LEISURE HOUR SERIES

A PSYCHE OF TO DAY

BY

MRS. C. JENKIN

HENRY HOLT & CO. PUBLISHERS

New York

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JUPITER'S DAUGHTERS.
WHO BREAKS PAYS.
SKIRMISHING.
MADAME DE BEAUPRÉ.
A PSYCHE OF TO-DAY.

LEISURE HOUR SERIES.

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BY

MRS. C. JENKIN

AUTHOR OF "WHO BREAKS PAYS," "SKIRMISHING," ETC.

"I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
. . . . . Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice."—SHAKSPEARE.

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT & COMPANY
1874

THIS STORY

IS DEDICATED, WITH GREAT ESTEEM,

TO

MONSIEUR LE PRÉSIDENT FÉLIX GILLON.

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

BOOK II.

A PSYCHE OF TO-DAY.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

WHO IS SHE?

PARIS was out of town—gone to Trouville, Baden-Baden, Biarritz, Switzerland.

No one that was any one was to be met on the pavement between the Madeleine and the Rue de Richelieu, save some young officials of government offices, hungering and thirsting after their annual leave of absence.

It was the month of August, close on the 15th, the epoch of official compliments, of illuminations, distributions of small crosses of the Legion of Honor, of theatres opened gratis for the million of nobodies.

In a darkened salon in a house in the Rue Blanche sat, or rather reclined, in her red-leather Spanish chair, Madame Claire Saincère, exactly as her nephew Paul has painted her: a picture that mer-

ited the grand prize of Rome, which he has just obtained, much more than his enormous "Thetis arming Achilles." It was this success of her nephew that had detained Madame Claire in Paris. She had been waiting until Paul should take his departure for his native town, en route for Italy, before setting out herself to join some friends at Interlachen.

In the mean while that little dark girl sitting opposite to her had arrived, threatening another delay to the annual Swiss tour. Yet when Paul entered the salon on this hot Sunday (he always dined with his aunt on Sundays), he did not perceive a trace of vexation on the fair face—fair in spite of the half-century it had seen.

The cool quiet room was what the young artist wanted. He had walked thither in a blaze of sunshine from the other side of the river, and he felt as a man might do, who, in the desert, suddenly came on palm-trees and a fountain. He kissed his charming aunt, and was about to speak when she said, "Look there!"

He then perceived the little girl dressed in black, sitting so uncomfortably upright, and with her eyes at that moment fixed in a wide stare on himself.

"Who is she?" he asked in a low voice.

"Come here, my child," called the lady.

The girl rose, and came toward the aunt and nephew, her head erect, her shoulders thrown back, her step firm and free, her whole mien that of one conscious of some superiority.

"Will you shake hands with me and tell me your name?" said Paul.

She gave him her small brown hand, saying—"I am called Regina."

Paul was astonished at the sonority of her voice, and said, by way of saying something, "Regina is an uncommon name. Do you know that it means queen?"

"Yes. I am a Hungarian, and I can speak Latin," was the curt rejoinder.

Madame Saincère rang the bell. "Hortense," she said to the servant who answered the summons, "take this child with you."

Regina left the room with the same solemnity of demeanor with which she had approached Madame Saincère.

As soon as she was out of hearing, Paul exclaimed, "Who in the name of wonder is that heathenish picturesque little mortal?"

"She is the child of Blanche de Rochetaillée."

"What! of the girl who ran away with that good-for-nothing Nolopœus."

"Exactly."

"And what has become of the unfortunate Blanche?"

"Dead. Husband and wife both dead."

"The best thing that could happen to them, I think."

"Yes, as *you* think, young Paul."

"Well, of course, such a marriage could never have been other than a miserable affair."

"Mistaken altogether. Blanche was happier than most women, in that she never lost her illusion with regard to the man for whom she had sacrificed so much."

"It's a puzzle to me how a high-born, high-bred French girl, could have loved that old adventurer. It looks like sorcery."

"The sorcery of passion, my dear boy. Poor Blanche was only sixteen when she returned home from the convent; a rose-bud of a girl, gentle, loving, shy. The Comtesse treated her as a child; the Comte overlooked her entirely. The soul of the one was in her sons; the soul of the other in his violin. Monsieur de Rochetaillée was a melomane. He thought of nothing, cared for nothing but music. It was the passion of his life; he could not live without music and musicians. The chateau had long been considered a sort of preserve for pianists and violinists. It was at the period when Monsieur Saincère was Procureur Impériale at Tours, and we saw a good deal of the Rochetaillées, who lived within an easy drive of the town.

"If ever there was a human being possessed by the demon of music, it was Sebastian Nolopœus. Quite impossible to describe his playing. It was such as I had never heard before nor have ever heard since. He inspired his listeners with what emotions he pleased. I remember once feeling as though I must kneel at his feet and worship him. He had fine features and an elegant figure, but was already gray-haired—no great disadvantage to a dark man. In

spite of disparity of age and rank, in spite of difference of country, and habits of life, he won Blanche's young heart. One morning he was missing, and so was the young girl.

"Monsieur Saincère was sent for to the chateau. He and the curé were the only persons who saw the Comte and Comtesse in the first moments of alarm, surprise, and anger. Some days elapsed before the fugitives were traced, and this being the case the only reasonable thing to do was to send the consent to her marriage, which Blanche implored in frantic words. Monsieur Saincère and I went to witness the marriage. After that, I believe neither father nor mother ever pronounced their daughter's name. The chateau was shut up. Monsieur and Madame de Rochetaillée came to Paris, and have never since left their hotel in the Rue St. Dominique.

"The news of the birth of the girl you have just seen was written to me by Blanche herself, accompanied by an earnest prayer that I would once more intercede for her with her parents. Their forgiveness was all that was wanting to her happiness. Her husband was a genius—the best of men—perfection.

"I dared not broach the subject by word of mouth to either Monsieur or Madame de Rochetaillée, so I enclosed the letter to them—a touching letter, full of all the babyisms of a young mother. It was returned to me without an observation. Blanche was then at Darmstadt. I went there, and to my amazement found her in downright poverty. So notorious,

indeed, was her want of common comforts during her confinement, that Duke E.— a great admirer of Nolopœus's talent—sent him five thousand francs. Will you believe it? he lost every sous of it the same evening, at rouge-et-noir, and Blanche stopped my reproaches by asserting 'that he had done perfectly right, for emotion of all kinds fostered his genius.'"

"Then there really was something superior in the poor girl; that power of losing her own identity in that of another is heroic," returned Paul.

"No measuring the heights or depths of woman's capabilities for good or evil," said Madame Saincère. "The same woman who will be an angel for one man, may prove a demon for another. All depends on some mysterious sympathy of natures. However, I am not going to philosophize, but to finish my story. Nolopœus died, and his poor little loving wife has followed him within the year. She must have met with some good souls who helped her, for Nolopœus died penniless. Regina, as far as I can make out, earned something by acting fairies, in ballets I suppose."

"Poor child! And what is to come of her now?"

"I took her yesterday to the Rue St. Dominique, but both the Comte and Comtesse ignored her presence. Had it not been for an occasional twitch of M. de Rochetaillée's mouth and for Madame's excessive pallor, I should have believed them to be as ignorant as they wished to appear of who the child was; but it is improbable that Blanche did not write

to them of her own approaching death and of her intention to send her orphan to Paris. When I mustered courage to say, 'This is your grand-daughter,' the Comte exclaimed, in a loud harsh voice, 'Not a word, not a word, madame, as to that young person.' 'But you cannot leave your daughter's child to starve,' I said. He answered, 'My notary shall communicate with you, madame,' and then he turned the conversation, hoped that my health was good, that my family were all well, was glad to know that it was my nephew who had gained the great prize of Rome. I left them without much ceremony, as you may believe."

"What a tempestuous family!" exclaimed Paul; "and little Miss looks as if she had inherited the stormy temperament of her family."

"Ah! poor little thing!"

"Ah! poor aunt; for the upshot of the matter is, that she is left on your hands."

"I hope you are not going to lecture me as your cousin Camille did this morning. To hear her, one would suppose that this unlucky orphan was about to deprive me of fortune and reputation."

"Not so bad as that," replied Paul. "Still I fear you will find her often in the way. You have been so free of encumbrances, so comfortably without responsibility, I can't bear to think of your beginning to have any worries; they will spoil all the placidity that makes you the most lovely and the most charming of women."

"Thank you, dear Paul; it is pleasant at my age

to hear such compliments; but do you suppose it is a happiness to have no one to wake for, to think for, to be uneasy or pleased about—to lead the life of a stalled ox?"

"I have not a word to say against your adopting this gipsy, if it pleasures you. I spoke entirely in your interest."

"Camille was very grand in her warnings, particularly as to the pecuniary part of the affair. None of my friends need fear I shall be ruined or thwart them of their share of my fortune. M. de Rochetaillée's notary has already informed me that he has orders to furnish me, or any one I may name, with two hundred a year for Mademoiselle Nolopœus' education and other expenses. So much for the present. In the future, she must inherit her mother's portion."

"My dear aunt, I was not thinking of money at all, but of your freedom of action, of your entire liberty to do as you like and go where you like."

"And, Paul, I answer, no one is at liberty to be of no use to a fellow-creature."

"I am satisfied," he said. "Now let us have another look at Mademoiselle Nolopœus."

This was what had been passing in the kitchen during the colloquy in the salon:

"You can sit in that corner," and Hortense pointed to a small wooden bench. "How old are you?" she continued, as she dipped the *escallopes de veau* in the delicate white bread-crumbs.

Regina took the question into consideration for

some five minutes, then answered in a solemn voice, "About ten, I believe, but don't ask me any more questions, for I don't mean to answer them."

A beautiful young woman was that Hortense, fair, healthy, gay, and giddy, a beauty in Reubens' best style. She was a severe trial to Madame Saincère, being a light that attracted crowds of moths, but, *entre nous*, Madame Saincère was one of those people who come into the world as it would seem expressly to help one pilgrim after another on their road.

As Regina had declared she would not reply to any interrogatories, Hortense, incapable of silence, burst into song, singing after her own fashion half-a-dozen operatic airs.

"You sing like a bird," observed Regina.

"As how?" asked Hortense, flattered.

"Without speaking words," explained Regina; then evidently fascinated by Hortense's beauty and gayety, she added, "I can help you, I know how to cook."

"You help me?" exclaimed Hortense, laughing and showing all her wonderfully regular little teeth.

"You are very pretty," said Regina.

"So I am told," replied Hortense, feeling a friendship for this *naïve* and disinterested admirer.

"Pray, what do you know about cooking?"

"I know how to roast and fry, and I can make an omelette."

Hortense stared at her. "Who are you? I thought you were the daughter of a friend of madame's."

Regina smiled scornfully. "I am called Regina, because I have royal blood in my veins; my mother was the daughter of French nobles, but my father was Sebastian Nolopœus, the greatest player on the violin ever heard. Kings came and bowed to him. My father was a royal man."

Hortense continued to stare at the little solemn speaker, "Pray, may I inquire whereabouts your father's kingdom is?"

"In the East—I never lie," and the girl sank into obstinate silence.

CHAPTER II.

PASSING ON.

It was decided that Regina should be sent to school. The institution (schools are all institutions in France)—the institution chosen was that under the direction of Madame Flot, at Passy.

To what height of power might not Madame Flot have attained had she been born a man instead of a woman! She was adroit, penetrating, self-confident, indefatigably active, and something unscrupulous in the means she used to attain her ends: good-tempered, good-natured, and withal, possessed of a vigorous constitution. Her blood ran equably and strongly through her veins. No feebleness about Madame Flot; and this plentitude of physical strength gave her a general ascendancy. Rosy, plump, smiling—she appeared a very incarnation of prosperity; and to appear prosperous is a great help to becoming so. Who, for instance, could have confidence in the talent of the lean apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet?*

Whatever were Madame Flot's private troubles, she carefully hid them. No one ever heard her complain of her idle smoking husband. She never sounded the alarum of her woes and deceptions. She never presented her public with any but bright pictures.

Madame Saincère had no sooner asked a question as to the terms of the institution than Madame Flot was down upon her.

"You have a little girl—give her to me. I'll make her everything you can desire. All my pupils are happy and clever and good. *Tenez*, look at that group in the garden. The eldest is to be married in three weeks. She left me only two months ago, and is here to-day merely as a visitor. All my girls make capital marriages. I have fifty English—pretty fair creatures; not more than a dozen Germans—excellent solid paste (*bonne pâte*). Yes, yes. Dear lady, trust me with your little girl. As to terms: the first year, a thousand francs, including our uniform, but not other clothes. She must have a trousseau. See what large grounds we possess; and give a look at our chapel decorated with paintings done by my pupils. Monsieur l'Abbé Labaume takes such an interest in us. He comes right across Paris to say our Mass. Excellent man; perfectly to be trusted with young tender hearts. Not severe—not too earnest about confession. Between us, quite a man of the world—of the best world," and so on talked the smiling head of the institution for young ladies at Passy.

At the sight of so many happy-looking healthy young creatures frolicking in the garden, Madame Saincère thought she could not do better than send the tragical-looking orphan to join them.

She was then led through the interior of the house

Large dormitories, well aired in summer, well warmed in winter; a dozen pianos going at once in half-a-dozen successive rooms; some half a hundred easels in a long gallery. Everything on a great scale—on a scale in harmony with the mistress.

Madame Saincère took leave of Madame Flot saying she would think the matter over; but Madame Flot had no doubts as to the result of Madame Saincère's reflections.

Madame Flot had dexterously gained a knowledge of all the circumstances of Regina's story, and also had penetrated Madame Saincère's perplexities, not free of alarm at the charge that had been so unexpectedly thrown on her.

"The girl will be here within a week," soliloquized the schoolmistress; "she shall have No. 15 bed. The poor lady is dying to get rid of her in a creditable manner—a child interferes so with a woman's liberty. I understand perfectly well we would like to save 'the goat and the cabbage.'"

Madame Flot judged Madame Saincère according to Madame Flot's self. We have no other standard measure than ourselves—personally as mentally. Is it not affirmed on good authority that in every painter's work—be it historical or portraiture—you will always find a likeness to the painter's self? Roundness, shortness of lines, and fairness; or length, thinness, and darkness, as it happens to be with the artist's own person.

Paul Latour's departure for Rome coincided with

that of Regina's for school. Regina, dressed in the uniform of Madame Flot's institution, came to wish Madame Saincère and her nephew good-by.

"What a metamorphosis! Not so picturesque though," exclaimed Paul, as he surveyed Regina.

"I come to thank you, madame, for all your kindness to me," said the little girl, with apparent self-possession.

"You will be good, I am sure. Strive also to learn," said Madame Saincère. "If Madame Flot is satisfied with you, your Christmas holidays shall be spent with me."

Regina still lingered.

"It is time for you to go, *ma petite*. Has Hortense got the key of your trunk? Come and embrace me."

Regina held up her face—the patient face of a child who has never known anything but sorrow.

"Come and kiss me also, Regina," said Paul; and slipping a small gold piece into her hand, he whispered, "Buy yourself a doll as a keep sake from me."

The girl made no answer; but when she was in the coach, Hortense perceived that she was crying.

"Don't be a coward," said Hortense. "They won't eat you at school. You ought to be very glad you are going to learn music and dancing. You are born under a lucky star, *ma foi*."

"I am not a coward. That's not why I am crying. You might beat me to death, and I would not cry."

"Cry, then, if it's a pleasure to you."

Paul Latour de la Mothe was at this period a young man of three-and-twenty, with manners peculiarly agreeable to women of all ages and classes. His had been the every-day story of early inclinations thwarted, of obstacles thrown in the way of the strong bias of the individual.

Paul was born a painter, and his father and mother insisted on his becoming a Government employé. Paul had loved, with the love that comes but once in life, a girl who had grown up at his side; but his mother had as strong an antipathy for the object of her son's affections as for painting, and indeed for art in general.

Few Frenchmen resist the wishes or defy the prohibitions of their parents in the matter of marriage; and Paul submitted to the sentence of condemnation passed on his love. But having given up his inclinations on one point, he claimed compensation in another, and Monsieur and Madame Latour de la Mothe had to consent to his going to Paris, to enrol himself among the pupils of Forgres.

Disappointment in one matter is often the stepping-stone to success in another—Paul regretting Adeline had no stomach for Paris dissipation. He gave himself entirely to the new mistress gained by such a sacrifice; and as concentration of will is, sooner or later, sure of victory, we find him, after two years' study, the successful competitor for the grand prize of Rome for painting.

The evening before his departure for Italy, the same on which Régina had gone to Passy, Paul

lounged late in the Champs Elysées, not in the principal walk but in some of the side alleys under trees. The lights and sounds from the cafés-chantants reached him softened, and made a pleasant accompaniment to his reverie.

What boundless hopes, what vast aspirations dilated his breast! His Adeline *si mignónne et si gracieuse* had no more consistency in his memory at that moment than the shadow in a dream. No Eve of mortal birth decked his fancy—busy with visions of superhuman beauty—such as may have floated before the rapt eyes of the young Raphael. Paul felt no doubt as the great Alexander did when he set out on his mighty military promenade; Paul was going also to conquer new worlds.

Paul's mother sat at home in the family house in the quiet country town, where this only and beloved son was born, and asked herself how it was she had given birth to a genius? Why must she of all women be so unfortunate? Not one of her neighbors could make the same complaint—*their* sons left the Lycée, went into banks, bureaux or *ministères*, sure, if long enough life was granted them, to become Receivers-General, or Directors, or Inspectors of something or other; sure after threescore and ten of a pension. Sons willing to marry the girl of their mother's choice, and affording their parents the ineffable joy of at least one grandchild.

And she, who only asked of Heaven an ordinary mortal, who saw no use in a young man who would inherit from twelve to fifteen thousand francs, hav-

ing any peculiar talent, she must consent to her son ming a sort of vagabond—to his going to Rome —ha... over the world perhaps. And after all, where was the certainty if he had any such wonderful talent. It might have been better to let him marry that frivolous Adeline, with a purse as light as her head.

Madame Latour de la Mothe sat at her window watching the same sunset as Paul was contemplating in Paris; but hers were no pleasant visions—she was as sorrowful as Sisera's mother waiting in vain for her son's return. Though death had not placed its icy barrier between them, she felt that they were nevertheless forever separated. She and Paul would never again live together as they had done; they would meet occasionally, but he would never again be wholly hers, dwelling under the same roof, giving and rec... ng the late and early kiss—never more—never more. She had lost her son. Oh! how she anathematized Paris, and Rome, and art, and boyish love!

When Paul entered his bedroom, he found Hortense on her knees before his half-packed trunk.

"You spoil me, Hortense, because I am going away."

"When are you coming back, Monsieur Paul?"

"Not for many years I hope and believe," he said, sitting down so as to get a good view of the beautiful girl. Hortense seemed to bloom into greater loveliness under his long gaze.

"I have finished packing your other trunk, Monsieur Paul. Who are you going to stay with, who is to take care of you, send your things to the wash, and sew on your buttons?"

"That reminds me," he said. "Get a needle and thread, like a good girl, and show me how to fasten on a button."

Hortense burst into one of her wildest laughs, every one of her little teeth in sight.

"Many a fine lady would give half her fortune to have your teeth," said Paul. "But I am in earnest about the buttons—get a needle and thread."

She fetched her work-box, and again kneeling down, this time close to his knee, she began the lesson. In spite of being only a *bonne*, Hortense had small taper fingers, and Paul remarked this and also a certain agitation and short breathing about her.

"You will never be able to do it, Monsieur Paul," she said, pettishly, snatching the needle out of his hand. "This house will be like a tomb when you are gone."

"Not as long as such a blithe bird as you remain in it," replied Paul.

"But I am not going to stay in it, Monsieur Paul. I don't mean to go on all my life cooking and slaving. I can better myself, and—I *shall*."

"I am sure I don't object," said Paul, laughing at the girl's tragedy tone.

She rose from her knees at his side, and stood facing him with angry eyes. "You don't object!"

she repeated mockingly; "you mean you don't care what becomes of me!"

"I don't know you in this mood. You shouldn't be cross to me the last evening you may ever see me."

"Oh! Monsieur Paul, Monsieur Paul, I am not cross; it is not that!" Hortense paused, grew first very red, then turned pale as ashes. She added, in quick, short accents, "I can go on the stage, if I please; I have an offer from the manager of the 'Gaieté.'"

"Why, where did he ever see you?" asked Paul, surprised.

"Never mind. Shall I accept the engagement?"

"Better remain with my good aunt."

"Not after you are gone," and her eyes met his entreatingly.

It was Paul's turn to change color. He said, hesitatingly, "I wish you every good, and I hope whatever change you make may be for your happiness."

"I wonder if gentlemen ever have any heart for poor girls like me!" ejaculated Hortense. "Good-by, Monsieur Paul, good-by."

"Shake hands, Hortense."

She thrust back his offered hand violently, and ran out of the room.

Paul waited some time, expecting, perhaps wishing, her to come back; but his good angel prevailed.

And so next morning he set off alone for Rome.

Mademoiselle Adeline Mayer, whom he had loved,

and who had owned she loved him passing well, married shortly after, by desire of her parents, M. Victor Aubry, a proprietor of fruitful vineyards in Champagne, and Hortense Secorbeau left Madame Saincère's service to enter that of the "Great Serpent."

CHAPTER III.

FRENCH PRECAUTION.

The next six years was a term of truce in the destiny of our *dramatis personæ*.

Regina went through the usual vicissitudes of a school-girl's life, even to having the typhus fever, Paul remained obstinately in Rome.

Possibly he might have returned sooner, but for the continual harping of his mother on one string, that of his marriage. Madame Latour de la Mothe continued to cherish the hope that her son would renounce painting, and settle down a married man in his native place, and during these six years found at least three models of perfection, any one of whom she would have welcomed as a daughter-in-law.

We constantly see the most formidable obstacles removed by a persevering pressure, and the strongest determinations fall before the tenacious efforts of feebleness. Thus, one fine day, Paul, wearied out, set off for Juvigny, his native town, to be introduced to one of his mother's unexceptionable "rose-buds." Sphinxes clothed in white muslin, Paul called young girls with suitable *dots*.

Before Paul arrived in Paris, Madame Saincère knew that the matrimonial negotiation had failed—failed, according to Madame Latour de la Mothe's

version, through the abominable coquetry of "*that* Adeline Aubry."

Madame Saincère was enjoined by her sister to talk reason with Paul on this subject.

Thus one evening she said, "I don't think I have heard you laugh once since you arrived."

"Is that a matter of regret?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so. A laugh is like a ray of sunshine. I am of Ninon's opinion: '*Que la joie de l'esprit est la mesure de sa force.*'"

"The gayety of a mind need not express itself by laughter. At nearly nine-and-twenty a man has had some experience. He is partially disabused as to the charms of existence, and as life begins to appear to him a misty problem, he is less disposed to laugh."

Madame Saincère took up the conversation by a change of subject. "And so you found everything at Juvigny much as when you left."

Paul lifted the lids of his eyes and looked fixedly at his aunt. "On the contrary, I found very little the same. The lower town is no longer lighted by dripping oil-lamps, swung across the streets. It has gas, and there are tolerable pavements where there were formerly none. There are fewer dirt-heaps before the old houses in the Côte de la Tour. My mother's hair is nearly white. Those I left boys and girls are men and women—the fathers and mothers of other girls and boys."

"One would imagine you had been absent twenty years instead of six. The air of Juvigny is not good for you, Paul. When your mother wishes to see you

let her come here. Hard work is what you require. Remember if a man has not done something worth doing by the time he is five-and-thirty he may be considered a failure. It is not easy to build up a reputation, therefore as few holidays as possible."

"Why fight about the bush?" he said, growing pale, his features contracting as in a crisis of bodily pain. "I see that my mother has written you all her fears and conjectures."

"She has told me all that is commonly said of you and Madame Aubry.

"Inventions," he replied.

"All inventions are based on some truth, friend Paul. You are on a slippery path; have you ever considered whither it leads? Oh, heavens! that men and women will be such fools! And for what? the most evanescent thing in the world. No love lasts, Paul."

He looked angrily at her. "Mine has lasted eight years."

She smiled. "And yet you remained absent six years, of your own free will. If you spoke truly you would say that your boy's feelings have been revived by meeting Madame Aubry again, and very likely she has done her best to revive them."

"Women are always cruel in their judgments of women," he returned.

"Perhaps—at any rate men always say so—when we interfere with their game. I wonder how you would judge the case were it your own instead of M. Aubry's?"

"Hang him; he cares for nothing but his fishing and his vines. He sees nothing, hears nothing: he is a mere lump of matter; unable to comprehend her. Her mother is absorbed by whist and her confessor—all the women are jealous of her. And *you* want to rob her of her only friend!"

"What you feel is not friendship!"

"I beg your pardon. I am the best judge of my own feelings; and I know that it is a strong affection, and not a passion I have for Adeline."

"So much the better, my dear; at the same time take an old woman's counsel—remain in Paris, and give up Juvigny."

Here the conversation ended for the present; Madame Saincère putting her trust for Paul's cure rather in the fascinations and pleasures of Paris, than in the efficacy of her counsels.

In the course of the following month Paul was established in a suitable atelier and apartment in the Rue Blene, not five minutes' walk from his aunt's house. What with the gentle blasts from Fame's trumpet which had preceded his arrival—what with the intimacies he had formed in Italy, and his birth and easy fortune, he was received into the worlds of art and fashion with equal cordiality. He had not to make his way—way was made for him. Every Sunday, however, Paul passed in the Rue Blanche. It was on these Sundays that he and Regina met, it being one of the customs of Madame Flot's institution that her young ladies should go and spend every alternate Sunday with their parents

or friends. Paul soon observed that Regina was as little changed in manner as in appearance. She was still given to haunting the corners of rooms—still shy and without expansiveness. He remarked also that she was far from being a favorite among his aunt's relations; and it was equally clear to him that she never sought to propitiate any one. He asked himself if this absence of all desire to please was a virtue, or the want of one.

Madame Saincère explained this sort of apathy by placing it to the account of the typhus fever, from which Regina had only lately recovered. The sight of Regina brought back Hortense to Paul's recollection.

"She is a *demi-monde* celebrity," said Madame Saincère, in answer to his inquiries. "I have once or twice caught a glimpse of her in a carriage and four going to the races. She never fails to send me a magnificent bouquet every New Year's Day, with her humble respects; and I more than suspect that all Regina's handsome *étrennes*, sent anonymously, proceed from the same source."

Though Paul dined alone with Madame Saincère on Sundays, Regina counting for nothing, there was always an addition in the evening of some half-dozen intimates, of many years' standing, or the sons and daughters of those intimates. There was first, Dr. M——, an oracle with Madame Saincère—a well of science, a systematist defending his opinions with obstinacy, yet never with passion. There was Old General Fey, with the rude voice and soft heart,

believing, and loudly asserting that all the prosperity of France vanished with Louis Philippe's green umbrella. The two brother sculptors, Emile and Gustave Roule, young, joyous, full of promise as spring; Jean Bertrand, the well-known author—every page of whose writings betrays the tender sentiment and benevolence of the writer; and who, in conversation, is an exasperating pessimist, continually citing Leopardi's dictum, that "the world is a league of villains against the good—of the vile against the noble." But the person who most impressed Regina was Madame Daville. To the schoolgirl it seemed natural that men should argue and declaim; but that a woman, and such a little woman, should dispute, and harangue, criticise, and condemn Government and senators, hold her own, nay, silence even Monsieur Bertrand, was a miracle to Madame Flot's pupil. What sort of a man must Monsieur Daville be, to dare to be Madame Daville's husband? An ogre seven feet high at least, thought Regina.

For the last two years she had been present twice a month at these meetings, learning very different things from what were taught at Passy. Sometimes, when her friends were gone, Madame Saincère would remember Regina's existence, and say—

"My dear, you should have been in bed long ago. Are you not sleepy, child?"

"No, madame; I like to listen."

For an instant it would cross Madame Saincère's mind that all the subjects discussed might not be

the fittest for a young girl to hear; but the thought was forgotten before the end of the fortnight brought Regina back to her corner. She sat there, quiet as a carved image, for many and many a Sunday after Paul formed one of the group.

Neither aunt nor nephew remarked that the marble was losing its rigidity and its coldness, that the eyes were less disposed to immobility. The statue was imbibing life; but none in that salon perceived the progress of transformation. Yet as the girl passed along the streets, many of those who met her turned to look again in admiration of her beauty. Her schoolfellows also began to be civil to her; beauty wields a sceptre even in institutions such as that of Passy. But Madame Saincère and Paul only saw the Regina of other days. Paul had said of her, "a reserved child is as disappointing as a violet without perfume," and had ceased to notice her. His nature craved for expansiveness as much as did that of Regina's.

It was all at once that Madame Saincère awoke to the fact that her protégée was a grown-up handsome girl. Her enlightenment came from seeing the eyes of the brothers Roule constantly straying to a particular angle of her salon. "Ah, ha!" thought Madame Saincère, "here is a new trouble. Good heavens! how time passes! I must put some order in this affair. Poor Emile has neither money nor position; it will not do."

Regina was left at Passy for some weeks. The poor girl paled and pined, and Madame Flot, who

hated ill health, wrote to Madame Saincère that Mademoiselle Nolopœus was indisposed, and that the physician of the institution prescribed change of air.

"How in the world am I to marry that girl?" exclaimed Madame Saincère. "The only man I see who has any fortune is Jean Bertrand, and he is too old."

"Tell her school-mistress to look out for a suitable husband for her. The Confessor will be able to help." This was Paul's advice, and yet he had had some experience that girls are not mere bodies without wills or hearts.

Madame Saincère was a Frenchwoman, and, therefore, not at all shocked by Paul's advice. A husband had been found for herself and for Paul's mother by a mutual friend. In short, it is the custom in France for parents and friends to arrange marriages, and some people contend that such a system is preferable to that of letting young people choose for themselves. Madame Saincère did not precisely empower Madame Flot to find a husband for Regina, but the two ladies talked the matter over, and shortly after Madame Flot proposed the "adjoint" of the Mayor of Quimper Carention. "No, no; a thousand times no," returned the Parisian lady. "A girl brought up in Paris could never live in Quimper Carention—as well send her to Cayenne."

A brief correspondence on the necessity of taking into consideration Mademoiselle Nolopœus's marriage ensued between Madame Saincère and the

Comte and Comtesse de Rochetaillée. Always the same refusal to interfere actively in behalf of their granddaughter; always the same assurance that whatever Madame Saincère thought fitting would meet with their approbation.

Regina had, as a matter of course, been often mentioned in the letters between Madame Saincère and Madame Latour de la Mothe, and, truth to say, Paul's mother had begun to have misgivings as to the advisability of the propinquity of her son and her sister's protégée. Though Madame Latour was in despair about Paul's unfortunate attachment, though, as she herself expressed it, she longed after a grandchild as she did after Paradise, she could not put up with anything short of immaculate genealogy on her daughter-in-law's side. Now the child of a runaway match between a noble and a gipsy did not at all meet Madame Latour's views. "Violent passions are hereditary," thought she, "and nothing so hurtful in marriage as passion." When, therefore, Madame Saincère consulted her as to a husband for Regina, Madame Latour de la Mothe at once took the field, and presently wrote thus:

"I have an eligible person in my eye—one who was at the Lycée with Paul—he is a redacteur in the Administration des Hypothèques here; there is also a young officer, at this moment in Algiers, the nephew of Mademoiselle Pagores. She thinks he would be glad to marry if he found a suitable dowry. But I should rather advise Charles Gerard: Paul can tell you what he was as a boy. If you entertain

an idea that he would answer, send Mademoiselle Nolopœus to me that they may see one another—Gerard cannot get leave at present to go to Paris."

Madame Saincère asked Paul about the redacteur.

"He is a good sort of fellow enough," he answered; "not overburdened with talent. I think he would be kind to his wife. I have a faint idea that he is fond of his gun."

Regina was sent for from Passy. When told that Madame Latour had invited her to Juvigny for change of air, the joy in her beautiful eyes, as she turned them gratefully on Paul, smote on his heart. He felt as though he was taking a share in a crime—as if the lamb thanked the butcher. Under this new impression he said to Madame Saincère, "Why be in such a hurry to marry her?—she has plenty of time before her. Do you know she is growing handsome?"

"You forget that I am growing old. She is friendless. What if I were to die?"

And so Regina had some new dresses, and was to be sent off by rail under the care of Madame Latour's milliner, carrying back to Juvigny the Paris summer fashions.

As Regina was waiting on the platform while her chaperone got the tickets, she was startled by seeing Paul enter the station. He had in his hand a small bouquet of roses de Bengale and a lady's travelling bag. He gave bouquet and bag to Regina, saying, "Now you look properly set up for your journey. Embrace my mother for me, and remember to see

the woods—my beautiful woods—they must be in full beauty—full of periwinkles and anemones. I wish I were going also."

Regina had grown crimson with surprise and pleasure, but not a word could she articulate. He shook hands with her as he saw the *modiste* approaching. Then he spoke familiarly with that important citizeness of his native place, as French gentlemen do, showing no recollection that he was a Latour de la Mothe, and she a Madame Pouchot.

The first observation that the milliner made to her charge when they were fairly seated in the railway carriage was, "To think of such a fine young man, and of such a good family, demeaning himself to be a painter!"

CHAPTER IV.

AN OLD TOWN.

Approaching Juvigny by the road from Paris, your eye is at once attracted by a steep hill receding from the opposite side of a slowly flowing river, and crowned by an old town, making a mediæval show of pointed gables, high roofs, ancient towers, and battlemented walls, which wind about this former feudal stronghold, as if still ready for sturdy service, though, in fact, centuries have elapsed since they have been mouldering in peaceful disuse.

This is the Haute Ville, backed by clumps of secular trees, beyond which wide woods spread. At the foot of the hill, in a valley by the side of the river, is the modern commercial Basse Ville. It is here that prosperity has taken up its abode, where the dwellings of official dignitaries and wealthy burghers are to be found. The Basse Ville is the centre of trade; the stir of life is concentrated there. Our business lies in the Upper Town. Crossing a suburb, you begin to ascend by a twisting narrow street, and soon find yourself in a road that follows the turns and bends of one of the walls already mentioned, which brings you to the Haute Ville. In days of yore the trampling of men-at-arms sounded in the now silent streets, and the pageantry of a ducal

court animated these grim gray houses, that stare at you as if they wondered what you meant by being alive.

First you come to an old tower with a white-faced clock, which tolls the hours for the work-people, calling them to toil and giving the signal that their hour for rest is come; further on is a mysterious, repulsive-looking building, so blackened by age that no sunshine can lighten its monotonous hue. This was the castle of the independent dukes of the province, and is now a guard-house. By this time you have reached the top of the ascent. To your right opens a wide street of handsome stone houses, their peaked roofs pierced by dormers. Many of them have the cornices of the window sculptured, together with carved borders running between each range of windows; while others, of still older date, have overhanging beetling eaves and latticed windows, with little octagon panes that but half admit the light of day. You may look up the street and down the street, many and many a day, and see no living creature stirring, till at last you begin to feel that your personal presence is an indiscretion. By the time you have come to the venerable church, a spell not unpleasant has seized upon you. Your pulses beat slowly and calmly. Life's fitful fever subsides, and you recall Leopardi's weird chorus of the dead:

Vivemmo . . . che fummo?
Che fù quel punto acerbo
Che di vita ebbe nome?

But, stranger, there is yet life in the still town. Behind those white window-blinds may be young and pretty eyes intently fixed on you, and curiosity wildly speculating upon the unknown. Whence comes he? Wherefore comes he? Which door is about to open for him?

And when you do pass the threshold of one of those antiquated mansions, the chances are you will find yourself among a group formed of three generations—assuredly you will meet with a kindly welcome.

"I see Madame Latour de la Mothe herself at the door, waiting for you," said the milliner to Regina, as the omnibus entered the Grand Rue. Regina looked out eagerly to catch a sight of Paul's mother.

