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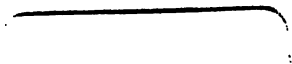
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the study. The first author (SM) was the primary investigator and was responsible for the design, data collection, data analysis and writing of the manuscript. The second author (MM) was responsible for the design, data collection, data analysis and writing of the manuscript. The third author (MM) was responsible for the design, data collection, data analysis and writing of the manuscript. The fourth author (MM) was responsible for the design, data collection, data analysis and writing of the manuscript.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

The study was a descriptive study that aimed to explore the experiences of nurses working in the intensive care unit (ICU) in a tertiary care hospital.

2.2. Setting

The study was conducted in a tertiary care hospital in a developing country. The hospital has a long history of providing high-quality patient care and is a leader in the field of intensive care medicine.

2.3. Participants

The study included 10 nurses who were working in the ICU. The nurses were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that they had a range of experiences and perspectives.

2.4. Data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in a private setting and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were audio-taped and lasted approximately 30 minutes.

2.5. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the grounded theory approach. This approach involves identifying themes and patterns in the data that emerge from the participants' experiences.

2.6. Ethical approval

The study was approved by the ethics committee of the hospital. All participants gave their informed consent before participating in the study.

2.7. Results

The results of the study identified several themes that emerged from the participants' experiences. These themes were related to the challenges of working in the ICU and the impact of these challenges on the nurses' well-being.

2.8. Discussion

The findings of the study have implications for the practice of nursing in the ICU. The challenges identified by the participants suggest that there is a need for support and resources for nurses working in this demanding environment.

2.9. Conclusion

The study concludes that nurses working in the ICU experience significant challenges that impact their well-being. Further research is needed to explore these challenges in more depth and to develop strategies to address them.

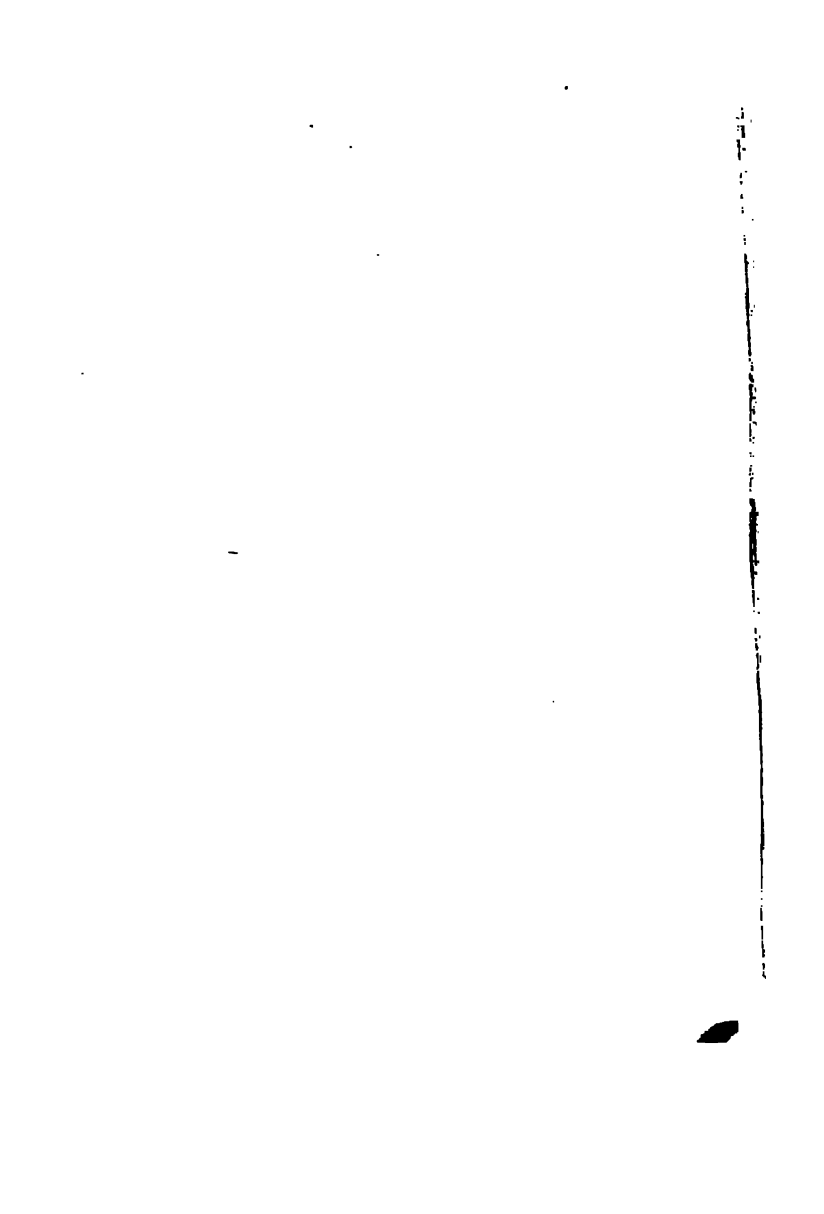
2.10. Acknowledgements

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2.11. References

1. Smith J, Jones K. *Intensive Care Nursing: A Practical Approach*. London: Blackwell Science, 2001.







F. v. d. W.
ONCE AND AGAIN.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"WHO BREAKS, PAYS."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L E I P Z I G

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1865.

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ONCE AND AGAIN.

CHAPTER I.

A Three-twisted Twist.

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

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

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

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

"Ah! philosophers and progressionists of the nine-

teenth century, I wish you joy of your success in the improvement of mankind. Here we are in the year 183—, as we were centuries ago, in full paganism, — crowds rushing after a fat ox destined for the shambles, blowsy women, brutal men, feathers, spangles, drums, glitter, noise, drink, and all the rest. If I were King of the French — which, I thank God, I am not — I would decree that the first man who blew a blast on a cow's-horn in the streets of my capital, should be hanged and quartered."

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

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

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

"As monsieur pleases."

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

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

Denis answered: —

"Children wake at dawn, like birds. It is Félicie who is the most to be pitied; Mdlle. Louisa lets no one sleep after she opens her eyes."

"Beautiful eyes they are," muttered the marquis.

The very young person thus alluded to was the

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

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

"Does monsieur ever think — but monsieur is always reading—"

"Do I ever think of what?"

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

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

"Well, no, monsieur. I reflect, and I say to myself, 'What is life? — dressing, eating, and undressing.'"

"You do not contemplate suicide, I trust, Denis?"

"I, sir? Why?"

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

"Monsieur is laughing at me." And Denis was silent.

The few minutes' lull in the morning's clamour was broken by an *organ-grinder* coming into the court,

and beginning to grind away at the bridal chorus from *Der Freischütz*.

