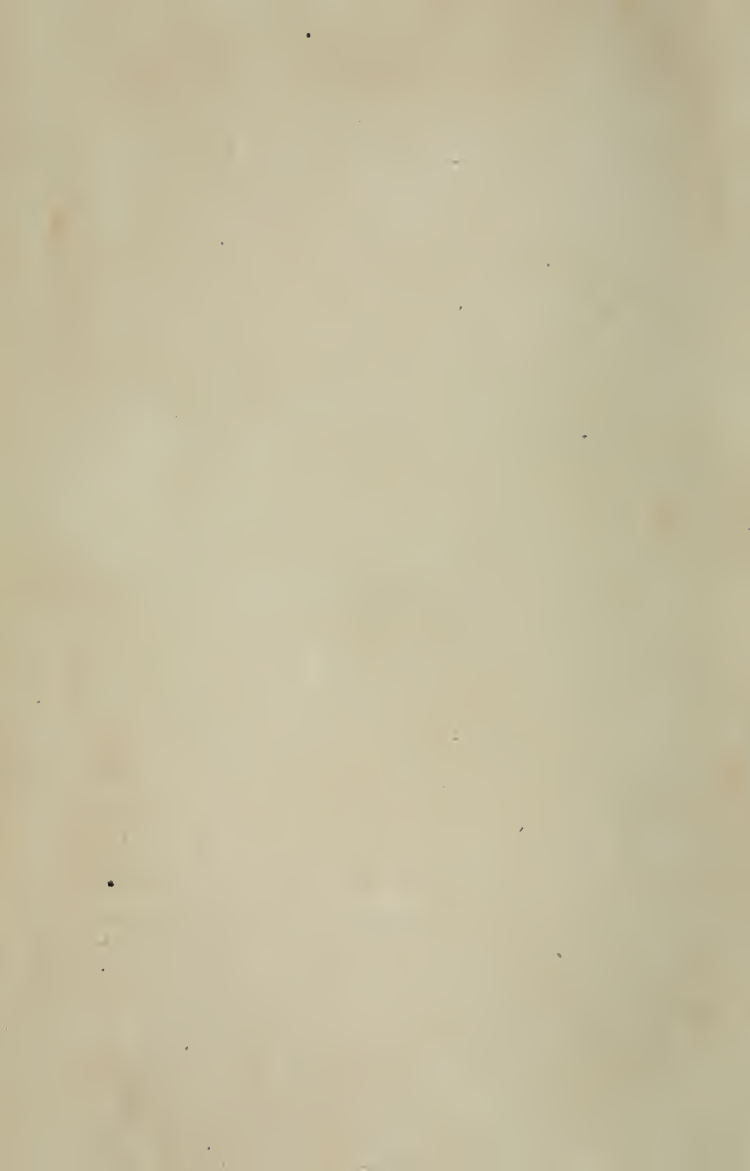






*Alexander Elder.*





# ONCE AND AGAIN.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“COUSIN STELLA,” “WHO BREAKS—PAYS,”

ETC. ETC.

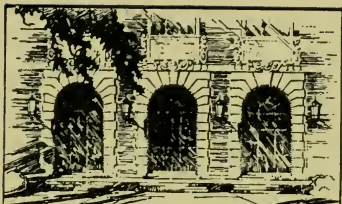
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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# ONCE AND AGAIN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### OLD FRIENDS.

ONE of Louisa's inborn weaknesses, and she had many, was a constant desire to be obliging and kind to those she was with. On this journey she was down on her knees in a twinkling to lace or unlace Madame von Ehrtmann's tight boots; she was ready to change places with any one who wished it. In the morning she was always helping Ismay and Fioretta to be dressed in time.

"You really disgust me, Louisa," exclaimed her mother. "You positively make yourself the slave of these people; what do you do it for?"

“ I don't know,” was the answer.

“ You haven't a bit of independence about you. You give in to every one; you never have an opinion of your own.”

“ Oh, yes, I have, mamma,” said Louisa, forcing herself to smile; “ I am sure I held out well about that hare at dinner yesterday being a cat disguised ! ”

“ People will take you at your own valuation,” went on Mrs. Templar. “ Give yourself airs and all the world will be at your feet; be good-natured and you'll always be made a tool of, or overlooked. I am sure I can't tell where you got that sort of humility. To see you waiting on those Ehrtmanns, nobody would suppose you had good old blood in your veins.”

“ They are just as good-natured to me, mamma. Didn't you see Madame von Ehrtmann contrive a footstool for me ? ”

“ You are a goose, or you might have found out by this time that she is full of deceit; she always manages to get the best room for herself and daughters. While you are being so mighty civil in carrying

her baskets and shawls, her girls have run upstairs and secured the largest, cleanest room for her. Ismay and Fioretta think first of their own mother."

"I thought it was the voiturier who always chose the rooms for us, mamma; and that, because they were three, and we only two, they had the largest room."

"Of course, your mother must always be in the wrong. Go on paying attention to strangers, and see what you will make of it."

Contrite Louisa neglected the baronne all day, and when they reached their night's resting-place, Louisa jumped out of the *berline*, and ran to make sure of the best bedroom for her mother.

"We ought to have the largest room," expostulated Ismay; "we are three."

"Mamma likes a large room," feebly returned Louisa.

"Ismay!" called out Madame von Ehrtmann, loudly. Ismay went away, and left Louisa in quiet possession of the room.

"We shall have a quarrel," said Mrs. Templar.

“What tempted you to interfere now, after we had borne it so long?”

Louisa swallowed the reproof in silence. She actually quailed at the prospect of meeting the Ehrtmanns. They showed no resentment, however; but in private the baronne remarked to her daughters,—

“What is said of the Russians applies to the English—scratch and you’ll find the savage. I was rather inclined to be fond of Louisa. I thought her mother harsh to her. I see now that she requires keeping down.”

It was a long journey from Geneva to Paris by *voiturin*, and the travellers were heartily sick of one another by the time they arrived in Paris. Louisa had never recovered from Mrs. Templar’s lecture; she sat silent and forlorn, in order that her mother should not fancy she was neglecting her, and striving to please strangers. The oppression of a naturally tyrannical person is received almost as a favour, whereas a yielding nature making an attempt to keep its own is abused, and browbeaten, and trampled on. No sooner did

Mrs. Templar see that the Von Ehrtmanns were cool to Louisa, than she became as pleasant as she could be—speaking in that peculiarly soft voice which imperious people use when on their best behaviour.

At last they were in Paris. Mrs. Templar remembered the name of the Hôtel de Hollande, in the Rue de la Paix, and desired to be driven thither. Madame von Ehrtmann said she had no preference; she might as well go there also. The Templars had rooms on the entresol; their fellow-travellers went up to the fifth storey.

In the very first moment of arriving, Louisa had proposed that they should go and see M. de Blacourt; but her mother for a whole week persisted in her refusal even to let him know they were in Paris. During those seven days, Mrs. Templar's temper was what the French describe in one word—"MASSACRANT." She had been accustomed for years to the cheapness of Germany, and to living as she pleased at La Forêt, which means denying herself very nearly every comfort. The prices of a Paris hotel filled her with terror; she

declared that she was ruined—that she had been fooled by Madame von Ehrtmann, who had only wanted her to help to pay the expenses of traveling by voiturin. Louisa caught her mother's terror.

“Don't let us order any dinners, mamma; we can go out and get something to eat at one of the restaurants on the other side of the Seine—they are much cheaper than in this quarter.”

“How do you know? What put such a thing into your head?”

“That's how the Von Ehrtmanns manage, mamma.”

“You have been telling them what I said.”

“No, indeed, mamma. Ismay told me of her own accord.”

That day Mrs. Templar ordered no dinner. She and Louisa went out about two o'clock, and crossed the Pont Neuf in search of some quiet-looking restaurant. But it is quite a different affair for a bustling, fearless woman like the baronne to go hunting after a cheap dining place, and for a reserved Englishwoman, who had never

entered an eating-house in her life. Every restaurant she looked into she saw, as might have been expected, men seated at the different tables; and Mrs. Templar passed on. Louisa's beautiful face also attracted more attention than was agreeable. At last Mrs. Templar said,—

“ You must be satisfied with some cakes; these places may be all very well for those German women—they won't do for me. We will go into the first pastry-cook's we come to.”

But they were not in the quarter where pastry-cooks abound. At last, half fainting with hunger, they had to retrace their steps, and finally to go into the pastry-cook's facing their hotel.

In the evening, Louisa said,—

“ Mamma, we used to be very comfortable in the Rue de Varennes; are we poorer than we were there?”

Mrs. Templar gave her an angry look, and said,—

“ You forget that if I am to spend half my income in giving you masters, we can't live as we did when you were little more than a baby.”

“But if you can't afford it, why should you give me masters?”

“Because I wish to give you a chance of being decently married, Miss Pert. I beg you will remember for the future that your mother is the proper person to judge what is right or wrong for you; your business is to obey.”

The baronne, who had no idea of allowing Mrs. Templar to shake her off, never appeared to notice the English lady's frigid manners. Madame bustled in to the entresol every day, talking of her own arrangements, and offering her services.

“Didn't that busybody say she had taken her rooms for three months?” asked Mrs. Templar of Louisa.

“Yes, mamma, and Ismay will begin her lessons with Hertz to-morrow.”

“You may write now to M. de Blacourt, and tell him we are here,—just that, and nothing more. I don't want him to imagine we want his help.”

Louisa sat down joyously to obey this command.



The following is the translation of what she wrote in French:—

“ MY DEAR M. DE BLACOURT,—

“ YOU will not have to send your next Christmas letter so far as Geneva. We are here, in Paris, I dare say not more than a mile from you. We are come to stay for a long while. I shall be so very happy to see you again, and very often, I hope. Give Denis and Marie, I pray you, my sincere compliments. Mamma says a thousand things to you.

“ I am your affectionate

“ LITTLE LOUISA.”

“ I thought I bid you say nothing about his coming to us,” said Mrs. Templar, after reading the note.

“ Indeed, mamma, I could not help telling him how glad I should be to see him ; but I’ll write it over again, if you like.”

“ Let it go ; and, for heaven’s sake ! don’t look as if you were wild.”

“What imbecile has taken a fancy to write to me?” said M. de Blacourt, as he received Louisa’s note—it was his usual exclamation on the arrival of letters. He read Louisa’s warm-hearted effusion, threw it down, went on with his book; but in three minutes the note was again taken up and re-perused.

At breakfast, he said to Denis, in his most matter-of-fact voice,—

“Madame Templar and Mdlle. Louisa have come back to Paris.”

Denis swore a portentous French oath, put his head out of the *salle à manger*, and screamed the news to Madame Marie, the *gouvernante* or housekeeper.

“And why did they not come straight here?” asked Madame Marie, indignantly entering the dining-room.

“There only needed that!” said her master.

“Allons donc! as if monsieur does not burst with joy to see Mdlle. Louisa again!”

Marie, according to her own declaration, never put any constraint on herself in speaking to

Monsieur le Marquis; as to that, no; it would not suit her, if monsieur required that one should be on one's guard; then monsieur, my faith! must seek another gouvernante. No one, however, knew better than this soi-disant, out-spoken lady how to suit monsieur's tastes and caprices, morally and physically. Marie had graduated in the school of rough flatterers.

"Let us see," she went on; "the little Louisa—how old is she now, monsieur?"

"Sixteen, two months ago," answered M. de Blacourt.

"Monsieur has a good memory. Madame Templar is come here, then, to marry her daughter. It won't be difficult if mademoiselle is as pretty as she was. There won't be any want of a dowry, I suppose?"

"What a thing a woman's mind is!" ejaculated M. de Blacourt; "never at rest in the present, always bounding on to the future."

Marie did not entirely follow her master's meaning, but she guessed that his remark contained something mortifying for her.

“ My faith, what can one do with girls but marry them as fast as possible, to keep them out of mischief?” she said.

“ I have not yet given the subject due consideration,” answered M. de Blacourt.

“ Monsieur mocks me; well, laughing is no argument. Monsieur will be so good as to give me his advice when monsieur has thought the matter over. My brother has two girls, and we don't know what to do with them;” and Marie, satisfied to have had the last word, left the room.

“ No end of ennui for me,” muttered M. de Blacourt, as he prepared for his visit; “ apartments to find, ladies to attend upon. Ah, mon Dieu!”

He was scarcely within the door of Mrs. Templar's sitting-room in the Hotel de Hollande, before Louisa had both his hands in hers, and he had kissed her cheeks, ere he had seen her.

She went by his side, still holding one of his hands, up to her mother, whose greeting was involuntarily cordial. Mrs. Templar did rejoice to behold the face of her former excellent friend.

He sat down, bringing Louisa in front of him. He looked at her for five minutes without speaking, for he was really surprised by her beauty.

“ Ah! ha! Monsieur le Marquis,” exclaimed Louisa, with glee; “ I am too tall, am I not, for the little pictures you sent me. You forgot I could grow old.”

“ Mademoiselle, I beg you a thousand pardons for my disrespect to your age.”

“ Not mademoiselle, never mademoiselle, even in fun—always Louisa, your little Louisa.”

Every feature was rippling over with pleasure at the sight of him,—you would have said, a flower expanding in some genial atmosphere. He sat as calm and dignified as Jove may have done under Hebe’s smiles, and yet some subtle sense informed Louisa he was as delighted to see her as she was to see him.

“ The eight years that have added length and colour to your curls, young lady,” he said, “ have paled and thinned my locks. I wonder you knew me.”

“You are very little altered,” said Mrs. Templar.

“Not a bit, not a bit; there’s no change,” said Louisa.

“Mademoiselle, you are too amiable.”

“You are just the same; that’s just the way you used to go on with me.”

“And now, my dear friend,” said the marquis, deliberately turning from the daughter to the mother, “tell me, what can I do for you? I am your humble servant, your white negro.”

Ah! Monsieur le Marquis, if Mrs. Templar could only have heard your soliloquy of half an hour ago: and yet M. de Blacourt was a sincere man. He hated the services he offered; but, nevertheless, he was willing to render them.

Mrs. Templar thawed still more. “I have come to give this tall girl some finishing lessons.”

“Paris groans under the weight of musical talent,” said M. de Blacourt. “There’s a style in the market to suit every taste. I’ll bring you a list of names, with their peculiar merits, in a

day or two. Is she musical, this Louisa of ours?"

"She has rather a pretty voice; I fear it is too late to make much of the piano; however, as every one plays (the marquis sighed), she must try what she can do."

"Music masters of all kinds," wrote the marquis in his note-book. "And what next?"

"A dancing-master," said Mrs. Templar.

"Languages?" suggested the marquis.

"She can speak French, as you hear," answered Mrs. Templar. "I'll wait a little before I give her more to do."

"Very good; and now, what about apartments? I am sorry to say your former rooms are occupied."

"I do not wish to take up house—not yet, at least," replied Mrs. Templar. "An acquaintance of ours, a Baronne von Ehrtmann, with whom we travelled from Geneva, has engaged rooms in this hotel for three months."

"The situation is excellent," observed the marquis; "the low pitch of the entresol does

not matter much in winter ; but you English can never do without your tea in the evening, and for that you must have a kitchen and a *bonne*."

"There is a tiny kitchen here, close to the ante-room," said Louisa.

"Mademoiselle approves of being in this fashionable quarter. Shall I make inquiries as to rent? Marie would find you a servant."

Mrs. Templar said she should like to feel herself settled; upon which hint, the marquis went and sought an interview with the manager of the hotel; and terms were agreed upon for the small entresol which would sound so fabulously cheap in 1863, that they need not be mentioned.

"Will you dine with me to-day, and have a talk with Marie as to a *bonne*?" asked the marquis.

Mrs. Templar graciously accepted the invitation. The first thing Mrs. Templar said to Louisa after M. de Blacourt had taken his leave, was,—



“Now, Louisa, you are not to be chattering about the marquis to those Ehrtmanns. I shall not introduce him to them.”

“But I *have* already talked to Ismay about him.”

“You are a perfect sieve,” said Mrs. Templar, angrily.

“I didn’t know any reason why I should not speak of M. de Blacourt, mamma,” said Louisa.

“You can’t bear the slightest reproof, Louisa; you have been completely spoiled by those Gasteaux. Take this as a rule,—Silence is gold.” Mrs. Templar added:—“You are not such a baby as to be crying, I hope.”

“No, mamma.”

“I shall not take you out to dinner with red eyes.”

“Mamma,——”

“Well?”

“*Do* be kind to me.”

“How am I otherwise? Have I not come to Paris on your account?—didn’t you hear me asking for masters? Do I deny you anything

I have the power to give you? What can you want more?"

"I want to be with you as other girls are with their mothers;—I want to feel at my ease with you."

Mrs. Templar paused a minute, then said,—

"I do not like being fondled or to fondle. Perhaps I make more sacrifices for you than either Madame Gastineau or that painted baronne ever did for their children. You'll find plenty of people to flatter you; be thankful to hear the truth from your mother. Now, then, I must unpack the trunks to find decent clothes for you and me to wear to-day."

Louisa, trying to look cheerful, went into the bedroom with her mother.

"Let alone," said Mrs. Templar. "I won't have you breaking your nails and fatiguing yourself." She pushed Louisa aside. "Sit down, if you choose to stay here."

Louisa sat down; then, as if unable to control her feelings, she ran and threw her arms round her mother, saying,—

“Oh, mamma! you are very kind to me;—forgive me for what I said.”

“Show your affection by something else than kissing.”

Louisa bravely withstood this chill, and exerted herself to talk as if she really were at her ease; but it was a mere pretence that deceived neither herself nor her mother. Did not Mrs. Templar shrink from Louisa as from one who any day might become her accuser? Was it not the consciousness of that secret wrong she had done to her daughter which had created that gulf between them which Louisa was for ever so painfully endeavouring to cross.

They drove to the Rue de Varennes. The sight of her old home greatly excited Louisa. The concierge and his wife were the same that the Templars had left. They did not recognize Louisa, who was ready to embrace them, so strongly did they recall to her the days of her childhood. She did fling herself on Madame Marie's ample chest and kissed and was kissed heartily, the housekeeper's kisses sounding so like

popguns that the marquis came out of the salon to see what was going on. Marie, with the facility of her class for weeping, had great tears rolling down her jolly face.

“This sentimental scene will spoil our dinner,” said M. de Blacourt; “pray, mademoiselle, enter the drawing-room.”

For a few minutes Louisa sat demurely listening to the conversation between her mother and the marquis; then her head turned from side to side, seeking well-remembered pictures, until at last she got up and went softly and slowly all round the room, standing in contemplation before every familiar object. The marquis continued talking, as if he were not noticing her every movement. From the salon, she passed into the library;—there she lingered so long that M. de Blacourt was curious to see what detained her. He put his head in at the door: she was seated in his large chair, lost in meditation.

“Eh! bien?” he called out.

The abstracted look cleared from her eyes—she smiled.

“What was the subject of your thoughts, mademoiselle?”

“Not one thing, but many things, were slipping in and out of my head,” she said. “Do you remember that carnival-day when you sat where I am, when I came to show you my smart dress?”

He put his finger on his lip to warn her to avoid such hazardous reminiscences.

“Have you seen Denis?” he asked; “I believe he is afraid of his feelings.”

“Denis never spoiled me so much as another person *used* to do.”

The marquis remarked the emphasis.

“Another person must be more respectful now.”

“Why?—I am not grown up yet.”

“Pray, when is that operation to be considered completed?”

“Not for three years at least,” she answered, and then grew crimson at the period she had named. For the first time for many days she recollected Gustave’s existence.

“Oh! I am glad you have explained the matter

to me,—till three years hence another person will treat you as a moutarde.”

“Now you are my dear M. de Blacourt again.”

“Go and ask for Denis.”

She jumped up, and ran into the *salle à manger*.

“Louisa keeps the promise of her childhood,” said the marquis to Mrs. Templar.

“Mothers are not in general considered impartial judges of their children’s looks, but every one assures me she is a pretty girl.”

“Something more than pretty,” said M. de Blacourt, drily. “She is singularly unaltered in feature and manner.”

“She needs polishing,” said Mrs. Templar.

“Let her alone as much as possible,” returned the marquis.

“That’s a bachelor’s advice,” said Mrs. Templar, with what she meant for a pleasant smile. Poor lady, her lips had forgotten how to say or to look pleasant things.

## CHAPTER II.

## FOREWARNED, FOREARMED.

ONE week closely resembled the other for Louisa during the next half year. On every day of the six allotted for labour, she had lessons either on the piano or the harp, or in singing. The dancing master came only on Wednesdays. This was the lesson that Louisa dreaded. M. Petit was severe. He insisted on her copying his carriage. This was difficult, for the curve from his shoulders inwards to his waist was surprising, and so was the curve outwards of his great calves. Louisa was to spring and to bend, and to glide, without her footfall being heard. She was (unaided by any partner) to waltz, to gallop, to dance the sauteuse, and to

do so without any sound of shuffling. She was ready to faint when M. Petit made his departing bow.

Her music masters were better satisfied with her. All three declared she was musically gifted. The first time that Massimino heard her sing, he said,—“Mademoiselle, you have the three requisites for a singer; first, a good voice; secondly, a good voice; thirdly, a good voice. You must practise diligently.”

Mrs. Templar's idea in having her taught the harp was merely to afford her a pretty accompaniment for her voice; but the harp-master urged her to study the instrument seriously, affirming that she took to the harp as a duck to water. Every day, and all day long, Louisa was busy with her music. She began at seven in the morning, and Mrs. Templar kept her steadily at piano or harp, or singing, till she went to bed, with the interval of an hour's walk in the Tuileries gardens and the time for her meals.

Sunday was literally a day of rest for Louisa.



She did not even go to church, for Mrs. Templar avoided the English church now, as she had done eight years before, and for the same reason—that is, the dread of meeting former acquaintances. Louisa's most prominent occupation on Sundays was to sit behind the muslin blind of one of the salon windows, and watch the people passing in the street. It was the custom to walk more in those days than in these—carriages, in Paris, have more than doubled since then. Louisa watched her countrymen and women, who abound in the Rue de la Paix, with intense interest, and was of opinion that Englishmen were the handsomest race of men in the world.

Being dwellers under the same roof, the Templars and Von Ehrtmanns did occasionally meet, in spite of Mrs. Templar's wish to the contrary. They encountered one another on the stairs and in the streets almost daily, and Madame la Baronne persisted in a monthly call. Latterly, Ismay had had lessons from the same harp-master as Louisa; in short, the force of circumstances was against Mrs. Templar. She felt this on the

day that M. de Blacourt came to offer her a box at the Français, to see Mdlle. Mars as Celimène.

“Would there be room for Ismay?” exclaimed Louisa.

“Who is Ismay?” asked the marquis.

“Madame von Ehrtmann’s daughter—she lives above us. She is my friend, and such a nice girl.”

“Then there *is* room for her,” returned M. de Blacourt.

“Mamma, may I run up and ask Madame if she will let Ismay go with us?”

Mrs. Templar said,—

“Cannot you wait?”

“Oh! let Miss Impatience have her own way,” said the marquis.

“Go, then,” said her mother, drily; and away ran Louisa. “She is so impetuous, so thoughtless,” observed Mrs. Templar.

“Let her alone, as I said before, and she will do very well,” returned the gentleman. “There is not much amiss with her.”

Back came Louisa, flushed with delight.

“Yes, she may go, and she is so happy—thank you, thank you, monsieur.”

“Your enthusiasm is exaggerated, mademoiselle—what more could you say or look if I had saved your friend’s life or fortune?”

“I can’t tell, Monsieur le Marquis, but something a great deal *worse* than only thank you.”

M. de Blacourt found it impossible to make a sharp rejoinder to the pretty creature smiling on him, so he turned his attention entirely to her mother.

As soon as he was gone, Mrs. Templar said, sharply,—

“Louisa, I thought I warned you that I did not wish to introduce those Ehrtmanns to M. de Blacourt.”

“I forgot, mamma—and it’s only Ismay.”

“*Only* Ismay—you pretend to be more innocent than you are; as if you did not know that you have done just the same thing as introducing Ismay’s pushing mother.”

Louisa had it on her lips to say, “And what does it matter?” but she refrained.

“I really believe you do these things on purpose to tease me,” went on Mrs. Templar.

“Oh! mamma,” and Louisa hung affectionately on her mother’s shoulder.

“There! there! the evil is done and can’t be remedied. Go away to your practising—you’ll be the sufferer;” and Louisa obeyed the command with all the brightness banished from her eyes.

Ismay von Ehrtmann was as different as possible from what you would have expected her mother’s daughter to be. She was retiring, pensive, and given to reading tender poetry! She had large, soft, pale blue eyes, with long flaxen eyelashes, her hair was of the palest yellow, her eyebrows were scarcely visible. She had no colour, no brilliance, yet she always attracted and interested. M. de Blacourt never afterwards offered Mrs. Templar a box at the theatre without mentioning that there would be room for Ismay. He often praised the German girl for the very qualities Louisa was deficient in—for her repose of manner, for her gentleness—yet he could never, with all his acuteness, discover that he excited

either jealousy or pique in Louisa; no, not even though her mother never failed to remark to her in private,—

“You see what you have done; you have given yourself a nice rival.”

Mrs. Templar's penetration misled her when she had decided that Madame von Ehrtmann would force her acquaintance on the marquis. Madame von Ehrtmann allowed Ismay to accept the amusement offered by M. de Blacourt, but the wily lady made no attempt to become acquainted with him.

It was in early spring that M. de Blacourt said one Sunday,—

“I have just met an old admirer of yours, Louisa.”

She flushed up painfully; she thought directly of Gustave. M. de Blacourt eyed her with surprise, and then continued,—

“I knew the young man again directly; he had on a coat not to be praised, and he was walking along the extreme edge of the pavement,

anxious not to be in anybody's way, dreaming of something to do, or that ought to be done."

"You mean a tiresome old Turk," said Mrs. Templar; "he is a downright nuisance, his impertinence has forced us to give up going by the Boulevards to Massimino."

"I don't mean an old Turk, but an excellent young Christian—Marc de Lantry—you must remember the professor's pupil; he told me he should call on you, madame, to renew his acquaintance."

Mrs. Templar did not look charmed by the news. She said,—

"How oddly people turn up whose very names you have nearly forgotten. At Geneva, what house should I chance to take but one next to that of Professor Gastineau's brother; and as Gustave, the professor's eldest boy, was with his uncle, there was no keeping clear of their acquaintance."

Louisa grew first frightfully red, then pale as ashes. M. de Blacourt's head this time was turned away from her.

"I don't see any good reason why you should

wish to avoid them. You used to see a good deal of Madame Gastineau," said M. de Blacourt, who was always roused to indignation by any display of false pride.

"Yes, I think there was every reason," retorted Mrs. Templar; "I am not one of those who patronize equality, and a bookseller's shop-boy has no right to my acquaintance, or Miss Templar's."

"Who says he has? but the professor's brother is not a shop-boy, I suppose, if he was living in a villa next to you."

"No, but his nephew Gustave is, and an ugly, hulking, ill-tempered fellow he is," said Mrs. Templar, adding, "ask Louisa."

As M. de Blacourt suddenly looked at her, Louisa thought herself called on to speak; she said, hurriedly,—

"Gustave did not like being in a shop, it was that made him cross."

"Did he make you his confidant?" asked M. de Blacourt.

"Very likely," put in Mrs. Templar; "Louisa makes friends of any one. I should be very much

obliged to you, M. de Blacourt, if you would lecture her on what is due to her position."

"I had known Gustave as long as I could remember, and I could not be rude to him, mamma."

"That did not oblige you to make Claire Gastineau your bosom friend."

"She was very kind to me, and so were her father and mother. I could not wear this," holding out her watch and chain, "if I felt ashamed of knowing the persons who gave them to me."

"As I see mademoiselle on the point of shedding tears, I must reserve my sermon on how she is to keep her nobility clear of the contact of citizens for another time," said M. de Blacourt, patting Louisa kindly on the shoulder.

Marc de Lantry made his appearance the very next evening in Mrs. Templar's salon. Louisa was hard at work at the harp, the light from the candles of the music-stand fell full on her. The visitor was dazzled by the beauty of the face which looked up at him in surprise. Louisa did not in the least recognise him. He had, as the



saying is, fulfilled the promise he had given in boyhood of being tall; he appeared even taller than he was from being remarkably, even startlingly thin. His large brown eyes had retained their benevolent expression, his voice its pleasant cheerfulness, and his manner was perhaps as boyishly gleeful as it had been at seventeen. Mrs. Templar had begun by receiving him with her most Arctic zone manner, but she unconsciously thawed, for no one ever had or ever would resist the geniality of Marc.

Louisa stared when he mentioned that he had just passed a successful examination at Strasburg, and had come to Paris to begin his pastoral duties as assistant to the most celebrated minister of the Reformed Church of France.

“A clergyman!” exclaimed Louisa.

“Why are you so astonished?” asked Marc.

“Don’t be afraid to tell me.”

“You are so merry, and you look so happy.”

“And you think preaching the Gospel and happiness cannot go together; that’s an original idea; how did you come by it?”

“Louisa does not know what she is talking about,” said Mrs. Templar.

“I should like to hear her own explanation,” persisted Marc.

Louisa was a little embarrassed; then she said,—

“I cannot fancy that the Apostles ever laughed or were merry as you are.”

“What nonsense you are talking, Louisa. I never heard you so silly before,” exclaimed Mrs. Templar.

Marc answered:—

“The Apostles had very serious work to do; they were laying the foundations of the great Christian temple—making the road smooth for us. They lived in constant peril of their lives; they felt sure that martyrdom awaited them, and such an expectation is sobering. But there are indications of the cheerfulness of the Apostles: for one thing, they encourage hospitality, and hospitality is a begetter of cheerfulness. Do you read the Epistles much?”

Louisa shook her head, and then the subject dropped.

While Louisa was making tea, she heard Marc launch into the subject of the Gastineaux. He was anxious to hear something of Gustave; he was interested in his prospects. Marc had kept up a correspondence with Gustave's mother, and thus was aware that the Templars had seen Gustave at Geneva. Louisa did not join in the conversation, and she hoped that Marc would not ask her any questions.

“Ernest still continues to give his mother trouble, but the elder ones make up for that. Antoinette is an excellent girl; she is in Paris, employed in a haberdasher's shop; she sends half her salary to her mother, who throws it away on Ernest. Poor Antoinette! what a pleasure it will be to her to see you,” ended Marc, addressing Louisa, who at that moment was handing him a cup of tea.

Louisa, in alarm as to what Mrs. Templar might say, stammered out that she should be glad to see her old playfellow again. With the terrible prolixity of benevolence, and unsuspecting of being on tender ground, Marc went on requiring

Louisa to answer question after question about Gustave, until to the poor girl it seemed as if he had some motive for his catechizing. A glance at his peaceable countenance, beaming with loving-kindness, made her ashamed of her thought.