Madame Latour was like and unlike her sister, Madame Saincère. The features of both were cast in the same mould, but how different the expression! That of the Paris lady was lively and mobile; the provincial dame's face was almost rigid. Every movement of the first was lithe and active, while the other had a stiff, upright carriage: the one was frank and cheerful, the other grave and ceremonious. There was no end to the formalities of the welcome given by Madame Latour to her young visitor, interspersed, to be sure, by little erratic discussions with the complaisant milliner as to the new shapes of bonnets.

One of the great differences between a Parisian and a provincial woman is, that the former purchases little at a time, and nothing in advance, whereas the latter lays in a store, and is addicted to buying bargains; and, as a rule, is never exactly in the reigning fashion. Her best clothes remain too long in the wardrobe.

When Madame Latour saw Regina without her bonnet, she said to herself, "it was strange neither her sister nor her son had ever mentioned the girl's rare beauty." But neither Madame Saincère nor Paul had ever seen Regina looking as she now did in Madame Latour's salon.

The bouquet of roses, the pretty toy of a travelling bag, Paul's unexpected appearance at the station, and his kindly parting words, had produced such a tumult of new-born happiness, as had made all Regina's young blood dance merrily in her veins. She was in that state of feeling which transfigures an exterior; and which, at rare moments, shows us what a human being really is. Madame Latour was seeing Regina in one of these phases. The girl's eyes seemed to love all they rested upon, from her hostess down to the most trivial object in the room.

Paul's paternal house was dull and sombre enough. Not one of the thousand trifles which appear necessary to existence in Paris was to be seen. A dozen large armchairs, and a sofa to match, covered with dark velvet, a gueridon or oval table, a small upright piano, a square rug before the sofa, another before the fireplace, a *jardinière* in each window, a

marble-topped work-table, was all the furniture. Not a book was lying about. At Madame Saincère's every available place was crowded with pamphlets and newspapers; book-cases lined the walls;—*here*, not a semblance of dust, the floors shining like mirrors, the curtains as white as snow, not quite free from the detestable odor of eau de javelle; while in the Rue Blanche it must be owned there was room for improvement as to dust and whiteness. Madame Saincère's walls were hidden by pictures, engravings, photographs. The only ornament on those of Madame Latour de la Mothe was a poor likeness of Paul, hung above the piano; which, of course, stood against a wall in the worst place for an instrument, between a door and a window. Even the "Garniture de Cheminée" was sombre, and yet the room seemed a most pleasant place to Regina.

After she had had some refreshment, Madame Latour took her over the house. It was large enough to accommodate twenty people. It had long broad stone corridors, a great stone staircase with a finely carved balustrade, doors in curious angles, steps here and steps there, a succession of rooms and anterooms, narrow passages running in and out and behind the rooms, the whole forming a tolerable labyrinth for the uninitiated.

"This is my son's private room," said Madame Latour, just unclosing the door of a room on the ground-floor, with windows looking into a well-sized garden. No lack of books or pictures in Paul's sanctum, but Madame Latour did not invite Regina

to go in and inspect either. She was jealous of her right of entry.

The guest-chamber allotted to Regina was exactly over Paul's study. Left there to herself, the girl sat down at the open window, taking in great breaths of the pure mountain air. The Maison Latour stood on the highest point of the steep height on which the Haute Ville was built, and had a view, from the back windows, over the new town and of the hills and valleys on the other side of the river. Regina's enjoyment at this moment was purely physical. The child of the great city had as yet no taste for landscape, but she felt that cheerfulness of spirit which the atmosphere of high regions imparts. There was a small jet d'eau just below her window, sending up its slender crystal column almost to a level with her face. She leaned downward to get sprinkled by its spray, saying aloud, "It is charming, charming; I could stay here forever."

Then, with the inconstancy of her age, she turned from what had so fascinated her to examine the room she was in. On the mantelpiece, instead of a clock, was a glass globe covering a wreath of orange-flowers, reposing on a red velvet cushion. Perhaps not many ladies, so well-born as Madame Latour de la Mothe, would thus exhibit their wedding garland; but with those less elevated in position a superstitious care is taken of this piece of bridal finery.

Regina contemplated the faded flowers with a sort of respect, and possibly wondered if it were her destiny ever to place such on her head. But in truth,

Regina was just arrived at that particular era of a young girl's life when there is an utter scorn for all commonplace reality, matrimony included. On the occasion of a companion's marriage, who has not overheard the bridemaids wondering how "dear Julia could take *such* a man!" Could any of those young creatures draw with their pencil the ideal created by their imagination, what a curious individual they would portray as the one they could take! Three parts angelic, and one diabolic.

Leaving the wreath, Regina took to peeping into the closets, with which all the four walls of the room were honeycombed. Accustomed to the want of space, which forms the great discomfort of Paris apartments, it was with quite a luxurious sensation that she laid out her new dresses at full length, and scattered the contents of her trunks all through the numerous receptacles placed at her service.

When she returned to the salon, Madame Latour looked at her with an uneasy sort of pleasure. What vigorous coloring of the South! what eyes! soft and bright, full of the shy wildness of a young girl—a figure, too, that denoted a rich and powerful organization; the head firmly placed on a throat that had the fulness in the centre of Eastern women; adorably shaped hands and feet! Strange, very strange that Paul should have been so silent as to such beauty!

"Did you see much of my son in Paris?" asked Madame Latour.

"Every other Sunday. I go once a fortnight to

Madame Saincère, and Monsieur Paul always dines in the Rue Blanche on Sundays."

"Ah! he is well?"

"Yes, madame."

"You don't think him looking fagged? He writes me that he works hard, and the smell of oil-paints is abominable for the health; and, besides, he goes a good deal into the world, and the distances in Paris are so great!"

"Monsieur Paul always seems very well."

"How do you amuse yourself on these Sundays?"

"A great many people come to see Madame Saincère, and they talk a great deal about everything. I listen, for it is very amusing."

Madame Latour changed the conversation. She had an unwillingness to continue talking of Paul, and yet there was no other subject that interested her. This reserve, however, was not to last long. She very soon yielded to the pleasure of having a listener, who seemed to be as much interested to be talked to about Paul, as she was to talk of him. Before Regina leaves Juvigny she will have been made acquainted with every incident (save one) of Paul's youth. She will know how he had suffered when cutting his teeth; the doubts and dangers of scarlet fever and measles; his strange child's sayings—those sayings which sound to mothers so like reminiscences of some former existence—of his successes and failures at the Lycée. Regina will have been told all these things, and have become the confidante of Madame Latour's regret, that he

should have quitted the smooth, beaten track of bureaucracy, for the vagabondage of an artist's life.

All that first afternoon Madame Latour and Regina passed in a *tête-à-tête*, attracted the one to the other by the secret sympathy of a common affection. Madame Saincère would scarcely have believed her senses had she seen Regina's winning ways with Madame Latour, or recognized those tender inflections of voice as belonging to her protégée. Madame Saincère would have wondered also that Regina could talk so agreeably, and give such point to her little anecdotes. What perhaps would have struck Paul's aunt more forcibly than it did Paul's mother, was the way in which Paul's name always got mixed up with what the young girl had to say.

Maternal love and vanity blinded and deafened Madame Latour to this circumstance. Probably not quite however, for, in the silence of the night, Madame Latour thought how best to hatch that matrimonial plot which had been the reason for Regina's visit to Juvigny. Even while unable to deny that there would be a comical, or perhaps a tragical disparity between Charles Gerard and such a wife, she wished for the marriage. What she wanted for Paul in matrimony was the same mediocrity she had desired in his career. Regina's beauty alarmed her—it was not an every-day prettiness. Regina's birth was, however, what made the girl so distasteful to her as a possible daughter-in-law. She had the look of a queen, or an actress—of anything but of a steady managing housewife. Madame La-

tour quieted her conscience by saying to it that Regina would need a contrast in her husband as much as Paul did in a wife. Two highflyers could never draw the matrimonial coach safely along the road of life.

"*Mon Dieu*, doesn't one see such contrasts every day?—and the household goes on very well. Passion was far better absent from marriage—at least beforehand: if love came afterward, so much the better; if not, children made up for all that. Her own marriage had been loveless, and she had done very well."

CHAPTER V.

A SOIRÉE IN THE OLD TOWN.

The reason of Regina's visit to Madame Latour de la Mothe was Harlequin's secret, at least in the Ville Haute. How could it be otherwise in a place where such a benevolent spirit of inquiry prevailed that there was no smuggling into it so much as a new bonnet from Paris, unknown to your neighbors?

Regina was the only one in the dark as to why the De Lussons gave a *soirée*, and why she was going to it. She awoke without any presentiments, and once certain she was not at the Passy Institution, she ran to the window, threw it open, and kissed her hand to the *jet d'eau*, sparkling in the morning sun.

There is a small Faubourg St. Germain in the Haute Ville of Juvigny—some half-dozen Legitimist families congregated there after 1830. The days of July completed the ruin of their families, begun by the emigration of '92. From a spirit of loyalty they have abstained from all official employments, and out of respect to their blood they have refrained from commerce. Luckily their families are small. M. de Noircourt's only child, a son, is in the Pope's Nobile Guardia. Young M. de Bris is an officer in the Austrian army; M. de la Tourveille

has only a daughter. Jules de Lusson alone had deserted his cause. Adopting for device that idleness is a crime in a poor man, he had entered a great commercial house in Paris. The consternation in the clique when that event occurred, is not to be described. Madame de Lusson lived more than ever on her knees in the church, and M. de Lusson shut himself up with his flute, which, during that period, was to be heard wailing through all hours of the night. This falling away of a true scion of nobility, was generally imputed by the De Lussons' friends to Jules' companionship with Paul Latour,—a companionship begun in childhood, and fostered by their being next-door neighbors.

The intimacy of children, sooner or later, brings about acquaintance between the parents. Paul, admitted to play with young De Noircourt, De la Tourveille, and the De Lussons, led to Madame Latour de la Mothe, in the course of years, being accepted by the noble clique. An occult sympathy drew her and Madame de Lusson together; they both had suffered disappointment in their only sons, and perhaps there was another bond of union. A faint rumor had once prevailed that Isabelle de Lusson had —not loved—no well-brought-up French young lady ever does that without her parents' permission—well, not loved, but shown a preference for a bourgeois. Isabelle would have been the daughter-in-law after Madame Latour's heart; so much so that Madame Latour would have been ready to make the sacrifice of a *dot*. That hope, however, vanished like many

others; but the friendship between the families continued unbroken, and it was to Madame de Lusson that Madame Latour applied to help her in her matrimonial project for Regina.

It is not a trifle for people living the secluded life of the De Lussons, to have company. Such an event had not occurred since Jules' departure. On the day of the eventful evening, the whole family were on foot at early dawn: the thing should be done handsomely, as they had to invite Charles Gerard and his family, as well as to ask some of the other bourgeois who were in the habit of leaving a card on them every New Year's Day.

You should have seen on this occasion old Lepeaute, the De Lusson factotum, gardener, cook, valet, housemaid.

"I shall serve tea at nine, madame, as we used to do when we were in Sweden."

During the last two years of the Restoration, M. de Lusson had been minister to the court of Stockholm.

"Ah! if we had only some of the same tea, Madame la Comtesse, but in this cursed little hole there is nothing—nothing good," sighed the old man. "Does madame intend to have ice?"

"Why, Lepeaute, what are you dreaming of? Where could you get any?"

"A little from one pastry-cook, and a little from another." Lepeaute did not dare to own that he meant to get some from the hospital under the plea that monsieur was ill. One thing he was

resolved on, that, as the bourgeois were to be admitted, they should see that the nobles were as well *montés* as any of their bankers and spinners. "I can borrow the *sabotière* from the prefecture, and no one the wiser," he concluded.

"Do as you like, but don't bring us into any great expense."

Lepeaute collected all the baronial spoons belonging to the noble clique, and counted heads with Mademoiselle Isabelle, that there should be a sufficiency of cups and glasses.

At eight o'clock the De Lussons' door-bell was rung; all the invited came within half-an-hour of each other. Every one of the guests had a friendly word for Lepeaute; and he in return inquired after their health, sometimes in a condescending tone—but that was for the lower town. He looked as though made up for a part in a play: all his wiry hay-colored hair brushed straight up; his face the color of burned bricks, from his recent exertions in making the ice; his stiff, standing-up collars cutting his poor, big, red ears; a black coat with the buttons between the shoulders; a frilled shirt; and a shrunk white waistcoat.

He complimented all the ladies whom he considered "ladies." Removing Mademoiselle de la Tourveille's cloak, he gave a clack of his tongue expressive of admiration, whispering, "The Parisian demoiselle can't show a complexion like mademoiselle's."

There was a strong resemblance among the Legit-

imists; you would have supposed they were all of one family. The women had narrow, oval faces, large eyes, small mouths *en cœur*, and aquiline noses. The men had the retiring forehead, the prominent eyes—in short, the marked obstinate type of the Bourbons.

The comtesses were shabby enough: their dresses had gone through many a vicissitude; but they, as well as their husbands, had that indescribable air which popular opinion ascribes to a superior rank. The young ladies De Lusson and De la Tourveille, in white muslin, would have been considered elegant anywhere. Associating only among themselves, they had caught the court air of their mothers. The had all of them also a certain air of languor, of melancholy, far from wanting in charm. They gave you the idea of exiles. The hopeless monotony of their lives had eaten away the bloom from their hearts as from their faces. They had learned one sorrowful note. To every proposition the answer was, "What's the use?" Why take a walk into the country to hear the birds' spring song; to see the first bursting into leaf of tree and bush? "What's the use?"

M. de Lusson would try to induce his second daughter to practise the singing learned at the convent. "What's the use?" and so on.

There was only one thing necessary. They must stitch, and stitch, and stitch, or go without clothes.

Isabelle and Lucie, more than pretty at eighteen, at eight-and-twenty had already skins of the hue of old parchment. They were beginning, too, to be

vigilant over their neighbors' doings, seeing evil even in innocent gayety.

As for their father, he had the most provokingly prosperous air imaginable: his face was like a rising sun; his great, blue eyes beamed with contentment behind the crystal of his spectacles; his mouth, now, alas! sans teeth, was ever open, as though he were about to break into song. His walk was cadenced as to some inward measure. Shut M. de Lusson up with his flute—no happier man in creation. He was an example of the advantages of a hobby. It must be owned, however, that it is trying to three pining, disappointed women to live with a man always the personification of satisfaction; and it was no wonder the daughters occasionally gave vent to their indignation.

"So long as papa has that horrid flute, he does not care a straw for our being buried alive as we are. Indeed, he would not miss us if we were actually under the ground."

On which the poor old gentleman would meekly reply—

"Your are right, my dears; I am a great egotist. I do forget everything once I have my flute in my fingers. I have a mind to burn it and all my music. Lucie, my dear, if you would practise you would be a beautiful singer."

"I don't care to be a beautiful singer. What's the use?"

This kindly musical fanatic was a contrast to M. de la Tourveille, who passed his days in smoking

halfpenny cigars, perambulating the town, and blundering as to what he had seen or heard.

M. de Bris was occupied from morning till night painting the coats-of-arms of all his ancestors. Alicie, his daughter, hoped only one thing, wished only for one thing—to escape from the Haute Ville of Juvigny.

Monsieur and Madame de Noircourt found their occupation in religious observances. No one could dress a *reposoir* or make such moss garlands as Madame de Noircourt. The bishop had once mentioned in his sermon, preached in the Haute Ville, the satisfaction he derived from these garlands—proofs of the piety for which Juvigny had always been renowned.

Madame de Noircourt was the most popular of the noble clique. She was a regular attendant on all funerals. Not a *De Profundis* was chanted in St. Joseph's in which her voice did not join. She kept a black alpaca dress, against which sun and rain had in vain combined, for these occasions.

After the nobles came the bourgeois. First appeared Charles Gerard and his mother. Madame Gerard was a nice fresh-looking woman, without any worldly cares, except keeping her maids in order. Her son was short, thin, with a long neck, encircled by a turned-down collar, a large nose, and a complexion which he and his mother had in vain tried to ameliorate. When he spoke, you understood that his striking nose had to answer for his nasal accent. If the faintest of smiles crossed Regina's lips as he

made her a bow, not a shadow of suspicion entered her mind that this slight youth came there with an idea of asking her to allow him to be the lord and master of her destiny. Before the evening was over, she certainly became aware that she was undergoing his scrutiny, but she had not even the grace to blush when she met his eye, so indifferent was she.

Lepeaute, giving a glance round the salon to make sure that all the expected guests were arrived, made a second appearance with a tray of tea. As he passed the young ladies, he said in a stage whisper, "Mesdemoiselles, go and bring the cakes."

As soon as the tea was over, preparations were made for a musical evening.

In France, as in England, there are found willing and unwilling martyrs to music, and French young ladies tremble and sing out of tune, and lose command of their fingers just as their English sisters do.

When it came to Regina's turn, she came to a dead-stop after the first two bars, and it was only her vehement desire to please Madame Latour which enabled her to make a new start and get to the end. After her trial was over, she was able to look about her, and enjoy the novelty of being at a party.

All at once, under cover of some cadenza of M. de Lusson's flute, a lady addressed Regina—

"You must find Juvigny very dull after Paris." The voice was harsh and staccato—not at all one in harmony with the fair face of the speaker, for she was very fair, with luxuriant golden hair. Was she pretty? that was a question often mooted, and

answered as often contradictorily. Regina, for instance, decided at first, yes—then, no, all through the evening. Perhaps the secret of the charm which she undoubtedly possessed, lay in her power of exciting the imagination. One of her admirers had described her as a *charmeuse*. At this moment she simply startled Regina, who said timidly, "I beg your pardon, did you speak to me?"

"I said that you would find Juvigny dull after Paris."

"Being at school at Passy is not living in Paris," said Regina, scarcely liking the tone in which she was addressed.

"You are then still at school?"

"Yes, madame."

"Are there many girls as old as you in the school?"

"No, I am one of the eldest."

All this time the lady's eyes roved over Regina's person with intense curiosity.

"You know M. Paul Latour, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes! very well," returned Regina, hastily.

"So do I; he is almost my oldest friend; we played together as children. I used to live in that old house just below Madame Latour's. There's only a year's difference in our age."

"He looks much older than you, but that's owing to his beard, perhaps," observed Regina.

"Is he much at Madame Saincère's?"

"I dare say he is, but I only see him every other Sunday when I go home."

"You call Madame Saincère's house your home?"

"Yes, madame."

There was a short interval of silence while Mademoiselle Lucie sang that pretty French song, "Pourquoi?" popular in her mother's youth.

"Oh, how sweet!" exclaimed Regina. "I wish she would sing again."

"Do you? her voice has lost all its freshness. What an old maid Isabelle looks! Does Monsieur Latour talk much of Juvigny?"

"He never scarcely talks to me, but he came to the station the morning I was coming here, and he told me to be sure and see the woods."

"I don't imagine Madame Latour is a great walker. If you like I will call on you to-morrow, and take you to the *Vierge du hêtre*."

"Oh, thank you! I should be so glad, if Madame Latour will allow me."

"Very well. Expect me about two o'clock. My name is Madame Aubry."

Madame Aubry's attentions to Regina gave rise to many a significant smile and whisper, but their conversation was stopped by a scream and a crash. Lepeaute, who had never been known to commit a similar crime in his life, let fall the tray with the ice —cut his own fingers and Madame Latour's foot. The fact was he had been trying to overhear what Madame Gerard was saying to Madame Latour, for Lepeaute knew as well as every one else why Monsieur Charles Gerard had been asked to meet the young lady from Paris.

"There's an end of all harmony for this evening,"

sighed M. de Lusson, and put his flute back into its case. "How in heaven's name did Lepeaute come to be so awkward?"

As they returned home, Regina told Madame Latour of Madame Aubry's proposal for the morrow, adding, "Her face is quite familiar to me. I can't think where I could have seen her before."

Madame Latour replied, "Some accidental likeness—for you certainly never could have met her before." Madame Latour made no objection to the walk to the *Vierge du hêtre*. It was convenient to her that Regina should be out of the way on the following afternoon, as Madame Gerard had proposed to call and have some private conversation as to their matrimonial project.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHADOW OF EVIL.

THE next day was all sunshine; the air full of the sound of bells, brought by the gentle breeze just stirring the leaves of the great elms of the Paquis, through which Madame Aubry and Regina were passing. They turned to the right, up a path with broad grassy margins, dotted with tufts of wild thyme and sage, which, trod upon, sent forth whiffs of their aromatic perfume. The birds had done singing for this year—their second broods were out in the world; but every now and then a set of gossiping restless martins made sweeping curves across the blue sky, their breasts shining like silver as they glanced in the sunshine in their downward dive to the earth.

"I must try to know one tree from another," thought Regina, and forthwith asked Madame Aubry how such and such a tree was called.

Adeline replied shortly, as a person does who is thinking how best to broach some other subject.

Regina stared intently at the forked tails of the vivacious birds, and picked a leaf that she might make sure of knowing a martin and an elm again.

They had passed the space between the Paquis and the wood; they were now in the cloister-like

alley that stretches right across from one highway to another; the thickly interwoven branches overhead shut out the sun; but baffled there, the rays penetrated right and left—now touching the bole of a beech, or dancing in and out of the small-leaved periwinkle which spreads so rich and thick a carpet in the woods of Juvigny.

"And this tree, madame?" again questioned Regina.

"That—oh! that is a lime."

Madame Aubry watched Regina gathering the wild-flowers that grew by the path. "Are you studying botany, that you are so taken up with trees and weeds?" she asked, in the same dry staccato voice in which she had first addressed Regina.

"No, madame, but Monsieur Paul advised me to study nature."

"I did not know that Monsieur Latour was professor of Natural History to a girl's school."

"He is not a professor that I know of; but as I am fond of drawing, he advised me one day to sketch from nature."

"He is very kind to you then?"

Regina hesitated for a minute before she replied.

"He is always very polite to every one: he never talks to *me;* only, when he knew I was coming here, he spoke about my sketching and advised me to go to the woods."

"We used to be great friends—playfellows as I told you last evening. I thought him altered for the worse when he came here last—giving himself

great airs — grown quite conceited. Everybody says, you know, that Isabelle de Lusson was in love with him. And that horrid peaked-beard of his, in imitation of Vandyke, does he still wear it?"

Regina said, "Yes," paused, and then spoke in defence of Madame Latour's son.

"None of Madame Saincère's friends think him conceited," said she. "Dr. M—— and all the other clever people who come to Madame Saincère's are very fond of him."

"Don't be angry with me, Mademoiselle Nolopœus. I know that Monsieur Latour is held by many people to be perfection. Surely some one told me his aunt had found a feminine perfection to match him?"

"I never heard that—but it may be true—for, of course, I should not be told till everything was settled."

If ever a lady was tempted to beat another, Madame Aubry was so tempted at that moment. She positively hated Regina for the cool way in which she agreed to the possibility of Paul's marriage. It seemed as if done on purpose to vex her. And of what was the girl made, to live so much in his society and yet remain so indifferent?

Adeline Aubry had no conception of the feeling of discomfort she was giving Regina; and just as little had Regina any insight into the motive prompting every word of her companion. If by some sudden revelation Regina had learned that the woman by her side, wife and mother, loved Paul Latour—was

frantically jealous of him, was at that moment in actual clandestine correspondence with him, it is more than probable that Mademoiselle Nolopœus would have committed that greatest of misdemeanors in a French young lady, left her chaperone and returned alone to Madame Latour. Regina was at that stage of life when all the virtues and the most heroic sacrifices seem possible—when there is no indulgence for error. Regina innocently believed that Paul was an object of dislike to Madame Aubry, and that, therefore, it would be better to talk of some one or something else. By some spell or other, however, the conversation always got back to Paris. *Dove il dente duole, la lingua batte*, says the subtle Italian proverb.

When they reached the end of the walk, the shrine of the Virgin of the beech, Regina was thoroughly exhausted.

"I suppose it is my not being accustomed to walking," she observed to account for her fatigue. She could not guess the strain that want of sympathy imposes on our every faculty.

They sat down on one of the benches which surround a patch of grass, from the centre of which rises a magnificent beech. On its smooth, straight stem is fastened, about five feet from the ground, a glass case containing diminutive wax figures of the Virgin and Child. Above and below this shrine, round and round the trunk of the tree, are all kinds of ex-votos, offerings of the poor, wedding-wreaths, funeral garlands, rosaries of black or white or brown

beads, small leaden crosses, knots of faded ribbon, nosegays—some withered, others freshly gathered—chaplets of ivy and cypress, little framed pictures of saints.

"I should like to try and make a sketch of this place," said Regina; "but I have not brought my book. Have you a scrap of paper, madame?"

"Nothing that will do for a drawing."

"It is to copy that prayer nailed on the tree."

"A half-mad woman wrote it. I suppose they teach you to be very devout at your school? It's becoming quite the fashion to be pious."

"Madame Flot is very particular about our going to mass," said Regina; "but we don't fast much."

"Oh, indeed!" returned Madame Aubry, with a slight laugh.

Another long silence, broken by Madame Aubry's asking, "What is the subject of your thoughts, mademoiselle?"

"I was thinking of the meaning of some parts of that prayer, wondering what the dangers of the world could be for ladies and gentlemen. I understand that poor people can be tempted to do wrong, but not persons like us."

"I am no philosopher," said Madame Aubry. "Pray how old are you, mademoiselle?"

"I shall be eighteen next month."

"I should not have guessed you to be more than sixteen. At eighteen I was as much a woman as I am now."

As she spoke thus, there came over Madame Aubry

a startling perception of what she really was now. Her youth on the wane—a loveless wife. Courted and admired, not esteemed, her whole wealth a love built too probably on a foundation of sand.

"One of these days," said an inner voice, "he will marry; his mother will force him to do so; and what will become of me?"

She turned a pair of fierce eyes on Regina. "And this girl has her whole future before her. She may love, and be loved in return. Ah! if I could only go back a few years—stand again at the dawn of womanhood!"

How clearly the poor soul perceived the opportunities she had let slip by. It was not her love for Paul that so galled her spirit; that had in it, as yet, no wounds for her woman's pride; he held her in a reverence as sincere as that he had for his mother. It was, that she felt she had no right to that reverence—it was his free gift, and she winced as she thought that the hour might, nay, must come, when he would couple her name with all the ungracious things that are said and written of women who love as they should not.

Often, even in these present days, when no eye was on her, she paled and reddened, and shrunk as from a cruel probe, when reading or hearing of similar cases to her own. She had never had any strength except in the cause of evil.

Regina's pure earnest eyes acted on her soul like the touch of Ithuriel's spear. She saw what a weary length of road she had traversed since her own un-

gracious youth. All her blunders and weaknesses started up before her. No undoing what was done; no going back, no going back!

The heart has prophetic warnings. Madame Aubry, from the first moment of seeing Regina, had felt jealous. At this moment a dread, sharp as the sudden fear of death, made her thrill from head to foot.

"Never—no, never will I give him up," she said half aloud.

And the sun shone brightly on her and Regina, making every character of the prayer against temptation more visible, gilding the ex-votos, surrounding as with a glory those signs of human suffering and human faith, and children gambolled, shrieking with laughter, and none saw the shadow of evil by the side of the woman and the girl.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUTH AND AGE.

Madame Latour de la Mothe did not immediately inform Regina that M. Charles Gerard had made her a proposal of marriage. She first wrote to Madame Saincère to inquire whether Mademoiselle Nolopœus was to be married under the *régime dotal*, or that of a *communauté de biens*. Madame Saincère replied—"The *régime dotal*, certainly." Madame Latour wrote again to say that the Gerards insisted on a *communauté de biens:* that it was a usual arrangement in their rank of life.

A further delay ensued while Madame Saincère communicated with the Comte and Comtesse de Rochetaillée. It had become absolutely necessary that they should state what would be Regina's future heritage—what they were willing to give on her marriage, and also if they would accept M. Charles Gerard for her husband.

The answer was in Madame de Rochetaillée's own hand. Her consent, and that of Monsieur de Rochetaillée, would be given to any one approved of by Madame Saincère. Regina's legal inheritance was a hundred thousand francs (4,000*l.*) In the event of her marrying, the half of that sum should be

advanced. Not a word of interest added for their granddaughter.

Upon this, Madame Saincère begged Madame Latour, before agreeing to the Gerards' conditions, to ascertain if Regina was well disposed toward the match; there was no necessity for forcing her inclinations; young men in search of a *dot* were plentiful.

When it actually came to the point of broaching the subject to the young girl, Madame Latour was astonished to discover in herself a repugnance to the task. And yet it must be done, for the Gerards were impatient for an answer, as failing Regina, they had another person in view.

Some evenings after the walk to the *Vierge du hêtre*, the lady and her guest were seated on the terrace, in the garden. The sun, a great ball of fire, seemed balancing itself on the top of the opposite hill: its last crimson rays came streaming across the purple woods, enveloping Regina's whole figure in a misty radiance. A sweet joy lit up her face. Not a flaw in the smooth clear skin—the cheeks of the color of the sunny side of a ripe peach. The large dark eyes, full of a daughter's love, were raised to Madame Latour.

Regina was talking with great animation in answer to some remark of Madame Latour's:—"Oh, yes, I mean to try and write a book some day. Alexander the Great interests me more than Charlemagne. I am sure he would be a capital hero for a romance. So young, and brave, and handsome!"

How was Madame Latour to offer Charles Gerard to a young lady whose ideal at that instant was Alexander of Macedon?

"Very well, as you say, for a romance, my dear; but my experience has taught me that happiness is much more likely to be had with common-place people than with heroes, or indeed with men celebrated in any way. Every one who knows anything of life, Regina, will tell you that great warriors, or great poets or painters, make the worst husbands. Women who mean to be happy, should avoid anything like genius. Napoleon or Goethe were never meant to be husbands. No, no, my dear. Glory and fame are terrible rivals to a wife."

Regina said—

"Still it must be delightful to be proud of a husband: to see him looked up to, and to hear him praised."

"And if this paragon should hold you as nothing?"

"He could not prevent my belonging to him, and being glad to serve him. It must be such a happiness to do something for those one cares for."

"My poor child, you know nothing about the matter: that sort of love is good between mother and infant."

"I am nothing to you, and yet I am so happy to be with you!" was the reply.

Madame Latour winced, and then a suspicion seized on her. She had been more than once loved by young ladies for Paul's sake. She turned her eyes from the loving face before her, and answered—

"Reality is so different from what you imagine, Regina. My dear, I wish you would believe me."

Regina's eyes fastened on those of Madame Latour with an expression of anxiety.

"My dear"—and the lady's voice became very persuasive—"My dear, *do* believe me. *No* man is worth any sacrifice."

The rich color in Regina's cheeks paled. She said—

"I should like to talk to you of my father and mother. I never have to any one since they died." Her voice was husky, and she put her hand to her throat as if something pained her.

Madame Latour, with a sudden softening of the heart, stooped forward and kissed Regina. The girl, holding the lady's face close to her own, whispered—

"My mother, when she was near dying, told me never to forget that my father had made her very happy: that she had never once been sorry for being his wife; and I know now that my mother gave up a great deal for his sake."

That evening there was no talk of Monsieur Charles Gerard. Madame Latour determined to choose the midday hours for announcing his proposal. Sunsets were too suggestive of heroes of romance.

The next morning she told Regina, in a dry matter-of-fact manner, that Monsieur Charles Gerard, one of the young gentlemen that she had met at Madame de Lusson's soirée, had made her a proposal of marriage.

"Why for me?" asked the amazed Regina.

"Because he admires you. Listen patiently to me for five minutes. He is a young man of good family; his mother has brought him up admirably he is fond of reading; is exceedingly well-bred; has no brothers or sisters. His income and yours would give you twelve thousand francs a year—affluence in Juvigny. By-and-by, between the increase of salary which his advancement insures, and your inheritance and his, you will be extremely well off, and able to live in Paris. He is an amiable, steady young man. No one knows that better than Paul. Madame Saincère writes me, that your grandparents would approve of the match."

"Oh, madame!" exclaimed Regina, clasping her hands, "I am not obliged to marry him, am I?"

"No—certainly, but I advise you to reflect before you refuse him. My dear Regina, there are some disadvantages on your side—not your fault, my poor child,—but your mother's *mésalliance*, and the persistency of Monsieur and Madame de Rochetaillée in not acknowledging you, may make many persons object to receiving you into their family. It would be such a comfort to all your friends to have you settled. You must marry some day, and you may never have so good an offer. You would be near me also; not entirely among strangers."

"Is Monsieur Gerard really a friend of M. Paul's?"

"Yes; Paul likes him very much. They were at the Lycée together. Take till to-morrow to think

the matter over." And Madame Latour patted Regina on the back, and smiled on her encouragingly.

It is a fact that Madame Latour had become quite anxious for this marriage; a good many small causes had contributed to make her so. First, the undefined fear that Regina might attract Paul. She was not the wife for such as Paul. She was too excitable, too passionate, too little of a bourgeoise—gipsy blood and noble blood were too evident in her; and, in addition, the lady was unwilling to fail in what she had undertaken. Lastly, she truly considered it an eligible marriage for the girl.

Regina did reflect a little on the matter. Her first impulse had been to give an unconditional negative; then she was seized by a dread of being separated from the only friends she could boast of, for had not Madame Latour declared that she *must* marry some day? Now if she accepted M. Charles Gerard, she should be near to Madame Latour, and sure of sometimes seeing M. Paul. That certainly was an inducement, and she lost herself for a little in a reverie about M. Paul's coming to see her. But the next morning it appeared that even the pleasure of M. Paul's expected visits had failed to reconcile her to the reality of being M. Gerard's wife, for she told Madame Latour that she had tried very hard to make up her mind to marry him, but she could not. She was so sorry to "disappoint madame." She hoped "madame would not be angry with her."

"I have no right to be angry," said Madame Latour, "but I regret your decision; I feel that you are throwing away an excellent chance of happiness."

"I am very sorry, madame, but indeed I cannot take him; I do not like him at all, he is so little, and so very ugly." Regina said this with tears in her eyes.

"I did not know that husbands were chosen by measurement," was the vexed reply.

It was, however, useless to argue the matter further, and when Madame Latour wrote to inform Madame Saincère of Mademoiselle Nolopœus's refusal of Monsieur Charles Gerard, Paul's mother could not help expressing a fear that Regina had inherited her mother's romantic nature.

Madame Saincère, in reply, took a more liberal view of Regina's conduct. She said that she thought the refusal indicated delicacy of feeling. So many girls of seventeen were ready to marry any one, in order to have the power of doing as they pleased, and of being called Madame; whereas Regina was quite aware that in refusing M. Gerard she would have to return to school and school discipline. Regina had better be sent back to Paris as soon as a suitable opportunity occurred.

Regina was very low-spirited at the idea of leaving Juvigny. This puzzled Madame Aubry, to whom she paid a parting visit.

"You must be delighted to go back to Paris?" said Madame Aubry in her driest voice.

"No; I am very, very sorry to leave Juvigny. I have never been so happy in my life as here."

"I shouldn't have thought your hostess a very lively companion," said Adeline, in a low voice.

"It has never been the least dull. It has seemed like home."

"And your drawings; the sketches you were to do for M. Latour?"

"I was not to do them for him—it was to teach myself."

"I suppose you will show them to him?"

"If he asks me, but I dare say he will not."

"Well, if he inquires how we get on here without the light of his countenance, be sure and tell him we thrive tolerably, and that the sun warms and the moon shines just as they did in days of yore."

Regina's heart was very full when she took leave of Madame Latour. It was at the station. In France friends are not allowed to accompany you to the carriages.

"You are sure you have your ticket safe, and your keys?"

"Yes, madame; I will not detain you longer. I will go to the waiting-room." Regina received Madame Latour's parting kiss in silence, and disappeared into the *salle d'attente.*

Madame Latour was already in the outer court of the station when she heard some one running behind her. It was Regina.

"Oh, madame! forgive me."

"My dear girl, you will miss the train!"

Regina's arms were round Madame Latour's neck. "Love me a little," she whispered.

"I do love you a great deal."

"*Pauvre petite — a-t-elle du cœur?*" muttered a peasant-woman who saw this scene.

