlle. Louisa, permit me to tell you that you are an ungrateful young lady."

"Félicie hates him, too," said the child, gravely adding, "It's all that Père Gastineau's doing. He is a bad man, Père Gastineau."

"Do you hate everybody, Louisa?" asked the marquis, looking pityingly at the graceful little creature uttering such ugly words.

"No, I don't. I love my mamma, and—*you*." The small plump arms were thrown round the marquis's neck as she spoke.

"You have ruined another collar," said he.

“ You are good.”

“ How can such a mite as you tell ? ”

“ I know it.”

The marquis silently stroked down the thick waves of the child's hair. One of Louisa's great beauties was her hair; amazingly thick it was, and it clustered all over her head, now turning this way, now that, in large soft golden rings. Her hair was fair, and her skin like the flowers of the white May, but her eyes were black, and her eyebrows also. She had a good deal the appearance of one of Greuze's lovely portraits.

Her declaration of esteem for the marquis was disinterested, that he was certain of; much as he doted on her, and he did dote on her as a prisoner does on a flower that cheers his solitude, he had always refrained from loading her with presents—he would never have to reproach himself with having added an element that might trouble the clear waters of her affections. He was inclined to thank her for the judgment she had pronounced on him; he knew that, however instinctive a child's love may be, it is rarely, if ever, bestowed

on the cold-hearted, the vain, and the over-bearing.

“*You* are not afraid of anybody, are you?” asked Louisa.

“I believe not.”

“But now *do* tell me, true, do you ever hide yourself?”

“I am so big, it would not be so easy for me to play at hide-and-seek as for you. My great long legs won't double up. See.”

Louisa burst into a laugh of ecstasy.

Denis at this moment put his head into the room, saying “Monsieur.” There he stopped—amazement cut short his intended speech, for he beheld his grave master squatting on the rug.

“What do you want?” asked the marquis, rather savage at Denis's intrusion.

“I thought M. le Marquis called me.”

Denis had often such imaginings when his master had visitors. He closed the door without being invited to do so.

“Félicie says M. Granson is afraid, and hides himself,” said Louisa, clinging to her subject.



“Hides from you, I suppose?” replied the marquis.

Louisa waved her head slowly from side to side.

“No, not from *me*.” She put her rosy lips close to his ear. “When he is out walking with mamma and me, all at once we look for him, and he is nowhere. We can’t see him, and he is afraid of *you*; he told mamma, I heard him; that he did not wish to know you. It was Père Gastineau brought him to us, and Félicie says they are just two *voyoux*.”

It was the marquis’s turn to laugh.

“Don’t laugh so,” said Louisa, vexed at the effect produced by her description; “he has great ugly teeth like the wolf in my Red Riding Hood. Félicie says he and old Gastineau will play my mamma some bad trick.”

“Félicie talks nonsense. It is naughty to speak so unkindly of one of your mamma’s friends.”

“I will tell you something else,” said the child, eagerly, and not heeding the reproof. She knew perfectly well by her child’s instinct that the

marquis did not like M. Granson. "He is not a gentleman. One day I saw he had no stockings on under his boots, his trowsers turned up, you know; and his pocket-handkerchiefs have big holes in them. Mamma says he is trying to get back his fortune, but Félicie says——"

"But I tell you, you must believe your mamma, and not Félicie."

"He has no stockings, and he eats a whole plate of cakes when he comes to tea," said Louisa, growing excited and loud.

"What do I care for your Monsieur Granson?" exclaimed the marquis. "Thou borest me, my dear friend."

"Very well, I shall go away, and I won't come again, and I won't be your wife—no, never, never." And with an air of offended majesty Louisa walked off.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MARQUIS AND THE VICOMTE.

MRS. TEMPLAR was away a week. During her mother's absence, Louisa, after her first outbreak, had recovered her usual high spirits, had made no further allusion to the not having had warning of the intended journey. But the moment she saw her mother, instead of rushing into her arms, she held back, burst into a passion of tears, as she had done on Shrove Tuesday, beating her breast, exclaiming, "Mammas should not leave their little girls without first telling them."

Mrs. Templar herself repeated this to the marquis, adding, "That often she did not know how to manage Louisa."

M. de Blacourt remarked, "Nevertheless, I have seen Louisa very much afraid of you, when

she has spoiled any of her finery. Good heavens ! I shall not easily forget the shriek she gave the day she burned her pinafore, nor the terrified face with which she said to me, “ Sir, a great misfortune has happened to me. I have burned my frilled pinafore, and mamma will be very, *very* angry with me.”

“ Yes, she knows that I do not easily forgive her spoiling her clothes.”

“ Make her feel that you will not easily forgive her for putting herself in a passion.”

The marquis divined as little as Mrs. Templar what was the stumbling-block between the child and her mother. Mrs. Templar was, in reality, too old to be Louisa’s mother—too great a difference of age separated them. God meant mothers to be young. A child with a young mother is in its proper element of caresses, gambols, and idleness. Sympathy is better than all reasoning on both sides. Louisa had none of this. She was essentially the precocious child of an elderly mother.

Mrs. Templar and the Marquis de Blacourt had had apartments in the same house for three years.



Louisa it was who had brought them acquainted; and gradually, from the interchange of mere passing courtesies, they had become intimate acquaintances. For this there were several reasons: separately, trivial, but together forming a strong chain. In the first place, their living under the same roof; secondly, the intercourse between their respective servants, by which the English lady and the French gentleman were kept continually alive to the fact of each other's existence; and lastly, and most important of all, the attraction that Louisa had for the marquis.

In the beginning, as was natural, the faithful Denis of the *premier*, and the attached Félicie of the *second*, had taken it for granted that Monsieur de Blacourt's love for the child meant love for the child's mother, and that there would be presently a marriage in due form. Such things happen on many days of the year between dwellers in the same house, without the intermediation of any cherub like Louisa. Read the notices of marriage in the French papers. Félicie remarked to Denis,—

“Monsieur is still a fine man, though his hair is growing thin about the temples; and he has quite the air of a nobleman.”

“Madame is not ill-looking,” returned Denis; “rather too thin for my taste, and a little faded; but her figure is charming—seen from behind, one might still take her for a girl. How old do you fancy she might be?”

“She accuses herself of being thirty-nine; she may be a year or two past forty.”

“H’m; she is old to be the mother of Mademoiselle Louisa; but her age doesn’t signify. M. le Marquis has had his love affairs. Enough—they are at an end. I know him as well as I do myself. What he wants now is repose; it would be the death of him to have to be going to balls with a young wife—standing in a corner like an umbrella, while she waltzed—h’m, h’m, h’m—that would not answer. Monsieur is, was, would be furiously jealous. Madame Templar is just what is good for his nerves.”

“And monsieur, how old is he?” asked Félicie.

“About my age,” said Denis, sawing the air

with his extended fingers—a gesture by which he meant to convey the information, a little difference this way or that—nothing to signify.”

Probably Félicie and Denis had views of their own depending somewhat on the matrimonial alliance between the master of the one, and the mistress of the other.

Monsieur de Blacourt, however, continued to advise Mrs. Templar whenever she applied to him for advice; continued to transact any little business she might have to do, such as remonstrating with the landlord about repairs, or repressing the insolence of office in the concierge—continued to escort her occasionally to the theatre or the opera—continued to adore Louisa; and yet, without any effort on the part of either the lady or the gentleman, all tittle-tattle concerning them—even that of ill-tongued Professor Gastineau died away. Everything without a foundation does fall to the ground one day or other.

Still, it is seldom that a man and woman of tolerably suitable age can be on such perfectly friendly terms, and both be at liberty to marry,



and yet not do so. There were certain qualities in Mrs. Templar which were of a nature to please the marquis:—First. She never flattered him; her faith was, that it was a man's office to flatter a woman—a woman's to receive homage.

Secondly. He respected her for her retired habits and for her devotion to her child. He was also amused by her thorough old-fashioned ideas—by the way she set herself in opposition to all the liberal sentiments of the day. She put no varnish on her opinions. She hated equality; it was a specious lie of the devil; there was no equality in heaven. An hereditary House of Lords was Britannia's anchor of safety. "High birth," insisted Mrs. Templar, "gives high qualities." Then she added the argument she invariably flourished as a club to fell her adversary. "*Can* you make a cart-horse into a race-horse? No, you cannot; polish and educate him as you will, a cart-horse, fit only for drudgery, he remains."

What did repel M. de Blacourt was her bitterness against the world. "The world she



denounces," he thought, "is what she herself is. When we complain of coldness, it is that we are ourselves cold. If we have friendliness in us, others are friendly to us."

Mrs. Templar was, in every sense of the word, a disappointed woman. She had set out in life with a purpose; she had held tenaciously to it. She had given her youth for it. No communings with poets and their dreams, no silent ecstasies at the sound of birds' songs issuing from leafy coverts, no whispers of young affection, no pressure of loving hands for her; she turned from all such things as from temptations to stray from the only right path for her. One of the many daughters of a younger son of a Nova Scotia baronet, she had more blood than money. And she had hated and dreaded poverty from the day when an ancient dame of her house had made her understand, that what was suitable for her would be beneath her wealthier cousins. From that hour, she had resolved to have "position," and to be able to insult as she had been insulted. She had married a rich old merchant,

but the sacrifice fell short of its mark. Her high-born relatives could not “abide the smell of money made in trade.”

When her youth and bloom were vanished, the old husband died. Then came her acquaintance with the handsome, extravagant Marmaduke Templar; of an unblemished descent from the Conquest—heir to a fine landed estate, but over head and ears in debt. She accepted his proposal of marriage, though perfectly aware he married her for her ample jointure, and her thousands in the three per cents. A few years more, and, in the course of nature, she must reign at Lamberton Park. Then it was that Mrs. Templar gave way to reveries and castle-building. She saw herself arrayed in diamonds, the Templar family diamonds, introduced to the presence of royalty; one, undoubtedly, of the upper ten thousand, with a right to insult, as she had been insulted.

Marmaduke Templar dragged the wife he openly neglected to every gay resort in Europe. He drank, he gambled, he got in debt, left no

dissipation untasted, and yet Mrs. Templar gave way to no complaints. Do what he would, he must inherit his father's estate, and must make her one of the great county ladies. But there was no *must* in the case. The great messenger, who will be obeyed, came and took poor sinful Marmaduke away, in the prime of his manhood and his vices. He left only one child, and that child a girl. Lamberton Park was strictly entailed on the male line, and would therefore revert to the younger brother of Marmaduke's father. Louisa was wholly unprovided for; all Mrs. Templar's thousands had disappeared, and the half of the jointure left her by her first husband had been mortgaged by her second. The cup so near her lips had slipped away—all her sacrifices had gone for nothing. When Louisa's grandfather died, his successor, not an unjust man, made over to Marmaduke's widow a sum of five thousand pounds, as a provision for his great niece. He then considered he need trouble himself no further about either mother or child.

Why Mrs. Templar had come to live in Paris,



and why she chose to keep all her connections at a distance, and, indeed, why she tried to avoid the English in general, she did not confide to her friend the marquis. But the fact was patent to him. Some words, occasionally dropped, made him suspect that mortified pride was at the bottom of this seclusion.

He had asked her one day, why she had left off going to the English chapel—if Mons. Coquerel's eloquence was the cause.

“No,” said Mrs. Templar; “but I don't choose to lay myself open to insolence. Fancy Lady Vortrose, a cousin of my own,—our grandmothers were sisters,—offering me the points of two of her fingers, as we came out of church. Ah! if Mr. Templar had lived——” and there the angry lady stopped.

No doubt, pride conjoined with disappointed ambition had made the widow a voluntary exile from her native country.

M. de Blacourt had lately begun to be alarmed that Mrs. Templar was contemplating the taking of a third husband. His principal anxiety in the



matter was on Louisa's account; the child would, indeed, be doomed to misery, should her mother marry the person styled M. le Vicomte Granson. However the marquis refrained from any advice. He had had sufficient experience of women to be aware that a warning against anything they have set their minds on, merely serves to precipitate an impending catastrophe.

By chance, or, more probably, by premeditation, Mrs. Templar had met this M. Granson in one of her rare visits to Mdme. Gastineau. Mrs. Templar was kind, in a certain way of her own, to the professor's wife. She gave her Louisa's cast-off clothes for her little girl Antoinette. On New Year's Day she put a five-franc piece in the hand of each of the two boys; and, finally, she engaged M. Gastineau to teach Louisa French. But Mrs. Templar's kindness was of the fashion of those rugged thorn-bushes which, for the scanty shelter they afford to a poor sheep, tear off in return some of his fleece. Thus Mrs. Templar often, while giving Mdme. Gastineau a comforting cup of tea, would snub the poor over-driven

domestic drudge, telling her (that which is so bitter to hear) that she had only what she deserved. Mrs. Templar had never seen good come of love-matches. Love was only another word for selfishness. If a woman really loved a poor man, it was her duty to refuse to marry him.

Mme. Gastineau was so thoroughly spiritless that she always agreed that she had been selfish, and had no right to lament herself.

To return to M. Granson. He had put in a plea for Mrs. Templar's acquaintance, on account of his love and gratitude to Scotland and the Scotch, and he had understood from his friend, the professor, that Mrs. Templar's family was Scotch. The vicomte's father had been one of the *émigrés* who accompanied the Comte d'Artois to Edinburgh. He, at that time of course a child, had grown up among the Scotch, and considered Scotland as his foster-country. Certainly education does much in forming our exterior; but in M. Granson's case it had given him the similitude of a native Scot: his accent was intensely Edinburgh.

“My first words were uttered in Scotland,” explained the vicomte, when Mrs. Templar remarked this peculiarity.

Now, the widow was very far from being one of those frank, unsuspecting souls who seem marked out from their birth to be dupes. On the contrary, she was always so much on her guard as to being taken in, that she suspected every one. But M. Granson came triumphantly out of all the traps she laid to test the truth of his assertion, that he had been well acquainted with several persons, who were, in truth, relations of her own. These persons, to be sure, had been long quiet in their graves, and Mrs. Templar forgot that dead men tell no tales—she gave her confidence to M. Granson on circumstantial evidence.

Once convinced, Mrs. Templar allowed the vicomte all the privileges of an old friend. Little by little his visits became a daily habit, and as they had so many memories in common, conversation never flagged.

There was a good deal of discussion among the different occupants of the house in the Rue de



Varennés, regarding Mrs. Templar's marriage with M. Granson. It was nobody's business—but every one made it his or her affair; some young men betted on it. A general belief reigned from basement to attic, that for some unknown wicked purpose of his own, Professor Gastineau was intriguing to bring about a union between the English widow and his sandy-haired friend. Heaven alone knows whether the professor deserved the abuse lavished on him. Félicie was one of M. Granson's most decided adversaries. Her mother-wit preserved her from running into the error of open attacks; but her hints and insinuations were poisoned arrows winged with innocent flowers. Félicie's praises invariably had the effect of always drawing attention to some incongruity or defect in the vicomte. Mrs. Templar was deaf and blind—she heard and saw nothing but what she chose. The equilibrium of her judgment was gone; she could have judged M. de Blacourt or Professor Gastineau tolerably well, but in all that concerned M. Granson, her moral sense was obscured.



The other enemy in the citadel had none of Félicie's arts. Louisa openly showed her dislike of her mother's new friend, and he, obliged to endure with complacency the manifestations of her aversion, could have willingly beaten, instead of caressed her.

His only honest partisan was Mdme. Gastineau. She, poor soul, believed that M. Granson exercised a salutary influence over her husband; therefore, she sang his praises to Mrs. Templar. She said and thought it too, that Heaven in its mercy had sent her two guardian angels—M. Granson and Marc de Lantry.

## CHAPTER III.

## FIESCHI'S CONSPIRACY.

DATING from her last journey to England, the friendship between the marquis and Mrs. Templar had diminished in cordiality. Hitherto, on any of the occasions when the English widow had required his services in the way of business or pleasure, M. de Blacourt had pushed and pushed, and behaved himself like a man of whom undue advantage is taken. Now, though he made no complaint, he felt ill-used that his assistance or escort was never asked for. Louisa still paid him visits, but the child was no longer frank and playful. She appeared to the marquis as if afraid to speak, lest she should say something she had been cautioned against saying.

One morning, it was in the last week of July, as Denis was waiting on his master at breakfast, he thus began:—

“Monsieur knows, of course, that Madame Templar is going away?”

The marquis swallowed a mouthful before he replied,—

“No; I know nothing of Mrs. Templar’s movements. Is her marriage announced?”

“It is not come to that *yet*,” said Denis. “Madame is going to Versailles.”

“Ah!” ejaculated the marquis. A French person’s “Ah” is often a very explicit reply.

“Yes, sir; madame leaves us to-day, and Mademoiselle Félicie does not accompany madame.”

“That is to say, Mdlle. Félicie does not choose to leave Paris?”

“Monsieur has guessed wrong. The poor girl would go all over the world with Mdlle. Louisa. Madame has dismissed Félicie.”

“Ah!” again remarked the marquis: he swallowed another mouthful, and then added,

“Félicie is a good servant—she will easily find another situation.”

“Oh! as to that,” said Denis, “there’s no danger; but turning her away at a minute’s notice, monsieur will allow, is an affront.”

M. de Blacourt made no observation: he had taken up a newspaper.

Presently Louisa came down in her bonnet and cloak to wish the marquis good-by. She was peculiarly prim.

“And where are we going, Louisa?” he said.

“To Versailles, and we are to stay there all this month and the next, and then the next. We are not going to Dieppe this summer. We are to have a carriage with a postilion in long boots. Babette stays here to take care of our apartment.”

“And Félicie? I hear that poor Félicie is not to go with you.” Louisa grew scarlet. “No,” she answered; “she is not elegant enough to be a lady’s-maid for mamma and me. I don’t need a nurse any more.”

“You must be very sorry to part with her?”



“Mamma says she is grown rude; but I am not to stay down here long. Good-by, Monsieur le Marquis.”

“Embrassons-nous, cher petit monstre sans cœur,” he said. Louisa put up her rosy lips, pouting in the prettiest manner possible. The marquis kissed her and said, “Now, I shall attend you upstairs to say adieu to your mamma.”

“No, you are not to go up. Mamma cannot see any one this morning. I was to say she would write and tell you when she was ready to see visitors.”

This farewell visit of Louisa's took place on the morning of the 28th of July, 1835.

Some three hours after Mrs. Templar and Louisa had driven away to Versailles, all Paris was in a state of excitement and emotion. In the palace were tears of joy mingled with retrospective terror. In the Gastineau's garret there was a widow weeping. Professor Gastineau had been killed instead of King Louis Philippe, by the explosion of Fieschi's infernal machine. M. Granson, who had been standing

by the professor's side, told the police where to carry the dead man, and then the fair-haired vicomte betook himself without delay to Versailles. The news he brought was his excuse for so speedily following Mrs. Templar to her new quarters. He had been a little dubious as to his reception, for she was subject to hot and cold fits. But the shock of his news entirely absorbed her attention.

It had not been without a misgiving nor without a struggle with herself that Mrs. Templar had changed her usual plans for the summer, and yielded to M. Granson's influence in fixing herself at Versailles. Though he had made no open professions of the interest he took in her remaining in the vicinity of Paris, he had lamented in pretty plain terms that *he* was tied to Paris or its neighbourhood, by the suit he was carrying on for the recovery of estates appropriated by the nearest of kin during his father's exile. She gave way, though under a silent protest against herself.

That is a curious state of mind which makes us resent in another the very suspicions we harbour

in our own breasts. What Mrs. Templar wanted at that moment was to have her partiality for M. Granson encouraged. Even while calling Mdme. Gastineau a fool, many a favour had she done the professor's wife, in reward for her innocent praise of the vicomte. It was the antagonism that Mrs. Templar divined in M. de Blacourt and Félicie, which induced her to withdraw from the society of the one, and to dismiss the other from her service.

The absence of the marquis and the change of maid were two great trump cards for M. Granson's game.

While he and Mrs. Templar were conversing in the salon on the tragical event of the day, Louisa was in an adjoining room with the damsel who had taken Félicie's place. Mdlle. Laure was unpacking some trunks; the little girl seated on a sofa apparently engrossed by a new doll, which she had received that morning to console her for the loss of her nurse. Louisa had not chosen to confess to the marquis the grief she felt; the child had an intuition that he blamed her mother for



parting with Félicie, and that thought sealed her heart to him.

But Louisa was not engrossed by her doll—she was watching the new maid with all the concentration of attention which children can bring to bear on an individual, while they seem to be preoccupied with a toy. Louisa marked the sneer with which Laure examined the contents of the trunks. Louisa's proud little heart swelled at the open contempt with which Laure placed her mistress's wearing apparel in the wardrobes, but Louisa was afraid to speak—for the first time in her life she was afraid of a human being. Once Laure's eyes met those of Louisa—the lady's-maid laughed.

“How ugly she is,” thought Louisa.

After Laure had finished unpacking, she let down her magnificent hair, and coolly re-arranged it with Mrs. Templar's brushes and combs. When she had finished the operation, she turned and gave Louisa a defying, threatening look, such as wild-beast tamers daunt lions and tigers with.

At first sight of Laure, Mrs. Templar had



thought the girl plain—this had given her satisfaction, for Laure had been recommended by M. Granson; he represented her as the daughter of a faithful servant of his house. On seeing her maid a second time Mrs. Templar altered her opinion. She noted her masses of deep auburn hair, her burning brown eyes, her small regular features, her well-built, slight figure. Mrs. Templar could not understand her mistaken first impression, until she had taken into account Laure's pallid, thick, freckled skin,—the sort of complexion which so often goes with red hair. A sudden sharp spasm contracted Mrs. Templar's heart, as she contemplated the young woman's face, reflected with her own in the dressing-table mirror, before which she was seated, with her maid standing behind her. At that instant the lady would have given all she possessed in the world, station, independence, child—given all for youth and beauty. "I am an idiot," she thought, "to imagine that any man can love me as I am." She returned to the drawing-room, and never had M. Granson seen

her so cold and forbidding. To Laure, who waited on them at dinner, she was, by the law of feminine pride, peculiarly condescending.

Next morning Mrs. Templar rose in the belief that she had recovered her senses. "Though M. Granson had said he should call to see if he could be of any use to her, she should not wait for his visit—she must go to see Madame Gastineau. The sooner she put an end to all nonsensical attentions, which might get her laughed at and talked about, the better. Thank God, her eyes were opened at last."

The communication at that time between Versailles and Paris was by *diligences*. Mrs. Templar, leaving Louisa in Laure's charge, took her seat in the coupé of one of the public coaches, and by noon was in Madame Gastineau's sitting-room.

For the first time the two women met as equals. Great grief gives dignity; in joy, strangers embrace in the streets; sorrow wears a crown, though it be of thorns.

Madame Gastineau did not rise from her chair

to receive her visitor. She held out her hand encouragingly as Mrs. Templar hesitated at the door; only the youngest boy was present; he had his back turned to his mother, and was killing the flies on the window by way of pastime. The room was, in reality, oppressively hot, but Mrs. Templar felt a chill as she took a chair by the side of the newly-made widow.

“I would have come to you yesterday had I known in time,” began Mrs. Templar in a subdued voice.

Madame Gastineau stared for a moment at the speaker; then recollecting herself, she said,—

“I remember now; you went away to the country.”

“We went to Versailles yesterday morning,” replied Mrs. Templar.

“It seems longer ago than that; I hope you are comfortable there, madame.”

“I was so shocked when I heard of what had happened; I am so sorry for you, Madame Gastineau.”

The professor's widow wiped her eyes quietly



with her pocket-handkerchief, a very coarse, faded coloured one; the hand that held it was as coarse and worn.

Mrs. Templar suddenly burst into a fit of tears, and cried like a child. The boy in the window left off trapping flies to look at a rich lady crying.

“The worst is,” said Madame Gastineau, hoarsely, “not to have heard his last words; that’s the worst; one likes to say good-by. If he had just said, ‘Good-by, my poor Justine.’ After so many years, and not even a good-by at last. I never expected that—how could I—it is not natural. Marc de Lantry says, a sparrow does not fall but by God’s will. I don’t understand it, not I—the father of a family—a strong man—piff, he’s dead—why should he die?”

“You must comfort yourself by thinking he was spared any suffering,” said Mrs. Templar.

“How do we know? Nobody was caring whether a poor, shabby grey-haired man was dead or not. Louis Philippe was safe; *he* ought to do something for my husband. Gastineau saved *him*,



that he did; and there he lies cold and quiet enough in the next room. O Lord! what can any king do for him now? Some people have no luck, everything goes wrong with them; it's best for them to try the next world. A pity we hadn't all made an end of it together."

She stopped and listened; there was a noise of several men's feet in the entry.

"I know what it is," added Mdme. Gastineau. "Ernest, see if M. Marc is there. I want to speak to him."

The little boy went and called Marc de Lantry.

"Dear Monsieur Marc, don't let them take him away yet."

"You promised to allow me to take all the trouble off your hands," said Marc, evasively.

"But not yet, Monsieur Marc, not yet; if he had only said good-by, that I might remember he seemed satisfied with me. I tried so hard."

"Indeed you did, dear madame, and he felt that you did; be sure of that. Now, you will trust me, to do what is right should be done."

"Oh, my God! If I could only hear his voice

once again, calling, ‘Justine, Justine;’ I wouldn’t mind what he said. I know better now, Monsieur Marc: this quiet is horrible.”

Mrs. Templar stood by wondering that such a mere lad as Marc could cope with the situation.

After the crash of that great wave of grief, Mdme. Gastineau relapsed into her former stupor. She did not seem to remark when Marc left the room.

The boy at the window began again to kill flies.

Mrs. Templar sat absorbed in thought. That something within us, which exhorts us to fulfil a duty—to help those in distress, was urging Mrs. Templar to take away Mdme. Gastineau and her children from that stifling garret, into every room of which penetrated the heart-breaking sounds which attend on death. Mrs. Templar, who had come to Paris, resolved to think no more of M. Granson but as an acquaintance, now set aside her good impulses, solely because to have Mdme. Gastineau with her would interfere with him; would probably be an annoyance to him.

Love, with all its weaknesses, inconsistencies and devotedness had mastered Mrs. Templar at the eleventh hour. What was it that had so fascinated her? The marquis was superior in everything to M. Granson, superior in station, in looks and manners, yet he had never made an impression on her heart. But then, M. de Blacourt had never shown her that sort of attention which makes a woman of Mrs. Templar's age, believe that she is still attractive, never lavished on her those flatteries which are a sort of guarantee that she can still inspire love.

When she had come to the determination not to invite Mdme. Gastineau to Versailles, Mrs. Templar felt for her purse; her wounded conscience called for some salve; she was vexed to find she had but little gold with her. Turning with some embarrassment to address Mdme. Gastineau, she perceived that the poor woman had fallen asleep. Her head was drooping heavily forward on her bosom. A sleepless night full of strong emotion had tired out nature, and overpowered grief.



Mrs. Templar was relieved. Rising with precaution, and gathering her gown together that it should not rustle, she went to the little Domitian in the window, and whispering him to take care not to wake his mother, she cautiously slipped out of the room.

The door next to that of the salon was ajar. Mrs. Templar putting her face close to the aperture, called in a whisper, "M. de Lantry." Marc opened the door wide. She could see Gustave, the eldest of the Gastineau children, seated by the side of a bed, on which, decently covered by a sheet, lay his father's corpse.

"Would you like to see him again?" asked Marc, in his tranquil voice, and with a face as calm, if not calmer than usual.

Mrs. Templar drew away with a shudder.

"I wish to say a few words to you, M. Marc. Mdme. Gastineau, poor thing, is asleep; will you take charge of this little packet for her. Are you all alone?" she added, suddenly struck by the idea, that this youth of seventeen seemed to be the only creature Mdme. Gastineau had to help her.



“ I am sorry to say, yes,” replied Marc. “ Mdme. Gastineau knows of no relations of her husband in France. The professor, you know, was from Geneva. He has a brother there; her own relations are at Metz, and,” said Marc, lowering his voice, “ the weather is so hot, it would not do to wait. I have been to the Mairie this morning.”

“ Gastineau was a Protestant, what has the Mairie to do with how he is buried,” asked Mrs. Templar.

“ Church ceremonies are a matter of choice, not necessary, here, as regards birth, death, and marriage,” replied Marc. “ I went to satisfy the civil law.”