“Is his uncle kind to Gustave? What is his cousin like? Poor Madame Gastineau is so embittered by her poverty that I can’t depend on her descriptions,” said Marc.

Mrs. Templar answered this time:—

“Madame Gastineau, and, indeed, the whole family are very good to Gustave; but M. Gastineau has effectually barred the youth out of our class by apprenticing him to a bookseller.”

“He was not apprenticed, mamma,” said Louisa. “He did not mean to remain where he was.”

“I wonder what else he’s fit for, now?” returned her mother.

“Fit for anything,” said Marc, cheerily. “A man able to write and read, and who has a strong will to boot, can always make his way in the world. Gustave was not a common-place boy.”

“A very disagreeable one,” remarked Mrs. Templar.

“Ah! my dear lady, we must be very indulgent in our judgments of Gustave and others that have been in his circumstances. You have no idea of what the lives of those three Gastineau children were, cooped up in a stifling back room from morning till night; not allowed to go out, because they hadn't good clothes; kept prisoners until they were in danger of becoming cripples; and when the mother did manage to get them a pair of new shoes among them, what tricks and lies the poor little souls had to resort to, to hide them from the professor, for fear of a beating.”

“Some of the natural consequences of a poor marriage,” said Mrs. Templar. “What in the world could induce those two people to marry on nothing?”

“Love,” said Marc.

“Humbug!” cried Mrs. Templar, with such a comical grimace of disgust, that Louisa and Marc both burst into a hearty laugh.

Mrs. Templar was flattered by the effect she

had produced, and went on, with a sort of grim good humour, to favour the laughing pair with a discourse on the horrors of a poor marriage.

“I’ll tell you in a very few words what are the results of marrying on love alone. It’s to be frozen in winter, and stifled in summer; it’s always to be hungry and thirsty; it’s to have good looks turned into ugliness, sweet temper into sour, youth into age, love—what you, M. Marc, call love—into hatred.”

“You make me shudder in anticipation of my fate,” said Marc, gathering himself together as one does under a pelting shower. “Heaven help poor men.”

“I speak of poor *gentlemen* and poor *gentlewomen*,” corrected Mrs. Templar. “As for labourers and workmen, they are born to privations, and don’t mind them. There’s no occasion to call specially on Heaven to help gentlemen and ladies, if they would make the same use of their reason as to marriage as they do in other affairs of life. For my part I would rather follow

that girl there to her grave than see her the wife of a poor man."

Louisa changed colour visibly. A flash of indignation darted from Marc's brown eyes. He checked his feelings, out of a wish to soften her mother's speech to Louisa, and said, laughingly,—

"That's a mere manner of speaking, madame. I trust that mademoiselle will find a good Christian for her husband, and then all other blessings will follow."

"Ah! you are thinking of the lilies of the field and of the fowls of the air," said Mrs. Templar. "A countryman of mine counselled one of those pious Christians to whom you allude, and who had a mind to live the easy life of a lily, to open his mouth and see if Providence would fling a *bawbee bapp* into it."

Marc's first impulse led him to say a sharp good-night, and take his leave for good and all. He had reached the door of the ante-room, when he suddenly turned back;—second thoughts are sometimes best. His face had recovered its usual serenity.

“I have returned to tell you how Providence once helped me to a pair of boots. I had not a penny at a moment when I was in urgent need of shoe leather. I was in a small town in one of the northern departments. I went to a shoemaker, told him my name, and asked him if he would let me have a pair of boots on trust. He made me write down my name; then observed, ‘The *de* is worth twenty francs; a man with a *de* will keep his word;—the boots are at your service.’ Though I am a poor gentleman, I hope the *de* will answer for my being trustworthy with you, as it did with the shoemaker.”

“I am much taken up with Miss Templar’s lessons,” said Mrs. Templar, “still I shall be happy to see you now and then.”

“I shall be discreet,” replied Marc. “Au revoir, madame and mademoiselle.”

“Come, Louisa, cover your harp, and go to bed, you must get up an hour earlier to-morrow, to make up for the time you have lost this evening.”

“I am sorry M. Marc is a French pasteur,”



said Louisa, "he's too nice for one. It's quite different, isn't it, mamma, from being an English clergyman?"

"Quite; but as people make their beds, they must lie on them," replied Mrs. Templar. "However, if he's satisfied, it's nothing to us. Go to bed, child."

"Thank you for your frankness, Madame Templar," said Marc to himself, as he walked home. "Forewarned — forearmed. Louisa is beautiful—almost too beautiful: she excites my wonder; she dazzles me. What would a poor pasteur do with such a large-eyed Psyche for a wife? No; I must seek for something more fit for every-day wear. But I mean to look after Louisa; I mean to do some good to her poor neglected soul."

## CHAPTER III.

## A BOURGEOIS DINNER.

No one can make sure of carrying through, to the end, the most carefully meditated plan; some circumstance is sure to spring up and baffle the wisest calculation; that little something which sets at naught the purposes of men and mice.

Mrs. Templar had a strong will of her own, and she had taken a resolution to keep Louisa hidden from the world, until she had attained her full perfection of bloom: then, and then only, she was to burst, a vision of delight, on society. Mrs. Templar never having possessed beauty herself, had the most unbounded faith in its power. She believed it to be omnipotent, and the castles she

reared for Louisa were as high as the Tower of Babel. Could Louisa only be throned above all those to whom she had a claim of kindred, and without obligations to any one but her mother, Mrs. Templar felt that the spites and disappointments of her own life would be avenged.

But fortune was still unfavourable to her. Within a few weeks of Marc de Lantry's visit, Louisa was surrounded by a circle of the very people for whom Mrs. Templar had the greatest antipathy. In her anxiety to avoid "the tiresome old Turk," Mrs. Templar to reach Massimino, the singing master's house, had gone up and down the streets abutting on the Boulevards, instead of following the line of the Boulevards themselves. In one of those side streets, they had come face to face with Claire and her husband. Before she could speak a warning word, Louisa had rushed forward to greet her quondam friend, and with such a burst of open-hearted, open-armed joy, that Madame Hébert's stiffness was mollified, though she observed,—

"I wonder you are so glad to see me, after

neglecting us all as you have done. Not even one letter to Les Vignes."

In the meantime, M. Hébert, fatter and rosier than ever, was overflowing with civil speeches to Mrs. Templar.

"They were within a few yards of his house ; madame and mademoiselle must give Claire the benefit of their opinion as to her taste," &c. &c.

Mrs. Templar declined on the plea that they must keep time with Massimino ; he exacted the greatest punctuality, and, considering that it was twenty francs an hour, every minute was of consequence.

Claire said with a snappishness Louisa had never noticed in her before, that M. Hébert ought to know it was her part to call first on Mrs. Templar.

"Write down the address," she added, as if speaking to a servant.

"Not the least danger of my memory failing me, my dear friend," said the husband, good-naturedly, and turned so expressively inquiring a face on Louisa, that she felt compelled to answer,—

“ Rue de la Paix, Hotel de Hollande.”

M. Hébert lifted his hat quite off his bushy hair, Claire said, “ Au revoir,” and they separated.

“ Louisa, you are the greatest goose under the sun!” exclaimed Mrs. Templar, as they walked away. “ What on earth made you fly up in that hoydenish way to Madame Hébert, kissing her in the street, attracting everybody’s attention ?”

“ Mamma, I am very sorry, but I was so glad to see her.”

“ Sorry and glad in a breath ; it’s just like you, pretending to wish to please me, and doing everything you know I disapprove of.”

“ Well, mamma, I am sorry that I vexed you, but I am glad to see Claire again.”

“ I never expected you to own that you were wrong.”

The rest of the way Louisa listened in silence to her mother’s remarks on the Héberts.

“ Purse-proud little fellow !” observed Mrs. Templar, “ wanting to show off his fine chairs and tables, as if any one but an upholsterer cared what tables and chairs cost, and then they’ll be asking

us to one of their vulgar bourgeois dinners. I shall not accept any of their invitations, I can tell them. Have you lost your tongue, Louisa?"

"No, mamma, I quite agree with you."

A sudden recollection of Gustave had chilled Louisa's enthusiasm.

"And pray what excuse am I to find, if they give us a verbal invitation, as such underbred people are sure to do."

"We must say that we never dine out anywhere."

"But if they find out that we dine every Sunday with M. de Blacourt? You will be certain to tell, if the Von Ehrtmanns do not; you forget they know Madame Claire. You don't suppose I want to make enemies, do you?"

All that Louisa could suggest in the way of comfort was,—

"Perhaps they will not invite us, unless we ask them first."

"A poor chance in a country where the new comers call first, so that one has no power of keeping clear of people."

M. and Madame Hébert came to the Hotel de Hollande not the following day, nor even the next after that, as Mrs. Templar had expected. Unfavourable fortune brought them the morning she was obliged to go to her bankers, and thus they found Louisa alone. Madame Hébert dismissed her husband at once, bidding him come back for her in an hour. And then Claire, congratulating herself on the opportunity afforded by Mrs. Templar's absence, told Louisa that Gustave had just arrived in Paris.

“Henri,” continued Madame Hébert, “has taken him as one of his clerks, and so Gustave will have wherewithal to keep soul and body together. You'll find him horribly changed, Louisa. What with fretting and starving, he is a skeleton. Why did you not write to Les Vignes? Considering how you are situated with Gustave, it was odious of you not to let him at least hear of you.”

“I dared not write, mamma desired me not.”

“I don't give much for your affection for Gustave, if you couldn't find a way to let him

hear of you, in spite of all the world," said Claire. "Poor fellow, and he has not a thought but of you—you ungrateful child!"

"I did wrong in giving the promise I did to Gustave, unknown to mamma. I will not do anything more that is wrong," said Louisa, firmly enough.

"After your promise, you are bound to consider Gustave's feelings, before those of any one else."

"But, Claire, though I was so silly as to promise Gustave to wait three years before I married, that does not give him any right to ask me to deceive mamma a second time."

"Don't be a Jesuit. A baby would understand that by promising to wait, you have as good as engaged yourself to marry Gustave."

"Oh! Claire, Claire, don't say that—it would kill mamma!"

"You must make a choice which of them you'll kill, for I am sure, if Gustave did not believe you meant to marry him, he would put an end to himself; it's best to speak plainly. You are not a



child now, Louisa; you are cleverer than many girls of twenty."

"Oh! if I had only some one to advise me," exclaimed Louisa.

"Thank you," said Claire, "you are very complimentary. Why don't you ask my advice?"

"You are altered to me, Claire."

"Not much wonder, after the way you and your mother have neglected us all. It was for Gustave's sake I came now. I have no wish to force myself on those who look down on me and mine."

"I don't look down on you; I shall always love you; I cannot help mamma's ways."

"Her ways, as you call them, do not much matter, after all," said Claire. "What *does* signify is your conduct to Gustave. Do you know that he has walked for hours up and down before this house ever since I told him you lived here; he's half mad to see you."

Louisa clasped her hand, and said, with a face full of terror,—

"Don't talk any more about him; if mamma comes in she will see at once that there is some-

thing wrong, and she will cross-question me. Talk to me about yourself; pray, do."

"You do look a little tragical, I confess," said Claire, "so I'll have pity on you this once; but it must all come out one day or other—the sooner the better."

Louisa made another imploring gesture.

"Tell you about myself," went on Claire. "What is there to tell, except that I am worried to death with these Paris servants, and that the smells and air don't agree with me. Don't you see how pale and thin I am?"

"You do not look well, poor Claire," said Louisa, fondling her.

"I want Henri to take a house at Passy, or Anteuil, or anywhere near enough for him to come home every day; but he is only a junior partner, and it's one of the duties of a junior to be poisoned, and his wife into the bargain, by living where the office is. That hateful office; he is there all day. I shouldn't mind half so much, if he were quite out of reach, but to know he is only downstairs, and yet can't go out to walk with me

or come and talk to me, keeps me in a state of irritation, very bad for my health."

Louisa repeated her kiss, which Claire half turned her face away to avoid. Claire was a very mortal, and when she was cross with one person she was cross with all.

"And Henri, if he only cared, but he is as happy as possible, and growing so horribly fat—I hate fat men."

"Is he not kind to you?" asked Louisa, with her eyes distended with anxiety.

"Oh! kind; I suppose he is; he gives me enough to eat, and doesn't beat me. But oh! dear me, that's not enough to make a woman happy," and Claire's eyes actually filled with tears.

Just at this crisis, in came M. Hébert, the very personification of contentment and good-nature. His sudden air of concern at the sight of his wife's moist eyes was almost laughable. Down he was on one knee before Claire, patting her hand.

"Don't, Henri; you'll spoil my glove."

"You know I can't bear to see you in tears, my cherished."

“ I hear mamma coming in,” cried Louisa.

Up jumped M. Hébert, and Claire smoothed her ruffled brow.

Mrs. Templar received her visitors more politely than Louisa had hoped. Mrs. Templar had, as most persons proud of their birth have, a great reverence for the duties of hospitality. In her own house it would need great provocation to have made her show a visitor that he was unwelcome; so she was even urbane when Claire, after a whisper from the fat Henri, invited her to dinner for the Friday of the same week.

“ Louisa is not yet out, and I cannot leave her at home alone,” said Mrs. Templar; “ you must really excuse me.”

“ Only a family dinner—strictly a family dinner,” pleaded kind-hearted M. Hébert. “ It will give my wife such pleasure to see such dear friends; she is still lonely in Paris. Madame, you *cannot* refuse to give us a very real satisfaction.”

Mrs. Templar had to yield to the gentle compulsion exercised by a really kind heart.

In saying good-by, Claire gave Louisa a significant look and a significant pinch on the arm, which filled the poor girl's heart with dread.

“Never, no never, will I have a secret again,” vowed Louisa to herself over and over again.

Up to that conversation with Claire, she had never had a distinct idea that her promise to wait three years before marrying, implied any engagement to marry Gustave. Whenever she had been made uneasy by the mention of Gustave's name, she had thought that the uneasiness arose merely from a fear of her mother's knowing what she had done. Claire had enlightened her; she was thoroughly conscious now, that from the evening when Gustave had persuaded her to grant his request, she had feared it meant something more than merely waiting. There was another feeling side by side with fear of her mother, and this was a decided shrinking from Gustave himself as a husband.

“I could not—oh, no, I could not be his wife,” was the constant burden of her thoughts. How and where was she to seek for help to extricate

her from the scrape she was in. Claire, who could best have aided her, would not—Claire was in Gustave's interest. Louisa pondered long as to whether she should confess her sins to M. de Blacourt, and beg him to intercede in her behalf with her mother; but though she still loved M. de Blacourt much, she feared him more. His manner since her return to Paris had not been to her that which had won her baby affections in the Rue de Varennes; she even fancied that he tried to keep her at a distance. Her faith in his indulgence for her had waned; no, she dared not confide in him.

She meditated on telling Ismay; but if Ismay should tell Madame von Ehrtmann, and that talkative lady betray her to Mrs. Templar, Louisa would be in a worse condition than ever; that she could not doubt. Mrs. Templar might some day forgive her, did she hear of her fault from herself; but there was no hope of pardon if the story reached her from a stranger, and one who had no motive for keeping silence on the matter. Louisa ended by doing what many more experienced

persons have done in a difficulty—she decided to let things take their course: she must abide the punishment due to her folly, with the sorry consolation that, however angry and implacable her mother might prove, she would save her from the penalty of being the wife of Gustave Gastineau.

It was with some of the sensations of one about to be tried for a criminal offence that Louisa prepared to accompany her mother to the Héberts. They lived in the Rue Faubourg Montmartre; a porte-cochère gave access to a square court, at the bottom of which was M. Hébert's office; Claire's apartment was on the first floor, but the windows all looked into the gloomy court. What a change for a girl who had been accustomed all her life to a view of Mont Blanc—accustomed to see the sun and moon shining on lovely Lake Lemman. Claire had some excuse for feeling ill and low-spirited.

The salon, into which Mrs. Templar and Louisa were shown, was large, well-proportioned, and handsomely furnished, but dark and close. Neither the lady nor gentleman of the house was ready to

receive the guests. Presently Claire's voice was heard in the next room, speaking in a high querulous pitch. Mrs. Templar gave a sarcastic glance at Louisa: the next instant the bride entered beautifully dressed. Five minutes later M. Hébert came in, followed by a gentleman, at sight of whom Louisa turned rapidly red and white, and tore one of her gloves to shreds. After she had received and answered the salutations of her host and hostess, Mrs. Templar saw the stranger bowing in front of her.

“Gustave Gastineau! is it possible?” cried Mrs. Templar, in undisguised amazement, and without a shade of cordiality in her tone. “Pray, where did you drop from?”

“He is come to make his fortune in Paris,” laughed jolly M. Hébert, “and our house of business is to have the honour of placing him on the first round of the ladder.”

“You have given up the bookselling business, then,” said Mrs. Templar.

“Yes, madame,” and Gustave turned to bow to Louisa, who did what well-bred French young



ladies do on such occasions; she rose slightly from her chair, and made a little inclination of her head, and sat down again. Gustave drew away to behind a large table in a distant part of the room, and tried to appear as if interested in the examination of the fashionable toys for grown people strewed on it. There was such a silence in the room you might have heard a pin drop—it was like the silence which reigns in the moment of anticipation of some important event. When M. Hébert spoke to his wife, she started as at the report of a cannon.

“You should not speak so loud, Henri.”

“Loud!” he repeated; “I appeal to Madame Templar—madame, did I speak unusually loud?”

“Not to my ears,” replied Mrs. Templar; “but Madame Hébert seems to have grown very nervous.”

“That’s true; my wife is not yet accustomed to Paris. Do you suffer as she does, mademoiselle?” addressing himself to Louisa.

“No, sir.”

Hébert now tried a whisper. The answer

given aloud informed every one what had been the question.

“It’s of no use asking me about dinner, M. Hébert; when Annette thinks fit she will let us have it. What she does, or how she manages never to be ready, is a mystery to me. She has nothing but the cooking to do—it’s a Parisian system, I suppose.” Madame Hébert then addressed herself particularly to Mrs. Templar, and went through a litany of complaints, and gave quite a picturesque description of her sufferings from the extraordinary servants she had had on trial. “I have had, what with cooks and lady’s-maids, sixteen in only four months, so I think I ought to know something of the subject.”

A whole hour elapsed before dinner was announced, during which time Gustave remained ensconced behind the table. The dinner was one half too much for the occasion; the splendid china dishes with their rich contents were served on a table covered with only an oil cloth. The dessert was even more expensive than the dinner. The champagne was irreproachable; M. Hébert insist-

ing that it was the only wine appropriate to such *merry* meetings—though any more lugubrious party there could not be. Claire spoke only to the servant waiting, and that to find fault. Louisa and Gustave, who sat opposite to one another, never uttered a syllable, so that what conversation there was, passed between Mrs. Templar and her host. In the course of the evening Mrs. Templar made an opportunity to say to Gustave,—

“I am glad to hear that your sister has a good situation. If we go to the shop shall we be able to see her?”

“See her, yes,” said Gustave, and his voice sounded as that of a stranger to Louisa, “but she could not have the pleasure of speaking to you. If you will give me leave, I will bring her to call on you her first holiday.”

Louisa was by her mother’s side; for the moment all her sympathies were with Gustave, and she said,—

“Oh! yes, do. Tell Antoinette how I long to see her.”

“You are very good, mademoiselle,” said Gustave.

“I wonder if we should recognize one another if we met by accident,” went on Louisa, rapidly, nervously anxious to prevent Mrs. Templar from speaking. “Is she as tall as I am?”

Gustave’s eyes rested long on Louisa—longer than politeness warranted.

“Poor Antoinette!” he answered; “she is crooked; she would not allow you to be told while you were in Geneva.”

Louisa looked on the ground; she said, gently and kindly,—

“Pray, pray bring her to see us very soon.”

Claire made Louisa try her new pianoforte, and Louisa not unwillingly sang song after song. It was far easier to sing than to talk, besides she was ready to do anything that night to prevent her mother from wounding Gustave.

At ten o’clock the carriage that had brought the Templars returned to fetch them. At parting Louisa shook hands with Gustave; she had been

quite softened by his timid manner and his look of suffering.

No sooner was the carriage door shut than Mrs. Templar began to scold.

“What made you shake hands with that young man? It’s not the custom in France; besides, he is not a gentleman, either by birth or position.”

“I have known him so long I can’t treat him as a stranger; it’s impossible, mamma,” said Louisa.

“By-the-by, Louisa, what do you mean by taking on yourself to invite people to come and see us? Don’t you know you should leave that to me? You take grèat liberties; it’s extremely unbecoming in a young girl to be putting herself forward, and treating her mother as if she were of no consequence.”

“Indeed, mamma, it never came into my head to do that; I was so sorry for Gustave and Antoinette, I believe I only thought of trying to be kind to them.”

“You talk very meekly, but you manage to do as you please; you force me to receive people

I don't want to receive, by your ridiculous cordiality and put-on sensibility, for I don't believe you care more to see these Héberts and Gastineaux than I do. I know you, Louisa, and you are as full of pride as any one, but you like being flattered and fawned on; I shall not allow you to usurp my place, and unless you want to have these people forbidden the house altogether, you'll have the goodness to make them understand that what was tolerated when you were all children, cannot be permitted now."

Louisa let the torrent of words flow on unchecked by any effort for peace; she was tired out by the strain on her feelings, endured for so many hours. She lay long awake that night, thinking how she was to manage between her mother and Gustave. Manage, was the word she used to herself. More than even her pledge of secrecy to Gustave, had her mother's violent, imperious character destroyed her girlish candour. Mrs. Templar never forgot, supposing she may have forgiven, an offence. She had driven both her husbands more than once to the verge of

desperation by her way of adding up past grievances, and weighting them with most bitter insinuations. Louisa knew and stood in mortal terror of these retributive paroxysms. Occasionally her impetuosity of feeling impelled her to take the initiative, but a natural timidity, fostered into moral cowardice by dread of her mother, inevitably compelled her into immediate abject submission. It was fear, even more than respect for her given word, which restrained Louisa from any confession to her mother.

“If I tell her, she will bring it up against me all my life. No, I will manage to get out of the scrape by myself.”

That the way to do this should be by marrying Gustave, Louisa never contemplated; no, *nothing* could ever persuade her to do that.

It was on the fête of the Ascension that Gustave brought Antoinette to see Louisa. Mrs. Templar was in her own room when the brother and sister arrived; Louisa could therefore make her reception of Antoinette what she pleased. Had she not been prepared for the poor girl's

appearance, she might have been too startled to be cordial. As it was, she showered kisses on the poor little humpback. Antoinette struck Louisa to the heart by saying,—

“ You are too good, mademoiselle.”

“ Call me Louisa, or I will call you mademoiselle,” said impetuous Miss Templar. “ Come and sit by me.”

“ You have not spoken to Gustave, and he is even happier than I am to see you again.”

Louisa, with her arm still round Antoinette's neck, turned to greet Gustave, but without holding out her hand. He was embarrassed, and so was she. Louisa was doubting whether Antoinette knew how she was situated with Gustave, and the doubt took away all her powers of speech.

“ I should have known you anywhere,” said Antoinette, fixing eyes full of admiration on Louisa. “ Should you have known me again ? ” asked the crooked girl, with the greatest simplicity.

“ After the first few minutes, I should,” replied Louisa.



“ Ah ! I remember, I was not humpbacked when we used to play together.”

Seeing Louisa look distressed, Antoinette went on,—

“ I am not sorry about it now ; it’s all for the best. I should have been very vain if I had been as good-looking and straight as other girls ; now, you see, it is easy for me to lead a good life. As M. de Lantry says, God loves me as I am, and when I go to heaven the angels will not laugh at me.”

“ Dear Antoinette,” said Louisa, “ you have a charming face, and no one will remember you are crooked, after the first minute or so. And so you know M. Marc—our good Marc ? ”

“ Yes, I see him for a few minutes on Sundays—sometimes before, sometimes after church,—and he gives me a word of advice, which makes me brave for the rest of the week. Now Gustave is come to Paris, and I can see him often, I have scarcely anything more to wish for.”

Antoinette’s eyes were bright with the happiness she expressed.

Gustave, after Louisa’s first silent greeting, had

taken a chair by one of the windows. When Mrs. Templar came into the room, she found him the whole length of the salon from the sofa, on which the two girls were seated, hand in hand. The confiding Antoinette rushed eagerly to seize Mrs. Templar's hand, which she kissed, exclaiming,—

“ Dear good lady! dear good lady!”

No civilized human being could have met Antoinette's beaming look of affection with disdain. The sister's warmth had the effect of making Mrs. Templar receive Gustave with something approaching to politeness.

“ How is your mother?” inquired Mrs. Templar of Antoinette.

“ Mamma is pretty well; she is more comfortable now that she is rid of the burden of keeping me, and she does not need to go on with the clear-starching. What my uncle allows her is nearly enough for her.”

Gustave was speaking to Louisa under the cover of his sister's loud, vibrating voice; he was saying,—

“The sight of me disturbs you, Louisa—makes you ill at your ease. You treat me as though I were some cruel creditor. You seem afraid—of what?”

No sound issued from Louisa’s lips; but they formed, or Gustave fancied they formed, the syllables, “Mamma.”

“If you are afraid,” continued Gustave, “of any imprudence on my part, or that I shall exact any from you, you are mistaken. I ask nothing from you but patience, for a little while. If I fail in my examination, you will hear nothing more of me.”

Louisa listened in silence, her eyes fixed on the carpet. Gustave waited in vain for any sign of interest, for a word of encouragement. All the while he had been speaking to Louisa, he had distinctly heard Antoinette giving a candid account of their circumstances to Mrs. Templar.

“Another piece of luck,” concluded his sister, “Ernest has got a situation on the Lyons Railway, thanks to M. de Lantry. Ernest is quite reformed; he promises to help our mother. Ah!

dear lady, haven't we seen evil days?—and you were so good to us.”

Here Antoinette interrupted herself to give another hearty kiss to Mrs. Templar's thin, uncaressing hands.

“ Ah! we have been very fortunate in friends !”

“ If deserving to be happy were any reason for being so, I am sure you will be happy, Antoinette,” said Mrs. Templar, with a kindness that amazed Louisa.

“ You speak like M. Marc,” exclaimed the grateful girl; “ he says that we are not sent into the world to be happy, but to deserve happiness. Since he explained things to me, I have been quite contented with all that happens.”

Here Gustave gave his little chattering sister a hint that it was time to end the visit.

“ First, you must have some refreshment,” said Mrs. Templar. “ Louisa, order in some cake and wine.”

Louisa left the room to do so, wondering at the partiality her mother showed for Antoinette.

When the brother and sister were gone, a small

parcel was found on the sofa, directed to Mrs. Templar. Inside was a purse of fine crochet-work, ticketed with "Pour ma chère Madame Templar," and an embroidered collar for Louisa.

"Of all those to whom I ever was kind, Antoinette is the only one grateful, and I have done least for her," said Mrs. Templar.

The day was so lovely that Mrs. Templar left their usual walk in the Tuileries, and went towards the Arc de l'Etoile. Paris thereabouts looked as if garlanded with flowers; nothing gayer can be imagined than the Champs Elysées on a fine May day. It was there that M. de Blacourt met the mother and daughter. He joined them, walking by Louisa's side. Presently he said,—

"You have been crying; what for?"

"I have been foolish."

"No doubt; but I want to be made acquainted with the folly. Which of your masters are you in disgrace with? or has mamma refused you a new frock?"

"What is the marquis saying?" asked Mrs. Templar of Louisa.

“ I am asking the reason of Louisa’s red eyes. You are not handsome to-day, mademoiselle.”

“ Louisa been crying ? ” exclaimed Mrs. Templar.

Louisa touched M. de Blacourt’s arm.

“ Perhaps I am mistaken, and it’s the wind or dust that has spoiled her beauty. Confess, Madame Templar, that there is no city like Paris. Where do you see such a happy mixture of town magnificence and country beauty ? Look at those lilacs and laburnums—you never saw such in London. France is the greatest country in the world, and Paris is its capital.”

Mrs. Templar at once began to defend England and London ; the marquis continued his attack, and she forgot Louisa.

It was not often now that Louisa had a tête-à-tête with her former friend ; but an opportunity offering a few days after, he went back to her red eyes and the touch on his arm.

“ Women’s fingers are a deception, as well as everything else about them. You have left the

mark of yours on my elbow. Now, what's the secret?"

She told him all about Antoinette, and how that when she saw the collar and the purse, she had felt a knot in her throat, and then she had cried.

"I never find time to do anything for anybody," ended Louisa.

"It's the old story," said the marquis; "you are a well-born, beautiful young lady, amusing yourself all day, and sleeping all night; and the poor work-woman stitching all day, only half-fed, or half-paid, gives you part of her sleep, her only luxury. To those who have much, more shall be given—that's the rule; no use your fretting about it, and spoiling your eyes."

"You do not think a word of what you say," said Louisa. "You are very sorry in your heart for Antoinette. I wish you could only hear her trying to make out that it is best for her to be crooked. You are my greatest friend, you know, and I want you to help me to do something for Antoinette."

“What can I do? take her to the opera? Your mother would object to chaperone her.”

“Nothing of that kind: you are so clever, so wise——” (“No coaxing, no flattery, Mdlle. Louisa,” interrupted M. de Blacourt.) Louisa went on. “Yes, you are clever and wise, and good into the bargain.”

“But I am not a fairy godmother, able to turn a pumpkin into a coach, and mice into horses—I forgot what the coachman was before his transformation.”

“What a tease you are.”

“Clever, wise, good, a tease—go on.”

“I beg you,” said Louisa, joining her hands and raising her eyes to his.

That argument carried the day.

“Well, if I must, I must,” said the marquis.

“Now you are good—kind; oh, yes, you are best of everybody,” said Louisa. “I knew you would help poor Antoinette.”

“There, that will do,” said M. de Blacourt; “not another word or I’ll retract my promise. I can’t stand ecstasies—go and sing, child.”



“Tiens! tiens!” exclaimed Louisa. “You spoke to me now in the same voice you had when I was your little wife—do you remember?”

“You are full of sentimentality to-day,” replied the marquis. “Now I think of it, I cannot see how I am to assist your charming humpback. I don’t wear any of those falbalas you women delight in.”

“Ask M. Marc—M. de Lantry; he is a pasteur now, and knows Antoinette.”

“Very well; give me his address, or get it for me.”

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE BEETLE IN THE ROSE.

LOUISA'S petition in favour of Antoinette produced ever widening circles of incidents. It brought about not only an intimacy between the marquis and Marc the pastor, but it also again introduced Gustave to M. de Blacourt's notice. The beautiful Louisa, and the little hump-backed workwoman, for a time, closely linked together three men, whose characters and walks in life were diametrically opposite.