CHAPTER VIII.

BREAKERS AHEAD.

Regina found that her terrors as to Madame Saincère's displeasure, or that of M. Paul, on account of her rejection of Charles Gerard were quite imaginary. She had expected to be questioned and lectured by the one, and that the other would view her with angry eyes; and neither the one thing nor the other happened. It was her first lesson as to how we exaggerate our own importance. She never even found a favorable opportunity for giving Madame Aubry's message to M. Latour. As for her sketches, he had clearly forgotten that he had ever advised her to draw.

Paul Latour at that particular moment was engaged in a sharp correspondence with an angry woman. The sight of Regina had filled Angeline Aubry with distrust and fears, and she wrote Paul letters, such as only jealous and violent women can write. It was, of course, useless for him to protest that he was utterly indifferent to Regina—that if she were beautiful he had never perceived that she was so—that he took no interest in the girl; and, in fact, that he should be glad of any circumstance which should deliver Madame Saincère from any further charge of her.

Madame Aubry put faith in his protestations for

half a day; but by night-time her suspicion had raised its hydra head, hissing horrible doubts of his truth into her excited brain. Once she wrote him that she had prayed—fervently prayed—that he might take the small-pox and be rendered hateful to the sight of every woman but herself. The following post brought him a recantation and a pathetic prayer for forgiveness. He was free—he must do whatever he thought most conducive to his happiness—if to marry and forget her would be best for him, so let it be. Another day there came a wild incoherent rhapsody, imploring him to do anything and everything *but* marry. She could endure any suffering rather than that of knowing another woman had a right over him—it would kill her. These letters were written during the first week after Regina's return to the Rue Blanche. It was clear that Paul still loved Adeline, for he was neither angry nor annoyed by her letters.

At the end of eight days Adeline came to Paris. She went to the house of some friend as silly as herself, and there ensued a series of stormy interviews and passionate scenes. No wonder Paul forgot to inquire into Regina's progress in drawing.

Quite as angry, if not so vehement as those of Madame Aubry, were the letters his mother now sent him. She assured him that Monsieur Aubry was the only person in Juvigny ignorant that there was a correspondence kept up between him and Madame Aubry—the only one unsuspicious of the motive of Madame Aubry's visit to Paris.

Madame Latour recapitulated, with all the fervor of a mother alarmed for the safety of her son, the dangers of the position. "Madame Aubry was so flighty, so careless, so daring—it needed but one of her customary imprudences, and M. Aubry would be as well informed as his neighbors of what was going on. Paul must remember that the carrying on of a clandestine correspondence with another man's wife was punishable by law. It would be his mother's death-blow to have him dragged into a court of justice for an offence of such a nature."

Naturally, Madame Latour wrote to Madame Saincère to use her influence with Paul.

Madame Saincère was nothing loth (what woman ever is?) to give advice. Paul, on his side, irritated and excited by the two angry women he had to contend with, and something uneasy also, was not sorry to talk the matter over with a kindly woman of the world, interested, and yet not too much interested in him. No friend so agreeable for a man as a clever good woman, who has renounced all pretensions to youth.

Madame Saincère had seen too much—known too much—to fall into common-place abuse of Madame Aubry. She never once said—"She ought not;" on the contrary, she spoke mercifully of the woman—severely of the man. "Whatever a man suffers," she said to Paul, "the woman is always the real victim; it is she alone whom the laws of society visit severely—have mercy on her, Paul! After all, you cannot with truth call yourself unhappy; you

eat, drink, sleep, enjoy music, books, the theatre, tolerably well without her; it will be downright egotism in you to lead this poor thing to destruction."

"But what *am I to do?* I have done my best to make her understand the perils of her position. Not a morning for the last month that I have not awoke with the presentiment of some horrid catastrophe."

"I will go to Juvigny and see her," said his aunt.

Paul grew very red.

"She is here in Paris."

"That makes it easier for me," replied Madame Saincère, quietly. "Find an opportunity of telling her that I am going to pay her a visit. It will look as if all was right, if your aunt goes to see her."

When Madame Saincère saw Adeline Aubry she ceased to wonder at what her sister called Paul's infatuation. "*Jolie comme un demon*," she said to herself, as the fair sylph-like figure came forward to meet her. Madame Saincère had expected coldness, reserve, sulkiness, anything but to find the arms of this dainty creature round her neck—and she had kissed the cheek presented to her before she well knew what she was about. They sat down, Adeline's hand clasping that of Paul's aunt.

"Don't scold me," began Madame Aubry, with a sweet mutinous pout. She wished to charm Madame Saincère. "I confess I am wrong, very wrong *now;* but it was not wrong, you know, ten years ago."

"Ten years!" repeated Madame Saincère, "why you don't look more than twenty."

"I am twenty-eight. *He* is always calling himself old; not very polite when he knows I am only one year younger than him. I suppose he means me to understand that he thinks me old."

Madame Saincère, who had taken quite a tragical view of Adeline's situation, who was prepared for tears and lamentations, was disconcerted by the lightness of this speech. It might have been made by some foolish girl, not by a woman who, had she possessed either sense or feeling, could not have spoken with such *sans-façon* of Paul and herself.

"And yet she has not the look of a fool," thought Madame Saincère, seeking how best to introduce what she had sought the interview to say.

"I see by your face you think ill of me," said Adeline, suddenly.

Madame Saincère seized the ball thrown to her. —"Honestly, I disapprove of you; it was not, however, merely to tell you disagreeable truths that I am here. If I knew nothing else than what scandal says, I should certainly not have come to see you; but I have been told what gives me an interest in you. I am aware that you are without any real friend, surrounded by foolish companions who, either from idleness or love of mischief, would push you over the precipice, on the edge of which you are standing."

Adeline changed color rapidly, and said, in her sharpest staccato voice, "I have done nothing wrong."

Madame Saincère said, "Your corresponding with

my nephew is wrong. Do you never think of the possibility of a discovery?"

"I take care of that; I always receive his letters myself."

"And the postman, of course, observes that you do so. Let me tell you that wrong-doing always betrays itself. Your husband possibly may never find out all that is going on; he must nevertheless have some vague suspicions."

"Not my husband," said Adeline, shortly.

"Then he is full of confidence in you," went on Madame Saincère. "Passion, I know, is without conscience, so I will not appeal to your conscience. But has no one else ever spoken to you about Paul?"

"My mother-in-law once scolded me about him."

"Ah! then she at all events has suspicions; she may look in your desk or your work-table any day, for, I lay my life, his letters are in the unsafest place. Since Eve ate that unlucky apple, nothing has caused more evil in the world than scribbling. My dear, you must give up this correspondence."

Adeline shook her head.

"What's the use of it?" asked Madame Saincère.

"It gives me emotions."

Madame Saincère lost patience. "And you risk the lives of two men—you forget your children's welfare—and all for the sake of having emotions!"

Adeline sat silent.

"I cannot tell you how much I despise you," went on Madame Saincère, her blue eyes flashing, and her voice rising. "And you call *that* love! Oh! Ma-

dame Aubry, I have more respect for those unfortunate creatures who ply their unholy trade to gain their bread, than for women like you, who play kitten-like with men, for the sake of having emotions."

Adeline's face was turned toward the speaker, her eyes dilated and her lips apart. There was a look of fear mingling with some other feeling—was it hatred or cruelty? was there an instinctive wish for revenge?

Presently she said, in a low voice, "I am not the least offended at what you say. Do you suppose you would have had the opportunity of lecturing me to-day about these letters, if Paul had had the same love for me I have for him? He says, and I say, his mother prevented his marrying me; it was not so. He had told me he loved me; and I had told him I loved him. He had only to have said, 'Wait,' and I would have waited; but he wrote me a long rigmarole, half lamentation, half sorrow, but the main point was—to give me up. I was so stung, that I married. It was no use; I could not get rid of my love for him. I heard that he had forgotten me, and yet I loved him. Then he came back to Juvigny, and we met—not by my will, by accident. One day he even bid me be on my guard against him."

"He did what was right."

"If he really loved me, he ought to accept the responsibility. Do you think I should care what I suffered for him? I love him in spite of being aware that he is quite capable of calculating the consequences of his actions. My dear madame, Paul can

take very good care of himself; he will never write a word that can compromise him, even were M. Aubry an Othello."

"You silly, silly woman!" said Madame Saincère; "you ought to offer up a thanksgiving night and morning for Paul's unselfishness. Have you lived all these years without using your eyes and ears? Are you nearly thirty, and been mixing with men and women for the last ten years, and not observed that all passion dies out of itself, that there is no wild beast so cruel as a man *cannot help* being to the woman who has sacrificed herself to him, and whom he has ceased to love? Women, in their relations with men, require the support of society; put yourself beyond its pale, and being passed under saws and harrows of iron, is nothing to the tortures you you will have to endure."

Adeline would have been a shining exception among young women, had she been convinced by Madame Saincère's words. That she was not, her reply showed:—"And yet one hears of men being slaves for life."

Madame Saincère was a thoroughly good woman. She had helped more than one pilgrim on the weary road of life. She had seen so much that she had become as pitiful of mental as great physicians are of bodily malady. They feel none of the disgust and horror with which the uninitiated shrink from disease. Neither did Madame Saincère draw back from the sick in mind or heart. In spite of her quickness of temperament, she was patient with all

sorts of error—except when it took the shape of meanness. She had certainly lost the prepossession in Adeline's favor which she had conceived on first seeing her; but she was as much in earnest to do her good at the end as at the beginning of the interview. She was also a wise woman,—she made use of the remedies she thought most calculated to effect a cure, without first consulting any pharmacopœia to see if her medicines were orthodox or not.

Morality—religion—duty. Adeline would have scoffed at all three. Love, in such breasts as hers, is very audacious,—it enters the temple and dethrones God himself. Madame Saincère intuitively knew this. Laying one hand on Adeline's shoulder, and raising the pretty little face to hers, she said:

"Your great fear, then, is the loss of Paul's love. I will give you an infallible charm to retain it. Relinquish all intercourse with him, and he will never cease to regret you; none other will ever occupy your place in his heart. Believe an old woman who has seen many sad things, but none sadder than the conclusion of such affairs as this you have begun. I dare say you do often feel life tedious and colorless; it is a state of feeling into which young married women who can afford to be idle often fall when the hopes and illusions of the girl have vanished, and the novelty of marriage has vanished. You are at the most critical stage of your life. Travel—change the scene. Your husband is rich; ask him for a tour in Switzerland—Italy—anywhere. And remember this: happiness is never in the possession of

what we covet; it flies our approach as does the horizon."

Madame Saincère withdrew quickly, so as not to let the effect of her words be diminished by discussion.

A week after, Madame Aubry left a card with P. P. C. on it, in the Rue Blanche; and Madame Saincère took it for granted that her conversation with Adeline had brought forth good fruit.

It remained a conjecture; for neither Paul nor Adeline admitted her further into their confidence.

CHAPTER IX.

"IT'S OF NO USE, MADAME."

Regina's refusal of Gerard threw Madame Saincère into some perplexity. What was to be done with her? She could not remain a permanent pupil at Passy. Once more Madame Saincère tried to interest the De Rochetaillées for their granddaughter. She wrote them a warm description of Regina's beauty, dwelling at length on the love and esteem felt for her by all those who had had any share in her education. Regina would be an ornament to any family; and Madame Saincère prayed the grandfather and grandmother to remember what a disadvantage the want of the countenance of her mother's family must be to the innocent girl. It would need only their recognition to place her in a position to make such a marriage as would obliterate all trace of poor Blanche's *mésalliance.*

There was no delay in the reply—written by the notary.

The Comte and Comtesse de Rochetaillée were gratified by the satisfactory accounts they had received of Mademoiselle Nolopœus, from one they so highly respected as Madame Saincère. Monsieur and Madame de Rochetaillée entreated that lady not to withdraw her protection from the young wo-

man, and to make any arrangement she thought fit as to a home for Mademoiselle Nolopœus.

This letter Madame Saincère showed to Regina. The cold measured words in which her grand-parents, her natural protectors, threw her on the mercy of strangers, fell heavy as stones on the poor girl's heart. But perhaps what inflicted the sharpest, most stinging pain, was Madame Saincère asking her what place she would prefer.

"If you do not like to remain as a parlor-boarder with Madame Flot, it would not be difficult to find you a home in some respectable family."

As she listened to these words a sudden faintness seized on Regina. She was then doomed to be a vagabond. Bravely hiding the wound she had received, she answered—

"Let me remain with Madame Flot. She has always treated me well. I don't think she would wish to force me to go among strangers."

Madame Saincère winced.—On first reading the De Rochetaillées' unfeeling letter, her impulse had been to invite Regina to stay with her; but what with the dread of losing the tranquillity of her life, by assuming the charge of *à demoiselle à marier*, and the loud opposition of a chorus of cousins (French people are as rich in cousins as the Scotch); backed, too, by warnings from Madame Latour, Madame Saincère had decided, not without a little remorse, against the promptings of her good heart.

She said to herself—

"I am an egotist, but I have bought my quiet

dear enough. Ah! yes; if any one has a right to wrap themselves in a cloak of selfishness, I have. I gave up all, and received nothing."

At the end of one of these painful half-hours of reminiscenes, when memory suddenly presents us with a list of our failures, and with a grim picture of past hopes and illusions, Madame Saincère said—

"After all, by trying to better things, we often make them worse;" and wrote to Madame Flot to propose Regina as a parlor-boarder. As the offer for the accommodation required was liberal, there was no difficulty in carrying out the arrangement.

Not long after Regina had been installed at Passy as *demoiselle en chambre*, Paul one evening startled his aunt by saying—

"I really believe I have found you the eligible husband you are always invoking for Mademoiselle Regina. I understand her having refused Charles Gerard. I shall have a very poor opinion of her taste and judgment if she says no to Felix Desjardins. He is one of the finest fellows I know. Large-hearted and large-minded. He has made his way at the bar by dint of talent and perseverance; for he had neither connections nor interest to back him, and now he stands in the foremost rank of our rising advocates."

"But what makes you imagine such a man would ever think of Regina? He might have a wide choice among girls with more fortune, and none of her disadvantages."

"It is exactly what you consider her disadvan-

tages that have attracted him. He has a dread of a wife's family. It was hearing him say, that if ever he ventured on marriage it should be with an orphan, which made me mention your protégée to him. Her story has touched his heart, and he begged me to propose him to you."

"And what is he like? Merit and goodness do not carry the day with girls. An angel with a bald head does not appear an angel to them."

"Desjardins has plenty of hair and a fine intelligent countenance. He is not a man of fashion, but his manners are good."

"Girls have a horrible facility for falling in love with idle good-looking men," said Madame Saincère, with considerable emphasis. "However, let us give my gipsy another chance of having a reasonable man for her husband. She will be here, as usual, next Sunday. Invite your friend for that day. Regina, of course, will know nothing of why he comes."

Desjardins came, and was exceedingly struck by Regina's beauty.

"She is too handsome," he said to Paul. "And one of my crotchets is, that I should like to be the only man to see beauty in my wife. I am as jealous as a Spaniard. You never told me she was beautiful. Well named Regina. She is the beau ideal of a young queen. Such innocence, simplicity, and beauty I never before saw combined."

Paul laughed.

"Habit must have dulled my senses, for, I confess, I never discovered anything much out of the com-

mon in Mademoiselle Nolopœus—a pretty brunette, certainly; but I am not an admirer of dark women."

"And you call yourself a painter," said Desjardins, with a shrug.

Paul repeated this conversation to his aunt.

"The man is positively in love."

"And I don't believe she would recognize him if she met him in the street," replied Madame Saincère. "As he has a gray hair or two visible, I dare say she takes him for an old man."

The following Sunday Regina was again in the Rue Blanche, and so was Desjardins. He endeavored to draw her into conversation, his expressive face revealing all the admiration he dared not put into words.

Paul's eyes, on this occasion, were suddenly opened to see that Regina was in truth a superb Southern beauty, with eyes that looked as though it would be difficult to sound their depth; plenty of character visible in face and form, as she sat tranquilly enduring Desjardins' passionate glances. Paul, who now that he had begun to observe, did so narrowly, saw that under this sharp fire her color did not vary nor her eyes droop.

He likened her in his thoughts to one of those proud Roman maidens who ripened into a Portia or an Arria. Once, while he was thus contemplating her, their glances met, and the sudden softening of her eyes, and the bright smile that just flitted over her face startled him. A strange sensation made him turn away abruptly, and throw himself into the

heat of a debate between his aunt and Dr. M——. But in the midst of tirades as to transmigration, metempsychosis, and new and old souls, Paul heard every word Desjardins was saying to Regina. He listened to the barrister's ever-softening tones with a growing exasperation. Looking round, he tried, but in vain, to catch a sight of Regina's face; she was engrossed, no doubt, by Desjardins' conversation. So much the better.

Madame Saincère's eyes travelled in the same direction as those of Paul, and then she gave her nephew a significant congratulatory nod, as much as to say, "You have been successful, you see." On the strength of this belief Madame Saincère invited Regina to spend a fortnight in the Rue Blanche.

One more example of how we push our way through the world, with about as much sight as the mole. Or is there some unknown power which amuses itself with snapping asunder all human webs, disarranging our game, making us do that we would not and should not?

During the next fifteen days M. Desjardins found reasons, which Madame Saincère willingly accepted, for being almost every day at one hour or the other in Regina's company. She had never visited the gallery of the Louvre, nor that of Versailles, never heard an Italian Opera, and it was quite time she should; and Madame Saincère told Paul three was bad company, and he must make one of the party to allow M. Desjardins to improve his opportunities.

"I begin to think the English plan of courtship,

with some modifications, excellent," observed the good lady. "Our way of handing over a girl to a stranger is odious and absurd."

Madame Saincère thought as little of Paul as Paul had thought of Regina before Desjardins' wooing.

That was a pleasant fortnight to all the party of four—a delightful fortnight to Regina. It was so calm, so like sailing on a smooth, blue sea—if it could only never come to an end.

"Regina really grows beautiful," observed Madame Saincère to Paul. "The bud is in its perfection, within a day or two of becoming a rose. Your friend will have to thank you for a charming wife." They were in the gardens of Versailles.

"You believe, then, that she will accept Desjardins?"

"Yes—don't you?"

"I am no judge. Desjardins worries me to get him an answer."

"He is wrong to be in a hurry," said Madame Saincère, without accounting to herself for her own unwillingness to put the fatal question.

"However, you must allow she has surely seen him often enough to be able to say whether she likes him or not," observed Paul.

"It is in your friend's interest I would delay. He is a man who must gain by being well known. I am by no means sure she has any idea he is thinking of her."

Paul smiled. "I am in no hurry, my aunt. I am merely Desjardins' ambassador, interpreter,—

what you will; but I humbly suggest that if Mademoiselle Regina is still in ignorance of his views, that it would be kinder to Desjardin if she were enlightened."

"You men of the world never believe in a girl's simplicity."

"I said just now I was no judge of young ladies."

"Well, I shall speak to her to-morrow, to please you and your friend—quite against my own judgment; if things go wrong don't blame me, but your own precipitation."

Madame Saincère was getting hot.

"I will tell Desjardins you object."

"No; I have said I shall speak to her to-morrow, and I shall do so."

It was Madame Saincère's habit every morning after breakfast to seat herself at her writing-table and get through her letters. Like most ladies without children, she had a large correspondence. When taking her usual place before her desk, she called Regina to her.

"Sit down here by me, my dear, I have something to say to you."

Perhaps Regina really was untroubled by hearing a phrase that is wont to send a thrill of apprehension through the most innocent breast. What is a fact, is that she took the chair indicated by Madame Saincère with a face as calm as usual.

"No doubt you can make a shrewd guess at what I have to tell you," went on Madame Saincère, smiling, and laying a hand on one of Regina's. "Young

ladies are seldom blind to the admiration they inspire."

Regina neither blushed nor smiled—perhaps she turned a trifle pale; and Madame Saincère felt the hand she held grow cold.

"My dear, without any more preamble, Monsieur Desjardins wishes to marry you. I congratulate you on the good fortune of having inspired a very superior man with a sincere and ardent love for you."

Madame Saincère stopped and gazed into the girl's face; no sculptured marble was ever whiter.

"You are too intelligent not to appreciate his merit," continued Madame Saincère, with a feeling similar to that of a general of experience who perceives from the outset that a battle is lost. "I should have no fears for your happiness with such a husband: that you should be happy, Regina, is one of the few desires I have left."

"I cannot marry Monsieur Desjardins," said Regina.

"You cannot marry him?" repeated Madame Saincère, in a high key.

"Because I do not in the least like him," was the firm reply.

"Then you are sillier, far sillier than I supposed it possible," said Madame Saincère, sharply. "I took you for something better than a mere Miss. I believed you had heart and head enough to recognize goodness and talent, when such things happened to come in your way. Pray *why* don't you like him? He is good-looking, young enough; he is well off;

absurdly in love. What do you want or hope for more?"

"Nothing. I don't like him, and I never, never could marry him," said Regina, still speaking without excitement.

There was a letter lying on the writing-table. Madame Saincère took it up, saying,—"At least hear what he says for himself; learn what it is you are so carelessly refusing."

"Indeed, it's of no use, dear madame. I am grieved to vex you—or anybody—but oh! no, no, indeed I cannot marry Monsieur Desjardins. Don't be so angry with me;" and Regina knelt down and kissed Madame Saincère's hands.

"I am not angry," protested Madame Saincère, very angrily, "but I am disappointed, and Paul will be cruelly vexed with himself."

"What has M. Latour to do with the matter?" asked Regina, and her eyes emitted an ominous flash.

"Do with it? Only that it was he who brought Monsieur Desjardins here in the hope and expectation that you would know how to appreciate him. Paul paid you a great compliment in thinking you worthy of a man he esteems so highly. However, there is no occasion for recriminations; circumstances allow you more freedom of choice than is usual; but, my dear, allow me to remind you I am not likely to be able to find you a husband."

Regina interrupted Madame Saincère. "I don't wish any one to trouble themselves to do so." Here

the clear voice grew husky. "I have no one to please but myself, none of my family cares what becomes of me, and I would rather be a cook, or sweep a crossing, or die"— here a long gasp, then in a quivering whisper—"than marry just—any one."

"There is no occasion for all this passion and violence," replied Madame Saincère; "no one, least of all either Paul or I, wish to put any compulsion on your will. Pardon me, nevertheless, for saying once more that I believe you are at this moment throwing away your best chance of happiness: though, after all, it is possible you would never understand such a character as that of M. Desjardins. He is too sensible: his feelings are not sufficiently on the surface: they do not explode in poetical tirades: nor is he six feet high, with the head of a brigand."

Regina fancied, and fancied wrongly, there was an allusion to her parents in this last observation. She let go Madame Saincère's hands, rose from her knees, stiffened all over, mentally and bodily, with resentment. She said, abruptly—

"My father was a good man, and made my mother happy."

For an instant Madame Saincère, quite at fault, looked at the girl in blank amazement. Then, perceiving the possible interpretation of her last words —for Nolopœus had been tall and wild-looking—she exclaimed—

"My dear girl, I was a thousand leagues from intending any allusion to your parents. I loved your mother dearly, Regina. I knew her from her cradle;

for her sake I received you; for her sake, even more than for your own, I desire your happiness. She was a loving, gentle creature."

Regina answered in a voice made harsh by deep emotion—

"I know I am hard and cold. I can't help it. Since they died, no one has ever had a bit of heart for me."

"Not I, Regina?" and Madame Saincère tried to take her hand.

"No, not even you," said Regina, stepping back. "You often dislike me. I have felt it in your kiss."

The girl shuddered. The floodgates were open, and out rushed the long pent-up waters of bitterness.

"Your cook Hortense was kinder to me in one week than you have been in all these years. All that you have done for me has been from the charity which would not even thrust a homeless dog from your door. How often I could have begged you on my knees only to care as much for me as for your maid; to look at me as kindly as you did at her! You are good, but you have never liked me. I am born to the fate of Ishmael, my great progenitor. It is not fair that I should suffer for what I did not do. I can't help my Bohemian blood. If I were fair-haired and blue-eyed you would all love me. I will go back to my father's people, far away, where I shall never, never hear any of your names again."

As she said this she saw Paul Latour standing gazing at her. Her eyes met his with a shock of an-

ger. She turned at bay on him, like some wounded animal.

"I am much obliged to you, M. Latour, but I *won't* marry M. Desjardins;" and out of the room she rushed.

"She has lost her senses," said Madame Saincère.

"Poor little girl!" exclaimed Paul, and his eyes were full of tears.

"Her wild blood is up. I am sure I do care for her."

Paul shook his head.

"I am doubtful of that. Liking goes by favor; and we cannot give affection because we ought. I had not the slightest conception she was of such a passionate nature. She has suffered, poor child."

"What can I do? She asks for affection in one breath and refuses it in another," replied Madame Saincère, too uncomfortable to put the question in a fair light. "I think my actions have sufficiently proved my good-will."

"They have proved your great benevolence. I wish I dared ask Mademoiselle Regina to forgive me for my share in this disagreeable business."

"The best thing you can do is to go away; and do not come back this evening."

Madame Saincère went to Regina's door. It was fastened.

"Better leave her to cool down," thought the woman of many experiences. "By dinner-time she will be ashamed of her outburst, and then I will give her Desjardins' letter to read."

Having thus resolved, Madame Saincère put on her bonnet and cloak and went out for a walk. All her life she had found that air and exercise were infallible restorers of the equilibrium of the mind. She returned home in a far more indulgent mood toward the delinquent.

Though sincere and truthful, Regina was not frank. On the contrary, her tendency was to shut up all she felt within her own soul. As Madame Saincère had anticipated, after the heat of her passion had evaporated, she felt humbled at having allowed the sorrow of her heart to be seen. What seemed to her protectress a mere girlish outbreak, had been an emotion convulsing and rending Regina's whole being. It was with surprise that Madame Saincère found her pale and feeble, like one recovering from sharp illness rather than from a fit of anger.

Madame Saincère was so complete a contrast in character to her protégée that she could not comprehend so great a prostration for so small a cause. But it is not by external causes that we can measure emotion or determine on the amount of suffering. What is a trifle to one, may shake another to the core.

However exaggerated in feeling she might consider Regina, Madame Saincère showed her a genuine kindness that evening, which, coming in aid of Regina's own regrets, established a better understanding between them for the future.

After dinner, Madame Saincère made Regina sit

in her own peculiar chair, placing a pillow beneath her head. Regina made no resistance, only when Madame Saincère once stooped over her, she held up her face to be kissed as a repentant child might have done.

"Do you think you are well enough to listen to the little I have to add on the subject of this morning?" asked Madame Saincère.

"I am so sorry I was so violent. I don't know what made me so. I felt all over as if I had been stung by wasps. I am not ill, only tired," and the eyelids, swollen by weeping, dropped over the weary eyes.

"First of all I am going to read you a letter from Monsieur Desjardins; not with any intention of trying to change your decision, but as some explanation of why I was so disappointed by your refusal."

It was indeed a letter that could only have been written by one with a noble heart. The avowal of his love for Regina was made in forcible but simple language. As she read, Madame Saincère could see that the girl's figure was agitated by nervous starts, like those of a patient under a galvanic battery, and at the conclusion two large tears rolled out of the half-closed eyes.

In a voice that quivered, Regina said, "I think it is very bad of me not to care for such a good man. I am ready to beg every one's pardon. Oh! why can't I like him?"

"Why not, indeed, you foolish child?"

"It is not my fault; but, indeed, whenever he came I always wished he would go away."

"Is he the only one who excites that flattering wish?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"Then that ends our discussion. Now, my dear, go at once to bed."

CHAPTER X.

"Jeune fille au nom mâle et fier comme ton cœur."
Portrait par ANDRÉ THEURIET

WITHIN the next twelve months Madame Aubry suddenly left Juvigny. Her husband's affairs required a journey to Russia; and, contrary to his usual nonchalance with regard to his wife, he now insisted that she should accompany him.

Common gossip said that his jealousy had at last been awakened, but this was a mere surmise founded on probabilities, for no human being could aver that M. Aubry had ever complained of, or blamed Madame Aubry.

She was gone, and from the moment of her departure, the barometer of Madame Latour's hopes rose as to Paul's marriage. It was amazing how many charming girls with good dowries she discovered; and she enlisted so many persons in her cause, that Paul came at last to look on every invitation to dinner or to soirées as so many traps to marry him.

Madame Saincère in vain counselled her sister to give Paul time to recover possession of his feelings. "Absence is a great ally—it throws a veil over remembrance."

Madame Latour wrote back—"He is four-and-

thirty; every day that passes renders him a less eligible *parti*. He will put off and put off till I am dead."

"But it is not honorable—not just"—replied Madame Sainecère, "that he should marry one woman while his heart belongs to another."

"Marriage," returned Madame Latour, "ought not to be a love affair. I see around me plenty of happy households; and, in most cases, the husband and wife had not seen one another more than twice when the contract was signed. The same interests, with life in common, produce an affection far more lasting than what you sentimentalists call love."

Madame Latour came expressly to Paris, to introduce her son to two lovely and faultless girls, brought up according to the most approved rules, who had never been out of their mother's sight since they were five years old—girls who were prizes also as to fortune.

"You ask an impossibility," said Paul. "I could never care two straws either for your Mathilde or Sophia. Surely you don't wish my misery, mother. I might put up with the crying of children, and the *migraines* of a woman I loved, but otherwise the post of father of a family would kill me."

"Then I am to die, Paul, without ever having held a child of yours on my knee."

"In the first place I might marry and never have a child. Trust a little to the chapter of chances, mother—to that hidden power which so often arranges or reverses the plans of mortals. To-mor-

row, even to-day, I may see the creature destined to make me a husband and you a grandmother."

Before the day ended Paul thought that his joke might possibly become earnest. He was in his atelier, in that listless mood into which all artists sink when they have finished any work that has occupied much time. Be it a book, or a picture, or a symphony, the end is sighed for—the last touches are given with feverish eagerness. Counsels that entail the slightest further effort are listened to with irritation—often received with anger: the sole desire is to write finis; and then—oh! inconstancy of man's spirit—no sooner are the five letters traced, than, instead of the joys of liberty, the artist, writer, or composer sits down and takes a gloomy view of things in general—of his own work in particular. "The game had not been worth the trouble," soliloquized Paul; far better had he been satisfied to go plodding daily to an office, and not fancied he was born to be anything superior to his fellows. Well, it did not much matter—this was probably the last time he should trouble the public. His imagination was exhausted—his nerve gone."

Paul was smoking a pipe of discontent when the sound of the *timbre* in the ante-chamber announced a visitor.

"Some fool come to favor me with his criticism, or his stupider compliments," he said, laying down his meerschaum, and calling out gruffly enough, "*Entrez.*"

The handle of the door turned briskly, and Paul

started to his feet, amazement flushing his face. A girl certainly not above eighteen, *bionda e grassotta*, stood in the doorway, her magnificent flaxen hair and lily-fair skin in notable contrast to her black eyes and black eyebrows. Her forehead was wide and prominent, the mouth small, the chin slightly projecting. The lower part of the face that of a child, the upper that of a man and a thinker. The eyes were full of power and inspiration. She came forward to Paul with outstretched hand.

"*I* have been so charmed—*that's* not the word—so transported—by your last picture, that I could not help coming to tell you so. We must be friends."

Her tone and gesture were frank and brusque, like those of a school-boy. Paul was puzzled how to meet her advance. Had she been ten years older he would have been quite at his ease; but the speaker was such a mere girl! She, perhaps, guessed what was passing in his mind, for she said—

"My *duenna* is in your anteroom, let us call her in, and then I'll tell you who I am."

Paul hastened to introduce a respectable middle-aged woman, evidently holding some office between that of a governess and a lady's-maid.

"Sit down, Martha," said the young lady, in English, "and make up your mind to be comfortable, for I am going to stay here a long while."

"English! that accounts for all," said Paul to himself.

The girl, as if she had again read his thoughts,

burst into a charming laugh—a sort of musical *cadenza*, of which some women have the secret.

"Yes," she said in French, "I come from the land of oddities; that is, I was born there—in Ireland, if you please, not in England—but I remember nothing about my birthplace. I came to France a baby. My name is Aurora Dale. For my intimates, I am Hubert. I am the only child of my father, who is a scholar, the kindest and dearest of men, who lets me have all my own way."

"I wonder what man of mortal mould could refuse you anything?" exclaimed Paul.

"No compliments," she said: "it's my misfortune to have a woman's form, but I have the soul of a man, and you must treat me as one, or you cannot be admitted into my circle."

"You ask an impossibility," said Paul, speaking in downright earnest.

"Think of me, speak to me as Hubert—the youth Hubert—or our acquaintance ends here."

"Having seen you, do you imagine I can submit to be banished your presence?"

"I will *not* be treated as a young lady, complimented and made love to. Accept my terms or avoid me. In the mean while you are going to show me all your pictures—your own paintings I mean. I want to see if there are any equal to the last; how divine it is!" and she sat down on the corner of a divan and covered her eyes. "It comes before me now, a poor, little, cold-stricken redbreast, and a

few fading flowers—nothing more; and yet it transpierces me as music sometimes does. Bristles and pigments to move me so, and make my heart ready to burst with melancholy! I should like to find out how, when divine thoughts arise in a man's mind, some turn into music, others into pictures, and others into poetry, more beautiful than all, and why great beauty in any shape makes us ready to weep."

She looked at him with great, moist eyes, the lips and nostrils quivering with excitement. Paul was quite at fault; it was delightful to be thus praised; but his spirit did not rise to the level of hers. It was she who was the discoverer in his picture of worlds unknown to him. "I am often sad," she went on, "because I cannot understand things. I am always longing—longing. Don't laugh at me."

"Far from it," said Paul. "Once I too sought to reach the Unknown; but little by little I have been driven back to reality. As for our ideas, my belief is, that none of us can trace our inspirations to their source. Life is a network of riddles, Mademoiselle Aurora."

"Hubert, or I vanish forever. Heigho! let's be done with sentiment, and be a little mad. Tell Hubert about your student's life, or show me your sketch-books: I shall learn more about you from them than from anything you will venture to say. All men lie when they talk of themselves."

"And women, are they more truthful?" he asked, laughing, as he brought her half-a-dozen portfolios.

"Poor things! how can you wonder at anything they do when you know how men treat them? I have sworn by the Styx to defy Nature: to be manly and in all things true to my own soul." She opened one of the portfolios. "Now, if you were a woman, you would annihilate that date of fifteen years ago, and do so only because men ridicule age in women. How old were you then?"

"Nearly twenty."

"So you have reached the half-way of life; you have seen more than you are likely to see in the future. Do you remember how you felt at twenty? Is it different with you now?"

"Very."

"Then it is true that we are always becoming something else."

"Do you study Philosophy with your father?"

"No; by myself. 'All labor,' he says, 'that is good for anything must be done alone.'"

"And you are really only—"

"Eighteen my last birthday."

"And you are not a fairy?"

She stamped her little foot impatiently. "Why can't you treat me as an equal?"

"Because I feel that you are my superior."

"Nonsense! You would scarcely say that to the greatest man breathing. *This* must be the picture of one of your first loves; it's the same face all through the portfolio. What's become of her?"

"She is married, is a mother, and lives in Russia."

All exact, but what a different impression Paul managed to convey from the truth!

"She is whimsical-looking rather than pretty; her nose is *en trompette*. Did you care much for her?"

"Very much."

"And you have survived and thrived?"

"It's not so easy to die of grief."

"Oh! I suppose she is nearly an old lady now?"

"One year younger than I am."

"That's a fine head, that chalk one in the frame opposite. I like the face better than that of your first love. This one gives the idea of an Arab horse with a club. Another first love is it?"

"No; not at all. The original is scarcely older now than yourself. She is a ward of an aunt of mine, and is still at school."

"Unhappy girl! That's what gives her the look of having a heavy bit between her teeth."

"Though she looks something wild, she is in fact a gentle, good little girl."

"A gentle, good little girl!" repeated Hubert, in a tone of contempt. "She is a Judith, a Zenobia. What's her name?"