“ A set of heathens,” muttered Mrs. Templar, “ But who is to undertake the expenses of the funeral ? ”

“ I have been to the Pompes Funèbres, and got a tariff of cost of the different classes of funerals. I only ventured to order No. 6. Here is the estimate.”

Mrs. Templar took the paper from his hand, and read,—

	Fr.	c.
Convoi de 6 <sup>e</sup> classe .....	43	0
Droit d'enterrement .....	15	50
Concession d'un terrain .....	50	50
Eglise, Messe 6 <sup>e</sup> classe .....	40	0
Chaises à l'Eglise .....	1	50
Une Couronne .....	1	25
Une Croix .....	2	0
Aux porteurs et cochers de corbillard.....	2	50
Aux fossoyeur .....	2	0
4 voitures de place .....	22	0
	<hr/>	
Total.....	180	25

Mrs. Templar glanced at the sum total, and gave back the paper, saying,—

“It makes me sick to read it. But pray who is to pay this sum, and decent mourning for the family?”

“With what you have just given me for Madame Gastineau and my watch—it is a gold one—I hope to manage,” said Marc.

“Keep your watch; I will send you enough to cover the outlay. Good morning, M. de Lantry,” and she offered him her hand. “I shall always be glad to see you, M. Marc, and I wish you every success in your career through life.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### A DOUBLE DISMISSAL.

MRS. TEMPLAR'S apartment at Versailles was in one of the streets leading into the Bois de Satory. The house was the last of a row, and detached by some fifty yards of wall from the others in the same line. With no buildings in front, the view from the windows was pleasant; but the close proximity of the forest made the situation not altogether a desirable one. This might be the reason that the rent of the rooms was in no proportion to their style. Window-curtains, bed-hangings, were of Italian silk; sofas, chairs, ottomans, were all covered with the same material. Handsome mirrors nearly hid the walls of the salon. The alcoves in the bedrooms were like little temples. As Mrs. Templar took note

of these things on the morning before she went to Paris to visit Madame Gastineau, a fear crept into her mind that she had made some mistake as to the sum mentioned by M. Granson as the rent for three months.

The landlady had sent up word at breakfast-time that she should be glad to go over the inventory with madame, and this suggested to Mrs. Templar a way of ascertaining the rent with certainty, and without any further inquiry of M. Granson. She desired Laure to go over the list with Madame Tetart, and also to have in writing the terms on which the apartment was let.

“The vicomte, ignorant that Mrs. Templar had gone to Paris, had called during madame’s absence, had assisted in going over the inventory, and had afterwards taken Mademoiselle Louisa out for a walk in the forest. M. le Vicomte would do himself the honour of calling again in the evening.”

This was Laure’s report to Mrs. Templar on that lady’s return home.



Mrs. Templar nodded; she scarcely heard what the girl was saying, her attention being engaged in reading the agreement as to the lodging. The terms were what she had been led to believe.

“ You were careful, I hope, to see that all the articles put down in the list were in good condition. If there’s anything injured or cracked, and you have not noted it, I shall have to pay for it,” said Mrs. Templar.

“ Madame can judge for herself,” answered Laure, haughtily. “ Madame can observe that I have made marks against several items; the china vases on the landing are chipped, and I have marked them so.”

“ Very well. Where is Mademoiselle Louisa ? ”

“ She is playing with her doll in the balcony of her bedroom. I will inform her that madame has returned.”

“ No, I’ll go to her myself,” said Mrs. Templar, surprised that Louisa should not have already come to meet her.”

Louisa was, in truth, seated on a little stool

in a corner of the balcony, and her doll was on her lap; but she was not playing with it. Her eyes were fixed in the direction of the forest; she looked dull, and went slowly and reluctantly to her mother.

“ Do you know what took me away from you this morning, my life?” said Mrs. Templar, sitting down and lifting the child on to her knee. “ Your poor French master, Monsieur Gastineau, was killed yesterday.”

The little girl was running her fingers up and down the buttons on her mother’s dress. She looked up, and said,—

“ I suppose Madame Gastineau and the boys are glad. He was an old tiger, you know.”

“ My dear Louisa, you must not talk in that way; little girls should never call people names.”

“ But he was a cruel man, mamma. Gustave told me his father beat poor madame; if it hadn’t been for M. Marc, she would have been *flambée*.”

“ Child, child, what word is that—what do you mean by ‘*flambée*?’ ”

“ I don’t know quite in English; but it’s like

being killed. No, I am *not* sorry for old Gastineau. I wish all naughty people to die, and then we should be happy."

"And what other naughty people does Louisa know?" asked Mrs. Templar.

Louisa changed colour—hung down her head.

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Templar, "let me hear."

Louisa burst out. "Papavoine was a wicked, a very wicked man."

"Papavoine," repeated Mrs. Templar; "why, my child, who is Papavoine?"

"He eat a little girl like me in the forest—this forest, where I was to-day. She was picking wood, and he carried her away, and eat her flesh, and drank her blood."

"And pray who told my Louisa this horrid story?"

"M. Granson did, mamma; and Laure laughed because I was frightened."

"Where were you when M. Granson told you about Papavoine?"

"In the forest."

“ And was Laure there also ? ”

“ Yes. I won't walk with those two again.”

The child's prattle gave Mrs. Templar an odd sensation of fear ; it brought back again her doubts as to the eligibility of her having come to Versailles. At this moment, Laure came into the room to say that dinner was on the table. “ Mdlle. Louisa,” said the waiting-woman, “ you must let me brush your hair. Have you told madame of our walk. Monsieur le Vicomte told mademoiselle a story, to show her that little girls must not run about in the wood alone.”

Mrs. Templar evinced no sign of dissatisfaction.

Early in the evening, M. Granson appeared, full of inquiries as to Mrs. Templar's visit to Paris. She told him pretty nearly all that had occurred.

How audaciously some people can praise you to your face !

M. Granson went off into a hymn to Mrs. Templar's virtues : her heart, it was large and it was soft ; her mind, it was strong and capa-



cious; she had genius of the heart. What a woman! what a woman!

His phrases sounded better in French than they do in English; for it was in his native language he expressed his enthusiasm. But Mrs. Templar was not in a happy mood. She could not forget the walk in the forest, to which he made no allusion.

She let him finish his rhapsody; then she said,—

“I never asked you how you came to be acquainted with a man so out of your own sphere as poor M. Gastineau.”

“Did I never tell you? I met him frequently at the *Café de la Régence*, in the *Palais Royal*. He played a first-rate game of chess, and he was made welcome by amateurs who go there to play chess. I fancy the cups of coffee his adversaries gave him was often his only meal, poor devil. He was a well-informed man; and, in short, pity, as your great poet says, makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows.”

“Shakspeare says that misery does,” corrected Mrs. Templar.

“ Ah! misery is it. All you English know Shakspeare by heart.”

He remained silent for a little, then continued, with some sharpness of voice,—

“ Upon what bad herb have you trodden to-day? ”

From the defensive he had suddenly assumed the offensive—a manœuvre that often succeeds in men’s warfare with women. M. Granson had not miscalculated his shot; the tone was that of a man not intending to be trifled with.

Mrs. Templar had been inclined to seek a quarrel with him; she was still out of sorts; yet she became suddenly afraid of yielding to her humour; her mood shifted, just as her mornings resolutions had melted away. With feminine dexterity, she put an end to the skirmish. She said,—

“ I believe I *am* cross. I am tired and grieved, and vexed about many things.”

“ Very likely; but that is no reason you should oppress me,” said the vicomte.

This answer was not what Mrs. Templar had

expected. She had done what was out of her own character in not making a sharp retort to his first uncourteous speech. She resented his present reply still more, and yet she said almost submissively,—

“ You are right, I have no right to make others suffer because I am uncomfortable.”

He said with a well-assumed enthusiasm,—

“ Pray, *do* you know how to quarrel ? ”

This was very soothing, very flattering. Unmerited praise is sometimes pleasant.

The vicomte talked much of himself that evening; explained the difficulties of his lawsuit—difficulties arising principally from his want of money to push it on energetically: were it not for a small legacy, the last of the elder branch of the Gransons would be penniless. It really seemed as though he wished Mrs. Templar to understand his position.

“ There is only one thing I cannot be robbed of,” he added, “ and that is my name. My resources may fail, and then adieu suit and estates; but, thank God, I have no debts, and a single

man can always manage to earn enough for himself. I shall never be guilty of such an imprudence as poor Gastineau's;—no, no; I will burden no wife with my poverty.”

If every-day experience did not show us how easily we are hoodwinked, once our partialities are engaged, we might wonder that Mrs. Templar, with a clear Scotch head of her own, accepted all the vicomte told her of himself without examination. The fact remains that she did so. Personal influence enters for a good deal in all our matters of belief. While M. Granson was still speaking, Laure entered the room, to tell Mrs. Templar that the landlady had come to ask if the inventory was signed.

“I think I left it on my dressing-table,” said Mrs. Templar.

The girl fetched it; and Mrs. Templar, who hated to see Laure brought in any way in contact with M. Granson, hurriedly signed the paper. Laure returned in a little while with another list.

“It is a duplicate,” she said, “which madame is to keep for her own use.”



As the vicomte was taking leave of Mrs. Templar, he said, retaining her hand in his,—

“You have been shocked at my avarice towards the Gastineaux. Dear lady, I am obliged to be miserly, to escape having, perhaps, to ask alms for myself. My motto is the good English one—‘Be just before you are generous.’ Honesty I believe to be the basis of all that is good.”

Laure was in waiting to help Mrs. Templar to undress.

“I require no assistance at night, thank you,” said Mrs. Templar.

Laure left the room with small show of respect.

“No spies,” said Mrs. Templar; and then she lost herself in conjectures, not as to the chances of the vicomte’s fortune, but as to the amount of his interest in that hateful Laure, and of the meaning of his declaration that he would burden no wife with his poverty.

She could not sleep—sometimes one subject was uppermost, sometimes the other. A woman has an extra sense as to her possible rivals; she feels the coming danger before the cloud rises

above the horizon. Sometimes Mrs. Templar wished that she had never known M. Granson; at others, she was overpowered by a dread of his absence. What a void that would make in her life. She heard hour after hour strike until the short summer night was over, and daylight was forcing its way through the violet silk curtains. Perhaps if she breathed the morning air it would cool her aching head. She opened a window, and the first dewy freshness of the morning made her shudder. She drew back hastily, and in so doing caught sight of the reflection of her own figure in one of the large mirrors.

“I could have sworn it was my mother,” was what shot through her mind. “I am a fool,” was the next thought, “to be dreaming of any man loving me.”

A faint sound from the room within hers reminded her of Louisa. She went in on tiptoe. There lay the sweet little thing, with flushed cheeks, the lips apart, the fair curls flung back on the pillow—just what we picture to ourselves child angels must be. The sight fell like balm

on the disturbed heart of poor Mrs. Templar. Louisa gave another faint moan: the mother woke her with a kiss.

Louisa started, sat up, saying quickly,—

“Yes, Mdlle. Laure.”

“It is mamma, dear,” whispered Mrs. Templar.

“You, mamma!” Here Louisa looked round the room. “I am so glad it’s only you, mamma. Is it time to get up? How I wish old Félicie was here;” and she gave a deep sigh.

Mrs. Templar turned a deaf ear to this last part of the speech, and said,—

“You must try and go to sleep again; it is not yet five o’clock.”

“Let me come into your bed, mamma—do; will you?”

“Come along, then; but you must not talk.”

As the pretty little creature, her scanty night-dress showing the perfection of her childish form, danced along before Mrs. Templar, the question of why should she trouble herself about M. Gran-son occurred to her. Had she not a rare treasure already to brighten coming years? Louisa lay



by her side, the large smiling eyes, little by little closing in sleep, the tiny dimpled hand clasping one of her fingers.

Recollections of the pleasant, quiet years she had spent in Paris, the friendliness of M. de Blacourt—a friendliness as clear as crystal—of which she could be proud, the untroubled freedom to do as she liked, crowded on her as comforts not lightly to be bartered away. But she did not come to any conclusion, for the even breathing of her child lulled her, like soft music, into a deep, dreamless sleep.

M. Granson did not call, as Mrs. Templar had expected, in the forenoon. He came in the evening. He had been in Paris all day on business; he brought her the dividends due on the money he had invested for her in the Docks Maritimes.

“You see I did not deceive you,” he said; “you have quite 8 per cent. The interest on your shares in the Forges at Hayange will not be paid before September. I hope you have all the papers I gave you in some safe place.”



Yes, she had them in her desk. It never came into her head to ask him whether she could not draw the interest for herself. No, she had had one or two qualms as to the investment of this money, which was in fact Louisa's little fortune, and she was now silenced by that honest shame which any tolerably conscientious person feels, who has suspected the good faith of a friend.

Ah! well-a-day, it all happened just as it has happened over and over again since the beginning of the world.

It was the same old story, which was told in Eden for the first time, which was told now in the gardens of Versailles. Mrs. Templar suddenly acquired a new appearance, her pale face was brightened by a tinge of colour, her years fell away from her, at the enchanter's touch her eyes grew gentle, so did her voice. She forgot to be caustic; she was always complaisant. The one dream of her life, indeed of most women's lives, was realized. She had the companionship of one devoted to her, as she to him. M. Granson

talked of their lives as one, and speaking of the future they both used the pronoun *we*.

Occasionally of a night Mrs. Templar would remember that she had scarcely taken notice of Louisa since the breakfast hour. Louisa had been sent to a day-school. At first Mrs. Templar used herself to take Louisa there and to fetch her back of an afternoon. Latterly it had been arranged that the school-mistress should leave her little pupil at home on the return of the school from their afternoon walk. Mrs. Templar was so engrossed by her own concerns that she never observed Louisa's loss of colour, or the dull heavy look with which she sat by herself of an evening learning her lessons for the next day—did not observe her petulant avoidance of any sort of intercourse with M. Granson—did not perceive the child's complete silence with regard to Laure. This was the state of matters at the end of August. Mdlle. Laure received her month's wages, and nothing was said as to her going away, so it is to be supposed Mrs. Templar had become reconciled to her services.

On that same day Mrs. Templar found it necessary to pay a visit to her banker in Paris, and she took Louisa with her. They went first to the Rue de Varennes. Babette uttered a violent exclamation when she saw the little girl.

“Mdlle. Louisa then has been ill?”

“Ill!” repeated Mrs. Templar; “mademoiselle has been perfectly well ever since she went to Versailles.”

Babette shrugged her shoulders, and remarked that she supposed mademoiselle was growing too fast.

Mrs. Templar made no reply to this conjecture, but entered on the subject of household matters; her eye, however, often wandering to Louisa, who, as is the habit of children in general after an absence from home, was taking a review of all the well-known objects in the room. In doing this, she lost that pale, spiritless look which had so forcibly struck the cook.

“Really, my good Babette,” said Mrs. Templar, interrupting her discourse on the re-tinning

of casseroles, "I can perceive no such great change in Mdlle. Louisa."

"I made a mistake, I suppose," said Babette, drily, and returned to the subject of her pots and pans.

Having finished her business with Babette, Mrs. Templar and Louisa went up to the *cinquième* to see Madame Gastineau. The widow interrupted her thanks for the aid sent through Marc de Lantry, to inquire if Louisa had been ailing.

"Not the least in the world," said Mrs. Templar, provoked.

"Then, dear lady, the climate of Versailles does not agree with the child. Poor Gastineau never could bear Versailles; he declared it had a bad smell. What were his words—ah! that it had a bad odour of aristocracy about it. Yes, Gastineau was a man with a head. We are all tail and no head now."

"You have not told me your plans," said Mrs. Templar, anxious to put a stop to sad reminiscences.



Madame Gastineau replied that she was about to return to her native place with her girl and youngest boy, and that she hoped to eke out the small allowance made her by her husband's half-brother by clear-starching, an employment to which she had served her apprenticeship before her marriage. Gustave, her eldest son, was to go to the same relation at Geneva, who intended to place him with a bookseller.

“And you?” asked Mrs. Templar, turning to Marc de Lantry, who had not yet left the Gastineaux.

“Oh! I have already found another home, thank you, in the family of the Rev. Adolphe Rameau.”

“Are you going to be a French pastor?”

“I hope so; but the examinations are severe, and I doubt if I am clever enough to get through them.”

“It will be a pity if you do not,” said Mrs. Templar, “for I am sure you would practise what you preach. I shall always be glad to see you, M. de Lantry.”

“You are very kind,” he returned, and stooping down to kiss Louisa, he added, “You will not forget me, little friend?”

“You shall always be my dear M. Marc,” said Louisa, firmly.

“She looks delicate, I think,” said Marc to Mrs. Templar, as he made his parting bow.

“Come here, Louisa,” said Mrs. Templar, when they were again in their own apartment, and she sat down close to a window, so as to let the light fall full on the child’s face. “Don’t you like school, my pet?”

“They are not cross to me, mamma.”

“But you would rather not go there?” questioned Mrs. Templar.

“I should like best to be at home with you, if I could be alone with you.”

“Is Laure good to you, Louisa?”

“I can’t bear Laure,” said Louisa violently.

“Why?” and Mrs. Templar’s voice was unconsciously to herself severe.

“Oh! mamma, don’t be cross; you never used

to be cross to Louisa." And the little face puckered up with the effort not to cry.

"I am *not* cross," said Mrs. Templar, at the same time speaking as crossly as possible, for there is no surer way to make anybody cross than to beg them not to be so; but Louisa could not know this, so she went on,—

"Yes, mamma, you *are* cross, you are always cross now. Even if I only just peep into the room where you are with that nasty Granson. I won't call him Monsieur le Vicomte any more; he is not a gentleman, or he wouldn't sit drinking beer with Laure and Mr. and Mrs. Tétart."

"What are you talking of, Louisa? are you crazy?"

"One of our great girls, Susan Beatson, told me, mamma. She knows Laure, because she sees her every morning when she takes me to school, and she saw Laure and Granson and those Tétarts sitting all together in a garden, and laughing. Susan Beatson was with her papa and mamma; and I have seen Laure talking out of the dining-room window to Granson

when I have been coming, and the girls saw them too."

The girls! Susan Beatson! then all that little school-girl world were talking about her waiting-maid and the man she was engaged to marry in a couple of months. The blood rushed to Mrs. Templar's head; her flesh shrank as it would have done under the surgeon's knife. She exclaimed,—

"You are a naughty, bad, ungrateful child! Get out of my sight."

Louisa uttered a sharp cry and retorted,—

"You are a wicked mamma to care more for that ugly man than for your little Louisa. I hate him, I do. I won't have him for my papa."

Babette here appeared, only to be ordered out of the room. Mrs. Templar was at fault, she did not know what to do, what to say. Good Heavens! how the child went on sobbing.

Babette re-entered the room resolutely.

"Mademoiselle will hurt herself. Allons donc, mademoiselle."



“Oh! Babette, Babette,” said the child, clasping Babette round the neck. “I am so unhappy,” and she put her hot wet cheek against the cook’s.

“It is infamous,” muttered Babette, between the cooing and coaxing noises she was making to soothe Louisa.

The servant was also up in arms against her, that Mrs. Templar saw very well. She would show them all—child, school-mistress, school-girls, servants, all the world—that she was not going to be domineered over; she would do as she liked.

This was reckoning without taking circumstances into account. You can certainly do what you like with what you possess; but circumstances, what with them? Hedges, stiles, gates, mountains, rivers, you can get the better of somehow; but circumstances, no. Louisa cried herself sick, and had to be laid on a bed. Mrs. Templar could not leave her until she was quieted, and there was yet the visit to the banker to be paid. By the time that was over, and Louisa had awakened from her sleep, it was necessary to

have something to eat, in short to dine. No possibility, therefore, of arriving at Versailles before the evening.

It was by the last diligence that Mrs. Templar and Louisa left Paris; it was getting dusk when they stepped out of it in the Place d'Armes at Versailles; it was quite dusk when they reached their own street. As they did so, Mrs. Templar felt Louisa pull her hand violently,—

“Listen, mamma.”

They were passing along the wall that adjoined their house. Laure's voice and M. Granson's were quite audible; they were laughing.

“Prudence; we must separate. The old lady will be here directly. So you counted them? she has a dozen hairs she can call her own?”

Mrs. Templar, dragging Louisa, went forward swift as an Atalanta.

“Good-night, M. le Vicomte,” she said, and brushed past him.

M. Granson gave a low whistle, and retreated some few steps to await the last incident of his courtship of the English lady. It was not long

in coming. In five minutes more, Laure put her head again out of the window.

“She says I must go away directly—am I to obey?”

“Yes; but not without your wages; she owes you a month, if she sends you away without warning.”

## CHAPTER V.

## THE GLASS OF WATER.

“MIDDLE. LAURE, leave this house directly!” was what Mrs. Templar said to her lady’s-maid at the door of the dining-room; the words were spoken with measured coldness.

Laure had it on her lips to ask, “Why she should go?” but as she raised her head to face Mrs. Templar, she refrained. The French girl affirmed afterwards that she positively saw a spark of fire emitted by that lady’s eyes.

“She is not a woman, she is a witch,” said Middle. Laure. “I scarcely dared to think when she was near me, she always guessed my thoughts.”



Instead, therefore, of pretending surprise, Laure tacitly confessed the justice of her sentence, by saying,

“I cannot be ready to go under an hour, and I must have a porter.”

“M. Granson can assist you,” returned Mrs. Templar, quietly.

“That’s true,” returned Laure, flippantly, and it was then that she inquired, through the window, of the vicomte, whether she was to obey the orders she had received.

During that short colloquy, Mrs. Templar and Louisa went upstairs to the drawing-room. Laure reappeared in about an hour with her shawl on.

“Well! why are you not gone?” said Mrs. Templar.

“My wages,” returned Laure, “and then I shall be glad to be out of your service. Mon Dieu! do you fancy it such a pleasure to live with people who look after every bottle of wine and lump of sugar? What a droll idea!”

“Your wages!” said Mrs. Templar, still with that self-control which held Mdlle. Laure in check

as the curb does a vicious horse. "I paid you your wages this morning. Ah, by the by, I must pay you for to-day," and she laid down some small money.

"Ridiculous," laughed Laure; "you must pay me for a month, or keep me—which you choose."

"Go!" said Mrs. Templar, with a burst of voice and a flash of the eye, that proved to Laure madame's self-control was evaporating.

"Not until you have paid me," said Mdlle. Laure, resolutely.

"Go, and at once; if your claim is just, you shall be paid to-morrow."

"Once out of the house, how do I know you will pay?" asked Laure, insolently.

Mrs. Templar rang the bell. The landlady's servant answered it.

"Beg M. Tétart to speak to me directly," said Mrs. Templar.

M. Tétart came.

"Sir, I discharge this young woman from my service; her wages are paid up to this evening; she claims a month's wages; is that a just claim?"

“It depends on the agreement made.”

“There was no warning stipulated on either side.”

“Then she has a right to wages for a week.”

Mrs. Templar drew out her purse, made the calculation, and laid the sum on the table.

“And for my board?” said Laure, after pocketing the money.

“Is that just?” said Mrs. Templar, referring again to the landlord.

“Yes, madame.”

Mrs. Templar immediately paid the extra demand; then she said,—

“You, M. Tétart, and your servant are witnesses that that young woman has no further claim on me. Mademoiselle, leave this room and my apartment, at once.”

“Not yet,” said Laure; “madame must give me a certificate as to my character.”

“You are right,” said Mrs. Templar.

She sat down to her writing-desk and wrote a few lines, and signed them with her name at full length.

“ I don't understand English,” said Laure, looking over the paper.

“ M. Granson can translate for you. I am unable to write French. You have your wages and your certificate—go.”

M. Tétart gave Laure an admonitory look to which she thought it wisest to attend.

“ Under no pretext,” continued Mrs. Templar, to the landlord and his *bonne*, as Laure was moving away—“ under no pretext will you admit that young woman, or the person calling himself Vicomte Granson, to my apartment.”

The door had scarcely closed on Laure and the landlord, when Louisa skipped into the middle of the room, and began dancing about like a wild thing, exclaiming,—

“ Now we are going to be happy again ! happy, happy ! ”

“ Hush, Louisa ! ”

The little girl stopped her whirling, and was for a minute transfixed by the sight of her mother's face ; child as she was, she could read the suffering printed on it. On tiptoe, treading



lightly as she would have done in a sick-room, Louisa went to her mother's side.

“What's the matter, mamma? Are you not glad?”

“No,” said Mrs. Templar.

There was a long silence; Louisa, with her hands crossed behind her back, stood watching her mother; at last she said,—

“Mamma, I don't like to see you sit and look like that. What are you staring at, mamma?”

“A great red cloud on a black sky, Louisa.” Poor woman, the blood had all gone to her head. “I'm cold, child; ring the bell; I must have a fire.”

It was a sultry August evening.

“Madame is agitated,” said M. Tétart's *bonne*, when told to kindle a fire; “madame would do well to take some eau-de-Carmes; it is excellent for the nerves.”

“I want a fire,” said Mrs. Templar, impatiently.

“Well, well, madame shall have one. She is to be pitied,” muttered the woman to herself, as

she left the room; "but what a fool to be thinking of lovers at her age."

The maid was thirty, and considered that a woman of forty ought to have done with the vanities of the world. Mrs. Templar was paying the full penalty of her folly; heart, soul, and body were all very sick. She cowered over the fire, thinking and shuddering at her thoughts. For the first time in her life, she had been expansive, confiding, affectionate; recollection after recollection came crashing down upon her of words she had spoken, of trust reposed, of moments of tenderness. She forgot Louisa's presence, she wrung her hands, crying aloud,—

"Idiot that I have been! What could have possessed me? as if any man born was ever true! all alike; nothing but self-interest binds them. Oh! if I could only revenge myself."

She raised her hand, as if invoking heaven to register some vow.

"Mamma"—and Louisa touched her mother's arm—"what makes you so sorry?"

“Go and play with your doll, and don’t ask silly questions,” said Mrs. Templar, fiercely.

Louisa was half-frightened and obeyed. In three minutes she was again in the salon.

“Mamma, come and see what that bad Laure did before she went away.”

Mrs. Templar followed the child.

“Look, mamma,” and Louisa pointed to her pet doll, with its delicate wax head and shoulders immersed in a ewer full of water.

There was something so terrible in the fury expressed by Mrs. Templar’s face, that Louisa exclaimed in a tone of terror, “Never mind, mamma, I don’t, much,” and the little creature caressed her mother’s hand. Neither the assurance nor the caress had any effect on Mrs. Templar’s outburst of passion. Louisa stood trembling before her, then remembering that she had once seen Félicie give her mistress water on some occasion of agitation, she ran now and brought a glass of water. Heaven knows what strange impulse of rage prompted Mrs. Templar, but certain it is, that seizing the tumbler, she

threw all its contents into Louisa's face. Louisa was too frightened to speak or to cry. She fell on her knees breathless, poor little soul, kissing her mother's hands with almost the gestures of a beaten spaniel caressing the hand that had chastised it. At that moment was sown a germ of fear of her mother, which spread its influence all over the girl's life.

Mrs. Templar's passion had been sobered by her own act,—she was something more than sobered; she felt the shame which punishes every one who gives a free course to the insanity of fury. She looked down on her little child crawling at her feet in an extremity of terror and grief, and had a momentary desire to catch her to her bosom, to humble herself before her victim. The next instant she said: “Don't be a goose, Louisa, worrying me, when I have already so much to vex me. That's not the way good children try to comfort their mammas.”

Louisa rose to her feet, her mind bewildered. There was her mother, looking much as usual, speaking much as usual; while her own poor



baby-breast still heaved painfully; her lips still quivered. Children have a keen sense of injustice, and something that would have been indignation in an older person mingled with the little girl's sense of relief—this feeling kept her silent.

“When you are good, and have got rid of your fit of sulks, you can come to me in the salon,” said Mrs. Templar; and left Louisa.

The child remained, perhaps for five minutes on the spot where her mother had left her. Then she went to the window, and leant her head wearily against a pane of glass. By and by Mrs. Templar came to the door and called to her—Louisa obeyed the summons. Mrs. Templar asked, “Are you good?” Louisa answered, “I am trying to be, mamma, but I can't yet;” and she began to cry again.

“It is time for you to go to bed,” said the mother.