Antoinette was to continue a workwoman. The marquis and Marc agreed that needlework was an occupation well suited to her; that to give her an employment which afforded a healthy subject for her thoughts, was wiser than to secure for her

a leisure that might engender morbid regrets for her unfortunate exterior. M. de Blacourt's purse, however, opened widely to ensure her a more independent position. She was now manager of a first-class lingerie in the Chaussée d'Antin with a small share in the profits. Nothing could exceed Antoinette's joy at her advancement, except her gratitude to M. de Blacourt and Louisa. In compliance with Antoinette's earnest supplication, Mrs. Templar condescended to go with Louisa to see the comfortable room she was able to rent.

"A fire-place, you see," said Antoinette, doing the honours, "and a window."

"Have not all rooms fire-places and windows?" laughed Louisa.

"No, indeed: the place that I slept in before had no chimney, and only a bit of a skylight; in the summer I broke one of the panes that I might have some air to breathe."

Louisa, aghast, exclaimed,—

"How did you manage to live, my poor Antoinette?"

"Oh! everything ends by becoming possible,"

said Antoinette. "Look, here's a closet for my wood; I can afford to have a fire when I wish for one; and the bed, and these chairs, and those tables are all my own."

"And the clock also?" inquired Louisa.

"Very nearly; I pay a franc a week, and in a year and a half it will be paid for. It's pretty, isn't it? The old man with the scythe on a car is appropriate—time is always rolling on. I wanted Gustave to let us live together: there is another room close to this. I could have looked after him—his clothes and his food, I mean; but he had engaged to live with a fellow-student. Don't you think Gustave looks ill, madame?"

"Young men of his age are always thin," replied Mrs. Templar.

"The worst will be over in a few months," continued the confiding Antoinette.

"What worst?" asked Mrs. Templar.

"His examination for the baccalauréat."

"What use will that be to him, if he is in commerce?"

"He does not mean to stay with M. Hébert—

it's only just while he must gain enough to live by. He studies almost all night, poor Gustave—once he has passed, he will get a situation as usher in some Lycée.”

“Tell him from me,” said Mrs. Templar, “that he is much better off as M. Hébert's clerk.”

“But he means to be a professor,” explained Antoinette; “and so he must begin at the beginning.”

“Why must he be a professor? he is more likely to make money by trade.”

“I don't know, but he's terribly set on being a professor,” replied Antoinette, who was very much inclined to believe Mrs. Templar in the right. “I am afraid,” she added, “that Gustave is very ambitious.”

Mrs. Templar smiled sarcastically.

“I should say very humble; an usher in a French school is the very lowest of all employments.”

Poor Antoinette's spirits drooped. It is the misfortune of some people always to scare away joy. Because she had made her very uncomfort-

able, Antoinette felt much more respect for Mrs. Templar than she did for M. Marc, who always cheered her, or even than she did for M. de Blacourt, who, to such as Antoinette, was always most kind and encouraging.

Leaving the young workwoman to her doubts and fears, we will turn our attention to the German baroness and her daughters.

Madame von Ehrtmann came to the conclusion that the proper moment had arrived for introducing her daughters to society. Her first step was to leave the higher regions of the Hotel de Hollande, and to descend to a pretty apartment on the second floor. Her next move was to announce her intention of having one evening in the week for receptions. She sent a card of invitation to M. de Blacourt, in a note of well-worded thanks for his kindness to Ismay. Madame von Ehrtmann was pleased to secure M. de Blacourt, but she was not the woman to be too standing as to the rank or wealth of her visitors. "The last may come to be first, one day or other," she argued, so she was civil and encouraging even

to Gustave, who gained admittance to her salon as Madame Hébert's cousin. The slight former acquaintance between the Von Ehrtmanns and Claire had ripened into intimacy in the Paris air. Gustave made one of a group of young men, who frequented her salon, whose whole fortune at that moment was their illusions. By this method of hers, the sharp-witted lady had at her disposal a violinist and a pianist, both destined to make a figure in European capitals; she had budding artists, who gave her charming portraits of her daughters, and whose original sketches in Ismay's and Fioretta's albums in a few years afterwards were worth more than treble their weight in gold. Madame la Baronne, in her good-natured lively way, turned every one to account.

Mrs. Templar, on the contrary, showed a face of stone to all this rising talent. "When I want music or drawing," said the English lady, "I pay for them in hard cash, not by lowering myself."

"My dear lady, I like young men for them-

selves," replied the German matron; "they keep the atmosphere of a drawing-room clear of heaviness; I get the drawing and music into the bargain."

One of Madame von Ehrtmann's most constant visitors was M. de Lantry. It is so common a proceeding to find a plausible reason for doing what one wishes, that it is nothing to wonder at that Marc was able to account to himself very satisfactorily for being so often in the Von Ehrtmanns' company. He was a pastor of the Reformed Church of France, and they were German Protestants. Ismay and Fioretta were as ignorant of the faith they professed as they were of every other thing, except music and dancing. Marc set himself to the task of enlightening them, and for a period supposed that duty was the spur which sent him so frequently to the pretty gay apartment, *au second* of the Hotel de Hollande. When the bandage fell from his eyes, he discovered that he was in love with that fantastical trifler, Fioretta; Ismay had listened to, and benefited by his teaching; he had every



reason to be proud of that pupil ; why had he not attached himself to her, instead of to the last person suited to his own earnest character or to his sacred calling ?

Fioretta was a coquet by temperament ; every look, every gesture, every syllable she spoke, betrayed it ; she had not one pretty feature, but she had such an excessive desire to please, set to work so resolutely to do so, that she generally did please and attract. Her temper was equable, she never showed resentment, was as affable to people that she was well aware had spoken severely of her, as though she believed them to be her great admirers.

“ She has no gall in her disposition,” said Marc.

“ She has no feeling, no moral sense,” retorted M. de Blacourt. “ Those who have, are wounded by censure.”

M. de Blacourt detested Fioretta for two reasons ; one, that something about her reminded him of the woman who had spoiled his life ; and the other, that he saw Marc, whom he esteemed, on the point of making a fool of himself. “ Mdlle.

Fioretta's proper vocation in life," said the marquis, "is the stage, not the higher walks, for she is incapable of conceiving what is grand or beautiful, but she would be inimitable in vaudevilles."

"I wholly differ from you," said Marc, angrily.

"I know you do," answered the marquis; "many men, many minds."

Mrs. Templar's opinion was thus expressed: "Fioretta is as deep as a well—take care of that girl, Louisa, she is dangerous."

"Oh mamma, how could Fioretta ever hurt *me*? I could upset her with one finger!"

"What an idiot you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Templar, with a tone of almost admiration for the simplicity she despised. "I wish you had some of her sharpness."

As a matter of course, these attacks on Fioretta only made those two honest creatures, Louisa and Marc, more inclined to like her, to trust her, and to make every allowance for her freaks. And, in truth, Mrs. Templar and M. de Blacourt did

exaggerate as to Fioretta's faults;—she was a mere commonplace little manœuvrer, fonder of fine clothes than she was ever capable of being of human beings.

Mrs. Templar, who was so proud of her penetration,—who believed that she could see further into a millstone than her neighbours,—did not, nevertheless, see what was so transparent to every other guest in Madame von Ehrtmann's salon. She never perceived Gustave's adoration of Louisa. M. de Blacourt was not so blind; he very soon discovered the state of the young man's feelings, but being convinced of Louisa's indifference, he saw no good reason why he should bring about the exposure of a hopeless passion.

This was M. de Blacourt's opinion for a time; but one evening he received a sudden impression that Gustave's presence made Louisa uneasy. The marquis would have been puzzled to explain what had given him this conviction. Some situations are divined intuitively and immediately without any discernible process of inferences. The marquis had all that quickness of perception which

distinguishes the Parisian man of the world. The most cleverly arranged intrigue would have cost him no effort to unravel; it was, in the first instance, the absence of all suspicion which had protected Louisa's uneasiness from his penetration. But from that evening he was certain that Louisa shared some secret with Gustave; in some way or other, for some cause or other, she was afraid of young Gastineau. As to her being in love with him, that the marquis was convinced she was not. There was something so strange in Louisa, a girl scarcely seventeen, having any fear of any young man, that M. de Blacourt found himself almost wishing that he could have explained the case by the folly of mutual love. The more he studied Louisa, the more assured he became that love had no part in whatever formed the link between her and Gustave. Studying her, he observed that her spirits were variable, as are those of persons who have some secret cause for anxiety; but there was none of the imprudence of love about her.

Hitherto M. de Blacourt had attributed her

reserved manners when at the Von Ehrtmanns'—a manner so at variance with her natural playfulness—to her mother's commands; now he set to work to discover her secret, and to do so, if possible, without exposing her to the anger of her mother. “For when a young girl has a secret,” thought the marquis, “her mother has a right to be angry.” The fact of Gustave having been in Geneva at the same time as the Templars, a fact to which he had paid no attention when first told of it, now presented itself very distinctly as a possible cause of the result he was witnessing. The marquis tried to make light of the subject,—to smile as he was in the habit of doing at Rosina's deceit towards Don Bartolo,—but it would not do. The belief that Louisa, the playful, lovely girl he almost daily saw, could be carrying on any clandestine intercourse with a young man, gave him a pang which made him believe that he had an insight into the anxieties and griefs of parental affection. He calculated what must have been her age when she left Geneva—scarcely more than that of a child.

“If,” said the marquis to himself,—“if I find that young fellow took the least advantage of her inexperience, I’ll grind him to dust.”

Certain states of the atmosphere make the pain of former flesh wounds felt again. Something similar occurs with past mental wounds. The idea that Louisa, who had, against his will, almost filled the void in his heart, should fall from her high estate of maiden candour,—that she should be deceiving mother and friend,—set the marquis’s heart aching once more.

One day, just while he was in this perplexity, Louisa offered him a most lovely rose, perfect in texture and form, of a pure, unsullied white. He viewed it for a moment in admiration; then pushing aside the petals nearest the core, an expression of disgust distorted his features.

“Look there,” he said to Louisa, and pointed out to her a black uncomely insect nestled in the innermost delicate folds. “Take away your rose, it brings before me the horrible image of a girl, with the appearance of the most adorable purity, nourishing in her heart some bad guest.”

Louisa took the rose, held it over the window, and shook the beetle out.

“There is the rose back again—you can’t find any fault with it now.” She looked as unconscious of evil and as perfect as the flower in her hand.

“I cannot admire it as I did before I discovered that ugly creature cherished in it.”

“As if the poor rose could help itself!” said Louisa, laughing, and evidently not perceiving any ulterior meaning in his words. She went on:—“M. Marc would not have refused it; no, he would not have punished a misfortune as though it had been a crime.”

The marquis made no answer. Louisa went to replace the rose in the glass of water from which she had taken it; in the act of doing so, she turned to M. de Blacourt, and said,—

“Once—twice—you won’t have it?”

“Louisa,” he exclaimed angrily, “you have no character.”

“No character?” she repeated, dropping the rose into the water. “How do you mean?”

“You are too yielding.”

“And mamma says I am as obstinate as a mule. Poor Louisa, everybody finds fault with you—except two persons”—she added this after a little pause.

“And those two?” questioned the marquis.

“Antoinette and M. Marc. Antoinette thinks me an angel, as she does *you*. M. Marc does not do that, but he never speaks to me as if he thought I had no good in me.”

Louisa tried to speak cheerfully, but the marquis saw that it cost her an effort to hide that she was hurt. Her tears were not so near her eyes as those of Ismay—she had a rich generous nature that threw off suffering.

“I did not say that you had no good in you,” said M. de Blacourt, rather moved by her self-control.

“After all, I don’t know any good quality I have, unless loving people is one,” she said.

“The merit of that depends on whom you care for.”

“You mean,” she said, “that it’s wrong to care



for any one who has faults. Ah! I have caught you," she added, with a burst of girlish glee; "I am full of faults; you care for me: so you do wrong. Now, what do you say to that?"

"I say that you are like all women,—when you can't conquer by reason, you do it by coaxing and flattering."

"Never mind how I have done it—we are friends again; I see it in your eyes."

She ran to the table, and brought him the rose. He shook his head at her, but he took it.

"I am so glad," she said, with a sigh of relief. "Do you know that lately you have looked as if I had done something to offend you."

"Are you sure that you have not?"

"Quite sure."

At that instant she was a thousand leagues away from any thought of her promise to Gustave.

While watching Louisa, the marquis became aware of many things; he found himself as it were the spectator of a comedy. He discovered that Ismay was in love with Marc, who was

captivated by Fioretta, who was in love with no one, but who loved the evidence of the feelings she excited. So far clear, but Louisa, who was for him the heroine of the drama, what about her? His interest, his anxiety, increased with every time he saw her in Gustave's company. He felt impelled even to multiply the opportunities for their meeting.

To Marie's astonishment and displeasure, he enlarged his dinner-table. The Von Ehrtmanns were often asked on the Sunday, the day which had hitherto been kept exclusively for the Templars. Marc and Gustave were among the invited, with this distinction, that Marc came to dinner, and Gustave in the evening. The marquis could not bring himself to eat and drink with the man he suspected.

Winter was again at hand, and Madame von Ehrtmann was engrossed body and soul by the desire to have herself and daughters received at the Tuileries. For this end, she plied the marquis with every flattery; an introduction to his cousin Madame de Villemont, now one of the ladies of the

Court, would ensure the gratification of the desire of her heart. To this end, one evening at his own house, Madame von Ehrtmann entangled him in one of those conversations about love and marriage, which enables a woman to envelope a man in a cloud of incense.

The marquis put forward his age as a shield.

“Your age!” repeated madame; “I don’t know what that may be; it is an axiom that we are only of the age we appear to be,” (she tossed the censer). “A man of forty, with every advantage of person, station and fortune, may command the world.”

“A man of forty, perhaps—” began the marquis, with a very good show of indifference.

“Ta, ta, ta,” interrupted the lady; “everything goes by appearances here below; do not put my words to the test, Monsieur le Marquis, unless you are prepared for the consequences of success. I heard a young lady, not a hundred miles off, a beautiful young lady,” here a glance at Louisa, “declare you were the handsomest and cleverest man she ever saw.”

This swinging of the censer, which reads so *fade*, and even vulgar, rarely fails of its effect, even with the wisest. The fumes of the incense blinded M. de Blacourt, but only for an instant. Presently he moved away to speak to Mrs. Templar, who was sitting alone with an affronted face.

“Is Louisa to be launched at the same time as her friends?” he asked.

“No, indeed; I don’t wish her to be classed with the Von Ehrtmanns. Louisa is nearly two years younger than Ismay; she can afford to wait.”

The marquis twisted his beard, still black and soft.

“Perhaps it might be best to enlarge her circle of companions,” he remarked.

“I don’t approve of girls going out too soon; Louisa is only seventeen; if she appears this winter, she will get the credit of being nineteen, and, by-and-by, people will be saying, oh! she came out years ago, and making her out to be five-and-twenty when she is only twenty.”

M. de Blacourt opened his eyes,—

“And what will it matter what people say of her age five years hence? In all probability, Louisa will be the mother of two or three children by that time.”

“I don’t mean her to marry the first man who asks her.”

“Has she promised to let you choose for her?”

“I don’t understand why you should wish me to hurry my daughter into the world,” said Mrs. Templar, in her most aggrieved tone.

“You mistake; I don’t advise or wish you to do anything. I was debating a question.”

“Or, rather forcing Madame von Ehrtmann’s opinion on me. I believe I am as good a judge as she is of what’s right or wrong?”

“Certainly,” answered the marquis.

He said to Marc,—

“Do you know what makes me understand our party spirit? It is the way women war on one another. What one says, the other contradicts; she ought and she oughtn’t; worry, vexation, teasing—a constant ‘I will and I won’t.’”

The Baronne von Ehrtmann and her daughters

were introduced to Louis Philippe's Court, and were invited to the Court balls, through the good offices of Madame de Villemont. After that, the young Vicomte de Villemont, M. de Blacourt's heir-presumptive, and a friend of his, a M. de Luneville, occasionally appeared at Madame von Ehrtmann's receptions. These two young men brought thither the true French element. This being the case, the marquis thought proper to say a word of warning to Mrs. Templar.

“Remember,” he said, “Frenchmen do not marry for love. Madame de Villemont, for instance, will make her son's marriage. She and some girl's parents will agree that the station and fortune of their children suit; the girl will be brought home from some convent; a meeting will be arranged, to allow the young people to see each other. If Raoul says, ‘Elle ne me déplaît pas;’ and she ‘Il me convient;’ a month after, their union will be solemnized.”

“Upon my word, Louisa ought to be much obliged to you for such care of her heart. She is not my daughter if she is won unsought.”

“How wrong-headed you are,” said the marquis, angrily; “or, rather, wrong-hearted. You don’t seem to understand what it is to have a disinterested friend.”

“I should rather call you Louisa’s friend than mine. You never think of *me*, it’s always of *her*.”

“Good heavens! is it not the same thing?”

“Pray don’t speak so loud; you make every one stare at us.”

Christmas came and went, and the marquis was no nearer the knowledge of Louisa’s secret than he had been at Martinmas. But a crisis was at hand.

## CHAPTER V.

## MARC'S CHOICE.

It was on the 6th of January that Major Templar walked into the salon of the entresol of the Hôtel de Hollande. Louisa was practising as usual.

“I am very glad to see you,” she said, fluttered by surprise, and embarrassed by his silent way of shaking hands with her.

“You pretty little chap!” he exclaimed at last.

Louisa coloured, and laughed, because she was ashamed, and went to find her mother.

The major was looking out of window, flapping his right hand glove on his left hand, when Mrs. Templar came in. He gave her two fingers, more because he was holding his glove than from



impertinence. Mrs. Templar stiffened all over. The trio sat in silence for some seconds. At last the major said,—

“They don’t write often to you from home; so you didn’t expect to see me, I suppose?”

“I hope all the family are well?” said Mrs. Templar, as if she did not care whether they were or not.

“Just the same; the old gentleman takes his walks and his pills, and Lady Theodosia eats eggs; she has given up meat—thinks it wrong, or is afraid of growing fat.”

“And Miss Wilton,” asked Louisa; “how is she?”

“As rough a brush as ever.”

The questions and answers came to a full stop. Presently the major began again,—

“What are you doing with yourselves? very gay—up all night—asleep all day—eh?”

“You forget that Louisa is not come out yet,” said Mrs. Templar.

“Isn’t she? Why don’t you bring her out, poor little soul?”

“She is only seventeen,” said Mrs. Templar snappishly.

“The right age; I should fancy all girls are at their best at seventeen. It’s a great pity that pretty things spoil so soon; a friend of mine declares that no girl has more than a few weeks of perfect beauty.”

“What nonsense,” exclaimed Mrs. Templar.

“Yes, so I say; but that’s what he thinks.”

“Any chance of Lady Theodosia coming to Paris?”

“Lord bless you, no; she is holding her court; busy with blankets and soup; she wouldn’t leave Lamberton at this time of the year for the world; I ran away from all the bustle of old women and their blessings.”

The major did not stare at Louisa, but he glanced sideways at her continually,—

“Would you like to go to the opera to-night?” addressing her abruptly.

Louisa’s eyes brightened as she looked towards her mother.

“If you would, you know,” continued the

major, "I'll take a box for you there, or anywhere you like."

"Mamma!" said Louisa, appealingly.

"As Captain Templar is so good—" began Mrs. Templar.

"Ah! you haven't heard that I have got a step—?"

"No; we know none of your news."

"That's the only news, my dear lady;" then turning to Louisa again,—

"Do you really like the opera best, or have you a fancy for any other theatre?"

"Anywhere you choose," said Louisa, afraid in her heart that this constant reference to herself might anger her mother.

"No, no; you must decide. I can't bear people not to know their own minds."

"I have never been either to the Grand Opera or to the Français," said Louisa.

"Well, we won't go to the Français; it's too much trouble to understand what's going on. I'll go and get you a box at the opera."

"What are you thinking of?" he asked, looking

at Louisa; "if you like the Français better, say so; come, out with your thought."

"Mamma, if we could take Fioretta; Ismay has been so often with us, and Fioretta never."

"Ask the young lady with the romantic name, by all means," said the major, as he left the room.

When the major was out of hearing, Mrs. Templar said,—

"Louisa, I thought I had warned you already; it's just what you did with M. de Blacourt; you were never satisfied till you obliged him to be acquainted with those Ehrtmanns; and now it's the same thing over again with your cousin. What *are* those Ehrtmanns to you?"

"I am fond of them, mamma, and Fioretta would like so much to go to the operà."

"What's that to you? Let other people find amusements for themselves, and don't you be setting up to patronise your companions; they won't thank you for it."

"Well, I won't do so any more, mamma; only let us be happy this evening. Who would ever

have thought of my stupid cousin doing such a clever thing?"

"Your stupid cousin is not so stupid as he pretends to be."

"Oh, mamma, I am sure he can't help himself; but I mean to like him now and evermore for his good-nature to-day. I may go and ask Fioretta, mayn't I, mamma?"

"You'll see that monkey will begin a flirtation with the major."

"That will be fun," exclaimed Louisa; "and if he were to marry her, how glad Madame von Ehrtmann would be; she's always saying she wishes her daughters to marry Englishmen."

Louisa ran out of the room. Mrs. Templar looked after her with a puzzled face; it is really difficult for a double-minded person to believe in perfect simplicity of character.

To Mrs. Templar's surprise, Fioretta did not attempt to flirt with Major Templar; she was as much taken up by the novelty of the scene as Louisa. The two girls sat in front, and only remembered the presence of Mrs. Templar

and the major, when they wanted some explanation.

“I like to see them,” whispered Major Templar to the grim lady by his side; “they look so delighted and absorbed; they are as pleasant a sight as I have witnessed for many a long day—pity they’ll so soon get used to it all.”

“People can’t go on being children all their lives,” was the answer he received.

By-and-by, under the cover of the noise of drums and horns, the major observed,—

“Louisa appears to be as good as she’s pretty—her wishing to invite that other girl is a capital sign of her.”

Mrs. Templar had a vision of Louisa as mistress of Lamberton Park. Curious enough, while the idea pleased her, she felt a sort of jealous anger. Why should Louisa be so lucky, and she so unlucky? Mrs. Templar never did enter willingly into any praises of Louisa; but if any one hinted that Louisa was not superior to all other girls, then Mrs. Templar fired up in a most motherly style. Her way of showing affection was the pur-

chasing some article of dress for Louisa, too expensive for her means; and then, in return for her daughter's caresses and thanks, to say, "I don't kiss and call you love and dear; I give you something more substantial; show me your love by your obedience." More than this: you might have imagined that Mrs. Templar had set herself the task of putting to the rout all her young daughter's sensibility as to what was beautiful or noble. Music she constantly spoke of as an accomplishment to be acquired for the sake of attracting, or of shining in public; drawing or painting the same. To speak several languages was desirable; it brought girls into notice; reading was loss of time—men hated blue stockings. Mrs. Templar could not give that which she had not, and she had no other opinions than those she expressed. To be the most admired in society, to make her way in the world, did seem to her the end of a girl's education; she did think all poetry rubbish; all novels poison; she approved of a certain knowledge of history, for instance, the dates of the reigns of the kings of England. Those Louisa would repeat

as she did the Church of England catechism. Mrs. Templar was what every one acknowledged to be a thoroughly respectable woman; she paid her bills regularly; she believed there was a code of morals for the great, another for the little; one for men, another for women; she had always a stone ready for these last: in short, she was a woman so severe of aspect and of speech, that every matron would have held her at once to be an eligible chaperone. Brought up in this arid atmosphere, it was a wonder that Louisa retained any freshness of feeling; that she should have a very limited sense of the word duty was to be expected. The one plank of safety her mother had given her, on which to ride the world's rough sea, was a terror of the fires of hell. Louisa had been taught to dread punishment—she had no conception of fatherly love—or protection.

As a matter of course Major Templar was invited to Madame von Ehrtmann's receptions; the baronne made him recollect that they had been acquainted at Geneva.

“Really, Major Templar has improved,”



observed Madame Hébert to Louisa. "Fioretta wakes him up wonderfully; I wonder what Lady Theodosia would say to a German daughter-in-law?" The speaker watched Louisa.

"Oh! dear, Claire, Fioretta would never have him; she laughs at his chin."

The Marquis de Blacourt had his eye also on all that was going forward. It was all very well for Fioretta to spend the evening turning over albums with the English major, and to play off all her pretty little artillery against his heart, the shots only told upon Marc de Lantry. Mrs. Templar sat pretending blindness, but the sagacious eye of the marquis detected the pretence. The keen-sighted man of the world perceived that there was another besides himself studying the game being played—M. Hébert's dark-visaged clerk was on the alert. If Gustave Gastineau did love Louisa, M. de Blacourt respected him for the power he now showed in maintaining the secret of his soul. Gustave never relaxed his reserve.

Meeting Major Templar at least three times

a week, the marquis had good opportunities for gaining an insight into his character. Each interview sent the Frenchman home meditating, not only on Louisa's chances of happiness with such a man, but speculating on matrimony in general. The marquis however was one of those men who invoke Harpocrates to act as a sentinel over their thoughts, so the world never was admitted to know those meditations.

The clap of thunder which ushered in a change of relations in the two families domiciled in the Hôtel de Hollande, was Marc de Lantry's proposal of marriage to Ismay von Ehrtmann. If Ismay was astonished, Fioretta was doubly so.

"I thought you loved Fioretta?" said Ismay.

"I once thought so also," was the honest reply. "Can't you forgive the mistake, dear Ismay?"

"It is not that, but perhaps——"

"There is no perhaps in the case," interrupted Marc; "I love you, and I honour and respect you above all women."

Ismay was only too happy to believe him.

When Fioretta was told by Marc that Ismay

had promised to be his wife, her first exclamation was almost a repetition of her sister's. "I thought you loved me?" she said.

"You must have cared very little about the matter, or you would have discovered some time since, that my heart was entirely your sister's."

"Don't be angry with me," said Fioretta smiling; "I am very glad; I am sure I shall make you a better sister than a wife; to be a saint is Ismay's vocation, mine is t'other thing; don't you agree with me?"

"Perhaps I do, but there is one thing I will not allow you to do any more."

"And that is, my brother?"

"To flirt with me."

"I'll try not," was the gay answer; "but I can't promise, on my word; it's first nature with me. Now I am going to kiss Ismay, and rejoice over her, poor lamb; she won't have to wear the green stockings, as I had expected she would."

Fioretta went off, with a smile on her lip and a tear in her eye. Did she care for Marc? or was it only her way of finishing off a game

played out? Probably she did not herself know.

“News, news!” cried Louisa, jumping up from her piano, the first time M. de Blacourt called after she had heard of Marc’s engagement; “somebody is going to be married!”

“Not you, I suppose?”

“Fancy my telling you of THAT, in such a way! Guess?”

“Of course, it’s one of the Von Ehrtmanns. Mdlle. Ismay has accepted M. de Lantry, has she?”

“Now, who did tell you?” asked Louisa, mortified.

“Nobody; that is, my own eyes enlightened me.”

Louisa looked at him with serious admiration.

“How clever you are!” Then she added, “After all, I don’t know that I am very glad; the Von Ehrtmanns and M. Marc will go away. Thank goodness! we shall always have you. What would become of me if you were to go also?”

The marquis played with his breguet chain.

“ Don't make too sure. What if I were also going to be married ? ”

“ You ? ” exclaimed Louisa, with a merry laugh.

The tone of the exclamation, and the laugh, were not complimentary to the marquis.

“ Why do you laugh, Mdlle. Louisa ? ”

She blushed the deepest scarlet.

“ You are a silly child, Mdlle. Templar. Ask Madame von Ehrtmann whether I am too old to marry, for that's what you mean. Madame la Baronne will teach you better ; she'll make you understand why I might pick and choose among the freshest blown roses.”

Mrs. Templar said,—

“ It is not my fault that Louisa is such a hoyden.”

“ She will improve when she has waltzed and galloped for two seasons ; ” and, as he spoke, he twirled her gently round, to see her averted face. Her large black eyes were dim with tears.

“ What's the matter now ? ” he said.

“ Don't think I meant to be rude ; indeed I did not. There's nobody in the world good enough for you.”

“ There,” said the marquis, turning to Mrs. Templar, “ I told you she would improve. Madame von Ehrtmann herself could not have made me a prettier speech.”

“ But I mean what I say ! ” exclaimed Louisa, passionately, and a large round tear fell over her hot cheek.

“ You remind me of the Louisa of the Rue de Varennes,” he said ; and, as his voice sounded terribly soft to himself, he added, rather roughly, “ But what was in season then, would be out of season now ; we are ladies and gentlemen, and we must behave ourselves nicely, and not give way to tears and violence. I think that's your cousin's ring.”

## CHAPTER VI.

## TWO CONFESSIONS.

WHENEVER the marquis came to call on Mrs. Templar, he found Major Templar there; whenever Major Templar appeared at a later hour than usual, he found the marquis installed on the sofa.

M. de Blacourt could not say that Mrs. Templar encouraged the major's visits; on the contrary, he felt assured that she did not favour the suit of the heir of Lamberton. Perhaps that was natural. Louisa was undoubtedly extraordinarily beautiful; her mother might have set her heart on her daughter's wearing a coronet. What did puzzle the marquis was, that Mrs. Templar never allowed an opportunity to escape

of showing Louisa in an unfavourable light to her cousin.

“ She cannot endure the idea of her daughter occupying the place she ought to have had,” thought he. “ God help that poor Louisa ; she has not a true friend even in her mother.”

On one of the days when both the marquis and Major Templar were present, Louisa was describing to the former the vaudeville she had seen the evening before ; the major was always taking her and her mother to one theatre or the other. At a play, Louisa was amused, and he might sit silent and admire her.

“ Well, . you are to understand,” explained Louisa, “ that the prince wanted to be loved for himself, and not for his crown ; so he disguised himself as a student—quite a poor student,—and then—how was it, mamma ?—there was some one else, who wished to marry the princess’s maid, and she would not have him ; and he gave her a beautiful necklace.”

“ Ah, ha !” said the marquis, “ that’s the way to gain hearts.”



“ Exactly what the pretended student said,” replied Louisa, laughing. “ The princess was better than her maid ; she refused a duke for the sake of the poor student.”

“ Allons donc ! She had guessed he was a prince.”

“ No, no, she had not indeed !”

“ You have grown very romantic since last night, Louisa,” said her mother. “ You then thought it very ridiculous of the princess to say she would marry the student.”

“ Because she *was* a princess, mamma ; that was what I meant.”

“ Oh ! let you alone, my dear, for setting a proper value on the good things of this world. It's a mistake your not having been born a princess.”

Louisa did not answer.

A preposterous thought flashed across M. de Blacourt's mind, “ Could Louisa really be that woman's daughter ?” Mrs. Templar could not be bitterer if Louisa had been a step-child, or an impostor. Then he remembered the love Mrs.

Templar had lavished on the child in the Rue de Varennes, and he had to place her present harshness, to the perversion of all her natural feelings, consequent upon the treachery of the *soi-disant* Vicomte Granson. Louisa was the scapegoat for that adventurer.