"Another nuisance," grumbled the marquis.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This Marc de Lantry was a lad of seventeen, and a pupil of Professor Gastineau, who lived at the top of the house. In reply to Félicie's call for help, Gustave Gastineau, the professor's eldest boy, said that Marc could not go downstairs just then, he was busy. Marc was at that moment in his own room, receiving the trembling Madame Gastineau's confidence, that she had no bread, no milk, no coffee for the morning's breakfast, and no money to buy any. "The professor will beat me," was how the poor woman wound up her *speech*, and her face turned the colour of lead.

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

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

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

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

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

He peeped out; the ogre was not in sight; he slipped swiftly through the house-door, and was already as far down as the second story, when he heard *Louise's screams*. *There was such a sound of pain in*

the cries, that, in haste as he was, he could not pass without stopping to see what was wrong. He rang the bell, and the door was instantly opened. Louisa was in the ante-room, stamping and shrieking, — a very little fury.

“Is she hurt?” asked Marc.

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

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

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

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

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

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

While Louisa was still in her defiant attitude, with head thrown back and one arm outstretched, there was the sound of a quick, unsteady step ascending the stairs, and, in another moment, a tall, thin, fair man came on the little group. Neither looking to the right nor the left, and only slightly raising his hat, he passed, as if by right, into Mrs. Templar’s apartment.

“Come here, Louisa,” he called out in English; “*I have something for you.*” Hitherto all the conver-

sation had been in French, which Louisa spoke with the same facility as English.

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

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

M. de Blacourt went downstairs again, followed by the brown-eyed youth with the bundle. Marc had a momentary impulse to tell the marquis that there was a family starving under the same roof with his noble self. But Marc was deterred by a certain look which belongs to men who have always exercised authority over the mass of their fellow-creatures by right of superiority of rank and wealth. In another three-quarters of an hour, young De Lantry returning minus his package, met little Miss Templar in the fancy dress of a Bernese peasant, going out, accompanied by the tall, fair, thin man, whom Félicie called M. Granson.

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

trimony as M. de Blacourt had actually married a woman to avoid a separation from her child.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I mean, what everybody means," replied the lady; "when a girl is beautiful and clever, she is called happily gifted."

"Be it so, but for what; to secure her own happiness? I doubt it: there are heavy taxes laid on great possessions. Destiny sports rather with what is high than low, as the storm does with the loftiest trees; you couldn't point out to me, if you tried for a week, three *instances of a happy tranquil life falling to the lot of*

superlative beauty, or genius, or even to one possessed of a character greatly superior to his generation. Mankind generally revenges this last species of excellence by bestowing on it the death of a criminal."

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

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

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

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

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

"And consequently you would like to watch over her — guard her? Come, tell me, confide in me, as a friend and relation, when is it to be?"

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

"But Louisa has a mother."

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

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

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

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

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

The lady's temper *was* ruffled.

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

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

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

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

A few words about M. de Blacourt. His was a disjointed life. Ten years prior to this Shrove Tuesday, on the edge of thirty, that age when most men

usually turn away from the mere pleasures of existence, and ask for happiness, he had received a blow which had unhinged his whole being; it had given a twist to his intellect, and covered his heart with a crust.

He had loved sincerely and devotedly as strange a compound of good and evil as is to be found even among women. Sophie's bad actions all appeared to spring from some good source, and — then she was fairest of the fair. Her faults were the exaggerations of virtues. The marquis had adored her in fear and trembling. One day a chilling frost killed all his budding hopes, and from that period he had looked at the world by the light of his own misadventure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes, my mamma left this costume for me, and bid M. Granson take me out to see the Bœuf Gras! My mamma is very, very kind."

"Very," returned the gentleman.

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

"I have been very much amused," went on Louisa. "*I had a good sight of the big oxen; one was white,*

he was the handsomest; he was on a cart which had no sides, and men in long white gowns, like ladies' dressing-gowns, and with green leaves round their heads, and great knives in their hands, stood by him, to keep him from tumbling out, I suppose; and there were other men in velvet cloaks and white feathers in their hats, and satin trowsers, on prancing horses, before and behind the cart, just as there are when the ring goes out; and there was a band, a band of real music, and not a sham, and there was a great waggon full of women with odd things in their hair; one had a little castle, and another a new moon, and they were going to see the king and queen, and the princes and princesses. I didn't think them nice; they had dirty red faces, but a great many people called *me* a pretty little girl."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You have ruined another collar," said he.

"You are good."

"How can *such a mite* as you tell?"

"I know it."

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

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

"You are not afraid of anybody, are you?" asked Louisa.

"I believe not."

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

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

Louisa burst into a laugh of ecstasy.

Denis at this moment put his head into the room, saying "Monsieur." There he stopped — amazement

cut short his intended speech, for he beheld his grave master squatting on the rug.

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

"I thought M. le Marquis called me."

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

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

"Hides from you, I suppose?" replied the marquis.

Louisa waved her head slowly from side to side.

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

It was the marquis's turn to laugh.

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

"Félicie talks nonsense. It is naughty to speak so unkindly of one of your mamma's friends."

"I will tell you something else," said the child, eagerly, and not heeding the reproof. She knew perfectly well by her child's instinct that the marquis did not like M. Granson. "He is not a gentleman. One day I saw he had *no stockings* on under his boots, his

trowsers turned up, you know; and his pocket-handkerchiefs have big holes in them. Mamma says he is trying to get back his fortune, but Félicie says —”

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II.

The Marquis and the Vicomte.

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

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

M. de Blacourt remarked, "Nevertheless, I have seen Louisa very much afraid of you, when she has spoiled any of her finery. Good heavens! I shall not easily forget the shriek she gave the day she burned her pinafore, nor the terrified face with which she said to me, 'Sir, a great misfortune has happened to me. I have burned my frilled pinafore, and mamma will be very, *very* angry with me.'"

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

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

The marquis divined as little as Mrs. Templar what was the stumbling-block between the child and her mother. *Mrs. Templar* was, in reality, too old to

be Louisa's mother — too great a difference of age separated them. God meant mothers to be young. A child with a young mother is in its proper element of caresses, gambols, and idleness. Sympathy is better than all reasoning on both sides. Louisa had none of this. She was essentially the precocious child of an elderly mother.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And monsieur, how old is he?" asked Félicie.

"About my age," said Denis, sawing the air with his extended fingers — a gesture by which he meant to convey the information, "a little difference this way or that — nothing to signify."

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

Monsieur de Blacourt, however, continued to advise Mrs. Templar whenever she applied to him for advice; continued to transact any little business she might have to do, such as remonstrating with the landlord about repairs, or repressing the insolence of office in the concierge — continued to escort her occasionally to *the theatre* or the opera — continued

to adore Louisa; and yet without any effort on the part of either the lady or the gentleman, all tittle-tattle concerning them — even that of ill-tongued Professor Gastineau died away. Everything without a foundation does fall to the ground one day or other.

Still, it is seldom that a man and woman of tolerably suitable age can be on such perfectly friendly terms, and both be at liberty to marry, and yet not do so. There were certain qualities in Mrs. Templar which were of a nature to please the marquis: — First. She never flattered him; her faith was, that it was a man's office to flatter a woman — a woman's to receive homage.