"Regina . . . . ."

"There—I was sure of it; you were trying to mystify me, but you couldn't."

"Indeed, she is simply Mademoiselle Regina Nolopœus."

"Really and truly? Not even a Roumanian princess."

"On my honor, no."

"Her face captivates me. And you don't adore her?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Are you a man of stone?"

"No. I would give a great deal to take *your* likeness."

"You may have it for nothing, my friend. I shall be taken in a boy's cap—only my head—and you must hang it by Regina, and call us, *I promessi sposi*. There is an idea for you. Shall I come on Monday?"

"If Mr. Dale will permit you."

"Oh! my father always allows what I choose to do; dear father . . . . There's my card, come and dine with us on Saturday; it's our day for receiving, and I'll introduce you to him. If you and he like one another, your name shall be put on our Saturday list."

Darkness seemed to fall on the atelier when Aurora left it.

Paul took his hat and went out, without any settled purpose, but to get air enough to breathe.

One day so constantly resembles another that it is an event as rare as charming when a man, who has reached the age of five-and-thirty, meets an individual who wakes an echo of delight in his soul, stirs his mind, and impels it to move even a step forward. Paul, after this visit of Aurora's, felt as if his spirit had burst some barrier. He was walking along with a swift step, his thoughts in a whirl, trying to gather themselves into form, as sand will do when set in

motion, by harmonious chords on the sounding-board of a piano, when his arm was seized from behind.

"The man of all others I want," exclaimed a familiar voice, with a strong German accent. "Come with me, Baul, I have scent of a Chardin, an undoubted original, they say. We shall see, it is not easy to throw dust in Ernst Bürgmüller's eyes."

Ernst, complacent reader, is perhaps the most astute of modern connoisseurs of pictures. The French school of the 18th century has no secrets for him. He can tell you how many Prudhons are to be found in the galleries of Paris; he is as familiar with a Coypel as with his own hand-writing; and he distinguishes at a glance a true from a spurious Chardin. Once on a time he wooed the muse of poetry on his own account, but the courtship was not successful. Bürgmüller is tall, thin, with long arms and legs, light-haired, rosy-faced, a nose *à la* Kalmuck, a projecting forehead, small, lively, sparkling blue eyes.

Passing his arm within Paul's, the German turned in the direction of the Boulevard des Italiens. There were two men in Bürgmüller—the clever critic, and the fop. He was a singular combination of ingenuousness and of experience—of materialist and spiritualist. As the two friends were going along the Rue de Helder, they met a very pretty woman. Ernst stopped in his learned dissertation on Chardin, to say in a stage whisper: "Do you observe her—an angel—the Duchesse de Belay (all the heroines of Ernst's adventures are duchesses and comtesses)

Last year I was at her chateau—*ch'ai été ein pè amoureux d'elle.*"

"*Comment! mauvais sujet*—only last year—and it is at an end?" said Paul, smiling. Ernst's friends have no faith in his conquests, but it amuses them to hear him boast.

"Pray have you ever met among your goddesses a Miss Aurora Dale?"

"*Aurora! Hubert! mais, mon cher, ch'ai été—je suis pocoup amoureux de la bella Aurora.* She is a Muse—a Fairy. You should see her when she is listening to a symphony of Beethoven or Mendelssohn. She inhales the music through every pore of her divine body—her lips part with an angel's smile—her eyes—*ach! mein lieber Gott*—they become profound and luminous as the heaven of a midsummer night. Know Aurora! why, I adore her," and the speaker sighed and colored.*—*Ch'ai tetang le cœur ein betit chartin de Marie—ein kleines Mariengarten comme nous tisons nous autres Allemands.* Where have you seen my Aurora?"

"She came to my atelier to-day, to compliment me on the last picture I exhibited."

"That is Aurora, altogether; but do not mistake, my dear Baul. She is very wise and good, and understands the self-government of her country folks. Her heart has never yet spoken—*eh, mon Tieu*—when it does!!!"

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* J'ai dedans mon cœur un petit jardin de Marie comme nous disons nous autres Allemands.

"Are you one of the Saturday list," asked Paul.

"Without doubt. We will go together if you please. Ah! she is a Muse—a Fairy . . . . but this is where we are to find the Chardin."

CHAPTER XI.

LIONS.

Every house reveals something of the spirit of those who dwell in it. Our personality impresses itself on everything that habitually surrounds us.

The salon into which Paul was ushered on the Saturday afternoon, seemed to him something between an atelier, a bric-à-brac shop, and a greenhouse.

There was a confusion, but a graceful confusion of pictures, articles of virtù, and flowers and plants.

The young lady of the house, at that instant, looked out of keeping with her framing. She was dressed most prosaically in the very height of the last fashion, while, to be in harmony with her surroundings, she ought to have been habited like some sylvan nymph.

At the moment of Paul's entrance she was standing by a marble basin, placed in a bay window, opening into a portico, from which you descended by a broad flight of steps into the garden. The basin had been picked up by Mr. Dale at Rome; it was discolored and full of cracks, but exquisite in form. It had, properly speaking, no supporting column. A youth, sitting on a step, held it up with outstretched arms. It was an article of faith with

father and daughter that the font was antique and unique.

Aurora, in her *Magazine de Mode* dress, held a common teacup in her hand, filled with half-boiled rice. She gave Paul and Ernst a nod and a smile; then blowing a tiny silver whistle, she exclaimed, "See how well they hear!" She spoke in a tone of rapture that was exaggerated (if you please), as some three or four gold-fish rose to the surface of the water in the basin.

"The very stones would move at your call," said Ernst.

"That's a piece of the commonest blarney," replied Aurora. "I am not glad because the fish came to my whistle. I am glad because they hear. Nature is too full of harmony for me to believe that any species of living creatures is created deaf, or dumb, or blind."

"You ought to send away your pets, Aurora," said a grave, sweet voice.

It came from a gentleman with a head which might have suited a Jupiter Clemens. Mr. Dale was as handsome for a man as his daughter for a woman, with the additional charm of repose of manner.

"Why, father?"

"Because in keeping them here you make them die gradually of starvation. All gold-fish in globes or small basins suffer that terrible death."

"Where's their native place, father?"

"China, my dear."

"People manage to bring silkworms from thence,

and I'll manage to send back my beauties. To-morrow they shall depart for their native land," said Aurora, throwing away her whistle.

"Better send them to the ponds in the Park," returned her father.

"It's horrible to think they are perhaps in pain at this moment," went on Aurora, thrusting her fingers through the elaborate arrangement of her hair with a boy's gesture.

The disarray of her head gave her a new charm. Every eye of the half-dozen men in the room rested on her with admiration.

Aurora was neither a coquette nor vain. You needed to be in her company only a quarter of an hour to find that out. But those who knew her best uttered many a "God knows!" and shook their heads when they spoke of Aurora's future. She will be something—but what? There is ever perilous stuff in a gifted woman.

She was the only woman at dinner, yet she was as unembarrassed as a child. The guests were all men of some artistic value. Besides Paul and Bürgmüller, there was Valton, the fashionable composer of songs, a short, stout man, with a rubicund face, intelligent eyes, and thick lips.

"What do you think of our Orpheus?" whispered Aurora to Paul, whom, as the stranger, she had called to sit by her.

"He looks a good fellow—something of a gastronome."

"He is one of the delights of my life," said the

young hostess. "Always good-humored; always obliging; always in tune with every one. If you mean to be friends with me, you must be friends with Valton. It's an immense compliment his coming here every Saturday. He is so run after that he never dines or breakfasts at home. I am perfectly indifferent to what we have for dinner any other day, but I always ask for the bill of fare on Saturday morning; I am so afraid of losing him."

"And all for the sake of his voice?" said Paul.

"His voice? no, it is cracked; but for his genius. He *is* a real genius. No one who was not a genius could do what he does. Every morning he composes a song—words and all. Jumps out of bed at ten precisely—runs to his piano—plays the song that he has in his head—writes it down, and then consults his almanac to see with what sublimity or excellency he is to breakfast and dine that day. He is so good; always ready to sing or play at whist, dance, walk. Never contradicts. Oh! he is the best of men!"

Paul looked at her, supposing her to be joking; but he saw she was thoroughly in earnest.

"Is it necessary to resemble M. Valton, to please you?"

"Nature made him, and then broke the mould," answered Aurora, gravely. "I shall never find another Valton; and one of these days I shall lose him. Alas, alas! he is sure to have an apoplexy!"

Paul laughed.

"Don't laugh," she said, stamping her foot. "I

am serious. I shall be wretched if he dies; and he *will* eat so much. It's the only bit of obstinacy in him."

Mr. Dale swallowed his dinner in silence. He did not appear to consider the men at his table as his guests; he left them to Aurora. Twice his eyes turned toward and rested on Paul. After a third investigating glance, he asked his neighbor, Ernst, "Who the stranger was?" Hearing that it was Latour de la Mothe, he sent the servant round to invite Paul to join him in a glass of champagne. It was rare that Aurora hit on any one suited to her father's refined taste. Mr. Dale was fastidious in everything—most so in art. Paul ranked high in his estimation as a painter.

After dinner the whole party went into the garden to enjoy the freshness of the evening. The men all took their cigars, and for a moment Paul feared and expected to see Aurora do the same. She was satisfied, however, with inhaling the odor, declaring it was as pleasant to her as the perfume of roses.

Mr. Dale passed his arm through one of Paul's, and leading him into one of the more retired walks, began a dissertation on modern painting, giving the preference, as such a man was sure to do, to the ancient masters. In spite of his companion's treasures of knowledge, and undoubted good taste, Paul's attention wandered to the strange girl with the free step of a nymph, flitting across their path every now and then, and whom he heard talking with great animation to a tall, thin, pale, wild-eyed, young man

with long dishevelled locks flowing over his shoulders.

At the close of one of Mr. Dale's most erudite periods, Paul inquired the name of the gentleman who was giving his arm to Mademoiselle Dale.

"He bears a great name," said Mr. Dale. "That is Georges Tully de la Belusson. Eccentric, but talented, he is as devoted to chivalry as ever was Don Quixote, and has gained among his intimates the nickname of the 'Don.' He is a poet. Aurora admires his poetry. It is rather too mystical for me. Tully is a man born out of time; he belongs to the middle ages. He has a horror of the modern spirit of democracy, and looks on equality as a degradation."

"His 'Ode to the Pourgeois' (Bourgeois) is the best thing he has ever written," said Ernst, who, tired of being overlooked by Aurora, had come to Paul's side. "Come, Tully, recite to us your famous imprecation, '*Fous mourrez, gorgez d'or et dout soullez de poue.*"

A burst of laughter saluted the quotation, and the accent of the quoter.

"Monsieur Bürgmülleer," said Georges Tully, "when you wish to excite merriment, let me beg you to do so at the expense of some other poetry than mine."

"Dear Monsieur Valton, give us some harmony to cure Ernst's discord." And, so saying, Aurora led the way up the steps.

Valton sang with a taste and a spirit that made

Paul, the only stranger to his singing, forget his cracked voice. No one who ever heard Valton sing "*Le Bonhomme jadis*," or "*Les Bucherons*," will ever forget his singing.

After Valton had finished, there was a general petition to Aurora that she would sing.

"I am not in the mood. I am stupid. I have forgotten all about music. What is it? Can any one explain? No, for it is of heaven, and we are of earth—earthy." And she ran through the window back into the garden.

"Let her alone *ein pè* (*un peu*)," said Ernst; "it is some inspiration that is struggling in her soul. I will implore Tully to recite something for us. That will reconcile him to me."

The good-natured German went to the Don and said—

"My very dear M. Tully, here is an opportunity to be kind; give us *ce pauvre* Hamlet's monologue."

Monsieur Tully frowned on the speaker, and Paul thought he was about to refuse; but the next instant the Don was on his feet.

He was really terrific, and so rapt were his listeners in his words that they did not perceive Aurora re-enter the room. At his last words she sat down to the piano, and in tones both passionate and brusque, broke into a wild ditty that had in it the savor of the desert; it might have suited Ophelia had Ophelia been an Aurora. She carried every one present away into the regions of passion and fancy; keeping them there as long as she pleased; they

were intoxicated alike by her look and her voice. All at once she broke the spell, by striking a series of discords, ending in a *charge d'atelier*.

All Mr. Dale's guests returned to Paris together. To Paul's enthusiastic admiration of Aurora, the Don replied gloomily, "She is a goddess, and not a woman: The love of a mere man will never find acceptance with her."

CHAPTER XII.

DEFINITIONS.

Paul was like one in the first stage of intoxication—fast losing sight of reality. He had returned from Versailles madly in love with Aurora. She was the first woman who had thoroughly dethroned Madame Aubry. Sunday was interminably long to him, though the evening was pleasant enough, as Madame Saincère encouraged him to speak of his new idol. As for Regina, who was sitting by, she counted for nothing.

"You can form no idea of this English or Irish girl from description," said Paul. "She lost her mother when she was only ten years old, and since then she has been her own mistress. Her father left the bridle loose on her neck, and she has taken advantage of her liberty to range in any pasture she pleased. She haunts painters' studios, is acquainted with most of the celebrities of Paris, reads Hegel, knows German, Italian, Sanscrit; is an inspired musician, has the head of a cherub, and the intellect of a man of genius; in short, she is more like what we imagine a goddess to be than a woman of flesh and blood.

"Ah! poor child, what will be her fate!" said Madame Saincère. "She is evidently not fitted to

be a wife and mother—for the ordinary conditions of humanity."

"And why not?" asked Paul, sharply.

"You might as well expect a bird to creep; it is contrary to her nature. No, no, Paul! such as this Aurora are born to adorn a pedestal, not to sit *tête-à-tête* at the fireside with a husband, or to hush a teething child."

"I should have expected such observations from my mother, who has a prejudice against artistic tastes in man or woman, but not from you."

"Think me as commonplace as you will, Paul, but I assure you from experience that an artist woman is rarely happy herself, or gives happiness. Perhaps it is an instinct of the dangers attending any of our sex, who, by special gifts, is forced out of the ordinary routine of life, which makes us look askance at a woman of genius for the wife of a son or brother."

"In short, you patronize *pot-au-feu* wives."

"Yes, I do. No man likes to find himself thrown in the shade by his wife. I have known of quarrels and even of separations arising between persons once fondly attached, and all for jealousy of the world's applause."

"Very poor specimens of human nature they must have been been," replied Paul, dryly.

"Human nature is made up of grandeur and meanness."

"Good-night, aunt. I never yet met the woman who did not decry superiority in another woman."

He went away, forgetful even of his usual "*Bon soir*, Mademoiselle Regina."

"My dear," said Madame Sainecère to her protegée, "you may thank God that he has not given you extraordinary talents. *Pot-au-feu* wives, as Paul sneeringly calls domestic women, are the happy women. They sit at home, and live, not in themselves, but in their husbands. Nothing touches me more than when I see some simple little woman falling down in spirit before her husband. I never believe so heartily in the goodness of Providence as when I hear one of these *pot-au-feu* wives puffing her husband and trying to make me share her faith that he is the best and cleverest of men. I hope to hear you do so one of these days, Regina."

The silent girl received her protectress's kiss, and then shut herself into her own little room, so glad of the solitude. From the impatience with which she unfastened that wonderful mass of hair coiled round her head, she seemed to accuse it as the cause of the aching of her temples. She stared at herself in the glass with that storm-cloud of tresses surrounding her face. The varnish given by education and the civilization of Paris had vanished. She looked the gipsy—the undoubted daughter of a zingaro father. She sat contemplating herself with piercing eyes; pride dilating her nostrils—wild grief dragging downward her red lips.

How her child's bosom was wrung, beaten, torn, by jealousy! How she wept over her dark skin and her black hair!—the origin, as she thought, of all her

evil. She was so lonely in the world. She longed so for a mother's heart to lean on. Madame Saincère praised her for being inferior—a mother would not have done so.

"Ah! mother, mother! to have given her life and then left her alone."

The next morning the maid found her sleeping in her chair, the candle burned out.

What a struggle she had to be patient with the inquisitive Annette, who wanted to know why and wherefore Mademoiselle had not slept in her bed!

Annette stood with one arm akimbo; her right hand busy with a toothpick.

"Mademoiselle must be ill, or unhappy?"

She was looking very pale when she went to bed. Annette had noticed this, though Madame Saincère had not.

"I am neither ill, nor unhappy, Annette. I was very tired and I fell asleep the moment I was alone."

"Let me feel your pulse."

Regina jumped up, ran to the wash-hand table and plunged her face into a basin of cold water.

"Is that a sick face?" turning it all rosy to Annette.

"*Nom d'un nom*—if you had always that color you would be the most beautiful girl in Paris."

"Ah! but I can't have it, nor a fair skin, and I shall always be what I am."

Annette told Madame Saincère that Regina was not well.

To Madame Saincère's questions Regina replied, 'I am as well as ever I was in my life."

"How came you not to go to bed?"

"I sat down for an instant and stupidly fell asleep. It has done me no harm, dear madame."

When Regina returned a fortnight after to the Rue Blanche, she heard that Madame Latour was in Paris, staying with Paul.

Madame Latour came in the afternoon, and it was easy to read trouble in her face. The sisters spoke to one another in a low voice. Regina took a book, went to the furthest corner of the room, and tried to read; but, in spite of herself, she overheard that the two ladies were talking of Aurora and Paul. It seemed that the Irish girl was at that very hour at the atelier, and that Madame Latour was convinced that she was about to endure the misfortune of a wish granted—that it was pretty certain she should have a Protestant for a daughter-in-law.

There was a noise in Regina's ears sounding as loud as thunder, and then she became aware that Madame Latour was asking her if she would go out on a shopping expedition.

Regina said yes, and tried to lay aside her book, but it fell from her hands.

"You are not looking as you did at Juvigny," observed Madame Latour; and then Madame Saincère for the first time perceived that Regina was thin and pale.

"But you are quite well?"

"Perfectly well, madame," and Regina left the salon to put on her bonnet and cloak.

"She looks very delicate—too delicate," said Madame Latour.

"I shall write to Dr. M—— to come here this evening. She is not strong; her mother died young. I'll have her chest examined. Poor little quiet mouse, I should not like anything to happen to her."

As Madame Latour and Regina went out of the *porte cochère* of Madame Saincère's house, an elderly woman with a young girl were passing. The latter turned and stared at Regina with a pleasant admiring look of curiosity. Regina said, "That must be Mademoiselle Aurora."

Madame Latour uttered a low groan. "She looks like an actress. Oh, my poor Paul!"

In the evening in walked Dr. M——, carrying something tied up in a colored silk handkerchief. He placed his bundle carefully on the table in the middle of the room, shook hands with Madame Saincère, bowed to Madame Latour and Regina, then, seating himself, indulged in a large pinch of snuff.

Dr. M—— was a small, thin, dark man, just the man to be passed over in a crowd, if he would have consented to be so. But there was a buoyancy in his talent which always brought him into sight. Considering he was a thinker, he had a wonderful fluency of language; he talked, and never was stopped by any conjecture that others might like to have their turn. The world was full of agreeable people

to him, but the world did not return the compliment; it called him, *tant soit peu*, a bore.

Madame Saincère was among the few who could occasionally transform the doctor into a listener, but even when he talked longest, she never tired of his conversation. The explanation was, that she had an extraordinary curiosity as to all matters connected with life and death, and she liked the doctor to tell her of nerves and ganglions, and other mysteries of the body.

If those in health were alarmed at seeing Dr. M—— take a preparatory pinch of snuff, the ailing declared him to be perfect; by the sick-bed he became as it were the student—the learner, hearkening while the patient taught him the symptoms of the disease. Even while just now administering an extra dose to his nose, his eyes were examining Regina's face and figure. The silent scrutiny over, he laid his hand on the package in the silk handkerchief.

"I have brought you a rarity—something that will delight you;" and, as he spoke, he withdrew the covering.

The ladies started as he gave to view two large skulls. He first took up one, and then the other, handling them with delight.

"You have no idea, have you, Mademoiselle, that you are looking on the skulls of relations—of distant cousins? Do you see this?" and he pointed out the intermaxillary bone. "All animals but man have it horizontal; well, you see that here it is similar to yours," touching her delicate cheek and tracing the

bone with his finger. "Very little, to be sure, of your ancestors in you or these two ladies," he added.

"But, sir,—sir!" exclaimed Madame Latour, "you are not surely one of those who set aside the Bible history of creation?"

"Creation here, creation there! Why, Madame, creation is going on now just as it did in the begining, whenever that was."

The doctor was a bit of a wag, and having found an auditor not conversant with new theories, he resolved to improve his opportunity. He began with his vesicle and his sea-weed, and came down link by link to the ape. "And now here are my two fingers, the index and the medium; well, they happen to be peculiarly perfect of their kind—ha, they meet, and produce a thumb superior to themselves—ha, the thumb looks about and finds another thumb, and develops another superiority; and so on, and on, till we arrive at the first man."

Madame Latour's face more than recompensed the doctor's trouble. "And speech, sir, how did the thumbs produce that?"

"Ah," he answered with calm dignity, "we are mighty proud; man monopolizes the privilege of speech, but animals speak, Madame. Every bow-wow-wow is a phrase; we don't understand their articulation more than they do ours, but they undeniably communicate by means of voice with one another. Stay, I will give you an example:—I was paying a medical visit one morning this spring, when

the mother of the child I was attending called my attention to two sparrows on an opposite wall, teaching their young to fly. The window of the room we were in was open, and one of the fledglings flew in; my little patient began a chase, and when he had caught the blunderer, I pointed out to the lady and her child the distress of the parent birds—their piercing cries spoke as clearly to me as any words could have done. The poor captive was put outside the window; I wish you could have heard the tones with which the old birds welcomed back their lost one, tones as different from those of the anguish of the instant before, as any of us could find to express a change of feeling. Mademoiselle Rachel herself could have found none more touching." The doctor's eyes were full of tears.

"But that is not a proof of speech, sir."

"Not of our way of speaking, I allow. But did you ever hear a newly-caught savage speak? and would his speech appear more human to you than the yelping of your pug dog? See here, Mademoiselle Regina: this skull of the female gorilla is far more intellectual than that of the male—something in favor of women. Madame Gorilla is less bestial than her mate—refined by her maternity, I conjecture. There has been great selection in your case," he added, with a sudden perception of her beauty. "But you are too thin. What's wrong? No cough?"

"No, sir."

"Sleep well?"

"Oh yes."

"Good appetite?"

"Excellent."

"Ha!" He took her hand. "H'm! rather hot; pulse a little irregular. Change of air and scene for her; that's all that's necessary; and she'll be as blooming as a rose."

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPRICES AND DREAMS.

SATURDAY had come round again, and Paul set off for Versailles with an eagerness that belonged to the days before he had ever left Juvigny—to those early days when he would have thought it impossible any woman save Adeline could ever accelerate the beat of his heart.

Aurora had given him two sittings, and then had neglected to come on the days she had appointed. Paul had felt aggrieved, and had taken his seat in the railway carriage, some anger mingling with his eagerness. He prepared several little ironical compliments for the fair inconstant.

As he walked from the station to Mr. Dale's house, it was wonderful how his irritability subsided. The atmosphere (it was one of the last days of September) was delicious: great lazy clouds veiled the blue of the sky, and every now and then there was a slight motion in the air, a touch of sharpness that braced his nerves and quickened his step. The poplars bordering the way had leaves of pale gold, while the buildings in the far perspective were of a deep bluish-gray. The eye of the painter revelled in this harmonious combination. "Ah! how cunningly nature works!" thought he. "We are always beaten by her."

The walk had done what a soft answer does to the angry. His whole being was in excellent tune when he rang the bell of No. 119, Rue ——, his fancy full of the pleasantest images.

He passed his fingers through the waves of his hair, and entered the salon with a smile.

Aurora was there alone, dressed all in white, as lovely as any fabled nymph. Thought travels fast, and Paul, as he approached her, said to himself, "Little coquette! she neglects me only to make more sure of attracting me." The clever man never doubted that she had dressed herself so artistically expressly for him. This persuasion gave boldness to his eyes and self-satisfaction to his smile. He might, had be been less occupied with himself, have observed an expression of astonishment steal into Aurora's face as he came toward her. Spread out before her was a large sheet of the common brown paper used for herbariums. He leaned down over her in a very lover-like manner, and said—

"I did not know you were a botanist. What a universal woman you are!"

"I don't know the first syllable of botany. I am only admiring and wondering. Monsieur Saint Leon, the new poet, you know, has been so good as to bring me some of his dried flowers, gathered in his last tour."

While she was yet speaking, a young man ran up the steps from the garden, holding in his hand a large tuft of some plant.

The moment the painter saw M. Antonin St.

Leon, he perceived a possibility of Aurora not having dressed for M. Paul Latour.

"This is the *Linaria Cymbalaria*," said the newcomer, in a voice neither smooth nor musical, but which had tones in it that acted pleasantly on your nerves, as does the subtle perfume of aromatic mountain-herbs. He was not nearly so handsome as Paul, but as the poet sings, "*La beauté n'est pas toute aux lignes du visage*:" there was the same charm in M. Antonin's face as in his voice: in a word he was like what girls imagine a poet to be.

Aurora named the two gentlemen to one another, but there was no radiation of sympathy between them. Paul sat down a little distance from his hostess, and drawing an album toward him, seemed to be examining the photographs it contained.

"There is plenty of it at your very door," went on M. Antonin, alluding to the plant he had brought in. "Enough to suspend in half-a-dozen baskets."

"What a dear little flower!" exclaimed Aurora, enthusiastic about the flower, because pleased with the finder of it.

"Look here," said the poet, and the two heads approached perilously near—so near that one of Aurora's long golden curls fluttered over M. Antonin's peaked beard. Paul saw the young man give a start as though he had received an electric shock, and his head went quite down to the table. He was short-sighted, probably. "Here's the reason of its being called Cymbalaria; the bud is in the shape of a boat."

"Oh! so it is. How pretty! What a dear fairy barque!" How describe that caressing sound which a woman's voice assumes when her heart suddenly feels a new and unknown sympathy. A succession of exclamations followed in an harmonic scale. "Flowers are the only things we can look at with pleasure when they are dead," she said, turning over the leaves of the herbarium. "This ivory-hued, graceful *Parnassia Palustris* makes me think of a young girl dead. Wouldn't that do as a subject for a poem? Write one, will you?" and her eyes turned to M. Antonin with a strange anxious expression.

The silence that ensued made Paul look up. M. St. Leon was a pale man, but he had certainly become paler.

"*Le dîner est servi*," said old Baptiste's voice, very *à propos*, for the conversation was taking a sentimental turn, very embarrassing when there are three present.

That evening Aurora was in one of her maddest moods. She launched the most piquant words right and left, sacrificing even Valton pitilessly. She called St. Leon "*le petit dernier*," was satirical, even a little ill-natured to him. She sang with a passion that bordered on frenzy. At eleven o'clock, when the gentlemen were about to take leave, nothing would satisfy her but that instead of going away they should accompany her to the Bois de Satory.

"M. St. Leon must go and adore her patroness, Madonna Luna—they must go and give themselves

to Nature, let her take hold of their hearts, and make them forget this periwig world."

Valton whispered to her—

"My dear young lady, you cannot go alone with us men."

"Why not? won't you do as well as *la vieille vipère?*—meaning Marthe. "Call her then, and light your cigars; they will give fire to the conversation. I am going to tell *le petit dernier* that his verses creak like new shoes. You shake your head pitifully, in the fashion of the buried or unburied majesty of Denmark."

One quarter of an hour Aurora was talking transcendentalisms—the next, slang. She took off her straw hat, filled it with wild-flowers, told St. Leon he must play Bottom to her Titania, and put a garland round his hat. Valton must sing. He did so; giving with all his own magic "*L'Amour Maternel.*"

"Beautiful, my dear friend, if it were true. The only descending of maternal love I ever knew, was in blows on my head and shoulders," said Aurora.

It was three o'clock before they got Aurora home again. Mr. Dale was at the window watching for her return. That was the only sign he gave of fatherly anxiety.

"You must all of you come in," said Aurora.

"We have one spare room—St. Leon's piteous face begs for it—there are five sofas in the salon for the rest of you; and you shall have some hot coffee before you go away. Now isn't Marthe's face exas-

perating? Where's the hardship of a walk by moonlight?"

"Madame Marthe is not eighteen," observed St. Leon.

"Is that my fault?" she asked petulantly.

"What thorn has pricked our beautiful Aurora?" said Valton to Paul, as they lay on opposite sofas. "I never saw her in such a mood as this of to-day."

"My good friend, I am too sleepy to care for any goddess, but she of night."

The following day being Sunday, Paul, of course, dined in the Rue Blanche. That day week his aunt's drawing-room had appeared to him dull—oppressively dull. It produced now quite a different effect. Something like a refuge after a day of combat.

Every object was a familiar one. For years Madame Saincère had received him, sitting in her peculiar chair, with the same cordial smile and words of welcome. Nothing in the long-run pleasanter than the certainty of finding people as you left them.

Regina was ensconced in the same corner, by a window, where he had been accustomed to see her for more Sundays than he could easily count up. She was half hidden by a curtain, busy, as usual, with a book.

Madame Saincère naturally questioned Paul about the visit of the day before. "And the charming Aurora—was she as charming as ever?"

"Lovely as a goddess, and capricious as Puck," he answered.

His eyes wandered to the quiet girl in the background. She was undoubtedly as beautiful as Aurora, though not so brilliant.

Presently Madame Saincère begged Regina to inquire if the evening newspaper had come. As Regina crossed the salon Paul was struck by her manner of moving: it was slow, undulating. The expression of her face was grave, even to sadness.

While she was out of the room Paul said—

"I never expected Mademoiselle Regina to grow up graceful."

"She is not well, and that has softened her in every way," answered Madame Saincère. "Dr. M—— says she ought to have change of air and scene: it must be dull for her at Passy. And so, as I must go somewhere for the next six weeks, I shall take her to the seaside."

"When do you go?"

"In the course of next week."

"And where?"

"That's the question. Boulogne, Dieppe, Trouville, are all too crowded."

"Try St. Valéry," said Paul.

"That's not a bad idea."

Paul was peculiarly agreeable that day at dinner. He described with so much spirit the humors of Mr. Dale's guests, that Regina laughed merrily more than once—the first time that Paul had ever heard that pretty laugh, ending with a sort of little sigh.

"Does Mademoiselle Aurora draw as well as she sings?" It was so wonderful that Regina should speak to Paul, except to answer him, that this question, suddenly put, astonished him.

"Probably, for there's nothing, I believe, she could not do if she tried."

"The society about her will utterly spoil her," said Madame Saincère.

"In one way she is already spoiled beyond imagining," replied Paul. "She says and does whatever she pleases; but in spite of her girlish caprices and follies, she is a diamond of price—a creature to be adored and scolded."

"Diamonds are only fit for full-dress," returned his aunt, "not suitable for everyday wear—remember that, Paul."

"If she marries a man she admires and loves she will do very well," replied the nephew.

Paul remained later than was his wont that evening.

"Did you ever feel you had lived in a world before this?" he asked, wakening up from a reverie. "I have a dim recollection that in some other state of being we three have passed together such an evening as this."

"And can you remember anything of what followed?" laughed Madame Saincère.

"No; but all we have done and said and looked is as familiar to me as a twice-told tale."

"You have been dozing and dreaming. Goodnight."

When Paul had gone, Madame Saincère said to Regina—

"I believe he is fairly caught this time by Mademoiselle Aurora."

"Do people ever speak of the faults of those they love?" asked Regina.

"It's a pleasure like that we have in irritating the sting of a gnat," answered the lady.

CHAPTER XIV.

A LITTLE FOOL.

THREE days later Madame Saincère and Regina were at St. Valéry. They had left Paris so early in the morning that none but market-carts and street-sweepers were astir. Regina kept her head out of the coach window, to hide from her companions that her eyes were full of tears. She could not bear the thought that she was leaving Paris. She envied every passer-by who could remain there. She could have kissed the stones over which they were jolting.

"You are sure you have your keys, Regina?"

"Yes, madame."

"I wish the coachman would go slower; we shall be upset. You have taken some warm clothing with you, I hope? Do you see the basket with our lunch?"

"Yes, madame," was answered to both questions.

Then Madame Saincère was afraid that the umbrellas had been forgotten; and when they were found she and Annette had a long and interesting conversation as to the *pour et contre* of the safety of the apartment, left in charge of the house-porter and his wife, the cook having got a holiday.

During the journey to St. Valéry, Regina sat with her hands on her knees, apparently intent on what she could see from the railway-carriage window,

while, in fact, she was absorbed by her thoughts, hearkening to an internal voice explaining to her the cause of her morning's tears.

Madame Saincère would have held up her hands in despair could she have known what was passing within that screen of matter, called Regina.

Seeing the girl so pale, with bistre circles round her eyes, and feeling her shudder, Madame Saincère closed the window and covered her up with shawls, insisting on her drinking a glass of wine and eating a biscuit. Madame Saincère was a thousand leagues away from guessing why her *protégée* was pale and sad.

About the time the travellers reached their destination, Aurora was giving Paul a sitting. Her portrait was nearly finished, and singularly resembled the fair original. It was not alone a faithful transcript of her features, but the painter had animated them with one of the salient points of her character. Every line, every muscle, had been made to tell the same tale. Valton had already given the picture the title of "La Capricieuse." Studying her animated face, Paul felt his first enthusiastic admiration reviving. She was this afternoon so lively and so amusing, that, by some subtle association of ideas, he was led again to think of the contrast between her and the quiet girl in whose company he had spent the previous evening.

Paul, dear young-lady reader, is not a hero of romance: he is a man, like many of those whom you constantly meet and think well of. Men under thirty do actually fall headlong in love; and, as

some one has pithily said, "falls are bad things in themselves." At five-and-thirty men make up their minds to be in love or not.

Paul was extremely disposed to be in love with Aurora.

After his visitor was gone, he locked the antechamber door, took a cigar, and set to work to give the finishing touches to the portrait, while his recollection of the original was still vivid. As his brush altered a tress of hair, or added color to the cheek, lustre to the eye, roundness to the throat, his reflections were as follows:—"Paul, be reasonable; marry, if marry you must, so as to have a peaceable home. My aunt is right. Beautiful Auroras are not made to keep house, to look after children, and attend to the comfort of husbands. Your picture finished, dear muse, goddess, fairy! I must forget you."

Paul found the day long and wearisome. He discovered that all those whom he habitually saw had left Paris. Every one had taken wing for the seaside or to some Baths. The Boulevards were a desert. The only acquaintance he met in his afternoon's stroll was Dr. M——.

Paul hailed him.

"What's wrong?" asked Dr. M——.

"Ennui."

"You require change of air, also?" retorted the doctor. "Why not go to St. Valéry?"

"Why there?"

"Go elsewhere if you please. But I cannot stop to discuss the point or I shall miss my dinner. By

a rare chance, I can dine with my family to-day. Will you come with me?"

Paul, in the extremity of his dulness, accepted the invitation, and got into the doctor's carriage.

Though Paul had known Dr. M—— for the last five years, he had never seen Madame M——.

The M—— family were already at dinner when the doctor unexpectedly made his appearance with a guest. Besides the wife and two little girls, there was the doctor's mother. A cover was quickly added for Paul; the host taking his seat between his wife and mother—the latter a most reverend-looking personage.

The greatest simplicity was visible in the dresses of the ladies and children, and in all the arrangements of the table. After the little embarrassment felt by recluses at the sight of a stranger had passed away, there was no want of cheerfulness. Dr. M——, whom Paul had been accustomed to see everywhere usurp the lead in conversation, here was reduced to playing the second part. Each of the ladies and children had something interesting to relate to the head of the house, principally the performances of the little girls at their day-school.

After dinner the grandmother and granddaughters disappeared, and then the doctor asserted himself, launching out into one of his most abstruse dissertations. Paul was amused, watching the laudable efforts of the wife to keep awake.

"Go to bed, my dear girl," said the doctor. "M. Latour and I will smoke in my study."

"You are a more fortunate man than I supposed, doctor," said Paul, between one whiff and another.