Abruptly breaking the silence, the major said to Louisa,—

“ So you like pretty things, too, do you? ”

“ Every one does, I fancy, ” said Louisa, in a subdued tone.

“ I not only like to see them, but to have them as my own, ” returned the major, and he came to Louisa’s side. “ What pretty thing would you care most to have? ” he asked, in a half-whisper.

“ I should need a long while to decide that question, ” said Louisa, laughing.

“ You know the story of the three wishes, ” said the marquis ; “ better make up your mind at once, or you may end with nothing better than black puddings. ”

“ If I had to say at this moment, ” replied

Louisa, "I should choose that beautiful piano we saw at Erard's yesterday."

"And where would you put it?" asked Mrs. Templar. "It would fill this room, or any room your poor mother is ever likely to have."

"I never thought of that," said Louisa. "You see, I should need time for consideration."

Major Templar seemed rooted to his chair; he out-sat M. de Blacourt. Mrs. Templar, to get rid of him, called Louisa to her, and, in a half-whisper, gave her a message to take to Thérèse. Louisa was scarcely out of the room, when the major, as if released from a spell, rose, shook hands hastily with Mrs. Templar, and hurried away. He caught Louisa in the ante-room.

"I have got something to say to you," he began, and placed himself before her. He turned very white as he said, "Louisa, will you marry me?"

She was startled, and, in her fright, stammered out,—

"No, I thank you."

“ You shall have the piano, and anything else you wish for.”

“ Oh! I can't, indeed!—pray let me go.”

She looked at him, burst out crying, and ran back to the salon.

“ What's the matter, child?” asked Mrs. Templar.

“ Mamma, mamma, I am so sorry!”—here a sob—“ but my cousin asked me to marry him, and indeed I cannot!”—more sobs.

“ Well, no one obliges you. What are you crying for, in that baby fashion?”

“ He looked so dreadful; his face was quite grey, and his nose—oh, mamma! it was so white and pinched. I am so sorry for him—so sorry!”

“ Don't flatter yourself that you have killed him? he'll get over it, my dear. Men die and are buried, but not for love.”

“ He will never forgive me!” exclaimed Louisa.

“ Probably not; but that's not of much consequence, since you don't care for him.”

“ But I do care for him as a cousin, mamma;

he was very kind to me. I would give anything to be good friends with him again."

"You should have thought of that before you said, 'No.'"

"But I do not wish to marry him, mamma."

"Very well, then be contented; you can't blow hot and cold at the same moment."

In the evening, Louisa brought a small packet to her mother; she asked,—

"Mamma, should I not send back these presents?"

"Who put that into your head?"

"Myself, mamma."

"You may do as you please."

"May I not write and say that I hope he will forgive me? he may think I am offended, if I send the things without a word."

"No, you are not to write. Remember this, Louisa, you are growing up,—never write to a man who is not either your husband or your brother."

"Not even to M. de Blacourt, mamma?"  
exclaimed Louisa, opening her eyes.

“Don't be impertinent; you understand very well what I mean; though, no doubt, that greatly of yours is just as selfish and good-for-nothing as other men; the less you have to do with men, young or old, the better. When they want anything, how amiable and gentle they are! Never trust one of them—not one. I will write to Major Templar myself.”

“Tell him, pray do, mamma, that I am sorry to have given him pain, and that I shall never forget how kind he has been to me.”

“I shall write what I think best. You ought to have more confidence in your mother's judgment.”

What was the use of Mrs. Templar's warnings to Louisa; the girl was born warm-hearted and confiding. Impossible to graft suspicion on such a stock. “Chase away nature, and it comes back at a gallop,” says the French proverb.

Mrs. Templar's letter and the packet of trinkets were brought back to her. When her messenger reached Major Templar's hotel, he had already started for England.

“Take care of the things, mamma,” said Louisa, “I could never have any pleasure in them again.”

The following day, M. de Blacourt asked,—

“What has become of your other daily visitor?”

“You mean Major Templar, I suppose? He is gone back to England,” and Mrs. Templar’s face expressed, “Ask me no questions.”

The marquis held his peace then, but the evening he was at Madame von Ehrtmann’s, he took an opportunity when Gustave was within hearing, to say to Louisa,—

“So you would not have your cousin?”

Louisa grew scarlet. M. de Blacourt went on,—

“In my opinion, you have made a blunder. Rich, well-born, young enough; I can’t understand what you expect better, Mdlle. Templar. What did you dislike in him?”

“I did not dislike him; but I did not wish to marry him.”

“And why, pray? that is what I want to know.”

“I was always inclined to laugh at him—I could not help it.”

“I hope you have no worse reason to give?”

“Worse reason!” repeated Louisa.

“Yes, worse reason,” said the marquis, looking at her, and then glancing at Gustave, who was evidently listening with intense interest or curiosity to their conversation.

Louisa’s crimson flush faded away into a waxen paleness. The marquis rose and left her.

During the evening Louisa went to him, and putting her arm within his, said,—

“You fancy something quite wrong of me.”

“Do I? I am afraid not—but I have no right to interfere in your affairs.”

“I promised faithfully not to tell, or I would tell you,” she answered. “Some day I may.”

M. de Blacourt shook his head, saying,—

“Bad, bad, when a girl of your age has under-hand doings with a young man.”

Louisa stood silent and hesitating, but still holding his arm fast.

“Don’t, pray don’t say anything to mamma. I



don't want to be accused of acting dishonourably, and of saving myself at another's expense; it will be all right by-and-by. It's nothing so dreadful, I assure you; promise not to speak to mamma."

She spoke in a half coaxing, half commanding voice.

M. de Blacourt was scrutinizing her while she spoke. Louisa, in her turn, looked at him. The expression of impatience and anger in his face startled her; as a frightened child might have done, she said,—

"It's nothing bad; don't tell mamma."

He felt that she trembled, and that seemed to provoke his anger to an outburst. He did not raise his voice above a whisper, but what he said lost nothing in fierceness for all that.

"Ah!" he said, "you imagine you have a good-natured blockhead to deal with; an old fellow that you can turn round your little finger with a few soft words. I hate deceit in you, as much as I do in others. You have only seen one side of my character, Miss Louisa. I despise all duplicity. Poor fragile creature," he added, as

he led her to a seat; "the bloom is already off your heart. Rest satisfied, I shall not tell your mother to look better after you."

He turned on his heel and left her.

A struggle between the tears of a child and the pride of a woman, swelled Louisa's bosom almost to bursting. She was pale as marble, her lips had lost all colour.

"Are you ill, Louisa?" asked Fioretta, fluttering up to her: at the same moment Madame Hébert addressing M. de Blacourt, who was passing her, exclaimed. "What can be the matter with Louisa?"

"Is there anything wrong with her?" he asked.

"Look at her; she is as white as a statue," said Madame Hébert.

"How people love to exaggerate," he returned; "she is pale, certainly, but place her by the side of a white marble bust, and you would see the difference."

"At this moment," said Madame Hébert; "I am wondering if she is going to faint outright," and she went to Louisa.

“ Sit down by me, Claire ; I have something to say to you ; I must speak to Gustave before he goes away this evening. Manage it so that no one shall overhear our conversation ! ”

This was a commission after Claire’s own heart ; it was so long since she had had any love affairs to deal with. She nodded her head, whispering,—

“ Then we must outstay that spying friend of yours ; there is no preventing his hearing and seeing everything that’s going on in a room. I am sure he guesses what we are talking about now.”

“ Never mind M. de Blacourt,” said Louisa ; “ only don’t let Gustave go away without my first speaking to him.”

Madame Hébert presently made her way, by a circuitous route, to Gustave, and gave him Louisa’s message.

“ There is no occasion for manœuvring,” he said ; “ I shall go at once to her. Being a guest here, gives me a right to address any one present,” and he walked across the room to where Louisa

was sitting ; placing himself so as to screen her from general observation, he told her he had come in obedience to her commands. By this time Gustave's love for Louisa was saturated with bitterness ; her avoidance of him, her cold good breeding, showed him her indifference. Louisa acted as she felt ; whenever she thought of Gustave, it was to wish that the time of her release was come. There was no tenderness in either his face or voice at this moment.

“ Gustave,” began Louisa, “ I must tell mamma this very night, of the promise I made to you.”

“ Indeed ! What is the urgent cause which forces you to break your word ? ”

“ I mean only to . . . . ”

Here Mrs. Templar came up, and laying her hand roughly on Louisa's arm, she said, “ I am going.” Turning to Gustave, she added in a voice loud enough for every one to hear, “ Well M. Gastineau, have you got an usher's place yet ? I saw your sister this morning ; she says her shop is prospering. Good night.”

“ You she-wolf ! how could I expect you to

bring forth a dove?" muttered Gustave between his teeth.

"I don't approve of your allowing Gustave Gastineau to speak to you so familiarly," said Mrs. Templar to Louisa, as soon as they were in their own salon. "Do you hear me, Louisa?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Then you will please to obey: I saw several persons staring with astonishment at you—the marquis for one."

Louisa had her night candle in her hand; she went up to her mother and kissed her cheek; a cold hard cheek that seemed to repel her daughter's kiss.

"You are in a great hurry to go to bed," said Mrs. Templar: "when young ladies act foolishly, they must bear to be told of it."

"Mamma, here is Thérèse waiting to speak to you."

"What is it, Thérèse?"

"Madame, the washerwoman has been to say that she cannot find the missing pocket-handkerchiefs."

Mrs. Templar's anger took another direction, and Louisa slipped away to her bed-room. The moment she was there, she began to regret that she had not seized the opportunity, and made her confession—it would have been over by this time, thought she: how shall I ever begin?

Boys and girls of seventeen do not often pass sleepless nights. Even while trying to determine in what words to disclose her secret to her mother, Louisa fell asleep; Mrs. Templar found her so, when, her conference over with Thérèse, she followed Louisa to continue her admonitions.

Mrs. Templar's hard features softened as she stood contemplating the sleeping girl. There was this quality in Louisa's mother; what was incapable of resisting her, she was tender to; no one could be more gentle to an infant, or to a pet bird, or a pet dog.

“How still she lies,” thought the watcher; “how white she is!” and with a sudden panic, she bent down her head to listen for the sound of breathing; she drew the coverlet more closely

round the sleeper's shoulders and walked away on tip-toe.

Next morning Louisa could not eat her breakfast. Her first waking thoughts had been the avowal she had to make to her mother; she never flinched from the resolution she had come to over night; what gave her the nerve to do so, was her anxiety to re-instate herself in the marquis's good opinion. With Louisa, her affections stood in the lieu of principles, which, sooth to say, no one had ever thought of giving her; she loved and revered M. de Blacourt with all the enthusiastic faith of a young girl in his superiority. She loved him the more, that she had so few to love; he stood for her in the stead of father, or uncle, or brother; she must be at peace with him.

"Are you ill?" asked Mrs. Templar, as she saw Louisa leave her roll untouched.

"No, mamma, but I have something to tell you." Louisa was trembling from head to foot; Mrs. Templar saw it, and with sickening fear of some unknown evil, she exclaimed, "Good God! what can she have done?"

“Oh, mamma! do forgive me,” cried Louisa, throwing herself on her knees before her mother.

“Forgive you, you good-for-nothing girl! what have you done?”

“Don’t look so dreadful, mamma; indeed it’s not so very bad.”

“What is it? speak at once!” said Mrs. Templar, actually shaking the terrified girl.

“I promised Gustave——”

“God in heaven, grant me patience!” broke in Mrs. Templar.

“Mamma, do hear me,” and out it came in a fear-thickened voice; “I only promised him that I would not marry any one for three years, that’s all, mamma.”

“That’s all!” repeated Mrs. Templar; “you worthless, vulgar, low wretch!” the scorn of her voice was blighting, she thrust away Louisa’s hands, grasping her knees, and began walking hastily up and down the room. In a few minutes she said, stopping before the still kneeling girl: “When did you make this wise promise?”



“At La Forêt, mamma; I did not wish to do it, but Gustave——”

“Don’t dare to mention that villain’s name,” almost screamed Mrs. Templar, stamping her foot; “he deserves the galleys, and he’ll come to that some day,” and again she walked up and down the room; then as before, coming to a standstill in front of Louisa, she exclaimed, “You are a fine precocious young lady—young gipsy, I ought to say; you’re a famous actress, upon my word;” and Mrs. Templar burst into an hysteric laugh. “So that’s the reason you refused Major Templar, a gentleman with good blood in his veins, a gentleman of good station, your father’s kinsman; and you did it, for this dirty, low-born, presumptuous cur? Ugh! get out of my sight.”

Louisa was rising to obey.

“Stop where you are, young madam. After keeping your secret so long, what made you tell me now?”

“I never thought of how wicked I had been till last night, mamma; believe me or not, I did

not think at the time that I promised, I was doing wrong.”

“A lie! If you had not known it was wrong, you wouldn’t have made any secret of it.”

“I did *not* think it wrong at the moment I gave my word — I did afterwards; but I had given a promise not to tell. It was done, and I could not help it, and I hoped it would not much matter.”

“I ask you why you tell now? Speak, and speak the truth, if you wish for mercy from me.”

“It was on account of what M. de Blacourt said to me last night. It was to give warning that I meant to tell you, that I begged Claire to bid that person” (Louisa did not dare to say Gustave) “to come and speak to me.”

“Ah! you remind me of Madame Hébert; she shall hear a bit of my mind.”

“Claire had nothing to do with it, mamma; no one had but myself. Mamma, don’t be angry with Claire; she is as innocent as you are.”

Mrs. Templar did not seem to hear this defence; she said,—

“ You will sit down this minute, and write to that low fellow, and tell him that he is not to consider you bound by any promise; that you will have nothing further to do with him. Get up out of that romantic attitude,” she added, in louder tones, as Louisa did not, because she could not rise directly; her knees felt like water. Mrs. Templar pulled her up roughly, and pushed her to the table, on which were writing materials. Louisa put her arms on the table, and laid her head down on them.

Mrs. Templar paused a few seconds; then she said,—

“ Don’t keep me waiting.”

“ I can’t say what you bid me, mamma. I must not break my word. The time will soon pass.”

“ Write.”

Louisa shook her head.

“ Mamma, mamma, only last Sunday . . . . do listen to me, my own mamma!” and Louisa seized her mother’s hands, and hung on them and kissed them. “ I do want to do right; I have

told you all the truth; I am afraid to break my word. In the Psalms last Sunday, mamma, I read to you that one must not swear to a neighbour and disappoint him, though it were to one's own hurt."

Louisa had noticed this verse, as people are apt to do all that bears on their own case.

"That has nothing to do with you, Miss Cunning—write! You will not?—then take your mother's cur——"

Louisa sprang up, pressed her hand over her mother's mouth, screaming,—

"Mamma!—don't!—you shall not, you shall not!"

Then she began to kiss Mrs. Templar wildly, and to moan and wring her hands like one half-crazed.

"Be quiet, Louisa. Do you want all the house to know your folly?"

Louisa was too excited, too bewildered, to care for or understand any such arguments. She went on repeating,—

"You shall not, mamma!—pity your poor

Louisa!—I am your only child!—don't be cruel to me!—God will punish me if I break my word!”

Mrs. Templar dragged Louisa, in this state, into her little bedroom. Loosening her dress, she said, sternly,—

“ Lie down ! ”

And Louisa, with every limb shaking, and her teeth chattering, obeyed.

“ Drink that,” and Mrs. Templar gave her some hartshorn and water; indeed, she nearly poured it down the girl's throat. She then left the room.

The dose of hartshorn, and the solitude, gradually calmed Louisa's excitement; her passionate exclamations died into quivering sobs; she lay on her bed for hours, she was frightened to leave it—frightened for a recommencement of the scene of the morning.

“ If some one would only come and tell her what to do. If she could see Ismay, and beg her to ask M. Marc—he was a clergyman—he would know what was best to do.”

Louisa had not the courage to move; a strait-waistcoat could not have held her a stricter prisoner than her terror lest that anathema which she had arrested on her mother's lips should be pronounced. Bodily weakness, from want of food, also began to have its share of influence in nailing her to her bed. She had just enough activity of mind left to wonder at the stillness of everything about her. At last, Thérèse put her head in at the door, and asked,—

“Is mademoiselle not well?”

“I have such an aching all over me,” said Louisa.

Thérèse advanced her whole body.

“Then probably madame is gone to fetch the doctor.”

“Is mamma not at home?” and Louisa tried to sit up, but the instant after she fell back on the pillow. “Oh! Thérèse, I feel so queer. Everything in the room is waving up and down.”

“Mademoiselle is faint; mademoiselle had better have a bouillon;” and Thérèse, who was, of course, perfectly cognizant of the morning's

fracas, though not of its cause, went and brought a bouillon.

“ I can't take it, thank you, Thérèse.”

“ Mademoiselle must,” said the maid ; “ mademoiselle is weak ;” and she forced a spoonful of the soup between Louisa's lips. The second was not so difficult to swallow ; the third was easy ; and so on, till the cup was empty.

“ Did you say mamma was out ?” asked Louisa, in a revived voice.

“ Madame went out this morning before twelve, mademoiselle, and it is now nearly five.”

“ I don't know where she is gone,” said Louisa, looking into Thérèse's face with awakening alarm.

“ After all, there's no reason why madame shouldn't have had visits and shopping to do ; time goes so fast when you are out of doors.”

“ Will you help me to get up, Thérèse ? Is it not strange I should feel so weak ?”

“ Mademoiselle wants her dinner, that's all.”

Louisa went into the drawing-room. She looked out of the window as long as there was

light to see anything distinctly—the days were still short; then she watched the hands of the clock by the fire-light. That lazy clock, whose striking of the hours had made her laugh so often, it was so like a sleepy person trying to speak, from this time forth became identified with sorrow in her recollection. In all her griefs to come, that gilt Diana, with the knight's helmet at her feet, would present herself as an old fellow-mourner.

Six o'clock struck—half-past six. Thérèse, who, as happens with all her class, had a delight in the anticipation of disasters, came into the salon, ostensibly to advise Louisa to take her dinner.

“No, I thank you, Thérèse; I had better wait for mamma.”

This was said calmly enough; then, giving way to her alarm, the poor young lady added,—

“I am beginning to be frightened at mamma's being so long away.”

“Madame is always so punctual,” said Thérèse.

“What had I better do, Thérèse?”



“ Suppose mademoiselle were to send for the German lady upstairs ? ”

“ No, mamma would not be pleased if I did that.”

“ And M. de Blacourt, who has not called to-day, just because he is wanted. It’s always so.”

“ If mamma is not here by seven, I think I will send for M. de Blacourt,” said Louisa.

“ Who will mademoiselle send ? ” asked Thérèse.

“ The concierge can go, can’t he ? ”

“ I’ll go and inquire,” said Thérèse, glad of an excuse for a gossip in the porter’s lodge.

Thérèse gave it as her opinion that the storm of the morning had been caused by mademoiselle having refused to accept Mr. Templar’s proposal of marriage.

“ He was rich as a Jew ; no wonder that madame was furious.”

Eight o’clock, and yet no Mrs. Templar. Louisa wrote three lines to the marquis, begging him to come to her immediately. She was, she said, in great distress, and signed, as usual, “ your affectionate little friend, Louisa.”

The porter had first better seek M. de Blacourt at his club, on the Boulevards; if he were not there, the note must be taken to the Rue de Varennes.

The marquis *was* at his club. As he read her signature, he thought, "she is more forgiving than I am." He put on his hat, turned into the first coach yard, threw himself into a cab, and said, "Go quickly to the Hotel de Hollande—Rue de la Paix."

He was so impatient to learn what could make Louisa send for him, that he forgot his usual forbearance to inferiors, and remonstrated pretty hotly on the time the driver lost in taking off the horse's nose-bag and cloth.

Louisa, who, from the moment she had despatched the messenger, had been listening for the stopping of a carriage, met the marquis at the door of the salon, and said almost in the words she had used as a child,—

"Oh, sir, a great misfortune has happened to me. I have made mamma very angry."

"Where's your mother?"

“I don’t know. Oh! M. de Blacourt, forgive me; don’t you be angry with me too. I am so sorry for what I have done. I told mamma all about it, because I could not bear you to be angry with me.”

“I am not angry;” and he took one of her hands in his. It was burning hot. “Come, tell me what has happened. Don’t cry, we are good friends again.”

He touched her cheek with his lips, and she said,—

“Thank you,” so humbly, that tears sprang into his eyes.

“Now, then, make haste and confess your sins.”

“I told mamma this morning that I had promised Gustave Gastineau not to marry any one for three years.”

The marquis stifled an oath.

“When did you promise this?”

“At Geneva. I know now that it was wrong of him to make me promise, and very wrong of me to do so. I can’t explain how it came about. I did not mean to do harm; he was so sorry that we

were going to leave, that I was sorry also—and I had known him nearly all my life, and he had been so good to me.”

Louisa looked as if pleading for her life.

“Never mind all your reasons,” said the marquis, “let us have facts. So you intended to marry him.”

“No, I did not; I wanted just to comfort him: he said it *would* comfort him.”

“Well, and what next?”

“I told mamma this morning, and she was so angry: she nearly——”

Here Louisa broke down altogether. She hid her head on M. de Blacourt’s shoulder. He felt her trembling.

“People in a passion say a great deal they don’t mean,” he said, soothingly.

“She’s gone, and I don’t know where,” said Louisa, in an excited voice. “*Do* find her! tell me what is right, and I will do it. I don’t want to break my word, it’s sinful. Help me—*do, do* help me. I am so miserable!”

The marquis did not improve the opportunity

for reading a lesson on her imprudence and folly ; he tried to quiet her by saying that there was no good reason for alarm ; probably Mrs. Templar had gone to the Héberts' to seek young Gastineau, and, not finding him, she had had to wait for his return.

“ Go and see, will you ? ” begged Louisa.

“ Certainly.”

“ And you will tell mamma and Gustave that I am ready to do what you and she think right ? ”

“ Very well : try to calm yourself in the meantime.”

As the marquis reached the door of the salon, it opened, and Mrs. Templar walked in. Always thin and pale, she now looked spectral ; her gown was mud up to the knees.

M. de Blacourt took hold of both her hands, placed her in an easy chair, and said,—

“ Thank God you are come.”

Louisa stood up, anxious to approach her mother, yet afraid to do so.

“ A glass of wine,” muttered Mrs. Templar.

Louisa rushed away for one; instead, however, of offering it herself to her mother, she gave it to the marquis. The silence portended an explosion of some kind. M. de Blacourt could imagine nothing better to do, than to bid Louisa bring her mother's slippers. Louisa did so, and knelt down to unlace her mother's wet boots. Mrs. Templar stared at her child as if she did not recognize her, then said in a tone which made Louisa start,—

“Go away, go.”

Louisa ran out of the room.

“You had better change your wet shoes,” said the marquis, gently. “May I ring for your servant?”

For all answer Mrs. Templar broke forth into an incoherent rhapsody about her unfortunate fate, of the pitilessness of every one towards her, of the wickedness of the human kind in general, and of Louisa in particular—Louisa had broken her heart.

“I have toiled and saved for her, thought of her alone; ever since she was born she has been

my ruling interest——” The marquis did not remind the poor lady of M. Granson. “And this is the return she makes me—a nasty forward——”

“Hush!” interrupted M. de Blacourt; “when you are cool, you will be sorry to have used such harsh words in speaking of your young daughter. She has only been as silly as most other girls of her age, and remember, my good friend, that you must have let her have more liberty than was good for her, or she could not have got into such a scrape.”

“Of course, I expected you to say that it was my fault. I believe if the heavens were to fall and to crush the larks, people would say it was my fault.”

The marquis held firmly to his point. He knew Mrs. Templar—knew that she must be mastered, that she was one of the few women with whom a certain brutality of authority would go further than magnanimity or gentleness.

“It is rare,” he continued, “that faults are all on one side; however, it’s worse than useless

arguing how the evil has been produced; the only sensible course is to find a remedy."

"I wash my hands of that young lady's fate," said Mrs. Templar; "as she makes her bed so she must lie on it."

"Pure folly to speak in that manner. Nine years ago, when Louisa burned her pinafore, you took the hint and bought a fire-guard, which you ought to have had before; apply my observation to the present case, and take better care of your child for the future. Come now, my good friend," and the marquis changed his harsh tone to one of persuasion, "do not let your feelings run away with you. I am not astonished at your indignation; you have every reason to be angry and indignant, but your excellent judgment must show you the dangers of over severity. First, you will give publicity to what had better remain unknown, and, secondly, you may drive your daughter into taking some irretrievable step—terror may drive a girl to elope as well as love."

"Thank goodness we are in France, where



clandestine marriages are next to impossible," said Mrs. Templar.

"So much the worse, if you frighten Louisa into seeking that young man's protection; she is not one that will long bear the lash. Spare her, spare yourself, my dear friend, future repentance! Have you forgotten what Louisa was as a child? She was one of the most high-spirited children I ever saw—prompt in defence and offence. I would stake all I have, that the gentleness and submissiveness towards you, which I have noticed since her return from Geneva, have their rise in remorse for having deceived you. Louisa is a strange mixture of timidity and rashness—beware!"

"I shall certainly never pretend to think wrong right, let what will happen," replied Mrs. Templar; "nor that I forgive when I do not. How she dared!" and Mrs. Templar once more gave way to invective and menace; she called her daughter "a bold minx," declared she had the greatest mind to send her to the strictest school she could find, or shut her up in a convent. "If

she were not young and pretty, you would be the first to condemn her," wound up Mrs. Templar.

"Her youth and beauty are certainly what a judge would call extenuating circumstances," answered M. de Blacourt. "If it will be any comfort to you to hear it, I can safely affirm that I am as much shocked at Louisa's conduct as you are. I am disappointed in her, she has fallen from her high place in my esteem."

Had M. de Blacourt spoken with the charity of an angel, he would not have succeeded so well in mollifying Mrs. Templar's ire against Louisa. His censure, so deliberately uttered, made her mother's pride wince. She turned upon him at once,—

"She has behaved extremely ill to me, and I have every reason to resent her behaviour. I don't see that she has done anything to make *you* despise her; she owed *you* no confidence or obedience. Little fool that she is, she thinks you perfection."

The marquis could have laughed; he did not

try to defend himself by explaining that it was not the having given the promise he thought so wrong, but that his displeasure arose from the marvellous coolness with which, under trying circumstances, Louisa had kept her own counsel. He held her to be an accomplished actress. He said,—

“ You see, then, that my advice to you is not from any indulgence towards Louisa.”

The marquis rose to take his leave. Mrs. Templar had no intention of letting him go, she wanted him to force her to come to some decision.

“ I am so weak,” she said; “ I have tasted nothing since breakfast! I have been wandering all day broken-hearted! Oh! marquis, I have had so many trials, so many disappointments—and now this seems the worst of all!”

Mrs. Templar was crying feebly from sheer exhaustion; she was so pale and haggard, her dress so wet and cold and muddy, that it was impossible not to pity her.

“ Poor soul!” exclaimed M. de Blacourt; “ I am very sorry for you.”

He went to the door leading to Mrs. Templar's own room, where he guessed Louisa would be, and knocked. Louisa, with a terrified face, answered the summons.

“Get your mother some tea, and try to find something that will tempt her to eat. Send Thérèse to make a fire, and to take off her wet boots.”

Before he could see what she was going to do, Louisa had bent down and kissed his hand. He turned away without saying a word.

Presently Louisa herself brought in the tea-tray; she poured out a cup of tea, and looked at the marquis as though asking him to give it to her mother.

“Louisa has brought you some hot tea; pray take it, my dear friend.”

Mrs. Templar took the cup without a glance at the culprit who was presenting it. The marquis then coaxed the wearied lady to eat some of the delicate *tartines* which no doubt Louisa had herself cut. When he had seen her something revived, he said good-night; shaking hands with

her, but with only a slight inclination of the head to Louisa.

Louisa's heart turned cold as the marquis closed the door on himself. Louisa counted on his affection and on his indulgence, and she was terrified to find herself alone with her mother. She remained standing just where M. de Blacourt had left her, awaiting her sentence. At that instant she was ready to make any atonement that could be exacted from her, if by so doing she could escape another outburst of Mrs. Templar's anger.

She dared not venture again to implore mercy. She remained silent and cowering. There is no measuring time in such moments of suffering; Louisa's feet began to tingle, then they seemed to swell, until she was fast losing the sense of a firm footing. Mrs. Templar at last broke the awful silence by saying,—

“Why are you standing there like Lot's wife? Go to your bed, and pray to God to forgive you!”

Louisa approached her mother.

“Mamma——”

“I have nothing to say to you; I prefer deeds to words. Go to bed.”

Louisa smothered a sob and left the room. Her every thought was absorbed by anxiety to earn her mother's forgiveness. She was about to kneel down to say her prayers as that incensed mother had desired her to do, when her eye was caught by a note pinned to the pincushion on the dressing-table. It was directed in Gustave's hand; she opened it; there were but two lines,—

“Be true to your word, and all will go well. Remember the Bride of Lammermuir!”

Louisa threw the paper down with mingled disgust and anger. How dared Gustave address her in that way? Her mother, then, was right in saying that her promise to wait was as good as an engagement to marry Gustave. He had laid a trap for her, for he must have been well aware that she had not understood her promise so. She hated him; she would do anything, everything to extricate herself. Certainly she would keep to what she had meant to bind herself to do; she would not marry till the three years were over,

but she would neither see nor speak to him. The idea of his daring to send her a note by Thérèse!

Frightened and angry, Louisa forgot her prayers—she crept into her bed, thinking, “Here I am safe till morning; oh, if I could sleep away these next horrid two years.” But Louisa was not yet at the end of her day’s tribulations. Striving to plan out some means by which she could make her duty to her mother square with the duty to her promise, her ear was caught by a measured tread beneath her window, which was not above twenty feet from the pavement. Once her attention was aroused; she remembered that she had heard that footstep from her first coming into her room. She guessed that it was Gustave who was there patrolling up and down before the hotel. She got out of bed and peeped from the window; Gustave was visible, sure enough, walking on the extreme edge of the pavement, manifestly with the intention of being seen by her: he was wrapped in a large cloak, *Almaviva* fashion, and, as Louisa caught sight of him, he suddenly stopped, and leaning against a lamp-post that faced her window, turned

his head upwards as if he saw her. She made one bound back into her bed, and, crouching beneath the bedclothes, she thought in an agony of dread, "If mamma sees him, how shall I ever make her believe that I knew nothing of his coming?"



CHAPTER VII.

“ LEARNING WHAT A PROMISE IS.”

LOUISA was quite surprised when she awoke next morning to find that she had slept.

While she dressed, she debated with herself as to what she should do about Gustave's note. To show it to Mrs. Templar was to get Thérèse turned away ignominiously; and besides, though more indignant with the writer than she had ever before felt in her life, she shrank from exposing his foolish heroics to her mother's scorn—girls are more womanly at seventeen than youths are men at twenty—Gustave's age—and Louisa keenly felt the absurdity of his language—that was the grain of sand which finally turned the scale of her feelings against him.