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

What did repel M. de Blacourt was her bitterness against the world. "The world she denounces," he thought, "is what she herself is. When we complain of coldness, it is that we are ourselves cold. If we *have friendliness* in us, others are friendly to us."

Mrs. Templar was, in every sense of the word, a disappointed woman. She had set out in life with a purpose; she had held tenaciously to it. She had given her youth for it. No communings with poets and their dreams, no silent ecstasies at the sound of birds' songs issuing from leafy coverts, no whispers of young affection, no pressure of loving hands for her; she turned from all such things as from temptations to stray from the only right path for her. One of the many daughters of a younger son of a Nova Scotia baronet, she had more blood than money. And she had hated and dreaded poverty from the day when an ancient dame of her house had made her understand, that what was suitable for her would be beneath her wealthier cousins. From that hour, she had resolved to have "position," and to be able to insult as she had been insulted. She had married a rich old merchant, but the sacrifice fell short of its mark. Her high-born relatives could not "abide the smell of money made in trade."

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

undoubtedly, of the upper ten thousand, with a right to insult, as she had been insulted.

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

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

He had asked her one day, why she had left off

ing to the English chapel — if Mons. Coquerel's eloquence was the cause.

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

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

M. de Blacourt had lately begun to be alarmed that Mrs. Templar was contemplating the taking of a third husband. His principal anxiety in the matter was on Louisa's account; the child would, indeed, be doomed to misery, should her mother marry the person styled M. le Vicomte Grandson. However the marquis refrained from any advice. He had had sufficient experience of women to be aware that a warning against anything they have set their minds on, merely serves to precipitate an impending catastrophe.

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

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

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

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

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

Now, the widow was very far from being one of those frank, unsuspecting souls who seem marked out from their birth to be dupes. On the contrary, she was always so much on her guard as to being taken in, that she suspected every one. But M. Granson came triumphantly out of all the traps she laid to test the truth of his assertion, that he had been well acquainted with several persons, who were, in truth re-

lations of her own. These persons, to be sure, had been long quiet in their graves, and Mrs. Templar forgot that dead men tell no tales — she gave her confidence to M. Granson on circumstantial evidence.

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

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

The other enemy in the citadel had none of Félicie's arts. Louisa openly showed her dislike of her mother's *new friend*, and he, obliged to endure with

complacency the manifestations of her aversion, c
have willingly beaten, instead of caressed her.

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

CHAPTER III.

Fieschi's Conspiracy.

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

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

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

The marquis swallowed a mouthful before he replied, —

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Ah!" again remarked the marquis: he swallowed another mouthful, and then added, "Félicie is a good servant — she will easily find another situation."

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

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

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

"And where are we going, Louisa?" he said.

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

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

"You must be very sorry to part with her?"

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

"Embrassons-nous, cher petit monstre sans cœur," *he said.* Louisa put up her rosy lips, pouting in the

prettiest manner possible. The marquis kissed her and said, "Now, I shall attend you upstairs to say adieu to your mamma."

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

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

Some three hours after Mrs. Templar and Louisa had driven away to Versailles, all Paris was in a state of excitement and emotion. In the palace were tears of joy mingled with retrospective terror. In the Gastineau's garret there was a widow weeping. Professor Gastineau had been killed instead of King Louis Philippe, by the explosion of Fieschi's infernal machine. M. Granson, who had been standing by the professor's side, told the police where to carry the dead man, and then the fair-haired vicomte betook himself without delay to Versailles. The news he brought was his excuse for so speedily following Mrs. Templar to her new quarters. He had been a little dubious as to his reception, for she was subject to hot and cold fits. But the shock of his news entirely absorbed her attention.

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

by the nearest of kin during his father's exile. She gave way, though under a silent protest against herself.

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

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

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

But Louisa was not engrossed by her doll — she was watching the new maid with all the concentration of attention which children can bring to bear on an individual, while they seem to be pre-occupied with a toy. Louisa marked the sneer with which Laure examined the contents of the trunks. Louisa's proud

little heart swelled at the open contempt with which Laure placed her mistress's wearing apparel in the wardrobes, but Louisa was afraid to speak — for the first time in her life she was afraid of a human being. Once Laure's eyes met those of Louisa — the lady's-maid laughed.

"How ugly she is," thought Louisa.

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

At first sight of Laure, Mrs. Templar had thought the girl plain — this had given her satisfaction, for Laure had been recommended by M. Granson; he represented her as the daughter of a faithful servant of his house. On seeing her maid a second time Mrs. Templar altered her opinion. She noted her masses of deep auburn hair, her burning brown eyes, her small regular features, her well-built, slight figure. Mrs. Templar could not understand her mistaken first impression, until she had taken into account Laure's pallid, thick, freckled skin, — the sort of complexion which so often goes with red hair. A sudden sharp spasm contracted Mrs. Templar's heart, as she contemplated the young woman's face, reflected with her own in the dressing-table mirror, before which she was seated, with her maid standing behind her. At that instant the lady would have given all she possessed in the world, station, independence, child — given all for youth and beauty. "I am an idiot," she thought, "to imagine that any man can love me as I am." She

returned to the drawing-room, and never had M. Granson seen her so cold and forbidding. To Laure, who waited on them at dinner, she was, by the law of feminine pride, peculiarly condescending.

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

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

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

Madame Gastineau did not rise from her chair to receive her visitor. She held out her hand encouragingly as Mrs. Templar hesitated at the door; only the youngest boy was present; he had his back turned to his mother, and was killing the flies on the window by way of pastime. The room was, in reality, oppressively hot, but Mrs. Templar felt a chill as she took a chair by the side of the newly-made widow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The professor's widow wiped her eyes quietly with her pocket-handkerchief, a very coarse, faded coloured one; the hand that held it was as coarse and worn.

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

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

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

“How do we know? Nobody was caring whether a poor, shabby, grey-haired man was dead or not. Louis Philippe was safe; *he* ought to do something for my husband. Gastineau saved *him*, that he did; and there he lies cold and quiet enough in the next room. O Lord! what can any king do for him now? Some people have *no luck*, everything goes wrong with them;

it's best for them to try the next world. A pity we hadn't all made an end of it together."

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

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

The little boy went and called Marc de Lantry.

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

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

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

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

"Oh, my God! If I could only hear his voice once again, calling, 'Justine, Justine;' I wouldn't mind what he said. I know better now, Monsieur Marc: this quiet is horrible."

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

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

The boy at the window began again to kill flies.