Dr. M—— gave an assenting puff.

"There is a delightful patriarchal air about your home that I don't believe is common in Paris."

Another potent puff from the doctor; who said, with a look in the direction of the door through which his wife had passed, "*She* is a most excellent woman, simple, devoted, and contented. Ours was not a marriage '*de raison*.' She was extremely nice-looking, and it must have cost her at first many a struggle to lead so retired a life; but my mother has very strict notions, and it would have been at the cost of never-ending quarrels had Eugenie gone into the world, even under the protection of her own family. As to my accompanying her, that was out of the question. I felt for her, though I said nothing. I never heard her murmur. My mother told me she fretted, but she always received me with a smile. After the birth of our first child, which unluckily did not happen before the fourth year of our marriage, she ceased even in secret to care for gayeties, and from that period has become more and more my friend. I might call her my partner in business, so well does she manage when any of my patients call or send during my absence." The doctor and his guest smoked some time in silence, and then Dr. M—— added, "All depends on choosing what will wear well. Nothing showy ever does."

"What you say tallies with a conclusion I came to this morning," said Paul. "Even while dreaming

of a great possible joy, I had a vision of the consequences it might entail."

"Of the headache after the intoxication," observed the doctor.

"Precisely. Just as I was about to fall at the feet of the most enchanting creature I ever beheld, I foresaw the possibility of one day not caring about her."

"Better choose a woman at whose feet you are not ready to fall, and you may end by adoring her. How is it you have never thought of Mademoiselle Regina?"

"Regina!" exclaimed Paul.

"Regina," affirmed the doctor. "Is she not as lovely as a houri? is she not well dowered? is she not as good as an angel? isn't her whole life known to you? Faith, you are difficult!"

"But I have not the smallest preference for her; that is to say, I have a certain regard for her, as one has for a child who has grown up under your eye. I wish Mademoiselle Regina well. I take an interest in her," went on Paul, like one who is gradually clearing a point to himself; "it would grieve me ever to know of any evil befalling her."

"That's enough to begin with," replied the doctor.

"But she is so cold, so silent, so little companionable."

"Ah! I shouldn't have guessed her to be cold; her eyes do not betoken want of feeling, though they are not to be read as you run. As a physiologist I can assure you she is not lymphatic, a gen-

erous blood courses through her veins. But what the devil have I to do with making marriages," said Dr. M—— hastily; and then resolutely mounted one of his hobbies, nor could Paul succeed in dismounting him.

Madame Saincère had lived too long to be easily surprised, but one day she sat with eyes and mouth open, "afraid with amazement." She had been reading a letter from her sister, and this letter contained a formal proposal of marriage for Mademoiselle Nolopœus.

Paul proposing for Regina! who could ever have dreamed of such a possibility? And Madame Latour not only consenting, but making the proposition. Paul had never shown any attention to Regina, had scarcely seemed conscious of her existence. And Regina? Ah! here Madame Saincère stopped—a light began to break in upon her. She laughed aloud, though alone, and then she re-read her sister's letter. It was really true. Paul had told his mother that if she was in earnest as to his marrying, she must accept of Mademoiselle Nolopœus as a daughter-in-law; it was to take or to leave; and Madame Latour, reflecting on the young lady's *dot*, her amiable qualities, her connections on the mother's side, had graciously consented to overlook the Bohemian father.

"Paul then has made sure of Regina's consent," thought Madame Saincère, as she wrote back that

she must have a conversation with Paul before she mentioned his offer to Regina.

She telegraphed to Paris, and the following day Paul walked into her little salon in the hotel of the "Lion d'Or."

"You can look me in the face and tell me that you seriously wish to marry Regina?" burst out Madame Saincère.

"Certainly I have that courage, for I mean to marry Regina if she will have me."

"But you do not love her—not even according to your fashion?"

"Perhaps. Who knows? though I am not aware to what peculiar fashion of loving you allude.

"No offence to you, my good Paul, when I say that your fashion of loving has a strong family resemblance to that of all men organized to be poets and artists. All genius, all exceptional talent, is of its nature egotistical. One like you, enamored of your art, will infallibly make a wretched husband, and break the heart of a woman with a spark of feeling. You need not be offended, you err in good company. Take my advice, let Regina alone, and marry some common-place girl, who, so long as you allow her plenty of pocket-money and amusement, will not trouble herself as to the amount of your love for her."

"Thank you for your opinions and counsels, but I fancy Regina will suit me very well. I have seen her grow up—she is a good steady girl. I flatter myself I *do* know something of *her* character."

"Possibly; though you may really be flattering yourself in thinking you understand her. Because she is undemonstrative, you fancy you have found a capital mill-horse. Have a care, Paul; my idea is, that she will develop into a passionate woman; and you, who are as cold as ice . . . . "

"Cold as ice! What makes you think so?" interrupted Paul.

"Oh! your imagination and your senses are keen enough. A young girl will easily mistake their ardor for warmth of heart. But with you, and such as you, there must be a priestess for your godship. You must be fed with illusions, and, consequently, must from time to time have a new priestess."

Paul laughed, and said—

"Suppose the god has turned sick of priestesses, and desires to descend from his pedestal, and to subside into private life?"

She answered—

"This I know, that temperament will always have the upper hand in life, and you will always require a priestess and incense!"

"Then I am to understand, you refuse my proposal."

"I disapprove of it, but I have no right to keep it from Regina; since her natural guardians refuse her their care, she must decide the question for herself."

"You will not prejudice her against me; and, of course, there is no necessity for mentioning that I ever loved any one else."

"It is difficult to wall out the past, Paul; but on that subject I see no necessity to enter. I shall not dissuade Regina from accepting you, but I shall undoubtedly point out to her that the wife of an artist must arm herself with a double armor of patience."

The Mephistopheles who is ever at the ear of men and women of the world, suggesting evil explanations of the acts of their neighbors, now whispered to Madame Saincère, that the only reason for this step of Paul's was, that, by the death of two childless uncles, Regina's fortune had been trebled. The De Rochetaillées would be sure to accuse her (Madame Saincère) of making the match. Whose the fault that she had the power to do so? Their conscience must tell them that it was their own.

A little drama had been enacting before her, and she had seen nothing of it.

It is not pleasant to discover how completely we are in the dark as to what is going on in the minds and hearts of those with whom we live: to look around a room full of our intimates, and to have to confess to ourselves that all we can answer for knowing of them is their exterior. People dance, sing, laugh, compliment; take one another by the hand and say, "What a pleasant evening we have passed! —how merry we have been!"—and all the time there has been disappointment, pique, rivalry, heart-sickness in many a bosom. Ah! what battles are fought out in the obscurity of the human heart! What sepulchres of untold agonies are our souls!

Madame Saincère waited till late in the evening,

so as to make sure of no interruptions before she spoke to Regina. She said abruptly—

"I have received another proposal of marriage for you, Regina."

"Thank you, madame, I do not mean to marry," was the quick rejoinder.

"Very well, my dear. No one will force your inclination; but I have promised to make known to you the offer, and therefore I must beg you to listen to me for five minutes. This time the person is not a stranger to you."

Regina gave Madame Saincère a quick half-scared look.

"It is my nephew, Paul."

Regina made no answer. She seized hold of the table by which she was sitting, for the room seemed to be turning round.

"Ah! *mon Dieu, mon Dieu*—what a misfortune! She loves him," muttered Madame Saincère—running into the next room for a glass of water. She held it to Regina's lips, saying with a harshness she could not subdue—"Don't let us have hysterics. I thought you were above that sort of thing. Come, swallow some water."

Madame Saincère was irritated, because she was both sorry and uneasy at what she foresaw was to be the upshot of the business.

"I cannot divine any cause for more agitation now than in the case of M. Desjardins; not so much reason, for you have known Paul more than half your life."

"I beg your pardon, madame. I am not well; that makes me nervous." The girl's lips were blue, her whole body was in a tremble. "I—I—." She threw her arms round Madame Saincère's neck and said with fluttering breath,—"Be good to me, I have no one but you."

"I wish to be good to you, child. Why do you doubt it?" and Regina felt warm motherly tears on her brow. What a look of intense affection shot from the orphan girl's eyes!

The world-experienced woman, the woman by the world subdued, shrank from the girl's gaze, as we do when we meet the confiding look of any helpless creature we know to be predestined to pass through some terrible suffering. Madame Saincère's feeling was very much the reverse of the spectator who, safe on shore, watches a probable shipwreck. It was, indeed, an access of interest which made her try to assume a cool matter-of-fact manner. She said—

"Let us try to make use of what common sense God has mercifully bestowed on us; for of all affairs which require good sense, marriage is the foremost. Almost everything else has been modified since the Creation; but that which was a matter of necessity then, seeing there were but two people in the world, has become a fatal law. Do remember, my dear child, that, let a man and woman hate one another ever so much, once married and there is no breaking the chain. When people marry, they take a formal engagement to make two wills work as one,—it's in the bond; but it's an impossibility. Pascal has said,

'*L'homme n'est ange ni bête.*' I say he is very often solely the last; and his wife, knowing him to be so, must pretend to think him the first. To be able to do so is the best foundation for her peace; but the gift of blindness is not vouchsafed to every one. As for Paul, I believe him less fitted to make a woman happy than M. Desjardins. Paul is too much in the world's eye. Celebrated men and women, having to give much to the public, have less for home. Paul, my dear Regina, has the organization belonging to his vocation. He is easily influenced; easily depressed: he is irritable—morbid—often doubtful of his own powers. To tell you the truth," added Madame Saincère, carried away by her subject, 'it is my decided opinion that poets, painters, writers, musicians, have no business with wives. Let their works be their offspring. They ought to leave it to men who can't tell Beethoven from Strauss, or a fine picture from a colored lithograph, to be fathers of families. However, I may as well hold my tongue; I shall not change the world."

Madame Saincère stopped, and waited for an answer. As it did not come, she pronounced an interrogative "Well?" so loudly that Regina started. The pale cheek flushed as she said softly, oh! so softly, in a voice she had learned within the last five minutes, a voice with divine harmonies in it, the secret of which each mortal possesses but for an evanescent period, she said—

"Do you think—it seems so wonderful—that *he* should care for me! Can it be?"

And this was the result of madame Saincère's appeal to common sense. She gave a dry "Hem!" and lightly kissed Regina's cheek, saying—

"Paul must answer that question himself; he only gave me a commission to ask you to marry him."

It was a strange duet this: each singer hearing only his own part.

The last words on Madame Saincère's lips that night were, "A little fool—a poor little fool."

CHAPTER XV.

HAPPY!

It is good to have been, once in a life, such "a little fool" as Regina was that night. All happiness has to be paid for; but it is much to have had the happiness—so many lives pass without it—pass in a dull, gray indifference. Paul's mother, for instance, had never known a similar feeling to that now experienced by her intended daughter-in-law. Poor Madame Latour! not one wish or project of hers but had been realized in the way most painful to her.

Nor had Madame Saincère any conception of the hymn of joy now being sung in Regina's bosom. Madame Saincère's nature had never been fully developed. Some fibres had never vibrated. Happiness is as necessary to the complete development of our faculties as grief; and Madame Saincère had never known the supremest earthly good—that of loving and being loved. It was this shortcoming which gave a something of hardness to her character. When, in wishing Regina good-night, she had added, "You will see Paul to-morrow," had Regina spoken as she felt, and said "Not so soon," Madame Saincère would have wondered. She had never felt as Regina was feeling, that craving of the soul for

space and solitude—to understand, to measure, to embrace its sudden wonderful happiness.

And Paul! Well, it is not to be expected that he should be in a similar frame of mind. No man of his age or character renounces all his past without regret—nay, more—without dread. Until he had been sure of Regina's acceptance of his offer, suspense had kept in check all other sensations. With certainty came reaction. Had there been a possibility of so doing, he would have drawn back. The die was cast, and he must accept his fate.

While preparing for his interview with his betrothed, he called up a vision of her the very reverse of all that had been most captivating to him. She was the very antipodes of Adeline and Aurora, those lively, rosy, blonde beauties—delightful, wayward, and unreasonable. Regina was dark, and pale, and calm, as only strength can be. It was thus he expected to find her.

What was his astonishment to meet a creature as strange to him as if seen for the first time!—a creature all grace and softness; a radiance not of this earth shining on her countenance.

A flood of life had inundated Regina's being. She was as new a creation as Eve, when first presented to Adam. The same Divine Spirit which out of Chaos had produced the order of the Spheres, had breathed on her, and bestowed light and harmony. All the confusion and discord of her soul had vanished.

Paul, as his painter's eye rested on her face, won-

dered how he could have been so long blind to its ineffable suavity. Even at that instant of surprise and admiration, the thought crossed him of what a lovely model she would be for an "Annunciation." Never did he remember to have beheld such a type of candor and modesty. She was more heavenly than any Madonna of Raphael. His were the raptures of an artist, not those of a lover; in fact he was not a lover. It never dawned on him that the greatest charm of the exterior was due to what was unseen. Paul was, in truth, very little of an idealist. He went no deeper than the surface, and in art, as in other things, we only find what we seek.

The girl divined his admiration, and with the ignorance of her age she believed admiration and love to be synonymous. Older and wiser than she might have been misled by the ardor of his looks and words.

Madame Saincère said to herself, "The fire of the volcano has been apparently long smouldering—it has burst into flame at last. Who would have thought it?"

Even Paul believed that what he felt was love, and of a certain kind perhaps it was. That evening when he was alone, he made an exquisite sketch of Regina from memory. He drew her standing, leaning slightly forward, as if in the act of listening. The grace of his lines had never been more perfect. "I shall astonish them," he said. "The them" alluded to, were the critics and connoisseurs, and the public who follow after, like sheep over a hedge.

When next day he showed the drawing to Regina, she gazed at it some time in silence, with every feature refined by an emotion rendering her complexion quite transparent. Turning her fathomless eyes on him, she asked, "Is this really like me?"

He hesitated for an instant to answer, for that voice was unknown to him, and then he spoke his thought brusquely, saying—

"No, the reality is far superior; but I shall succeed in painting you, Regina, and I shall owe you not only my happiness, but my fame. Raphael had no more faultless model."

It was the fable of the Bulbul and the Rose put in action. The song of the lover made the maiden blush into even more loveliness. Regina was still child enough to perceive no fault in Paul's continual ravings about her beauty. While he was expatiating on the purity of the lines of her figure—remarks the warmth of which was scarcely checked by respect—she, instead of growing vain, was grateful to him for seeing anything worth praising in her.

At the end of the month Madame Saincère took Regina back to Paris; and as there was no reason for delaying the marriage, she commenced all the necessary preliminaries. She had already received a willing consent from the De Rochetaillées, and was in possession of the certificates of the death of Regina's parents and of that of her baptism. The only thing to do, besides ordering the *trousseau*, was to agree on the terms of the marriage settlement.

Accordingly, one morning, Madame Saincère spoke

to Paul on the subject. "Regina having so much larger a fortune than you have, I should advise you, Paul, to settle some considerable part of her money on herself."

"I meant to propose the *communauté de biens*," he said. "I think, in our rank of life, independence for a woman absurd. However, do as you please. I shall sign whatever you and she agree on."

"As for Regina, she knows nothing about the necessity of contracts. My proposition arises from a wish to prove to the De Rochetaillées that we have not made the marriage from interested motives."

"They have no right to make any remarks, considering the way they have thrown the girl on us."

"But no one considers 'the right they have' before they make remarks, and I should not wish our conduct to afford any foundation for ill-natured suspicions."

"My dear aunt, do what you please about Regina's money, but spare me; discussions concerning settlements are enough to disgust a man with marriage."

Madame Saincère was not pleased; she had expected greater liberality from Paul. M. Desjardins had offered to settle the whole of Regina's fortune on herself. Poor little fool! ejaculated Madame Saincère a second time.

The moment Regina came to understand on what subject Madame Saincère was consulting her, she said, impetuously—

"If, as you say, my being one-and-twenty gives

me the disposal of my money, then I give it all to Monsieur Latour: so that is easily arranged."

"But that cannot be, my good child. Paul would never allow you to do such a foolish thing. Both he and I are bound to take care of you. Regina, nothing in this life is certain, except changes; a thousand eventualities may occur which would render your contract of marriage an anchor of safety for Paul, as well as you."

"It is dreadful," exclaimed Regina, "to be caring about the safety of my money, when I give him myself. If I were queen of the whole world, I would make him accept all I possessed; I would have nothing but what he gave me as a gift. I wish to owe him everything. Oh, madam! it will be so delightful to be obliged to ask him for what I need."

"You very silly girl! where have you picked up such nonsense? A settlement you must have; Paul's honor requires it as much as your interest. He is not immortal."

Regina turned deadly white, but did not speak. Madame Sainecère noticing her change of color, said—

"It is the duty of friends to look after those who have lost their senses—that is your predicament at this moment. You will thank me some day for what, in your heart, you are stigmatizing as worldliness."

"I can never have any interest separate from M. Latour's; I pray to God to take me away before such a misery befalls me." And her tone was that of one already seized on by a presentiment of martyrdom.

Madame Saincère was at fault—influenced by a respect such as that which restrains us from uttering anything base or mean before a child. No, she neither could nor would enlighten Regina as to possibilities.

"Why must I have a settlement?" went on Regina. "Poor people do not have any, do they? My mother had none."

"Your mother's marriage was a peculiar one. Suppose we leave the arrangements to Paul?"

"Yes. Tell him I don't wish to be independent of him,—that I beg he will accept all I have. I would like to owe him everything—to belong to him altogether—to have no life of my own: that's my hope."

"There's nothing real, nothing reasonable in what you say. No imaginable love can annihilate your individuality or your will. Begin with your notions, and you will blunder on from one mistake to another. Your reason has been given to you to make use of. If young folks would only be guided by their elders!" concluded Madame Saincère.

And if they were, would it not be like having summer without a preceding tender, graceful spring?

BOOK II.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN ANNIVERSARY.

Regina was at the zenith of her contentment when she arrived in the Rue Bleue after her wedding-tour to the Pyrenees. She loved, and nothing doubted. But she was as ignorant as to whom she adored as was Psyche, that eternal prototype of young womankind, when she left her paternal home to follow the god. A strange thing it is to love, and yet be so thoroughly in the dark as to the object of your love. It would not much matter if the obscurity might last; but no! there is some mysterious law which condemns the loving to seek for knowledge and light.

Regina had a great success among Paul's bachelor friends. She was so modest, so unaffected, so evidently devoted heart and soul to her husband, that she spread an epidemic of matrimony among them. Tully, Valton, and Bürgmüller became unfailing attendants of Paul's Friday artist soirées. Ernst of course confided to the world that he was *ein pé amoureux* of the beautiful Madame Paul. Ah, had he only known her a little sooner! Like a withered tree suddenly sending forth new branches, so did he have

a new growth of sentiment and enthusiasm. Madame Paul was installed as the saint in his *betit* Mariensgarten. This did not, however, prevent his assuring Valton that a *grande dame* at Trouville had made him advances. But that was a mere profane love, not worthy to pass the gates of the Mariensgarten.

George Tully de la Roche Belusson elected Madame Paul as the Laura of his sonnets, for the sake of the *angelico sorriso* with which she listened to his odes, even when he recited that famous one already mentioned, with eyes so charged with electric anathematizing power, that they must have paralyzed any grocer unlucky enough to receive his glance.

Paul was amused by Regina's unconsciousness of the admiration she excited. He watched, with sly complacency, how completely he himself absorbed all her attention. Latour was as nearly happy in those days as it is given to mortals to be. He enjoyed his contentment as men do good health, unconsciously and without gratitude. It was during the first year of his marriage that he painted that "Annunciation" for the Church of ——, which gave him a European reputation. Every bit of canvas, signed with his name, brought its weight in gold. Princesses bade for them. Poets sang them. Every one of his works, dated at that period, is distinguished by an extreme delicacy and refinement, which you seek for in vain afterward. Emerson says—

"You cannot hide any secret. If you make a

picture or a statue, it sets the beholder in that state of mind you had when you made it."

Madame Sainère was so satisfied with the state of things in the little household in the Rue Bleue, that she began to take credit to herself for the marriage, to boast of it as her doing. Madame Latour was only half pleased. She was still longing for a grandchild.

Aurora, though Bürgmüller, and indeed all her circle, pressed her to seek Regina's acquaintance, had not followed the advice; nevertheless she continually questioned Valton and Ernst about Madame Paul. She made them tell her how she wore her hair, how she dressed, what she talked about. As to this last, they owned they had little to repeat. Madame Paul was more of a listener than a talker.

Paul had had his wife photographed by all the best Parisian photographers, and Aurora coaxed Bürgmüller to obtain surreptitiously for her one of these photographs.

"I don't wish M. Latour to know that I have it," she said.

And when Ernst brought it to her, Aurora said in her most decided way—

"I can tell you this, Regina has a soul above her husband's. She is his superior; it is to be hoped he will never find it out, or he will hate her."

"She is undoubtedly angelic, my dear Hubert, but she has not his talent for painting," answered Ernst.

"An original discovery, dear Ernst!" and Aurora

dropped into silence. Her eyes, widely opened, were fixed on the rosy Teutonic visage opposite to her.

Had he not been so possessed by his familiar demon of fatuity, he might have perceived that her spirit was wandering. His besetting foible did for him what it does for everybody—distorted all the objects he looked upon. Aurora's absent soul returned, and found him in the midst of a most brilliant declaration of love. She broke it off by a long ripple of laughter, like a flute cadenza.

"This is too bad," she said, when she had fairly arrested his fluency. "How old are you? Do you remember? Forty-five, and I am a year under twenty, and yet I can't be Hubert for you! How lonely you men make women! We find small companionship among ourselves, for we are like a herd of cows, always butting at one another, and that's from rivalry; and if, to escape that, we turn to such as *you*, more than middle-aged, instead of honest friendship you offer us a Fools' Paradise. Marry, or be lonely—that's what men have decreed for women. I choose the last."

"You ask for impossibilities, Aurora—Hubert," replied Ernst, almost angrily. "You are young, attractive, and men are not statues."

"Humbug!" she answered. "You have been very unkind, Ernst. I wanted a friend just now, I was on the point of saying, Lend me your ear—the ear of a safe confidant."

"It all comes of a bad habit, Hubert; forgive me. You know I would go through fire and water for you.

Tell me your secret. I will never again breathe a word of my passion to you."

"Very well; now let us go on talking of the painter and his wife. And so he makes her happy?"

Ernst raised his eyes in attestation of the fact.

"She worships the ground he stands on."

"That decides me not to know her," said Aurora. "A sight to exasperate a saint, for I am sure he accepts her idolatry as only his due." She thrust both hands through her hair, making herself look like a lovely Discord. "I am going to compose a cantate, after the fashion of the 'Desert;' it is to be called 'Juggernaut.' I shall have a soprano, raving mad with love for the god, and two choruses—one of devotees, Hindoos, and the other of English—and dances, and at last such a crash—my soprano precipitating herself with a hymn, pathetic, exulting, tragic, to be crushed by her idol. It will be grand, won't it? And I shall dedicate it to Madame Paul Latour. What a fool I am to put myself in a rage! It's all right, and I am very glad the beautiful Regina adores her Paul. There, are you satisfied?"

"Oh, quite!" and Ernst drew a long breath; then he added, in a low voice, "Dear Hubert, I pray that you may one day love a husband as Madame Paul does—don't look so angry—believe me there is more happiness for a woman in loving than being loved."

"How can you, a man, judge of that?"

"Men and women are very much the same, and it makes *me* happy to love."

"Go on and prosper, dear Ernst," she said, with a light laugh.

Bürgmüller left Aurora, wondering what it was she had been going to confide to him. He speculated freely, and often came very near what he was seeking, but he never actually found it. In fiction, motives and feelings are arbitrarily laid bare—in reality, souls keep their secrets.

It was on the 15th of October that Ernst had had this conversation with Aurora. It was the anniversary of Regina's wedding-day, and this was what was passing in the Rue Bleue:—

Regina had that morning, very naturally, expected some affectionate compliments from Paul. She went into her dressing-room expecting to see some flowers, as on her fête-day (bouquets are obligatory offerings on such occasions); there were none. She was sure to find some in the salon, or by her plate at breakfast. It was a trifle to be anxious about, but then there are no trifles where the heart is concerned. The young wife's eager eyes looked in vain. "Surely Paul had not forgotten what had occurred on that day last year; perhaps he had not recollected the date." A woman is the subtlest of all advocates in finding a loop-hole of escape for a culprit who is loved. "When he came to look over his engagements he would remember." Breakfast passed without any tender allusions, and it was not till a quarter of an hour before dinner that Paul and Regina met again. He came into the salon with the lively step of a man in good-humor. She was stand-

ing rather disconsolately at one of the windows overlooking the garden at the back of the house.

"My dear Regina"—his voice was joyous—"my dear Regina"—she turned to him, certain that he was going to say the wished-for words—"I have a piece of good news for you; the very thing I have so longed for has come to pass to-day. Guess who has been here—who has been for the last hour and a-half in the atelier."

Regina gulped down the ball that had risen in her throat, and valiantly named M. M——, the eminent art critic.

"Better than that. The Princess M——, my dear girl. Yes—she has begged me to paint a picture for her."

"I am very glad," said Regina, striving to appear so, but having an involuntary consciousness that Paul's joy was not very dignified. It is horribly painful to be forced to see the least flaw in an idol.

"And now," continued her husband, "I must run away and dress, for I dine with her Highness."

"To-day, what a pity!" she exclaimed. "Paul, have you forgotten?"

"What?" and his voice was disagreeably sharp.

"To-day is the 15th of October—our wedding-day."

"Ah! I am sorry it has so happened—we will keep it to-morrow; one day is as good as another when all are happy; and you see, my dear angel, even had I recollected the important date, I could not have declined the invitation. When Fortune comes to our

door, we must open it wide. Don't spoil my luck by a sentimental face: it's more a matter of business than pleasure, I assure you."

Paul descried something sparkling like dew-drops on his wife's long eyelashes, and immediately resolved on flight. He gave her a hasty kiss and ran out of the room.

In half an hour he returned, and found Regina sitting in the dark. He set down his lighted candle, and rang the bell angrily.

"Why haven't you brought in the lamp?" he asked of the servant. "Do you hear? it is to be lighted every day at dusk."

Up to this moment not a single unpleasant word had ever occurred between husband and wife. There is always a pause of unwillingness before any Rubicon is passed. So Paul poured out his irritation on old Joseph, his valet.

As soon as Regina saw Paul angry, she forgot her own griefs in anxiety to allay the storm. She sought for something agreeable to say, but she had to struggle with a bashfulness all delicate natures feel in the utterance of personal compliments, ere she could say—

"How well you look in evening dress, Paul!"

"This demi-obscurity which you have chosen is favorable to me"—then he rang the bell violently again. "Get me a cab, and see that the horse can move. I shall be late—thanks to all this nonsense"—he added in a mutter.

"You will oblige me, Regina, if, during the eve-

ning, you will put the sketch-books I had to exhibit to-day back into their places. Make Joseph light the gas for you. I am sorry to give you such a task, but it is one I cannot trust to a servant."

"It won't be any trouble. You promised I should have charge of the atelier."

"Remember to arrange the books in rotation according to the years. Good-bye; if you feel dull, go over to my aunt, and don't sit up for me."

He went without any further leave-taking. He was not of the forgiving kind.

Joseph, as he shut his master into the coach, said, with what he meant for an agreeable smile—

"If I were to take a bouquet to Madame from Monsieur?"

"Do as you please," returned Paul, giving the suggester an angry look.

"It begins—it begins!" sighed old Joseph.

The old man was a sort of heir-loom in the family of the Latours de la Mothe. At ten years old he had entered the service of Colonel Latour, the handsome aide-de-camp of the Marechal O——. Joseph had seen something of gay life. Colonel Latour had been a spendthrift and a roué—had broken the hearts of two wives, and squandered their fortunes. Joseph had certain reminiscences which helped him to understand Paul's angry mood, and his young mistress's sadness. Joseph had recollected, though his master had not, what day it was.

When Regina saw beautiful flowers by the side of her solitary plate, her eyes brightened.

"De la part de Monsieur," said Joseph; telling his monstrous falsehood without any remorse, and then he took on himself to coax Madame to eat. By the time she had finished her dinner, Joseph had brought about a reaction in Regina's feelings, and it was quite cheerfully that she begged him to light one of the gas-burners in the atelier. She had something to do there for M. Latour. After she had placed the sketch-books in their proper places on the shelf, she began to gather together the drawings strewn about on chairs and tables.

This part of her task did not proceed very rapidly, for she had enough of the artist in her to appreciate and be interested in what she saw. She lingered wistfully over the many female heads, and there were dozens of them, drawn in pencil, washed in sepia, or colored carefully. They were all beautiful, and she wondered how it was Paul had not married sooner—it was surely impossible he could have been indifferent to all these lovely creatures. It was strange how he had waited so long, and then chosen *her*—a person of whom he had scarcely ever taken any notice. He really had scarcely known anything of her when they married; she doubted if he understood her now. She believed she was of more worth than he thought. She wished—all young, generous natures do have such wishes—she wished for some opportunity for a great self-sacrifice, that something might happen: that he might be bitten by a mad dog, and she save him by sucking the wound; or that he might have the plague, and she nurse him

back to health—herself dying. Ah! how willingly she would die only to hear him say as she heard it said in her heart, "Regina, I love you!"

Gradually it dawned on her that, among the female heads of the sketches, there was one oftener reproduced than the others, and that it was one familiar to her. At first, she fancied it was like that Miss Aurora, of whom she had been jealous; but it could not be, for these drawings were dated years back. All at once, and without any apparent association of ideas, she thought of that Madame Aubert or—no—Aubry, whom she had met at Juvigny, and then she recollected having said her face was familiar; and so it was; for there had been a picture of her in the atelier when she was a child. It was gone, but she remembered very well where it had hung, near that corner where there was now a coat-of-armor. Regina went and looked behind the armor, but there was no picture there.

She took out the drawings she had already consigned to the portfolios—always that same face on the margins of all the sketches done at Rome. It reappeared among the ruins, among columns and arches; there it was again in that careful study of the Campagna—that sick woman had Madame Aubry's features. She guessed now why Madame Latour had shown an aversion for that lady. She guessed, also—love is a clever master—why Madame Aubry had been so sarcastic about Paul. Ah! but she was old, now! those dates at Rome were more than fifteen years back. Madame Aubry was as old

as Paul; and her children must be grown-up. With that consoling thought Regina put away those waifs of her husband's early years back into their respective portfolios.

As she pushed them into their niche, she perceived a drawer open of a Louis XV. commode,—one of the prettiest articles of furniture in the atelier. As she was passing it she mechanically tried to push in the drawer, which resisted, as drawers are apt to do. It went in at one side and obstinately came out at the other. Regina persisted, and thought to overcome by force. In the struggle she pulled the drawer out, and all the contents fell on the floor. Very heterogeneous articles did Regina pick up—cigar-cases, neckties, worked slippers, old purses, old hotel bills, novels in yellow paper covers, vocabularies in every living language, a mask, odd gloves, a something rolled up in a white silk handkerchief. As she lifted this it opened, and out fell a thick long roll of fair hair, dry and faded, but still of a pale gold color. It had evidently been severed close to the neck. She had it still in her hand, when Joseph opened the atelier door; he had come to see if Madame did not require his services.

"What wonderful hair!" said Regina, holding it out to him.

"Hair! Is Madame sure it is not the tail of the Arab horse Monsieur was so fond of?"

"What! such fine gold silk hair the tail of a horse, Joseph!"

"Ah! now I recollect," said Joseph. "Monsieur

has lots of hair to paint from. Has Madame not found some others?"

"No, only this. It wants air, it smells mouldy."

"Monsieur has forgotten he had it. Monsieur was always very particular about hair. I remember his paying an ugly German broom-seller for some of her hair, because it was of some particular shade."

Regina said no more, but rolled up the hair in the handkerchief and replaced it in the drawer. She went at once to bed. Some woman's instinct, which so often stands a young wife in lieu of experience and judgment, led her to avoid any conversation with her husband that night.

CHAPTER XVII.

RIPPLES ON THE LAKE OF MATRIMONY.

Paul had left his house both irritated and sorry. The burden of his thoughts, as he drove to the Champs Elysées, was, that women managed, by their sentimentality, to make reasonable men thoroughly uncomfortable, and that assuredly the blessings of marriage were counterbalanced by the many checks it imposed on a man's liberty.

It was a great change, from his own dark drawing-room and Regina's disappointed face, to the blaze of light and the brilliant circle assembled in the Princess M.'s salons. It was like the change from December to June. Nothing could be more gracious than the reception accorded to the artist by the noble hostess; and the guests, to many of whom he was already personally known, followed H. H.'s example.

Paul found himself at once in a congenial sphere of grace and beauty—eye and ear equally caressed—the one by the sound of silver voices, the other by bright smiles. As he glanced around the circle, he started violently. Not for half an instant did he doubt that it was Madame Aubry who was within a few feet of him. Her lips were parted by the strange smile he knew so well—a smile that conveyed no impression of pleasure. As his look of recognition

met hers, she turned away her head—did so pointedly and decidedly. He had forgotten none of Adeline's ways: he understood her as perfectly now as he had done years ago—years many enough to tell them both they had left their youth behind them. At first he was aware of a great change in Madame Aubry's appearance. She looked either hectic or rouged. Her eyes were sunken. She appeared, in fact, what she was—a well-preserved woman. Those were his first impressions; but ere the evening ended, he had lost sight of any alteration; he saw her as she had been when they parted. It is always so; it is not the features or the bloom we care for in those dear to us—it is the well-known expression, and this always remains.

The whole time he was breathing the same atmosphere with her, Paul had a double consciousness. Carrying on at one moment a lively discussion on art with some connoisseurs, at another listening respectfully to H. H., he was the while speculating inwardly on what might be the result of this meeting with Adeline—chafing under her sarcastic smile and resolute repudiation of all knowledge of him.

"It is a fatality," thought he. Yes, a fatality, because the citadel was ill defended.

Paul slept little that night. The leading faculty, his imagination, was excited.

Regina asked him the following morning, at breakfast, if he were well?

"Quite," he answered in a tone that was civil, by a great effort.

She ought to have left him undisturbed to the newspaper he was reading. But she had little tact, and was, besides, oppressed by a fear that his unusual taciturnity arose from displeasure. Though if either of them had cause to be displeased, it was surely not Paul. But she, as all loving women do, felt ready to avow herself in fault, and to seek reconciliation.

"Was it a pleasant party?"

"Neither pleasant nor unpleasant."

"What did you do?"

At this last query he looked at her and said—

"I am a bad hand at gossipping. There were women pretty and not pretty; well and ill dressed; coquettish and silly, as usual. Several men in evening dress; one or two young, but most of them bald-headed."

Regina was silenced.

When Paul went to his atelier, she passed through a bitter quarter of an hour. She supposed that she must expect her husband to be different in the second year of their marriage to what he had been in the first. She had heard Monsieur This and Monsieur That speak roughly to their wives; and yet everybody knew they were attached to one another. She recalled to mind a conversation she had once heard at Madame Saincère's. A Monsieur Georges had said, in presence of Madame Georges, that if his wife died, he should never marry again—not that he had been unhappy, but to have his liberty; and Madame Georges had laughed and said,

"If she were a widow, she should marry again directly." Upon which M. Georges had answered angrily, that, "If she did, he would not acknowledge her when they met in Paradise." Women often find comfort in such recollections as these. Besides, Madame Saincère had warned her not to expect that Paul would remain lover-like in manner—had warned her that it was an impossibility, and that affection and friendship were excellent substitutes; a theory quite hateful to Regina; but what if it were true?