She had, as all girls have, an ideal—an ideal on a gigantic scale—superhumanly endowed in every way—a something utterly impossible to find. A young man, with his ingenuous heart opened before the eyes of seventeen, has not the power over the imagination that a dark, reserved, morose man of the world possesses. The Marquis de Blacourt, a man on the very edge of fifty, had he tried, would have been more likely to develop the romantic element in Louisa than one such as Gustave Gastineau.

Annoyed, mortified, and disgusted as she was, Louisa could not be wilfully or spontaneously cruel. If she overlooked his claims on her, she remembered all his misfortunes, his courage and perseverance. He was poor, humbly born, and plain in person, three reasons why she must not expose him to her mother's bitter ridicule. The result of Louisa's meditations was this speech to Thérèse, spoken with the sternness of a judge,—

“Thérèse, you must never bring me any letter or note unknown to mamma; if you should do so a second time, I must tell madame.”

Thérèse made no direct answer; she said in a loud aside,—

“Poor young man! I shall advise him to spend the night in his bed, rather than on the pavement of the Rue de la Paix.”

Louisa pretended not to hear this remark. She went into the salon, wondering whether she ought to practise as usual; perhaps if she did, her mother might come in and accuse her of want of proper feeling. Louisa felt as if there had been a death in the house—one of those deaths which exact solemnity of demeanour as a substitute for grief. Poor girl! she was unconscious that what was now occurring would for ever shut her out of the promised land. She was standing now on its frontiers; all that the future had in store for her would be a glimpse of its loveliness—an echo of its wonder-sweet nightingale’s song of tenderest joy and soothing melancholy; she would see those magic flowers which mortals may gather but once in a life; she would never pluck them.

Mrs. Templar had heard Louisa’s step, and

opening the door of communication, looked into the salon, and asked,—

“Why are you not practising?”

Mrs. Templar had very icy tones at her command.

Louisa went in a hurry to the piano.

Mrs. Templar continued,—

“You don’t wish the curiosity of those German people to be excited, I suppose. Before them and every one else I shall set you the example of behaving to one another as we were in the habit of doing. I expect you to have sufficient proper feeling to follow the example I set you.”

Mrs. Templar shut the door, and Louisa began her “do, mi, re, fa,” with what interest or inclination one may imagine.

Mingling with her fear of her mother, there was a sort of pity, as she listened to these useless precautions. Thérèse understood all that was going on, and Claire must be also behind the scenes; and Claire, who had always confided her own unhappy love crises to the first willing ear, would think nothing of talking over Gustave’s

mishaps with the first comer. Louisa could easily fancy she heard Claire saying, “ He is my cousin, you know, and of course we know all about it, and feel for him.”

The utmost that could be hoped was, that the story might not reach the ears of that pale, cold-blooded Vicomte Raoul de Villemont. Louisa could never have the courage to face him and those other young men whom Madame von Ehrtmann loved to assemble in her rooms, if she was to be pointed out as the heroine of a clandestine love-story. How she wished that she could see M. Marc alone, and beg him to prevent the exposure she dreaded.

All that day and the next Mrs. Templar maintained a resolute silence towards Louisa; in a word, she sent her to Coventry. Perhaps the girl's greatest trial was when her mother did speak to her with assumed familiarity at meal times, while Thérèse was present—Louisa acted her part as badly as possible. The marquis did not appear during those two long days: on the third afternoon, M. de Lantry called. Her first glance at his face told

Louisa that he had heard one version of her case, and it also showed her that he was sorry for her. Would he speak about it to Mrs. Templar? Louisa grew pale at the thought. She had no faith in any influence over her mother, save in that of M. de Blacourt. She did not see in Marc's calm face that "temperamental or taming power," which, without knowing how to describe it, she instinctively recognized in the marquis's eye.

After a few sentences as to the weather, Marc plunged into the dreaded subject.

"I have come to ask you," he said, addressing Mrs. Templar, but including Louisa by turning his head in her direction, "if I can be of any use or comfort to you? I have heard that you are in trouble, and I consider as one of the dearest privileges of a Christian pastor, his right of entrance, wherever help or consolation are needed."

"Really," said Mrs. Templar, bridling, "I am not aware that we are in any trouble, or that any sorrow has befallen us. Do you know of any, Louisa, my dear?"

Louisa covered her face with her hands, and Marc saw that she was crying bitterly.

“ There are signs of grief here at least,” he said, motioning towards Louisa. “ Pray, recollect, Mrs. Templar, that I am not a stranger—I knew this young lady when she was a child; she has often sat on my knee. Believe, I beg of you, that I have her best interests at heart; and if you will give me credit for no better reason, believe me I am anxious to help her, because my affianced wife dearly loves her.”

“ So, then, the audacity of that good-for-nothing, low-born young man, and Miss Templar’s folly, are known above stairs !” exclaimed Mrs. Templar.

“ Yes,” said Marc; “ but I did not inquire how the story reached Madame von Ehrtmann and her daughters. The friend of both parties, I hope to be able to do some good.”

“ You might, if you could conquer the obstinacy of that young lady. As for me, as I told M. de Blacourt, I wash my hands of any further interference in her fate.”

“Do you give me leave to talk over this affair with Mdlle. Louisa?” asked Marc.

“Oh! certainly, as far as I am concerned.”

“Then may we go into the dining-room?”

“Dear me! is a tête-à-tête necessary?”

“I think so,” replied Marc, quietly.

Mrs. Templar said, “There’s no occasion for you to move, I shall follow the fashion of the day, and give place to my youngers;” and so saying, she went into the adjoining room.

In fact, under this show of indifference or displeasure at M. de Lantry’s visit, Mrs. Templar hid her thankfulness that a mediator had come forward. A continuance of the armed neutrality of the preceding days was impossible, and Mrs. Templar had begun to wish for a crisis.

“I am so sorry for you,” were Marc’s first words to Louisa. “From what I myself have known of you, and from what Ismay tells me of you, I am sure that the deception you have practised must have been sorely irksome to you. You must be glad that it is over at any cost.”

Louisa let her hands drop on her lap; he could



see the fingers trembling as she nervously intertwined them.

Marc said, “I want you to tell me how it happened?”—in other words, Marc was desirous of discovering by Louisa’s explanation whether she loved Gustave. Whatever he did or tried to do in the matter must be modified by a knowledge of the state of her feelings.

The sisters upstairs differed in opinion. Fioretta said, “Louisa is just the girl to get into a scrape, and not to know how to get out of it again. I don’t believe she cares a pin for the man;” and Marc inclined to think rather as Fioretta did, than to adopt Ismay’s more sentimental views.

Louisa continuing silent, Marc said, soothingly,—

“I am confident you did not wilfully set about deceiving your mother.”

She looked at him with earnest eyes, the long lashes all wet and matted with her quiet tears, and pronounced a quivering “No.” He did not hurry her, but let her take her time. She went on in little broken sentences.

“It is not obstinacy indeed, M. Marc ;—I don’t think it is so easy to know what is right.”

“I agree with you, and that’s one of the reasons I ask you to confide your story to me, that we may try together to find out what is really the best for you to do. Duties do clash sometimes, and, perhaps, in your case.”

“It’s this, M. Marc :—I gave my word, and I do not think any one should break a promise.”

“If it’s a promise to do wrong, certainly every one should. Suppose that in a fit of passion or madness you had promised to murder me, ought you to keep your promise ?”

“Oh, no ;—but that’s a downright crime. Now, is it really wrong in me to have promised Gustave Gastineau that I would not marry for three years ? I never would marry him or any one else against mamma’s wish.”

“Did you tell him so ?”

“He did not ask me to marry him ; he said he wanted time to try and rise in the world.”

“How old were you then ?”

“I was sixteen and a month.”

“ Surely you had begun to comprehend something of what those sort of wishes and promises meant ? ”

“ M. Marc, I think *you* will believe me, if no one else will ;—you seem to understand people,” said Louisa, still twisting and untwisting her trembling fingers. “ I was sorry for Gustave, and I did care for him in a way. He vexed me, too, by saying that it was because he was a shop-boy I looked down upon him, and that he had been writing books to make me proud of him, and he begged me so hard for time. I can’t remember what he said ”—(a proof, thought Marc, that she did not and does not love him)—“ it was something about—oh ! never mind ; it was all very silly, I know that now ; and so, to satisfy him, I said I would wait—that’s all.”

Marc could scarcely repress a smile at the honest, innocent confession. He said,—

“ And you never felt troubled at having made such a promise unknown to your mother ? ”

“ I was a little frightened just after ; but what with masters and practising, I had not much time

to think. Lately I have been uncomfortable, ever since we began to go to Madame von Ehrtmann's Thursday evenings—Gustave looked so cross and watched me so—he had no right to do that.”

“I am afraid he had.”

“Dear M. Marc, don't say that. I never did promise to marry him—I never did—indeed I did not.”

“I am certain you did not think you had done so. How came you never to tell Ismay?—girls always have confidants.”

Louisa changed colour. She said, in a low voice,—

“I will tell you the truth. When I saw him side by side with real gentlemen, I was ashamed of him. M. Marc, don't give me up;—I know it was a shabby feeling—I tried not to feel so, and to take his part in my own mind, but——”

“I have no intention of giving you up—there is no reason why I should, and every reason why I should *not*. You will have to suffer a good deal for not having known how to be truthful and

candid at the right moment. You will try—will you not?—to make good use of this lesson. If Gustave really loves you, as I believe he does, you may have done him incalculable harm. Nothing hurts man or woman so much as to have placed their trust wrong.”

“ I will hold good to my promise, and if you think I ought to marry Gustave by-and-by, I will—that is, if mamma will give me leave, or I will never marry any one else,” said Louisa.

“ That, again, would be undertaking more than you could perform. No, no; the first—indeed, the only thing to do, is to extricate both you and Gustave from a false position. Will you trust me to explain your situation and your sentiments to that unlucky wight?”

“ Please do, M. Marc; I do so long for mamma and M. de Blacourt to be friends with me again. Ismay is not angry with me—is she?”

“ Not in the least; she is grieved and is anxious to come and see you, but we thought Madame Templar might not approve of her coming here just now. Before I go, let me as your old friend,

and also as in some sort your pastor, give you a word of advice as to the future. Do not be so anxious as to pleasing people; you are too much inclined, I see, to care more for the displeasure you may excite, than for the actual wrong-doing."

"I cannot bear any one to be angry with me," said Louisa, with a pitiful face.

"It is not pleasant," returned Marc, "but, in the cause of right, you must learn to put up with anger and misconception."

"Perhaps it is because I know I am wrong every way at present, which makes me so frightened of every body. But I should never be afraid to tell you, whatever fault I had committed."

"I should not spare you, I promise you," said Marc, at the same time gazing at her with pitying kindness. "Good-by, poor child."

"What shall I say to mamma?" cried Louisa, relapsing into alarm.

"Ah! I may as well save you that little suffering. Ask Mrs. Templar if she will be so kind as to see me."

"M. Marc," said Louisa, overflowing with

gratitude, “I will try and follow your advice; I will copy Ismay, and then I shall be all right; shan’t I?”

He smiled, and said,—

“Yes, she’s a very good model; but I have preached enough for one day. Go to mamma now.”

Mrs. Templar came with her stateliest manner; her lips closely compressed, as if neither persuasion nor torture should make her open them. There was really something imposing in her appearance. Marc, however, was the last man in the world to be embarrassed either by coldness or hauteur. His heart was always so thoroughly in the work he had on hand, whatever it might be, that he had a very minimum of self-consciousness. He drew a chair to the sofa on which Mrs. Templar had seated herself, and told her, in a respectful but perfectly straightforward way, the heads of Louisa’s confession.

“You see,” he concluded, “that it was no pre-meditated fault. Miss Templar erred from a kind-hearted impulse; the inexperience of her age got

her into the scrape. As one of Gustave Gasteau's earliest friends, I intend to counsel him as to the course he ought to pursue; and when I have explained to him the actual truth of the case, that Mdlle. Templar never supposed that the promise he obtained from her meant more than met the ear, he will withdraw claims evidently based on a misunderstanding."

"He has no claims on her," said Mrs. Templar.

Marc certainly heard the words, but he perceived no movement of the speaker's lips.

"I allude," he said, "to his relieving Mdlle. Templar's scruples."

A bitter, satirical twist of her features was the only answer Mrs. Templar vouchsafed. Marc, therefore, rose to take his leave.

"You do not go as an accredited ambassador from me, M. de Lantry. What you do, you do on your own account. As for that—person you call your friend, he counts as zero in Miss Templar's life; his orbit can never cross hers; you had better make him understand that."

Marc bowed and left the room. As soon as



he was out of hearing, Mrs. Templar called Louisa, and said,—

“ Why are you not practising? you forget that I can’t afford to pay masters for nothing.”

As long as life lasted, Louisa never lost the recollection of the violent contradiction between her feelings and her employments on that day. She endeavoured to sing, but there was a tightness in her throat which strangled all sounds. She took to one of Herz’s brilliant pieces, then in vogue—variations on the march of *La Violette*.

“ You are playing out of time,” remarked Mrs. Templar, pitilessly; “ practise that passage for a quarter of an hour—look at your watch.”

Before the quarter of an hour had elapsed, Thérèse came to say that Mdlle. Antoinette begged to know if madame or mademoiselle could receive her. Louisa jumped up from the music-stool.

“ Stay where you are,” said Mrs. Templar, in English; then in French to Thérèse, she added, “ Beg Mdlle. Antoinette to excuse us, we are particularly engaged.”

As soon as Thérèse was gone, Mrs. Templar said to Louisa,—

“If you had a spark of proper feeling, or any self-respect, the sister of that man is one of the last persons you should wish to see.”

“I wanted to ask her to forgive me, that was all.”

“Unstable as water, you’ll never come to good, you’ll fail in everything. You don’t know what you would be after, or what you really wish, for two minutes together.”

Louisa resumed her practising.

A couple of hours later, a letter from Marc was brought to her by Ismay. What a balm there was for Louisa in Ismay’s tender kiss—in the gentleness with which Marc’s affianced wife spoke to her.

“This is a letter from M. de Lantry, mamma,” said Louisa, as she broke the seal.

“Oh, indeed!”

Marc, in brief words, informed Louisa that he had seen Gustave, that Gustave was impressed with the idea that Louisa was not a free agent—

in short, that nothing would satisfy him, but receiving from Louisa's own lips, the assurance that she desired to be set free from her promise. Marc strongly advised Louisa not to shrink from the ordeal; she owed it to Gustave to act with perfect frankness. “Men,” he wrote, “are easily misled by women's vagueness and inclination to half-measures. You must now say, No, clearly; it is the greatest kindness you can do Gustave, under the circumstances. I wished to have spared you the trial of an interview. Bear this in mind, that what you suffer is nothing to what you have inflicted, and you will be willing to accept the pain. Ismay can bring me your answer. Always your affectionate well-wisher,

“M. DE LANTRY.”

Louisa, after reading the letter, carried it to her mother. Mrs. Templar, without looking up from the work she was busy with, said,—

“It really does not concern me. I told you before that I had washed my hands of all interference in your fate.”

Louisa flushed; she said,—

“A mother should not forsake her child in trouble.” Then she turned to Ismay, “Tell M. de Lantry, I will see M. Gustave Gastineau at four to-morrow afternoon.” Louisa named that hour, as the one at which Gustave would be at liberty. “Ismay, would you mind being with me at that interview? I shall need a friend by me.”

Ismay answered with quiet firmness,—

“I will come.” She whispered, as she left Louisa, “Be of good cheer, you are going to do right.”

“Always appealing to strangers for help,” said Mrs. Templar.

“You refused me yours,” returned Louisa.

“How do you know that I shall permit you to receive this noble swain of yours in my drawing-room.”

“I took it for granted that you would not oblige me to ask Madame von Ehrtmann to allow me to see Gustave in *her* drawing-room; or I can meet him on the stairs, or in the street, I don't

care. I *will* see him; he has a right to fair dealing, even though I were a princess, and I will not be frightened out of doing what a good man tells me I ought to do. I have striven all I can to make you take pity on me. I have owned my fault; I put myself at your mercy; I would have borne any punishment without a word; but to throw me off, to deny me a mother's help, when I want it so sorely, leaving me nothing to rest on but the compassion of strangers;—and I'll accept it, thankfully, thankfully, and pray to God to bless them for it.”

The last words were uttered in a high, unnatural tone, and then Louisa rushed into her own room.

Mrs. Templar was startled; she had goaded Louisa into open rebellion, the very thing the marquis had warned her not to do. But to goad and to irritate, was a necessity of Mrs. Templar's nature. As soon as she had driven her victim or adversary into loss of self-command, she felt soothed, and began to negotiate for peace. She was, in truth, thankful, even grateful to M. de

Lantry for bringing about a dissolution of Louisa's ill-advised promise, yet she could not help doing that which would have prevented most men from interfering in the business. Louisa's storm of passion had dissipated Mrs. Templar's resentment.

"Mademoiselle has so bad a migraine she cannot come to table," said Thérèse.

"Beg her to try and take some potage; eating is often a cure for a nervous headache," said Mrs. Templar, in her most good-natured voice.

But Louisa could swallow nothing; her temples were beating, her heart palpitating painfully; she felt as if fire were running through her veins.

"I *must* be quiet, Thérèse; I must be left alone and in the dark. I shall be well soon, if I remain quiet."

Thérèse, of course, sided with mademoiselle against madame.

"Mademoiselle wishes to be left alone; the only thing she asks for is to be left alone," said Thérèse, reproachfully.

Mrs. Templar took the hint; the tables were turned; it was she who was now unwilling to face Louisa. At tea-time Thérèse was again sent to inquire if Louisa would come into the salon, or preferred having a cup of tea sent to her. Louisa begged she might have her tea in her own room. Thérèse then helped her to undress, and put her fairly into bed. Mrs. Templar went to see her, and asked if the pain in her head was better? Louisa answered,—

“ It is better, thank you.”

“ A good sleep will set you all to rights. Good-night.”

“ Good-night,” said Louisa.

Louisa was at the breakfast-table next morning, looking feverish. Mrs. Templar behaved as if nothing had ruffled their intercourse. Louisa’s manner was constrained and reserved; she never once used the word “mamma.” Without waiting to be told, she sat down to the piano.

“ If your head aches, don’t practise, Louisa.”

“ Thank you, I am pretty well,” and she continued her exercise of scales.

In the middle of the day, Mrs. Templar proposed a walk.

“I must be at home at four o’clock.”

“It is not yet one,” answered Mrs. Templar ;  
“you have plenty of time.”

They went to the terrace in the Tuileries Gardens overlooking the river, and walked there for an hour in silence.

“I wonder if all these people I see walking about are as unhappy as I am?” thought Louisa.

It was too early for fashionables to be abroad, but there were young wives accompanied by babies and nurses, and older matrons with young girls by their side ; one or more couples were walking in the more retired alleys, deep in conversation.

“No one looks unhappy but me,” was what Louisa thought, and yet every one of those she gazed on, except the babies, had their share of care.

When she said, “We had better go home,” Mrs. Templar agreed with lamb-like meekness ; she was alarmed by Louisa’s appearance ; she did



not like the look of her bloodshot eyes. Mrs. Templar, with all her belief in her own infallibility, had to suffer the penalty every one pays who inflicts unnecessary pain.

As the hour neared for the interview with Gustave, Louisa had cold and hot fits; she could scarcely force herself to sit still, or when still, to control the trembling of her limbs. Ismay came according to her promise a little before four. Marc had warned her only to tap at the door, in order not to startle Louisa by a ring.

“ She will be sadly frightened, poor little thing,” he said. “ Ismay, be brave enough to prevent Gustave from worrying her. Fioretta would have managed him better than such a little dove as you.”

“ I can peck pretty sharply at times,” replied Ismay.

“ Then pray make use of your beak on this occasion.”

When Louisa heard Gustave’s ring at the door, she clutched at Ismay’s arm; but when Gustave entered the room, she seemed to recover her

presence of mind. Mrs. Templar sate in a chair by one of the windows, and never raised her head or even her eyes; to all appearance she was ignorant that any visitor had entered the room. Ismay, full of pity for Gustave, broke through the rule of not shaking hands with gentlemen, and held out her hand to Gustave. By so doing she brought him close to Louisa.

He began at once,—

“I have come to ask you, Louisa——”

Mrs. Templar very nearly forgot her assumed indifference at this familiarity.

“I have come,” said Gustave, “to ask you, Louisa, if what M. de Lantry told me yesterday, of your wish to be freed from the promise you gave me at La Forêt, emanates of free will from yourself?”

“It does,” said Louisa, speaking low but very distinctly.

Gustave was silent. He took hold of a chair and leaned on the top rail.

“You may ask this of your own accord, and yet

not because you yourself really wish to take back your word.”

“I do wish to be freed from my promise, without reference to the wishes of any other persons,” replied Louisa.

“Do you love any one else?”

Mrs. Templar looked up angrily, and Ismay gave Gustave a glance of reproach.

“I wish to be free because I do not love *you*,” said Louisa, with a flash from her eyes that seemed to scorch him, for he laid one hand over his face.

After a little, he leaned down towards her and said,—

“Will you untie this ribbon?” and he showed her a broadish black ribbon hanging round his neck, to which was fastened a common glass locket containing, as Ismay could see, a curl of fair hair.

Louisa shrank back with unmistakeable disgust. Gustave’s features contracted; a deadly paleness overspread them. His mouth took a frightful expression, his look was a curse.

“You refuse so small a favour?” he said. “Ah, well, so let it be. Farewell, Mdlle. Templar. I don’t know yet what will be the consequence of this day’s act of yours—no good to either of us, I fear. It’s a terrible moment when one loses faith in a creature highly prized, dearly loved. I think you have killed all goodness in me.”

“Enough of this theatrical bombast,” said Mrs. Templar. “You have had your answer, Monsieur Gustave Gastineau, you have nothing more to do here. I wonder you have not more pride than to go on bemoaning yourself in public.”

“You are a fiend,” exclaimed Gustave fiercely.

Ismay jumped up and took him by the arm, whispering,—

“Pray go away, M. Gustave.”

“If you don’t leave the room directly,” said Mrs. Templar, “I shall ring for the concierge to put you out.” Ismay tried to impel him towards for the door saying,—

“Pray, M. Gustave, go; act like a gentleman your own sake.”

He obeyed. As he was leaving the room his eyes met those of Louisa.

“ You are free,” he said.

When Ismay came back Louisa threw herself on her friend’s neck and with a violent shudder exclaimed,—

“ I am frightened.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

BY THE SAD SALT WAVES.

FROM this time Louisa ceased to be the child she had been. She and her mother observed a strict silence as to her entanglement with Gustave. This was but natural on Louisa's part; but that Mrs. Templar should forego the solace of all reproaches and recrimination was not to have been expected. It was just another of those instances in which Louisa suddenly assumed the upper hand, after having acted like her mother's abject slave. The first time Mrs. Templar had opened on the subject, Louisa had said, with calm determination,—

“If you abuse him, I shall go and ask his pardon.”

Louisa spoke as one in earnest. Mrs. Templar called her a fool—but she took the hint.

They went to the sea-side—to Dieppe—not then the renowned bathing quarters it has become. The Templars had quiet lodgings, and Louisa passed the mornings as she had done in Paris—practising her singing, and piano, and harp. In the afternoons, she went to the sea-shore, accompanied by the little daughter of the landlady, Mrs. Templar caring little either for the sea or for walking for walking's sake.

Many and many were the successive afternoons that Louisa sat on the beach, watching the rolling in of the waves, trying in vain to find a rule by which to know when the larger would swallow up the smaller; many and many an hour she passed, hearing the rustling of unseen life among the shingle, listening to the song of the lark above, or idly gathering shells. But count, or listen, or dream, Gustave, M. de Blacourt, the Ehrtmanns, Marc, Major Templar, were for ever in her mind; they shifted places, formed new combinations, but were always present to her thoughts. What better

could she have done? was a perpetually returning question. Sometimes memory recalled other scenes, further away—those Versailles days would reappear, M. Granson and Laura figure again before her, and she would say to herself, “Nothing has ever gone right with me since.”

Now and then she almost regretted that she had refused her cousin; she should have had a comfortable English home, and relations who would have cared for her. She should have had a gay life, and perhaps Major Templar might not have been so odd had she known him better; she could not have been worse off than she was now. Never once did Louisa pursue a similar train of reasoning with regard to Gustave. She did grieve for having pained him (she had no conception how deep the wound she had inflicted), but there she stopped; she never had a moment's regret for having got free of her promise. She had put her finger on the true cause of her distaste for her former playmate, when she told Marc de Lantry that she was ashamed of Gustave when she saw him by the side of real gentlemen. What did



make her downright miserable, was the belief that her dear old friend, M. de Blacourt, had given her up. She longed to write and beg for his forgiveness; nevertheless, a month passed by, and she was still longing to make an attempt at reconciliation.

One morning the post brought a letter from Ismay, announcing that the day for her marriage was fixed, and requesting Louisa to be one of her bridesmaids. Louisa laid the letter before her mother. Mrs. Templar inquired why she must read it.

“It is from Ismay; she invites us to her wedding. What am I to say?”

Mrs. Templar hesitated, then replied,—

“It will be inconvenient to me to accept the invitation.”

“Very well,” said Louisa, and sat down to write an answer.

“What makes you in such a hurry?”

“I must give Ismay time to look out for another bridesmaid,” and Louisa’s pen went swiftly over the paper.

“ I suppose you are disappointed, and will lament to your friend the cruelty of your case ? ”

“ No, indeed ! I have not the slightest wish to go to the wedding, except for one reason.”

“ And what is that ! ”

“ I want to see M. de Blacourt ; his anger makes me unhappy.”

Mrs. Templar made no answer to this ; but when Louisa was folding her letter, she said,—

“ If you are particularly anxious to accept Mdlle. von Ehrtmann’s invitation, you may do so.”

This appearance of kindness once more softened Louisa towards her mother. She thought of her own sullenness and resentment, and said, with one of her enthusiastic outbursts,—

“ You are very good to me, mamma ; too good, by half. I really do not wish to be present at the marriage ; they are very kind to ask me ; still, I am sure M. Marc could not like to see me as one of Ismay’s bridesmaids.”

“ Nonsense,” returned Mrs. Templar, who had

remarked the resumption of the term "mamma," which Louisa had avoided so sedulously of late.

"But there is one thing I should be so glad to do," said Louisa.

"Give them a wedding present, I suppose?"

"Oh! yes, of course. I have some of my uncle's money left, haven't I? But that's not it, mamma; may I write to the marquis?"

"What for? If he chooses to neglect us, it's not our part to make advances to him. Let him alone."

"He is not neglecting us; he is angry with me."

"It's no business of his what you do."

"Yes it is; he has always been so good to me."

"I don't recollect any such mighty proofs of his kindness. If he had been really your friend, he would not have left you in the lurch as he did; that pastor behaved better."

"M. de Blacourt was angry at my having done wrong; he was my friend; he did care for me; I am sure of it; at all events I care for him."

“ Let him alone, I tell you, and he'll come round. Men are all the better of a little neglect.”

Louisa did not comprehend this sort of argument.

“ May I write, mamma? I do so wish it.”

“ I wonder that a young lady, such an adept at clandestine arrangements, should think it necessary to ask her mother's permission for the sake of a letter.”

“ Mamma, you are too cruel.”

“ Just now I was too kind.”

“ Mamma, mamma, you try me too much! you drive me to evil!—this is the last time I will ask your leave for anything;” and away went Louisa to the writing-table, where she wrote for some time. She then left the room, and presently after, Mrs. Templar heard steps below the window, and looking out, she saw Louisa with the landlady's little girl going along the street. Louisa had two letters ostentatiously displayed in her hand.

When Louisa returned, neither mother nor

daughter alluded to M. de Blacourt. Mrs. Templar contented herself with sarcasms at Madame von Ehrtmann's having gone to Paris to marry her daughters to rich Englishmen, and having to put up with a poor French pastor.

"M. Marc is not poor," said Louisa. "Madame von Ehrtmann told me, that if he had been as poor as he seemed, he should not have married Ismay. He had been putting aside money to help to build a Protestant church."

"Oh! so he has bought a wife instead of a church."

"That money is to be kept for the church; but he need not save any more."

"You seem very well acquainted with his concerns."

"I was told; I did not ask."

"What an old fox that woman is! she took very good care to keep everything secret from me."

"She told me," said Louisa, "and I suppose she expected me to tell you."

"Always contradicting your mother; if you go

on in this way, Louisa, it will be long enough before *you* are married; men watch how girls behave to their mothers, and judge accordingly. Suppose I am ever so wrong, you are not the one who ought to set me right; however, go on in your own way, and see what you'll make of it—no blessing will ever follow disobedience and impertinence to a parent. Remember the fifth commandment; it is the only one that contains a promise of reward in this life. I have brought you up, spared on myself to give you advantages, done a thousand times more for you than Madame von Ehrtmann has done for her daughters, and yet how differently they behave to her—their mother is their first object, while you——what are you staring at me for, in that rude manner? Go to your room, miss, and study your catechism.”

Similar scenes between Mrs. Templar and Louisa were now of constant occurrence; they were becoming the rule and not the exception. Mrs. Templar's temper, always bitter, was growing cruel. It is to be supposed, however, that in her cooler moments, she repented of her harsh-

nesses to her daughter; for always after some outbreak, she bestowed some indulgence. Louisa, though still sensible to any proof of relenting kindness, was beginning to long for escape from such constant stinging. It was a bad school for a young heart; in fact, Louisa's youth was already blighted—mildewed. She had none of a girl's anticipations of happiness—none of those hopes which young creatures have, that they will grasp happiness, where others have failed. Without being worldly, Louisa began at Dieppe to contemplate marriage, not as the result of a great and tender devotion, but as an escape from what was day by day becoming an intolerable tyranny. Loveless homes make loveless marriages.

For several days after sending her letter to M. de Blacourt, Louisa expected, and expected in vain, an answer. Mrs. Templar, who had watched her disappointment morning after morning, could not let the opportunity slip. She observed, "You will learn in time, Louisa, to abide by your mother's advice."

On the afternoon of the seventh day, Louisa

was at her favourite resort on the sea-shore, very sad and very sorry, when her little companion left off hunting for crabs, and called out,—

“Here’s a tall gentleman coming, mademoiselle.”

Louisa jumped to her feet, for she recognized the marquis.

“I am so happy to see you—so much obliged to you.” He took her offered hand, but he did not look pleased. “I was so afraid you would never forgive me,” she added in a lower voice.

“My dear young lady, I must answer you as I did your mother a little while ago, in Figaro’s words: *Qu’est ce que cela me faisait à moi?*”

All the brightness which the sight of him had brought into Louisa’s eyes, vanished at this answer.