“I can put myself to bed, mamma.”

“Very well, I shall come in a few minutes and take away your candle.”

Louisa, who had hitherto been dressed and

undressed like a doll, did her very best to fold her clothes as neatly as Mrs. Templar had required of Félicie and Laure. Then she stood waiting to see if her mother would come to hear her say her prayers, as was her custom. The child waited a good ten minutes, then she took courage and went back to the saloon.

Mrs. Templar had her desk open before her—she was leaning her head on her hand; her cap was pushed back, and her face looked sad and withered.

“What do you want?” she said, impatiently.

“I have come to say my prayers, mamma.”

The pretty little creature knelt at her mother’s knee and said her simple prayers. “I am good now, mamma,” and she put up her sweet mouth to kiss, and be kissed.

A score of years afterwards, Louisa said to an old friend: “I remember as if it were only yesterday, all that happened that evening; even to the indignation that half choked me as I stood at the window, watching the darkening sky, and the trees growing blacker and blacker. I recollect

so well putting my finger on the window just opposite to a little star that seemed perched on the top of a tall fir-tree. I was dreadfully sorry for myself; I have never forgotten the sensation I had when my mother kissed me that night; her lips felt as hard as stones against my cheek, they never recovered their softness for me, never; lucky as it was for her, mamma even now resents the share I had in opening her eyes to that man's deceit."

Mrs. Templar was naturally anxious to leave Versailles. The day after the double dismissal of M. Granson and Laure, she informed Madame Tétart of her intention to return at once to Paris; the landlady was at liberty to re-let her apartment immediately, though the rent for the whole three months had been paid.

Madame Tétart was all complaisance—might she assist madame in her packing? Mrs. Templar accepted the proffered aid. When the trunks were filled and locked, the landlady said, "that as madame wished to leave early the following

morning, it might be as well to go over the inventory without delay."

Mrs. Templar answered, that whatever might have been broken in the kitchen by her servant, she was ready to pay for ; she had no strength for counting crockery. Madame Tétart was infinitely obliged to madame, but to satisfy M. Tétart, who was very particular, it would be necessary to examine the furniture of the apartment, which madame was aware was both costly and new, when the gentleman had taken the rooms for madame.

"There can be no occasion for any examination," said Mrs. Templar ; "the loose covers have never been removed from any of the chairs or sofas."

"True," said the landlady ; "however, it was a formality M. Tétart always insisted should be complied with. Had madame her duplicate of the inventory at hand?"

"My desk is already packed," said Mrs. Templar ; "I never thought of the inventory."

In a twinkling the landlady produced her list,



and in five minutes the chairs and sofas were stripped of their covers, the blinds drawn up, and the furniture pushed into the blaze of an afternoon sun.

As Madame Tétart scrutinized article after article, she uttered sound after sound, expressive of annoyance and sorrow, to which Mrs. Templar paid no attention; she guessed that more trouble was in store for her: at last Madame Tétart shoved a chair towards her tenant, and said, "Have the goodness, madame, to look at those spots yourself."

There were in fact several whitish stains on the violet silk.

"I see them," said Mrs. Templar, "but Laure pointed them out to you and made a note regarding them on the inventory."

"I find no memorandum of the kind here," said the landlady.

"I will get my own list," said Mrs. Templar.

It was tiresome enough to have to open an over-filled trunk, and dive to the bottom of it for a desk, but Mrs. Templar felt more than repaid,

when she could triumphantly show Madame Tétart the note as to the stains on the violet silk of the saloon chairs, and other observations also as to cracks and flaws of vases and scratches on tables.

The landlady smiled: "That list is worth nothing, madame, it has no stamp on it. Your paper, madame, has not this," and she tapped the Government stamp at the head of her own inventory.

Mrs. Templar was silent for a minute, trying to recall the French equivalent for "You are a set of downright cheats." She could not manage anything better than, "You are a thief!"

"Take care, madame, what you say. I shall not let you escape so easily as Mdlle. Laure did. I shall go to the juge de paix."

"Go to whom you please; stamped or unstamped, my list will prove that your demands are unjust."

"That is madame's last word?"

"Certainly; if you choose to abide by my list

I will go over it with you, and pay you for any damage not noticed there. At all events, I mean to return to Paris to-morrow."

"Madame will find out her mistake," and Madame Tétart bounced out of the room.

To say the truth, Mrs. Templar had made a show of courage she was far from possessing; but as hour after hour passed, and she remained unmolested, she began to believe that she had won a victory.

After dinner, which was served by the Tétarts' servant without any incivility, Mrs. Templar said to Louisa that they would go as far as the Place d'Armes, and secure places in the coupé of the diligence which left in the forenoon for Paris, and, at the same time, order a porter to come for their luggage.

As the mother and daughter, on their return, reached the blind wall already mentioned, they heard shouts of laughter, proceeding evidently from the Tétarts' garden. Louisa clutched her mother's hand, trembling violently.

"What frightens you?" asked Mrs. Templar.

“It’s that nasty man and Laure, mamma; don’t let us go in.”

Mrs. Templar walked on and rang the bell. The gate was opened by the Tetarts’ servant. Mrs. Templar had a full sight of Laure and M. Granson sitting with the landlord and landlady at a table in the summer-house—a glass full of beer before each. They all stared at Mrs. Templar; she glanced at them as she would have done at a group of strangers, and walked at her usual slow pace up the paved alley leading to the house door.

Some remains of decency kept those four persons silent until she had entered the house; but all through the evening, up to as late as eleven o’clock, she heard bursts of laughter from below, which she understood as they were meant to be understood, as insults to herself. Once Louisa, who had crept to a window, ventured to say,—

“Mamma, they are talking about you. I hear your name.”

Mrs. Templar said, “Don’t you know that it is



unlike a lady to listen at windows or doors, to what people are saying? Never let me find you doing anything of the kind again."

Mrs. Templar had a book open before her; she did not turn many of the pages. After a while she looked up, involuntarily attracted by Louisa's fixed gaze.

"Why do you stare at me so, Louisa?"

"Mamma, will Félicie come back to us now?"

"I don't know; perhaps."

"Mamma, I wish M. de Blacourt would come here—then we needn't be afraid of anybody. I know that bad man," with a movement of her head in the direction of the garden, "was afraid of my bon ami."

"You are not to speak half English, half French," said Mrs. Templar sharply. "Do the one or the other—do you hear me?"

"Yes, mamma."

Mrs. Templar again looked down at her book; not so intently, however, but that she perceived that Louisa was muttering to herself.

"What are you doing child?"

“Mamma, what is *bon ami* in English?”

“Good friend; you know that as well as I do.”

“*Bon ami* means” — persisted Louisa — then suddenly stopped.

“Means what?” asked Mrs. Templar.

“Oh! mamma, every one called M. Granson your *bon ami*, only Félicie said it was not true. Mamma, why are you so cross to me, because *that* man is naughty?”

Mrs. Templar seized the opportunity Louisa had offered by her sudden change of subject to escape the further explanation of the meaning of *bon ami*. Feigning more anger than she felt, she said,—

“How dare you call your mother cross? Come here to me, Louisa, and say your commandments.”

When the little thing had stumbled through the first four, Mrs. Templar held up a warning finger.

“Now pay attention to what you are going to say.”

Louisa, with a little prompting, repeated the fifth commandment—“Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

Mrs. Templar repeated the words over, and then asked,—

“What does that mean, Louisa?”

“To be good, mamma,” said Louisa, at a guess.

“Of course, if you obey the commandments you will be good; but remember this, Louisa: the fifth commandment is the only one in which God has promised to give a reward for its being obeyed—you are to honour your mother—always to obey her—never to do what she does not wish. Do you understand?”

“Yes, mamma; but what is God to give me?”

“He is to make you live long. There, don’t ask any more questions.”

Louisa was left with a strong belief that if she did not do everything her mother liked, God would kill her. To the fear of her mother, to which the violence of the day before had given birth, was now added a superstitious terror; a double influence which reason would never have power quite to shake off. It is never easy to get clear of false impressions received in childhood, and the lesson now inculcated sank the

deeper, that the giver of it was thoroughly in earnest.

There were no signs of hostility next morning when Mrs. Templar, on her way to the dining-room, met Madame Tétart in the passage. At nine o'clock the porter, with his truck for the luggage, punctually arrived. No one interfered with his bringing the trunks downstairs. Then M. and Madame Tétart appeared on the scene, and desired the man to wait.

“Your trunks shall not leave the house, madame, till you have settled my charge for damage done to the furniture.”

“I will pay for articles broken or said to have been broken in the kitchen, but for nothing else. I would rather go to prison than that you should benefit by such barefaced imposition.”

But M. and Madame Tétart were obstinate—they would be contented with nothing less than all. If Mrs. Templar would not pay, she must go before the juge de paix. Thereupon the porter drew Mrs. Templar aside and said,—

“You may be right or wrong—I don't know—



but you cannot manage these people. Madame must send for some friend to help her.”

Mrs. Templar took the advice, and wrote a few lines to M. de Blacourt, begging him to come to her at once. The friendly porter went off to Paris in the diligence that was to have conveyed Mrs. Templar and Louisa. Before three o'clock M. de Blacourt was at the house on the edge of the Bois de Satory. After the first hurried greetings were over, he exclaimed, as his eye glanced over the salon,—

“How in the name of common sense did you come to hire these apartments?”

Mrs. Templar, not choosing to confess that it was M. Granson who had engaged them for her, said,—

“Why shouldn't I?”

The marquis shrugged his shoulders. “Only an Englishwoman, after seeing the woman below, and the arrangements above, could ask, Why not? However, let us lose no time in getting you out of this place; your messenger told me that your landlord detains your luggage.”

As M. de Blacourt spoke, he lifted Louisa on to his knee and whispered in her ear, "Little traitress, I see you have already forgotten your 'bon ami?'"

He felt Louisa quiver in his grasp, even while she pressed herself close to his bosom; but he had to attend to Mrs. Templar's explanation, confused enough in those parts where Mdlle. Laure figured.

"You have fallen among thieves, madame; we will see what the Versailles juge de paix has to say to the case."

M. Tétart at this moment knocked at the door, and begged to say a few words to monsieur le marquis. The porter, who was still waiting for the trunks, had taken care to mention the rank of the gentleman he had brought to Mrs. Templar's rescue. M. Tétart was very voluble in his explanation, accusations, and excuses. Madame Tétart had very quick feelings. Mrs. Templar had wounded her sensibility, by declaring that all the beautiful furniture of the house was mere trash; in short, it was an affair that might easily be settled between reasonable people. Monsieur le Marquis agreed in this opinion, and no doubt an

interview with the juge de paix would prove this. M. Tétart hesitated. The marquis added, "You have grossly misbehaved to this English lady, and I cannot allow her to agree to any compromise. We will meet you at the juge de paix's office, monsieur." Forthwith M. de Blacourt walked thither with Mrs. Templar, Louisa clinging fast to his hand. M. and Madame Tétart were already there.

On the arrival of Mrs. Templar and the marquis, the magistrate laid aside the newspaper he was reading. The judge was an elderly man, with a physiognomy which reminded you of a portrait by Rembrandt. He wore one of those small black silk caps so often seen in Dutch pictures. He listened in unbroken silence to M. and Madame Tétart's story. When that was at length concluded, he turned courteously towards Mrs. Templar. In very bad French, so far as grammar was concerned, but with surprising conciseness, she told the circumstances relating to the inventory, producing the one Laure had given her.



“M. Tétart,” said the juge, “you have no claims on this lady beyond what she is willing to allow; my idea is, that she has been the victim of a plot; the case is dismissed. Madame, you are at liberty to leave those persons’ house, with all your luggage, when you please.”

M. and Madame Tétart went away blustering that they would seek redress elsewhere.

The juge said a few words apart to the marquis.

“Advise the lady,” he said, “to have nothing to do with that fellow calling himself Vicomte Granson; the police are beginning to look after him.”

It was not easy to give the warning. Mrs. Templar, in spite of the service she had asked and obtained from M. de Blacourt, was not at her ease with him; indeed, her manner was stiff, almost to repulsiveness. He observed, during the drive to Paris, for he took charge of her and Louisa thither, that she looked askance at every demonstration of fondness he received from the little girl. He was a man of all sorts of experiences; he said to himself, “She is angry with me for



having been right where she was wrong about that Granson. Well, he who wrote, that women could be generous, but never just, wrote what was worthy of Solomon." The marquis did not acknowledge to himself that he was as curious as any son of Eve to know what had passed at Versailles. He was too conscientious to catechize Louisa, with whom he had now but rare tête-à-têtes. The child had been evidently cautioned not to speak of M. Granson, or that certain Mdlle. Laure; the only unguarded word she let slip was, that her mamma had desired her not to call any one, not even M. de Blaccourt, "bon ami."

"But I love you just as much as if I did call you so," said the little maid, throwing her arms round his neck, keeping her head on his neck, to the destruction of his immaculate collar.

Within a month of their return to Paris, Mrs. Templar and Louisa went away from the Rue de Varennes. Great was the exultation of the marquis's cousin, the widow De Villemont, at this event. She believed she had now fairly got rid

of her son's great enemies and rivals when she heard that the furniture had been sold, and that the apartment was to let.

Mrs. Templar vouchsafed no explanations of why she went, or where she was going. She begged M. de Blacourt to take charge of any letters that might come for her. When she was again settled, she would let him know her address; but she begged it might be communicated to no one.

The marquis accompanied the mother and child to the Messageries Royales; as they had taken places for Calais, he naturally supposed they were going to England.

It was with something approaching to horror that M. de Blacourt watched Louisa. She literally appeared glad to go away. Madame Gastineau and her young Domitian were in tears; Denis and Marie sobbing, the concierge and his wife snivelling; who had ever before seen a French porter and his helpmate show signs of a common humanity? The marquis himself had a choking sensation in his throat, and the object of all

this tenderness and grief, looked and moved gay as a linnet—even Mrs. Templar's manner evinced more feeling.

Arrived at the coach-office, when Louisa saw the great diligence which was to take her away, all the colour left her cheeks, her lips began to tremble, her large eyes lost their brightness. The marquis almost thanked God aloud, for this softening of the child.

“I will always love you, my good M. de Blacourt,” she said.

He could not answer her, but he held her in a close, fatherly embrace.

“Nature meant me to be a good father of a family,” quoth he to himself, more than once that day. “Destiny, or my unfortunate character decided otherwise.”

At the end of six weeks, Mrs. Templar wrote to M. de Blacourt, giving *poste restante*, Frankfort, as her address. At Christmas, he sent Louisa some of the little pictures which French children call “*des noëls*”—pictures of the stable at Bethlehem, and the Child in the manger, with Joseph

and Mary, and a bull and an ass—all in high relief.

In return he received the following letter from Louisa, which is given verbatim—faults and all:—

“ MON CHER M. DE BLACOURT,—

“ JE viens vous dire mon remerciement pour toutes les bonté et l’amour que vous avez pour votre petite Louisa et eaussi mille fois merci pour la jolie petite lettre et les trois belles images de vous. Non, non, mon bien cher monsieur, Louisa n’oublier pas jâmais son cher ami de Paris, le contrair, elle pense toujours à vous et à Denis, à Marie à Félicie.

“ Pauvre Minette\* je suis triste qu’elle est morte mais j’espère que Denis aura achteé un autre petite chatte qu’il lui fera bien du plaisir. Mais je suis très contente que mes chers amis de Paris avoir une bonne santé, et moi eaussi à Dieu merci. J’étais malade quelques jours. Je ne pourrais pas aller à l’école que j’aime beaucoup. J’espère que vous serez content de votre Louisa à notre revoir.

\* The marquis’s cat.



Si on apprend avec beaucoup de plaisir on grandi  
eaussi beaucoup. Voilà, mon cher ami la petite  
Louisa est plus grande que l'été passé. Nous  
avons passé noel bien. Christkindlie apportait  
bien de belles choses à Louisa. Je suis très  
contente avec la chere Christkindlie. A le bon  
Dieu, mon cher M. de Blacourt. 1000 baisers  
pour mon cher ami à Paris. Votre recon-  
naissance enfant,

“ LOUISA.”

M. de Blacourt laughed as he read this epistle  
to Denis, but his eyes moistened nevertheless.  
He carried it for many a day in his pocket-book,  
long after Madame de Villemont believed he was  
forgetting Louisa.

She was awakened from this belief one day  
when by some chance they were walking in the  
Champs Elysées together, and she drew his atten-  
tion to a handsome girl of nine years in front  
of them.

“ What a perfect figure,” she exclaimed.

“ Pretty well,” he said; “ but her legs, they are

not to be compared with Louisa's: how perfect they were; her mother always had the nicest fitting boots for her, and not a wrinkle in her stockings."

"Really your affection for that child is something more than paternal," said the provoked Madame de Villemont.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BUTTERFLY AND THE MOUSE.

“ WELL, and what is your opinion of Lord Nelvil? isn't he delightful? don't you admire him? don't you adore him?” This was what a dark-eyed beauty—a woman in miniature—said to a girl of fifteen, who sate by her side with “Corinne” lying open on her lap.

The room they were in was on an upper story, with one large window which opened into an outside gallery with a fantastic roof of shingle, the front and the two ends protected by a carved balustrade with a broad ledge, on which were ranged pots of scarlet geraniums, with here and there a bright-hued cactus or fuchsia. This gallery was also used as a sitting-room, for in it there was a sofa and chairs and a table. The family

indeed often took tea there on fine summer evenings, to enjoy the magnificent view—a view bounded only by the Alps of the Mount Blanc. In the middle distance were the Salèves, closer still a fertile plain and the village of Chully, whence the Neckar family came.

It was on a brilliant afternoon of May that the two girls were seated before the open window: it was one of those moments when the perfume of the air, the songs of birds, the wonderful beauty of the shifting lights and shades, make human beings thrill with the ecstasy of existence.

To the question of Lord Nelvil's ardent admirer, the younger girl replied,—

“I care more for Corinne. Poor Corinne, why didn't she tell him out and out her story in time? then they would both have seen that they must not think of marrying one another, and they might have been good friends all their lives.”

“Friends!” repeated the elder. “Child, child, friendship won't console a woman for the loss of a man's love.”

“But when she knew his father was against



Lord Nelvil's ever marrying her, she oughtn't to have wished him to disobey his father."

"You talk like a baby—like the child you are. When you come to feel. . . . Oh! Louisa, then you'll understand that neither sense nor duty can help you in such a plight. Don't you hear people saying how thin I am grown? how changed I am? don't you see it yourself? I have had no illness, and yet I have felt myself at death's door."

"Poor Claire!" and Louisa kissed the plaintive speaker.

"Ah, yes! you may well say, poor Claire; many and many are the nights, child, I have passed lying on the floor, weeping."

Louisa was silent for an instant, then she said,

"Why?"

"Why? Because I was as unhappy as Corinne."

"Really, Claire; quite really?"

"Of course, really," replied Claire. "My dear girl, take me as a warning; never give away your heart, till you are sure the man you wish to give it to, can accept it."

“Indeed, I never will,” said Louisa, gravely.

Claire burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

“You little simpleton; do you think you will be able to help yourself? your heart goes without your knowing when or how. It’s exactly when you are feeling all over happier than usual, that your misery is preparing. Mind *that*, Louisa—but you are such an infant, you can’t understand what I mean. It’s dreadful to have to shut up all one’s feelings—never, never to speak the one name—never to mention the subject that’s nearest and dearest to your heart.”

“But indeed I do understand Corinne’s story; do tell me yours, if it will comfort you.”

“Didn’t you tell me the other day that Corinne was tiresome?”

“Yes, but only the learned parts.”

Claire went on,—

“Heaven knows there was not much learning between Amedée and me. We danced together; we sang duets; I never went to Geneva, but I met him—of course, I guessed that could not be mere chance. At church, there he was; and

once I had three blessed days; we went round the lake in the same steamer. Ah! Louisa, to go to bed with the certainty of seeing one particular face the next morning, *that* is a happiness: to be sheltered by the same roof, breathe the same air—those days, those days have ruined the peace of my whole life. We climbed the rocks of Meillerie; we visited Clarens. You are not old enough to know why those places have such an effect. Never, never shall I see such colours again on earth; never hear such heavenly harmonies issue from groves so green; never see so bright a sun.”

“Poor Claire!” said Louisa, again resorting to the only proof of sympathy she knew of—that of kissing her friend Claire’s burning cheeks, now wet with tears.

“And to think,” she continued, “that he should have the courage to tell me, in answer to a letter I sent him, that he would not take advantage of my innocence, to entrap me into a correspondence; that he had too great an *esteem* for me to do so. Esteem indeed (as if I cared for his *esteem*); and

that I might always depend on him as a sincere friend."

Louisa was perplexed. After a little thought she said,—

"You see that he does care for you."

"Louisa, you are a greater idiot than I took you for. Love is love, and can't be satisfied with anything less than love. What's the use of your reading? Could you fancy Corinne marrying Prince Castel-Forte, or any one but Nelvil? I tell you that I am utterly wretched. I don't know what to do with my time; I don't care to sing; I don't care what I wear, or how I look. I should like to stab him and then myself. There—do you see that?" and Claire pointed to a particular spot on the floor of the gallery.

Louisa's eyes followed the direction of Claire's tragically extended finger. A gaily-painted butterfly had strayed into the gallery, perhaps been pursued and injured by some rival—no sooner had it reached the ground than it was rudely assailed by a grey mouse. Louisa jumped over



the low ledge of the window; and ran to the rescue, and then the mouse ran away; but it had already torn a piece out of one of the butterfly's wings. Louisa lifted up the prostrate tiny warrior. Alas! it was too late for aid—he gave one pant, and died.

“That poor butterfly is an apt emblem of me and my fate,” exclaimed Claire.

Spite of her childish simplicity, Louisa could not help a little laugh. Claire said, angrily,—

“You are making game of me. I was a precious goose to trust you.”

“No, indeed, Claire,” said Louisa, putting in her delicious face at the window. “I could not help laughing at the idea of M. Amedée being a mouse; but you shan't die like the butterfly.”

“If I could only stab him to the heart as he has stabbed me,” said Claire, pressing her hand to her bosom.

“Oh! pray don't look so dreadful, Claire; don't say such horrid things.”

“Go away—you are too foolish, Louisa. I won't let you in again; I won't see any one.”

And down came the window-sash with a crash; the bolt snapped to, and the blind was lowered.

Louisa tried the door, but it was locked; so there was nothing to do but to obey Claire's mandate and go away. But Louisa did not feel easy at leaving Claire in such a mood. She thought of warning Claire's mother, Madame Gastineau; then, afraid of doing mischief by betraying her friend's secret, she refrained. On the way back to her own home she hit on an expedient:—she would go and meet Claire's cousin, Gustave Gastineau, and give him a hint to go and take care of Claire, and speak reason to her. Gustave was a sort of oracle or mentor for Louisa. So, instead of turning out of one gate into another—for the Gastineaux' house and Mrs. Templar's were only separated by the garden wall—Miss Louisa passed into a meadow which ran down to the high-road. Gustave always crossed this meadow on his return from Geneva; it was not the shortest route to his uncle's house, but Gustave found it the pleasantest.

Tiresome as retrospects are for reader and

writer, it is absolutely necessary that both should now go back a little.

Every day since that eventful one on which she left Versailles, the mother had more and more seemed to neglect her daughter. Yet Mrs. Templar's every thought was given to devising means to make up to Louisa for an injury of which she had been the involuntary instrument. For this end she had given up her pleasant home in Paris; for this she had lived in the closest retirement, had practised the most rigid economy. She had come to Geneva only the year before, with the intention of giving Louisa some advantages of education, and had by the blindest chance taken a country house, called La Forêt, which was divided only by a garden wall from Les Vignes, the dwelling of M. Louis Gastineau, half-brother of the professor of the Rue des Varennes, and the patron of Gustave.

When within a couple of days after their taking possession of La Forêt, Louisa had rushed to tell her mother that she had seen and spoken to Gustave Gastineau,—that he was living in the

next house, and that Mr. and Mrs. Gastineau were coming to call,—the intelligence communicated with such breathless joy was received with as much annoyance as surprise. Mrs. Templar's vexation had calmed Louisa into something like common sense and clear articulation. She had gone on to say, that Gustave had told her his uncle was rich, his wife English, and that they had only one child, a daughter nearly twenty, and that Gustave himself was with a bookseller in Geneva.

“ You mean that he is a shop-boy,” had observed Mrs. Templar, contemptuously. “ What business have such people to come worrying me? and, pray, how did you come to see that lad?”

“ This is Saturday, mamma, and he comes home in the middle of the day.”

“ How old is Gustave Gastineau?”

“ Oh! mamma, don't you recollect he is just three years older than me?”

“ I wish you would speak properly. Three years older than me!—than I, if you please.



“It’s being abroad, mamma, makes me speak so badly.”

Mrs. Templar took no notice of the explanation, and Louisa, understanding what was best to do under the circumstances, sat down quietly, with a book in her hand.

Mrs. Templar turned back to her desk, a which she had been busy when Louisa came flying in, like a strong breeze, and resumed her interrupted occupation—that daily occupation for the last six years—a sum of addition.

As soon as Louisa had perceived her mother’s attention to be engrossed by a paper covered with figures, she had slipped out of the room noiselessly, and set off running down the selfsame meadow along which she was now going a year after, and with the selfsame intent, viz. to meet Gustave Gastineau. The year before, her purpose had been to tell him how Mrs. Templar had received the news of their being again near neighbours.

Louisa had rejoiced to find her former play-fellow; nor was she then, or even a year after,

of an age to feel shy of expressing the joy she felt. She had walked by his side, her two hands clasping one of his arms, telling him how they had lived at Heidelberg, and at Frankfort, and at Berne, and, thank goodness, here they were at Geneva; it had been so dull at all those places—they had known nobody, had never seen a creature within their doors except a music-mistress, and occasionally a daily governess who had come for a couple of hours a day to teach her history and all that.

Louisa had wound up her recapitulation by saying,—

“Mamma is grown so old, Gustave; she never smiles, scarcely ever talks to me; she does nothing all day but look over papers. Do you remember how she used to love me and pet me, and call me ‘her life?’” here the speaker’s voice had died into a broken whisper: “I don’t believe she loves me a bit now.”

“That’s impossible,” had said Gustave. “Mothers can be cross, and scold, but they always do love their children. It’s my opinion,” he added, “the

worse the children are, the better they love them.”

Louisa had looked inquiringly in his face.

“There’s my brother Ernest, for instance; there’s no making anything of him; he gets one situation after another—he never keeps one for six months, and my poor mother’s letters are full of excuses for him; and if I venture to say it must be his fault he’s so unlucky, she rates me soundly, I can tell you. But don’t let us talk of disagreeables. Do you ever hear anything of the people we knew in Paris—of that good Marc de Lantry, or of M. de Blacourt—he was famously fond of you when you were little?”

“I always write to him every Christmas—it’s so funny, he goes on sending me pictures for babies just as if I were still nine years old.”

Gustave had laughed, because her merry, ringing laugh was so pleasant to hear; otherwise he was not given to merriment. He was a taciturn youth, and in the struggles with fortune that awaited him, his temper was likely enough to become morose. He had not grown handsomer



with increase of stature; indeed, had it not been for the intelligence of his face, he would have been pronounced positively ugly; as it was, when he was pleased and animated, he became even agreeable-looking.

Perhaps it was from some natural compassion for the dulness of Louisa—perhaps it was from a perception that Claire Gastineau would save her the expense of a French mistress for her daughter, or it might be from a mingling of pity and parsimony; but whatever was the predominant motive, Mrs. Templar did certainly permit of an intimacy between the two girls. She maintained her own reserve, unthawed by the cordiality and hospitality of her neighbours, and when the vivacious Swiss beauty took to the practice of running in and out of La Forêt at all hours, Mrs. Templar made no remonstrance, but retreated with her desk and papers to her own room. As for Gustave, never seeing him, she forgot that he was in existence; so immersed was she in her calculations, that she also forgot that Louisa had passed



from childhood into girlhood. So went by one year.

And now I return to the brilliant May afternoon of Claire's confidences, and of the bitter battle between the mouse and the butterfly, which put so violent and alarming a conclusion to the conversation of the two young ladies, and sent Louisa along the meadow to meet Gustave Gastineau.