After this self-colloquy her heart was so sore that she felt impelled to seek the balm of Paul's presence, and went to the atelier. He was not painting—he was brooding and smoking, and in a mood common to mortals: he needed to be reconciled with himself. Regina, most assuredly, was not the person to do this. She was too young and unknowing; never even having had the experience of many girls, who have had opportunities of observing—"How mamma managed to put papa in good-humor again." Nor had she high animal spirits to help her. She was too heavily weighted by her love, and she was further checked by a sensation that had troubled her ever since her marriage. It was difficult to define. The nearest explanation would have been that of two people living together who did not understand a word of each other's language. She had striven over and over again against this disagreeable impression; and had more than once surprised her husband by certain starts of confidence, which

however, never led to any reciprocity from him. Paul never talked to Regina of his childhood, boyhood, or of his young man's life: never gossipped to her about former years, in the way a married lover does. Often and often there was lack of subjects of conversation between them. A very sad symptom. No surer sign of love than that of having *so much* to say to one another.

When Regina opened the atelier-door Paul laid aside his pipe, rose, and placed a chair for her. What superhuman efforts she made to find something agreeable to talk about! After diverging from topic to topic, with a want of connection distressing and fatiguing to them both, in her dire strait for something to say, for he gave her no assistance, she began to relate to him the story then publishing in some minor paper. Poor little woman! She believed she had at last succeeded in interesting him; he had ceased to fidget. The tale finished, she saw that her supposed listener was fast asleep. At the cessation of the sound of her voice, he awoke.

"You mesmerized me, my dear girl," he said.

"By my stupidity," she answered.

He could see how mortified she was. "You must not learn to be susceptible, Regina. When two persons are to pass their lives together, they must learn how best to be supportable to each other. Let us go and take a walk. I am not fit to do anything to-day."

To be just, it is impossible to insist too much on the point that Paul was meant by Nature to be a

good painter, and not a domestic man. Like all persons of strong imagination, he was the easy prey of *ennui*. The more poetically gifted the individual, the more sure is he to create trouble for himself; and when, added to the poetic gifts, there is a desire for fame, conjugal *tête-à-têtes* are utterly spoiled. Art is a jealous mistress, and makes her votaries intolerably egotistical.

Regina and her husband went to the Champ Elysées. Paul had obeyed a good impulse in proposing to go out, but he had not enough self-mastery to force himself to be a pleasant companion.

A multitude on foot, on horseback, in carriages, were abroad. Great personages and little folks were mustering in force for the coming winter. The fresh air, and the gay scene, restored Regina's spirits. She was as lovely a woman as any to be seen in that throng, and in Paris men never seem to have any business which interferes with their leisure to admire beauty. Paul fumed and fretted as he perceived the many glances of admiration levelled at his wife.

"How did you come to forget your veil?" he asked.

"I never wear one. It's not the fashion."

"You say right. It's never the fashion for women to be modest."

He stopped, and beckoned to an empty cab.

As he was handing in Regina, a lady on horseback, attended by a large party of gentlemen, passed. The lady pulled up her horse, stared at Regina,

slightly nodding to Paul, who but slightly lifted his hat.

"Have you no recollection of who that person was who looked so earnestly at you?" asked Paul, when they were in the cab.

"No, none."

"That was Hortense, my aunt's cook when you first came to the Rue Blanche."

"Hortense? Oh! I would give anything to be able to thank her for all her kindness to me. She was so good to me all the time I was at Passy, never forgetting to send me beautiful *étrennes*, that I might seem as well cared for as the other girls."

"You and Hortense must never have any intercourse. Let me warn you never to take any notice of her; indeed, I believe she will avoid you. Ah! there goes your grandmother, the Comtesse de Rochetaillée, in her carriage covered with armorial bearings. She little imagines her daughter's daughter is passing in this shabby cab. Had you married the greatest idiot among modern vicomtes, she would have taken you to her bosom. Your marriage with me is scarcely more respectable, in her eyes, than your mother's with your father. The faults of the parent are renewed in the daughter."

"If you had read her letter to Madame Saincère, you would know how differently she feels. She was so glad you should marry me!" and Regina slipped her hand into that of Paul's.

He held it for a minute, then put it aside, saying—

"We must behave ourselves with propriety in

public, even though we belong to the world of artists; neither do I wish to be taken for any one else than your husband."

It must not be supposed that Paul was always as little agreeable as on this morrow of the Princess's dinner. There is a succession of fine days during which are gathering the elements for a storm; or there is rainy, tempestuous weather, to be followed by sunshine. The same alternations occur in our lives. The teller of a tale cannot note down the lesser variations, he can only relate the principal vicissitudes. For a time all went smoothly again with Regina.

"You spoil that husband of yours," said Madame Saincère one day to her. The remark was made on one occasion, when Paul had told his wife he should be ready to walk with her at two o'clock. Regina knowing how it vexed him to have to wait, had been sitting since half-past one in her bonnet and shawl. "You are *too* obedient, too slavish, child," went on Madame Saincère: "there is too little of equality between you and Paul; you are afraid to keep him waiting five minutes, and he does not care though you should do so for an hour. It's all right to be obliging, but it does not answer to make a man feel himself so completely master."

Madame Saincère was a clever woman, but not well versed in one particular subject. She did not comprehend that Regina's conduct was that of a woman who is not sure of her power.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HINC ILLÆ LACHRYMÆ.

All Paris—that is, all *in* Paris who were worthy of being counted somebody—one Sunday were to be congregated in the Church of La Madeleine. A member of a great Russian family had become a convert to Catholicism, and was to preach in behalf of a mission to Honolulu.

Madame Paul Latour had been requested to be one of the *Dames Quêteuses*, an office answering to a plate-holder at a church-door in English churches. Paul, considering the rank and fashion of the lady from whom the request came, had decided that Regina must accept the invitation. The greater number of the stronger sex who can be attracted on such occasions, the greater chance of a large collection: so rank, or fame, or beauty is a necessary qualification for a *Quêteuse*.

The first duty each chosen lady performs, is to despatch a printed circular to all her friends, requesting their attendance at a particular church on a particular day, when so-and-so is to preach in favor of such-and-such a cause. At the bottom of the circular is a list of the *Quêteuses* who will parade the church, presenting a beautiful bag to you, dropping you a courtesy even for a sous, adding a smile when

your donation is a large one. A spirit of emulation swells the breasts of the *Quêteuses*. It is the ambition of one and all of them to have collected the largest sum; and as women have great faith in the influence of dress, their toilet for the ceremony is ever a matter of importance.

"You had better consult Madame de St. Gignoux," said Paul, naming the comtesse who had selected Regina as one of the band of which she was the leader.

"Do you think I dare?" asked Regina, looking as if her courage could never carry her to that altitude.

"You imagine, perhaps, that because I have painted Madame de St. Gignoux's portrait, you are to hold yourself as her inferior," said Paul, stiffly.

"It wasn't that—how could it be? Don't I think you superior to the whole world?" She was standing by him, and with a shy quick movement she hid her face on his breast; whispering, "Every day I think how wonderful it is you should have taken me for your wife."

Madame Saincère would have shaken her head more than ever, had she heard this confession. She would have said—

"Little goose, if you want this man, or any man, to care for you, don't let him see his power. Pretend to a strength, if you have it not; be sulky, passionate, unreasonable, coquettish; above all, self-asserting —never gentle and loving.

Paul was, however, for the moment touched;

he stroked her hair, and stooping, kissed her forehead.

"You forgive me, Paul?"

"What for, *petite sotte?* It is I who ought to ask pardon for interfering with what is quite out of my province."

"Nothing that concerns me can be out of your province," returned Regina, with unusual courage. "I am very grateful to you for taking an interest in my dress."

She had much better have made him laugh by declaring she would wear a bright orange gown and a sky-blue bonnet.

"I don't really attach any importance to your consulting Madame St. Gignoux; but if you do, be prepared for her making you spend plenty of money. Don't show any backwardness for the sake of some few hundred francs;" and, tired of the discussion, he left the room.

Madame la Comtesse de St. Gignoux was a personage—one of the women whose opinion counted for something in Paris. She was neither good nor clever, nor beautiful — one of the beetle-browed women so often seen in France. She was separated from her husband, having even renounced his name, declaring it to be beyond the power of her lips to pronounce. It was certainly an outlandish name. She had no friends—cared for no one—loved nothing on earth but her own self. Neither joy nor sorrow would have tempted her to go out-of-doors while the

sun was shining. She declared the sun to be one of the main causes of wrinkles.

"Can any one," she inquired, "be exposed to sunlight without screwing up one eye and ruffling up their brows? It was ridiculous to suppose that when you have made similar grimaces a hundred and fifty times, no trace of them should remain." Carrying out her theory, in summer she lay in bed all day, rising at six or seven in the evening, and receiving visits at eleven at night. She believed she owed her still smooth complexion to this management. She was one of those of whom Parisians say, "They have no age." Some of her intimate enemies asserted that she had passed forty, but it was a calumny; for she carried a certificate of her baptism always about her, and that went to prove she wanted yet two years of that redoubted bourne of youth.

Madame de St. Gignoux received Regina rather graciously. First of all, she approved of the portrait Paul had made of her. Secondly, she liked handsome, clever men, and Paul was undoubtedly both; and then among the shortcomings of this fashionable lady was not to be counted that of jealousy of other women's looks. On the contrary, she tried as much as possible to keep away all the plain or ungraceful of her female acquaintance from her salons.

It being in the month of November when Regina paid her visit, Madame de St. Gignoux had no objection to drive in the afternoon to the house of the Great Arbiter of Fashion. As they went along she said—

"You have a pretty skin," Madame Latour. "I have not detected a flaw in it yet. Follow my example," and then the great lady entered on an explanation of her theory and practice.

"I am afraid Monsieur Latour would not approve of my remaining in bed all day," replied Regina, almost laughing.

"If he is painting, what can it matter to him what you are doing? I suppose you have servants, haven't you?"

Madame St. Gignoux did not take the trouble to listen to the answer; her attention had been engaged by the sight of a beautiful spaniel, which a lady held by a string.

"That's just the dog I want," she exclaimed. "I wonder where Madame de Julivière got it? Do you know her? Poor woman! she is not sure that she hasn't two husbands. The first is said to be alive somewhere. For my part, I am quite in favor of divorce. All women ought to be. Considering the way marriages are made among us, it would be but bare justice to provide a safe remedy. You are only just married, I believe, and perhaps you like your husband pretty well at this moment—he is a novelty; but suppose you should come to detest him—or he you? Isn't it awful you should not be able to get rid of one another?"

Regina's running commentary on this speech, if uttered aloud, would have been, "Oh, thank God! nothing but death can separate us—nothing but death! O righteous law!"

There were two ladies waiting in the great Arbiter's salon. Madame St. Gignoux gave them a glance: they were not of her world, and therefore she went on talking to Regina as though they had not been present.

But Regina's attention wandered; her eyes, in spite of herself, would turn to the elder of the two strangers. Her memory was making a painful effort to recover the name belonging to that striking face. She was convinced she had seen it before.

At last the lady extricated her from her perplexity. She came forward, saying—

"Has Madame Paul Latour de la Mothe forgotten me?"

At the sound of the voice, Regina instantly recalled the name, and exclaiming, "Madame Aubry!" held out her hand.

Regina returned home so excited by the events of the afternoon, that she poured out all her information pell-mell to her husband: scraps of Madame de St. Gignoux's conversation mingling with what had passed between her and Madame Aubry, and with descriptions of Madame Aubry.

"Mademoiselle Lucile has a nice droll little face. She is not so pretty as her mother. I am sure she is clever. She is not at all like her mother—except her nose, and that is the worst part of Madame Aubry's face. Madame Aubry is very much changed. I did not recollect her at first."

Paul listened to this chat in silence.

"Changed in appearance, I mean, not in manner

Sometimes she spoke quite kindly, and then, all at once, she was as cold as ice. I don't think she liked M. W—— taking me for her daughter."

"It does not say much for his perspicacity," remarked Paul.

"She *might* be my mother. She is sixteen years older than I am."

Paul made no answer. He gathered from all Regina said, that Madame Aubry had not mentioned having met him at the Princess M——'s dinner. Some consciousness had kept him silent as to the meeting, and it appeared that Adeline also had felt a difficulty in alluding to the circumstance. It would have been as well had he questioned himself as to the reason of such a reticence.

On the following day, Madame Aubry and Lucile came to the Rue Bleue. Regina received them with that sort of cordiality which has its source in the recollection of former acquaintanceship. They had a subject in common—Juvigny. Regina supposed it a pleasant subject. In her unconsciousness she really tortured Madame Aubry, not only by the memories she innocently and ruthlessly aroused, but by her manner toward Paul; for Regina had sent for her husband as soon as Madame Aubry arrived.

Madame Aubry said to herself, in an after meditation, that it was stupid and unjust to resent Regina's wifely familiarity toward Paul—it was so completely a matter of course; and yet, good heavens! how every "we" pronounced by Madame Paul stabbed her!

Regina, as well as Paul, accompanied Madame Aubry and her daughter to the carriage; and Adeline, as they drove off, saw Regina put her arm within her husband's, as together they re-entered the house.

"I would rather have seen him lying dead," thought Adeline.

"How beautiful Madame Paul Latour is!" Lucile was saying; adding, "and, Mamma, do you know I think that she and her husband are alike?"

All those who had been in the habit of seeing Regina from the time of her marriage, perceived a striking change in her during this second winter. That calmness expressed by her whole person, the more charming as no one could doubt it proceeded from ignorance of all the little meannesses of society, from an absence of all unholy curiosity—that peculiar calmness had disappeared. In its place was a look of intense inquiry, the attitude of one always on the alert.

There are people in every circle whose amusement it is to watch others, and whose pleasure consists in improvising romantic or scandalous stories —people who give a meaning to the raising of an eyebrow, to the choice of a flower, even to the motion of a foot. It was among this class that first arose whispers that Madame Latour was unhappy with her husband; it was first observed by them, that however smiling and at her ease she might be,

the moment Madame Aubry appeared her features contracted, and that she never shone to less advantage than when that lady was paying her the most friendly attentions.

Unfortunately, some of these observations were true. That sort of vague distaste which Regina had felt toward Madame Aubry on their first meeting at Juvigny had deepened into distrust. Regina had lost her childlike ignorance of men and manners. When she married, she believed that the ceremony of marriage irrevocably secured her Latour's heart as well as hand. At first, she saw and heard, without heeding, things tending to enlighten her ignorance on this point. But the hour comes sooner or later when some one plays the part of Psyche's sister, asking, "Do you know whom it is you love? Maybe a monster! You must try and find out." Then begins the cruel series of hopes and fears, of doubts and suspicions, out of which the poor seeker emerges too often with life saved, but treasure lost.

Into this sad period of striving after light and knowledge Regina had entered; and it happened to her, as to other discoverers, that what she had been groping after in the dark was suddenly revealed to her by a chance word.

She was at a large evening party, seated next to two ladies who were strangers to her. They spoke without any care as to being overheard. The elder of the two was saying as Regina sat down, "Yes, it's the first marriage I ever made, and I am quite proud of it. Both families are pleased."

"I thought she was to have married Monsieur Bourdoin," said the younger.

"That went off because his mother thought her too pretty—thought it would be ridiculous to have it said that at five-and-thirty he had married for love, and that he would be safer with one less attractive."

"No wonder, when one sees what passes every day and hour. You have heard about the Meillerays?"

"Good heavens! How? What? When?"

"The baron came home unexpectedly—you understand—in short, there's a separation."

"I am not astonished. Just look at that handsome Latour, scarcely a year married, and see how he is paying court to Madame Aubry."

"An old love—*on revient toujours*—she is a finished coquette. It was she who caused the death of poor de Suzet, one of our Embassy *attachés*, at St. Petersburg; played fast and loose with him, till one fine day he blew his brains out almost in her sight. Ah! Monsieur St. Leu," to a gentleman passing, "have you heard of the Meillerays?"

"I saw them in the Bois de Boulogne this afternoon—he was driving her in his curricle."

"Then there can be no truth in the report of their being separated?"

"A grain, just a grain, I suspect."

"Ah! Well, if they have made it up, it's no business of ours what she has done or has not done."

This conversation was sufficient. All Regina's

vague suspicions had assumed a shape. She pressed her hand against her heart to still its throbs of tumultuous pain. From that evening the serenity which had been one of her marked traits, the indication of a happy equilibrium between duty and affection, disappeared. Her love for her husband suddenly assumed all the character of a violent passion, and passion gives supernatural powers—it divines. Regina thought over her visit to Juvigny, and, little by little, the past of Paul and Adeline Aubry was revealed to her. Circumstantial evidence crowded on her. The mutual dislike between Paul's mother and Madame Aubry; the constant recurrence of Adeline's features in Paul's sketches; that long roll of fair hair. Ah, well! there was no help, she must believe it; Paul had loved Adeline Aubry; but now, though he might show her attention, it could not be love. Adeline was old for a woman, and had lines round her eyes and mouth. Girls, nay, even women, have such a faith in the power of beauty and youth; they cannot realize the fact that a woman, sometimes old enough to be their mother, can and may be a dangerous rival. They do not believe that the years which steal away freshness from the complexion, or imprint a line round eyes and mouth, bring knowledge, and that knowledge of any kind is power. A young wife is exacting, often cross; a woman such as Madame Aubry, when she has reached within a few years of forty, and wishes to please, is always smiling, flattering forbearing; and if she has to do with the irritable organization peculiar to poets, painters, or mu-

sicians, knows how to restore to them the confidence in themselves which in some hour of disappointment they have lost—knows how to rouse them from those prostrations of spirit into which they are prone to fall. Once a man has sipped of the cup of cordial offered by an enchantress of this kind, her age or appearance matters little; her empire over him will be established.

Regina soon forgot to say—

"It is impossible that he can love a woman of her age." Thirty-six seems old to twenty-one.

She passed into another phase—that of inner debatings, of fears, doubts, hopes. Backward and forward she turned her thoughts: she lay in wait to catch a word, a gesture which, she said to herself, should be decisive. Alas! only to begin anew; to pass from suspicion to hope, from hope to suspicion. Now lulling asleep the one and awakening the other; sometimes believing that she could be resigned, so long as she might breathe the same air as Paul; at others about to resort to some violent step—to leave him; the next minute to dread, as the only evil in life, a separation from him.

Regina's suffering can only be understood by those who have gone through a similar trial. There are certain sorrows universally acknowledged, and which receive universal sympathy—such as loss of fortune, sickness, death; but for the anguish arising from disappointed or deceived affection, the majority, who being a majority are egotists, content themselves with saying—"Oh! a few years will cure all

that." But the possibility of the cure depends on the character. Time has no power over the sentiments of an earnest soul. For such as Regina—

> Time but the impression deeper makes,
> As streams their channel deeper wear.

It was astonishing how such an appearance of intimacy could be kept up between two women who certainly hated one another. They had only one feeling in common between them, and that was exactly the source of their mutual dislike. On every other point or subject they disagreed. What one praised the other was sure to find fault with. They were always on the alert to contradict one another; they found means, in expressing their opinions, to say the most disagreeable things, the one of the other. Regina was the least successful in these battles. She had naturally far less quickness of repartee than her rival; her thrusts were often awkward—she showed too plainly that she was in earnest.

Madame Aubry was the supporter of all the liberal views of the day; Regina of those of a former generation. The gentle young creature was all in favor of authority; of the privilege of class; and most of all, a devoted partisan of the church. Pure of soul, and retaining all the naïveté of her early belief, she was positively terrified at the ultra liberality of Madame Aubry in religion and morals.

Madame Aubry had what Regina was most wanting in, a great mastery of language. She could say everything she wished *as* she would wish it said·

even turn Regina into ridicule before Paul, without exciting a doubt that she intended to wound his wife. Regina keenly felt her own want of weapons with which to defend herself. She was well aware that Adeline took every opportunity of making her deficiency apparent. When by any happy chance Regina's native good sense had given her the advantage, or when Paul, as he occasionally did, sided with his wife, Madame Aubry, by some clever play on words, some apt quotation, could always make him laugh at what he had just approved.

At such moments it was an overpowering dread of him which stopped Regina from expressing her displeasure in very plain terms. Once after one of these bouts Regina, alone with her husband, recurred to the discussion, and complained of Adeline's manner toward her.

But she never did so again, for Latour, who had been touched by his wife's supposed forbearance, was irritated to find himself forced either to defend or to blame Madame Aubry. He did control his words, but his eyes flashed ominously as he said—

"You are mistaken. She is a *bon enfant*, free of all aforethought: her wit springs forth without malice."

Regina, by blaming, had played into her adversary's hand.

A general feeling of indignation pervaded the little circle of Paul's intimates, when they perceived the element of mischief threatening Regina's happiness. Men of the world, they knew it was not their place

to interfere openly; still it was not forbidden them to make an occasional sortie against the enemy, or to come to the rescue of the weaker side.

An interest other than that which had made Georges Tully erect her into the Laura of his sonnets, was developed in the Don's chivalric breast for Regina. Calling on her one day, he found her alone. After the first compliments had passed he dropped into a silence that embarrassed her. But her embarrassment was nothing to her astonishment, when he suddenly addressed her thus—

"If I were going to be married, I should beg my bride to study Madame Aubry's manners. As a man, I shall never penetrate the secret of their charm; a woman, I suppose, might master it. To my obtuse male faculties it appears that her object is always to amuse. She is a sort of Medea chiffonière—gathers up every scrap, no matter from whence, or how little inviting; and then, by the help of her magic cauldron, turns out for our delectation a tissue of variegated hues that dazzle us so pleasantly we have no inclination to examine of what the web is composed. I should say to my wife, 'Do thou likewise.'"

Reflecting afterward on Tully's strange exordium, the poor little soul understood the advice he meant to convey, and turned over in her mind how to put it in practice. But the Don, in giving his counsel, had forgotten some essential disadvantages attached to Regina. First of all, she was Latour's wife, and further, she loved him with that

blind, timid love, which women feel but once in their existence. Her excess of feeling hampered her. He was the sole good heaven or earth could give her—the world without him a blank. She was always on the watch, how not to annoy or offend him; how then could she laugh or talk at random? The woman who can do this is either sure of her empire or else indifferent.

Madame Aubry was not at all the latter, and pretty sure of the former. She loved Paul as well as her nature permitted. When she saw him, her love even acquired a certain intensity. But she had done without him very well for years; and though her conduct had been what is called correct, it was a correctness which had not prevented her having very sedulous admirers. That *enfant terrible* Lucile had one day said to a visitor, "I don't know whether M. T—— comes for mamma or for me;" and this was said in the lifetime of Monsieur Aubry.

Regina set earnestly about to copy Madame Aubry. She followed Tully's advice too literally. She strove to collect all sorts of gossip, which she retailed to Paul in and out of season. Paul bore this novelty as he did Regina's religious observances—with a resigned silence. However, there came a moment when his pent-up irritation exploded.

One day that he was extremely busy, his wife interrupted him with some frivolous story. He turned sharply on her, saying—

"I should be glad if you would sometimes grant me a little liberty to be alone."

"I beg your pardon, Paul," said Regina, changing color, for his look and tone were more bitter than his words.

"I see you think me very barbarous; but, my dear friend, if two people are to live comfortably together, they must have a mutual respect for each other's ways, habits, whims, or whatever you please to call them. I am very glad of your company, but there must be a measure in all things; and I confess it would be a comfort to me to be sure of now and then having an hour to myself."

The vexation of weeks had at last made itself known.

"I will go directly," and Regina began gathering up her work and books, for lately she had established herself daily in a corner of the atelier. Perhaps she lingered a little in the hope that Paul would tell her she need not remove her work-basket, but he remained silent.

"Then you mean me never to come here?" she said, as she was leaving the room.

"On the contrary, come as often as you please. I object only to our remaining together all day long. A sort of moral unhealthiness arises from two persons being always together. Moderation is necessary even in what is good."

Regina went out to her own room with a heart bursting with grief and mortification.

"I weary him! I weary him!" she kept on exclaiming. "What can I do? I can't change myself. There's something about me downright

disagreeable to him. I feel it. I know it. How grave he always is with me! How his eyes brighten when he sees *her!* To love him, and know I am only a bore to him! It's horrible to be a load to a man. If I were dead he could marry Madame Aubry."

Regina did not yet wish herself dead. That wish is born with the first knowledge of the treachery of one trusted and loved. Our hearts die by inches, slowly. On that day Paul's wife felt the first throe of the death-agony of hers. Paul was not easy in his mind. He was no monster, no; merely a man such as every one numbers among his acquaintance—one to whom hitherto no disloyal action could be brought home, yet given, as we all are, to self-deception. Finding, by some sleight of logic, *that* not to be wrong in himself which he would have condemned in another, he said—

"I render to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's. I take nothing from Regina because I enjoy Madame Aubry's society. Wives are always anxious to make their husbands give up their former friends." Still, exonerate himself as he would, Paul was uncomfortable in his mind. He confessed to himself he had been too harshly candid with Regina. Poor young thing! so innocent and so loving. Ought she to be punished because he had found out his mistake in marrying her? And why was it a mistake? Because he had not taken into his calculations that a girl of twenty would require some warmer sentiment than that of good-will; that it would be depriving her of the jewel without price of her heritage, to erase

love from her life; that nature would assert her rights. And now that he had robbed this young creature of the best joy of her existence, mutual love, he had added unkindness and contempt to the deprivation.

It is something in his favor, some mitigation of his conduct, that he was not self-contented.

CHAPTER XIX.

CLOUDS AND MIST.

Madame Aubry gave a ball. The rooms were, as chroniclers of balls phrase it, crowded with rank, beauty, and fashion.

"Celebrities of all sorts—from princesses down to that woman who can play the harmonium and the piano at the same time."

This was what Lucile Aubry, dressed, by-the-by, quite as a little girl, said to Regina, behind whom she was standing.

"That," continued the young lady, "is the man who wrote the famous story about Italy. He says that women who are fond of dress have been peacocks in a world before this."

"Oh! who can that be?" exclaimed Regina with a start, and directing Lucile's attention to a person who was just then entering the room. No wonder she asked. The lady she pointed out was a tall, dark old woman, dressed in black, with a crown of thorns in jet on her head. Her still black hair sadly required smoothing; it seemed standing on end. The strangest shades lay over her face—such shades as you see on bronze.

This person walked leisurely round the salons, carrying her gloves in her hand. From time to time

she stopped to examine any one who attracted her notice.

"Who is she?" again whispered Regina.

"Heaven knows!" returned Lucile. "She looks like the bad fairy, who has not been invited to the royal christening."

"What christening?" said Regina.

"Oh! don't you remember the story?" . . .

The "bad fairy" was close upon them. She stood still and scanned Regina from head to foot, in a cool way, that nearly choked Lucile with laughing. After this inspection the woman in black pursued her way.

"I must find out who she is," said Mademoiselle Aubry, and glided into the thickest of the crowd.

"What rubbish this Russian woman has gathered together!" said a voice close to Regina's ear. It was Madame de St. Gignoux. "She's well dressed, though," as the hostess came more fully into view.

Madame Aubry was in one of those moments which women who have reached the line dividing youth from middle age occasionally enjoy. She looked as young and brilliant as she had done ten years before. She was in white, and wore a coronal of daisies in her hair.

Her appearance at once recalled to Regina a sketch of Paul's, under which was written, "Paquerette." Regina remembered something else also. She remembered in the first days of her marriage saying to Paul, "Put your foot on that daisy, and you will not die this year," and his loud exclamation of

"Not for worlds! *I* put my foot on a daisy—*Never!*"

Madame de St. Gignoux interrupted these reminiscences. "But dressing like a girl cannot make her look like one—a woman with a grown-up daughter might spare herself the trouble. She takes arsenic for her complexion, you know."

Here a pretty young English girl, whose portrait Paul had lately painted, came running up to Regina. "Madame Latour, as you are Madame Aubry's friend, you won't mind asking her, will you, who is her hair-dresser, and what sort of petticoat she wears? Her dress hangs divinely. I would give anything to know."

"You are Madame Aubry's intimate friend?" questioned Madame de St. Gignoux, raising her great eyebrows to the highest arch of surprise, and all her features one sneer. "Pleasant family arrangement."

"Would you like to make a tour of the rooms, Madame Latour?" said Georges Tully. "You must be tired of sitting so long in one place."

Regina thankfully accepted his arm. She wanted to get away from Madame de St. Gignoux's malicious company.

Many a murmur of admiration greeted Regina as she moved along. More than one comment was made on Latour's good luck. The tall gentleman who had written "that famous story about Italy," said to the painter—

"Beautiful, modest, and rich. You have drawn the prize out of the bag of blanks."

"That is Paul Latour de la Mothe, the painter. Is it not?" asked an unknown voice.

Regina looked up and saw the woman in black by her side.

Madame Paul said, "Yes."

"And, no doubt, the lady at whose side he has been all the evening is his wife; the daughter of Nolopœus, the fiddler, and granddaughter of the Comte and Comtesse de Rochetaillée. I may tell those anxious about Madame Paul, that she is as beloved as she is beautiful."

The speaker curtsied and moved on, still holding her black gloves in her dark wrinkled hands. Regina watched the crown of thorns moving above the heads of the crowd.

People stood up to see the strange woman as she passed—

"Good heavens! she must be mad! What can make her wear such a curious thing on her head?"

Some said, "She was an English duchess; others declared her to be an American authoress. Some an Indian Princess come to Paris to petition the Emperor to redress the wrongs she had suffered from the British Government. No one ever discovered who she was: perhaps she was one of Regina's gipsy relations. Who knows?"

"It's very hot," sighed Regina.

Georges Tully led her away to a glass door opening on a balcony.

"Are you afraid of the night air?"

"No; I am sick with the heat," she replied.

They went into the balcony.

It was a clear frosty night; the dark-blue sky spangled all over with shining stars. Above, all bright—below, all sombre; trees, flowers, grass, one vague obscurity.

Regina stood so wrapt in her own perplexed feelings, that she was unconscious she was leaning on the Don's arm, unconscious that he was murmuring one of his odes—something mystic, which accorded well enough with the hour and scene. Any looker-on might have mistaken the couple for lovers. Some who peeped into the balcony smiled and wondered "where M. Latour might be?"

Paul himself, at last, bethought him of looking for Regina. He sought and found her standing as she had done for longer than she knew. As soon as she saw her husband, Regina said, without removing her hand from Georges Tully's arm—

"Is it time to go? I hope so. I am tired, and the heat is overpowering."

"Not here, at least," retorted Paul. "Come, don't monopolize Tully any longer."

"I am quite at Madame Latour's service," said Georges, stiffly.

"Thank you, my dear friend; I see my wife is dying to get away. *Au revoir*," and Paul carried off Regina, still utterly unconscious that her husband was in a white rage with *her*, Tully, and mankind in general.

Paul would not wait until the carriage could be got up to the door; he insisted on their going in search of it themselves. He had withdrawn his arm from Regina, and somehow or other she slipped and fell. Half-a-dozen coachmen and footmen ran to help her, asking anxiously if she were hurt. Paul stood by without making even an inquiry.

"*Voilà au particulier qui adore sa petite femme*," said one of the bystanders—an ironical remark which elicited a burst of laughter.

Regina's heart rose at Paul's marked indifference; for the first time she felt anger toward him. Not a syllable passed between them during the drive home. She jumped out of the coach without touching his extended hand, ran up stairs, took a light from Joseph without heeding his salutation, and went at once to her own room. It was a wise thing to do in her state of excitement; and it would have been a wiser to remain there and let the healing wings of night pass over her perturbed feelings. But when was a young and loving woman ever wise?

Paul was scarcely in his dressing-room before Regina entered it. She was magnificent in her anger. The artist's eye was struck by the grandeur of her beauty, but the man armed himself against the scene he foresaw.

"What do you want, Regina?" he asked, coldly, and with eyes so full of displeasure, so mocking a smile on his lips, that the poor thing lost all her courage.

"Oh, Paul! Paul!" she said clinging to his arm. "*Why* did you marry me?"

"My dear, it is two o'clock in the morning. I am dying of sleep, allow me to postpone the answer to your question till to-morrow."

She turned at bay. "It is not fair, not honorable, not gentlemanly, to use me as you do. I could forgive you, yes, I could, if you gave me a worthy rival, but—for—an—old coquette—bah!"

He seized her arm. "You had better stop," he said. "Go to bed! Go to bed! You have been imprudent enough once already this evening." She stared at him. "Tongues wag freely, Madame Latour, when ladies remain *tête-à-tête* with gentlemen in a dark balcony. I know you meant no harm. You have simply given occasion for a laugh at my expense, and now, in self-defence I suppose, you try to force a quarrel on me. Understand once for all, that I am not a booby, nor yet a toy for a woman to play with. I am not going to allow you to dictate to me. I shall do as I please, and you had better conform yourself to my wishes." He had hitherto spoken in a calm, though bitter tone—now his voice and face betrayed rising passion. "There are certain attacks I will not bear—be warned—go to bed."

"What had I done that you should see me fall, and not help me?"

"You were not hurt. You cannot expect an angry man to be playing the gentle shepherd."

"But I had done nothing."

"Nothing!" he repeated, "when you had flirted all the evening; when you had insulted the woman in whose house you were?"

"I—I insulted her?"

"Yes, madame, in ways which all women, even the least gifted, have at their command. Your whole conduct throughout the whole evening was an insult to her. Do you mean to tell me you did not avoid her—markedly so?"

Instead of attacking, Regina was forced to act on the defensive.

"I assure you, Paul—"

He interrupted her, all the devil in him roused.

"You think I have been blind. I wished to be so. I hoped you would come to your senses, but as you choose war, war it shall be, and blame nobody but yourself for the consequences."

The magnificent ireful queen was turned into a poor little cowering girl.

"Oh, Paul! don't speak to me in that voice—don't look at me as if you hated me. I have tried not to—to care."

"Care! humbug!"

Woman's pride, woman's love both wounded. She gave him one look, such as a faithful spaniel receiving his death-blow from his master's foot might give, and trembled out of the room.

That was how Regina's first attempt to vindicate her right to the first place in her husband's heart ended. Love is not strong except to suffer. The

one who loves is ready to bear all, save the breaking of the chain of slavery.

Within a few hours, Madame Aubry had become acquainted with what had passed on the night of her ball between Latour and his wife. She had drawn from Paul an account of all that had been said. He had owned that Regina was jealous.

Madame Aubry listened to him with eyes, those eyes he had loved so well, eyes that had taught his heart to beat, with an expression in them he had never seen, and that he shrank from qualifying.

Adeline was seated on one side of the fire, Paul opposite to her. Out of doors, it was a raw January day—in that salon, the atmosphere was of an Italian spring day. Without, sparrows with drooping wing were searching for food amid mud and slush, many men and women shivering with cold, wondering how they were to dine. Within, gold-colored canaries in gilded cages, a lovely woman in soft warm raiment, all about her bespeaking luxury and elegance.

There was a long silence; Paul, quite unconsciously, busying himself with the fire. He had taken the tongs, and was, to all appearance, intent on inserting bits of half-burnt wood between the large blazing logs. Those accustomed to wood-fires will understand how he was occupied, and also what a degree of intimacy his occupation implied.

It was Madame Aubry who first spoke, and in her harshest staccato voice. "You mean to say that she is jealous of me."

He turned from the fire and looked at her, anxiously.

She continued, "And you have come to give me warning that we must cease to see one another, to tell me that your wife's caprices must be respected."

Paul shrugged his shoulders, and answered, coldly—

"Are all women alike unreasonable? I came to you for counsel and sympathy, and you seem inclined to play as childish a part as Regina."

"I am a woman, and not an angel," she said, softly—oh! so softly caressing!

He took his eyes away from her with a start.

She went on with vibrations in her voice that sent a subtle fire through his every vein. "I am ready to do whatever you think best for your comfort. I would give you, if I could, all my share of happiness now and forever."

Some inarticulate sounds issued from his lips.

She, as if moved by an uncontrollable impulse, as if long-restrained feelings would burst forth, exclaimed, "Paul, do you remember when I was Paquerette for you! Oh! those happy, happy days! My marriage was not my doing; you know it. You gave me up—yes—you did, you loved art more than me. I wished to wait. My mother said, if two or three years more went over my head, my freshness would be faded; and with my small *dot*, it would be more difficult to marry me. And then, just when I was again free, came your marriage. I would rather have heard of your death. There are griefs which

ought to kill, but which fail to do so. I deceived myself when I thought you had nothing to do with my wish to come to Paris. What I felt on our first meeting ought to have warned me to avoid you; but have I ever—tell me—have I ever sought to—to—" She paused.