“It sounds hard, I know,” continued the marquis; “but after all, it is the truth. I am neither your father, nor your uncle, nor your brother. Accept my speech as a proof that I consider you have done nothing to offend me, and consequently, as I am a tolerably reasonable man, I am not offended but am, as ever, you very humble servant.”



Louisa's heart swelled to suffocation; this profession of indifference hurt her far more than would a torrent of invective, or a declaration of unrelenting anger. She walked on in silence by his side; it seemed to her that he had suddenly become a stranger to her. After they had walked thus some distance, M. de Blacourt said,—

“I preferred to say what I have now said to writing it, because I can explain away some of its apparent harshness. It is necessary, or I hold it to be so, that you should not place me in the false position with your family or with strangers, of one with any right to guide you. I shall always be ready to serve you whenever you call upon me.”

“I am too unhappy,” said Louisa, and her voice quivered. “I can please no one. I don't know how to do right.”

“That is true,” he replied in an unflinching voice; “you yield to every impulse—you never reflect.”

“Yes, I do; but it's always too late. I can see now how foolish I was. Don't turn your back on me, this time. Don't, pray don't!”

The sternest moralist that ever walked on earth would have been melted by the entreaty of that passionate young voice, aided, as it was, by the pleading of the loveliest eyes that ever looked on man.

“There, there; let the past be past,” said M. de Blacourt.

“But will you scold me, and be very severe to me, just as you used to be?”

“Make some allowance, Mdlle. Louisa, for my spirits not being so elastic as yours. You have given my affection for you a shock, remember.”

“But you do care for me, a little?”

“I don’t put off my affections as I do a coat. You will do many more foolish things in your life, Louisa: if we are to continue friends, let there be no more concealments—no deceits—no falsehood.”

M. de Blacourt’s voice showed rising anger. Louisa fathomed now, at this instant, how much she had grieved her friend; how much she had fallen in his opinion. She could have thrown herself on the ground, and kissed his feet, if she

could have hoped for pardon or to have been reinstated in that place she had fallen from; but instinct told her to be quiet—to put on a seeming calm. They spoke no more till they reached the lodgings.

M. de Blacourt declined Mrs. Templar's invitation to stay dinner; he would see them again next morning. The following day he came immediately after breakfast, and proposed that they should drive to Arques, to see the ruins of the chateau. He was very conversible, very courteous—too courteous to please Louisa; the change in his manner towards her kept tears very near her eyes. She restrained them, put on a cheerful air, admired the country, picked a bouquet of wild flowers. She used a thousand little innocent artifices to obtain a kind word or smile from the marquis. The next day and the next day it was much the same thing—an excursion to some place in the neighbourhood; the same courtesy, the same agreeable conversation, displaying a fund of information on all subjects. Louisa plied M. de Blacourt with questions, listened to his answers as

though they were oracles, had a ready smile, showed the same willingness to be pleased. She went to bed wearied to death, saying to herself, "How can he be so unforgiving? he knows how he is punishing me; yet he does care for me; he was frightened when he saw me fall down the bank."

If the marquis was punishing Louisa, he was suffering more than she was—she did not in the least understand his feelings towards her. Mrs. Templar suspected their true nature, and rather enjoyed her position as an on-looker; never had she been so equable in her temper.

After a stay at Dieppe for ten days, the marquis mentioned one evening as he was saying, "good-night," that he purposed returning to Paris the following morning.

"I suppose you will soon be coming back?" he said to Mrs. Templar.

"I am not sure," she replied, "that I shall go back to Paris. I have an idea of returning to settle in my native country."

Louisa looked surprised. This was the first time

she had heard of such a plan : up to that moment her mother had always spoken of their return to the Hotel de Hollande as a matter of course. The marquis replied,—

“Then perhaps I ought to say farewell, instead of *au revoir*?”

“I have decided on no plan yet,” continued Mrs. Templar; “my movements depend on a letter I am expecting.”

“Under any circumstance,” said M. de Blacourt, “you will let me hear of you occasionally?”

“Louisa shall write,” returned Mrs. Templar.

“Adieu, and all good attend you both!” Louisa clung to his hand. “God bless you, Louisa!” and he was gone.

Louisa went to the window, and stood for some ten minutes with her face pressed against the glass. Presently Mrs. Templar said cheerfully,—

“I have paid him off for his telling me our affairs were no business of his.”

“Are we going to England, mamma?”

“Of course we are, but not till next spring; what should we do there in the winter?”

Louisa went to bed very much comforted. England was terra incognita for her; all her habits, all her friends were continental.

## CHAPTER IX.

## ONE WEDDING MAKES ANOTHER.

THE month of November found the Templars again in Paris, in their entresol of the Hotel de Hollande. Louisa's life was what it had been before the discovery of her promise to Gustave; if there was any change, it did not appear on the surface.

Ismay was gone away with her husband to one of the chief towns of a department in the north-east of France, where Marc had been appointed minister of the Reformed Church; but Madame von Ehrtmann still retained her apartment in the hotel. She had taken Fioretta to Baden Baden to console her for the loss of her sister's society;

they returned the same week as the Templars. Madame von Ehrtmann had never seemed affected by Mrs. Templar's frigid manner, but chattered away to her as if to the most congenial of spirits; indeed, the Hanoverian baronne ventured on subjects with her English acquaintance that no one else would have had the courage to broach. It was exactly for the reason that Madame von Ehrtmann was not afraid of her, that Mrs. Templar, while abusing her, preferred the baronne's society to that of any one else in Paris.

“My dear soul,” said Madame von Ehrtmann, at her first visit, after having, with great apparent candour, told only what she wished to tell respecting Ismay's marriage; “I have come in person to invite you to my Thursday evenings. I have sent no cards to the Héberts; she is nursing—quite a pattern mother—the cousin has somehow or other got a situation as private secretary to some man with a system, he is safe on the other side of the river—of course, I pass *him* over also, so you can have no reason for refusing to let your lovely Louisa brighten my poor salon. I



am very disinterested, for no one will observe Fioretta while Louisa is present; Dieppe has added to your daughter's charms; her complexion is even more transparent, her eyes softer. Mon Dieu! she may wear a crown yet. I hear that the marquis went to see you at Dieppe."

"Where could you have already heard that?" asked Mrs. Templar.

"Raoul de Villemont told me. Between us, my dear, that little young man and his mother keep a sharp eye on the marquis."

"Do they? What for, I wonder?" said Mrs. Templar in her most lamblike voice.

"It's easy to guess: should the marquis have no children of his own, Raoul, you understand, hopes to inherit."

"Oh! now I understand."

"I would not give much for his chance," continued the German lady; "M. de Blacourt is still a very fine man, erect, not very grey, an air of melancholy mystery about him—he would be a formidable rival to the young vicomte with some girls."

“Is Fioretta debating between the two?” inquired Mrs. Templar, slyly.

“Pon my honour, I wish she had the alternative in her power,” cried the baronne, in a voice that sounded honest; “no—no! Fioretta must be satisfied, as her sister has been, with something less exalted.”

From the very first of Madame von Ehrtmann’s *réunions*, Mrs. Templar remarked that Raoul de Villemont was often by Louisa’s side, that he never failed to seek her when M. de Blacourt was talking to her, and that whenever the younger gentleman approached, the elder always ceded his place.

By-and-by Vicomte Raoul’s mother appeared at one of Madame von Ehrtmann’s Thursdays; was presented to Mrs. Templar, and announced to that lady, at that instant cased in triple mail of reserve, that she had long desired to make her acquaintance, and that of her amiable daughter. The following day Madame de Villemont called on Mrs. Templar, who, mortified at being found by a Court lady in a small entresol, was more icy

than ever; but the French lady was nothing rebuffed, her manner was even caressing to Louisa. After his mother's visit Raoul left his card; Mrs. Templar flung it into the fire, saying,—

“Remember this, Louisa, I'll have no flirtations.”

“I am not inclined to flirt,” said Louisa.

M. de Villemont now occasionally was one of the guests when the Templars dined on Sunday with M. de Blacourt; he spoke scarcely at all to Louisa, devoting all his powers of conversation to Louisa's mother. Louisa began to hate these weekly dinners, they were becoming altogether ceremonious. Had she felt herself on the same happy terms as formerly with the marquis, she would have asked him why he brought his cousin there to spoil her pleasure.

Three months had passed since the Templars' return from Dieppe—three months of a dull, sultry calm; all that agitated Louisa she locked within her heart. March was at hand, and she trusted that her mother had been in earnest in saying that she would go to England in the spring;

she had the restlessness of one whose life has no wholesome aim. She rose one Thursday morning to go through her usual mill-horse routine—nothing in sky or on earth, out of doors or in doors, predicted that that day was more than the preceding one, to mark an epoch in her life.

At breakfast Mrs. Templar received a letter.

“I don’t know the hand—the postmark is Lamberton.” She opened the envelope, and drew out wedding cards,—“Major and Mrs. Templar.”

“Who has he married, I wonder?” she exclaimed, and examining the envelope, she found “Ada Wilton” printed on the turn over. “Well, she has managed it at last, thanks to you! The idea of that common-place creature being mistress of Lamberton—ugly and old into the bargain! It is enough to make your father rise from his grave,” and Mrs. Templar threw the cards to, or rather at Louisa.

Louisa said calmly,—

“I think she always cared for my cousin.”

“*You* think! *my* cousin, indeed! prettily you treated your cousin!”

“He is not offended, or he would not have sent cards.”

“She sent them, I’ll be bound, to crow over you.”

“I don’t see that she could have done it otherwise than in kindness; she must have been very much obliged to me for saying, ‘No, no,’ to him.”

“Grant me patience!” exclaimed Mrs. Templar, excited by Louisa’s opposition; “I believe you were born to drive me mad. Slave, slave, as I do for you—spare nothing on you—and I get only impertinence as a reward.”

Here Mrs. Templar began to cry.

“Mamma, do believe me, I don’t purposely offend you—I do try to please you—I really do—why else do I go on all day at that weary music, but because you wish it?”

“That’s right, reproach me.”

“It is not meant as a reproach; I would do anything to content you; if I had believed that you would have liked me to marry my cousin I would have done it—I don’t care about myself.”

“Very fine—when you were engaged to that low fellow—do you fancy Major Templar would have condescended to take you, after he found out what you were; Louisa, no blessing will ever follow you——”

“You have said that very often, mamma, but I can’t believe that a girl is ruined for life because she has once made a silly promise.”

“That’s your opinion, is it? Does M. de Blacourt behave to you now as he formerly did? A girl’s reputation, Miss Templar, is for ever tarnished by a clandestine affair. Do you think all those young men you meet at the Von Ehrtmanns’ haven’t your story in their mouths? I can tell you that vulgar wretch has you in his power for life.”

“Mamma, have pity,” gasped Louisa—she was the colour of ashes.

Mrs. Templar had gone further than she either thought or intended; she did not know how to retract what she had said. Suddenly assuming an admonitory manner, that was at the same time apologetic, she said,—

“Come, come Louisa, don’t let us make mountains of mole hills. I was angry—I suppose you have said things in anger you didn’t mean—I was vexed at your cousin’s speedy marriage—he might as well have tried his luck with you a second time. Come, now, don’t look as if you were condemned to death.”

Louisa sighed and sighed, as if her heart were like to break.

“Let us go to England, mamma, and get away from all these people who despise me.”

“Nobody despises you; I told you I spoke in anger. Can’t you forgive your mother?”

Louisa put her arms round Mrs. Templar’s neck—laid her head wearily on her mother’s shoulder. Mrs. Templar was softened—it was too late—she could not withdraw the poisoned arrow she had shot.

That night, after returning from Madame von Ehrtmann’s, Louisa said to her mother, in an unmoved voice,—

“M. de Villemont proposed to me this evening, and I accepted him.”

“What did you do that for?” almost shrieked Mrs. Templar, falling into a chair.

“Because it suited me, mamma, and M. de Villemont was all respect, I assure you; he said that he spoke to myself, being aware that English girls were allowed the privilege of choosing their husbands themselves. He then asked me frankly if I would marry him, and I said yes, if he persisted, after what I had to explain, and then I told him exactly all that had occurred between Gustave Gastineau and me. He answered that he had heard something of the matter, but no one could blame me, and that it made no difference to him; that’s all—oh, yes, I forgot—his mother is to come and speak to you to-morrow. This time I was resolved not to say no.”

“Suppose I refuse my consent?”

“You will not do that; you cannot expect anything better for me, after my conduct. I am quite of your opinion that no particular blessing will follow me in this world. M. de Villemont is a gentleman—I beg his pardon, a nobleman. I shall be a viscountess; I am sure you will be glad of that.”



“Louisa, I don’t know you in this mood.”

“Look here, mamma; you have chafed at me for years; you don’t love me as other mothers love their daughters, I cannot say why; I am not happy with you; let me try to be happy with some one else.”

“All you are saying has no foundation but in your imagination, Louisa; you have done a silly, a very silly thing. You have no money, and no Frenchman marries a portionless girl.”

“No money?” repeated Louisa; “my uncle Templar told me he had given me five thousand pounds.”

“He gave it to me,” said Mrs. Templar, “to do with as I thought best for you.”

“That’s the same thing,” returned Louisa. “Don’t let us talk any more about it to-night; my head is splitting.”

The next morning Mrs. Templar was with M. de Blacourt before nine o’clock. So urgent was the message she sent to him, that he went to her in his dressing-gown. He listened to the news of

Louisa's precipitate acceptance of his cousin, without once interrupting the narrative. "What *am* I to do?" were Mrs. Templar's concluding words.

"There's nothing to be said against Raoul," returned the marquis. "He is neither dissipated nor extravagant; he is attached to his mother, and that's a good sign of him; he is of a suitable age, and bears an honourable name. His fortune is small, but he will not find it difficult to obtain some post under the government — some *sous-prefecture*."

"You don't understand," said Mrs. Templar; "I am not objecting to M. de Villemont; the objection is more likely to come from him. Louisa has no fortune—if she had only acted with any sense or prudence!"

"Love laughs at both, madame."

"Love!" exclaimed Mrs. Templar; "Louisa cares no more for the man than she does for that cat," touching with the point of her boot the beautiful Angora cat, basking on the rug before the fire.

“I did not solely allude to Louisa, but to Raoul, who astonishes me by the way he has set aside immemorial French customs as to proposals of marriage.” Then recurring to Mrs. Templar’s assertion of Louisa’s fortune, he added, “Surely you once told me that Louisa’s uncle had settled something more than equivalent to a hundred thousand francs on her.”

“He gave me five thousand pounds to use for her benefit. I made an unfortunate investment, and, in fact, the money is lost.”

“What all?”

“All,” said Mrs. Templar.

“Who advised the investment or speculation?”

“That has nothing to do with the matter,” said Mrs. Templar, and a flush passed over her pale face; “you cannot doubt my word?”

“Not a whit: I asked the question with a view to forming some opinion as to whether you had lost your money by ill luck, or been swindled out of it. Of course you employed some man of business to investigate the affair?”

“No, I did not.”

“My dear lady, half confidences are useless always, often dangerous. You must be clear with me, if you wish for my advice or my help.”

Mrs. Templar sat silent for some minutes, then she burst out,—

“If you knew how I have pinched myself to save something for her out of my income. I have never had any happiness—always sacrificing myself, and no return for it. I let her father mortgage half my jointure, and he never cared a straw for me—never. I meant well towards her when I trusted her money to a wretch. I wanted her to be rich and independent, never to feel the slights I had felt in my youth, never to be forced to marry because she was poor. For years I have scarcely allowed myself decent clothes to my back, and she was always well dressed. I suffered from cold while she was warm; she has had the masters who teach duchesses, and all but my gown is a rag; and yet she does not love me—she is ready to go away with the first man that asks her.”

The marquis, in listening to Mrs. Templar, made two reflections; first, that nothing makes a person so bitter as the sense of a personal error; secondly, that Mrs. Templar, with all her faults of temper, was capable of self-sacrifice—and he held self-sacrifice, even in a false direction, as worthy of esteem. This was what made him avoid any hint of blame, and say, soothingly,—

“No one can doubt that in all you have done you have had Louisa’s good in view. She has acted foolishly; her passionate nature leads her constantly into danger; but, my good friend, there is nothing to be done now but to tell her the fate of her little fortune.”

“I cannot do it; I cannot lower myself to my own child. You must tell M. de Villemont that I disapprove of my daughter’s marrying a Roman Catholic.”

The marquis laughed.

“For what do you take me that you propose to me to be the bearer of a falsehood? As you have done me the honour to consult me, I shall

tell you what I conceive to be your best course. Go home and explain your situation to Louisa; let her decide what to do—that is, how Raoul is to be informed that she has no fortune. Truth is ever safe. Suppose you get rid of Raoul, the same case must arise again. Louisa believes she has money—the sooner she is undeceived the better. I am greatly mistaken in her if she will not be more eager than yourself to conceal the share you had in the loss of her money. Above all, don't consider me bound to any deception with Raoul or Louisa."

The last observation fired Mrs. Templar.

"You think Louisa so very superior to me. She never told you of her prince?"

"What prince?"

Mrs. Templar answered by relating what she knew of the idyll of the crown prince. When she had finished, M. de Blacourt said,—

"You had better let her marry Raoul."

"You don't suppose he would take her without money?"

"Why not?—since he asked her to marry him

without taking any of our usual precautions to ascertain what dowry she had."

"As for that," said Mrs. Templar, "Frenchmen always take it for granted that English girls have money."

"We are arguing in a vicious circle," said the marquis; "either wait to avow that she is portionless till the contract of marriage is about to be drawn up, or say so now. This last plan will be the wisest—it will prevent a scandal that must injure Louisa. Somehow or other, if this marriage is broken off, that story of her entanglement with young Gastineau will get abroad, and serious misconstructions of both circumstances may ensue."

"You are very anxious to force on this marriage," exclaimed Mrs. Templar, angrily, and suspiciously.

"Mon Dieu! what a woman," said the marquis half to himself. "You come of your own accord, madame, to ask my advice; I give it, and you directly imagine I have some ulterior views; explain to me what interest can I have other than your daughter's in this business. Seek in every

convolution of your brain for any other possible motive than her welfare; if you discover one, I will pay you down the lost fortune."

"You irritate me, and then you take advantage of what I say; you have no feeling, no compassion for me, and yet God knows there isn't a beggar in the street needs it more;" and Mrs. Templar covered her face and sobbed aloud.

The marquis paced up and down the room.

"That's the way with your sex—tears, the moment they are proved in the wrong—what weapons has a man against a weeping woman? What in the name of heaven do you wish me to do?"

"Speak to Louisa—make her understand it all. I have no one to help me if you will not."

"Very well; I will speak to Louisa; I will call within a couple of hours."

Mrs. Templar said, "Thank you," in quite the humble tone of a victim, which very nearly provoked the marquis into another outbreak. He contented himself with ringing the bell so violently that the bell-rope remained in his hand.



“I had better go now,” continued the lady in the same resigned voice.

“You cannot walk from here to the Rue de la Paix. Denis will get you a coach.”

## CHAPTER X.

## VICTORY.

LOUISA received the marquis with an air of defiance—it was assumed to hide embarrassment. Mrs. Templar had said to Louisa at breakfast that M. de Blacourt was coming to speak to her about M. de Villemont, and, from the expression of her mother's face, Louisa took it for granted that the promised interview was not likely to be an agreeable one.

On entering the room the marquis's quick eye discerned on a console the *bouquet de rigueur*, with which, in Paris, the *futur* salutes the awakening of the *future*. Louisa saved the visitor the trouble of seeking for a suitable beginning to their conversation by saying,—

“I know you have come to lecture me about my having accepted your cousin out of my own head. Before you begin, I want to tell you that I have given my word once again, and this time I mean to keep it. M. de Villemont behaved very nobly to me” (the marquis’s eyebrows went up an inch). “I told him all that hateful story about Gustave Gastineau, and he said it made no difference. I am dreadfully tired of always being found fault with, and so it was quite a pleasant novelty not to be treated as a criminal. As for caring for M. de Villemont more than for all the world, he did not ask me to do that—it’s not the fashion in France. I intend to make him a good wife; that is, as far as such an unfortunately faulty creature as I am can do anything good. I shall *adore* him, if he does not scold me from morning till night.”

All this was said volubly and with flashing eyes.

“Calm yourself,” began the marquis.

“I can’t be calm,” interrupted Louisa; “there’s going to be a fuss. I believe nothing in the world can happen to me as to other girls. There was Ismay, she was allowed to marry in peace.”

“Louisa, do you not consider me as your friend?”

“I don’t know whether you are my friend or not,” she went on, always with more excitement; “you have not been very kind to me lately. I feel as if I were all over stings; it does not do always to be severe—at least, not with me; I am not a spaniel. Since M. Mare went away, I have not heard one word of kind advice; always something ironical from you, as if hitting at people was the way to make them open their hearts and be candid.”

“Bear with me now for a few seconds,” said M. de Blacourt, quite overpowered. “I have not come to reproach or to lecture you. I am commissioned by your mother to make a painful disclosure to you.”

Louisa fixed her eyes in surprise on the marquis. His face bore, very distinctly, marks of suffering; the mouth was drawn down, the cheeks had fallen, the eyes were sunk, and all the features were twitching nervously. Louisa’s passion fell at once, as every woman’s anger does

fall at the sight of pain in the countenance of a man who has any sort of hold on her affections. She sat down and said, as she shaded her eyes with one hand,—

“What is it?”

The marquis informed her of the entire loss of the money which her uncle had given her, and of her mother’s distress at having been the unwilling cause of the disaster.

“Poor soul!” added the marquis, “she has never allowed you to feel any of the effects of the loss; she has denied herself every luxury, almost every comfort, that you might have the same advantages as if you had had the money.”

“Are you saying that, because you think I shall blame my mother? How well and how kindly you judge me,” said Louisa, indignantly, and she was leaving the room.

“Stop a minute,” cried the marquis.

“I am coming back, I just wish to assure mamma that I don’t care about the money being lost.”

“Wait a moment; there is a consequence

attending that loss, which you don't think of." As she did not seem to catch his meaning, he added, "I allude to how it may affect M. de Villemont."

Louisa for a while did not answer, then she exclaimed,—

"Suspicion—suspicion, nothing but suspicion. From the earliest time I can remember, I never heard of good motives for any one's actions. It's all of a piece; I do believe I was not meant to be bad. I believe that if any one had ever seemed to care that I should be good, I could have been so. But always to be taught things for mere show off, always to be hearing praises of riches and rank, never to be allowed to like people because I felt inclined, has made me grow violent and hard. I was glad when M. de Villemont asked me to marry him. I long to get out of such a mess of a life as mine is. Now, you know all about what I feel; if your cousin won't marry me, I'll go and be a sister of charity or a nun; I must be done with this horrid singing and dancing; I turn sick at the sight of a piano."

“You imagine I also have helped to do you evil,” said the marquis.

“I care for you a great, great deal,” answered Louisa, firmly, “but, lately you have added to my wretchedness; how unkind you were to me about Gustave Gastineau; how different from M. Marc. Dear, good M. Marc! I wish he knew how grateful I am to him. I hope, oh! so much, that he will always be happy.”

Tears, for the first time, softened Louisa’s eyes.

“M. de Lantry never had half the interest in you, I have had and still have.”

“He was *sorry* for me,” said Louisa, “and it is such a blessing to see that some one is sorry for you.” Had Louisa looked at the marquis, she would not have thought him less full of pity for her than M. Marc. She went on in a subdued voice, “Will you go to M. de Villemont and say that I have not a penny, that I was ignorant of having no fortune last night? If he draws back, make him understand I shall not break my heart on his account.”

M. de Blacourt really could not speak; every

word she had said, had gone to his heart; he held out his hand to her. A hand is always expressive; Louisa's expressed no faith in the kindness or sympathy of the person in whose palm she placed hers.

In the course of an hour, M. de Blacourt returned to the Hotel de Hollande; he found Louisa sitting just where he had left her.

He said, abruptly,—

“M. de Villemont and his mother will be here shortly.”

Louisa's eyes brightened,—

“You see, that there is some disinterestedness in the world.”

“You mistook me, if you fancied that I asserted there was none,” returned the marquis. “There is no time to continue the debate just now. You must prepare to meet your visitors with composure. May God bless and guide your future life, Louisa.”

“Thank you,” she said.

Her thoughts were distracted, and to tell the truth, she was somewhat indignant at the doubts



the marquis had insinuated as to M. de Villemont's indifference as to her having money or not. All through life we go on blundering in our estimate of the people about us. In those mistakes lie some of the greatest bitternesses of life.

This was what had passed between the Marquis de Blacourt and his heir presumptive. M. de Blacourt had announced that he was commissioned by Mrs. Templar to make known to Raoul and his mother the fact that Miss Templar was entirely without fortune.

The vicomte replied by a question,—

“That is very unusual, is it not, in the case of English young ladies of Miss Templar's rank?”

M. de Villemont had gleaned from the Von Ehrtmanns the social position of Louisa's family.

The marquis gave the explanation as to how and why Louisa, though the child of the last heir of Lamberton, was barred from inheriting the estate.

“Surely,” remarked the vicomte, “Mr. Templar having, as it were, taken away his niece's

birthright, would consider himself bound to make some provision for her."

"Mr. Templar had fulfilled that duty," said the marquis; "the money had been unfortunately invested, and was totally lost."

"But Miss Templar's mother must have money," remarked M. de Villemont; "the fact of her living in the Rue de la Paix admits of no other supposition."

"Mrs. Templar lived on the jointure left her by her first husband," explained the marquis; "in the case of her daughter marrying with her consent, Mrs. Templar would either pay yearly as long as she lived, the amount of what would have been the interest of Louisa's money in the English funds, or she would insure her life for Louisa's benefit. The interest would be nearly four thousand francs."

"How old is Mrs. Templar?" asked Raoul.

The marquis's face, which had been clouded throughout the conversation, now darkened ominously. Raoul remarked this, and, without waiting for a reply to his question, added,—

“ You are aware, my good cousin, that my income does not admit of my entirely overlooking fortune in my wife.”

“ True ; therefore the more reason you should not have deviated from the usual road in our matrimonial matters.”

“ Men act often from the impulse of passion when they should be guided by judgment,” said Raoul.

The marquis shrugged his shoulders, and replied,—

“ Luckily, your rash proposal is known only to Mrs. and Miss Templar, your mother and our two selves ; withdrawn now, it need never be bruited to the world.”

“ Is it part of your errand, my good cousin, to dismiss me as Miss Templar’s suitor ? ”

“ My mission was confined to communicating to you that the young lady would have no dower.”

“ You will allow me to consult my mother ? ”

“ Do so, my good Raoul,” said the marquis. “ A mother’s opinion, in a point like this, should not be overlooked.”

Raoul had not the intellect of the marquis—far from it; but he had his own interests at heart, and that made him more than a match for his superior cousin. Raoul saw, or fancied he saw, that the marquis's face cleared at the prospect of a rupture.

Madame la Vicomtesse, after listening to all that her son had to say, observed,—

“ If you don't marry her, he will. Trust a woman's penetration; our cousin is in love with Mdlle. Louisa.”

The French expression was more forcible,—  
“ Nôtre cher cousin est féru. Acceptes, tu hériteras à cause d'elle.”

Self-interest lent two shallow-hearted, shallow-headed persons a sagacity not their own. Raoul returned to M. de Blacourt, declaring that, armed with his mother's free consent, he was resolved to marry Miss Templar *coûte que coûte*. The young man made known this magnanimous resolution in excellent language, concluding with,—

“ My happiness will be without alloy, if I have your approval also, my cousin.”

“ In all that relates personally to the young lady whom you have chosen, my approbation is decidedly yours ; as for the prudence of the step, I have some doubt. Sans adieu.”

When the marquis had left Louisa alone, bidding her expect Madame de Villemont and her son, Louisa gave the reins to her imagination. She exalted Raoul's disinterestedness to the height of heroism ; she was prepared to receive him with hope and gratitude. Her enthusiasm vanished with the visit. No fault could be found with the vicomte's manner, nor with that of his mother ; both of them said and did exactly what was proper on the occasion. But for the previous discussion with the marquis, Louisa would have been satisfied. But between the vicomte's proposal and his visit in form, Louisa had put him on a pedestal. It would be difficult to keep him there ; and this poor Louisa felt. Nothing more sad than that effort to blind oneself to reality.

In the course of that evening, Raoul received a packet from the marquis ; within was a note and a paper, evidently drawn up by a

notary. Raoul read the latter first. It ran as follows:—

“ Je soussigné, Jean Marie, Marquis de Blacourt, Baron de Clairefonds, demeurant à 116, Rue de Varennes, Paris, dans le bût de reparer autant qu’il dépend de moi, une injustice à laquelle je suis pourtant étranger, declare par le présent acte, donner volontairement, librement, et sans contrainte, mon domaine de Clairefonds, avec toutes ses dépendances, pour en jouir immédiatement en toute propriété, avec ses revenus, à M. le Vicomte Raoul de Villemont, aussi soussigné, qui accepte et s’engage à la condition expresse et *sine quâ non*, qu’il reconnaîtra par son contrat de mariage que Mademoiselle Louisa Templar, sa future épouse, lui a apporté en dot une somme de cent mille francs.

“ Dès l’instant de la célébration de ce mariage, M. le Vicomte Raoul de Villemont deviendra propriétaire incommutable et sans réserve du domaine que j’abandonne par le présent acte, que je m’oblige à ratifier dans les formes légales à la première requête.

“Fait et signé double ces engagements d’honneur a —— le ——.”

The marquis’s note contained only these words:—

“MY DEAR RAOUL,—

“YOUR actual fortune could scarcely admit of your carrying into execution your project of marrying a lady without dower. You perhaps counted on being my heir. We can answer for nothing in this world. Your determination is one more instance that men will act, under certain circumstances, in flagrant contradiction to their sentiments.” (Raoul winced at this.) “Therefore it is possible I *may* marry, I *may* have children. I make you the enclosed offer, in view of your possible future disappointment.”

Raoul laughed as he read the concluding words, and going to his mother’s room, threw the packet into her lap, exclaiming, “Victory!”

## CHAPTER XI.

## IT WILL BE OVER SOON.

AFTER this, M. le Vicomte Raoul de Villemont and Miss Templar went through the prescribed forms of French courtship. The inevitable bouquet appeared every morning; *lettres à faire part du mariage* were sent by Madame la Vicomtesse and her son to those relations and friends beyond a morning call, and cards with the cabalistic signs "A. F. P." were left at the door of those in Paris. Visits were paid to Mrs. and Miss Templar by the family and acquaintances of the expectant bridegroom, and the bride elect went with her future mother-in-law to return these civilities. Mrs. Templar had resolutely declined to accompany her daughter for that purpose.