Mrs. Templar sat absorbed in thought. That something within us, which exhorts us to fulfil a duty — to help those in distress, was urging Mrs. Templar to take away Mdme. Gastineau and her children from that *stifling garret*, into every room of which penetrated

the heart-breaking sounds which attend on death. Mrs. Templar, who had come to Paris, resolved to think no more of M. Granson but as an acquaintance, now set aside her good impulses, solely because to have Mdme. Gastineau with her would interfere with him; would probably be an annoyance to him. Love, with all its weaknesses, inconsistencies and devotedness had mastered Mrs. Templar at the eleventh hour. What was it that had so fascinated her? The marquis was superior in everything to M. Granson, superior in station, in looks and manners, yet he had never made an impression on her heart. But then, M. de Blacourt had never shown her that sort of attention which makes a woman of Mrs. Templar's age, believe that she is still attractive, never lavished on her those flatteries which are a sort of guarantee that she can still inspire love.

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

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

The door next to that of the salon was ajar. Mrs.

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

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

Mrs. Templar drew away with a shudder.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV.

A Double Dismissal.

Mrs. TEMPLAR's apartment at Versailles was in one of the streets leading into the Bois de Satory. The house was the last of a row, and detached by some fifty yards of wall from the others in the same line. With no buildings in front, the view from the windows was pleasant; but the close proximity of the forest made the situation not altogether a desirable one. This might be the reason that the rent of the rooms was in no proportion to their style. Window-curtains, bed-hangings, were of Italian silk; sofas, chairs, ottomans, were all covered with the same material. Handsome mirrors nearly hid the walls of the salon. The alcoves in the bedrooms were like little temples. As Mrs. Templar took note of these things on the morning before she went to Paris to visit Madame Gastineau, a fear crept into her mind that she had made some mistake as to the sum mentioned by M. Granson as the rent for three months.

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

"The vicomte, ignorant that Mrs. Templar had *gone to Paris*, had called during madame's absence,

had assisted in going over the inventory, and had afterwards taken Mademoiselle Louisa out for a walk in the forest. M. le Vicomte would do himself the honour of calling again in the evening."

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

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

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

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

"Very well. Where is Mademoiselle Louisa?"

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

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

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

"Do you know what took me away from you this morning, *my life?*" said Mrs. Templar, sitting down

and lifting the child on to her knee. "Your poor French master, Monsieur Gastineau, was killed yesterday."

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

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

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

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

"Child, child, what word is that — what do you mean by '*flambée*'?"

"I don't know quite in English; but it's like being killed. No, I am *not* sorry for old Gastineau. I wish all naughty people to die, and then we should be happy."

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

Louisa changed colour — hung down her head.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"In the forest."

"And was Laure there also?"

"Yes. I won't walk with those two again."

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

Mrs. Templar evinced no sign of dissatisfaction.

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

How audaciously some people can praise you to your face!

M. Granson went off into a hymn to Mrs. Templar's virtues: her heart, it was large and it was soft; her mind, it was strong and capacious; she had genius of the heart. What a woman! what a woman!

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

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

"*I never asked you how you came to be acquainted*

with a man so out of your own sphere as poor M. Gastineau."

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

"Shakspeare says that misery does," corrected Mr. Templar.

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

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

"Upon what bad herb have you trodden to-day?"

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

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

"I believe I *am* cross. I am tired and grieved and vexed about many things."

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

This answer was not what Mrs. Templar had ex-

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

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

He said with a well-assumed enthusiasm, —

“Pray, do you know how to quarrel?”

This was very soothing, very flattering. Un-merited praise is sometimes pleasant.

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

“There is only one thing I cannot be robbed of,” he added, “and that is my name. My resources may fail, and then adieu suit and estates; but, thank God, I have no debts, and a single man can always manage to earn enough for himself. I shall never be guilty of such an imprudence as poor Gastineau’s; — no, no; I will burden no wife with my poverty.”

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

to tell Mrs. Templar that the landlady had come to ask if the inventory was signed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Laure left the room with small show of respect.

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

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

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

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

A faint sound from the room within hers reminded her of Louisa. She went in on tiptoe, There lay the sweet little thing, with flushed cheeks, the lips apart, the fair curls flung back on the pillow — just what we picture to ourselves child angels must be. The sight fell like balm on the disturbed heart of poor Mrs. Templar. Louisa gave another faint moan: the mother woke her with a kiss.

Louisa started, sat up, saying quickly, —

"Yes, Mdlle. Laure."

"It is mamma, dear," whispered Mrs. Templar.

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

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

"You must try and go to sleep again; it is not yet five o'clock."

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

"Come along, then; but you must not talk."

As the pretty little creature, her scanty nightdress showing the perfection of her childish form, danced along before Mrs. Templar, the question of why should she trouble herself about M. Granson occurred to her. Had she not a rare treasure already to brighten coming years? Louisa lay by her side, the large smiling eyes, little by little closing in sleep, the tiny dimpled hand clasping one of her fingers.

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

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

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

Yes, she had them in her desk. It never came into her head to ask him whether she could not draw

her interest, for herself. No, she had had one or two realms as to the investment of this money, which was in fact Louisa's little fortune, and she was now silenced by that honest shame which any tolerably conscientious person feels, who has suspected the good faith of a friend.

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

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

Occasionally of a night Mrs. Templar would remember that she had scarcely taken notice of Louisa since the breakfast hour. Louisa had been sent to a day-school. At first Mrs. Templar used herself to take Louisa there and to fetch her back of an afternoon. Formerly it had been arranged that the school-mistress should leave her little pupil at home on the return of the school from their afternoon walk. Mrs. Templar was so engrossed by her own concerns that she never observed Louisa's loss of colour, or the dull heavy look with which she sat by herself of an evening *earning her lessons for the next day* — did not ob-

serve her petulant avoidance of any sort of intercourse with M. Granson — did not perceive the child's complete silence with regard to Laure. This was the state of matters at the end of August. Mdlle. Laur received her month's wages, and nothing was said as to her going away, so it is to be supposed Mrs. Templar had become reconciled to her services.

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

"Mdlle. Louisa then has been ill?"

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

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

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

"Really, my good Babette," said Mrs. Templar interrupting her discourse on the re-tinning of casseroles, "I can perceive no such great change in Mdlle Louisa."

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

Having finished her business with Babette, Mrs. *Templar and Louisa* went up to the *cinquième* to see

Madame Gastineau. The widow interrupted her thanks for the aid sent through Marc de Lantry, to inquire if Louisa had been ailing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Are you going to be a French pastor?"

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

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

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

"You shall always be my dear Mr. Marc," said Louisa, firmly.

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

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

"They are not cross to me, mamma."

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

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

"Is Laure good to you, Louisa?"

"I can't bear Laure," said Louisa violently.

"Why?" and Mrs. Templar's voice was unconsciously to herself severe.

"Oh! mamma, don't be cross; you never used to be cross to Louisa." And the little face puckered up with the effort not to cry.

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

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

er he wouldn't sit drinking beer with Laure and Mr. and Mrs. Tétart."

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

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

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

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

Louisa uttered a sharp cry and retorted, —

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

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

Babette re-entered the room resolutely.

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

"Oh! Babette, Babette," said the child, clasping

Babette round the neck. "I am so unhappy," and she put her hot wet cheek against the cook's.

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

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

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

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

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

"Prudence; we must separate. The old lady w

be here directly. So you counted them? she has a dozen hairs she can call her own?"