His whole soul, heart, and body were as wax in her hands. Just enough truth in her words to give them unerring power; just little enough of love not to rob her of all her tact.

Paul's face, as she put her last question, was hid in his hands. She came and sat down by him. He held out his hand to her; she clasped it in both hers, bent down her head, laying her cheek on it, then her lips.

"Oh! my God—my God!" she heard him mutter.

She had no compassion on him. She wanted to make him suffer—it was very sweet to revenge herself.

She kept his hand prisoner, and with one of her taper-fingers traced the letters of his name on the upturned palm. Paul had forgotten Regina's existence.

Chance befriended him in sending Lucile to end the *tête-à-tête*.

Madame Aubry did not yield to Paul's effort to withdraw his hand as the young girl appeared. She held it firmly, and called out, "Come here, *ma petite;* I want to show you something in M. Latour's hand."

Lucile did not obey the call. She said—

"Monsieur Pictis wants to speak to you, mamma. He says it is of no use his giving me any more lessons; that you might as well throw your money out of the window, for that I have no more ear for music than a fish."

"Very frank and disinterested on his part," said Madame Aubry, smiling sweetly on her daughter. "Well, my heart, give him up."

"I don't need to do that," said Lucile. "*He* gives me up."

"It is much the same, is it not, little Oppositionist?"

"I don't think so, mamma. Then I may tell him you agree?"

"Perfectly. Ask how many lessons you have had."

Lucile went away without addressing so much as a look of recognition to Latour.

"She is such a strange girl; so difficult to manage," observed the mother.

"Strange! In what way?" asked Paul.

"Possessed by a spirit of contradiction, and jealous of me! almost sure to dislike all those I prefer, and *vice versâ*. For instance, she adores her fat, ugly governess, whom I detest, and will not hear of parting with her."

"And I am no favorite?" said Paul.

"You were, but if she has taken it into her head that you have any influence with me, she will probably take an antipathy to you."

"Not to excite her ill-will further, I will say good-bye now."

"Sans adieu!" said Madame Aubry.

"Sans adieu!" he returned.

Poor Lucile! she had been brought up in a bad school; she had come to understand Madame Aubry, and this young girl of sixteen had set herself the uncommon task of protecting her mother.

It is easy to imagine how uncomfortable matters were in the Rue Bleue. Hypocrisy was not among Paul's faults. He attempted none with Regina. His heart had turned against her. Prejudice cannot see clearly, aversion is totally blind; and at this time, Paul actually disliked his wife. He manifested toward her a constant disapprobation, betrayed not so much by words or overt acts, as by looks and gestures.

It is possible to live tolerably well with those who are indifferent to you, however opposed their sentiments and tastes may be to yours; but with one whom you love, even silence warns you of an opposition of feeling that cuts you to the quick.

At times Regina was moved to make her husband see how much she suffered. She thought it would be a consolation to say to him, "Try and understand how wretched I am." But the expression of his face, when they were alone, either mocking or stern, frightened the words of her intended appeal out of her head.

All this time Latour observed the proprieties of life. He appeared with his wife at every public resort consecrated by fashion. He went to mass with her, to the Italiens, to the Opera. She was al-

ways present at the first representation of any theatrical piece of note. She was well dressed.

Young women of her acquaintance said to her, "What an enviable person you are!" and Regina smiled assent.

The strength of her love bore her up during this season of trial.

> Deep love, mid all its wayward pain,
> Cannot believe but it is loved again.

CHAPTER XX.

A SIGNIFICANT SILENCE.

All at once, the world began to whisper about Madame Aubry, to couple her name with that of Paul Latour. Like the wind that bloweth, and you know not from whence it cometh, were these rumors. Their unknown source was in an apartment under the same roof with that of Madame Aubry.

In the Champs Elysées you may have remarked a very large house—mansion we should call it if it were inhabited by one family. It contains many suites of splendid apartments, let unfurnished, and in general to foreigners, *i. e.*, to Russians and English. A vast *porte cochère* divides the building into two parts. Madame Aubry had the premier to the right of the entrance, Madame St. Omer that to the left. Each division had a separate staircase. Madame Aubry's visitors ascended by escalier A; those of Madame St. Omer by escalier B. Each staircase had its peculiar *concièrge*.

Madame St. Omer was that same beautiful Hortense who, three lustres ago, had half broken her heart because Paul Latour would not take her to Rome with him. She wielded a sceptre, such as it was, in Paris, and Madame Aubry was unfortunate in having her for so near a neighbor.

With the career of Hortense from the time of her leaving Madame Saincère up to this date we have nothing to do. The thread of her life now gets entangled with that of the lives of those two who had possesesd her purest youthful affections, Paul and Regina. The gossip of the two porters' lodges ascended to her through her lady's-maid, and it set her to using her own eyes. Women are contradictory beings. Madame Aubry would rather have seen Paul dead than married, would have condoned any other act than that; Hortense could forgive his marriage, but no other tie. She retained besides a lingering interest in Regina.

And now it is easy to comprehend how, with Hortense under the same roof, Madame Aubry began to be talked of wherever men of the world congregated.

Adeline treated the matter very lightly to Paul.

"Let them talk," she said, "it will be an affair of nine days. There never would have been a word said had your wife not ceased to come and see me."

Upon this hint Paul acted. When he returned to dinner he asked Regina "why she never went now to see Madame Aubry?"

Regina answered, "As you were angry with me, I supposed she would be so also."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Paul, why do you look at and speak to me so angrily? I am ready to do anything you desire."

"Your own heart should dictate your conduct. Do you think it right to neglect a person who has al-

ways treated you kindly, and is one of your husband's earliest friends?"

"I will go and see her to-morrow."

Paul and Regina were each acting weakly and insincerely. Nothing leads more certainly to a deterioration of character than to live in a state of continual deception. Stifling our convictions, struggling to conceal our real sentiments, hiding our honest disapprobation, setting forth one motive, and acting from another, are all things that take virtue out of us. We end by losing faith in others, because we have lost it in ourselves.

Regina paid her visit, and, to outsiders, the intimacy between the two families had never been shadowed by a cloud of disagreement. Indeed, Madame Aubry and Regina were seen almost constantly together in public. It is surprising what hearts can bear, and not break.

That lovely, pale, dark-eyed Regina on the left of Paul at the theatre, so tranquil in appearance, is enduring a slow torture. There is nothing trifling in love; and it is torture to her to sit there and feel that Paul has no thought of her—to see him address all his observations to Madame Aubry on his right, toward whom he leans as naturally as the willow to water.

The world is too greedy of scandal to have its appetite easily satisfied, and in spite of the apparent intimacy between Mesdames Latour and Aubry, the world talked.

Madame Saincère, who had vainly tried to win

Regina's confidence on the subject, turned to Paul, and gave him her opinion roundly. She did not spare him or Madame Aubry.

"So Regina has been complaining to you," he said.

"Not a syllable of complaint has passed her lips."

"If she has not complained, then, I suppose she is contented. My dear aunt, let us alone and we shall do very well. My friendship for Madame Aubry has nothing in it that intrudes on my wife's rights. You don't mean to condemn me to no other female companionship than that of my quiet, silent Regina? Had I understood that marriage was to debar me the society of clever women, I should be still a bachelor."

"You forget that I am aware of your former passion for Madame Aubry; that I was, I may say, in the confidence of you both. She can never be a safe friend for you. If she had a grain of good sense or good feeling she would have kept out of your way. Instead of which, she is killing your wife by inches, and showing to the world how well she can play that great fish, Paul Latour."

Paul left the Rue Blanche in a high state of exasperation, and of course went straight to Madame Aubry and told her all that had passed. Adeline mused awhile, then said—

"Do you think our friendship worth some present discomfort?"

"A curious question from you to me," said Paul, adding, "It is for you to decide; the world, as you

know, is always harder on a woman than on a man."

"The world is always gracious to those who do not fear it," she returned. "Besides, as long as Regina and I are on good terms there is no danger. She has been less cold to me lately. I have discovered many charming qualities in her; and she is certainly a pretty creature."

"How good and generous you are!" exclaimed Paul, clasping her hand. "Not a word of reproach or bitterness for those who attack you—only kindliness for your enemies. You are a better Christian than any of them, though they profess so much, and make such a show of piety."

There was no more mention of Regina that day. Madame Aubry skilfully turned the conversation to Paul himself—that is, to his pictures. Written down, what she said would appear nauseating flattery; but spoken with grace and *enjouement*, the object of it found it very palatable.

Had Madame Aubry's love for Paul reawakened? Though her life had depended on her telling the truth, she could not have decided whether it was love or hatred she felt for him. Sometimes the one feeling predominated, sometimes the other. But, leaving aside love and hatred, Adeline was a true coquette. There was a struggle to take Paul from her, and it determined her to hold him fast at all risks; besides, Regina loved him, that was the weight which sufficed to make the balance of her scruples kick the beam.

One morning Regina received an anonymous letter; it began abruptly—

"A well-wisher of Madame Paul Latour begs to tell her that the part of the patient Griselda, which she is now playing, will not succeed. There is no common sense in it. Such meekness merely serves to weary men. She who keeps in the background, abdicating her right place, will soon be overlooked. Be more of a woman. Show him you can be happy without him. Take exactly the contrary manner to that of your rival; drive him wild with jealousy; laugh at him and his pictures, and I promise you he will soon come to your whistle."

Regina read this effusion twice over; wondering whom it could come from. It must have been written by some one intimate in the house. Every word implied a knowledge of Paul's indifference for her—Bürgmüller perhaps? Regina had often seen his German blue eyes fixed on her with compassion; but no, the hand was familiar to her, and it was not his. At last it flashed on her, who her unknown adviser was. It was Hortense. Yes, the writing was the same as that on the New Year's gifts she had received regularly up to the time of her marriage. Regina's face crimsoned as she thought of her domestic affairs being commented on and criticised, herself discussed and pitied in the circles of a certain world. It was clear to her that many among those she received in her salon visited persons of a very different stamp. Her whole heart rose against advice proffered to her from such a quarter. She

was too young to be indulgent; too inexperienced to know that none are all evil. In that moment of indignation she forgot all Hortense's past kindness. Suppose Paul should come in and ask whom her letter was from? She thrust it into the fire.

Not long after this, Madame Aubry had a revelation by a significant silence. She received no invitation to the Princess M——'s fancy ball. Feminine instinct pointed unerringly to her intimacy with Latour, as the cause of the omission. Yet she had never violated any of the proprieties; had conformed to the exigencies of society's laws. Some inimical influence was at work against her. She had talked to Paul of defying the world. Yes, that is Regina and Regina's intimates, but not the court and princesses. There was not passion enough left in her love for that. And besides, would Paul remain uninfluenced by public opinion? She said to herself bitterly enough—"He cares more for the success of one of his pictures than for any woman breathing." Thinking thus, was it not strange that she held so to him?

Madame Aubry's behavior to Latour at this period singularly resembled that of Regina, and yet impossible for the same result to have more contrary motives. Adeline maintained an unbroken silence as to the mortifications inflicted on her. Not an allusion to any neglect. It was only when Paul, taking it for granted that she was to be at the fancy ball, proposed that she and Regina should go together, that she told him she had not been invited.

"How is that?" he exclaimed.

"Some caprice, probably."

"Nonsense; it must be some mistake; the invitation has been lost."

"Possibly, but it is of no consequence. Has Regina decided on her dress? Is it to be Swiss, Greek, or Italian? A Roman costume would suit her best."

"You are concealing something from me. If I thought any slight was meant to you my wife should not go."

Madame Aubry always winced when he said, "My wife."

"Don't be childish, Paul; if a slight is intended, the best way to make it innocuous, is not to appear to understand it. Any demonstration of anger on your part would be injurious to you and me. You must not make yourself enemies among those in high places. Let me alone, I can defend myself. Those who have a clear conscience can afford to wait for justice."

Madame Aubry sent Paul away that day more than ever impressed with her greatness of soul, and with her devotion to himself. He did honestly credit her with a rare power of self-sacrifice. He who had given her up in the heyday of youth for the sake of art, was now ready to offer her unlimited service. He perceived, and enthusiastically appreciated in her the self-same conduct which passed unnoticed in Regina. His self-deception went so far that he had taken up the notion that he owed something like

reparation to Madame Aubry for his having a wife. He argued, as madmen do, from false premises.

Since the day Paul had dismissed her so cavalierly, Regina had never gone to the painting-room unless obliged by some circumstance to do so. She was, nevertheless, perfectly aware that Madame Aubry visited Paul there constantly. Indeed he never concealed the fact.

It was one April morning that Joseph came to the salon, and told "Madame that Monsieur would be glad if she would go to him in the atelier."

Regina went with a beating heart. Madame Aubry was standing before the fire, and Paul had a letter in his hand.

"I have just waited to give you my congratulations," said Madame Aubry, kissing Regina. "I shall leave Latour to explain."

She left the room, saying hastily to Paul—

"I can find my way by myself. Go back and tell her at once."

CHAPTER XXI.

DARK SHADOWS FLEE.

As Paul came toward Regina, he was startled by her excessive paleness. Madame Saincère's words, "You are killing your wife by inches," flashed across his mind. Not only was she pale, her face had lost all its roundness, and her features had a pinched look.

"What is it you are to tell me?" said Regina, in a voice sharpened by emotion.

"No bad news!" he said, but hesitated.

Regina's eyes were fixed anxiously on his.

"There is no need of preparation," he went on. "The Emperor of Russia has sent me (I owe it to Madame Aubry) a gracious invitation to go to St. Petersburg to paint the Empress's portrait, and some pictures for her majesty's summer palace."

"Yes, and what more?" said Regina, and he saw her lips quiver violently.

"Well, of course I must accept. It will only be an absence of two or three months. It would be the height of folly to refuse such a proposal; and you have too much good sense to wish that I should do so. I shall go to Russia, instead of to Greece, as I had intended. An artist must have change of scene

from time to time, to nourish his imagination. My absence will be now, instead of later in the year."

"And does—" Regina paused, then said, hastily, "Do you go alone?"

Paul had perfectly understood the drift of her question; but he answered as if he had not. He said, coldy—

"I thought you would understand without my pointing them out, all the inconveniences, or rather, impracticabilities, of your accompanying me. The wives of soldiers and sailors, of engineers, are all compelled to submit to long and painful separations from their husbands, and those of artists are often placed in the same predicament."

Regina suddenly threw her arms round Paul's neck, and burst into a passion of tears. He let her head lie on his breast till he felt that she no longer trembled so convulsively, then he said—

"I am sorry that what I consider a signal piece of good fortune should distress you."

She clung closer to him, whispering—

"Paul, you do care a little for me?"

"Why should you doubt it? But, my dear Regina, we are living in a very matter-of-fact world—not in Arcadia."

Tone and words stabbed her; her arms fell from his neck.

"My idea of a wife's love," he continued, "is that she should smooth, to the utmost of her ability, the ruggedness of her husband's path."

"You are hard on me, Paul, very hard."

"That's what women always say when men don't agree with them."

"I have done my best—" began Regina.

"Pray," interrupted Paul, "let us have no recrimination. I make no complaints of you."

"Paul"—and Regina seized his hands—"can you honestly say I have not done all I could to please you? Have I not overcome my feelings? have I not over and over again borne in silence what almost broke my heart?"

"You surprise me! I did not know I was such a monster, and you such a heroine."

"God forgive you!" she exclaimed. "You are cruel; and it is Madame Aubry makes you so."

"Dare to say that again," he said, roughly seizing her wrist, "and, by the God that made me, you shall repent it as long as you live!" He pulled her to the window. "Do you see that sky, this earth? She is as superior to you as the one is higher than the other. I take heaven to witness that she has never said one harsh word of you, though reasons for doing so have not been wanting. Remember this, madame, you will never get me to change my conduct to her. I reverence and esteem her beyond all other women. Decide on *your* conduct. Mine will depend on yours."

Regina made no reply. She left the room with a steady step; but the steadiness only lasted as long as she was under Paul's eye. She went to her own room, put on her bonnet and cloak, and left the house. She had no definite purpose in going out.

She wanted movement—quick movement; her mind was a chaos. People, as they passed, turned to gaze after her, so strangely bright and eager were her eyes—like those of one hotly pursued straining to reach a goal.

Poor soul! desolation was chasing her—it was treading behind her with silent footstep, fanning her with "silent wing." On she went; crossed the noisy, dangerous Boulevard; along the Rue de la Paix; the Place Vendôme; the Rue Castiglione; on—on; through the Tuileries Gardens; on—on; never stopping till forced to do so by a block of carriages on the Quay d'Orsay. She turned to one side and got on Solferino Bridge. She leaned against the parapet, watching the water moving sluggishly below. The early spring day was darkening into twilight, and a sharp wind made pedestrians hurry on their way, otherwise it would have been impossible but that a woman so young and striking in appearance must have attracted general notice.

During a momentary intermission of the stream of wayfarers, a stout man, nothing of his face visible but a pair of keen light blue eyes, turned to take a second look of the figure in so pathetic and picturesque an attitude. The next instant he was by Regina's side, exclaiming, "*Mon Dieu! c'est cette chère* Matame Baul, *ah, chère* Matame," and then he paused in very real alarm. In that dim light Regina looked to him quite spectral.

"What is it? What has happened? Where is your husband?"

"Take me away," said Regina, "I am so tired."

"Ah! where is a coach?" he exclaimed. "*Mon Tieu*, I will run for one."

Bürgmüller had reached the end of the bridge, when he ran back again, urged by a sudden fear. Regina had resumed the attitude which had first drawn his attention, but she was leaning further over the parapet, and he perceived that she had got up on the ledge of the pilasters. As Bürgmüller reached her on one side, a *sergent de ville* came upon the other, and taking hold of her arm, politely invited her to change her position.

"Take me away, Monsieur Bürgmüller," she said, in a faint voice, holding out her hands to him with the gesture of a frightened child.

"Here is my card and address, my friend," said Ernst, giving his card to the man in office. "I know this lady and her friends. I will take her home; if one could only have a coach, but in this Babylon there's nothing but noise to be had."

The *sergent de ville* hailed a passing cab, but with the genius of his cast, suspected the couple at his side to be no better than they should be.

When they were about half-way to the Rue Bleue, Regina, who had not answered one of Bürgmüller's anxious inquiries, said to his horror, "I will not go home."

"But where will you go, then, dear Matame Baul?"

"I'm thinking—give me time."

"We are close to the Rue Blanche. Shall I tell the man to stop at Madame Saincère's?"

"Yes."

As the coach stopped, she began to feel for her purse.

"I have no money with me," she said, piteously.

"God bless me, what does that matter?" said Bürgmüller, ready to cry.

"Don't tell any one," she said, as he led her into the *porte cochère.*

"Never!" he answered, in a voice that would have suited a conspirator taking an oath. He waited at the foot of the stairs till he heard her ring at and enter Madame Saincère's door. Sure then she was safe, he went off, muttering, "*Une si cholie Vemme bauvre betite tame, elle me douche le cœur;* ah, Baul, Baul, *brends garde à doi, mon ami.*"

Madame Saincère's eagle eye rested for an instant on Regina's troubled face, then she said, in a cheerful voice—

"Child, child, you look frozen to death. There, sit by the fire, you shall have some warm wine directly; first of all a *chauffrette.*"

Regina sat down, shaking from head to foot; drank the wine, accepted the *chauffrette.*" Little by little the shuddering of her body and the quivering of her lips ceased; tears gathered in her eyes.

"Well, now what is the matter, my child?" asked Madame Saincère, taking one of Regina's hands in hers. She was sure beforehand that the poor little wife was in some jealous trouble.

"Ah! dear madame, I have been so silly; I have made Paul angry with me, and he is going away."

"Going away; that's something new."

"Going to Russia—going to St. Petersburg."

"What is taking him there?"

"The Emperor has invited him to go and paint the Empress's picture: but he is so angry; he said such dreadful things, and looked as if he hated me."

The floodgates were opened, and tears—such as the young alone have to shed—poured forth.

"You objected, then, to his going?" asked Madame Saincère.

"No. I cannot tell you what I said. I am ashamed of it now; it was stupid, wicked; but it is true, though. He must not quarrel with me; don't let him quarrel with me; he does not know what I suffer. I will bear anything—everything—only he must not look at me as if he hated me; as if I was in his way."

Madame Saincère understood it all. She would have given something to know if Madame Aubry was also going to Russia. She answered—

"As for Paul hating you, or thinking you in his way, that is mere exaggeration; the extravagance of passion. I dare say you have, both of you, been very foolish children, and the best thing you can do is to kiss and make friends."

"He won't," sobbed Regina. "Once before he was angry, and it was so long before he forgave me. I made such good resolutions. I meant to be quiet and forbearing. I wish he were not famous, then every one would not be trying to take him from me."

Madame Saincère here exacted the tribute to her foresight.

"There it is; I warned you that a woman who marries a genius must lay her account with having unusual burdens laid upon her. Fame makes a bad third at the fireside."

"But I would rather suffer as Paul's wife than have peace with any one else. I ought to be more patient—more humble."

"Hush! there's his ring; feel what you will, but don't tell him all this; there's not a man in the world could stand it."

It was Paul, and Paul in search of Regina.

Scarcely had she quitted the atelier before he felt regret at his own violence. What we are agreed on to call conscience, told him that his wife had good reason for complaining. It was not her fault that he had married her; nor that she was an inexperienced girl, instead of a clever woman. He had never meant to act unkindly by her. She loved him, of that he could not doubt. Beautiful as she was, had he not occupied her whole heart? She might have had a crowd of adorers. If there was a husband in Paris who could boast of a wife in the same words as Collatinus, he knew himself to be that one. Purity so shone in Regina that her presence influenced even men who had long ceased to respect anything, to be guarded in their language and look while in her company. Once his thoughts had taken this direction, a sensation akin to self-reproach invaded his bosom. The wounds we inflict return on

ourselves. None of us, be he judge or be he criminal, can escape from this protestation of our common humanity against hostility to our neighbor.

Paul chafed sorely in his solitary atelier. How was he to mend matters? He asked himself the question, but averted his ear from the answer. He hoped much from this journey to Russia. He assured himself that time was a great arranger of difficulties,—the force of circumstances generally severing all Gordian knots.

He took his hat and went out, intending to go to the Boulevard to pick up the latest news or scandal. But he found himself in no humor to enjoy the witty insinuations which kill reputations with so sprightly a grace. The carriage of the Princess M—— passed quite close to him; he fancied that she turned away her head to avoid his bow. He was in a mood that made him supersensitive. At one moment he was not a hundred yards behind his wife; but she turned to the left, and he to the right, and when she was contemplating the dark moving river, he was ascending Madame Aubry's stairs.

Behind the large glass doors of Escalier B—— was visible a group of persons, one of whom he distinctly recognized as the Duc de G. C——. There was a lady among them. All at once there was a burst of laughter. He went up to Escalier A——, wondering whether that sudden laugh was at his expense.

"Well, how did she take the news?" asked Madame Aubry. "Not very well, I fear, from your face."

"It agitated her," he answered, not intending to repeat what had taken place between him and Regina; but before he took his leave he had let Madame Aubry know there had been a quarrel. She did not, however, push him to give her the particulars. She guessed them pretty accurately.

"We must make your going as easy as we can for her. Would it not be as well if she paid your mother a visit during your absence?"

"She shall do as she likes. I will not fret her by any advice," said Paul.

"She is very young to be left alone and in Paris."

"Regina! I could and would leave her anywhere without a moment's anxiety; besides, she has Madame Saincère almost next door."

"You know I would willingly offer her my services, but she is too prejudiced against me to accept of them."

"She's a mere girl, you know," was the vague reply; and then he fell into a reverie about the loud laugh that had issued from the vestibule of Escalier B——. He had forgotten both Regina and Madame Aubry in trying to imagine who that lady could be of whom he had had only a glimpse.

"You have very gay people on the opposite side, haven't you?" he asked.

"A *grande dame* of another world. She is very *convenable;* and it's just the same as if we were in different houses," replied Madame Aubry.

"What name does she go by?"

"Madame St. Omer. Lucile used to go into such

raptures about her beauty that I inquired who she was."

"Madame St. Omer was once my aunt's cook," said Paul; and smarting under the idea that Hortense had raised a laugh at his expense, he spoke harshly of her.

"And, by-the-by," he added, "I never see Lucile now. Does she avoid me?"

"Oh dear no. You are as much a favorite again as ever."

"I should not have guessed it," he answered.

"I suppose you have not yet fixed when you go?" asked Madame Aubry, without appearing to be aware of his ill-humor.

"As soon as possible."

"I shall see you every day before you go, shall I not?" The question was put with those caressing inflections which never failed of their effect.

"Surely," he replied; and they sat hand in hand for five minutes. With a deep sigh Paul roused himself to go away.

On his road home he turned into a jeweller's shop, and bought an expensive bracelet for Regina.

It was beyond the dinner-hour when he reached his own door. On seeing him alone, Joseph exclaimed—

"How! is Madame not with Monsieur?"

"Nothing so wonderful in our not being together to make you look so stupidly frightened," said Paul.

"Certainly: only Madame must be alone, and it is quite dark."

"There are plenty of cabs to be had." Paul went into the salon, looked at the clock, took up his hat, saying, as he went out, "Madame must be at Madame Saincère's."

He had in reality been uneasy enough to be glad to find Regina with his aunt. However, the moment he saw his wife's agitated face his displeasure returned.

"You are just arrived in time," said Madame Saincère, promptly. "I was going to send you a message to come and dine here. Regina, who must never boast of being a heroic wife, has been telling me of your purposed journey. Is it interest or simply your fame that has moved the Czar to invite you?"

"A little of both!" returned Paul, not very graciously. "Madame Aubry knew that such a mark of favor would be agreeable to me, and exerted herself to obtain it."

"An excellent thing for your reputation and your purse; but it gives a sore heart to some one we know."

"True affection knows how to make sacrifices," said Paul, sententiously.

"We are human, my dear Paul; and though I believe I love you truly, I confess that the idea of your going so far rather unhinges me," said Madame Saincère. "I like the sight of that good-looking face of yours."

Paul was mollified. Madame Saincère kept the conversation on the level on which she had placed it. She had a stronger will than Paul, and keener per-

ceptions than Regina, therefore they yielded to her influence.

The evening was really almost pleasant. Dr. M—— came in, and hearing that Paul was going to Russia, began a discussion on races, asserting as a fact, as easily proved as that two and two make four, that the nations of the North were preordained to conquer those of the South.

To see the Doctor, you would have supposed him entirely occupied by the subject in hand, blind and deaf to everything else. Not at all. His medical eye was always on the alert. As he finished off a tirade about the superiority of bone and muscle in Scandinavians, interspersed with quotations, *ad libitum*, from "Tacitus" and "L'Union Medicale," he suddenly turned to Regina, and said—

"My dear little lady, I shall call on you at ten to-morrow morning. You require looking after. Paul has let you have too much gayety. I can see you are half-poisoned by vitiated air. Go on so and you will be wrinkled as I am in half-a-dozen years. Paul will allow us a *tête-à-tête*, I hope."

Paul said—

"Regina has been as well as possible. I suppose she has overwalked herself to-day."

"Ah!" said the doctor, with a scrutinizing look at Regina. "My carriage is at the door. I'll take you both home. It will save her any more fatigue."

So said—so done.

Alone with Regina, Paul asked—

"Why did you not send for Dr. M—— if you

have been feeling unwell. It's not right to give people an impression that I neglect you."

"Paul, don't be angry with me any more to-day." Then she leaned against him and whispered some words.

"You little goose!" he said, holding her closer to him. "Why did you not tell me sooner," and then because he spoke tenderly to her, and because she felt herself folded in his arms, she began to cry as if her heart would break.

"You will hurt yourself, Regina."

"Oh! no—no, Paul. I am so happy! I shall never be unhappy again, or—"

"Or what?" he asked.

"Never mind what. You shall never be vexed with me any more. However it may seem, I will always trust that you are right, for you are the best, kindest—." The poor, passionate heart was trying to speak out words of love, the same in all ages, yet that each one who loves believes new, and never before uttered, burst from her lips.

All that Regina said sounded as familiar to her husband as a thrice-told tale. He had heard the same loving assurances from many a sweet mouth. The nightingales have had the same song ever since they were created, and love has but one gamut.

"I don't know when I did not love you," said Regina, nestling to his breast. "From the first moment I saw you, you seemed to me an angel. You remember when I was a poor, unhappy child. I have still the gold piece you gave me; and you

looked at me and spoke to me so kindly, and I cried then just as now. To hear your voice—to know you were coming to Madame Saincere's—to know that I was sure to see you—was enough of happiness. I lived for those Sundays when you did not care a straw about me. I did nothing but think and think of you—quite like dreaming. If you had—but you do love me—if you had not, I used to make plans how I would disguise myself and be your servant, and if you married I would take care of your children, and one day when I was dying you would find out how much I had loved you." All this, said low and tremulously, like the whisperings of a summer breeze among the trees. As long as he held her in his arms she asked no response—happy to be allowed to tell her innocent love.

Paul kept silence, painfully conscious that he was not in unison with her. Have you ever tried to place your feet in the footprint they made five minutes before, and did you succeed? He said to her, "Pleasant as it is to listen to your soft prattle, I must send you to bed. What will Dr. M—— say to-morrow, if he finds you in a fever?"

"Did happiness ever hurt?" asked Regina.

"Happiness must go to bed when midnight strikes. See here! I bought you a toy to-day," and he clasped the costly bracelet on her arm.

"Bought it for *me!*—to-day!—when I had been behaving so ill! Oh, Paul! how good you are; how much, much better than I am!"

"Opinions are free," he said, laughing, and thinking to himself, "if deifying me makes her happy, why should I insist on opening her eyes? After all, the best things life has to give us are illusions. God help me, I have not one left."

CHAPTER XXII.

PSYCHE INSISTS ON LIGHTING HER LAMP.

It did not need twenty words from Paul to make Regina understand that he was very anxious that the news she had communicated to him the day before should not interfere with his visit to St. Petersburg. She therefore immediately began to talk of the preparations for his journey, asking him if he thought he could be back by August. Nothing she had ever done or said had so touched Paul as this entering into his wishes without any blowing of trumpets in praise of her self-sacrifice.

"You are very good," he said, in a voice of emotion, and with tears in his eyes.

At the tender sound of his voice, at the sight of his moistened eyes, a wild desire of self-sacrifice possessed Regina. Could her instantaneous death have served him, she would have met it without flinching. She knelt down before him, and said, with flashing eyes, "Give me something very, very hard to do for you."

He rested his hand on her shoulder, so preoccupied with his own thoughts as scarcely to hear her words. She drew his hand to her lips and held it there.

"I am afraid my mother and aunt will advise my giving up my journey," said Paul.

"Because of me?" asked Regina.

"Had I known sooner, of course I should have declined; now, should I do so, it would be with a bad grace, and not only should I be a loser as to money, but run the risk of turning a powerful friend into a powerful enemy."

"No one knows what I have told you. We need not tell either your mother or Madame Sainecère till after you are gone."

"That's true; and you really will not be vexed, will not complain of me?" and he raised her face to his. He saw it full of trouble, and thought it was because of his threatened absence, and not that she shrunk from the *naïve* egotism of her idol.

"Is it not my wish, as well as yours? I want to do something to prove my love for you. I will keep the secret, and never own to having told you. Go quickly, and—"

"What?" he asked.

"No, nothing; I leave all to you."

"I should be easier if you had somebody to watch over you. Would you object to taking Madame Aubry into our confidence? She is to be depended on, and could advise you."

"No; if your mother cannot be told, no stranger shall know. I am very well and strong; many a woman never tells, and is none the worse. If you write regularly, and make me believe that you think of me and care about me, nothing will harm me."

"To put any *if* in the case is absurd," said Paul,

"and you know it is. Women never can be satisfied without sweet speeches—"

Regina put a hand on his lips.

"Don't go on, Paul; don't say anything unkind; it will come back on me while you are away. I don't require you, nor wish you, to be otherwise than you are. I dare say I *am* exacting; promise me, dear, not to be angry with me once before you go, whatever I may do or say."

"I am never angry with you; it is you who are always finding fault with me."

"I won't do so any more," said Regina, softly; her strength was failing under this vain effort to wring from Paul something like a response to her own feelings. All her genius lay in her heart; all her light came from its noble inspirations.

From this time forth to the day of Paul's departure, she never showed him any but a cheerful countenance. By her manner of speaking of Paul's absence, she prevented any of those insidious conversations which so often entrap into unwary admissions those who wish to conceal their sentiments. She answered every expression of surprise that she did not accompany her husband, by saying, "she had a horror of travelling."

Her acquaintances said, "How little one can judge of people! One would have imagined Madame Paul would have been in despair at being separated from her husband for two months, and she takes it quite composedly."

Madame Latour de la Mothe came to Paris to see

Paul before his departure, and it was agreed on that she should remain with Regina till his return.

To most people Madame Latour appeared an iceberg, her presence imposed a restraint. Even Paul had ceased to be at ease with his mother; he believed that he still loved her as of old; she knew better. She saw that he winced under her old provincial ways, her old provincial ideas. Absence and change of society, *l'influence du milieu*, had done their work surely. Familiarity between mother and son had vanished; they scarcely ever conversed, and if they did, it was without expansion.

Regina, on the contrary, was never so frank as with Paul's mother. She would sit on a footstool at her side, just as she had done when only sixteen. Every tone of her voice, every glance of her eye, expressed the affection of a daughter, and Madame Latour gave in return the affection of a mother. Paul wondered to see how prettily Regina caressed his mother, and wondered still more to see how Regina could brighten and soften that austere mother.

As was natural under the circumstances, Madame Aubry avoided the Rue Bleue. After the arrival of Madame Latour, she called once on that lady, but the interview was cold and disagreeable, and never repeated.

It excited Paul's gratitude to watch how perseveringly Regina held to her promise; it was kept not only to the letter, but in the spirit—no dejection, no lamentations; she played the part she had undertaken honestly. He was the more grateful that he

was aware that his mother was on the *qui vive* to discover if there existed any discomfort in his household. Juvigny was not so far from Paris, nor its inhabitants such stay-at-homes as she was, and Paul had his own reasons for believing that reports of his renewed intimacy with Madame Aubry had reached the maternal ear.

Madame Latour de la Mothe sometimes marvelled to herself that Regina looked forward so composedly to Paul's departure. One day the elder lady made an observation to this effect to the younger.

Regina answered—

"I have made a vow that I will not shed one tear till he is gone. I wish him to go away cheerful. The Czar's summons came at the right moment. Paul was beginning to fancy his fame was waning."

"It is why you don't wish to go with him that puzzles me," said the mother-in-law.

"If I went, Paul would not be lodged in the Palace, that's one reason; and then there are all sorts of etiquettes at the Russian Court which would annoy him dreadfully on my account; there is also the expense to consider. He would have taken me in spite of everything," said Regina, audaciously; "but I would not go."

After a short pause, the young wife added—

"Maman,"—with what fondness she gave the title!—"Maman, you must bolster up my resolution, for sometimes I am very weak, ready to crumble to pieces."

The words were uttered with difficulty.

"After he's gone, we will have a good cry together," and she threw herself into Madame Latour's arms, who felt how hard and fast the poor thing's heart was beating.

From that hour Madame Latour de la Mothe avoided the subject of Paul's journey.

The day fixed for his going arrived. Such moments are always cruel. Regina had maintained her courage to the very last. She had more the appearance of a waxen image than of a living woman when they met on the last morning at the breakfast-table. She tried to eat, tried to smile.

"I didn't let Joseph pack your trunk, Paul," she said, suddenly breaking the silence. "I did it myself."

Here she paused, drawing several long breaths.

"There's a list of your clothes pasted in the inside of the lid, and in the pocket there's needle and thread. How droll it would be to see you sewing!"

It was a failure. She threw up her hands, and burst into tears. How she did weep!

Madame Latour de la Mothe left the room.