Père Panisset, the tenant of La Forêt farm, met Louisa as she went, singing with a light springing step through the long grass. To her lively, "Bon jour, Père Panisset," the farmer returned a gruff answer. After she had gone by, he turned and looked after her. Mrs. Templar was economical to penuriousness, but there was one exception to the rule, and that was Louisa's dress. The mother had continued to dress the girl with the same taste and attention, as when she had been a child in Paris. This was done at the cost of her own labour. Many a night, Mrs. Templar sat in her cheerless solitary room, stitching away at some new frock for Louisa; when Louisa was in a rosy sleep.

Now Père Panisset was a sour man, sour by

nature, and made sourer by hard, unsuccessful labour. He had kept the wolf from his door, and that was all.

Looking after Louisa, this bitter Calvinist said to himself: "There are other things besides the lilies of the field which are handsomely clothed, without having to take any thought about it. There's no justice on this earth; one class has all the work, and the other all the play. May the case be reversed in the next world."

The Mère Panisset also looked with a grudge at the fair young girl; but there was this excuse for her, she had an only son, a grown-up youth, whose eyes devoured Louisa whenever he saw her.

Fils Panisset attended the public Drawing Academy, at Geneva, and was in the habit of making sketches of Miss Templar. He had managed to pick up enough English to write under these rude attempts at a portrait, "i love Miss." Père Panisset threw these drawings, whenever he found any, into the fire, saying to his son, "You waste time and paper; you are born to sweat, that such as she may feed on fine

wheaten bread; you have no right to feast your eyes on her milk-white skin. Dig the ground and be thankful; you are ugly and poor, she is rich and handsome.”

Louisa was an eyesore to that family. She had so few to be kind to her, no wonder she clung to Claire and the bookseller’s apprentice.

When she came to the gate opening into the road, Louisa looked in the direction of Geneva, then up at the sky. The sun was yet too high in the heavens for it to be six o’clock, so she turned back a little, and went into a small copse at one end of the field; there she sat down on a grassy bank, raised under one of the largest trees. Gustave had made the seat, and laid a carpet of sward on a clear space of ground, which Louisa called her drawing-room. Hither she came on warm, sunny days to read, or to listen to Claire, for Claire liked relating her experiences to one who believed so implicitly what she said. It was only on summer Saturdays that Gustave could enjoy the dainty retreat he had formed; his attendance in the shop kept him on



other days too late. Opposite to the seat was a swing, which was also of Gustave's contrivance, and in which it had been one of his holiday pastimes of the year before, to swing his pretty little friend. It looked mouldy and damp now from exposure to winter snows and frosts. Gustave had spoken of re-arranging it, but Louisa had said,—

“No ; she didn't care for swinging now ; she was too tall and heavy.”

The sun and the leaves together made a pretty chequer-work on the green mossy carpet. Louisa sat watching the dancing of the sunny flecks on the velvet grass, until her head began to droop forward, when suddenly a nightingale sent forth a loud musical summons to his mate, and woke her up.

“How I should like to see him,” said Louisa, thinking of the songster and not of Gustave, as she rose on tiptoe, with her slender neck outstretched.

It was thus Gustave saw her as he put his head inquisitively into her rural drawing-room. Her



beauty, as she stood within the yet tender green of the leafy covert, stray sunbeams wreathing a glory round her head, took away his breath. She heard the passage of a bird's wings among the branches, and saw a shadow darken the circle of light at her feet. She turned her head, and then Gustave exclaimed,—

“Well, you do look” — he hesitated. The beautiful modest instincts of youth restrained the expression of his amazed admiration.

“I am sorry you frightened him away,” she said.

“Frightened who away?” he asked.

“My nightingale; my beautiful nightingale.”

“No; not beautiful; he is a plain brown bird.”

“A plain brown bird. Who would not rather be a nightingale than a gaudy peacock, you matter-of-fact bookseller.”

The moment the word was spoken she repented of it.

“Bookseller's shopboy, you should say,” he replied, in a tone of mortification.

“If I were a man,” said Louisa, “I should like

to be a bookseller. It must be delightful to live among books."

"Without time to read one," retorted Gustave.

"That's not quite true," said the young lady, "for I know you read quantities and quantities."

"A girl's idea of reading," he remarked, contemptuously.

"No, indeed; it's not *my* idea," she replied, with a little coaxing in her tone—she thought she had hurt his feelings, and she longed to lay some balm on the wound. "M. Gastineau says so, and Claire."

"Two judges about equal to you. No, Louisa; reading for a man who means to make his bread by literature means working over books for eighteen hours out of the twenty-four."

Louisa's eyes looked immense with astonishment.

"Eighteen hours of reading every day?" she repeated.

"Yes; if ever I am to be what I wish," he said.

"And what's that, Gustave?"

"A professor—what my father was before me. Look here, Louisa, I had rather starve on learning

as my father did, than grow fat on commerce of any kind, like my uncle here. I detest trade and its prosperities." Suddenly he added, "Do you remember what a wretched home ours was in Paris, Louisa?"

"Poor Gustave," she said, and, by way of showing her sympathy, laid her hand on his.

"I never saw any one so good as you," he exclaimed vehemently, and clasped the delicate little fingers in his toil-hardened palm. "Always trying to comfort; even when people are cross to you; even as a mere baby. . . ." He let go her hand to wipe his eyes. "There's nothing I would not do for you, Louisa, though I am so rough."

"I am sure you have always been as kind, more kind to me than I have been to you. Do you remember how you used to teach me my French lessons for your papa?"

"What a sweet little creature you were, and how M. de Blacourt doted on you. I wonder he has never come to see you."

"He has written that he should like to see us. I think he wants mamma to invite him. Oh!

goodness, there's the great bell—it must be tea-time—good-by.”

“Just stop one moment, Louisa; I haven't told you what made me come to look for you; will you do me a favour?”

“Of course I will if I can.”

“Will you teach me English? I have been trying to learn by myself. I should be better paid if I knew English; such lots of English people come to our shop, and I want to make money to get back to Paris.”

“But I don't know grammar,” said Louisa.

“I'll manage the grammar part, if you'll only teach me how to pronounce and let me read aloud to you.”

“And when you read badly I'll give you a famous task to learn by heart.”

They were now out in the meadow.

“Everything depends on my getting to Paris, Louisa. I must get my Baccalaureat, and then——”

Louisa did not hear what was to be the result of Gustave's success, nor had she time to speak of



Claire and her love-affairs, for the bell was rung more loudly than ever, and she had to scamper away, after a hasty promise that she would be at the swing next afternoon, at six o'clock.

Louisa found her mother walking up and down the drawing-room, looking flurried and heated.

“Where have you been all this time, Louisa?” she exclaimed; then, without waiting for an answer, she went on,—“You don't know who has come to stay close by us? . . . .”

“M. de Blacourt—isn't it, mamma?” interrupted Louisa.

“Nonsense! it is your grandfather's brother and his wife; I have a note from Lady Theodosia—they have taken Andreossey's Campagne till July.”

“Oh! that is delightful; are you not glad, mamma?”

Mrs. Templar continued as if Louisa had not spoken,—

“Her ladyship says Mr. Templar is fatigued with the journey, and that she can't leave him. Humbug; they don't think us worth the trouble of a visit. Ah! if you had been a boy, instead of

a girl, Lady Theodosia would have found her way here fast enough."

"I am sorry for your sake that I am a girl," said Louisa, half in joke, half in earnest.

"It's no use regretting what can't be helped," returned Mrs. Templar, gravely; "but what's troubling me now is my dress. I have not a decent bonnet to face these people with."

Louisa was aghast, for she knew that her mother spoke the literal truth. Mrs. Templar never put her foot into Geneva—never walked out but in the garden. She had one dress cap, which she wore on the rare occasions of drinking tea with the Gastineaux, but that wouldn't serve as a bonnet.

"Couldn't we send to Geneva, mamma; or I could walk down early in the morning with Aimé, and buy you one; or I am sure Madame Gastineau would take you down in the carriage. I'll go and ask." And away Louisa was flying:

"Stay where you are, Miss Impetuous; I am not going to let all the world know I have not a bonnet. I don't want any of Madame Gastineau's

help. You are not to say a word to Claire, do you hear? I shall manage something—let us get tea over.”

“What relation is Mr. Templar to me, mamma?”

“He was your father’s uncle, so he is your great-uncle, but you need only call him uncle.”

“Has he got any children, mamma?”

“A son in the army, and one daughter married to Lord Deighton’s eldest son. All the Miss Templars, generation after generation, have married well; that’s one comfort. You are well connected on both sides, Louisa—remember that. The name of Templar figures pretty often among the marriages in the peerage.”

Louisa’s young cheeks flushed for the first time with a proud feeling of her station in life. She went to bed that night something less of a child. She had had her mind opened during the day to the two generally antagonistic interests of life. Claire had talked to her of love, and Mrs. Templar of the advantages of birth and position. While Louisa slept, Mrs. Templar was busy hunting for some of her former finery, to fashion into some

plausible covering for her head. Patiently she sat over her self-imposed task till daybreak — her occupation contrasting with the projects she was forming—projects born simultaneously with the arrival of Mr. Templar.

Louisa would be a beauty—no doubt of that. If Lady Theodosia would only agree to introduce her into the great English world—no fear but that a coronet would enrich that lovely brow. “I shall make Lady Theodosia understand,” mused Mrs. Templar, “that I have no wish to mix in the gay world, and that she may invite Louisa, without being bored with me. Louisa’s marrying well is the only hope left me; better she died than live poor and obscure.”

These were the mother’s thoughts as she put the last pin into the lace fabric she had concocted.



CHAPTER VII.

DA COSA, NASCE COSA.

LADY THEODOSIA met Mrs. Templar with well-bred cordiality ; she kissed Louisa once and then again ; the second kiss was a tribute to the young girl's beauty. There were several persons in Lady Theodosia's salon, and every face smiled a welcome on the pretty creature before them.

Miss Wilton, Lady Theodosia's companion, looked at the gentleman nearest to her, and touched a half-blown rose, perfect in bloom and perfume, standing in a glass on the table by her side, and then gave a significant glance at Louisa.

“ Yes, very sweet and fresh, but a mere bud, you know ; her nose may grow large at the point,”

said the gentleman, who was Captain Marmaduke Templar. "You don't think it possible, eh? well, don't look so savage; it's not my fault that I am born without any proper ideas as to beauty—a fact, I assure you. Young ladies constantly assure me of the loveliness of their particular friends, and get into a passion with me because I can't see what they see."

"I am not a young lady. I am twenty-seven; what girls call an old maid," returned Miss Wilton, adding, "It's such a pity you think it worth your while to pretend to be a fool."

"It is such a pity you will be such a hard brush, instead of a dear, soft, pillowy woman," he said. "Now what is it you want me to do? If it is to admire my cousin, I am ready to do so. I am going to her side for the purpose."

Lady Theodosia told her son to fetch his father.

"It would be of no avail my going to him, mother," said Captain Templar; "he has not finished his morning's walk, and he would not

miss one step of the number prescribed to see even the Emperor of China.”

“Mr. Templar is pursuing a cure,” explained Lady Theodosia.

“I am sorry to find he is an invalid,” said Mrs. Templar.

“No, he is not an invalid, but he is not so young as he was,” said Lady Theodosia.

At the end of half an hour Mr. Templar, who was quite aware that his deceased nephew's widow and daughter were waiting to see him, made his appearance.

His mode of life agreed with him, for he might have sat for a picture of health. Fresh-coloured, bright-eyed, and straight-backed, his was the sort of appearance we all suppose to be the type of the good old English gentleman. At first sight, or from a little distance, you fancied he had an air of benevolence. Yet beggars never expected the penny from him, of which they made sure from the saturnine-looking M. de Blacourt. Children never fondled Mr. Templar, dogs never put their cold noses on his hand, in expectation of

having their heads patted, or their ears stroked. But though as incapable of the simple charities of life, as of understanding an heroic sacrifice, Mr. Templar was what we call an upright man. He gave five thousand pounds to Louisa on succeeding to his brother's estate; it was a just action, which was characterized as generous. Yet, somehow, those he benefited were never grateful to him; perhaps he made them feel that what he did, was more to secure his own tranquillity than to bestow comfort on them. Whatever shortcomings, however, might be imputed to him in the world to come, in this present world his character stood at the highest. Even Lady Theodosia had come half to believe in his superiority; and his son obeyed him; in short, he had become a revered institution in his family, his parish, and his county.

Mr. Templar shook hands in a limp way with Mrs. Templar and Louisa; he said he was glad to see them, without his eyes having ever rested on either the mother or daughter.

However, before they went away he was forced



into looking at Louisa. Lady Theodosia appealed to him, to know if his niece did not remind him of that picture of her father, taken when a lad.

Mr. Templar's blue eyes rested on Louisa for a second.

"Ye-es, the upper part of the face is something the same," he said.

"She is the very image of that picture," observed Miss Wilton, in a tone that stopped discussion.

The rest of the visit shall be described by Louisa herself. She was punctual to her appointment with Gustave, but he had been waiting for her a quarter of an hour. She burst upon him with,—

"I have something wonderful to tell you—something like what happens in story-books. What do you think the bell rang for last evening? Mamma had had a note to say that my uncle—papa's uncle—and Lady Theodosia had come to Andreossey's villa for the summer."

"Then there's an end of my lessons," said Gustave, crossly.

“What have they to do with my teaching you English, sir?”

“Of course they’ll always be wanting to have you with them.”

“I promise you to come here every Saturday and Sunday at six o’clock, and you’ll see I will keep my promise,” said Louisa; then she went on, “Oh! Gustave, they are such odd people, except Lady Theodosia; I like her. She has a pleasant face, and is altogether nice; but she has a companion, a Miss Wilton—you never saw such a black moustache as she has; she questioned me about everywhere we had lived, and why we did not stay in England; and when we came away she asked me to give her a kiss; and I have a cousin, a captain in the army—he had on boots like a woman’s, such long, narrow feet, and he went about as if he was afraid of making a noise. I think Miss Wilton hates him—he only vouchsafed me a bow, never condescended to speak to me.”

“Was your uncle kind to you?”

“So, so. I expected him to embrace me, but

no, he held out his hand, and if I hadn't held it tight, I *couldn't* have shaken hands with him; and he made mamma as angry as could be, by saying I was seventeen, and then when Miss Wilton asked if I had a voice, he told mamma she had better take me to Florence to have lessons of some one who had taught Lady Somebody to sing. They are very grand folks, and not in the least inclined to run away with poor, insignificant me; there is no fear of any one being too kind to me, except all of you. *There* now, I am ready for you. How am I to begin?"

Louisa was already seated on the mossy bank; Gustave, who had been standing, now went down on his knees, so as to bring his eyes on a level with the book lying on her lap.

"Read that line aloud to me, and then I'll read it after you," explained Gustave.

"What, those tiny words? they are for babies!" exclaimed Louisa.

"Every one who tries to learn a new language must begin like a baby," said Gustave.

“Oh, very well!” Then she read: “The dog barks, the cat mews.”

“Ze dog,” began Gustave.

“No, no, *the*. Look how I put my tongue.” And she showed him her little pink tongue pressed against her teeth. Never was there such a merry lesson. Louisa went into fits of laughter at Gustave’s pronunciation; at first he was inclined to be sulky, but he could not look at that sweet face and be out of humour.

“Now, I’ll make you say the names of all the things we see,” she said, closing the book; and this went on till Gustave himself warned her that it was time she should go home, lest she should be missed and questioned.

“Don’t tell,” he said; “for if you do, Mrs. Templar won’t let you come. She would never allow *her* daughter, niece of a my-lady, to teach a shopboy. Your mother is very proud, Louisa; she looks down upon us all, she can scarcely put up with my uncle and aunt, and Claire. As for me, she hates me, because I know about that Vicomte Granson.”



“ Oh, pray don't speak of him ; it frightens me,” and Louisa changed colour.

“ Why, what harm can he do you ? ”

“ I don't know—don't let us talk about him ; if you do, I shall be afraid to go along the field by myself.”

Gustave perceiving that she was really alarmed, said : “ I shall watch you safe home, though of course there's not a bit of danger.”

The lessons went on regularly enough on Saturdays and Sundays at the swing, and at Les Vignes on those evenings which Louisa spent there. These last were given in Claire's boudoir, for Mdlle. Gastineau agreed with Gustave, that Mrs. Templar would speedily put an end to the teaching, if she knew of it, and she speedily would know, were either M. or Madame Gastineau to become cognisant of what was going on. Claire loved a secret for its own sake. The child of a couple as frank as daylight, she delighted in mystery ; she would make one to Louisa of every invitation she received, tell her she was going out to dance or to dine, yet never mention where ;

tried to practise in the same way on her father and mother, but they were so unsuspecting, they never perceived her manœuvres. Not satisfied with concealing the fact of the lessons, Claire devised a method to enable Louisa to pass unseen from one house to the other, a method that proved she had a talent for intrigue.

There was a covered well built into the wall which ran between the court-yards of Les Vignes and La Forêt. On either side was a door for the convenience of each family drawing water. It was on a plank laid across the aperture of the well that Claire persuaded Louisa to venture, and now almost every evening, Louisa spent an hour or more teaching Gustave in the boudoir.

This constant association had its *natural* effect; Gustave was fathoms deep in love, a youth's first love, before he found out the meaning of his feelings, and Louisa was beginning to connect Gustave with all she thought or did. Whatever happened, her first idea was, that she would tell it to Gustave; whenever her mother had been unkind, the consolation was that Gustave would

be sorry for her. The danger lay in her having no one with whom to compare him, except Captain Templar, and somehow Louisa was always inclined to laugh at the captain.

And all this time Mrs. Templar was busy over her calculations with a view to Louisa's future fortune, or else contriving frocks for her daughter out of her own former dresses, that another pound or two might be saved at the end of the year. It was astonishing how little Mrs. Templar cared to have Louisa with her, she never seemed to take heed that her child was growing up, and ought not to be allowed to run about wild and uncontrolled. She seemed to forget that, *out of to-day comes to-morrow*; or, as the Italians say, "da cosa, nasce cosa."

However, without Mrs. Templar's having to move a finger, a change was wrought in Louisa's habits of life, and in this manner.

The English in Geneva bethought themselves of giving a ball to those families from whom they had received civilities, and they also considered that a Lady Theodosia would look well at the



head of a list of lady patronesses. It was after having graciously assented to the office proposed to her, that Lady Theodosia desired Miss Wilton to send tickets to Mrs. and Miss Templar.

“The mother is so odd-looking,” objected Miss Wilton, “and the girl is too young.”

“We must have Louisa,” said Lady Theodosia, peremptorily; “we should be a fine humdrum-looking party, without something to set us off. Duke hasn’t even his red coat. Go down and ask Mrs. Templar yourself,” added Lady Theodosia to her companion.

Miss Wilton put on her large Swiss hat, sauntered down the hill, and walked unannounced into the La Forêt drawing-room.

Louisa was coiled up on a sofa, absorbed in a book; Miss Wilton stood watching her for a minute. “Let us see what so interests a young lady of your age,” said the visitor, and she took the book from the hands of the startled girl.

“Gil Blas!” exclaimed Miss Wilton, her strong eyebrows going up to the roots of her heavy band



of strong hair. "Who gave you leave to read Gil Blas?"

"Nobody; I found it in M. Gastineau's library. Mamma likes me to read French books, it teaches me the language."

"I never read Gil Blas myself," said Miss Wilton, "but I am sure it is not a story for a girl like you. You ought to be reading history, and not stories."

"Dear Miss Wilton, I like stories so much better than the History of England." And Louisa looked with a coaxing smile at her heavy-browed mentor.

"I suppose you do; we all prefer what is not good for us. If you must live on sweets, I'll lend you some English novels. My dear Miss Templar, remember, Frenchmen don't write books for young girls. But what do you think has brought me here in this broiling sun?"

"To sing a duet," suggested Louisa.

"Nothing so selfish. I have brought you an invitation to a ball."

"A ball for me!" cried Louisa, quite flurried.

“By the by, *can* you dance?” inquired Miss Wilton.

“Yes, quadrilles, and I know the Lancers quite well; but will mamma let me go? Shall I run and ask her?”

“Can’t I see Mrs. Templar? Lady Theo hopes your mother will go too.”

“Mamma hates seeing people,” replied Louisa; “but I’ll beg her to come down to you. I suppose it is my aunt who is going to give the ball?”

“No—there, take the card of invitation with you, and say that we all hope very much that Mrs. Templar will not refuse.”

Louisa flew upstairs and gave the message.

Mrs. Templar went off into a string of questions.

“What in the world did these people come troubling her for? Why should she put herself out of the way for them, or their ridiculous ball? Why couldn’t Miss Wilton have let Lady Theodosia write and make her own request, if she cared so much about it? Did they think she was made of money, that she could afford to be buying useless dresses? Louisa was to go downstairs, and say

she was too busy to see visitors. "And, Louisa," concluded Mrs. Templar, "you are not to be letting that vulgar, meddling young woman come up to me. She is not going to spy into my private life, I can tell her." Poor Louisa was quite colourless by the time that her mother ceased, and her eyes were swollen with repressed tears. It was not so much sorrow for the negative given to her hopes, as for a confused sense that every one was so much kinder to her than her own mother. "Well, what are you looking so miserable about?" asked Mrs. Templar.

"I am very sorry, mamma. I wished to go to the ball."

"*You!*" exclaimed her mother. "Why, what had *you* to do with it?"

"Miss Wilton said I was invited, mamma."

"Now I understand why *I* was thought of," said Mrs. Templar, with a dry laugh. "It's the rising sun they are trying to flatter."

Louisa did not understand the allusion.

Mrs. Templar's eyes fixed themselves on her daughter, and gratified maternal vanity softened

her asperity. In her heart she said, "No wonder they want her—their eyes tell them she'll be worth courting one of these days." She added, aloud, "Go down and tell the companion I will send Lady Theodosia my answer by and by."

"Mamma will write her answer to my aunt," said Louisa, too much interested in the matter to make any excuse for her mother not coming down to the visitor. "I do believe mamma will say yes, Miss Wilton—it's a good sign her not saying no, at once."

Mrs. Templar said nothing more to Louisa about the ball, and Louisa's hopes and fears fluctuated with every sentence that her mother spoke. She was so inattentive in teaching Gustave in the evening, that he put aside the primer, and asked her what was the matter?

Louisa at once poured forth all her anxieties.

"What can make you so anxious to go to a ball?" said Gustave, in the same moment that Claire uttered a most impassioned appeal to Louisa to get her a ticket.

"I'll try," replied Louisa to Claire; then turn-



ing to Gustave, she said, "Why shouldn't I like balls?"

"I hate them," he answered.

"That's no reason for our doing so," laughed Louisa.

The same silence when Louisa went, with a beating heart, to wish Mrs. Templar good-night.

"Mamma, Claire has begged me to ask for a ticket for her."

"Indeed!" was all that Mrs. Templar said.

The next morning, the maid Aimée told Louisa that before she put on her frock she was to go to madame's room.

"Come here, and try on this body," said Mrs. Templar.

Louisa looked and saw a heap of muslin lying on a chair. She guessed that she saw what was to be her ball frock.

"Oh! mamma, how good you are!"

"Yes," returned Mrs. Templar; "you can be very fond when I give you your own way."

"I would be always fond, mamma, if you would let me."

Mrs. Templar began fitting the dress she had sat up over-night to prepare. There was some hitch in her nature, which would not allow her to do a kindness, gracefully; there was some obstacle in her, to all expansiveness—she could neither give nor take frankly, cordially. Her best actions were marred by the mode of their doing. At this very moment, she pushed and turned Louisa about, complaining of the worry of fitting “such a stick,” when all the while she was full of admiration for the graceful creature standing so patiently before her.

“There, go, and don’t come and disturb me, whoever may come to call this morning.”

“And what shall you wear, mamma?”

Nothing; I am not going to your ball. I shall send you with Lady Theodosia—they don’t want me; they only invited me that they might have you.”

This last assertion struck Louisa so forcibly as to put the first part of her mother’s speech out of her head.

“Why should they want me more than you, mamma?”

“I told you before, you are the rising sun ; they are civil to you because they don’t know but that you may be worth courting one of these days.”

“ Oh, mamma ! ”

There was a reproach in the tone of the exclamation which made even Mrs. Templar wince. Poor young heart, to be chilled in it’s moment of expansion by such worldly suspicion.

“ Now go away, Louisa, ” concluded her mother ; “ go away and amuse yourself with your new friends, and leave me in peace to make your finery. ”

Louisa left her mother’s room disgusted with her frock and the ball, and every one she knew.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE FIRST BALL.

CLAIRE received a ticket for the ball through Louisa's interest, in gratitude for which she gave her English friend lessons in waltzing. Those were the days of the "trois temps," and Claire also taught Louisa the figures of the Cotillon then in vogue. The table with Gustave's grammar and copy-books, was pushed into a corner, and Gustave himself followed his grammar and copy-books, to keep out of the way of the whirling couple.

"Don't look so dreadfully cross at us, Gustave," Claire would gasp out as she passed him, while Louisa made him all sorts of amicable gestures,



and at the end of a dance, would drop him a curtsey. The more lovely and graceful she was, the more churlish he became.

“Why didn’t they both go on the stage, if they wanted to be seen and admired?”

“Because, you cross old Gustave —” said Louisa, “because we don’t want to caper about to please others; we want to dance for our own amusement.”

“Oh! I dare say; if that was all, you would be satisfied with doing it here. No, what all women care about, is to be bedizened, and then go and show shemselves to a parcel of fops, who laugh at them for their pains.”

“I had rather they laughed than scolded,” retorted Claire; “sour grapes, cousin. Come, Louisa, once more the sauteuse.”

The evening of the ball, even Mrs. Templar was not proof against Louisa’s winning ways. It would have made a painter’s heart glad to see her *pose*, as she held up her white silk petticoat to show her mother how well her satin shoes fitted.

“Pretty, are they not, mamma?” and she

danced a step—the feet and ankles were what set off the shoes.

Her daughter did look so lovely, that Mrs. Templar regretted her resolution, not to go to the ball. In her very natural desire to witness the effect of Louisa's appearance on strangers, she told the gaping Aimée, that, if the Panissets pleased, they might come in and see mademoiselle before she went to the ball.

Father, mother, and son, came and stared at the youthful vision of loveliness smiling to them.

“She is like a picture,” said Mère Panisset—the men did not speak.

Lady Theodosia had had several gentlemen to dinner that day, in order to make sure of being well attended on entering the ball-room; she sent the carriage to bring Louisa up to Andreossey's Villa, from whence the whole party were to start.

As soon as Louisa was gone, Mrs. Templar went back to her daughter's room; she looked round at the disorder which reigned there, and felt injured.

“This is my part of the business,” she muttered as she began to fold away the clothes, left lying on

the floor and chairs. "I shall labour and labour for her, and one of these days, she'll fly off altogether, without a thought of all I have done and suffered for her. There she is sparkling, every one flattering or petting her, and here am I alone, doing a servant's work." And Mrs. Templar persisted in putting the room in order, as though it had really been a necessity for her so to do. Well, it was a sort of comfort to her.

In the meantime, Louisa was in her uncle's well-lighted drawing-room, undergoing Lady Theodosia's scrutiny.

"She has no fan—get her one of mine," said her ladyship to the companion.

While Miss Wilton was away on this errand, Captain Templar sauntered in. Hitherto he had scarcely noticed Louisa; he stood now like one amazed, gazing at her.

"You must dance your first quadrille with me," he was saying as Miss Wilton returned, bringing the fan. The companion suddenly stopped at the door; she did not give Louisa the fan until some minutes afterwards, when the other gentle-



men coming in from the dining-room, made a bustle in the room. All eyes fixed themselves on Louisa with surprise; she stood modestly by Lady Theodosia without any sort of self-consciousness; the deepened colour of her cheeks was more caused by expectation than by timidity. She was longing to be at the ball.

“Miss Templar, my niece,” announced Mr. Templar, pompously. He was at liberty at that moment to observe her, and also the effect she was producing; the next instant he was fidgeting about his white rosette, the badge of his being one of the stewards of the evening. He was of course *en grande tenue*, a white waistcoat, coat-tails lined with white silk, boots like looking-glasses, his face, even, seemed fresher for the occasion; not a hair of his head, or his whiskers (cut English fashion), out of its place.