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

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

M. Granson gave a low whistle, and retreated some few steps to await the last incident of his courtship of the English lady. It was not long in coming. In five minutes more, Laure put her head again out of the window.

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

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

CHAPTER V.

The Glass of Water.

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

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

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

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

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

"M. Granson can assist you," returned Mrs. Templar quietly.

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

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

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

"My wages," returned Laure, "and then I shall be glad to be out of your service. Mon Dieu! do you

fancy it such a pleasure to live with people who look after every bottle of wine and lump of sugar? What a droll idea!"

"Your wages!" said Mrs. Templar, still with that self-control which held Mdlle. Laure in check as the curb does a vicious horse. "I paid you your wages this morning. Ah, by the by, I must pay you for to-day," and she laid down some small money.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

M. Tétart came.

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

"It depends on the agreement made."

"There was no warning stipulated on either side."

"Then she has a right to wages for a week."

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

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

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

"Yes, madame."

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

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

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

"You are right," said Mrs. Templar.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Now we are going to be happy again! happy, happy!"

"Hush, Louisa!"

The little girl stopped her whirling, and was for a minute transfixed by the sight of her mother's face; child as she was, she could read the suffering printed on it. On tiptoe, treading lightly as she would have done in a sick-room, Louisa went to her mother's side.

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

"No," said Mrs. Templar.

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

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

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

It was a sultry August evening.

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

"I want a fire," said Mrs. Templar, impatiently.

"Well, well, madame shall have one. She is to be pitied," muttered the woman to herself, as she left the room; "but what a fool to be thinking of lovers at her age."

The maid was thirty, and considered that a woman of forty ought to have done with the vanities of the world. Mrs. Templar was paying the full penalty of her folly; *heart, soul, and body* were all very sick.

She cowered over the fire, thinking and shuddering at her thoughts. For the first time in her life, she had been expansive, confiding, affectionate; recollection after recollection came crashing down upon her of words she had spoken, of trust reposed, of moments of tenderness. She forgot Louisa's presence, she wrung her hands, crying aloud, —

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

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

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

"Go and play with your doll, and don't ask silly questions," said Mrs. Templar, fiercely.

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

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

Mrs. Templar followed the child.

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

There was something so terrible in the fury expressed by Mrs. Templar's face, that Louisa exclaimed in a tone of terror, "Never mind, mamma, I don't, much," and the little creature caressed her mother's hand. Neither the assurance nor the caress had any effect on Mrs. Templar's outburst of passion. Louisa stood trembling before her, then remembering that she *had once seen* Félicie give her mistress water on some

occasion of agitation, she ran now and brought a glass of water. Heaven knows what strange impulse of rage prompted Mrs. Templar, but certain it is, that seizing the tumbler, she threw all its contents into Louisa's face. Louisa was too frightened to speak or to cry. She fell on her knees breathless, poor little soul, kissing her mother's hands with almost the gestures of a beaten spaniel caressing the hand that had chastised it. At that moment was sown a germ of fear of her mother, which spread its influence all over the girl's life.

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

Louisa rose to her feet, her mind bewildered. There was her mother, looking much as usual, speaking much as usual; while her own poor baby-breast still heaved painfully; her lips still quivered. Children have a keen sense of injustice, and something that would have been indignation in an older person mingled with the little girl's sense of relief — this feeling kept her silent.

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

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

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

"I can put myself to bed, mamma."

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

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

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

"What do you want?" she said, impatiently.

"I have come to say my prayers, mamma."

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

A score of years afterwards, Louisa said to an old friend: "I remember as if it were only yesterday, all *that happened* that evening; even to the indignation

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

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

Madame Tétart was all complaisance — might she assist madame in her packing? Mrs. Templar accepted the proffered aid. When the trunks were filled and locked, the landlady said, "that as madame wished to leave early the following morning, it might be as well to go over the inventory without delay."

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

costly and new, when the gentleman had taken the rooms for madame.

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

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

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

In a twinkling the landlady produced her list, and in five minutes the chairs and sofas were stripped of their covers, the blinds drawn up, and the furniture pushed into the blaze of an afternoon sun.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That is madame's last word?"

"Certainly; if you choose to abide by my list I will go over it with you, and pay you for any damage not noticed there. At all events, I mean to return to Paris to-morrow."

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

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

After dinner, which was served by the Tétarts' servant without any incivility, Mrs. Templar said to Louisa that they would go as far as the Place d'Armes, and *secure places in the coupé* of the diligence which

left in the forenoon for Paris, and, at the same time, order a porter to come for their luggage.

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

"What frightens you?" asked Mrs. Templar.

"It's that nasty man and Laure, mamma; don't let us go in."

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

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

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

Mrs. Templar said, "Don't you know that it is unlike a lady to listen at windows or doors, to what people are saying? Never let me find you doing *anything* of the kind again."

Mrs. Templar had a book open before her; she

did not turn many of the pages. After a while she looked up, involuntarily attracted by Louisa's fixed gaze.

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

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

"I don't know; perhaps."

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

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

"Yes, mamma."

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

"What are you doing, child?"

"Mamma, what is *bon ami* in English?"

"Good friend; you know that as well as I do."

"*Bon ami* means" — persisted Louisa — then suddenly stopped.

"Means what?" asked Mrs. Templar.

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

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

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

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

"Now pay attention to what you are going to say."

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

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

"What does that mean, Louisa?"

"To be good, mamma," said Louisa, at a guess.

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

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

"He is to make you live long. There, don't ask any more questions."

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

There were no signs of hostility next morning when Mrs. Templar, on her way to the dining-room, met Madame Tétart in the passage. At nine o'clock *the porter*, with his truck for the luggage, punctually

arrived. No one interfered with his bringing the trunks downstairs. Then M. and Madame Tétart appeared on the scene, and desired the man to wait.

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

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

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

"You may be right or wrong — I don't know — but you cannot manage these people. Madame must send for some friend to help her."

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

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

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

"Why shouldn't I?"

The marquis shrugged his shoulders. "Only an *Englishwoman*, after seeing the woman below, and the

arrangements above, could ask, Why not? However, let us lose no time in getting you out of this place; your messenger told me that your landlord detains your luggage."

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

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

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

M. Tétart at this moment knocked at the door, and begged to say a few words to monsieur le marquis. The porter, who was still waiting for the trunks, had taken care to mention the rank of the gentleman he had brought to Mrs. Templar's rescue. M. Tétart was very voluble in his explanation, accusations, and excuses. Madame Tétart had very quick feelings. Mrs. Templar had wounded her sensibility, by declaring that all the beautiful furniture of the house was mere trash; in short, it was an affair that might easily be settled between reasonable people. Monsieur le Marquis agreed in this opinion, and no doubt an interview with the judge de paix would prove this. M. Tétart hesitated. The marquis added, "You have grossly behaved to this English lady, and I cannot allow to agree to any compromise. We will meet you at juge de paix office, monsieur." Forthwith M. de Blacourt walked thither with Mrs. Templar, Louisa c

ing fast to his hand. M. and Madame Tétart were already there.