"Regina, my dear love, my child, my heart, don't sob so; you will hurt yourself."

"Paul, Paul, say once, just once, that you love me!"

"Of course, I do; and if I have ever pained you, forgive me, Regina."

She was now so quiet as she rested in his arms that, for an instant, he thought she had fainted away. He looked anxiously into her face; her lips were moving rapidly.

"What is it? Speak to me, Regina."

"I am praying to God for help, if you don't love me."

She had entirely ceased crying.

"Won't you say you forgive me?" he asked, moved by sudden remorse.

She did not answer that she had nothing to pardon, but she drew down his face to hers, kissed him on the lips, saying, "I *do* forgive you."

There was a tap at the door; it was Joseph, who came to warn his master "that the coach was at the door."

"You go with the luggage; I shall walk," said Paul.

"Let me walk with you," whispered Regina; "I will behave well, and Joseph can bring me back."

"My dear girl, be guided by me; it would be good for neither your nor me: now let me go, dearest," said Paul, as she clung wildly to him.

"Be brave, my sweet heart, for my sake."

He kissed her several times, called to his mother, embraced her hastily, and ran down stairs.

"Call him back, call him back; I want to say something to him; I must see him once more; I can't remember his face: call him back."

"He is gone, my daughter," said the poor mother repressing her own agitation.

"Come with me, maman."

"My poor child! my dear daughter—"

Regina broke from her mother-in-law's arms, and, running to the atelier, threw the window open, leaning almost all her body out.

She saw the well-known figure walking swiftly away; in two minutes more he would have turned the corner. A lady crossed the street hurriedly. Regina was sure it was Madame Aubry.

She drew back with a groan. It smote on her heart that it was a prearranged meeting: that Paul had sent on Joseph with the luggage, had refused her prayer to be allowed to go with him, because he and Madame Aubry had concerted to be together to the last.

"I think I am dying," sighed Regina, as Madame Latour came into the atelier.

Alas! we do not die once, but many times before a grave-stone is laid over us.

Regina had to be carried to her bed.

From this time forth she lighted, like Psyche, her lamp, searching for evidence of what was to break her heart if found. No matter what she was doing, her mind was always working. She passed and repassed in review every trifle that had reference to Madame Aubry and Paul; and it was strange how the intensity of her intention, strained in one direction, brought her knowledge.

One day, as she and Madame Latour were sitting at work together, Regina said suddenly—

"I wonder Paul did not marry Madame Aubry?"

The elder lady, thrown off her guard by the quiet tone in which the question was put, answered—

"She knew that as long as I lived I never would consent to his marrying her. A frivolous, light-headed creature. I never could understand his pas-

sion for her," added Madame Latour, incautious through indignation.

* * * * *

Paul wrote very regularly to his wife: there was no want of expressions of anxiety about her health, nor of caressing epithets—of dears and darlings. Nevertheless, these letters did not satisfy Regina. She missed something in them: he mentioned himself so little; told her next to nothing of his daily life; of what he felt or what was said to him; of his triumphs or vexations; nothing of those trifles we relate so willingly to one we look upon as another self.

Her letters to him were charming in their *naïveté*. She sent him a sort of diary, relating even the conversations she heard. She once wrote him a description of a family of chiffoniers, whom she watched daily from her bedroom window, that was a little *chef-d'œuvre* of pathos and humor. She could write, too, of her love with far less reserve than she could have spoken.

Nothing like this in his answers; and presently his letters began to distress her. The first impression they gave was that of disappointment. She would read them over and over again, until the first effect produced was diminished, and she had almost persuaded herself that she had been mistaken.

Then came another, inflicting the same discomfort. She felt sure, though she could not have explained why, that Madame Aubry was for something in this

change of Paul's style. Long since Regina had come to know that Paul wrote as often, if not oftener, to Madame Aubry than he did to herself. Lucile had frequently unconsciously wrung Regina's heart, by telling her that "maman had had a long letter from Monsieur Latour, and that he was well and so gay." Did Madame Aubry send such messages out of kindness?

Many of Regina's sayings at this period were afterward recalled by Madame Latour and Lucile Aubry; for this little girl was always finding some plausible pretext to be with Madame Paul, the object of her adoration.

"If we had only guessed!" said every one. "Paul might have been warned—she might still be here and happy. She would so willingly have let herself be deceived." As it was, no one conjectured that the young wife's mind was on the rack.

That great fund of the unknown, which we call chance, had arranged that she should exchange doubt for certainty.

One morning when Paul had been absent three months, Regina received a letter from him which excited both alarm and astonishment. Every line was impregnated with irony; slight indeed, and which might have escaped the notice of an indifferent person.

"You are surely not well, my dear," said Madame Latour, when they met at ten o'clock.

Regina replied, "that she was unaccountably cold—nothing more."

"You want your breakfast," said the mother-in law, going to hurry Joseph.

Though it cost her a struggle, Regina ate a little to please Madame Latour.

"Well, you are warmer now, my dear?"

"Not much, maman; perhaps if I go out the air will do me good." Regina did not allude to having heard from her husband that morning. She could not trust herself to speak of him or his letter. She could not have borne that any eye should rest on such dry, biting words addressed by Paul to her. She kept turning over in her mind what he could mean by praising her for being such a model of patience and of wifely obedience, and then that long tirade about the extremes of fashion in St. Petersburg.

It was a strange answer to a letter in which she very well remembered to have said—

"I sometimes ask myself if I do not wish to love you less. You understand that it is a selfish wish; but, indeed, I am too happy to have you to love. I would like to give you all my share of happiness in this world. The love I *have* for you absorbs all my thoughts and all my heart. I have a little flower you gave me one day—a bit of jessamine—it is faded and dry. It does me good to have something from you to look at." It was very girlish, but it was sterling ore.

Paul was angry about something or other—that was the conclusion to which Regina came. She would write to him frankly, as a wife might write to a

husband. She would complain of the tone of all his letters, claim her right to his confidence, tell him she did not deserve his irony; that never since the world began had there been a woman whose whole soul and affections were more completely given to a husband than hers to him. She was young and ignorant—she was doing her best to make herself more fit to be his companion. Would he not have patience with her? He must be good and write to her kindly—he must remember that an hour of trial was before her. She might die. It would be a comfort to him in such a case to think he had made her happy. He might scold her as much as he pleased, only he must tell her that he loved her, loved her only.

She had been pacing up and down the neighboring square while concocting the letter she was to write that day. She made sure that coming from her heart it must find its way to Paul's; and, full of new-born hope, she went back to the house and wrote one of those loving, incoherent letters, which no art can imitate.

When she had sent it away her spirits rose, as though she had received some good news, or as if she had gained her cause with Paul.

"Your walk has done wonders," observed Madame Latour. "Whenever you feel that nervous chill, you must always eat something, a biscuit with a spoonful of wine, and go out for ten minutes."

Regina answered cheerfully, "I shall take your advice, maman. You always give good advice."

That evening Regina sang several songs, and she

and Madame Latour laughed over her panic at Madame de Lusson's soirée at Juvigny.

"I did not think then I should ever be your daughter," said Regina.

"The possibility crossed me," replied Madame Latour.

"Did it? Why?"

"Because you were very pretty, and a charming girl; it even seemed strange to me that Paul should have let Charles Gerard have a chance."

"Really!" exclaimed Regina, in a tone of delight. "Oh, maman, how nice it is to hear you say this, for I am certain you mean every word you say;" and Regina nestled close to her mother-in-law.

"You don't think I am much changed, do you? Paul won't be shocked when he sees me?"

"Absurd, child!" said Madame Latour, almost fondly. "When do you mean to become a reasonable woman?"

"I don't know, mother. It's pleasant to love some one foolishly."

Madame Latour's severe eyes softened: "God bless you, my dear child—my very dear child," she said, kissing Regina on the forehead.

Letters are delivered in Paris as late as half-past nine at night. Just as Madame Latour pronounced her blessing, Joseph brought in a letter.

Regina saw at a glance that the address was in the same hand as that of the anonymous letter of months back. It was Hortense's unformed writing, without any attempt at disguise.

"Who is your correspondent?" asked Madame Latour, as Regina examined the direction.

"A person who was Madame Saincère's cook when I—an unhappy child—first came to the Rue Blanche. Hortense was very kind to me then, and for long afterward, but I wish she would not write to me."

"Surely that girl went all wrong? What can she have to say to you, Regina?"

"I don't know," replied Regina, with a slight flush.

"I would return her letter unopened, my dear. Don't you fall into the romantic philanthropy of the day, and fancy you find every virtue save one in these sort of women."

"I cannot act rudely to Hortense, after accepting her gifts for years;" and Regina told how every New Year's Day, while she was at school, she, the granddaughter of the Comte and Comtesse de Rochetaillée, had been indebted for the *étrennes* that saved her from mortification to the ci-devant cook."

"My sister should not have allowed it; these compromises never lead to good. You must find some way of putting an end to all intercourse with this person."

"I will request her not to send me any more letters."

"You are not to write her one line. I shall make known to her that by my desire you decline all further correspondence."

"You will not write unkindly?"

"No; but remember, my daughter, there is nothing more dangerous than a false position. A woman's

life should be as clear as crystal; above all, her actions should be avowable without a blush. I don't suppose you could confess to receiving letters from this Hortense, even to Paul, without some embarrassment."

"I shall do as you wish in future, maman."

"And why not immediately? Don't read that letter."

"She may be in distress, or wanting help."

"Don't let my advice vex you, my dear," said Madame Latour, struck by Regina's increasing pallor. "Read your letter and let us go to bed."

"Yes, I will say good-night," said Regina, rising. "You are not angry with me, mother? It is wrong to be so obstinate."

"The matter is not worth further discussion, my dear. Youth and age seldom see matters in the same light. To-morrow we will come to some decision. Good-night, my sweet child."

CHAPTER XXIII.

OUR HOPES ARE FROZEN TEARS.

Regina laid the unopened letter on her dressing-table, allowing Celestine to brush and arrange her beautiful hair for the night.

"Madame does not read her letter?" asked Celestine, peering over her mistress's shoulder to see the direction, with all the familiarity of a French lady's-maid.

"By-and-by," said Regina.

"It does not come from Monsieur. Ah! if Monsieur could see Madame's eyes when his letters arrive—they light up like a match. Ah! if he could see them."

Regina smiled.

"He never will. If he were once home again I should never have any letters from him. There, that will do, Celestine; roll up my hair."

"What hair!" went on the soubrette. "It's a pity no one knows but I how long and thick it is."

"Never mind—that will do—go to bed, my good Celestine."

"Madame does not wish me to put out the candle?"

"No—good-night."

Instead of at once opening Hortense's letter as

soon as she was alone, Regina went to the window, undrew the curtains, and looked out. The night was beautiful—a summer night—almost as clear as day. There was a temporary lull in the noise of the great city; not so much as the echo of a footstep reached her ear.

Curiosity and apprehension alternately possessed her. She felt like one about to play for a stake, which, if lost, brings irretrievable ruin. Whenever she turned her eyes toward the letter, a shuddering seized her. Why should Hortense write to her? Though the voice of truth in her heart warned her to beware of one who, though meaning well, had already pointed the arrow of suspicion at her husband, yet Regina persisted.

"Whatever is fated will take place," and the envelope was opened. She perceived in an instant that the enclosure was in her husband's writing. Without giving herself time to reflect, she spread the sheet of paper before her and read as follows:

"My dear Friend—

"Many thanks for the account you give me of my *cara sposa*. You are my good Providence. What you say reassures me, qualifies my mother's representations. Yesterday I had begun to think seriously of renouncing the fruit of my journey hither, and of returning to Paris. My mother is so anxious about this expected grandchild, that she magnifies all Regina's little ailments. What proves to me that you are right in ascribing my wife's

present indispositions to her nerves, is that she is capable of the exertions you describe. Relying on your judgment, I shall put off my return till close on the grand crisis. I suppose men's paternal feelings develop at sight of the *bambino*. Up to this moment I know nothing of the rapture and pride of a father. In fact, every time I see a small specimen of humanity, I am seized with a dread of what is before me. I look forward, however, to this child with the hope that it may fill the void in her life which Regina experiences with me. How can it be otherwise? We are both of us the victims of miscalculation—I, that my mother prevented my marrying you, the only woman I ever loved—and *she*, that I committed the folly of marrying her.

"Too late, too late for us all, my heart's blessing. We must make the best of the position, and for the few years that remain to us, avoid any separation.

"The Emperor is most gracious, very familiar—the dangerous familiarity of a lion. The grand-duchesses are handsome and amiable. I do not know whether, as you say, they try to make you forget their rank. What I am sure of is, that they do not succeed in doing so. I wish for you every day, and every hour of the day, &c. &c. Thank you for all your efforts to keep on good terms with my tigress, it is a sacrifice you make for my sake."

And much more to the same effect. The conclusion was—"Your Paul."

Regina sat for long, looking at the signature, quite unconscious that she had been guilty of any

wrong in reading what was not intended for her. When she recovered the power of thinking, her purity of soul, her naïve faith in others, her hopes of happiness—all, all were crumbled into dust—vanished like the shadow of a dream: gone, gone forever. She could never believe in human being again. She had one wish, the wish that comes to all, with the first knowledge of having been deceived by the one most loved, the one in whom unbounded trust has been reposed. If those who betray could know what it is they inflict, of the wrecked, devastated life of the betrayed—all lost, without resource! For there are some who cannot forget, cannot pardon. Undeceived—it is for life! One pang rose above the rest: it was that Paul had called Madame Aubry his heart's blessing—a term of endearment that Regina was in the habit of giving to him; that was the sharpest thrust of all. After a crisis like this, such as Regina become strangers to their former selves. They have been translated into another world. Not one well-known thing or person will wear a familiar air for them; words will have another signification; music, painting, poetry will rouse other sensations.

It was not reason, but instinct, the instinct of the stricken deer, which made Regina seek to hide her wound. When Celestine entered her room the next morning, Regina was in the attitude of one who sleeps soundly. She kept her eyes closed, without courage to bear the sight of a human being. She felt her maid lay something on the bed.

As soon as Celestine had slipped noiselessly out of the room, Regina jumped out of bed and carried a newly arrived letter to the window. Enough light came through the bars of the venetian blinds to allow of her reading it. Yesterday, what delight the sight of that handwriting would have bestowed! To-day it filled her with disgust. Why should she break the seal? What could he have to say to her? Nothing. And so she remained, holding the unread letter, until Celestine came back with an inquiry from Madame Latour, if there were good news from St. Petersburg.

Regina tore off the envelope; a flower fell out—a white cyclamen, Regina's favorite flower. It was Celestine who picked it up. Urged, perhaps, by some remorse for the sentiments he had expressed to Madame Aubry, Paul had written quite like a lover to Regina. He had even found touching words to say of the expected baby.

As Regina read, she smiled—no, it was not a smile, but a contraction of the lips that Celestine took for a smile.

"Tell Madame Latour" (hitherto Regina had always said, speaking of Madame Latour, "my mother")—"tell Madame Latour that Monsieur will return in less than three weeks."

"And Madame is not wild with joy?"

At Celestine's question, Regina burst into tears. She had not yet wept since reading the letter to Madame Aubry.

Celestine was alarmed. "Madame must not cry so,

Madame would hurt herself," and the maid brought eau de cologne and eau de fleurs d'oranger.

"Let me cry, let me cry," gasped Regina, laying her head on Celestine's shoulder.

The passion spent itself, and then Regina bid Celestine go with the news to her mother-in-law. Once alone, she opened the window, threw out the bit of white cyclamen, and watched a passer-by tread on it with an expression of scornful pleasure. She pinned together the two letters, the one to Madame Aubrey and the other to herself, and placed them in her desk, where they were afterward found, and served to clear up what otherwise had been a mystery.

It must seem as yet unaccountable to the reader how Hortense had obtained possession of the letter to Madame Aubry. Hortense, living under the same roof, had discovered through her maid that Paul Latour and Madame Aubry kept up a constant correspondence. Partly from affection for Regina, partly from ill-will to Paul, and with entire wrongheadedness, Hortense left no stone unturned until she had intercepted one of Latour's letters. With a strange scrupulousness she sent it unopened; only his wife, so she argued, had a right to know what he wrote to other women.

One thought kept its place in Regina's mind that day and for many days after, until at last she could have declared some one was perpetually whispering it to her. "What is the use of living?" was what the voice said. She sought no confidant; there was an end of her jealousy; anxiety and doubt had van-

ished. In the very suffering of jealousy there is excitement; where there is sensation, there is life. But when all is dumb within us, when there is neither hope nor fear, it is then that life becomes insupportable. Can any one suppose that a loving woman of Regina's age is to find an equivalent for the absence of all the joy of mutual affection in the performance of her domestic duties?

The strongest desire that Regina now had was to hide the knowledge she had acquired. She believed, as so many young women do in her situation, that she should not survive the birth of her child. She would keep her secret. As long as she lived no one should ever have the satisfaction of knowing that she was aware that Paul did not, never had loved her. Up to this time she had been as shy of speaking of Paul as though she had been only an engaged girl. From that fatal night a singular alteration took place. She seized every opportunity of talking of her husband's devotion to her, and more particularly to Madame Aubry and Lucile. One of her most constant assertions was, that so as Paul had her with him, he did not mind where he was, and that it was all she could do to make him go to St. Petersburg without her.

Madame Aubry listened with astonishment to these declarations, but not with so much wonder as Madame Latour de la Mothe, who, with a woman's penetration, had soon discovered that Regina was troubled with many misgivings as to Paul's love for her. There was another change.

Regina, who had hitherto always acted on the defensive with Madame Aubry, all at once assumed the offensive, finding out and hitting the weak places in her enemy's armor. Madame Aubry was too experienced a tactician to let her discomfiture be perceived.

One day, however, she was ill-advised enough to speak of a letter she had just received from Latour before some persons calling at the same time with herself on Regina. She ended with—

"You are not jealous, I hope, Madame Paul?"

"Of you! Jealous of you? Oh! No!" Regina's tone and the little accompanying laugh were inimitable—impossible to express more clearly how grotesque such a supposition appeared to her.

The most good-natured of those present said—"Then you are not of a jealous nature, Madame."

"I am not better than my neighbors," returned Regina. "Yes. I think there are women of whom I could be jealous."

When one woman has wounded the vanity of another to the quick, no return of good-will can be looked for. Madame Aubry came no more to the Rue Bleue till one day after Latour's return.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DYING ECHOES.

Yes, Paul was coming back; he would be home in ten days. Regina's heart had leaped for joy when she first heard this. Love has a long agony before it altogether dies. She would sit hour after hour, shut up in her own room, doing nothing but thinking, thinking of him—not consecutive thinking, but a kind of dreamy recalling of everything he had ever said to her, of the few attentions, the many negligences he had shown her, of his letters. She thought over all that had passed, the whole culminating to the one point that he had declared he did not love her, that he regretted his marriage.

And now he was coming home, how was she to receive him? And he? She shrunk with disgust from the idea of his caresses, given because it was proper and right in a husband to kiss his wife on his return home. No; she never, never could put her arms round his neck again, and feel happy that it was her privilege so to do. Ah! what a misfortune for them both that she had been enlightened! So that she had not known of his indifference, happiness would have been still possible for her. And some day, seeing how entirely she loved him, he might have come to care for her. That was all over; bury her heart, that was what she must do.

One day after the other went by, and Paul's mother watched Regina's listlessness with some alarm; she was indeed so struck by it that she sent privately to Dr. M—— to call.

"Pulse a little disturbed," was the Doctor's verdict, and he lectured Regina on the necessity of keeping herself calm, of avoiding agitation,—advice about as easy to follow as when some patient, with good reasons for being in low spirits, is told to amuse himself.

All the morning of the day in the evening of which Paul was to arrive, Regina went restlessly about the house, so pale and sad-looking that it brought tears into the eyes of those who saw her.

"She is not going to trouble anybody long," observed Joseph to Celestine.

"Trouble, whom do you think she troubles?" asked the maid pertly.

"A way of speaking, a way of speaking, young woman; we are all troublesome to somebody or other."

"You old hypocrite," retorted Celestine, with feminine logic.

"Why do you look so much at me to-day, mother?" asked Regina petulantly.

"Do I look so much at you, my dear?"

"Yes! I hate to be stared at."

Madame Latour choked away a sigh. She knew that Regina was suffering, and yet the unusual harsh manner hurt her, and she said in her heart, "Every one thinks an old woman may be ill-used."

Regina had laid herself on the sofa in the little back salon, and muffled her head with a shawl, to prevent all sounds from without reaching her. She need not have done so, for a deafening noise as if a dozen bees were buzzing in her ears, and the beating of her heart like the ticking of a great clock, prevented her hearing anything else. She was ill, very ill, though she did not know it.

Presently a well-remembered voice spoke—

"Regina, my darling!"

She sprung to her feet, and stared at her husband with blood-shot eyes. He was holding out his arms to her.

She forgot his letter—her doubts—her resolutions; she only saw and only knew that Paul was before her; she sprang to his embrace, clinging to him with rapture.

"My own, my darling!" Paul's arm was round her waist, his eyes looking down fondly into hers. "You have not given me one kiss, Regina!"

A tide of recollection rushed over her; she would have turned away from him, but that he held her firmly. "You have not kissed me," he repeated.

She tore down his face close to hers, and kissed him on the lips once, twice, violently; then she thrust him from her, and went back to the sofa. Paul, a little startled, followed and said, "Did I hurt you?" and would have again taken her in his arms, but she said, sharply, "Don't—don't!" He was sure, now, that there was a strangeness in her manner.

"You are my little wife—my property, and I claim it," again putting his arm round her. "When a man has been more than four months absent, he wants to be made much of and petted." While speaking, he laid his head on her shoulder. She let it lie there, yet neither speaking to him, nor returning the pressure of his hand. He was close to her, and it seemed to her as though she could not reach him, as if she were inaccessible to him.

Twenty times Regina was on the point of telling Paul that she had read that unlucky confession of his to Madame Aubry. She would have liked to say, "No need for you to play a part, we are equals now, our hearts in the same key, mine as indifferent to you as yours to me. I don't belong to the living." But her tongue was tied by Paul's influence over her. Absent from him, she could think and act independently. His presence enslaved her, and she sat silent, shuddering, indignant with him and herself.

The moment of reaction must come, the tension of her mind relax, or reason pay the penalty. She turned suddenly on him, placed her two hands on his shoulders, and looking him in the face said, with a face blanched by terror and pain—

"No need, Paul, to make any more pretences. I believe I am dying. I know you don't love me—never did love me. Quick! Call your mother!"

"Are you mad, Regina?" he exclaimed, throwing his arms round her. "What nonsense is this you have taken into your silly little head?"

"I read it myself! You wrote it all to Madame Aubry! I read it! Hortense sent it to me! You should not have married me."

Paul turned almost as white as Regina.

"Call Maman! For God's sake, call her—call her!"

Madame Latour came, and, as soon as she saw Regina, desired Joseph to take a cab and fetch Dr. M——.

Regina could not be persuaded to go to her bed. She would lie moaning on the sofa for five minutes, then start up and begin pacing the room till weakness forced her again to the sofa. Paul was in a pitiable state. He knelt by his wife, reiterating that he did love her—that he had written that fatal letter in a moment of irritation. He dared not avow that he had done so to pacify Madame Aubry, who had shown a jealousy of Regina that had alarmed him. Untrue to both, his sin had found him out.

The night of the 14th of August was a terrible night—twelve hours never to be forgotten by any of those then in Latour's house.

It was with difficulty that Paul could be kept away from the side of his wife's bed, though every time she caught sight of him she screamed out that he was killing her.

At break of day of the 15th, the fête of the Assumption, Dr. M—— sought Paul and told him that Regina was safe, and that he was the father of a little girl. Prematurely born, the child was not likely to live long: it breathed, and that was all: the sooner it was baptized the better.

"May I go to Regina?" asked Paul.

"She must not be agitated." There was so much misery in Paul's face, that the doctor added, "I will go and see whether you can be admitted."

Dr. M—— had gained sufficient information from Regina's incoherent words during the night, to have a shrewd guess that matters were not right between the husband and wife. With infinite caution, he broached the subject of his mission.

"The baby must be baptized, and Paul would be glad to consult her about the names, and also about the sponsors."

"She is to be called Marie Dolores."

Dr. M—— said, "Marie is pretty, but the other name is not French."

"It was the name of my father's mother." Then she added angrily, her face flushing violently, "but I don't care what you call the monkey."

"She may be a good Christian by any name," said the doctor smiling.

Regina did not speak.

"Do you feel able to see Paul?"

The same silence, but the doctor saw an angry sparkle in her eye.

Several times in the course of the day Paul went to her bedside, but to all he said to her (and Heaven knows he had never spoken so caressingly to her, never looked at her so fondly,) she made no reply: gave no return, save a curious low derisive laugh. Once, when he leaned over the baby lying by her

side, she eyed him so fiercely, that he burst into tears.

She closed her eyes as one weary.

Somewhat to Dr. M——'s surprise, Regina recovered rapidly, and the baby continued to live. It lived, but it did not thrive. The young mother would never let it out of her arms except when it was absolutely indispensable that the rosy-cheeked Norman woman, its nurse, should have it. As for Paul, Regina's love for him had given place to decided aversion. She would neither speak to him nor look at him. Day after day he brought her flowers, the sweetest and the choicest. Her dressing-room, where she now always sat, was strewed with the most costly baubles and toys invented to amuse grown-up children. Not a morning but she found some gift awaiting her. Paul, the indifferent husband, had become an impassioned lover. Every fault exacts its expiation. Human vengeance may sleep; conscience does its work bravely.

Paul used to watch, through the glass door of communication between his room and the dressing-room, the effect on his wife of his morning's offering. Once his heart beat with hope: it was when he saw Regina look with interest at "La Journée de Mademoiselle Lili." He had left the book open, and she turned over every page, showing the engravings to the unconscious babe in her arms.

Nothing came of it. When he went in to wish her good-morning, Regina turned away her head, and to all he said gave no reply. One day he knelt down before her, took her hands in his, and said—

"Look at me, Regina; do you not see that I am unhappy?"

He was indeed the shadow of the handsome, successful Paul Latour de la Mothe.

"Look at my hair," he added. "It's growing gray, my love, because I am so wretched. And it is all a mistake. You would believe me if I told you I did not love you, why can you not believe me when I tell you that I do?"

Tears were rolling over her cheek.

"Why do you cry, my darling?"

"Because you hurt my hands," she said, whimpering like a child.

He fled.

For some time the doctor and his mother comforted Paul by assuring him that many women were eccentric after their confinement; and a common thing that the eccentricity should manifest itself by aversion to the person most dear—to the husband or child. Time—care—travelling—generally effected a cure.

Madame Saincère had a whole list of cases where the wife recovered after the lapse of more than a twelvemonth.

Dr. M—— recommended Paul to be less assiduous in his attentions to Regina; to pass his morn-

ings in the atelier. Very probably when she missed him, she would begin to wish for his presence.

"Finish your 'Iphigenia,'" said Dr. M——, "you have just time before the opening of the Exhibition."

Regina had sat to Paul for Agamemnon's daughter: he had made an excellent likeness of his model, but had sought in vain to impart to the face of "Iphigenia" the expression suitable to her horror and her terror when she discovers that she is to be the victim offered to the offended god.

As he sat now contemplating his half-finished picture, he remembered how he had been almost exasperated by the shy, happy, loving look with which Regina's eyes always met his, whenever he bid her turn them toward him—the very look becoming in a willing bride, but not to one about to be sacrificed. Those beautiful eyes were now as perfect as ever in shape, but that peculiar clearness which belongs to great youth and health had vanished. Many bitter thoughts occupied the painter's brain. He wondered over the blindness of human beings, which prevents their seeing where happiness lies; so often close to us, and yet we cannot see it. He felt that his life was broken up, and it was by his own weakness. Painting! yes, he had believed that art alone could give his existence sufficient interest; that the exercise of his intellectual powers alone would be sufficient to make life grateful. He understood now that there is nothing one-sided in nature—the affections must be in the right direction as well as the intellect. Every tear he had made Regina shed was now

weighing down his heart. We must respect the rights and feelings of others, if we would secure our own peace. What is remorse but a protestation of human nature against the wrongs we have inflicted. Not a touch of the brush did Paul give that day. It had cost him a great effort to follow Dr. M——'s advice, and remain away from Regina for several hours. In his afternoon visit to her, he told her that he had been trying to finish the "Iphigenia." He had taken the new habit of telling her everything that he did during the day—and that in spite of her unvarying taciturnity. And how he had formerly repulsed her every endeavor to enter into his life, to be his companion. God help us, how stupid we are when we tread down affection!

The next morning, as soon as Paul was in the atelier, Regina came thither with her baby, and unasked, placed herself opposite to him as his model.

"Thank you, darling. I shall now be able to finish," and he hastily placed the platform for her to stand on. "Will you allow nurse to hold baby?"

She shook her head.

"It will fatigue you too much," he said, tenderly; but he desisted from further remark, for he saw her anger rising.

She placed herself in the necessary pose.

"How well you remember!" Six months ago, the caressing tones of his voice would have made her heart leap for joy.

He had found the expression for "Iphigenia's"

eyes; his hand trembled as he strove to copy what made his misery. At the end of half an hour, the sleeping infant woke with a wail, and Regina went away without a word, as she had come.

CHAPTER XXV

A RAINBOW ABOVE THE WRECK.

Paul was examining his work of the day before with mingled pain and wonder, when he was startled by the appearance of Madame Aubry at his side.

"For God's sake, go away!" he exclaimed. "Regina may come here at any moment, and if she meets you, the consequences may be fearful."

"Why don't you come to see me?" cried Adeline. "What have I done to deserve your neglect? It was no fault of mine that you wrote as you did—none of my doing that your letter reached your wife's hands. There was nothing after all so very dreadful in what you said."

"Go away, for God's sake!" reiterated Paul, "you don't know the evil you may cause."

"Is she, then, really very ill?" asked Madame Aubry.

"I have always had great confidence in you," he replied; "so I'll tell you a secret, two secrets—she is mad—mad—very mad; and I adore her."

Madame Aubry said—

"Hush! there's a step."

"Go into the little room, remain there, I implore you. I will do my best to release you soon."

Madame Aubry had scarcely closed the door on herself before Regina appeared, always carrying her

baby. She paused after she had come forward some few steps, and looked about her uneasily; however, after that moment's hesitation she went and placed herself on the platform. But Paul perceived that she was far less tranquil than she had been the day before; her nostrils quivered, and her lips twitched nervously.

He painted on, scarcely knowing what he did; and yet instinctively rendering the disturbed, fiercely passionate face before him. If the baby would only wake and wail! His sensations were those of a man on the scaffold hoping for a reprieve.

Regina stood very quietly: all of a sudden, just when Paul for an instant had his head bent over his color-box, she made a bound to the glass door, and before he could reach her, had opened it. There were woman's screams—a baby's wail—a violent struggle.

"Joseph!—mother!" shouted Paul, and Madame Aubry rushed through the atelier.

When Madame Latour and Joseph ran in, Regina was holding Paul's bleeding hand to her lips.

"Look to the child," said Paul, pointing to the poor baby lying on the floor.

No questions were needed, the scene explained itself.

Regina obeyed Paul the moment he asked her to go upstairs; but she would not let go his hand once she was in her room; he said—

"You don't wish me to die, Regina? and I shall if you do not allow my hand to be bound up."

She let it go, and threw herself at his feet, folding her arms round his knees.

"I will not leave you, my dear one; lie down on the sofa, and I will sit by your side."

She did as he bid her, her eyes always riveted on him, and seemingly having forgotten her baby.

The wound she had given Paul was without doubt intended for Madame Aubry. The blow had been dealt with his palette knife, which she had caught up and concealed with the cunning of madness. It was supposed that the strong patchouly with which Madame Aubry was always perfumed had been the betraying cause of that lady's presence.

Dr. M—— and Madame Saincère seized this occasion to try and persuade Paul to let Regina be removed from home, and placed for a time under special supervision. But to their amazement Paul scoffed at the supposition that his wife was mad, though we know he had owned to Madame Aubry that she was so. He would listen to no plan or project which was to separate Regina from him; he said "that she had only done what any jealous, passionate woman might be guilty of. The Mañolas who stabbed their lovers were not put in Maisons de Santé.

"Some day the police will interfere," said the doctor.

"If you set them on a false scent," returned Paul, furiously, "you and I will have to settle that matter."

"God help you, my dear Paul;" and the doctor ran away to hide his emotion.

"Curious inconsistency of human nature," observed Madame Saincère afterward to doctor M——. "This man, who was indifferent, if not disdainful of his wife, while she was full of health and beauty and devotion for him, has suddenly conceived what I should call a furious passion for the poor crazed creature."

"The 'inaccessible,' that's the attraction," replied the doctor; "the instinct of the hunter after an unattainable prey."

"And you think there's no chance for her recovery?"

"There's nothing impossible; but as far as my experience goes, I should say but small hope. Physical and moral causes have united to destroy her reason."

"And all promised so well in the beginning of their marriage! Every thing seemed so suitable."

Dr. M—— arched his eyebrows.

"You mean what is called a *mariage de raison*—a *blasé* man and an inexperienced girl. Paul once said to me, and said justly, 'That it was monstrous to marry a man with worn-out feelings, who has been steeped in all the dissipations of the world, to a pure young girl, with all her feelings fresh and strong.' In short, the situation has produced a natural result—a tragedy, and a tragedy of which I wish I could be sure of the end. Regina must be watched closely; her having used a knife alarms me."

For weeks Regina remained tolerably docile, though she had every sort of caprice, all of which Paul satisfied. He would not have her contradicted.

One of her whims was to dress herself and her baby in the costume of a Dominican nun. Anything more lugubrious than the mother and child thus habited, it is not possible to conceive. It required the courage of affection and of a great compassion in the nurse and Celestine that they remained in the house.

Paul's friends gathered round him in this disastrous period. Ernst Bürgmüller, Valton, Georges Tully, proved they could feel deeply and seriously. All that love, friendship, and science could do was done for the husband and wife. Love alone withstood the daily proofs that the evil was on the increase. Regina could scarcely be brought to eat; it was only when she saw Paul's tears that she yielded to take a morsel from his plate, or to drink out of his cup. She had taken a fancy that there was a general conspiracy against her, and that some night she was to be killed. Occasionally, however, there would flash across her folly and incoherence traces of her former sweet loving self; and now, when all disguise was impossible, it was manifest what a gentle soul she had been, and how she had suffered from Paul's neglect and coldness.

A terrible storm had raged over Paris on the 15th of November, just three months since the birth of the child.

The lightning and thunder lasted for hours. Regina was violently agitated. Dr. M—— had been in the Rue Bleue for hours, and had insisted, when

he left, on leaving a strong woman from one of the Maisons de Santé in charge of Regina.

As soon, however, as Regina perceived a stranger in her room, she shrieked so dreadfully, and implored Paul so pathetically to send away her enemy, that he yielded. In vain the keeper remonstrated with him, and advised him at least to allow her to occupy for that night his room, adjoining that of Regina. As usual, he persisted in saying that all such precautions were useless.

Very little ever transpired of the events of that night. About three in the morning the house was alarmed by the loud ringing of Paul's bedroom bell. The keeper was the first to answer it. Regina was kneeling on the bed, Paul holding her hands.

From what was wrung from Paul, it would appear that after long watching he had fallen into a sound sleep, out of which he had been awakened by the pressure of something cold on his chest; that by the light of the night-lamp he had seen Regina in her night-dress standing by his bed. She had laid her baby on his breast. It was quite stiff and cold. Regina had said to him—

"It never cried, Paul. No marrying for her."

What further had passed he never told, but from Paul's exhausted appearance, there must have been some fearful struggle. He had evidently rung his bell, which luckily hung at the head of his bed, only at the last extremity.

Paul is still travelling with his wife.

In every letter he assures his mother that there is a great amelioration in Regina's health of mind and body, and that he expects to bring her home shortly quite restored. In his last, he adds, "A new era of happiness for us all is at hand."

"Pray God it may be so!" sighs the mother.

THE END.

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