Lady Theodosia entered the ball-room with Louisa leaning on her arm. A little murmur followed their steps. “Ah, how pretty she is! how charming! scarcely more than a child.” The crowd was as much touched as dazzled by the



very youthful beauty. Lady Theodosia and Miss Wilton, who were aware in what absolute solitude Louisa had been brought up, wondered at her unembarrassed grace. She was a little serious, that was all, but even that wore off before the end of the first quadrille.

“I don’t think I can remember all the persons who have asked me to dance,” she whispered to Lady Theodosia.

“Have you no tablets?”

“No, indeed!”

“You must trust, then, to the memory of the gentlemen.”

Louisa had one partner more assiduous than the rest, the Comte von Schaunitz, a stout, tall, fair young man, with a profusion of light hair, and whiskers. The name and title were a transparent disguise, under which the Crown Prince of —— was travelling. He displayed his admiration royally. When not dancing with Louisa, he stood by her side, or where he could have a good view of her. Whenever she stopped in a waltz to recover breath, there he was, persuading, pleading,

insisting on her taking a turn with him. Before Lady Theodosia retired, he and Louisa were laughing and chatting, as if they had been old acquaintances. He knew where she lived and had lived, how she passed her time, how old she was, and that she thought a ball the most delightful thing in the world. Beauty holds a sceptre that brings all potentates to their knees.

The same murmur of admiration as had welcomed Louisa's entrance saluted her departure, and as she made her way through the rooms, she could not but have heard the exclamations, "Qu'elle est jolie, ravissante," etc.

Lady Theodosia and Mr. Templar fell asleep directly they were in the carriage, and apparently so did Miss Wilton, for she never moved nor spoke during the drive home. Louisa wondered how they could be sleepy after such a delightful party, and then gave herself up to recalling all the events of the evening.

"I have quite worn out my shoes, mamma," was the first news Louisa gave her mother; "I danced so much. I never was so happy. I wish

there was a ball every night. Oh, dear! I *am* so tired—not myself, only my body.”

“So your aunt took care to get you plenty of partners.”

“Partners! they came of themselves, mamma. She said I gave her no trouble.”

“*She*,” repeated Mrs. Templar. “Are you speaking of a cat? say Lady Theodosia.”

“It’s only by ourselves, mamma. Lady The., as my uncle calls her, did not do anything except smile and bow. Her poor neck must ache with so much bobbing from side to side.”

“And Miss Wilton, did she dance much?”

“She had a migraine, and couldn’t enjoy anything; she was crosser than ever to Captain Templar—she would not dance with him. He asked me twice, but I could only give him one quadrille.”

“Upon my word, miss, you have learned plenty of airs at your first ball. You owed the attention you received to your being with Lady Theodosia.”

“I am not giving myself airs, mamma. I am



telling the truth. Comte von Schaunitz *would* dance so often with me."

"Who is he, pray?" Foreign titles were at a discount with Mrs. Templar.

"Claire says he is the Crown Prince of — He is a very nice man, and waltzes capitally. I felt like a feather when I had him for a partner. Claire was so proud that he danced with her; he told me he should ask her, because she was my friend."

Louisa was in that state of elation and excitement when she would have made her confidences to a judge in his wig and robes. By the time she had finished her last speech, she had got rid of all her ball-room trappings. With a sudden change from gay to grave, she knelt down and said aloud the same prayers she had said at Versailles (in the matter of religion Louisa had remained stationary), kissed her mother, and with a "Thank you, mamma, for such a delightful evening," jumped into bed, and in two minutes more, even before Mrs. Templar left the room, was already asleep.

"Vanity is not one of her faults," thought the



mother. Nature asserted her power in spite of Mrs. Templar's resistance. You could see the victory gained in the way she let down the curtains to shade the sleeper from the coming dawn—in the way she took up the small shoe, and examined with admiration its proportions—in the cautious tread with which she left the room.

In the afternoon of the day after the ball, Capt. Templar, who had not shown much cousinly attention to the widow and her daughter, took it into his head to pay them a visit. It was already five o'clock when he made his appearance at La Forêt. At no time had he much to say, but on this occasion he surpassed himself in his power of silence. He sat apparently watching his hat twirl on the top of the cane he held between his knees. Mrs. Templar had to frown violently to prevent Louisa from laughing; but the young lady grew grave enough as the captain sat on. This was Saturday, and at six o'clock Gustave would be waiting for her at the swing. Gustave had been cross about the ball, and Louisa was unwilling to vex him a second time. The recollection of his annoyance was

chasing away that of the pleasures of the evening before, and Louisa was one of those who have daring enough to get into a scrape or a quarrel, but once in, have not the courage to keep their own.

“One, two, three, four, five, six.”

“That clock is fast,” exclaimed the captain; “it is a quarter to six by my watch.”

“Yours is probably London time,” remarked Mrs. Templar.

“Ah, yes; true.”

The captain took his hat off the cane, Louisa half rose from her chair; the captain put his hat back on the cane, thrust his fingers into one of his waistcoat pockets, and took out a small parcel wrapped in silver paper,—

“My young cousin had no tablets on which to mark her partners last night,” he said, addressing Mrs. Templar. “I have taken the liberty of supplying the deficiency. You have no objections—have you?”

“You are very kind,” said Mrs. Templar. “Come here, Louisa.”

Louisa, already full of repentance for having hated Captain Templar during the last half hour, came forward to receive his present.

“I am very much obliged to you,” she said, as he met her half-way, and put the packet into her hand.

“Oh! mamma, see—how beautiful!” It really was an elegant trinket, and a valuable one also. “Thank you,” went on Louisa; “do you think—I hope——”

“What?” asked the captain, with some animation.

“Another ball,” said Louisa, looking at him with such an enchanting face—half deprecating, half hoping.

The gentleman scarcely heard what she said; he was so taken up considering her loveliness. The first words he said were, “Well, I suppose it’s time for me to go—we dine at six.”

He shook hands with Mrs. Templar, and then with Louisa, who repeated, “It is so very pretty, thank you.”

“Where are you going, Louisa?” asked Mrs.

Templar, as she saw Louisa take up her garden hat.

“Going out for a little, mamma. I have not been out all day.”

“You are not to go far from the house: keep within sight.” And Mrs. Templar went upstairs.

Away flew Louisa to her rendezvous.

“I was so frightened I shouldn’t be able to come,” exclaimed the breathless girl. “My cousin is only this moment gone.”

“I see that it will be best for us to give up meeting here,” said Gustave.

“Now, Gustave, don’t be cross with me, just when I have been doing all I can not to disappoint you. Mamma asked me where I was going; I ought to have told her the truth, but I did not.”

“If you think you are doing wrong, pray don’t come to meet me.”

“If you would only be pleased when I do come, I should not mind,” said poor, untaught Louisa, with a sigh, and quite ready to sacrifice herself in defiance of her good instincts.

Gustave made no answer.



“We had better begin,” said Louisa. “We have less time to-day.”

Gustave let her open the book and ask him questions, but his voice and averted face were sufficiently indicative of displeasure. Louisa’s heart grew very full. She was more alive at this moment to Gustave’s ill-humour, from its contrast to the bright smiles and attentions lavished on her last night, and she began to repent of having considered her kind cousin such a bore. And all for what? They heard the village clock chime the quarters of the hour; when it came to a quarter to seven, Louisa threw the book petulantly on the grass.

“I won’t hear you any more. I won’t teach you. Why are you angry with me? I have been doing no harm. I longed so to come and tell you all about the ball. I have been thinking all day what a chat we should have; and now all the time is gone, and I haven’t told you anything. If you make me so unhappy I won’t come.”

Not a word from Gustave; his back was turned to her.

“Gustave — see — *do* look—isn't it pretty?” went on Louisa, after a minute. “You *shall* look,” and she ran round to his other side, holding towards him her cousin's present. When she did manage to get a view of his face — when she saw that his eyes were full of tears, and his lips quivering, away went the tablets after the book. She seized his hand, exclaiming, “Oh, pray, Gustave, forgive me — I didn't mean what I said — I don't want to vex you — I only said that I wouldn't come, to try and make you speak to me — that's the truth, indeed — now won't you be friends? I don't care for any of those people as I do for you.”

“You are sure?” said Gustave.

“How could I? Why, I have only known them a day, and you — I can't remember when I didn't know you — and you have always been so good to me.”

Gustave was conquered, but only after he had conquered.

“Stay five minutes longer,” he pleaded; “I can't help being cross when I know all your new

friends are doing their best to carry you away from me.”

“What nonsense! They don’t know even that you are in existence.”

“That has nothing to do with the fact that they will separate us; and, after all, they don’t care for you. They have plenty of money—it’s nothing for them to give you baubles—they do it because you are pretty—not one of them would let themselves be hacked to pieces for you as I would.”

Gustave’s whole passionate soul was in the eyes he fixed on Louisa’s face. She reddened slightly; he went on,—

“Oh! Louisa, you are *too* pretty. I wish you were ugly.”

“I think that a very unkind wish, Gustave,” said Louisa, gravely.

“Yes—but I do—for then you would care more for me.”

Some awakening woman’s instinct made Louisa shrink from Gustave’s complaints. She drew herself up and said,—

“I can’t make out what has come over you

to-day." A slight pause, then she added, "Good-by; I hope you will be your good old self to-morrow. She went away slowly, not with her usual deer-like step. Gustave ran after her with the tablets.

"Shake hands, Louisa."

She shook hands without speaking.

"What's the matter with you, Louisa?" asked Mrs. Templar, as they sat at tea.

"Matter with me, mamma? Nothing."

"You look vexed; have you and Claire quarrelled over the ball?"

"Oh, no, mamma; I am tired, that's all."

"Every pleasure has its accompanying pain," complacently observed Mrs. Templar. "You must go to bed early."

Louisa sat alone in the dusk of the evening, by the low window which looked into the broad green pastures. She was not tired—that is, not tired in body; but she wanted to be quiet. What wavelets of thoughts tossed through her quickening mind. She was downright vexed, that she was, with Gustave, yet she returned again and again to his



tearful eyes—to his saying she was too pretty, and that he would let himself be killed for her.

When Aimée brought in the candles, Mrs. Templar said,—

“ You don’t practise half enough, Louisa. Go and sing over your songs.”

Louisa did as she was bid, but singing did not prevent her thinking; and back and forwards, and over and over again, did the incidents of last night and to-day chase one another before her mind’s eye.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE PRINCE AND THE PRENTICE.

A VERY few days after the subscription ball, an open carriage drove to La Forêt, and out stepped three gaily-dressed ladies.

Madame la Baronne von Ehrtmann, and her fair-haired daughters, Ismay and Fioretta, had come to call on Mrs. Templar and Louisa. These ladies were Hanoverians. I don't think any one knew why they were living at Geneva; nor anything further about them than that they had a fine house and a smart carriage. A great lilac and rose-coloured cloud seemed on a sudden to float round and envelope Mrs. Templar, who, at that moment, was receiving a ceremonious visit from Lady Theodosia and Mr. Templar.

The baronne was a short woman, unusually plain; so plain, that she herself would take notice of the circumstance to you the second or third time she was in your company. She asked you first to believe that, as a girl, she had been beautiful, with a skin as smooth as china; after this call on your faith, she went on: "An illness of a virulent nature robbed me of my good looks, but luckily not of my spirits. I argued with myself, that if an ugly man could make his way, why not an ugly woman? There are advantages attached to all states and conditions of being; mine were, that no woman envied me, mothers did not fear me, nor wives, nor daughters; I was fêted and invited as only a foil can be. I was praised as clever and amiable, which, to tell the truth, I was as little as I was beautiful. And the result was, that I have been twice married,—my first husband was madly in love with me, and as jealous as a Turk—I might have married a third time. Many of the beauties who spoke of me as poor Thedolinda are still spinsters, or worse still, are obliged to see after the cooking of their husbands' dinners, and

mending the children's clothes." "Bah!" had said this experienced lady, when Ismay, her eldest daughter, declared she would give so many years of her life to be as beautiful as Louisa. "Bah, you will do much better than she will. With such a fine face and form, she will be buffeted by all sorts of adverse winds, and you'll swim on the same sea in which she'll founder."

These were the sentiments of the lady with frankly rouged cheeks, now making such courtly reverences before the half-abashed and wholly astonished Mrs. Templar, and who, in rapid and flattering phraseology, was explaining that her girls had made the acquaintance of Mdlle. Templar at Les Vignes, and that they had given her no peace until she had consented to venture on this visit to madame.

Poor haughty Mrs. Templar was perfectly incapable of replying properly to such graceful words, accompanied by such graceful curtsies. Her knees seemed to stiffen, and her tongue also. Lady Theodosia came to the rescue. Before the end of the visit, her ladyship found herself, quite



against her wishes, positively engaged to a *soirée dansante*, for which the baronne was issuing invitations. Ismay and Fioretta had been down on their knees to Mrs. Templar to obtain a similar promise. Coaxed, flattered, bewildered, overpowered, Mrs. Templar at last consented that Louisa should accompany Lady Theodosia; and then away out of the room fluttered the lilac and rose-coloured clouds.

“Very nice-mannered people,” observed Mr. Templar. “The mother’s a mon’sous agreeable clever woman.”

“Uncommonly plain,” returned Lady Theodosia.

“Didn’t strike me so,” said the husband.

“Makes as good a curtsy, by George, as Vestris herself; not afraid of bending her knees.”

“Really, men are the oddest creatures in the world,” exclaimed Lady Theodosia. “So that they have never seen a woman before, they are delighted with her, whatever she’s like.”

Mrs. Templar had a way of her own of making known her assent to any satirical remark as to men. She closed her lips tightly, and yet you heard

her laugh—a laugh that made every one else grave.

“No Englishwoman, only half as ugly as your German baronne, would have had the courage to put on that lovely pink bonnet,” continued Lady Theodosia. “She went smiling and swimming about with all the audacity of a beauty.”

“She’s a mon’sous good-natured creature,” reiterated Mr. Templar.

“Now, how *can* you know, Mr. Templar?” asked Lady Theodosia.

“I have only to look in her face.”

“Ugh!” ejaculated Lady Theodosia.

Mr. Templar observed to his guests that day at dinner, that the German baroness he had met at La Forêt that morning “was a mon’sous clever woman, a mon’sous pleasant creature, and thirdly, mon’sous graceful—made as good a curtsy, by Jove, as Vestris herself.”

“You ought to add,” said Lady Theodosia, “and as ugly as a mummy.”

The obstinate old man replied, “Didn’t see it, ma’am—didn’t, ’pon my honour.”

Madame von Ehrtmann had not told any of the Templar family that her *soirée dansante* was given expressly to please the Crown Prince. She had warned her daughters not to say so, but the fact might have been told without awakening any suspicions in the mind of Louisa's mother of any unfair play. Mrs. Templar considered Louisa yet as too much of a child to lay much stress on her attractions, and perhaps she was not so much alive as others to the loveliness of her daughter, nor to the fact of her looking older than she was.

Mrs. Templar was a person who regulated herself by her personal experiences, and believed only in those. She had never studied life in any other school. She consulted the events that had marked her own career as oracles; she would have been quite on her guard against any intruder like M. le Vicomte Granson, but for Baronesses von Ehrtmann she was without any compass.

Once more, then, Mrs. Templar's thoughts and fingers were busy with a new ball-dress for Louisa.

“Do let me help you, mamma,” said Louisa.



“No, I will not have your finger all marked with the needle,” replied Mrs. Templar.

“Mamma, indeed it is not right that you should slave so for me. I had rather never go to parties.”

Mrs. Templar laughed.

“Give me deeds, not words, Louisa.”

“Indeed, mamma, I am ready to give you deeds. I don’t care or wish to go to this dance. I have seen one ball, and that’s quite enough.”

“You should have said so sooner; you know that now it is impossible to send any excuse.”

The tone of this last remark implied that Louisa was insincere in her professions.

“Mamma, you are very kind and very cruel to me,” said Louisa, beginning to cry.

“Upon my word, miss, you are getting quite spoiled by all your new friends. What have I said to cause your tears?”

Louisa did not answer immediately, then she said,—

“Deeds don’t always show love. You are



making my frock, but oh! mamma, a kind look, one of those kind words you once used to say to me when I was little, would better make me feel that you loved me. In the Rue de Varennes I remember you called me Louisa my life! Mamma, throw down that tiresome frock, and call me your life, and let us be happy, as we were long ago."

Louisa was kneeling by her mother, striving to take hold of the hand that held the muslin. She went on,—

"I try to be pleased, I am so much obliged to every one who is kind to me, but—I feel that I want something else. I want you, mamma, to love me; I want your heart to be open to me again. Why should you be cold to me, mamma, and all because of that bad M. Granson?"

By the mention of that name, Louisa lost her cause. Mrs. Templar shook her off roughly.

"I don't believe a girl ever had a more devoted mother than you have, and no blessing can follow you, if you go on being so impertinent as you are. Go away, and leave me to finish your frock

in peace." So saying, she pulled the muslin out of her daughter's hands.

Mrs. Templar looked and spoke bitterly. It was all Louisa could do to restrain herself from tearing the muslin to pieces; the healthy current of her blood stood still one instant, only to flow more impetuously the next. She recollected the glass of water thrown in her face years ago; she felt as if her mother had repeated that cruel act now.

Mrs. Templar perceived the struggle Louisa was undergoing; she was perhaps alarmed for the result, for she suddenly exclaimed,—

“Go away instantly, and don't dare to answer me.”

Louisa ran out of the room into the garden. Père Panisset and his son were working there; she could not stay where they might watch her. She passed into the field, and instinctively went to the swing. She threw herself on the grass, face downwards; she hated the light. Thus it was that Gustave found her. He thought she was sleeping, and plucking one of the long,

flowering grasses, approached her gently, and just touched one of her ears. She sprang up.

“ Good heavens ! what is the matter, Louisa ? ”

She was quite white, with red, swollen eyes.

“ I am so glad you are come, Gustave ; I want some one to take care of me. I feel dreadfully wicked.”

Gustave took hold of both her hands, put her on the mossy seat, and sat down by her. He still held her hands in his, and was half-mechanically pressing them together and then separating them, as he had been wont to do when as a little child she had stood between his knees, learning her lesson from his lips. She said,—

“ You are the same you used to be, but mamma is not ; and to think that she does not love me, only because of that horrid Granson, does exasperate me.”

“ He was a great villain,” said Gustave ; “ and my mother told me that somehow you were the means of his being found out ; the whole business hurt Mrs. Templar dreadfully, and I do believe she has never been the same woman since. I



don't wonder she is bitter, it would make any one bitter to have been so deceived. You must not take to heart every cross word she says."

After a short pause Louisa began—

"How lucky that you happened to come here this afternoon; you have made me quite good again. I was in a dreadful passion. Lady Theodosia would never have called me Smiler again had she seen me. I love mamma best of everybody in the world. I would do anything to please her, and yet I am happier and merrier with every one else."

"It does not depend on our own will to be happy with people," said Gustave.

"It's very stupid to be unhappy, unless a great misfortune happens to you," observed Louisa. "One thing is certain, I am always happy with you, Gustave. Oh! no, I am not. I was not happy the other evening when you were vexed about the waltzing."

"You must learn to make allowances for my liking to have my own way, as well as you yours."

"But I should never think of being vexed



with you, because you liked to have your own way, and to dance, or to ride, or go to parties."

"You would not care if I went to balls, and made new friends, and never came here?"

"I am not such a dog in the manger, Master Gustave, that because I couldn't have the pleasure I was to grudge it to you. No, indeed; I should be glad you were enjoying yourself."

Gustave sighed and let go Louisa's hands.

"Will you hear me read?" he asked. "Do you remember that it is a whole week since you gave me a lesson?"

"Oh! well, it's not my fault, it's my misfortune; you may blame all those tiresome dinners at my uncle's. I do hate going there now. Miss Wilton is grown so whimsical; I begin to believe she is mad. She looks at me so fiercely, I am half afraid to go near her. There, *do* begin to read, or I shall go on talking for ever."

Louisa returned to tea in a very repentant mood. Mrs. Templar received her as usual; the scene of the afternoon seemed as if spunged out of her mother's recollection.

Louisa enjoyed Madame von Ehrtmann's *soirée dansante* much more than she had done the ball.

She said as much to her constant partner, the prince, who received the information as a compliment to himself, and tossed his head somewhat saucily.

“I am afraid your pleasure won't last long,” said he; “after you have had a year of them, you will grow as tired of balls as every one else does.”

“I can't imagine that. I should never tire of this beautiful waltz. All my favourite songs I like better and better the more I hear them.”

“Indeed! what a constant disposition you have. I am very fickle by nature and habit,” returned her royal partner.

Louisa had not paid attention to his reply. She was looking away from him, staring intently at one of the windows. The room in which they were dancing was on the ground floor, and the windows opened into the garden.

“And do you like every one as well as every

thing, the better the more you know them?" asked the prince, wondering at the young lady not having taken up the ball he had thrown her; he did not in the least believe she was only fifteen.

"No, that I don't," she said, with an energy that startled him.

"You know how to hate, I perceive," he said.

"I would run a mile to get out of some people's way," she answered.

"That is a terrible proof of hatred, I allow."

He was now convinced that the tall girl on his arm was after all only a big child, but the loveliest child he had ever set eyes on. He looked into her face with quite a new interest—a new feeling stirred his heart. It would be something akin to sacrilege to flirt with her, as he had been trying to do. Under this new impression, his voice softened in speaking to her; hitherto, he had used a careless tone of persiflage in their conversation, which had kept Louisa from having the least preference for the prince, except as a partner. She was

well aware that all the other girls considered her as the most fortunate of her sex, and she divined that it was because the prince danced so often with her, that madame la baronne showed her such attention; yet Louisa's feminine instinct had once or twice almost driven her to renounce her honours, and openly to resent his serene highness's off-hand manner.

"May I inquire," began the prince, in his altered voice, "what it is that so strongly attracts your attention to that middle window?"

"I thought I saw some one I knew looking in."

"Are you acquainted with many people in Geneva?"

"Scarcely with anybody. Mamma never goes out. I thought I saw a cousin of my friend Claire looking at me."

"Ah!" ejaculated the prince; then, in an icy tone: "Perhaps you wish to make sure of the presence of this individual?"

"No, I thank you. I had better go to Lady Theodosia, if you please."

His serene highness's brotherly interest was



shocked by the confession Louisa had made of her acquaintance with a friend's cousin, who could condescend to make one of the mob peeping in at the ball-room windows. Besides, this beautiful Miss Templar seemed to him alarmed at the mere idea of this spectator. With some stiffness of manner he led her to Lady Theodosia.

After making a silent bow to his pretty partner, he sauntered in an opposite direction to the window, then suddenly retracing his steps, he went to examine the state of the heavens. He saw a black, starless sky. Turning his attention to the garden, he met a scowling pair of eyes close to the pane of glass opposite his own face. The prince turned on his heel, and invited Mdlle. Claire for the next quadrille. Claire, thrilling all over with delight, stole a glance at Louisa to see how she bore this defalcation. Louisa was at the moment full of wonder that Count von Bistönen, the grandee travelling with the prince—a haughty, middle-aged individual, with a very broad, white waistcoat—should ask such a girl as she was, to dance with him. Count von

Bistönen, as a matter of course, led his partner to be the prince's *vis-à-vis*.

During the first quadrilles, H. S. H. deigned no notice of Louisa, but in a *grande chaine*, he softened and smiled as he received her hand; the smile she gave in return brought him back to her feet. He begged for the next waltz; Louisa had promised that; then for the one following.

At the close of the ball, the prince himself wrapped her in her cloak, and himself bareheaded, put her into Lady Theodosia's large English carriage. He lingered at the door.

“You look so comfortable I wish I were going with you.”

Lady Theodosia turned a deaf ear to the remark.

When she had dropped Louisa at La Forêt, she observed to Miss Wilton,—

“If Louisa were a year or two older, I should advise Mrs. Templar not to allow of her being asked out to meet that sprig of royalty. He was quite lover-like this evening.”

“She is such a mere child,” said Miss Wilton.

“A child to you and me, my dear,” retorted Lady Theodosia; “but a youth of twenty may mistake her for a woman. It would be a pity such a pretty creature as she is, should be trifled with; girls are never good for much after a heart-crush. If her mother only takes common care of her, with such an angel’s face, she must marry well. I should be glad to get her into a good set. There’s nothing like beginning well—when a woman falls among the wrong people, she has nothing but trouble and vexation all her life. There’s my sister’s son; if he would only have made his wife obey me, I would have got her invitations to the best parties in London, in spite of her vulgarity. But he chose to continue his rebellion, and I shall never trouble myself about that doll of his again—he’ll be tired of her before long. I wish he had seen her as I did in Oxford Street, with her sixpenny muslin gown trailing half a yard behind her in the dust.”

Once on the theme of her nephew’s plebeian marriage, Miss Wilton knew nothing would stop



Lady Theodosia's tongue but the stopping of the carriage.

It *was* Gustave that Louisa had seen staring in at her as she waltzed with the prince; it was Gustave's angry face that had so fiercely confronted his serene highness's curiosity. We shall hear of Gustave's feelings at that moment again; for the present it will be sufficient to say that he felt as furious as he looked.

Louisa had not half so much to say to her mother on her return from the baronne's dance as after the subscription ball.

"Haven't you enjoyed yourself?" asked Mrs. Templar as she took off Louisa's dress.

"Thank you, mamma. Oh! yes, I have been very happy; I liked it better than the ball."

"Whom did you dance with?"

"Almost always with the prince. What nonsense it is calling him a count. Every one knows he is the Prince of ——"

"If he were publicly called prince, he could not be dancing with such chits as you."

"Couldn't he? Then I suppose he's looking



down on me all the while ; he is only pretending to be polite," exclaimed Louisa, with some indignation.

"Of course, he does not consider you his equal. You ought to consider yourself very much honoured by his notice."

"But I do not feel honoured," said Louisa, tartly.

"You little goose," said her mother, with a dry laugh. "But the prince did not dance only with you, I suppose?"

"No, he danced once with each of the Von Ehrtmanns, and once with Claire."

"Claire!" repeated Mrs. Templar. "That was carrying condescension too far."

"I don't see that," said Louisa, still smarting with the mortification of her mother's remarks. "I don't see that ; Claire is prettier than either Ismay or Fioretta."

"She is not of the same rank. The Gastineaux have no business to be in such society."

Louisa made no reply, for she saw that her mother was getting angry.

She did not fall asleep directly as she had done after her first ball. She lay thinking how awfully deceitful it was of the prince to put on such a respectful manner towards her, to hold her bouquet, and to stand bareheaded at the carriage-door—it was enough to make her hate him. She should like to make him know that she understood it was all sham; but it was not probable she should see him again; and then she remembered Gustave outside the window, looking so queer—so angry—so unlike a—prince.

Next morning Louisa felt dull; she didn't know what to do with herself. She wished that Claire would come and talk over the party; she had a great mind to creep through the wall, and seek her friend. But she let time slip between the wish and the deed, till it came to be the hour of the Gastineaux' noon-day meal. She went to the piano, and was trying to pick out the notes of the waltz she had declared the night before she should never be tired of hearing, when a shadow darkened the glass-door. She saw Claire, and jumped up. Certainly that blush was not for Mdlle. Gastineau.

The prince was there smiling, and far handsomer than he had looked at either ball or dance. His fine blue eyes were bright with happiness as they rested on Louisa.

Louisa was flattered, but she had not forgotten her mother's observations of the night before, and that was why she made him a low curtsey now, a quaint curtsey, by which she intended to convey to the visitor her sense of the difference of rank between them. A slight flush mounted to the prince's brow at this reception; the curtsey threw him back far better than the haughtiest demeanour would have done.

Claire was excited to a thorough disregard of all etiquette. She patronized his serene highness; explained the motive of their visit. Count von Schaunitz was passionately fond of music, and particularly of part singing. She had been coming to fetch some of her duets when the pr—— the count had proposed to accompany her.

Louisa was shy and embarrassed as to what she should do about her mother. She took the music from a stand, and, laying it on the piano, said,—



“ I will go and tell mamma.”

“ Pray do not disturb madame on my account,” said the prince, with almost too much earnestness.