Raoul came every day to the Hotel de Hollande, *bien ganté, chaussé, et frisé*—"well-gloved, shoed, and curled,"—and either stayed an hour with his betrothed or walked out with her, in both cases chaperoned by her mother. The marquis had said so much on the subject to Mrs. Templar, had insisted so strongly on a rigorous observance of French etiquette, that Mrs. Templar felt compelled to comply with the advice. The marquis further admonished Louisa that she was never to remain alone with the vicomte; and if her mother were from home, she was never to receive him alone. In France they manage all these matters differently from what they do in England—no tête-à-têtes are to be thought of between a betrothed pair.

Louisa had, in former days, heard much of love from Claire; she had read during her untrammelled life at La Forêt all the passionate scenes and descriptions in *Delphine* and *Corinne*; she had seen M. de Lantry's affectionate manner to Ismay; she remembered the boyish tenderness of the Crown Prince; had suffered from the despair-

ing morose worship of Gustave Gastineau. She therefore was prepared for some marks of attachment from Vicomte Raoul, the more so after such proof of his disregard of fortune. But no, Raoul talked to her of the Corbeille, of balls, and plays—the word love neither played on his lips nor glanced from his eye. He seemed to her absurdly anxious about her dress when she was going on a round of visits with his mother, giving her minute directions as to how she was to behave, and to speak, or rather not to speak in French dowager coteries, and he often alluded, in not flattering terms, to the manners of her young countrywomen. Louisa chafed under this last infliction. His coolness as a lover she naturally kept to herself, but she complained to her mother of his incessant carping depreciation of England and the English.

“It is so disrespectful to me,” observed Louisa, her heart very full; “I can’t help feeling it as a mark of more than indifference.”

“You did not accept him from affection, did you?” asked Mrs. Templar.

“No, but *he* professed to care for me, and since I accepted him, I have never been anything but respectful to him.”

“There can be no drawing back now, Louisa. You have always chosen to decide for yourself, and you must submit to what you have brought on your own head; make the best of it now. Better repent in a castle than in a garret. Lady Theodosia writes enthusiastically about your marriage. At all events, it has this advantage, it places you on a level with them all; we can't get everything, lucky when we can get something! It's too late to be finding out faults in the vicomte. Look at these patterns, and say how you will have the coronet worked on your handkerchiefs.”

“You choose, mamma; I don't care.”

Another circumstance increased Louisa's depression; she had received a violent letter from Claire.

“I could have pardoned you,” said Claire, “if what you had done had the excuse of love; but you are marrying for rank and riches—selling yourself! Mind my words! you have thrown

away the substance for the shadow, and my belief is, you will go to your grave hungering and thirsting after affection!"

The German baronne and Fioretta were the persons who did Louisa most good during the interval between her engagement and her marriage. They were always so charmed with everything, from the *joli blondin* of a vicomte, down to the embroideries of Louisa's trousseau—always so full of congratulations, so enthusiastic over her beauty, and the beauty of her wedding-dress; so good-natured in pointing out the advantages of being Madame la Vicomtesse de Villemont, that they, and they alone, could bring a smile to Louisa's face.

The marquis was absent; he had gone to Clairefonds to make some arrangements as to its transfer, and to look after the welfare of two old servants of the family. Louisa as yet only knew that M. de Blacourt had settled the estate on Raoul, in consideration of his being the probable heir to all the rest of the De Blacourt property.

The marriage was fixed for the sixth of May.

Mr. Templar and Lady Theodosia had been duly invited, but had declined on the plea that travelling of late days always gave Mr. Templar a fit of the gout; the old gentleman wrote a pompous, long-winded epistle as to the settlement of Louisa's money, strongly recommending Mrs. Templar not to trust to French lawyers or French law; he proposed himself and his son as trustees for Louisa.

Mrs. Templar had never really expected the owner of Lamberton Park to put himself out of the way for her daughter's marriage; nevertheless, she breathed more freely when she could be certain that he was not coming; she did not give the letter to Louisa to read on account of its subject, for since the day the marquis had enlightened Louisa as to the loss of her five thousand pounds, Mrs. Templar had avoided the topic with sedulous care. She had even stopped Louisa's assurances of indifference to the loss by saying, sharply,—

“ You will be none the worse for it in the end ;  
I am the sole sufferer.”

On this occasion as she laid down the letter, all she said was,—

“Your uncle and aunt are not coming.”

“That’s too bad,” exclaimed Louisa; “they owed it to me as my father’s daughter to have come.”

“It’s just as well as it is,” returned Mrs. Templar; “Mr. Templar would have wanted to meddle with what he did not understand, and given a great deal of unnecessary trouble. He has sent you a cheque for a hundred pounds, with which you are to buy what you please as their wedding present.”

“I should have valued their coming more than any gift. I shall look like some waif or stray with not one relation of my own to meet all Raoul’s family.”

“Do call him M. de Villemont, Louisa; that name Raoul is hideous. If you can persuade him to go to England, the tables will be turned, he will have no relations present.”

“It is useless to talk of that,” said Louisa; “I must bear it as best I can.”

The names of the bride and bridegroom

appeared on the door of the church of the Madeleine, and in the office of the mairie of the first arrondissement. All the necessary papers, certificates of Louisa's baptism, of her father and mother's marriage, of her father's death, and of the deaths of M. de Villemont's father and grandfathers and grandmothers were forthcoming, and the curé of the Madeleine attested that from his examination of the parish registers, neither of the parties about to become man and wife, had contracted any previous marriage during the last two years.

There is one crime which never figures in French novels—the crime, par excellence, of English stories; bigamy is ignored by French novel writers. It is, indeed, scarcely possible where such a chevaux de frize of precautions exists.

Never were the preliminaries for a marriage arranged more smoothly than was the case for the union between M. de Villemont and Miss Templar. Louisa received exactly thirty-five bouquets from her betrothed; long engagements are rare in France; the custom is to allow five

or six weeks between the acceptance and the marriage.

Mrs. Templar, during all the bustle which ushers in a wedding, remained as cold and hard as though her only child was not on the point of becoming a wife. She was as exacting and irritable with Louisa as before, not a mark of tenderness. Only one person guessed that she was inwardly troubled; the marquis discerned it, to him she turned for advice or help, to him alone her manner softened.

Louisa's spirits were as variable as are the spirits of those who are battling with a heavy heart; one five minutes she was laughing at everything and everybody, her future husband included, and the next she would forget to answer when addressed, and often her eyes would turn from one to another, with a question in them which it seemed that her lips dared not utter. Once the look was so speaking that Mrs. Templar answered it; she said,—

“Yes, it is too late!”

The trousseau, the jewellery, the presents, large and small, had been all shown and admired, and



packed. It was the eve of the wedding day. Louisa was in her own room, alone with Fioretta; the gay little flirt was to be Louisa's demoiselle d'honneur; in France one bridesmaid is considered enough, and in right of that office, the German sprite had been flitting about the bride all day. A score of times had Fioretta exclaimed, "What a lucky girl you are, Louisa"—to the twentieth exclamation she added, "but, of course, it was to be expected."

"Why?" asked Louisa, idly watching Fioretta's keen pleasure in examining her costly dressing-case, and its rich contents.

"Why? because you are so downright lovely. Mamma may say what she pleases, but beauty is the best thing a woman can have. You may be as clever and as good as you like, but nobody's eyes soften, nobody smiles on the good and clever as they do on a beauty."

"Well, I don't believe being beautiful makes people love you," said Louisa.

"Doesn't it?" burst out Fioretta. "Everybody loves you."

“Who?” asked Louisa, listlessly.

“M. de Blacourt, Gustave Gastineau—the prince; and all the young men who saw you at our soirées were in love with you.”

“You have forgotten to mention M. de Villemont,” said Louisa.

“Of course he does.”

“I have a great mind to tell you something, Fioretta.”

“Do,” said Fioretta, delighted at the prospect of hearing a secret, and deserting the dressing-case.

“No, I shall not say it—second thoughts are best. Of one thing I am pretty sure, Fioretta; beauty does not make one happy.”

“It would me,” returned Fioretta; “just look at our two faces in the glass,” and she drew Louisa to a mirror. “I should never be tired of looking at myself if I were as lovely as you.”

“Then you wouldn’t be so nice as you are now.”

“You don’t know what a trouble it is to be plain,” said Fioretta; “first with one’s bonnets—they are always wrong; and then the continual

cry, 'Don't look grave, Fioretta, it does not become you;' or, 'If you saw the difference it makes in you when you look pleased, Fioretta'—it would be the greatest of luxuries to look cross and handsome at the same time."

Louisa was smiling at Fioretta's earnestness, when Thérèse came in to say that the *lingère* begged to see mademoiselle for a moment.

"What *lingère*?" asked Louisa.

"It is Mdlle. Antoinette," answered Thérèse, "she is in the *salle à manger*."

Thérèse spoke in a tone that showed she knew that Antoinette was no mere workwoman for the young lady she was addressing.

"Oh! I wish she had not come," said Louisa, in a whisper, to Fioretta.

"Shall I go to her?" asked Fioretta.

"No, no. I can't send her away without seeing her myself; I will go."

Louisa had not guessed the emotion the sight of Gustave's little deformed sister would produce in her. It is said that drowning people see in a second their whole previous life pictured before

them. In the moment of meeting Antoinette, all her intimacy with the Gastineaux, from childhood to girlhood—the games, the quarrels, the caresses, the lessons at the swing, Gustave's love for her, her unkindness to him—all rushed to Louisa's memory, and she flung herself on Antoinette's neck, exclaiming,—

“Forgive me!”

“You are so good,” said the workwoman.

“Good! no, don't say that, Antoinette—how kind of *you* to come here; you don't hate me, do you? I did not mean to do harm—you *must* forgive me, for it's much the same as if I were dying; this is the last of Louisa Templar. Forgive me, forgive me!”

“Oh! Mdlle. Louisa——”

“Say Louisa, I shall always be Louisa for you.”

“You are pleased with the embroidery on your clothes, are you not?”

Louisa, surprised at the question, answered,—

“Indeed, Antoinette, I have not looked at it.”

“I am so sorry,” said Antoinette, mortified. “I worked all the coronets and initials myself.”

“*You!*” exclaimed Louisa. “How came you to have anything to do with my trousseau?”

“Madame gave us all your linen to make, on account of your friendship for me.”

In a paroxysm of grief and shame, Louisa fell on her knees before Gustave’s sister.

“Antoinette, Antoinette, I did not know, I did not—oh! mamma, you are too cruel. Antoinette, say you believe that I had no hand in this — promise not to tell Gustave. What a monster you must think me—and you to come and ask *me—me*, if I am satisfied with your work.”

Great sobs choked Louisa’s words.

“Pray rise, mademoiselle—I have nothing to forgive: madame did it for the best. I see I was very wrong to come, but I did so wish to bid you good-by, and to tell you that I hope you will be happy.”

Louisa made no answer; still kneeling, she took one of Antoinette’s work-hardened hands and kissed it, then she rose, and they walked together in silence to the door.

As Louisa was bidding her mother good-night, Mrs. Templar said,—

“So Antoinette has been here?”

Louisa replied,—

“Mamma, you should not have done what you did.”

“On the contrary, I wished to serve the sister—all the more that, in doing so, I could give the brother a lesson.”

“Mamma, we are just going to separate; don’t let us quarrel to the very last. Kiss me, mamma.”

“Wait a minute, Louisa; your tears are very ready for strangers. Pray, what is to come of me, now? You have never thought of me—that you were leaving me desolate and alone.”

Louisa did not answer directly. She said, after a little reflection,—

“I will beg M. de Villemont to invite you to Clairefonds.”

“It is rather late to make up your mind to that. After all I have done and suffered for you,

I ought not to have been obliged to remind you of your duty to me."

"Mamma, don't let us have any words to-night. You wished me to marry, you wished me to have a title; you see I have done so far to please you. It was only the other day I knew I was going to Clairefonds; I had imagined I was to live in Madame de Villemont's house. I do not intend to leave you desolate; I will try to do right. Kiss me, mamma;—say, 'God bless you, Louisa!'"

"I have said nothing to put you in this state of excitement, Louisa; it's impossible to speak reason to you!"

"Kiss me, mamma; I will try to be better in future."

"Always in heroics; why can't you be more like other people?"

"I will try."

Mrs. Templar let Louisa leave her without the asked-for kiss; but, by-and-by, she went to her child's bedside and kissed her.

Louisa was up and dressed, all but having on

her wedding-dress, when Mrs. Templar entered her room next morning.

“It’s a beautiful day,” said the mother.

“Beautiful!” repeated Louisa.

“You should have waited for the hairdresser, Louisa.”

“I could not have endured one this morning, mamma; if I haven’t done my hair well, *you* must put it to rights. Mamma, you will come directly to Clairefonds; I *was* careless. You are not angry any more, are you? I did not mean you to be left alone; but I have no more head than a pin—you always said so. You know there’s a large garden at Clairefonds, and the windows upstairs have the best view; there will be plenty of room for us all. M. de Blacourt says it is a large house.”

“You must have a cup of tea and keep quiet, Louisa. I shall come to visit you, after my time of this apartment is out.”

“It seems so odd to be going away with a stranger. What o’clock is that?” cried Louisa, starting.



“There’s plenty of time,” said Mrs. Templar. “Come, you must not flurry yourself. I expect you to behave well; French people are very particular as to decorous behaviour; you must do your mother’s bringing-up credit.”

“I shall not make any scene; but waking and remembering that you are going to be married, gives a sort of qualm. I am not a sentimental young lady, am I, mamma?—that’s not one of my faults, now, is it?”

Louisa tried to laugh, and the laugh turned into the most painful little low wail. The sound made her silent. Mrs. Templar hurried away and brought her a cup of tea.

Fioretta and the baronne came down to them. What a blessing it is, in some circumstances, to have to do with kindly indifferent people. No sooner was Louisa left with the Von Ehrtmanns than she became calm. The dressmaker arrived to put on the bridal array; during the bustle, Louisa descried a strange face—it was that of her new *femme de chambre*.

“Send them all away,” she said to Madame

von Ehrtmann. "You and Fioretta can finish dressing me; I won't have strangers. Where's mamma?"

"She is getting herself ready, my dear."

Madame von Ehrtmann dismissed the dress-maker and sent away the lady's-maid.

Louisa suddenly exclaimed,—

"I don't want to be married!—pray, pray don't let me!"

"My dear, my dear!" screamed the baronne, "you must not say that; the carriages are at the door. See how charming you look. It will be all over very soon, and you'll be the first to laugh at your panic."

"I don't want to be married! I don't know why I am going to be married," cried Louisa, in an agony.

"Get some ether," said Madame von Ehrtmann to the astounded Fioretta, whose pale, frightened face looked absurd in its coquettish bonnet.

"I don't need ether, Madame von Ehrtmann. Help me!—do help me!" appealed Louisa, in great distress.

“Ma chère petite, the carriages are at the door. Indeed, ma belle, it's too late for any change.”

“Ah, well ! you won't help me ? So be it, then ; let us go—I am ready.”

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE NEW HOME.

You journey past Meaux, and, of course, you think of Bossuet. You go bowling over the levels of Champagne, and look with curiosity on the succession of vineyards; and then you begin to ascend hill after hill, divided by the narrowest of valleys, which tell you that you are approaching the country of Alps. Firs of a dark blue green fringe slopes, which gradually change from slopes to steeps, and then you discover that you are in that department of France which was once itself a kingdom, and a very warlike kingdom. The inhabitants, some two hundred and odd years ago, preferred their own laws, customs, and princes to

those of their neighbours. But Might made Right, as it sometimes does now, and they became French by the grace of Louis the Fourteenth's armies. They are quite amalgamated now, though there still remains to them, as to the Scotch and Irish, an accent of their own.

On the third day after leaving Paris (railroad in that direction there was none in that year), M. and Madame de Villemont reached Bar le Duc. Half of the town, styled the *ville-basse*, lies along the banks of the Ornain, a narrow, sullen river, often almost as yellow as the Tiber. The streets of this part are pretty much like those of other thriving provincial towns—some are broad, some are not; in summer they are dusty, in winter, muddy. There is a *lycée*, a *mairie*, a theatre, and a prefecture, for Bar le Duc is the *chef-lieu* of the department. Several factories and some breweries stand on the side of the river, and also multitudes of what may be called small garden houses. Almost every family, in easy circumstances, has one of these resorts—not large enough for dwellings, but shaded as they are by trees, and

surrounded by a profusion of flowers, they form pleasant resorts for hot summer days.

Leaving the ville-basse, you wind up a steep ascent to the picturesque ville-haute, the heart of the old capital of the Duchy of Lorraine. Here grey and red mix in the buildings, just as a painter would desire. Next to a clean-faced, modern house, you find a finely sculptured building, almost black with age. The church of St. Etienne is where it was in the days of Louis the Eleventh; some of the old city walls, with flowers springing from between every mouldering stone, show where once was the deep moat and the protecting towers. Of these there were seventeen all razed to the ground by the conqueror's orders, save one, the Tour de l'Horloge, which still, with its great white disc, stands as a landmark between the upper and lower town.

Beyond St. Etienne there is a road, and there, on the outskirts of the town, is the domain of Clairefonds.

A bright setting sun was turning every window of the ville-haute deep red—it was making all the

parti-coloured odd-shaped roofs look like so many painted targets—it was taking away all dreariness from the most rickety tenements. That gracious sun was adding to the loveliness of the lovely hill sides, and bringing out those pretty purple tints which sometimes make vineyards comely. The evening song of birds streamed from the gardens and thickets, and the woods, which formed a belt round the ville-haute.

Intensity of feeling for nature is not common in very young persons ; in general they are yearning unconsciously after other secrets than those of light, and shade, and form in landscape. Hitherto Louisa had never thrilled with the enjoyment a lovely prospect can bestow ; now she did feel the spell, and turned to her husband with a sort of joyous thankfulness.

He said, “ Well, I suppose you are rather disappointed ; you did not expect the château to be so close to a town.”

“ Disappointed ! ” exclaimed Louisa. “ Oh, no ! I am delighted.”

The carriage stopped at a large white porte-

cochère, a misnomer by the way, as it admitted no carriage. The moment the bell rang, the doors flew open, and a little old woman in a short woollen dress and a white skull-cap, followed by a man something younger, dressed in a blouse, appeared. The one was Manette, the other Jacquot, the servants who had so faithfully served the aunt from whom M. de Blacourt had inherited Clairefonds.

In an instant Manette was tugging at the carriage door, striving to open it by main force.

“You can’t do it, my good lady,” said M. de Villemont; “let the friend by your side try.”

“How? I can’t do it!” shouted Manette, in a loud voice: “and I, who opened and shut madame’s carriage for thirty years. It is your carriage door that’s too hard; ah! here it is at last.”

M. de Villemont jumped out; Manette pushed him aside and put in her hands, as if she had an intention of lifting the bride out like a package.

“Ah! madame is young and light,” she exclaimed with some admiration, as Louisa sprang to the ground.



“Do you expect madame to be like our old madame?” muttered Jacquot, with his mouth stretching with pleasure from ear to ear; then to the lady’s-maid on the box, “Now, mademoiselle.”

“Let her alone,” said Manette; “she knows the way to the ground without help. This way, monsieur and madame,” and she bustled along the straight stone walk which led between two plots of grass, to the double glass doors that opened into the vestibule.

“Monsieur and madame will have time to see those rooms,” said Manette, pointing to doors on either side; “here is the salon.” She was silent for a moment, gazing first at one and then the other, to espy their astonishment. “What do you say to it, monsieur? there is not such another salon in Bar le Duc—no, not in the department; look at the height; and the ceiling—madame used to say it was done in the days before the French came here; and the furniture, eh?”

“It is beautiful,” said Louisa.

“No, it is not beautiful—it is old—but it is well

taken care of—not a brass nail out of a chair—there, madame,” patting a cushion of one of the bergères; “sit down—good, isn’t it?”

“Very, but I don’t wish to sit; I wish to see the house; what a delightful garden!”

“Madame will have time to see everything; madame had better take off her cloak, and have her dinner.”

“You seem a great manager, my good lady,” said M. de Villemont.

“Monsieur, when the old madame was alive I *had* to think, or she would never have eaten anything. Madame la Vicomtesse, I will show you your room.”

“You had better obey,” said M. de Villemont.

Louisa was following Manette, when the woman stopped short.

“But madame wished to see the garden—well, madame can just take a glance;” and she opened other glass doors corresponding to those that gave access to the entrance hall.

“Upon my word, we are going to live in a glass house,” said M. de Villemont.

“Not at all,” cried Manette, indignantly; “there is not a more solid, better built house in the world—one that is cooler in summer or warmer in winter.”

“No doubt; I am quite of your opinion; don’t be angry, old lady,” he replied.

The salon opened on to a terrace, which at that moment had a border of white and purple pinks; at regular intervals were orange-trees and pomegranates just blossoming. A flight of steps opposite to the door led down into a broad alley. There were parterres on either side, and intersecting paths; but the prettiest part of all was a walk running the whole width of the garden, which would be impenetrable even to a July sun. This walk, called the Charmille, was on the edge of a precipitous descent; a high hornbeam hedge isolated it from the rest of the garden, and rendered it impervious to all eyes, whether from the house itself, or from any adjacent dwellings. It was protected on the side of the precipice by a low grey stone parapet—a *salle de verdure* terminated the walk at both ends. From the one, the eye

plunged sheer down into one of the widest streets of the ville-basse; from the other into a road hundreds of feet below. The hill on which Clairefonds stood was so high, that the men and women, horses and carts, and carriages, viewed from its summer-houses, looked like children's toys.

Louisa, as she wandered about her new home, fancied that she had closed a door on all that had happened before her marriage; she believed *that* phase of her life had passed away—that she had done with it, as with some old castaway dress or mantle; as if we have ever done with any passage of our lives! as if all that happens to us from our birth to our grave is not indissolubly bound together. It is a poetic licence to talk of broken links—our most insignificant action is still a part of the chain of our lives, and through every joint of that chain there is always going on a mysterious repercussion of either our good or our bad deeds.

Louisa began her married life with the most sincere desire to do her duty. She owned to herself, with regret, that she had married without

loving her husband, but she had both gratitude and esteem for him, founded on the supposition of his disinterested affection for her. Many were the earnest prayers she sent to heaven at this time to grant her the power to be a good wife. She abounded in affectionate attentions to M. de Villemont; his will was to be her law. "Everything will be easy now," thought Louisa; "there can be no possibility of my getting into scrapes. I need not even be at the trouble of thinking for myself."

Poor young wife! she really was blind for a while to the impracticability of her project. When a man does not know his own mind, it is rather difficult for another person to do so.

As the weeks went by, Louisa had harder and harder work to maintain her respect for her husband. He was well born, bore an old title, and yet she became sensible, much against her will, that his manner was almost servile towards any one in a high position. She surprised him one day dusting and setting out some old china.

"What are you doing, Raoul?" she exclaimed, laughing.

“Madame la Prefette is to call this afternoon, and I want to give her a good impression of us. What dress are you going to wear?”

“Don’t you think I am very well as I am?” asked Louisa.

“I would rather you put on a silk.”

For that time, Louisa put aside a little feeling of contempt, and changed her muslin for silk. Other things began to puzzle Louisa. She was not vain; her beauty was an incontestable fact, it had never occurred to her to calculate the effect she was likely to produce, nor to expect compliments from her husband. She heard him, indeed, speak of other women’s dress and style, and had wondered at the minuteness of his observations, but she never supposed his remarks were aimed at herself. It was, therefore, with more of astonishment than mortification, that she did at length perceive that he was dissatisfied with her appearance whenever they went into public. As soon as she was aware of this, she asked what was amiss in her dress.

“I can’t tell; everything; you don’t look

like other people. The English always dress ill."

"The poor English are not to blame for my wardrobe," said Louisa. "Every article I have is made by French fingers, and in Paris. Probably, I have brought the last fashions, and that's why I am dressed differently from the ladies here."

"You look so English," he said, and the tone was not complimentary.

"I cannot help that; but as you admire Madame de Neuville so much, I'll try to copy her."

"Her style won't suit you; you haven't her jetty hair."

"Well, whose style will suit me? it's my duty to do what I can to please you."

Louisa's girlish heart was rather full at Raoul's depreciation of her.

"Don't put on such a pitiful face," he said; "nothing so little to my taste, if you care about that, as gloomy looks," and he left the room.

Louisa had been married only two months when

this dialogue took place. A woman has a very curious mixture of feelings the first time that she has a clear perception that the love and admiration she believed herself sure of, does not exist. There might have been nothing distressing to a bystander in M. de Villemont's words—no doubt a friend would have pool-pooled Louisa, had she founded on them a belief of Raoul's indifference for her; nevertheless, Louisa not only now wondered at Raoul's having asked her to marry him, but she began to speculate seriously on *why* he had done so, in spite of her being dowerless. Once on this track, she rapidly reached the goal to which it led. Had he loved her even a little, he would not have gone to sleep every evening when they were alone, though she sang and played to amuse him; nor when they were in company would he have considered himself obliged to make some apologetic speech, or rude criticism, whenever she began singing or playing. It was either, "What a doleful ditty! I hope you have not many such;" or else, "What's the use of that tight-rope dancing on the piano?"



Some men utter similar things, as bait to catch praises for the performances of their wives or daughters, but M. de Villemont really was ashamed of his wife—he did think an Englishwoman must be inferior in manners and accomplishments to a Frenchwoman.

There was another influence far more inimical to Louisa than that of the gay circle of beauties, of which Madame la Prefette was the graceful centre—an influence far more to be dreaded. M. de Villemont had chosen for his confessor and spiritual director the Chanoine Maillard, a ferocious bigot. M. le Chanoine's opinions were much too absolute to allow of his sparing his penitent on the subject of his union with a Protestant. He made himself master of the case, and having ascertained that no provision had been made that the offspring of the marriage should be brought up as Catholics, the incensed priest exclaimed,—

“Pray to God, M. le Vicomte, that you may never have children !”

This M. Maillard was a rosy, fair, blue-eyed, cherub-faced man ; his cheeks were soft, his hands

soft, his hair soft, like yellow floss silk. One of his most dearly-prized enjoyments was a whist table, and this was provided for him by three pious dowagers.

As he sat shuffling his cards, a chauffrette under each foot, he would exclaim, with a benign look,—

“ Ah! those poor Protestants, damned without reservation! What is the trump?—damned to all eternity, my dear ladies!”

The Creator has given to all helpless creatures an instinct to warn them against their enemies. Louisa was afraid from the first of this fresh-looking priest; she tried, as so many inexperienced, defenceless persons have done and will do, to propitiate her foe by always speaking well of him, taking his part whenever she heard him ridiculed or censured by any of the gay world at the Préfecture. She had yet to learn that to turn a foe such as M. Maillard into a harmless acquaintance, you must crush him. An evidence, trifling indeed, but decisive of the Chanoine's influence over her husband, was M. de Villemont's ceasing to

accompany her to the door of the Temple.\* The first time this occurred Louisa attached no importance to it, but when Sunday after Sunday the same thing occurred, she suspected that the omission was done with intent to show his dislike of her form of religion; she was not long left in doubt.

Louisa's parting words to her mother had been, "Mamma, you must soon come to Clairefonds," and after the first month of their arrival, she had often alluded to her mother's approaching visit, but Raoul had always left the allusion unnoticed. In her increasing loneliness of feeling, Louisa's thoughts turned to her mother; she had not forgotten, it was impossible that she should forget, Mrs. Templar's violence of temper; but after months passed with a man like Raoul de Villemont—who had himself thus described his temperament one day when Louisa was striving to make him give some mark of feeling,—“The De Villemons are cold as fish, and I am a De Villemont”—

\* N.B.—Protestant churches are so designated in the towns of the departments of France.

she had grown disgusted with the monotony of a phlegmatic temper.

Lately Mrs. Templar's letters had begun to express vexation at her visit to Clairefonds always being mentioned in an indefinite manner; at last she wrote that she must know whether Louisa expected her or not, for the term for which she had taken her apartments in the Hotel de Hollande was on the point of expiring. If there were reasons why she should not be received at Clairefonds, she should have to seek some cheap hole, in which to hide herself. Louisa's heart rebelled against the idea that her mother should be obliged to wander about the world alone, while she had a large mansion with half a score of spare rooms.

“Mamma cannot fail to be happy here,” thought she; “there will be no need for her to be for ever calculating about every penny she spends. There can be nothing for her to be angry with me about; she will not care whom I speak to now that I am married, nor for my practising; and there is the garden and the phaeton,

or if she prefers to be alone she can. Poor mamma!" And here there was a long sigh, perhaps of regret for the girlish troubles which had seemed so hard to bear.

The first opportunity that offered she said to M. de Villemont,—

"It is time that we should invite mamma to come to us; the term for which she engaged her apartments is at an end."

"What prevents her from taking them on?" asked Raoul.

"Nothing, except that I have always said we should hope to see her here."

"You should have consulted me before giving any invitation."

"I could not dream that you would not wish my own mother to come and stay with me."

"The vendange is at hand," said M. de Villemont, "and I am sure that Madame de Villemont would like to be here at that season."

"But mamma's coming need not interfere with that; there's plenty of room for everybody."

“Thank you, my dear; two women in a house never agree, what would it be if there were three? Thank you, my dear, *I* would rather not,” and Raoul laughed at what he thought a good joke.

This mocking laugh of her husband's was what jarred most painfully on Louisa's nerves—it tried her self-control to the utmost; she had to pause before she spoke again.

“Do you mean that I am not to invite mamma? I must write her one thing or the other. I think you ought rather to be anxious to have her here, when you leave me to walk alone so much.”

This allusion to his having given up escorting her to the Temple was unlucky; it hit Raoul's only ticklish point: he said,—

“The fact is, *ma petite*, I consider one Protestant in my house more than enough.”

Louisa turned the colour of marble; the question rose to her lips, “Why did you marry me?” She did not utter it; she got up and left the room. She had never yet had a quarrel with her husband; never even till the last half hour

addressed him but in a pleasant tone of voice— at that last speech of his, accompanied by another of his jeering laughs, she understood that her safety lay in flight. She ran to her own room, there she threw herself on the bed, and put her hands to her ears, as if she would avoid hearing something. She did hear it, though; it was a voice from her heart, saying,—

“I repent, I repent! I shall never learn to love him—never!”

When they met before dinner, Raoul said,—

“I did not intend to prevent your inviting your mother.”

The words produced an immediate revulsion of feeling in Louisa; she said,—

“You are better than I am, Raoul.”

He looked at her inquiringly, twirling his moustaches.

“I have been so angry with you,” she went on. “You forgive me, don’t you?”

“I would forgive anything, if we could only have dinner.”

It is probable that Louisa had a feeling akin to

that of the Danaïdes filling their sieves, when she received this reply.

Raoul's last words to her that night were,—

“ You had better specify in your letter to your mother that you invite her for six weeks or two months, otherwise she may fancy she is to live here always.”