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

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

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

The juge said a few words apart to the marquis.

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

It was not easy to give the warning. Mrs. Templar, in spite of the service she had asked and obtained from M. de Blacourt, was not at her ease with him; indeed, her manner was stiff, almost to repulsiveness. He observed, during the drive to Paris, for he took charge of her and Louisa thither, that she looked *askance at every demonstration of fondness he received*

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

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

Within a month of their return to Paris, Mrs. Templar and Louisa went away from the Rue de Varennes. Great was the exultation of the marquis's cousin, the widow De Villemont, at this event. She believed she had now fairly got rid of her son's great enemies and rivals when she heard that the furniture had been sold, and that the apartment was to let.

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

The marquis accompanied the mother and child to the Messageries Royales; as they had taken places for

Calais, he naturally supposed they were going to England.

It was with something approaching to horror that M. de Blacourt watched Louisa. She literally appeared glad to go away. Madame Gastineau and her young Domitian were in tears; Denis and Marie sobbing, the concierge and his wife snivelling; who had ever before seen a French porter and his helpmate show signs of a common humanity? The marquis himself had a choking sensation in his throat, and the object of all this tenderness and grief, looked and moved gay as a linnet — even Mrs. Templar's manner evinced more feeling.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“MON CHER M. DE BLACOURT, —

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

“Pauvre Minette* je suis triste qu’elle est morte mais j’espère que Denis aura acheté un autre petit chatte qu’il lui fera bien du plaisir. Mais je suis très contente que mes chers amis de Paris aient une bonne santé, et moi aussi à Dieu merci. J’étais malade quelques jours. Je ne pourrais pas aller à l’école que j’aime beaucoup. J’espère que vous serez content de votre Louisa à notre revoir. Si on apprend avec beaucoup de plaisir on grandit aussi beaucoup. Voilà, mon cher ami la petite Louisa est plus grande que l’été passé. Nous avons passé Noël bien. Christkindle apportait bien de belles choses à Louisa. Je suis très contente avec la chère Christkindle. Adieu le bon Dieu mon cher M. de Blacourt. 1000 baisers pour mon cher ami à Paris. Votre reconnaissance enfant,

“LOUISA.”

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

* The marquis’s cat.

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

"What a perfect figure," she exclaimed.

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

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

CHAPTER VI.

The Butterfly and the Mouse.

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

The room they were in was on an upper story with one large window which opened into an outside gallery with a fantastic roof of shingle, the front and the two ends protected by a carved balustrade with broad ledge, on which were ranged pots of scarlet geraniums, with here and there a bright-hued cactus or fuchsia. This gallery was also used as a sitting room, for in it there was a sofa and chairs and a table. The family indeed often took tea there on fine summer evenings, to enjoy the magnificent view — a view bounded only by the Alps of the Mount Blanc. In the middle distance were the Salèves, closer still the fertile plain and the village of Chully, whence the Neckar family came.

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

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

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

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

"But when she knew his father was against Lord Selvil's ever marrying her, she oughtn't to have wished him to disobey his father."

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

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

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

Louisa was silent for an instant, then she said,

"Why?"

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

"Really, Claire; quite really?"

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

"Indeed, I never will," said Louisa, gravely.

Claire burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

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

"But indeed I do understand Corinne's story; tell me yours, if it will comfort you."

"Didn't you tell me the other day that Corinne was tiresome?"

"Yes, but only the learned parts."

Claire went on, —

"Heaven knows there was not much learning between Amedée and me. We danced together; we sang duets; I never went to Geneva, but I met him — of course, I guessed that could not be mere chance. At church, there he was; and once I had three blessed days; we went round the lake in the same steamer. Ah! Louisa, to go to bed with the certainty of seeing one particular face the next morning, *that* is a happiness: to be sheltered by the same roof, breathe the same air — those days, those days have ruined the peace of my whole life. We climbed the rocks of Meillerie; we visited Clarens. You are not old enough to know why those places have such an effect. Never shall I see such colours again on earth; never hear such heavenly harmonies issue from groves *green*; never see so bright a sun."

"*Poor Claire!*" said Louisa, again resorting to the

roof of sympathy she knew of — that of kiss-
ing friend Claire's burning cheeks, now wet with

and to think," she continued, "that he should
have the courage to tell me, in answer to a letter I
wrote him, that he would not take advantage of my in-
experience, to entrap me into a correspondence; that he
had so great an *esteem* for me to do so. Esteem
(as if I cared for his *esteem*); and that I might
depend on him as a sincere friend."

Louisa was perplexed. After a little thought she

"You see that he does care for you."

"Louisa, you are a greater idiot than I took you
to be. Love is love, and can't be satisfied with any-
thing less than love. What's the use of your reading?
Do you fancy Corinne marrying Prince Castel-
more or any one but Nelvil? I tell you that I am
wretched. I don't know what to do with my
life. I don't care to sing; I don't care what I wear,
or how I look. I should like to stab him and then

"There — do you see that?" and Claire
pointed to a particular spot on the floor of the gallery.
Louisa's eyes followed the direction of Claire's
boldly extended finger. A gaily-painted butterfly
had crept into the gallery, perhaps been pursued
and captured by some rival — no sooner had it reached
the ground than it was rudely assailed by a grey

Louisa jumped over the low ledge of the
gallery, and ran to the rescue, and then the mouse
bit; but it had already torn a piece out of one
butterfly's wings. Louisa lifted up the prostrate

tiny warrior. Alas! it was too late for aid — he gave one pant, and died.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Go away — you are too foolish, Louisa. I won't let you in again; I won't see any one." And down came the window-sash with a crash; the bolt snapped to, and the blind was lowered.

Louisa tried the door, but it was locked; so there was nothing to do but to obey Claire's mandate and go away. But Louisa did not feel easy at leaving Claire in such a mood. She thought of warning Claire's mother, Madame Gastineau; then, afraid of doing mischief by betraying her friend's secret, she refrained. On the way back to her own home she hit on an expedient: — she would go and meet Claire's cousin, Gustave Gastineau, and give him a hint to go and take care of Claire, and speak reason to her. *Gustave* was a sort of oracle or mentor for Louisa. So, instead of turning out of one gate into another —

for the Gastineaux' house and Mrs. Templar's were only separated by the garden wall — Miss Louisa passed into a meadow which ran down to the high-road. Gustave always crossed this meadow on his return from Geneva; it was not the shortest route to his uncle's house, but Gustave found it the pleasantest.

Tiresome as retrospects are for reader and writer, it is absolutely necessary that both should now go back a little.