But Louisa was already gone. She had had the greatest possible wish to be out of the room ; her heart was beating fast ; she was vexed ; at least she thought she was. She walked upstairs very slowly, knocked at her mother’s door, and obeyed the peevish permission to enter. Mrs. Templar was of course at her desk. Louisa had expected that, but not to see her the figure she was. Of late Mrs. Templar had taken to wearing a bonnet always ; she had now turned it the back before, probably to see better, for her room was darkened by a large tree close to the window ; she really looked droll, and altogether unsuited to receive a prince.

“ What do you want ? ” she asked.

“ Count von Schaunitz, the Crown Prince, is downstairs, mamma,” said Louisa, her voice faltering with suppressed laughter.

“ What’s he come for ? I can’t be bothered with him. I am not fit to be seen. What made you come up to me ? ”



“I thought I ought, mamma. Claire brought him.”

“Then she may take him away again. Say I am ill or out, anything you please. I don’t want his visits. Those little German princes give themselves such airs! There, go and get rid of him as fast as you can.”

As soon as Louisa was outside the drawing-room door, Claire had observed to the prince, with the air of an accomplice,—

“You needn’t be afraid; Mrs. Templar never sees any one.”

“I should be glad to make the acquaintance of the mother of Mdlle. Louisa,” said the prince, with a shade of rebuke in his manner, which made Claire feel that the young man did not accept the position she awarded to him; then he began turning over the music.

Louisa came back, and addressing the prince, the colour in her cheeks deepening with every word, said,—

“Mamma is very sorry she cannot come downstairs.”

He made a courteous reply, yet did not seem to take the hint to go away.

They both continued standing by the piano, for Louisa did not think it right to ask him to sit down after her mother's charge to get rid of him. The conversation written down would be question and answer, like a catechism. Little by little, however, Louisa grew more at her ease, and at last, by some manœuvring of Claire's, she sat down to the piano, and sang, I believe, *La Suisse au bord du lac*.

Whatever it was, it enchanted the prince. When she looked up she thought she saw tears in his blue eyes. The prince had, of course, heard thousands of times far finer singing than Louisa's; but he had never before listened to the sweet voice of a girl with whom he was falling in love; or rather with whom he had been in love from the moment he had imagined he felt a brotherly interest in her, and that it would be sacrilege to flirt with her. Duets and trios followed the solo, and there was no want of sincerity in the manly tones in which *Idol mio* and *Mio bene* were sung. When

the visit came to an end, Louisa was all smiles and gaiety.

“I hope we may have another practice soon,” said the prince, in quite a low voice.

“I don’t think mamma would let us,” said Louisa, and her face grew grave.

Louisa walked into the garden with her visitors.

“You have nothing on your head, Mdlle. Louisa,” said the prince, and the words sounded very like the words of the Italian love-song.

“I don’t mind the sun,” said Louisa, very softly.

The prince took off his straw hat, and held it as a sort of parasol for her.

“Pray don’t,” she said, but he persisted.

They parted at the garden gate.

“I will go in by the court,” said Louisa; “there is no sun there.”

Miss Templar was behind her time at the rendezvous of the swing. Gustave received her in a surly manner. She was very gentle to him.

“Indeed, I am so sorry I am late. I can’t think

how it happened, for I was not doing anything in particular."

"Those balls are spoiling you," said Gustave. "If you could have seen yourself twirling about like a top, with that red-headed prince, you would never care to do it again."

"He has not red hair," said Louisa, sharply.

"A prince can't have red hair, of course," said Gustave, sarcastically.

"I know what he has, and what every one else has not, and that's good humour," retorted Louisa; adding, "Why should you be cross and rude to me because I dance—every girl dances?"

"Take the consequences," said Gustave. "It's disgusting to see any man allowed to put his arms round a young lady's waist, and breathe into her face. I wish you had heard what the people about me were saying."

"I don't want to hear what footmen say. You have no right to talk to me in this way. Mamma and Lady Theodosia would not let me do wrong. You are always ready to quarrel with me now, Gustave; we had better give up the lessons." And



Louisa laid down the book, out of which she heard Gustave read.

“No, don’t do that,” said Gustave, in a choked voice. “You are right and I am wrong. I will not be cross any more; let’s be friends again,” and he held out his hand.

Gustave had done what all do when fearing a rival. It is strange, yet sadly true, that just when we ought in all common sense to try to be more than usually polite, witty, and agreeable, we invariably choose to be most unkind, uncourteous, and stupid.

Louisa dropped her dimpled, rosy fingers willingly enough into Gustave’s outstretched palm, but she remarked the coarseness of the hand clasping hers. She was so impressed, indeed, with the roughness of his whole exterior, that to make up for such a consciousness, she felt called upon to be doubly kind to him. She showed him all that sweet and ready forgiveness which oftener proceeds from indifference than from love.

## CHAPTER X.

## AN IDYLL.

M. GASTINEAU (Gustave's uncle) had, while in England, married an Englishwoman. He had been in trade in London, and his wife was the daughter of a tradesman. She brought him a tolerable fortune, and the most equable of tempers. Her parents would declaim against this placidity as against a fault, while their hearts swelled with admiration.

“Fanny is, what I call too quiet—nothing ruffles her. If the house were on fire, she would sit knitting her purse till desired to move,” was a standing declaration in her parental home. M. Gastineau carried on the secret admiration and the outspoken joke.

Claire inherited the ideas of her father and grand-parents. From the age of ten years old she had patronized her mother, and at twenty she told her how she ought to behave. Madame Gastineau had really come to believe that she was an original, a creature set apart by nature, a precious and curious specimen to be cared for, and exhibited. It never came into any one's head to trouble Madame Gastineau to think. The regimen agreed with the lady. Her face was as smooth and fresh-looking as when M. Gastineau married her. It was next to impossible to believe what was, however, the fact, that she and Mrs. Templar were of the same age.

When Claire told her mother that the Crown Prince Henri of —, under the title of Comte von Schaunitz, was coming to pay them a visit, and that she must put on her best lace cap with lilac ribbons and her pale straw-coloured China-silk dress trimmed with lilac, to receive him, Madame Gastineau obeyed without asking a question. She was more pleased and excited

by the visit than by anything that had occurred to her since the birth of Claire.

The prince, who was not in the secret of Madame Gastineau's being an original, paid her the attention every well-bred young man pays to the mistress of a house. From her isolation as an idol, she had acquired a slowness of speech, which, with her low English voice, gave her an air of refinement the prince had not expected in Claire's mother. Claire perhaps never appeared to such disadvantage as in the company of the mother she considered so inferior to herself. Indeed, Claire became odiously domineering from the belief that her guidance was necessary to prevent Madame Gastineau from committing some solecism in good manners.

When the prince had taken his leave, Madame Gastineau actually asked her daughter "why he had called?"

For a minute or two Claire remained silent from astonishment, then she said dogmatically,—

"It's the fashion for gentlemen to call on their partners after a ball."



“I never was in company with a prince before,” observed Madame Gastineau. “I did not feel abashed as I had expected.”

“One always expects wrong,” said Claire, decidedly. She did not approve of her mother’s asking questions and making observations.

His serene highness made his appearance a second time at Les Vignes, though there had been no ball the previous evening. After this second visit, Claire desired her mother always to be in the drawing-room, nicely dressed, every day at two o’clock. “The prince wishes to learn some duets and trios with Louisa and me,” explained Mdlle. Gastineau, “and you must chaperone us, mamma; do you understand?”

“It will be very pleasant, my dear. You will tell your father, my love.”

“Oh, yes! I’ll do all that. We don’t want you to do anything but sit quietly on the sofa.”

M. Gastineau, however, never heard of the arrangement; he always drove into town at one o’clock, so he never met the prince and Count

von Bistönen, who thought it his duty to be in attendance on these occasions. M. Gastineau was not in the least aware of what excellent music he missed the pleasure of hearing.

“Are you not tired of singing so long, Miss Louisa?” ventured Madame Gastineau one day to ask. “You look flushed, my dear.”

“I never tire,” was the answer.

As soon as the visitors were gone, Claire went and stood before her mother, with her hands firmly pushed down into her apron pockets. The little brown thing wore the resolute air of one resolved to do or die.

“Mamma!” she began, “you are *not* to say a word to Mrs. Templar of your fancy that Louisa is singing too much. She is doing *nothing* of the kind, it’s all nonsense.”

“I never thought of speaking to Mrs. Templar, Claire,” and the placid lady looked with admiration at the little lawgiver. “You are very handsome, my dear. I am not sure I don’t prefer black hair to fair—Louisa’s curls are lovely though——” A short pause, then sud-

denly, "Do you like the prince's friend, Claire? I can't say his name, poor man."

"It would be very improper for me to confess any preference for a gentleman, before he has declared one for me, mamma," said Claire demurely.

"You are always right, my dear; only in England you know——"

"But we are not in England," interrupted Claire.

"No, no more we are; but you have English blood in your veins, Claire." Here the young lady shrugged her small shoulders. "I hope," continued Madame Gastineau below her breath, "I hope his Royal Highness——"

"Serene Highness," interpolated Claire.

"I hope he isn't, you know, making love to Louisa; she is so young, and, my dear, remember, he cannot marry her."

"Mamma! *have* you lost your senses?"

"No, indeed; but lookers-on do see more of the game."

"What game?" asked Claire, with fierce eyes.

“I couldn’t bear to sit by and see such a thing,” pursued Madame Gastineau, placidly. “I am a mother myself, and I could scratch any man’s eyes out who was wicked enough—don’t be in a passion, my sweet girl. Something warns me.”

“Mamma, answer me one question. Do you want to make me miserable? If you send away the prince, you send away Count von Bistönen.”

“Claire, it will end just as it did with M. Amedée.”

“No, it will not, if you don’t interfere. Louisa is a child and the prince a big boy. Nobody but you would take up such fancies. Promise now, promise me sacredly, you won’t be filling papa’s head with such nonsense.”

“Don’t have Louisa here the next time they come.”

“You are enough to drive any one mad,” burst out Claire, and rushed from the room.

Madame Gastineau sat still, tranquilly and skilfully handling her crochet-needle.

That evening at tea, Claire, who was mounting watch over her mother, received a little note



in pencil from Louisa. Her fit of sulkiness vanished. She jumped up, ran to her father, kissed him, exclaiming,

“Oh, papa, you won't refuse to let me go! Lady Theodosia is going to take Louisa with her to Chamounix, and Lady Theodosia has given Louisa leave to invite me to be one of the party. I may go, may I not?”

“Of course, you may; and Claire, say, if my carriage can be of any use you can have it. Your mother will manage without it for a week.”

Away went Claire over the well to Louisa. It was not yet decided whether Mrs. Templar would go or not—Louisa thought she would not.

“What shall we do about the prince and the count?” asked Claire. “It would only be polite to let them know, that they mayn't be coming through the broiling sun for no use. I have a great mind to write them a note.” Louisa was silent. “On the whole, better trust to chance. You don't look half pleased, Louisa.”

“I am glad you are coming,” said Louisa. “I shouldn't have liked to be alone with Miss Wilton.”

“She’s jealous of you with Captain Templar, child. Stupid old thing that she is.”

“I have a mind to tell her I don’t care a bit for my cousin,” said Louisa.

Claire had done a good deal for the development of Louisa’s mind.

Mrs. Templar did not go to Chamounix; the prince and Count von Bistönen did. They were lounging about the front of the Hôtel d’Angleterre when the char-à-bancs containing Lady Theodosia’s party drove up. The prince handed out the ladies.

“How odd that they should be here,” whispered Louisa to Claire.

“Didn’t I tell you I met them in Geneva the day I went to buy my travelling hat?” said Claire.

“No, you never told me,” answered Louisa.

The Templars dined at the table-d’hôte. More than two-thirds of the fifty persons assembled there were English, and among them were some of Lady Theodosia’s own set. None of the French or Germans or Swiss who saw the meeting between the Templars and their

acquaintances, but must have been disabused of their prejudice as to British phlegm. How the Islanders shook hands, and how much they had to say to one another! The only indifference they showed was as to who heard their conversation or might be disturbed by it. As last comers, the Templars, the prince (whose rank had not yet transpired at Chamounix), and Count von Bistönen had their places at the bottom of the table. Lady Sophy and her husband Mr. Mitchell Mitchell, whose seats were further up, coolly sate down next the Templar party, ignoring all rights but their own pleasure.

The French lady and her daughter, whose chairs Mr. Mitchell and his wife had taken, remonstrated gently, whereupon Mr. Mitchell said, "Eh!" and stuck his glass in his eye.

"Does that gentleman opposite not understand French?" asked the incognito prince, of Louisa, by whose side he had secured a place.

"Pardon, monsieur," said Mitchell Mitchell, cavalierly. "Je comprends parfaitement le français."



Here Lady Theodosia, who was next to Mr. Mitchell Mitchell, hurriedly whispered to him, and that gentleman, with rather a red face, applied himself to his soup and did not again look across the table.

Lady Theodosia asked the Mitchells to take their tea in her room. In those days there was no such thing as a private sitting-room to be had in any hotel in Chamounix. Lady Sophy, who had learned from her husband that the fair-haired *soi-disant* Count von Schaunitz was a real prince of a reigning house, was inclined to be very agreeable. In right of an infirmity of her eyelids, which, indeed, nearly concealed her eyes, Lady Sophy had passed for a beauty some years back. Her manner and movements suited the languid look given by the defect, and what with slow step and a sleepy look, Lady Sophy gained not only the unmerited reputation of beauty, but of gentleness.

“Who is that young girl?” inquired her ladyship of Miss Wilton. “She’s rather pretty, isn’t she?”



“That’s Mr. Templar’s great-niece, the daughter of his nephew.”

“Oh, yes! she ought to have been a boy. I remember meeting her father once. I was quite a girl at the time. A handsome, brigand-looking man. People told all sorts of stories about him. There was one about a hat. I can’t recollect what it was; but I know he was a sad *mauvais sujet*. I was too young then to be allowed to hear certain things.”

Lady Sophy was approaching that uncertain age when in speaking of the past women always mention themselves as girls.

“I wonder if that was before Louisa’s birth?” said Miss Wilton, with an innocent face. “She is now within a week or two of sweet sixteen.”

Lady Sophy did not hear the question; she was saying to Captain Templar, who had crossed the room in obedience to a smile,—

“Do try and get me some sort of a footstool. I am so tired, and these chairs are so fatiguing.”

Captain Templar went off and returned with a

bundle of cloaks and shawls, which he made into a sort of footstool.

“Too high, you see,” said Lady Sophy, exhibiting her pretty foot on the heap.

Count von Bistönen came to help Captain Templar. Lady Sophy thanked her new attendant in very pretty German, which she had learned when her father was Minister at one of the German courts. Lady Sophy had no more smiles for Captain Templar; she was busy talking of the happy days she had spent in Germany when quite a child.

“You see a thorough-paced coquette,” whispered Claire to Louisa. “An old woman flirting is the most odious sight under heaven.”

“I don’t see anything particular in what she’s doing,” said Louisa.

“Don’t you? Everything about her is acting,” said Claire hotly. “Just look how affectedly she smiles and shakes her head and tries to laugh like a girl. I wish some one would hold a candle close to her face.”

“Hush!” said Louisa, for Lady Sophy had

begun to sing. The song was one which had been her *cheval de bataille* some eighteen years previously; it belonged to youth, required a girl's birdlike notes. She sung it well, but it suited her as little as a coral necklace, a blue sash, and red shoes would have done. Everybody, nevertheless, praised the song and singer, and she was pressed to condescend again to enchant the company.

“Surely one or other of these young ladies will keep me in countenance,” said Lady Sophy, strong in her musical fame. “Miss Wilton I know has a beautiful contralto.”

“I shall be very happy to sing,” said Miss Wilton; “if Louisa Templar will take the first of a duet.”

“I am afraid I shall forget the words,” said Louisa, alarmed.

“I will prompt you,” whispered Claire. “Oh! *do* sing, Louisa; it will enrage Madame Affectation.”

“Now then, don't lose any more time,” said Mr. Templar, as if time was of the greatest consequence\* just then.

Louisa, who stood in awe of her uncle, began at once. Even if her voice had not been as fresh and sweet as it was, she must have charmed every one. She looked like a cherub singing, so earnest, so innocent. The prince could not continue to gaze without falling on his knees to adore her, so he slipped into the deep embrasure of the window. There was such a silence after the duet that Mr. Templar fancied it had been a failure, and to cover so bad a result roused every one by saying,—

“A doleful ditty, indeed! Can't you give us something merry. Lady Sophy, pray cheer us.”

But Lady Sophy was tired and sleepy, and it would be best to go to bed, as they were to be up so early next morning.

“I hope you hate that Lady Sophy as much as I do,” said Claire to Louisa, in the confidence of their bed-chamber.

“No, I don't hate her at all,” answered Louisa, laughing. “She rather amuses me; I never saw any one like her.”

“She's anything but original, I can tell you,”



said Claire; "she's one of the kind of women who flatter men to get them to pay her attention. Of all detestable animals, an old married flirt is the worst."

"Do speak lower, Claire; you don't know that she mayn't be in the next room."

"I wish she *could* hear me; it might do her good," said Claire.

Louisa had not remarked that Count von Bistönen had never left Lady Sophy's side the whole evening. Even had she observed this, she would never have supposed *that* to be the cause of Claire's exasperation against Lady Sophy. After Claire's confidences about a certain unhappy Amedée, Louisa could never suppose that Claire would ever again love any one. Besides Louisa was too happy to be able to understand or sympathize with hatred and malice. She felt at peace with all the world, ready to do any one and every one a service; her last waking thought was one of gratitude to Lady Theodosia for inviting her, and to her mother for allowing her to come, to Chamounix.

“I hope mamma is not feeling lonely to-night,” she said to Claire. “I wish she were going up the Montanvert with us. I wish it was morning—still eight hours before we start—it seems such a time.”

“Go to sleep, and you’ll know nothing about the time,” replied Claire.

Mdlle. Gastineau was up and dressed before she called Louisa.

“I am going downstairs to have a look about me; you have just half-an-hour to dress in—make haste”—and Claire was gone.

As six o’clock struck, Lady Theodosia’s maid came to summon Louisa to breakfast. The prince happened to be on the stair as the young lady was coming down, and they said “good-morning.” He asked permission to be her cavalier in the ascent of the mountain, and she said, “yes,” adding, “What a beautiful day; I am so glad.”

Never did two happier young faces catch the eyes of the travellers flitting to and fro. The prince, however, did not accompany Louisa into the *salle à manger*.

Presently Mr. Templar came in rubbing his hands joyously.

“Such a mon’sous fight,” he exclaimed. “There’s little Lady Sophy giving it like a good one to big Lady Ford. By George, the small one has the best of it; there was a ring round them, by George!”

“What are they quarrelling about?” asked Lady Theodosia.

“My Lady Sophy wants the Spanish saddle, and so does the stout citizeness. Says she,— ‘Only see how heavy I am, my lady. I can’t sit on one of the regular saddles; I can’t get my knee between the pommels; it’s only common humanity to let me have the Spanish saddle. You’re such a slip of a thing, it don’t matter to you.’ Says Lady Sophy,— ‘It’s nothing to me what you can or cannot do with your knee; it’s nothing to you whether I am fat or thin. I bargained for the Spanish saddle, and I am going to have it.’ ‘Indeed, I spoke first,’ says the other; ‘ask this gentleman,’ taking hold of the guide, ‘if I didn’t.’ ‘You shan’t have it, I tell you,’

screamed Lady Sophy, and up she jumped on the mule with the Spanish saddle. ‘Here I shall sit, and there’s an end of it.’ Everybody burst out laughing. The poor fat woman was ready to cry. ‘You can get a chair fastened on a man’s saddle,’ said Miss Gastineau; she’s a good-natured girl, that; she led Lady Ford away, and I do believe Lady Sophy is still sitting triumphant in the Spanish saddle.”

As Mr. Templar finished his story Claire appeared, smiling, as though she had just performed some good action.

During the bustle of the setting off, the prince lifted Louisa on her mule, put her foot into the stirrup and showed her how to hold her reins.

“You are not afraid?” he asked, for Louisa had owned she had never even mounted a donkey. “I shall keep close to you, and a guide will walk at the head of your mule. How splendid your uncle is—he beats us all.” And the two young people laughed merrily.

Mr. Templar was dressed in a green hunting



coat with white corduroys and yellow top-boots, and wore as important an air as if he had had intentions of leading a field.

“Where are the Mitchells?” inquired Lady Theodosia.

“They are gone on, and so is M. von Bistönen.” Claire spoke as if she were quite pleased with the arrangement.

The little cavalcade moved on.

“That girl in the blue frock and straw hat,” said an enthusiastic, very young Englishman, “has the face of an angel.”

“How do you know, Bertie dear? did you ever see an angel?” asked his sister.

“Don’t you be *stoopid*,” was the fraternal reply.

Claire’s mule was the only one which showed any signs of restiveness.

“I think you had better ride foremost, Miss Gastineau,” said Mr. Templar, who, in spite of his hunting costume, did not seem comfortable when his mule began to fidget.

“I will, sir,” returned Claire, and passing him,

and then Louisa, she came up with the prince. "I challenge you, M. le Comte, to a gallop."

"With all my heart, if you can persuade these poor beasts to move out of a walk.

She struck his mule with her switch smartly on the croup, and then her own; the blows were so well aimed that both animals set off at a gallop. They were on the plain which leads to the foot of the mountain.

"Take care," said the prince, laughing, "or you will ride down that lady."

The lady was no other than Lady Sophy, in her Spanish saddle.

"No fear," cried Claire, flushed and breathless. "You go on one side, and I'll go on the other."

As soon as Lady Sophy saw the galloping mules she began to scream. The prince tried to draw in, but he might as well have tugged at a wall as at his mule's mouth. Lady Sophy's guide did his best to pull her beast out of danger, but it flung up its heels, nearly sending Lady Sophy over its head, and then took the lead in the race, Claire following, whipping up with all her strength.

She reached Lady Sophy where the path narrowed. The mules began to kick, and both ladies were thrown to the ground.

Count von Bistönen picked up Claire, who persisted in declaring she was not hurt, though she bit her lips to keep in a cry of pain. Lady Sophy, who had fallen on soft ground, was frightened but not hurt; she, however, resisted all the prince's efforts to lift her up. She said she was mortally hurt, that she was sure her spine was injured. There had very nearly been another catastrophe; for even while Lady Sophy was protesting that she was killed, Mr. Templar, almost standing in his stirrups, came tearing along at full tilt, crying, "Stop him, stop him!"

The prince, leaving Lady Sophy, placed himself right in the middle of the road, waving his hat; the mule stopped with a jerk that nearly sent Mr. Templar over his tail. The whole party were now assembled, and at a stand-still. The guides had caught the ladies' two mules, and there was a consultation as to what was best to be done. Lady Sophy, who still lay on the ground moaning,

was at last persuaded to try and move her arms; they were safe; then to move her feet; then to be raised, and finally to stand.

“You are all right, thank God,” said Mr. Mitchell; “I hope the young lady has escaped as easily?”

“Quite, thank you,” said Claire, though she was aching from head to foot.

“Are you able to go on?” asked Mr. Mitchell of his wife.

“Oh, no, no, no! I’ll never mount a mule again.”

“Then I am afraid you must walk back to the hotel.”

At this juncture, fat Lady Ford, perched on a chair, came on the scene, escorted by her son.

“I say, I have an idea,” said Mr. Mitchell; “we’ll make an exchange with your adversary, Sophy; she can take the Spanish saddle, and give you the chair to be carried home in.”

“No, she shan’t have it,” said Lady Sophy, stoutly.

“Oh! come, you know, we must do something;



we can't spoil everybody's pleasure; either you must ride or be carried."

"I won't ride."

"Very well." Hat in hand, and in the most polite terms, Mr. Mitchell made his request to Lady Ford.

"Indeed, you are very welcome to the chair, sir. I hope your good lady is not much hurt—lucky she is not such a weight as I am."

"She is a lump of Christian Charity," said Mr. Mitchell, going back to Lady Sophy. "I am her knight for evermore."

The Spanish saddle was shifted to the strong, quiet mule, which had been selected for Lady Ford, and Mr. Mitchell and one of the guides placing their poles under the chair, returned to Chamounix with the sulky Lady Sophy.

Claire, quivering with pain, remounted her mule, and once more the party, with the addition of Lady Ford and her son, set out for the Mer de Glace.

"I am afraid your friend is really hurt," said the prince to Louisa. "If she would agree to re-

turn to the hotel, I am sure Von Bistönen would gladly escort her back."

But no! Claire would go on. Caillet was reached without further misadventure, though at every warning of the guides, "Penchez-vous en avant," Mr. Templar, in the excess of his obedience, nearly went over his mule's head. At the fountain of Caillet, Claire was obliged to own she could go no further.

"Louisa had better stay with her friend," said Miss Wilton.

In spite of her affection for Claire, this would have been a sore disappointment to Louisa; nevertheless she agreed at once.

"No, my dear young lady," said Lady Ford; "I am shaken all to a jelly already, and I don't care to see the ice; it was only just to boast I had seen it, you know. I'll keep this poor thing company."

A couch was improvised for Claire with all the shawls the ladies had with them and a couple of jackets from the guides. The only person whose kindness Claire did not seem to remark was that

of Count von Bistönen. She never answered one of his inquiries.

“ This is the last party of pleasure I will ever undertake,” said Lady Theodosia; “ the whole day has been spoiled by the wilfulness of that Miss Claire. What could have put it into her silly head to make a mule gallop?”

“ Young girls will be young girls,” said Mr. Templar.

Louisa felt as if Lady Theodosia threw some of the blame of the disasters caused by Claire on her shoulders, and her spirits began to flag. Nothing, however, could spoil her rapture and surprise at the sight of the Mer de Glace. She could fancy nothing grander, nothing more amazing; and, luckily, there was no one by to mar the impression that “ it was nothing in comparison to something else.”

“ Now, Louisa, remember, we are to have no more foolish tricks,” said Lady Theodosia, more pettishly than Louisa had ever heard her speak.

“ Will you permit me to take charge of Miss

Templar?" said the prince. "I will answer with my life for her safety."

Lady Theodosia bowed stiffly; she felt more inclined to say no, than yes. She was cross, and she knew it, and refrained from speech, as she did not wish to be rude to the young man. As she saw them go away together, taking her silence for consent, she argued thus, inwardly:—

"Louisa is still a child, and he scarcely more than a boy—still—well—they would soon be back in Geneva, and then Mrs. Templar must really be cautioned to look more after her daughter; better send her to school, than let her run wild about the country."

While Lady Theodosia was thus reflecting, and preparing, with the help of two guides, to venture on the Mer de Glace, the subjects of her meditation were already on the ice. They both had poles shod with iron spikes, but the prince held Louisa's left hand fast clasped in his right. They spoke little; their young hearts were too full to speak. An occasional broken phrase fell from the prince's lips—an effort to make Louisa under-



stand the rapture overpowering him. It was the sight of that great glacier, sparkling beneath a sky of unclouded blue, which had revealed to him that he loved. Happiness untold is it, when a sublime scene of nature, or a sublime action of man, is that which quickens the heart. The prince was breathless, like one who has no air to breathe human language, has no articulate sounds wherewith to clothe such sensations as his. It is not a first love which is eloquent.

Lady Theodosia did not care to stand on the ice in thin boots. She could say she had seen all that was to be seen, and therefore she made the guides halloo, to bring in all the stragglers to take some refreshment. No reverie could withstand such shouting.

“ I wish we could find the snow-flower,” said Louisa, as she and her companion turned reluctantly to obey the summons.

“ The soldanella ? ” he said ; “ we must look for it lower down.”

Lady Theodosia was much pleasanter after she had had some lunch. She spoke quite kindly of

Claire, and insisted on Louisa's drinking a glass of champagne.

“ You look pale and tired, my dear child.”

“ No, indeed ; I am not in the least tired,” said Louisa.

The prince's spirits rose, and he told some capital stories of hunting in Norway. He was pleasant to listen to, for he never made himself the hero of the exploits he described.

It was not till the guides gave the signal for departure that any one remarked the absence of Von Bistönen.

“ He is probably gone to look after the ladies at Caillet,” suggested Miss Wilton.

“ Poor souls ! they must be starving,” observed Mr. Templar, as he complacently swallowed another glass of wine.