To describe how little by little Louisa suffered disappointment after disappointment in her endeavours to attach herself to M. de Villemont, and to attach him to her; to relate how often she rose from failure to renewed effort; to enter on the detail of all the pin-pricks he inflicted, would be a painful task. At the end of the first six months the decisive hour struck—Louisa renounced the struggle. She had come to comprehend that there was something in M. de Villemont's nature which repelled hers—a something which neither interests in common, nor life in common, could surmount. She did not hold Raoul guilty for this, on the contrary, she cried, “ *Mea culpa, mea culpa!*” She kept before her mind's eye the fact of her having wilfully married him, without any



affection for him; *he* had given her distinct proof that he had *had* a preference for her—he had scorned the dowry, which even M. de Blacourt had thought so indispensable. What a plank of safety this belief in Raoul's disinterestedness was for Louisa! “No,” she repeated over and over again, “the fault lies in me. I have not known how to keep his heart!”

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE STORMY PETREL.

LOUISA had resolved never to let Mrs. Templar penetrate into the secret disappointment of her heart; she did all that depended on her to give her mother an agreeable impression of her married life.

“I assure you, mamma, that we never have any quarrels.”

“Indeed, then matrimony must have greatly improved you, Louisa.”

“I hope it has; I am very sorry for many things, but I have turned over a new leaf, and I am going to make up to you now for all the trouble you have had with me.”

Mrs. Templar would not be pleased. As she

walked over the house, and Louisa pointed out to her the fine old furniture, and said, with the pride of a young housekeeper,—

“No one here has such beautiful things!”

Mrs. Templar observed,—

“It’s more than you deserve.”

“Quite true,” replied Louisa; “that’s why I value it all so much, and why I try every day to be grateful for my lot.”

Mrs. Templar assumed a very high and mighty manner with her son-in-law. She spoke to him, as it were, from the tip of her lips—never praised anything—neither the beautiful china (which, perhaps, was what Raoul most valued of all his possessions), nor the pyramids of choicest fruit that graced each meal, nor Manette’s exquisite entrées, nor the famed view from the salon window, nor the stately garden; no, nor even the luxurious comfort of her own room. She would not allow her trunks to be unpacked—declared it was not worth while, implying, to Louisa’s surprise, that her visit would be a short one. She made every invitation that came to Clairefonds a cause of dis-

turbance. Mrs. Templar, when she did agree to accompany the De Villemonts, was sure to get up a scene before or after. It was Louisa's and Raoul's fault that she was not treated with proper respect; it was Louisa's duty never to allow herself to be taken in to dinner until she had seen her mother, properly escorted, leave the room before her. She would not listen to Louisa's explanation that she was still receiving the honours of a bride at some houses. No; Mrs. Templar insisted that people took their cue from M. and Madame de Villemont's neglect of her. Thus it happened that Louisa had red eyes every time she went out. M. de Villemont never seemed to perceive Mrs. Templar's dissatisfaction, nor did he resent her accusations; this nettled her, but made Louisa really grateful to him. He began, however, to absent himself almost every evening: "I am going to the *Cercle*," he would say to Louisa after dinner; "your mother will be happier without me, and I'll bring you the newest bit of gossip."

For several evenings, Mrs. Templar made no remark on M. de Villemont's absence; she was

catechizing Louisa, not with severity, but with affability. Louisa was so glad to see her mother becoming, as she believed, reconciled to her, that she was as communicative as Mrs. Templur desired. She mentioned the amount of Raoul's income—twenty thousand francs a year.

“The idea of a title and eight hundred a year,” exclaimed Mrs. Templar; “Major Templar will inherit as many thousands.”

“But you see, mamma, that we don't want for any comfort.”

“Not if you remain cooped up in this out-of-the-way country town. I did not educate you for that—a fine finale for a girl with your advantages. Why don't you push your husband to apply for some Government situation? M. de Blacourt told me he had only to ask and to have.”

“Raoul does not wish it, mamma.”

“Lazy fellow!” muttered Mrs. Templar.

One evening after this conversation, M. de Villemont did happen to be at home, and Louisa, thinking to please Mrs. Templar by showing that she had not neglected her music, sat down to the

harp; she sang song after song without expecting any observation from her auditors. At last she was stopped by a portentous snore from Raoul, followed by a loud sob from her mother. Louisa flew across the room,—

“Mamma, mamma, what is the matter?”

“Oh! my child, how you have thrown yourself away.”

Luckily Mrs. Templar had spoken in English.

“Hush, mamma; pray, hush.”

M. de Villemont awoke, and came towards the ladies to see what had happened. The sight of his smiling, rather pretty face drove Mrs. Templar into one of her fits of passion—what she had said in English she repeated in French—she told him he had been the ruin of her daughter’s prospects; he had taken her in. The moment he opened his lips, she called him various ugly names.

Presuming on her knowledge that she was an heirloom, Manette put her head in at the salon door, upon which Mrs. Templar went off into violent hysterics.

“Poor old lady!” exclaimed Manette, bringing in a glass of water. Louisa put it aside with an indescribable expression of face, no doubt she recalled a similar scene at Versailles. Manette went away, and assured Jacquot and the neighbours, “that the young madame was very hard to her mother.”

The next day Mrs. Templar ostentatiously busied herself with her trunks. She asked M. de Villemont if there were voituriers to be hired at Bar le Duc.

“Certainly,” he answered.

“I shall be obliged to you, if you will bring me their terms.”

“With pleasure, madame.”

“You hear the hint your husband gives me to go away?” said Mrs. Templar to Louisa.

“Oh, no! mamma, it’s all a mistake,” said Louisa. “You must not talk of going away—if you go, I shall go too!”

“I don’t want coaxing, I want proper civility.”

“Just try us a little longer, mamma.”

Mrs. Templar would neither say yes nor no;

she adopted the habit of remaining in her own room, excepting at meal times, and for ten days she never spoke to Louisa or M. de Villemont. He begged Louisa to put no impediment in the way of her leaving Clairefonds, the next time she proposed to do so.

“But what is to become of her?” sighed Louisa; “I cannot bear to think of her living alone.”

“Let her take an apartment near to us,” returned her husband.

Louisa begged for time. Raoul shrugged his shoulders. Whenever Mrs. Templar now attacked him, she found she had met her match. Whatever she said, he answered by a little mocking laugh that nearly drove her mad. For some time she avoided any bickerings, and Louisa, who had resented Raoul’s impertinence, began to believe it had produced a good effect—she was deceived. One morning at breakfast, Raoul took it into his head to discuss Colonel St. George’s niece, Marguerite. “She will be famously handsome,” he said; “I never saw such a peach complexion,



and her hair is adorable; what smoothness, what lustre, what richness! I never saw anything to equal it."

"What colour is this wonderful hair?" asked Mrs. Templar, sneeringly.

"Black, raven black."

"Do you prefer black hair, to fair?" she asked.

"Everybody does," said Raoul, carelessly.

"I wonder, then, that you chose a fair-haired wife."

M. de Villemont answered by one of his provoking laughs.

"You are a devil!" she said, losing all self-command.

Louisa, from her mother's gesture, expected her to throw the cup she had in her hand at M. de Villemont.

"Raoul, pray, pray, go away!" said Louisa.

Scared at the tempest he had raised, he took her advice.

"Mamma, you should not speak so to Raoul, he does not deserve it."

"Doesn't deserve it? he cares as much for you

as for me; your friend M. de Blacourt bribed him to marry you, that you might not wear the willow," said the enraged woman.

"Bribed him!" repeated Louisa in amaze.

"My words are plain enough; he gave him this very place on condition that he married you. You might have known it, for you heard the settlement read."

"I never listened to a word. Ah, mamma, I wish you had not told me!" said Louisa, in a pitiful voice.

"I can't bear to see you making such a fool of yourself, with your airs of submission and gratitude to such a selfish fellow as that. As for me, who give him a third of my income, you make me quite second to him."

"I don't understand you, mamma!"

Mrs. Templar said, "I pay him four thousand francs a year for you. You have nothing to thank him for."

"It would have been better to allow me to feel grateful to my husband, mamma."

"Pay your gratitude where it is due, to your

poor mother, who has done nothing but sacrifice herself for you."

"I am grateful to everybody," returned Louisa, in a broken-down voice; "I am everybody's debtor—I have nothing to give."

"Don't go back to your heroics, Louisa; remember you are a married woman, and behave like a reasonable creature."

"Give me advice how to do so, mamma."

"Do not go now and repeat to your husband what I have told you, and learn to make the best of the bad bargain you have made."

M. de Villemont came into Louisa's dressing-room before dinner. He said, "You must manage to get your mother away; I will not be insulted in my own house."

"I cannot bid her go; she gives us so much of her income, she has not enough left for her own comfort."

"Why, she has upwards of seven thousand francs left: what can an old woman want with more?"

Louisa winced, but she was still labouring

under the weight of her mother's revelation ; she felt sinking, sinking into some dark pit : nothing remained but an instinct that she must command herself ; she said once more, " I cannot ask my mother to quit her daughter's house. You are the master, do what you think proper," and she went into her bed-room, and closed the door between them.

Then she gave way to the passion that was choking her—all illusion gone. In her ears rang her mother's words :—" He was bribed to marry you, make the best of the bad bargain you have made. Cruel mother, can you give me no other help ?"

" Madame, madame !" cried a shrill voice at the door ; " monsieur wants you in the salon."

" And I must go and smile, and talk, and know all the while that the man to whom I belong does not care for me, despises my boasted beauty, was bribed to marry me, and it's for life !" she clutched at her throat.

" Madame !" again called Manette, " you are wanted."

What might Louisa not have done but for that loud determined call.

“I am coming,” she said, opening her door.

Manette’s sharp eyes scanned Madame de Villemont; she said, “Madame had better arrange her hair.”

“You do it,” said Louisa, yielding to a wish that some one should show her some kindness.

Manette got a comb—“Sit down, madame,” and the old servant passed the comb dexterously through the ruffled hair, then she smoothed the tumbled collar, she did it all kindly, as though a child were under her hands; “now, then, madame must go.”

“Come here, Louisa, and help me to decide which of these patterns to take,” called out M. de Villemont, as soon as he saw his wife.

A tailor was at a table displaying a long pattern-book of different materials for waistcoats and trousers. Mrs. Templar was seated at a window, calmly reading a newspaper. Raoul never noticed the stony look of Louisa’s face, he was so pre-occupied with the patterns.

“Which shall I take? do you think this is too light, or too thick? you choose.”

She put her finger mechanically on one of the little squares.

“That is only suitable for winter, madame,” observed the tailor.

She moved her finger.

“Madame has the very best of taste,” said the man of coats.

At dinner, Raoul and Mrs. Templar conversed as if there had been no *fracas* in the morning. By a tacit agreement, neither of them asked Louisa what ailed her.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### NOVELS.

MRS. TEMPLAR had broken the staff over Louisa's head, when she told her that Raoul had not married her for love, that the Marquis de Blacourt had given him Clairefonds to do so. "I have no right to resent it," she argued with herself; "nor shall I, but now we are on a par; the one is no better than the other."

She fled from the world of reality into that of fiction: novels had for her all the savour of hitherto untasted fruit; she might revel in them now—she was married, she might read anything and everything. Of all that she read, those that she studied most were the works of Balzac.

Passages were dwelt on, perilous descriptions perused and reperused, until Louisa's imagination was on fire. Summer and autumn rolled by, and little by little, slowly but surely, Louisa came to understand what she had done by marrying without love—she had sold herself into a bondage worse than Egyptian—her very thoughts must be controlled, she might die by inches, she must never lift up her voice in complaint.

M. de Villemont had become an object of contempt to her; she took almost a pleasure in unveiling his defects to herself; she seemed thus to acquire a right to despise him.

Mrs. Templar was always talking of going away—yet never going—her trunks were packed every day and unpacked every night. Since a truce had been established between her and M. de Villemont, he had not mooted the question of her departure; perhaps he wished to gratify his wife, perhaps he had some compunction with regard to her, or perhaps he was merely one of those who submit to anything from daily habit. One day, Mrs. Templar awoke to a perception of the



complete change of Louisa's demeanour towards her husband. The eager desire to do her wifely duty was transformed into utter indifference, shown with perfect frankness. If Raoul attempted to be flattering and caressing, which was sometimes now the case, Louisa had an infallible way of her own of stopping him. She was not rude or violent; she distanced him by pretending not to understand what he meant.

Perhaps Mrs. Templar had a twinge of self-reproach, when she marked this state of things; though her remorse is very conjectural. It is not true that consciences resemble Prince Cheri's ring, and prick us for every evil deed. Every one has a ready belief in their own immaculateness, the blame lies always with another; rarely will any one admit that a tittle of the fault may be their own. However that may be as to Mrs. Templar, it is certain that she began narrowly to observe Louisa. Mrs. Templar had a coarse sort of penetration, which on the slightest probability, concluded on the worst possibility. Rendered uneasy by Louisa's manner and appearance, she

laid in wait for some indication of the cause; but she did not find that for which she sought; Louisa was cold as ice to every man she saw.

At last, one morning, Mrs. Templar stopped Louisa as she was sauntering away from the breakfast table into a small room she had fitted up as a boudoir.

Mrs. Templar said, "Do you think you are right, Louisa, in throwing away your whole time on trashy novels?"

"I don't see much harm in it, mamma; I may as well read stories as embroider muslin, or do worsted work."

"It's a sin and a shame to neglect your music after all the expense and time bestowed on it."

"Girls only practise till they are married; it's no use afterwards, every one gives it up. Madame Arthur Bredy never opens her Erard—her tapisserie takes up all her time."

"Even that would be better than filling your head with nonsensical lies; if you go on as you are doing, Louisa, you'll lose your husband's affection."

Louisa sat down and folded her hands on her lap, as if ready for a lecture.

“Ay,” went on Mrs. Templar, “I understand your look of resignation, but it’s my duty to warn you. When a woman does not make herself the companion of her husband, he finds some one else who will.”

“M. de Villemont,” said Louisa (she had given up the Raoul), “was not half so civil to me the first month or two after my marriage as he is now; I believe he likes me better as I am.”

“Very well, go on, and see what you will make of it; a disobedient daughter is not likely to be a good wife.”

“Mamma, I am no longer a child, not even a girl, don’t let us have any disputes! Understand this, I do as well as my nature allows me; do not rouse me from my vegetating existence, it’s the best for me.”

“Some of the rubbish you have picked up out of your novels.”

“If you force me to alter my life,” continued Louisa, and her eyes flashed, and her colour rose,

“I shall become a regular dissipated woman; I shall not do things by halves. I *have* sometimes a longing for fun and frolic and dash, a longing to figure in the gay world—to shine—not to have a moment I can call my own; I sometimes pity myself for being shut up here. I have heard often enough of my beauty. Sometimes, do you know, I regret its *blushing unseen*, tarnishing as that old Venetian mirror in the lumber garret did, for want of air and light. Let me be, let me be, mother mine, give me plenty of novels and quiet, and perhaps I shall pass through life respectably.”

Mrs. Templar held her tongue; for the first time she was wise enough not to exasperate Louisa.

A few days after this, M. de Villemont joined a party of young men who were going to a château near Clermont to shoot larks. During his absence Louisa received a packet containing a book fresh from the printer's hands; the title was merely the initial “L.” There was a dedication to Madame L—— de —— . It ran thus:—

“To whom can I better dedicate this true story

than to you who have suggested every page of it? The few friends who have read the MS. tell me that the descriptions have that smack of truth which redeems the poverty of the style, and the want of novelty in the subject.

“Accept, madame, all the sentiments of gratitude I owe you.

“Your everlasting debtor,

“THE AUTHOR.”

The book was a short one, not more than a couple of hundred pages of tolerably large print; Louisa never lifted her eyes till she had gone through the whole. It began with the description of herself as a child, and a contrast was cleverly drawn between her, in her elegant Bernese costume, and a hungry half-clad boy, trembling for the safety of his mother, exposed to the rage of a poverty-stricken father. The boy's first perception of the gulf dividing the rich and poor, was ably described. Then followed an idyll; the meeting of the same boy and girl in the country, the simultaneous awakening of the boy's love and ambition.

What Gustave Gasteineau had hinted at in a few broken sentences to Louisa seated on the mossy throne he had raised for her, was here detailed in full. "A rough Cymon, intent on his daily task of work, already hating the world in which his lot was so hard, blind and insensible to all those God-bestowed pleasures, open alike to great and small, suddenly had all his senses unlocked."

The orchard in which they had sat together, the snowy Alps rising before them, the rushing river, the calm lake, the murmur of the wind among the trees, the shade and sunshine playing at their feet, the sweet chimes of the village church; all the ineffaceable impressions of by-gone happy hours, were noted down.

Of story, there was scarcely any, the writer had literally kept to the description of three phases of his life: first, his childhood, then the quiet Swiss village, the irruption of the heroine's English relations, the ball, the prince; thirdly, the change to Paris, his jealousy, his despair, the whole was photographed from the life. There

was only one invention in the book, and that, the motive assigned for the heroine's marriage.

Gustave had never sufficiently penetrated into the life Louisa led with her mother, to understand how she might have been driven into accepting M. de Villemont. Unable to credit that his passion had never met with any return, and that Louisa's friendliness for him was free of love, taking for granted that she had sacrificed herself to a mere vulgar ambition of riches and rank, he stigmatized her in the cruelest words at his command.

"This woman," he wrote, "who has transformed a warm-hearted youth into a callous wretch, who has robbed him of faith in his labour, who has taught him to curse love, driven him to the stupidity of meditating suicide, merits a greater punishment than to have her likeness published as a warning." The concluding words were: "I have eaten a little honey, and for that I die."

Not for half a second after opening the little volume could Louisa doubt the identity of the author with Gustave Gastineau, and she felt as he

intended that she should feel; as if every eye in France was directed to her, every finger pointing to her, as the original from whom "L." was drawn. Her first impulse was to fly to her mother for help and protection; but she paused, after having opened her door—the first time in her life that Louisa had stopped to consider beforehand the probable consequences of an act. She shook her head, and said to herself, "I dare not trust her," and shut herself into her room, and locked the door. Once again she took up the book, she read again the passage descriptive of the hero's love. "I was jealous of everybody, of everything about her, jealous even of the piano her fingers touched, of the flowers that she wore in her sash, of the sash itself. How grateful I was for the blue sky, for the song the of birds, for the flowers, the dew; while I loved, my heart was full of blessing: now, where my love was there is a void!"

"Poor Gustave! why could I not love him?" thought Louisa; "I did not care for him, for I never felt anything like what he describes, that



something which seems to drive men and women mad.”

Mrs. Templar remarked her daughter's absorbed manner during that afternoon and evening, and wondered what had happened.

Twenty times, Louisa was tempted to tell her mother what had occurred, twenty times she refrained, thinking “better not.” She said to herself that it was very improbable it should ever be guessed by any soul who Madame L. was, and five minutes afterwards she was burning with a sick feverish dread, that M. de Villemont would hear the book talked of, and that there would be a duel, followed by some dreadful scandal; she went from one extreme to the other.

She meditated on the advisability of writing to M. de Blacourt, and asking his advice as to what she had better do; he had told her, too truly, she would never be free of difficulties and suffering, and she recalled how earnest had been his warnings against concealment. But she could not bring herself to apply to him for help. After hearing the conditions he had attached to the gift

of Clairefonds, Louisa had felt as if the marquis had assisted in bringing about her humiliation, and had been full of resentment towards him ; not resembling the heartburning she had towards her husband, but that which springs from the drop of gall hidden in the germ of all human affections.

With the morning, however, came less sombre views of her position. She would wait—M. de Villemont seldom opened a book ; why should he fix on this one in particular ? Louisa watched for an opportunity, and thrust the story of “L.” into the kitchen fire.

M. de Villemont came home full of vanity as to his own exploits in lark shooting. Louisa listened, and was sure he had heard nothing of Gustave Gastineau’s novel. Yet every now and then he began a phrase, which seemed to her so indicative of a knowledge of it, that she turned sick ; she could have borne to discuss the subject with Marc de Lantry, or to hear it judged by M. de Blacourt—both men whom she respected with all her soul ; but to have to listen meekly to M. de Villemont, who was always so vain of any part in

which he had to play the judge, to listen meekly to his common-place prolix denunciations of a case beyond the power of a limited nature to comprehend, to have him roughly handling the feelings of a man she had offended so cruelly, was what she could not do ; she would be driven to say something she should live to repent of for the rest of her days. She thought of writing to Marc or to Ismay, they corresponded occasionally ; but when she tried to explain herself on paper, the words appeared to mean more than she wished to say. “It’s impossible to write on such matters,” she said, and tore her letter into little bits, which, for further precaution, she burned. It came to this, she would trust to chance.

## CHAPTER XV.

## FRÈRE PRÊCHEUR.

M. AND MADAME DE VILLEMONT'S domestic intercourse became extremely peaceable. They lived as did most others of their acquaintance; seldom meeting except at breakfast and dinner. Monsieur had his separate amusements and occupations into which madame did not inquire. Madame had hers. They attended to the etiquette of making their entrance together at the ceremonious dinners and soirées at the Prefecture and elsewhere, and that being so, no one had any right to conjecture that their ménage was not a pattern one.

Louisa saw pretty young creatures, many of

them as young as herself, married to elderly invalids, or to men who neglected them or did worse; and yet, who dressed and danced, and laughed and sang, and enjoyed themselves mightily. Why should she not do the same? Why mope all her life over an irretrievable blunder? Free now from any care as to the impression she was producing on her husband, she was at her ease, and perfectly comprehended the powerful arm she had in her beauty. She smiled and in a twinkling had a train of courtiers. She enjoyed the homage she received, and what was more dangerous, she enjoyed in her turn the putting down of those who had been cold and sneering on her first coming among them. She was without even the safeguard of a mother's sharp admonitions.

For Mrs. Templar had relapsed into her former habit of solitude. She remained in her own room surrounded by open half-packed trunks, by her side a small portmanteau bursting with papers; or else she slipped out of the house unseen to walk in the neighbouring woods.

Even M. de Villemont remonstrated with her on this last point, representing that the woods were the resort of the soldiers quartered in the town, and that it was not well for a woman to go there alone.

“An old stick like me is safe anywhere,” she replied; “however, for peace sake, I’ll take your dog, Stop, with me; *he* is fond of me, poor fellow.”

On Christmas-day, Mrs. Templar as she sat down to breakfast, handed Louisa a bank note.

“What is this for, mamma?”

“For my board, my dear.”

“There is no necessity for anything of the kind, I assure you, mamma.”

“I don’t choose to quarter myself on any one,” replied Mrs. Templar; “if you don’t take the money, Louisa, it will be because you want to get rid of me.”

“You cannot suppose that,” said Louisa.

“Very well, then do as I bid you. No need for your being afraid, my dear, of always having me, but as long as I am here, I shall pay you

at the same rate ; your husband approves, you see."

"Do as you please, madame," said M. de Villemont ; "pay or not, go or stay, and I shall equally approve."

The belligerents had no real mind to quarrel, so they refrained from further open warfare : it is possible that M. de Villemont had a consciousness that it was better for Louisa that her mother should remain at Clairefonds.

Louisa at this period wrote for the first time since her marriage to M. de Blacourt ; her heart was sore against him, and her letter was short and ceremonious.

Before the anniversary of her wedding-day, Louisa was the leader of one of the gayest coteries in Bar le Duc. She had a fixed day for receiving ; but there was one of her acquaintances who very soon had a pretext for paying a daily visit to Clairefonds.

Severin de Pressy was young, noble, handsome ; in stature of middle size, in figure slight and

graceful; he had besides a pair of most expressive brown eyes; with a countenance of which every line betrayed passion and sensibility; nevertheless it was well known that Severin's life was singularly irreproachable. All Frenchmen are not of necessity immoral. In the enjoyment of a place in the administration which was almost a sinecure, he devoted his many hours of leisure to study—of a desultory kind, perhaps—but all of a nature to refine and exalt his tastes.

A singular intimacy speedily established itself between him and Louisa; they had evidently just the coincidences of tastes and dissonances of character which so often form the closest ties of friendship. Severin assumed very soon the part of a mentor to his beautiful new friend. Without rendering any reason for his doing so to himself, he began to scrutinize her conduct, and this led to remonstrances on the way she wasted her time on yellow covered novels, and to lectures on the frivolity of the society she frequented. She laughingly named him “frère prêcheur.”

He brought her books, read to her, made her



know the best passages of the modern poets of France; they spent many an innocent hour over *Lamartine*. Louisa, however, would only listen patiently to the love story of Jocelyn, but Severin's earnestness generally prevailed over her unwillingness to be serious. One of his favourite pursuits was botany; and he strove very hard to inoculate Louisa with this taste: it was amazing the ingenuity he displayed in his descriptions, so as to make the knowledge of the dry nomenclature captivating to her. He led her to remark all the daily graduations by which spring glides into summer, summer into autumn. And all this time never had there been any lapse into unhealthy sentimental discussions between them; their intercourse was without any disturbance or agitation of the feelings. They discussed all subjects with candour and openness. As she might have spoken to M. de Blacourt, Louisa said to Severin,—

“Do Frenchmen never marry for love?”

“Seldom,” was the answer.

“Allow me to tell you, then, that your system

is atrocious," she said, warmly. "Will it always be so, I wonder?"

"It is a pity," he said; "but in France there always has been something of ridicule attached to marriage. Our language abounds with comic expressions against matrimony, which date back as far as the origin of French. Frenchmen can't take marriage seriously, they consider it an absurdity to have a passion for their own wife."

"I think a passion of any kind an absurdity," said Louisa. She went on, "It is possible I may be differently constituted from other people, but nothing I ever read or saw has made me understand what *that* is, which you call passion."

"Then I sincerely trust you never may," he replied, gravely.

"And I as sincerely hope you will not marry without loving your wife. Take my advice, M. de Pressy, rather never marry at all than marry as Frenchmen do."

"I shall probably never marry, but if I do, it shall not be without an affection for the person I marry."

“That’s right,” said Louisa, and shook hands with him to show her approbation.

Until his acquaintance with Louisa, Severin’s name had never been coupled with that of any woman; it was now beginning to be associated with that of Madame de Villemont, but as yet only in whispers that had not reached him or Louisa. This ignorance was not to last long for either. One afternoon M. de Pressy found Mrs. Templar seated in the salon; hitherto he had never done more than catch a glimpse of that austere lady. He happened to have brought with him a new number of the *Revue des deux Mondes* to show Madame de Villemont an article on Comte’s “Philosophie Positive.”

Mrs. Templar interrupted him,—

“Poison!” she said, “keep it for yourself, sir. As long as I have any influence with my daughter, no man shall teach her philosophy.”

Severin, who was of a shy, reserved disposition, shrank from this rude attack, and made his visit short.

“I fancy I have taught that fine gentleman

something better than philosophy," said Mrs. Templar.

Louisa was very angry.

"Pray, mamma, may I ask why you were so rude to M. de Pressy?"

"You thought me blind, my dear."

"There's nothing to see. Other ladies receive visits."

"Lookers-on see more of the game than the players, Madame Louisa. You had better be on your guard, or that husband of yours will play you a disagreeable trick one of these days. You are cleverer, no doubt, than your mother; you can talk philosophy and fine arts; but, my dear, I was born long before you. Better have me bodily before your eyes than your noble Raoul sneaking into that room there," and Mrs. Templar pointed to the glass-door by which Louisa's boudoir communicated with the salon.

This speech made Louisa recollect having once or twice heard stealthy steps in her boudoir during Severin's last two or three visits.

"God forgive you, mamma, if you are making

a false accusation against M. de Villemont, and God forgive him if he has been so treacherous."

Only a couple of days after this conversation, Madame de Villemont received a letter, addressed in an unknown hand; the seal was black and of an enormous size and thickness. After speculating as to who could be her correspondent, Louisa broke the seal. The first words made her stare: they ran thus:—

“MY DEAR COUSIN,—

“I AM an old woman, but though I live like a toad in a hole,” . . .

Louisa turned to the signature and read,—

“ADÈLE ST. GEORGES.”

Before giving the rest of the epistle it will be as well to explain who the writer was.

Mademoiselle St. Georges was the sister of Amedée St. Georges, colonel en retraite.

Mademoiselle was now a lady of upwards of sixty, whom the colonel, her junior by a couple of years, ostentatiously called “Petite Maman.”

They were nearly related to the De Blacourts and De Villemonts, and as proud as they were poor. Their poverty, however, did not prevent their taking a third to share it, the daughter of a deceased brother—that same young girl, Marguerite, whose black hair M. de Villemont had praised so highly. “Petite Maman” was a mother to her brother and housekeeper as well. It was Petite Maman who cooked the dinner and curled the colonel’s grey hair, and frizzed his white whiskers, who ironed his shirts with their high stiff collars, who drew on and pulled off his tight boots, who sent him forth to shine in that gay world whither she never went. It was by Petite Maman’s management the colonel always had a five-franc piece in his purse to make a show with.

Now for the rest of the letter:—

“MY DEAR COUSIN,—

“I AM an old woman, but though I live like a toad in a hole, I hear all that is talked about in the town. I love your sweet bright face, and

I am a friend to open dealings. I shall tell you what others will not. All scandal comes to my ears, thanks to my good brother. Now, my very dear (*ma très-chère*), the colonel—I give you my authority—hears your name taken with that of M. de Pressy. You are surrounded by foolish women whose greatest pleasure would be to see you sticking in the mud of some bad road. My dear, be as wise as you are amiable. With my best salutations,

“Your all devoted,

“ADÈLE ST. GEORGES.”

How Louisa's soul rose and rebelled—*her* name taken in vain—*her* conduct speculated on—she who had not a thought she should be ashamed to avow, with regard to M. de Pressy or any one else. How she hated the world—a vile world—a cruel world. Innocence then was no safeguard—ah! by what a treacherous, dastardly set she was surrounded. For the moment she detested Severin; he must have known, though she did not, that people were gossiping about

his visits; if he had had any real friendship for her, he would have stayed away.

When the hot fit of indignation had spent itself she had an ague of terror for that "dread tongue" which slays happiness and good fame with a word; she must know what, and all, that had been said. She put on her bonnet and shawl to go to the St. Georges' house, which was not more than ten minutes' walk from Clairefonds. She left word with her maid where she was gone.

As she was stepping out of the courtyard she met M. de Pressy, and said more hastily than politely that she had a rendezvous with Mademoiselle St. Georges.

"Allow me to walk there with you," said Severin.

Louisa did not refuse, and he walked by her side. She knew as well as if she had looked in at all the windows she passed, that behind every muslin blind there was one or more pair of eyes watching her, and commenting on her being so accompanied; her cheeks burned and her



ears tingled. She did not hear a syllable of what De Pressy was saying to her. A gentleman on the other side of the way lifted his hat as they passed; and Louisa saw or fancied she saw him smile significantly. But Louisa would have braved anything rather than Severin should imagine that she knew of her having had her name joined with his.

END OF VOL. II.

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