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

When within a couple of days after their taking possession of La Forêt, Louisa had rushed to tell her mother that she had seen and spoken to Gustave Gastineau, — that he was living in the next house, and that Mr. and Mrs. Gastineau were coming to call, — the intelligence communicated with such breathless joy *was received with as much annoyance as surprise.*

Mrs. Templar's vexation had calmed Louisa into something like common sense and clear articulation. She had gone on to say, that Gustave had told her his uncle was rich, his wife English, and that they had only one child, a daughter nearly twenty, and that Gustave himself was with a bookseller in Geneva.

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

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

"How old is Gustave Gastineau?"

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

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

"It's being abroad, mamma, makes me speak so badly."

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

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

As soon as Louisa had perceived her mother's attention to be engrossed by a paper covered with figures, she had slipped out of the room noiselessly, and set off running down the selfsame meadow along which *she was now going a year after, and with the selfsame*

intent, viz. to meet Gustave Gastineau. The year before, her purpose had been to tell him how Mrs. Templar had received the news of their being again near neighbours.

Louisa had rejoiced to find her former playfellow; nor was she then, or even a year after, of an age to feel shy of expressing the joy she felt. She had walked by his side, her two hands clasping one of his arms, telling him how they had lived at Heidelberg, and at Frankfort, and at Berne, and, thank goodness, here they were at Geneva; it had been so dull at all those places — they had known nobody, had never seen a creature within their doors except a music-mistress, and occasionally a daily governess who had come for a couple of hours a day to teach her history and all that.

Louisa had wound up ~~her~~ recapitulation by saying, —

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

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

Louisa had looked inquiringly in his face.

“There’s my brother Ernest, for instance; there’s no making anything of him; he gets one situation after another — he never keeps one for six months, and my poor *mother’s letters* are full of excuses for him; and

if I venture to say it must be his fault he's so unlucky, she rates me soundly, I can tell you. But don't let us talk of disagreeables. Do you ever hear anything of the people we knew in Paris — of that good Marc de Lantry, or of M. de Blacourt — he was famously fond of you when you were little?"

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

Gustave had laughed, because her merry, ringing laugh was so pleasant to hear; otherwise he was not given to merriment. He was a taciturn youth, and in the struggles with fortune that awaited him, his temper was likely enough to become morose. He had not grown handsomer with increase of stature; indeed, had it not been for the intelligence of his face, he would have been pronounced positively ugly; as it was, when he was pleased and animated, he became even agreeable-looking.

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

so immersed was she in her calculations, that she also forgot that Louisa had passed from childhood into girlhood. So went by one year.

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

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

Now Père Panisset was a sour man, sour by nature, and made sourer by hard, unsuccessful labour. He had kept the wolf from his door, and that was all.

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

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

Fils Panisset attended the public Drawing Academy, at Geneva, and was in the habit of making sketches of Miss Templar. He had managed to pick up enough English to write under these rude attempts at a portrait, "i love Miss." Père Panisset threw these drawings, whenever he found any, into the fire, saying to his son, "You waste time and paper; you are born to sweat, that such as she may feed on fine wheaten bread; you have no right to feast your eyes on her milk-white skin. Dig the ground and be thankful; you are ugly and poor, she is rich and handsome."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I am sorry you frightened him away," she said.

"Frightened who away?" he asked.

"My nightingale; my beautiful nightingale."

"No; *not beautiful*; he is a plain brown bird."

"*A plain brown bird.* Who would not rather be a

nightingale than a gaudy peacock, you matter-of-fact bookseller."

The moment the word was spoken she repented of it.

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

"If I were a man," said Louisa, "I should like to be a bookseller. It must be delightful to live among books."

"Without time to read one," retorted Gustave.

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

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

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

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

Louisa's eyes looked immense with astonishment.

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

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

"And what's that, Gustave?"

"A professor — what my father was before me. Look here, Louisa, I had rather starve on learning as my father did, than grow fat on commerce of any *kind*, like my uncle here. I detest trade and its *prosperities*." Suddenly he added, "Do you remember *what a wretched home ours was in Paris, Louisa?*"

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

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

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

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

"He has written that he should like to see us. I think he wants mamma to invite him. Oh! goodness, there's the great bell — it must be tea-time — good-bye."

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

"Of course I will if I can."

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

"But I don't know grammar," said Louisa.

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

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

They were now out in the meadow.

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

Louisa did not hear what was to be the result of Gustave's success, nor had she time to speak of Claire and her love-affairs, for the bell was rung more loudly than ever, and she had to scamper away, after a hasty promise that she would be at the swing next afternoon, at six o'clock.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Her ladyship says Mr. Templar is fatigued with the journey, and that she can't leave him. Humbug; they don't think us worth the trouble of a visit. Ah! if you had been a boy, instead of a girl, Lady Theodosia would have found her way here fast enough."

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

"*It's no use regretting what can't be helped,*" re-

and Mrs. Templar, gravely; "but what's troubling you is my dress. I have not a decent bonnet to these people with."

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

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

Louisa was flying:

"Stay where you are, Miss Impetuous; I am not going to let all the world know I have not a bonnet. I don't want any of Madame Gastineau's help. You are not to say a word to Claire, do you hear? I shall do something — let us get tea over."

"What relation is Mr. Templar to me, mamma?"

"He was your father's uncle, so he is your great-uncle, but you need only call him uncle."

"Has he got any children, mamma?"

"A son in the army, and one daughter married to Deighton's eldest son. All the Miss Templars, generation after generation, have married well; that's comfort. You are well connected on both sides, mamma — remember that. The name of Templar is pretty often among the marriages in the neighbourhood."

Louisa's young cheeks flushed for the first time with a proud feeling of her station in life. She went to bed that night something less of a child. She had

had her mind opened during the day to the two generally antagonistic interests of life. Claire had talked to her of love, and Mrs. Templar of the advantages of birth and position. While Louisa slept, Mrs. Templar was busy hunting for some of her former finery, to fashion into some plausible covering for her head. Patiently she sat over her self-imposed task till day-break — her occupation contrasting with the projects she was forming — projects born simultaneously with the arrival of Mr. Templar.

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

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

CHAPTER VI.

Da Cosa, Nasce Cosa.

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

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

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

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

"It is such a pity you will be such a hard brush, instead of a dear, soft, pillowy woman," he said. "*Now what is it you want me to do? If it is to ad-*

mire my cousin, I am ready to do so. I am going to her side for the purpose."

Lady Theodosia told her son to fetch his father.

"It would be of no avail my going to him, mother," said Captain Templar; "he has not finished his morning's walk, and he would not miss one step of the number prescribed to see even the Emperor of China."

"Mr. Templar is pursuing a cure," explained Lady Theodosia.