Thus reminded of the absentees, a packet of the remnants of the eatables was made up and confided to one of the guides, and then the signal for departure was given.

As the accident of the morning had taken from the ladies all inclination to ride down the moun-

tain, the gentlemen, with the exception of Mr. Templar, agreed to walk. On mounting his mule, he said to his son,—

“ Look after your cousin, Miss Templar.”

When the prince saw Captain Templar place himself by Louisa's side, he offered his arm to Lady Theodosia.

They found Lady Ford and the count ravenous. Claire, it was evident, ate against her will.

“ I believe I must have broken some of my bones,” said Claire to Louisa. “ I can't think how I am ever to reach Chamounix.”

There was, indeed, some perplexity as to the means. The guides proposed to cut some sticks to make a litter.

“ Oh! no use for all that fuss,” said Captain Templar, who spoke so seldom as to have got the nickname of “ Le Muet ” from the prince. “ She can be carried ‘ king's-cushion ’ fashion. Mr. Ford and I can manage such a light weight very well.”

“ Perhaps the guides would be safer,” observed Lady Theodosia.

“Why should you trust her to any foreign fellows when she can have honest Englishmen to carry her?”

Luckily, none of the foreign fellows understood Captain Templar.

Claire, half-laughing, half-crying, was carried to the hotel by the two young men.

“Louisa,” called out Lady Theodosia, “now Mr. Ford has gone on with Miss Gastineau, you must remain with Lady Ford; we can’t leave her alone with the guide.”

There was no mistaking that Lady Theodosia expected still to have the assistance of the prince’s arm.

The unfortunately stout lady, whenever her breath permitted, was profuse in her apologies to Louisa. She was not the least afraid to be left alone with her guide, who seemed a very decent person.

“Do run on, my dear young lady, to your party; it’s not my way to be a mar-sport.”

But Louisa had a misty idea that Lady Theodosia’s orders had not been given solely



out of civility to Lady Ford; so she forced a smile, and obeyed her aunt. She saw the prince for a moment on the steps of the hotel.

“ You are very tired, I fear ? ” he said. “ I was obliged to leave you. ”

“ Oh ! yes ; it couldn't be helped, I know. ”

Louisa hurried away, for she felt inclined to cry, without knowing why. When she went up to her room, she found Claire on the bed, groaning.

“ Oh, Louisa ! I am so glad you are come. Do help me off with my things ; I am dying to get into bed. Take care—you hurt—oh ! dear, what a fool I was. I am as stiff as if I had no joints. ”

“ I wonder if we couldn't get a doctor. I am sure something ought to be done for you. Shall I go and ask ? ”

“ Do, for I am one ache. ”

A Chamounix surgeon was sent for, who gave orders for embrocations, and bandages, and rest. This time it was Louisa who proposed to Lady Theodosia to remain upstairs with Claire.

“You are quite right, my dear; she’s your friend, and you know Copus is not in the best of tempers; she’s always cross when we are moving about.”

Copus was Lady Theodosia’s lady’s-maid and tyrant.

The fomentations soothed Claire’s pains, and her spirits were raised by a good supply of chicken and cakes, to the pitch of being able to talk.

“It’s the biter bit,” said she; “but I don’t much mind, for I punished that cat Lady Sophy. I only wish she had fallen on the stones instead of me.”

“You don’t mean you tried to make her mule throw her,” exclaimed Louisa.

“Well, I thought I would give her the chance. How vexed she was to see the fat lady get the saddle at last.”

“Claire, it was too bad; you might have killed her, or been killed yourself.”

“She shouldn’t have interfered with me,” said Claire.

“But how did she interfere with you?” asked Louisa.

Claire turned a deaf ear to the question by asking,—

“Had you a pleasant day?”

“Very,” was the laconic reply.

“It was very cross of Lady Theodosia to leave you to take care of Lady Ford.”

“Somebody must have stayed with her, as her son helped to carry you, and I was the youngest.”

“That wasn’t the reason. I say, Louisa——”

Claire hesitated, for as she spoke the last three words, a look of fear had crept into Louisa’s face. Claire began again: “Louisa, I am older than you, and I know a great deal more of the world than you do. Promise me not to be doing anything foolish while I am tied to my bed and can’t look after you. Girls can’t be too particular, dear; and Gustave would say it was all my fault.”

“I don’t understand you, Claire.” Poor Louisa blushed crimson as she made this assertion.

“And I don’t see what right Gustave has to blame you for anything I choose to do.”

“Why, Louisa, don’t you know as well as I do that Gustave is over head and ears in love with you?”

Louisa’s hand had tried to stop the words on Claire’s lips.

“You are always talking of love,” she said, in a very decided tone of disgust.

“Very well, now remember, Louisa, I shall never interfere again in your affairs. You may get into scrapes and out of them as you can,—I shan’t trouble myself.”

“I don’t mean to get into scrapes,” said Louisa.

“Don’t you?” said Claire, significantly. “Mind you keep to that.” And she turned her face away from Louisa, adding, “Pray don’t stay up here on my account.”

Louisa left the side of the bed, and sat herself down by the window, sad and disconsolate. There was no view to admire, nothing but a large yard bounded by the stables and out-houses of the



hotel. She was angry with Claire, as angry as if Claire had uttered some sacrilegious words; her heart was burning within her. Still perseveringly looking out at the coming and going of stable-boys and guides, she at last distinguished one of the latter who had been hired by the prince. Suddenly he took off his hat and stood bare-headed; he must be talking to a gentleman. Then she distinctly heard him say, "Mais certainement, monsieur." He added something in patois to his comrades, and left the yard.

During the evening Lady Theodosia came into the room to inquire for Mdlle. Gastineau. She sat down for five minutes.

"Lady Sophy had been very sulky," said Lady Theodosia; "but she was now in high good-humour, for Captain Templar and young Ford had made Copus dress them up as women—such absurd figures as they were, to be sure; and now they were making their handkerchiefs into surplices, and painting their thumbs as faces, pretending one was a priest and the other a Scotch parson, preaching such intolerable nonsense."

“Much we are missed downstairs,” exclaimed Claire, when Lady Theodosia was gone.

“Claire,” said Louisa, “don’t be angry any more; I can’t bear to quarrel.” And she stooped and kissed her friend.

“I am not angry, but I mean what I said. I shall leave you to your own devices.”

Claire rather despised Louisa for sueing for peace. Louisa answered,

“Claire, you should not bear malice for so little. I couldn’t help firing up when you said such things. Do promise to interfere, Claire, *do*.”

“But if you never get into a scrape, there will be no necessity for my interference,” said Claire, with a spice of malice.

“Ah! you can’t forgive,” said Louisa, sorrowfully. “What can I say more than that I am very sorry?”

“Well, I’ll forgive and forget if I can, the more easily as I owe you something for my invitation to Chamounix.”

“Not at all,” said Louisa. “Lady Theodosia did that out of her own head.”

“You are a good little thing!” said Claire.

“Not so little,” exclaimed Louisa, with renewed courage; “I am nearly a head taller than you, and to-morrow I shall be sixteen; no one can call me a child after to-morrow.”

Miss Wilton paid the two girls a ceremonious visit as she was going to bed. She was either cross, or out of spirits, or sleepy—perhaps all three.

“Louisa, are you asleep?” cried Claire, an hour after the lights had been put out.

“No.”

“What are you thinking of?”

“I am wondering whether you will be able to go to the Bossons to-morrow,” replied Louisa.

“I *will* go, otherwise you will have to remain with me. Set your heart at rest on that subject. Now, then, I am going to tell you *my* thoughts. You know, or you don't know, that men say women are always jealous and envious of one another—it's true, and it isn't true. A woman is only spiteful to another woman when they are rivals; if it weren't for rivalry women would be

the most amiable of living creatures, and to think they can hate one another for such a snipe of a fellow as Captain Templar ! It passes belief."

Louisa laughed and said,—

"Thank you in the name of my cousin."

"With all my faults," went on Claire, "I believe I am the only woman friend you'll ever have, Louisa. You are too pretty to have friends. Now, that Miss Wilton, who is clever enough, hates you and every woman breathing, for the sake of that disagreeable little man; she fancies we all admire him as she does. If there were no men, women would be angels. I am sure Miss Wilton told Lady Theodosia to keep you up here."

"No, she did not. I asked to be allowed to stay with you."

"Good-night," said Claire; "and dream that Miss Wilton is your most loving and obedient servant."

The next day, the 22nd of September, Louisa's sixteenth birthday, was an era in her life. Claire was as good as her word, and bravely appeared at



the breakfast-table. Louisa had gone down earlier, and meeting Captain Templar, had begged him to secure the Spanish saddle for Claire.

“She is so good,” said Louisa; “she is determined, whether it hurts her or not, to go to the Bossons, for fear I should have to stay at home with her.”

“You are two very nice girls, both of you,” said the usually taciturn captain. “I promise that Miss Claire shall have the saddle. You may tell her from me that I admire her eyes extremely.”

Louisa was thoroughly surprised, and something intimidated by this lively speech from Le Muet.

The prince did not seek to be by Louisa's side on the way to the Bossons. This glacier has perhaps now, what it had then, something the appearance of ruins. An arch led into a cave of ice. Claire and Louisa, accompanied by the gentlemen, went in. Louisa knew that the prince was by her, she felt one of her hands clasped in his, and her heart seemed to bound into her throat

and half choke her. It was only for a minute, and then they were all in the bright light again. When the prince released her hand, Louisa saw a small folded paper in his.

“ This is your birthday,” he said ; “ and this is my gift. I picked it myself last night—my guide showed me where to find it.” And he gave her a perfect specimen of the soldanella—the flower she had wished for the day before.

She received it in silence ; he did not see where she put it for safety, for he turned away as he gave it to her. Louisa went to Claire, and walked by her friend’s side all the way back to the hotel. Once more that day Louisa found the prince close to her.

“ The sight ” of the afternoon was to be that of the setting sun behind Mont Blanc.

“ It is all over now,” sighed Louisa.

“ What is all over ? ” asked the prince.

“ We set out early to-morrow morning, and it has been so happy here. I wish I had not seen the mountain looking so ghastly—it seemed to die before us, didn’t it ? ”

The prince had nothing consolatory to say in reply. All day he had been trying to think what was right to do, at least he thought he had been striving to do this. On the contrary, he had been very sincerely trying to make pleasure and duty agree; he had failed, as people are apt to do in that attempt. His last waking thoughts were—  
“I must let circumstances guide me. Dear, sweet Louisa, I would not do you an injury for the world. Ah! if I were not a prince.”

## CHAPTER XI.

## END OF THE IDYLL.

THE first days after Louisa's return from Chamounix, she was restless and out of spirits; it seemed impossible for her to remain any time in the same place. She went from the house to the garden, from the garden to the house. The least noise made her start; the tears started to her eyes for the slightest cause; she felt tired without having done aught to tire her.

One evening Mrs. Templar, who had been watching her for some minutes, asked her what was the matter with her?

“Nothing, mamma,” answered Louisa.

“You don't seem such friends with Claire as before your trip.”

“Oh, yes! indeed.”



“Then I suppose you are fretting because you have no gaiety in view. It’s a poor return to me for having allowed you to accept the invitation; young ladies have a way of keeping all their agreeable qualities for strangers, and of sulking at home.”

“Indeed, mamma, I am not sulky. I have felt done up; that’s all. I will sing you some of your favourite songs; shall I, mamma?”

“If you are fatigued, you had better go to bed.”

“I am not so bad as that.” And Louisa went to the piano and did her best. But her mother’s manner had not tended to make her more cheerful, and, it must be owned, she sang in a doleful tone.

It was the ninth day since her return from Chamounix—a beautiful bright Sunday. Louisa had done as she often did, accompanied the Gastineaux to the church in Geneva, Mrs. Templar being glad of any excuse to avoid the long walk. Instead of going into the house when the Gastineaux left her at the gate of La Forêt, she went to the end of the field, where a little summer-house

overhung the high-road. She had not been there many minutes when she saw the prince coming along. She drew herself out of sight, and sat down as breathless as though she were frightened. She was still wondering whether she had been seen, when she found the prince standing by her. He had easily climbed the low wall. They were both embarrassed. He asked her several questions, without waiting for any answer, talked of the heat and dust, laughing awkwardly. At last he took a long breath, and exclaimed,—

“This has been the happiest summer of my life. I shall never be so happy again; but everything, pleasant or unpleasant, comes to an end one day or other.”

Louisa understood at once and said,—

“You are going away, I suppose?”

“Yes—letters——” He did not finish that phrase, but burst out, “I am dreadfully sorry to go.”

“Are you?” And Louisa involuntarily turned to look at him. She could not guess that she was very pale.

He stamped his foot, and said quickly and loudly,—

“I hope you will forget me very soon. I don't deserve one single thought from you; but I am not a good-for-nothing fellow; don't let any one make you believe that.” And the great strong young man, covering his face, sobbed aloud.

“Pray, pray, don't,” and Louisa laid her hand softly on his arm. “There's nothing for you to be so sorry about.”

“Remember,” he said, looking at her with swollen, reddened eyes, “that if ever I can do anything for you, you must tell me. I would give my right hand, half of whatever I may possess, to hear you say that I had helped to make you happy.”

She said, in a very low voice, “Thank you.”

“Will you shake hands with me?” he said, and held out both his hands.

She laid hers in his outstretched palms.

“You promise you will not let any one make you think ill of me. I swear to God I have always respected you in my thoughts, as I do the

Holy Virgin." A great hot tear fell on the back of her neck as he bent over her. "I am not my own master, dearest, sweetest Louisa, and the more I care for you, the more injury I might do you, and I would rather die than harm you! just say you don't hate me."

"No, indeed, I do not."

"I must go; I gave my word only to say good-by."

"Good-by," repeated Louisa.

He let go her hands, and left the summer-house.

She sat down utterly bewildered. Suddenly she heard the steps of some one running; she looked up, and there was the prince again.

"I came back to see if you were crying," he exclaimed, wringing her hand. "I can't bear the idea of your being sorry; tell me you don't care a straw for me! tell me that I am a stupid coxcomb to dare to think you do."

"I don't care so very much," said Louisa, making an effort to say the words with a smile.

"Will you promise—promise faithfully," he went on in a hoarse voice, "that if you ever need



a friend to help you, you will send for me. I'll never fail you, so help me God."

"I promise," she said. "Don't come back any more."

He lingered.

"And you don't hate me?"

"No."

"God bless you," he whispered, and once more left the summer-house.

Louisa heard his step in the road beneath, and then she took her way to the house. She went slowly, for suddenly she felt as if all strength had left her knees; she was glad to hold by any shrub that bordered the way. She crept up to her own room, and she lay down trembling on her bed.

In the meantime, Lady Theodosia had been enlightening Mrs. Templar as to what her ladyship had seen with her own eyes, and what Miss Wilton and her maid Copus had seen with theirs at Chamounix. There is no necessity to give Lady Theodosia's recapitulation of the idyll recorded in our last chapter.

“The prince is a very fine young man, though he is a foreigner,” continued her ladyship, “and I wish for Louisa’s sake he had been only Count von Schaunitz. I have said nothing of what I told you either to Mr. Templar or Marmaduke—these sort of affairs are best managed by women. But when I took leave of his serene highness at Chamounix, I invited him to come and lunch with me on his return to Geneva. I was sure the expectation of meeting Louisa would bring him immediately. He made his appearance the very morning after we reached home. I managed to get every one out of the way, and once we were *tête-à-tête*, I began by various inquiries as to his native land, until I got him into a description of the grand-ducal court. Then I said, bluntly enough, that I supposed he was making the tour of Europe previous to his marriage. He reddened—stammering out some evasive answer. I begged his pardon for my indiscretion, but that my excuse was the having read several paragraphs in the papers on that subject. It was a transparent white lie, and he knew it was a lie. I was re-

solved, however, to give him his lesson. 'It wouldn't be fair,' I said, 'if the incognito of princes, or the secret of their matrimonial engagements, was too well preserved. Doubtless he recollected the fable of the boys and the frogs. What was play to one party was death to the other.' 'How does your ladyship apply that fable to me?' he asked, angrily. I answered that I left the application to his own penetration. 'I will not affect to misunderstand you any longer,' he replied; 'no word has passed my lips to the young lady in question, that angels might not have heard.' 'Of that I was quite certain,' I said, 'but——' He interrupted me with 'Yes, yes, I know what you are going to say; you are quite right to take care of her.'"

He stopped a moment, then went on in a voice that showed he really felt what he expressed: 'I pay dearly for my rank; never shall I see any one like her again; neither church nor priests can do me as much good as only being in her company has done; she has made me loathe everything that is not as pure and lovely as her-



self.' I really did not know what to answer. He touched me, I assure you. After a while he said, 'Well, Lady Theodosia, what do you require of me?'

"'You must give up seeing her,' I replied (we both avoided the poor child's name); 'indeed, the kindest thing your highness could do, would be to leave Geneva at once.' 'Very well,' he answered, 'I shall go, but not without bidding her farewell.' I said, 'That's exactly what I must beg you not to do.' 'I *must* say good-by to her,' he said, doggedly. 'No one shall persuade me to leave the idea rankling in her memory that I was a heartless fellow.' I proposed to give her any message from him; I assured him I would do it as kindly as he could desire. No, he was determined to see her—*he* could bear any pain better were it given by her hand.

"'I was sure,' I said, laughing, 'the young lady was not in any danger of the suffering he supposed. Her vanity might have been tickled by his attentions, but that he might trust my experience, that she did not yet know that she



had a heart.' 'Then there can be no reason for any interdict as to my saying farewell,' he returned, sharply; 'you won't dissuade me, Lady Theodosia, and I tell you frankly, I will see her, once more. I don't want to see her alone—what I have to say, I should be glad to say before the whole world. She shall know I am not a selfish brute. She shall know that it is an agony for me to leave her.' I said, 'You promise that you will quit Geneva after this one interview?' 'You have my word already—thank you,' he added, interrupting me as I was beginning to say that I would arrange that he should see Louisa.—'thank you, I will find or make the opportunity for myself.' He bowed rather haughtily, I must say, but I forgive him. He left the room without another word. Count von Bistönen came to me an hour ago, to announce that he and the prince leave Geneva this evening; so, of course, the meeting has taken place."

Mrs. Templar had listened in unbroken silence to Lady Theodosia. She looked very angry, and said,—

“I shall take very good care that Louisa does not play any more such tricks again.”

“Poor child! she played no tricks,” said Lady Theodosia; “her beauty alone is in fault.”

“Pardon me, Lady Theodosia; no man is ever forward with a modest girl, let her be ever so handsome. When men flirt it is always the woman’s fault.”

“I know there is some such maxim in Fordyce’s sermons to young women,” said Lady Theodosia; “the maxims and sermons of an old man. Elderly people like you and me, my dear, have forgotten what it was to be young and admired; besides, no preux chevalier could have shown more respect for the lady of his thoughts than his young highness.”

Mrs. Templar smiled the mockery of a smile as she replied,—

“I cut my wisdom teeth too long ago, as you just now reminded me, to have much relish for these romantic affairs. As for any love on Louisa’s side, it is preposterous to speak of such a thing. Some girls of her age I don’t say but might have such

feelings. Louisa, thank goodness, is not a precocious young lady."

"I don't think she is; however, my advice to you is, the least said on the matter the soonest mended." And so saying, Lady Theodosia took an icy cold leave of Mrs. Templar. The ladies, indeed, parted with feelings of mutual dislike.

As soon as Lady Theodosia was gone Mrs. Templar went in search of Louisa. The poor child's pale, scared face induced Mrs. Templar to put off her intended lecture. She could not, however, refrain from saying,—

"What freak is this, your lying down at this time of day? Are you ill?"

"No, mamma."

"Then get up, and come down to your dinner."

When Louisa wished her mother good-night, she said in a low voice,—

"Indeed, mamma, I have done nothing wrong."

"I am glad you have a quiet conscience—there, go to bed."

And this was all Mrs. Templar ever said to Louisa in allusion to the prince. In fact, she



was at a loss what to say, for the more she thought over Lady Theodosia's account, the less she saw reason to blame Louisa. And then, after all, the principal offender had been a prince—a prince who would one day reign over an independent territory, and Mrs. Templar was inclined to be more indulgent to the errors of princes than to those of artisans.

On the first of October, the shutters of the Villa Andreossey were closed. Mr. Templar, in taking leave of Louisa, had presented her with a bank-note of fifty pounds, and Lady Theodosia had given her some trinkets of which she was tired. Captain Templar's parting gift was a little white poodle which he called Prince—Louisa changed its name to Chamounix.

Not a word as to any future meeting had either Lady Theodosia or Mr. Templar spoken to Mrs. Templar, nor yet to Louisa, for Mrs. Templar inquired of her daughter if they had. The adieux had been without even a conventional hope of the kind.

Mrs. Templar was disappointed; how much so,



she never told. She had always looked forward to Louisa's being introduced into the great English world by Lady Theodosia. Standing, as she was, as to her own dignity, Mrs. Templar had intended, if Lady Theodosia would undertake to chaperone Louisa, to remain in the background herself. Nay, more, she would have given all her income, save what was necessary to keep soul and body together, to allow Louisa an opportunity of figuring in the rank to which she was, by birth, entitled. Suspicious, vindictive, and implacable, Mrs. Templar had nevertheless a great capability of self-sacrifice, but her self-sacrifice always seemed more like a self-inflicted penance, than flowing from a generous affection, happier to give than to receive. Mrs. Templar did noble things now and then; but she effaced their merit by considering those for whom they were done as debtors, and whom, ever after, she was ready on the slightest provocation, to reproach with what they owed her.

## CHAPTER XII.

## CHÂTEAU QUI PARLE, FEMME QUI ÉCOUTE.

LOUISA had been nearer the truth than she was herself aware, when she said to the prince by way of consoling him: "I don't care very much." She had felt the mere vague preference of a girl scarcely sixteen, for the first agreeable young man who pays her special attention. It had been a mere flash of youth; nevertheless she was not after that trip to Chamounix, and the ensuing interview in the summer-house, exactly what she had been before. It said much for the temper of her character that her first grief had done her good, not harm; it had made her more thoughtful for others, more tender in her obedience to her mother.

The whole romantic episode was somehow or other known to all Geneva; it would really seem as though stones and trees could whisper what passes before them. The comments on the incident depended on the peculiar disposition of the commentator; the world's ear is large and eager, and the world's tongue harsh and venomous. In this instance, however, it was Mrs. Templar and Lady Theodosia who were blamed; and Louisa pitied. In vain did Claire reiterate that Louisa never cared for the prince, nor the prince for Louisa; and that she who was Louisa's intimate friend, and had been a witness of all that occurred, must be the best judge. The world of Geneva persisted in the judgment it had formed, and even accused Mdlle. Gastineau of being actuated by jealousy of her friend in her denials. One person alone tried with earnest goodwill to believe Claire's assertions, and that person was Gustave.

Louisa had still continued to teach him English up to the month of November, but the lessons had been confined to the Saturdays and Sundays;

the rest of the week Gustave returned too late for any meetings at the swing, and Louisa excused herself from going over on the other evenings to Les Vignes, saying that she could not leave her mother so much alone. Perhaps she had not forgotten Claire's assertion about Gustave, for though kind and gentle to him, it is quite sure that her manner was more reserved than it had been three months previously. In fact, Gustave perceived that Louisa had completely passed out of childhood.

“You know enough of English now to go on by yourself,” said Louisa the day that she complained that it was too cold to sit out of doors. “Why don't you talk and read to your aunt?”

“In other words, you don't wish to teach me any more?”

“No, I do not mean that; I will try to give you a lesson every Saturday afternoon at your own house.”

Claire was scarcely better satisfied with Louisa than Gustave; she openly reproached her with being changed, with having grown reserved;



and, as always happens in such cases, the reproaches only served to increase the evil complained of. Claire's sharp speeches destroyed all that confidence which is the charm of intimacy. Gustave also occasionally indulged in ironical inuendoes, which brought tears to Louisa's eyes; the which Gustave no sooner perceived, than he added to her discomfort by his vehement expressions, and his passionate prayers for forgiveness. All this tended to keep Louisa more at home. She borrowed some books of history from Mr. Gastineau's library, and unaided, set herself heartily to work to improve her mind.

All at once Claire's ill-humour vanished, her scoldings ceased. She began again to send tiny notes to her dear Loo-loo, about everything and nothing; she was always inviting Louisa to go on shopping expeditions to Geneva, or for a drive along the shores of the lake; or else the dear child must come over and have a singing lesson.

One day Mrs. Templar startled Louisa by saying, "So your friend has a new flirtation on

hand." How did Mrs. Templar, who so seldom put her foot out of her own premises, know this? Noticing Louisa's astonishment, Mrs. Templar added: "My eyes are not very large, but they see uncommonly well. This time I believe Miss Claire will snare her bird: he is young and stupid enough to walk into the net."

The mother's words grated harshly on the daughter's ears. Sour elderly people have no mercy in flagellating the hearts of the young, with their cruel knowledge of poor human nature.

"When did you find it out, mamma?" asked Louisa, thus ingenuously admitting the accusation, and the faithfulness of the description.

"Never mind. Don't engage yourself to act as bridesmaid, for it won't be in your power to keep your promise. We are going away."

Louisa flushed with surprise and something with pleasure also, at the prospect of a coming change.

"We are going back to Paris," announced Mrs. Templar.

“ Oh ! how glad I am ! We shall see dear M. de Blacourt, and Denis and Marie again. Mamma, I wonder if we could find Félicie ? ”

Most unpleasant reminiscences were connected with this last name. Mrs. Templar answered waspishly : “ So that’s all you care for leaving your dear Gastineaux ? Well, my dear, your feelings will never hurt your health ; so much the better for you. ” And then Mrs. Templar walked away to her own room in excellent humour with herself.

This conversation took place on a Saturday, not long before Louisa’s usual hour for going to Les Vignes to give Gustave his lesson. She clambered over the well without delay, to make known the prodigious news, that they were going to leave La Forêt, going back to Paris. As she entered the Gastineaux’ court-yard, Claire called softly from an upstairs window : “ Louisa, don’t go into the salon, come up by the back-stairs to my room. ”

When Louisa saw Claire’s face, she guessed that something out of the common had happened.



“Louisa! I am engaged,” exclaimed Claire. “He is richer than I expected. Oh, Louisa! I do believe that I shall be happy.”

“I am sure I hope so, dear Claire; M. Hébert looks very amiable.”

“Papa and mamma are so pleased. Papa says he would have chosen him out of a hundred for me, and then the best of all is to come, we are to live in Paris. Henri is junior partner of a great commission house, and the head of the business lives in the country: Henri is going away almost directly to choose an apartment for us, and it is to be furnished as I like.”

“How lucky!” exclaimed Louisa in her turn; “for, do you know, Claire, mamma has just told me that we are to go back to Paris? I came over directly to tell you.”

“Why are you going?” asked Claire.

“I can’t tell, for mamma just told me we were to go, and no more, and you know she can’t bear to be asked questions.”

“Well, I am very glad for my own sake!” said Claire; “but what will Gustave say?”



“He’ll say he is very sorry, I suppose,” said Louisa, in a tone of impatience.

“Fie, Louisa! you are very ungrateful: anybody can see that Gustave is pining to death about you. His eyes are twice as big as they were.”

“Claire, I wish you would not say such things.”

“Well, I won’t, since they anger your ladyship,” said Claire, laughing. “Come and look at the presents Henri has given me.” And she dragged Louisa to a secretaire and pulled out a handsome gold bracelet, with half a dozen little hearts pendent from it. “I mean to put Henri’s hair, and papa’s and mamma’s, in three of them. How nice it is to have some one who thinks more of you than of all the rest of the world!”

“Do you love him already?” asked Louisa.

“I respect him very much,” said Claire, with great gravity; “and I am sure I shall love him as a husband; the first necessity in marriage is to be able to respect your husband.”

Claire was repeating her father’s words to herself.

“Mamma guessed what was going to happen,” said Louisa.

“Then she must be a witch,” replied Claire, “for she never saw Henri and me together, that I am sure of.”

This allusion to her mother’s penetration had recalled Mrs. Templar’s other observations to Louisa, and made her also remember Claire’s confidences about Amedée and Count von Bistönen; but Louisa had no more judgment than usually falls to the lot of girls of sixteen, and in her interest in a real case of an offer of marriage, she did not reason on the unsteadiness of the feelings of the bride elect.

“We are to be married before Christmas,” said Claire. “I wonder if you’ll be still here, and, above all, I wonder why you are going to Paris?”

Claire’s speculations were here interrupted by a summons downstairs.

“Come with me, Louisa, and get over the ceremony of congratulating the bridegroom to be.”

“What ought I to say?” exclaimed Louisa, hanging back.

“ Oh ! anything ; mumble something about happiness, but don't offer to shake hands. Henri is very French, and would feel quite awkward. You should have seen him the other day, when Madame Mercier, who is an Englishwoman, put out her hand ; he gave her his left in such a grotesque way ; I almost laughed out. He said afterwards that she ought to have learned better manners by this time.”

Louisa, on entering the drawing-room, fixed her eyes on Madame Gastineau, and kept them so fixed, under some sort of impression that M. Hébert must feel ashamed before a stranger. She kissed Claire's placid mother, whispering that she wished her joy.

“ That won't do, Louisa,” called out Claire, to Louisa's amazement ; “ you must do your duty.”

So summoned, Louisa went forward to the affianced couple, looking so prettily shy that M. Hébert was well enough satisfied merely to gaze at her. He made her a fluent oration of thanks for the congratulations she had not spoken. When he had ended, Claire said,—



“We are going to take a walk, and you must come and chaperone us, Louisa.”

“It’s the day for Gustave’s lesson,” replied Louisa, in a whisper, “and I shouldn’t like to disappoint him.”

“We can go and meet him,” answered Claire, also in a low voice, “and I depute you to tell him the great news. I mean Henri to help Gustave,” added Claire, confidentially: “he shall take him as a clerk or something. I have a sort of liking for Gustave, though he never did me the honour of falling in love with me.”

The trio sauntered down the road to Geneva. It was one of those grey days common enough at the beginning of winter; the clouds of that particular neutral tint, which amateur sketchers find easiest to paint. There had been a frost in the morning, for you could see every now and then a heap of withered, fallen leaves, bordered and sprinkled with what looked like silver. It was not an unpleasant day: it had the charm of perfect tranquillity. They were within a bow-shot of Geneva before they met Gustave. The



bookseller's clerk was a head taller than M. Hébert: a long line would have served to portray Gustave's figure, so thin and straight was he. In consequence of this meagreness, his head, covered with a thicket of black hair, seemed out of proportion with his shoulders; his face was haggard, and his brow lined, though there was only as yet a down on his upper lip. Claire often hit the mark when she said,—

“ I declare, Gustave, one would think you were half-starved, that you had nothing to eat all day.”

The truth was, that, in furtherance of the object he had at heart, Gustave put aside almost all the allowance made him by his uncle for his breakfast and dinner during the week, contriving to keep under the cravings of a growing youth's appetite with bread and water in the winter, and bread and fruit in the summer. He only dined once a week, and that was on Sunday. M. Henri Hébert, so plump, fresh-coloured and faultlessly attired, Gustave so lank, dark, with clothes that looked as if they had been made for somebody

else, were types of prosperity and adversity. Louisa, who had more sensibility than her mother believed, was quite grieved for the supposed mortification Gustave must feel in being contrasted with so fine a gentleman as Claire's fiancé. She went so far as to admire Gustave's courage in not being as abashed as she was for him. It happened to Gustave in this instance, as it so constantly does to every one of us: we get credit for the doing that which we have not done, and none at all for that we have done.

Gustave had not remarked M. Hébert's dress; nor had he, would it have exercised any influence over him, or made him draw any comparison between himself and the wearer. Every day of his life, Gustave was in close propinquity with real fine folks. Geneva is a sort of halfway-house, at which most travellers of distinction stop; and stopping, they buy books. One of the distinctive marks of the town is the number of booksellers' shops. Gustave had been politely spoken to by English peers and peeresses; they had asked his opinion and abided by his recom-

mendation. In some respects, Gustave was already a man of the world. While Louisa was admiring his courageous indifference to dress, Gustave had never cast a thought on his own or M. Hébert's. Hitherto he had kept out of the Parisian's way, because he was in no wise interested in him. The moment Claire formally introduced him to M. Hébert, he understood that he was bowing to one who was about to become his cousin's husband. After the two young men had exchanged a few insignificant words, Claire and her lover walked slowly, to let Louisa and Gustave precede them.

"Claire bid me tell you that she is going to be married," began Louisa.

"So I guessed," replied Gustave. "I wonder if she has a little bit of heart left to give M. Hébert."

Louisa did not attempt to unravel this riddle.

Gustave went on,—

"Well, she has always been good-natured to me, and on her wedding-day she shall have my prayers for her happiness."



“She says she is certain that she shall be happy,” said Louisa.

“We know she is not difficult to please,” returned Gustave.

Here they heard Claire’s strong, high voice, saying,—

“We must have a good-sized salon; women’s dresses never show to advantage in a small room.”

“I suppose the marriage will take place soon?” said Gustave.

“Before Christmas, Claire told me.”

“You will find it dull without her.”

Louisa hesitated; she had a distinct consciousness that the news of her leaving Geneva would pain Gustave; lately she had never felt easy in his company, and she had a growing aversion to anything resembling a tête-à-tête with him, and this though his manner was in general almost painfully humble to her. Avoiding a direct reply, she asked,—

“Do you find your English of the use you expected?”



“Yes, my master promises me an increase of pay. I am very grateful to you, Louisa.”

“Oh! don’t speak in that way, Gustave. You learn so easily it’s no trouble to teach you.”

He was watching every word that fell from her lips; he interrupted her by saying,—

“I can scarcely believe that it is only six months since you gave me my first lesson. You have suddenly started into a grown-up young lady.”

“One must grow up some day or other,” she said. “I wish I were not so ignorant as I am, and that’s the reason I am glad we are going to Paris, for there I shall have masters.”

“Going to Paris!” repeated Gustave; “glad you are going to Paris!” he reiterated.

“I am not glad to leave the good Gastineaux and you, Gustave; but I do long to have some education.”

“Since when did you know this?” he asked, his mind intent only on the fact that she was going away.

“Mamma only told me this afternoon.”

“And when do you go?”

“Soon, I think, for mamma said I must not promise to be one of Claire’s bridesmaids.”

Gustave asked no more questions; indeed he did not open his mouth again during the rest of the walk.

“I am afraid it is too late for your lesson,” said Louisa, as they stood at the gate waiting for the lingering lovers. Young as she was, she read the signs of repressed grief on Gustave’s face, and tears started into her eyes. It is generally unlucky for themselves that daughters of Eve are all so impatient of the sight of suffering in men, and that they are so impetuous in their wish to console. To think now what a difference it would have made in Louisa’s life had she not looked at Gustave, and looking, had not been moved to put out her little hand, but had said, “Good-evening,” and tripped away?

As it was, Claire and her lover came up— Claire in high glee. Hébert had been promising her *carte blanche* for the furnishing of her new home. At that instant of her own supreme con-

tentment, Claire wished everybody to be as happy as she herself was. There was not much penetration required to perceive that something was distressing Gustave, and Claire supposed that she knew what would best console him. To Louisa's "Good-night," she said,—

“What nonsense, your going away now! I am sure Mrs. Templar will expect you to stay and have tea with us. At all events, if you are afraid to stop without leave, I will take Henri over the wall, and introduce him to her—that will please her; and then I'll beg her to allow you to spend the evening with us. In the meantime go and give Gustave his lesson—there's no one in the drawing-room.”

Louisa said, years and years after, in speaking of the scene that ensued,—

“I said what I did not wish to say; I did what I did not wish to do; I felt as if I could not help myself.”

Louisa went up to Claire's boudoir, and brought down the English book Gustave was reading with her; it was *Evelina*, belonging to Madame Gas-



lineau, who had brought it some five-and-twenty years before from England. Gustave found his place, tried to read a sentence, and fairly broke down.

“What frightens you?” he said, after a pause; “you are trembling.”

“Trembling!” repeated Louisa; “no, indeed, I am not.” And she kept her eyes riveted on the page of the open book.

“I had a letter from my mother this morning,” he continued; “I want you to read it.”

“I shall be very glad.” And she looked up with that peculiar relaxing of the features which follows relief from apprehension. She took the letter he held out to her, and bent her head over it. Madame Gastineau wrote of her gratitude to Louisa for her kindness to Gustave, making many allusions to her charming ways as a child. The letter ended with an earnest prayer that Miss Templar might be as happy as she certainly deserved to be. All the while Louisa was reading, she heard Gustave’s loud breathing—felt his hot breath on her neck. She shivered as one



does when one hears those mysterious sounds in woods or plains which precede a coming storm. Louisa shrank into herself. She might have got up and left the room; she might have gone to the window and spoken to M. and Madame Gastineau—she could see them in the garden; she might have desired Gustave to leave her; she might have done a dozen things which she did not do. She did as the canary did the other day. It was in a cage hanging under a trellis. A sparrow-hawk soaring past, lighted on the bird's gilded prison. The canary had only to go to the opposite side, or only to remain in the centre of the perch, and it was safe. It might have done so, yet it did not. Heaven knows what the fascination of peril is; but it went shuddering until within reach of the hawk's cruel beak.

Louisa did not even draw further away from Gustave; perhaps she had a dread of wounding him by any show of discomfort. She returned the letter, saying,—

“Thank you for letting me read it. Your

mother thinks far too much of the little service I have rendered you. When you write to your mother, give her my love, and say that I have not forgotten the old days in Paris."

She looked so tender and pitiful as she said this—she looked so like the sweet child of his boyhood,—that the temptation was irresistible: Gustave suddenly kissed her on the cheek.

"You should not," exclaimed she, flushing, and pushing him away.

"Louisa," exclaimed Gustave:—"Louisa, I wish I was not such a rough fellow. You used to love me once, in spite of my rags. You would sit on my knee, and put your beautiful little rosy face against my great ugly dark one."

"I was a child then," answered Louisa, gravely.

"Don't be angry with me," he went on; "you don't know how I love you—I would die for you. If it had not been for love of you, Louisa, I should have been dead long ago. Mine was such a wretched home: at twelve years old I remember planning to kill myself, and but for you I should have done it one day after my father had beaten

me till I was bruised from head to foot, and for no reason except that my shoes were worn out. I had gone to the hole I slept in, I had fastened a rope round my neck, when I heard your little feet coming slowly and wearily up the stair—the steps were so steep for you; and then you tapped impatiently at the door, calling out, ‘Gustave! Gustave! come here directly, and teach me my lesson.’ You saved my life then.”

“I don’t think that children have such happy lives as I hear people always boasting they have,” observed Louisa. “I am sure I do not wish to be little again”—she could go along with Gustave’s feelings so far.

“I never loved any one really but you, Louisa,” said Gustave, passionately. “I could not love my father, he was so cruel; nor my mother, she was so unjust to me for Ernest’s sake. If you are to begin to hate me now, it’s no use for me to live.”

“Why do you say such things? Why should I hate you?”

“Now suppose, Louisa,—one may suppose what



one likes,—suppose a man just in such a situation as I am in now, were, by dint of talent and industry, to raise himself,—others as humbly born as I am have risen to be prime ministers of a great country,—suppose a man were to overcome all difficulties, all obstacles for your sake, that you were sure that you had been the spur to all his exertions, that all his thoughts had been centred in you, that he had fought and struggled until he had gained an honourable position, all in the one hope of winning you,—would it make you . . . .”

He stopped, for he saw alarm in every feature of the face he was so anxiously gazing on.

“No,—it’s no use to ask the question,” he said, abruptly; “you could never forget I had been a shop-boy.”

The agony of his voice as he said this, the tears that rolled over his cheeks, banished every other feeling from Louisa’s tender little heart save that of compassion. She said, unconscious of the strength of her assertion,—

“Indeed you are quite wrong, Gustave.”



“ Am I? Oh! say so again; Louisa, say so again; you don't guess all I have suffered this summer; it has made me more of a scarecrow than ever.”

This speech drove the colour from Louisa's cheeks; the growing duskiness did not allow Gustave to see her change of colour.

“ Look here, Louisa,” went on Gustave. “ I have something worth in my brains. I have tried what I could do. I sent two articles to the *Revue de Genève*, and they have been printed; and I sent a story to one of the newspapers, for a feuilleton, and it is accepted, and will come out shortly. No one, except the editor, has any idea that I am the author.”

“ An author!—a real author! Oh! Gustave, how glad I am—I am quite proud. Won't you tell your uncle?—I should like to tell everybody.” Louisa spoke with enthusiasm.

“ It's all for you, Louisa. If I live, I will make you proud of your old playfellow.

He leaned towards her, and, in a choking voice, said,—

“ Do not be angry again. Louisa, Louisa, give me some hope to live on ! ”

Louisa's brightness faded ; she sat as if charmed to her chair ; she was frightened, and yet she was softened. A man's pleading has an effect on a woman's nerves, if not on her heart ; and Louisa was not a woman, but an inexperienced girl, who had a certain amount of affection for Gustave ; he had filled the place of an elder brother to her, and she had cared for him, without ever thinking how much.

She faltered out, “ I am sure I ought not to let you talk so to me, Gustave. ”

“ Why not ? I have not asked you to marry me—I should be a fool if I did. No ; I plead for very little, Louisa. I would serve twice seven years to win you—and think it only too little. All I ask is, that you promise to give me time to make my way in the world. Oh ! Louisa, don't refuse, or you will kill me ! You have the power for good or evil over me ; you may make or mar my life. Be merciful, or the consequences be on your head. ”

“ But I don’t understand what it is you want me to do,” said Louisa, distressed and puzzled.

“ Promise you will not marry any one for three years,” said Gustave, quickly.

“ I am going to school ; there’s not the least chance of my marrying,” said Louisa, almost laughing.

“ Laugh if you will, but promise to wait for three years.”

“ I don’t mind giving you *that* promise, if it will make you happy,” said Louisa ; “ but I don’t see much use in it.”

“ You promise,” he said, holding out his hand.

“ I promise,” she said, smiling. “ You silly Gustave ! ”

“ Now then, a pledge,” he exclaimed, and suddenly cut off one of her glossy curls.

“ You should have asked my leave first,” she said, drawing away her hand.

“ It will be my only comfort when we are separated,” returned Gustave—“ the only proof I shall have of your promise.”

“ You make me sorry I was so foolish as to

give you any promise," she said, and left her seat.

She went to the window, and M. and Madame Gastineau, catching sight of her, came in.

Meanwhile, Claire and M. Hébert had paid their visit to Mrs. Templar, and had brought back permission for Louisa to spend the evening at Les Vignes. Claire was much too pre-occupied with her own concerns to take notice of Louisa's unusual silence, or of Gustave's equally unusual excitement. Claire was like small fireworks with her lover. She was for ever exploding into some coquettish command—demanding a stool or cushion, or scolding or rallying him. She behaved as a child does with a new toy; had M. Hébert been breakable, she would certainly have broken him to pieces before bed-time.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### A PROMISE.

A WHOLE week passed before Louisa and Gustave met again. As far as Louisa went, she would have willingly dispensed with seeing him again until the expiration of the next three years. In her secret soul, she looked forward to that period as to the termination of a disagreeable compact. The recollection of what had passed between her and Gustave had in it a dissolving quality. Louisa was uneasy at the promise he had succeeded in wresting from her, and her disquiet produced a decided irritation against the person who had led her into so silly an act. She shared in none of those passionate sentiments which agitated Gustave,

and which make wrong appear right, and right wrong. Gustave had much more nearly won her dislike than her liking. She was impatient to be away from La Forêt, to be where he could not worry her. It was Claire, that amateur of love-plots, who brought Louisa an entreaty from Gustave to meet him at the swing on the Saturday afternoon.

“ You will be very mean, if you continue to avoid him as you have done,” said Claire.

Louisa took her way to the rendezvous with slow, reluctant steps. Gustave watched her coming along, and that languid droop of her head, and, indeed, of her whole figure, gave him much the same sensation as that famed individual must have had, who, drawing his head out of the bucket of water, discovered that his thousand years of joy had been the illusion of a few seconds.

Gustave leaned his back against a tree, and very pale and gaunt he looked.

“ So you are positively going away in a few days ? ” he began.

“ Yes ; it is quite settled that we set off next Thursday.”

Louisa spoke gravely, but Gustave detected no atom of regret in her tone. Perceiving this, had Gustave had any logic, he would have sighed, and left the matter unsifted ; but folks in his position always yield to a furious desire of investigation.

“ Your eyes sparkle at the thought of the change,” said Gustave, reproachfully.

“ There’s no cause for my being unhappy because we are going to Paris,” said Louisa ; “ and I *am* glad that I shall see dear M. de Blacourt.”

“ I hate separations,” returned Gustave. “ Who can tell when they separate that they shall ever meet again ? ”

“ Of course, no one can be sure of not dying,” replied Louisa, with the reasonableness of indifference ; “ yet there are as many chances in favour of living as of dying. After eight years, M. de Blacourt, and Marie, and Denis, and mamma, and I are all alive and well. I can’t see anything so

dreadful in our going as far as Paris. M. and Madame Gastineau do not fret because Claire is to live there."

"That's different; however, it's of no use discussing the subject—evidently you do not care about leaving me, while I——" he broke off.

"Suppose you were to get some employment, and had to leave Geneva, while I was to remain here, would you like me to be angry with you for what you could not help?"

"I am not angry, Louisa. I am only grieved that you have no sort of regret in saying good-by to me."

"Why do you care for me? You are always finding out something or other wrong in whatever I say or do," said Louisa, petulantly.

"No, not wrong in you, rather folly in myself. I am to blame, not you. Let there be an end of everything between us; I will never seek to see or speak to you more."

Certainly there was a look in Louisa's eyes as if she thought he had come to a most desirable conclusion. Gustave saw this, and the effect was



just the contrary to that any one in their senses might have anticipated. He threw himself on his knees before her, exclaiming,—

“Don’t mind my words. Do or say what you please, but for God’s sake, Louisa, don’t quarrel with me!” His lips quivered, his whole face twitched with emotion.

“I don’t wish to quarrel, Gustave. I would be good friends with you, if you would only let me.”

The instant Gustave showed agitation and suffered, Louisa was conquered.

“You don’t care for me, Louisa.”

“You are very unjust, Gustave.”

“No, I am not. I have a consciousness that I am disagreeable to you; it was not always so. If you grudge the straw you have given me to keep me from drowning, withdraw it—take back your promise.”

Louisa hesitated.

“It’s the deceit towards mamma I hate.”

“Have you made your mother the confidant of all that passed at Chamounix?” asked Gustave, with a sneer. “If you tell Mrs. Templar, it will

be a mere trick to get rid of me. You know very well that Mrs. Templar would force you to trample on me. Don't be a coward, Louisa. Cowardice makes men and women false; keep your promise without conditions, or retract it."

In her heart she longed to withdraw her word, but she quailed before the fierce, passionate young man. She answered,—

"I will keep my word."

"You will? May God bless you, Louisa, for the mercy you now show me!"

He made a movement as if he would have thrown his arms round her; she drew aside, and gave him her hand, saying,—

"I must go now."

Why did Gustave, who thoroughly understood Louisa's reluctance, persist in binding her? Why did Louisa, panting to free herself from an inconsiderate promise, repeat that promise? We refuse to follow the light of our reason, we twist the rope of destiny for ourselves, and then pass the rest of our lives inveighing against our fate. The character of every man or woman is their fate.

“You have not told me,” said Gustave, “why your mother has so suddenly decided to leave La Forêt.”

“Mamma has been thinking of moving ever since Lady Theodosia advised her to take me to Italy for singing lessons; the time of our house is out, and Madame von Ehrtmann has persuaded mamma that Paris is a much better place for education than any town in Italy. The Von Ehrtmanns are going to Paris themselves, and Madame von Ehrtmann proposed we should all travel together by *voiturin*, and mamma agreed.”

“You don’t suppose Mrs. Templar has any idea of going to England?”

“No, certainly not yet—not for a long time.”

“Thank God for that, I shall be able to hear of you constantly from Claire, and Claire will talk to you sometimes of me.”

This speech recalled to Louisa her mother’s words as to the necessity of breaking off all intimacy with the Gastineaux.

“I have no intention,” had Mrs. Templar said,

“of sinking down into a tradesman’s set. All my life I have managed to maintain my social position; Claire’s marriage will be a good opportunity for dropping her. You must choose your associates better, Louisa.”

Gustave continued,—

“I shall live on the news my cousin sends me of you.” His voice was tremulous, once more he went over all he had expressed before; his determination to win a name for himself, in order that she might be proud of him. He only cared for success for her sake; he was ambitious of laurels only that he might place the crown on her head. In broken phrases he repeated—“You are my present and my future, Louisa; for your sake nothing will be impossible to me! Louisa, don’t forget me!” he wrung her hand.

His emotion had communicated itself to her. Tears glistened in her eyes as she said,—

“I am sorry I was so cross just now—you must not remember any of my sharp speeches.”

Gustave dropped at her feet, and kissed the hem of her dress.



“Indeed, I must not stay any longer,” she said.

Gustave walked with her till they came in sight of the windows of the house, then he left her with a silent pressure of the hand.

Madame von Ehrtmann, in advising Mrs. Templar to leave the retirement of La Forêt, had given the little spur needed to rouse Louisa's mother into a more active life. The passionate feelings of resentment and mortification with which she had fled from Paris had worn themselves out in the eight years that had since rolled by. A new turn had been given to her thoughts by the arrival of Mr. Templar and Lady Theodosia; they had sounded a réveille to her ambition by their admiration of Louisa, and the prince's attentions had witnessed as it were to the truth of Lady Theodosia's assertions, that the girl was gifted with uncommon beauty. But then had followed the damper of her ladyship's reticence as to affording Louisa the shelter of her wing in her first introduction to the gay English world.

Madame von Ehrtmann, in her flattering way,

had said and re-said to Mrs. Templar, "Your daughter is a diamond of the first water; you need only give her a Paris setting, and——" a smile, a nod, a shrug, significant of untold triumphs, completed the sentence.

Madame von Ehrtmann really thought all she expressed or implied concerning Louisa, but of course she had some other motive than the benefit of the English girl for urging Mrs. Templar to take her to Paris. Very often the advice we give or receive is influenced, involuntarily perhaps, by some latent interest of our own. Madame von Ehrtmann was quite frank with herself as to her own motives for the counsels she lavished on Mrs. Templar. It was for the advantage of her own daughters. The baronne knew that the Templars were connected with the English aristocracy, she exaggerated the connection—but that has nothing to do with the fact of her manœuvring. She had taken it into her intriguing head that through the Templars she could get into a good English set in Paris; and it was only among what is there called "les étrangers"—comprising, besides the English,

the Russians, Poles, Hungarians, Bavarians, Austrians, that she coveted or hoped to obtain husbands for Ismay and Fioretta. The dowry of the sisters she was well aware was not sufficient to win any Frenchman in a tolerable position.

Mrs. Templar, in spite of flattery and persuasion, nay, even in spite of thinking Madame von Ehrtmann's advice good, might yet have lingered on at La Forêt but for the busybody's following proposal—

“We could all travel together by *voiturin*,” said she; “we are just enough to fill a carriage. I will undertake all the arrangements.”

No one but those who have acquired the habits of a recluse, and who shrink from contact with strangers, can imagine the relief given by such an offer. It decided Mrs. Templar to undertake the journey.

It was just as Mrs. Templar was beginning to indulge in the most ambitious expectations for Louisa, that the young lady hampered herself with a promise which might prove an effectual bar to all her mother's projects.



From the date of her determination to return to Paris, Mrs. Templar made more a companion of her daughter. She talked of her intentions as to Louisa's education; what masters she should give her, wandering off into anecdotes connected with her own young days, greedily listened to by Louisa, who had all a girl's natural curiosity to know about "Mamma when she was young,"—a curiosity which had never been gratified. Mrs. Templar had hitherto systematically avoided any reference to her early days. Once when Louisa had asked her, "When was her birthday?" Mrs. Templar had answered that her birth had not been registered, and having lost her parents in her infancy, she did not know when she was born. Even now the incidents she related had nothing personal to herself in them. They were principally told to show that the end and aim of a girl's accomplishments were to procure a good marriage. Mrs. Templar told of a young lady, whose only gift was a fine voice, and who had sung herself into being a viscountess; another who had danced to equally good purpose; there were tales



of warning also, one which greatly amused Louisa, of a gay young thing, who had committed the impropriety of going with the sisters of a gentleman to examine what sort of a nightcap he wore, by which heinous act she had forfeited the great landed prize of the neighbourhood. The pith of all Mrs. Templar's stories was, that there was no salvation out of the peerage. Louisa listened and felt herself guilty—beyond pardon. “If only the three years were past, and she could feel free.”

Mrs. Templar put on all her airs of a duchess, as Claire declared, when she paid her parting visit to the Gastineaux. She was the very pink of courtesy, and had not neglected to provide herself and Louisa with handsome bridal gifts for Mdlle. Gastineau. “I am not going to let them say we owed them anything for their tea-drinkings and taking you out drives in their carriage,” had observed Mrs. Templar, as she was choosing the earrings Louisa was to give her friend.

Louisa's heart contracted at these words. She

was ashamed to offer Claire her present, purchased as a kind of remuneration. Many were Mrs. Templar's spoken good wishes for the happiness of the bride, but not one syllable did she utter referring to any future meeting. Mrs. Templar had the benefit of Lady Theodosia's example as to how to do that sort of thing well. Claire whispered to Louisa,—

“Your mother wants to cut me, but if you don't, I shall come to see you in Paris.”

“I shall always love you,” said Louisa, not daring to take part either against her mother, or for her friend.

“You *must* manage to see Gustave once more,” said Claire; “he is wretched enough, poor fellow.”

“I will try and come over to-morrow evening, and see you all for the last time,” replied Louisa.

The next evening, Louisa got leave to go over to Les Vignes for half-an-hour. She wept bitterly when it came to the saying good-by.

“We shall always be glad to hear of you, Mdlle. Louisa,” said M. Gastineau. “Perhaps

one of these days you may come with Claire, and pay us a visit. There, my dear, is a keepsake from all your friends here. Do not forget us, and try to change as little as possible from what you now are."

They all walked back to La Forêt with her. In the confusion, Gustave's agitation was unnoticed, save by Louisa and Claire.

Louisa exhibited to Mrs. Templar, with not a little pride, the tiny gold watch with its pretty chain and seal, which M. Gastineau had given her in the name of the family.

"I did so wish for a watch, mamma, and this is such a beauty. Was it not kind?"

She did so hope to mollify her mother towards the Gastineaux.

"You have got it, because you have an aunt Lady Theodosia, and they think it will be a good thing for Claire to visit us in Paris. What is that, pray?" asked Mrs. Templar, pointing to a parcel done up in white paper.

"A book that Gustave gave me, mamma."

"He is beginning to make presents too, is he?"

I suppose it did not cost him much, as he is in the trade. For the future, Louisa, you are not to accept presents from any man not your near relation."

"I will not, mamma, but this is——"

"It doesn't matter," interrupted Mrs. Templar. "I hope we have now done with all these Gastineaux."

Gustave was on the watch to see the Templars take their departure. He stood in a corner, round which came a biting north wind that nearly cut him in two. He had on a thin fustian coat, he would not even spend a franc on a neck-wrapper; he was saving every penny for his great venture in Paris.

For three minutes, himself unseen, he could contemplate Louisa's faultless profile, unhindered by any bonnet. Louisa wore a Polish cap of dark sable, with a broad gold band; the sympathy for Poland manifested itself at that period in ladies' head-dresses. This cap had been a surprise prepared for her by her mother; it was exactly similar in shape to those worn by Ismay and Fioretta, only twice as costly.



At the least proof of maternal tenderness, Louisa was ready to fall at Mrs. Templar's feet. In all these long years of coldness, often reaching to harshness, the passionate love Louisa had had for her mother as a child, had been kept alight by those eccentricities of indulgence often exhibited by imperious exacting natures. The sight of Mrs. Templar slaving at her needle to make her a ball-dress, the idea of Mrs. Templar remaining in solitude, while she was enjoying herself at Chamounix, the having a fire in her room all the winter, while Mrs. Templar denied herself one, had been more than sets-off, with a disposition like Louisa's, against the ebullitions of a bitter temper.

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