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

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

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

His mode of life agreed with him, for he might have sat for a picture of health. Fresh-coloured, bright-eyed, and straight-backed, his was the sort of appearance we all suppose to be the type of the good old English gentleman. At first sight, or from a little distance, you fancied he had an air of benevolence. Yet beggars never expected the penny from him, of which they made sure from the saturnine-looking M. de Blacourt. Children never fondled Mr. Templar, dogs never put their cold noses on his hand, in expectation of having their heads patted, or their ears stroked. But though as incapable of the simple charities of life, as of understanding an heroic sacrifice, Mr. *Templar* was what we call an upright man. He gave *five thousand* pounds to Louisa on succeeding to his

brother's estate; it was a just action, which was characterized as generous. Yet, somehow, those he benefited were never grateful to him; perhaps he made them feel that what he did, was more to secure his own tranquillity than to bestow comfort on them. Whatever short-comings, however, might be imputed to him in the world to come, in this present world his character stood at the highest. Even Lady Theodosia had come half to believe in his superiority; and his son obeyed him; in short, he had become a revered institution in his family, his parish, and his county.

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

However, before they went away he was forced into looking at Louisa. Lady Theodosia appealed to him, to know if his niece did not remind him of that picture of her father, taken when a lad.

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

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

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

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

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

and Lady Theodosia had come to Andreossey's vi for the summer."

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

"What have they to do with my teaching y English, sir?"

"Of course they'll always be wanting to have y with them."

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

"Was your uncle kind to you?"

"So, so. I expected him to embrace me, but r he held out his hand, and if I hadn't held it tight, *couldn't* have shaken hands with him; and he ma mamma as angry as could be, by saying I was seve teen, and then when Miss Wilton asked if I had voice, he told mamma she had better take me Florence to have lessons of some one who had taug *Lady Somebody* to sing. They are very grand folk *and not in the least* inclined to run away with no

significant me; there is no fear of any one being too kind to me, except all of you. *There* now, I am ready for you. How am I to begin?"

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

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

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

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

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

"Ze dog," began Gustave.

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

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

"Don't tell," he said; "for if you do, Mrs. Templeton won't let you come. She would never allow *her* daughter, niece of a my-lady, to teach a shopboy. Your mother is very proud, Louisa; she looks down upon all, *she can scarcely* put up with my uncle and

aunt, and Claire. As for me, she hates me, because she knows about that Vicomte Granson."

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

"Why, what harm can he do you?"

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

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

The lessons went on regularly enough on Saturdays and Sundays at the swing, and at Les Vignes those evenings which Louisa spent there. These were given in Claire's boudoir, for Madlle. Gastineau agreed with Gustave, that Mrs. Templar would speedily put an end to the teaching, if she knew of it, and she would know, were either M. or Madame de La Forêt to become cognisant of what was going on. Claire loved a secret for its own sake. The child of the couple as frank as daylight, she delighted in mystery she would make one to Louisa of every invitation she received, tell her she was going out to dance or dine, yet never mention where; tried to practise in the same way on her father and mother, but they were unsuspecting, they never perceived her manoeuvres. Not satisfied with concealing the fact of the lessons, Claire devised a method to enable Louisa to pass unseen from one house to the other, a method that proved she had a talent for intrigue.

There was a covered well built into the wall which ran between the court-yards of Les Vignes and La Forêt. On either side was a door for the e

se of each family drawing water. It was on a
laid across the aperture of the well that Claire
led Louisa to venture, and now almost every
; Louisa spent an hour or more teaching Gustave
boudoir.

is constant association had its *natural* effect;
e was fathoms deep in love, a youth's first love,
he found out the meaning of his feelings, and
was beginning to connect Gustave with all she
; or did. Whatever happened, her first idea
at she would tell it to Gustave; whenever her
had been unkind, the consolation was that
e would be sorry for her. The danger lay in
ring no one with whom to compare him, except
Templar, and somehow Louisa was always in-
o laugh at the captain.

l all this time Mrs. Templar was busy over her
ions with a view to Louisa's future fortune, or
striving frocks for her daughter out of her own
dresses, that another pound or two might be
t the end of the year. It was astonishing how
rs. Templar cared to have Louisa with her, she
eemed to take heed that her child was growing
ought not to be allowed to run about wild and
olled. She seemed to forget that, *out of to-day*
to-morrow; or, as the Italians say, "*da cosa,*
osa."

ever, without Mrs. Templar's having to move
; a change was wrought in Louisa's habits of
l in this manner.

English in Geneva bethought themselves of
a ball to those families from whom they had
l *civilities*, and they also considered that a

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

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

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

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

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

"Gil Blas!" exclaimed Miss Wilton, her strong eyebrows going up to the roots of her heavy band of strong hair. "Who gave you leave to read Gil Blas?"

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

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

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

"I suppose you do; we all prefer what is not good

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

"To sing a duet," suggested Louisa.

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

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

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

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

"Can't I see Mrs. Templar? Lady Theo hopes your mother will go too."

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

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

Louisa flew upstairs and gave the message.

Mrs. Templar went off into a string of questions.

"What in the world did these people come troubling her for? Why should she put herself out of the way for them, or their ridiculous ball? Why couldn't Miss Wilton have let Lady Theodosia write and make her own request, if she cared so much about it? Did you think she was made of money, that she could afford to be buying useless dresses? Louisa was to go downstairs, and say she was too busy to see visitors. And, *Louisa*," concluded Mrs. Templar, "you are not

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

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

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

"Miss Wilton said I was invited, mamma."

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

Louisa did not understand the allusion.

Mrs. Templar's eyes fixed themselves on her daughter, and gratified maternal vanity softened her asperity. In her heart she said, "No wonder they want her — their eyes tell them she'll be worth courting one of these days." She added, aloud, "Go down and tell the companion I will send Lady Theodosia my answer by and by."

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

Mrs. Templar said nothing more to Louisa about *the ball*, and Louisa's hopes and fears fluctuated with

ry sentence that her mother spoke. She was so tentative in teaching Gustave in the evening, that put aside the primer, and asked her what was the matter?

Louisa at once poured forth all her anxieties.

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

"I'll try," replied Louisa to Claire; then turning Gustave, she said, "Why shouldn't I like balls?"

"I hate them," he answered.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh! mamma, how good you are!"

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

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

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

"There, go, and don't come and disturb me, whenever may come to call this morning."

"And what shall you wear, mamma?"

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

This last assertion struck Louisa so forcibly that it put the first part of her mother's speech out of her head.

"Why should they want me more than you, mamma?"

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

"Oh, mamma!"

There was a reproach in the tone of the exclamation which made even Mrs. Templar wince. *Perceiving young heart, to be chilled in its moment of expansiveness by such worldly suspicion.*

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

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

CHAPTER VIII.

The First Ball.

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

"Don't look so dreadfully cross at us, Gustave," Claire would gasp out as she passed him, while Louisa made him all sorts of amicable gestures, and at the end of a dance, would drop him a curtsy. The more lovely and graceful she was, the more churlish he became.

"Why didn't they both go on the stage, if they wanted to be seen and admired?"

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

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

"*I had rather they laughed than scolded,*" retorted

Claire; "sour grapes, cousin. Come, Louisa, once more the sauteuse."

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

"Pretty, are they not, mamma?" and she danced a step — the feet and ankles were what set off the shoes.

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

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

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

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

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

"This is my part of the business," she muttered as she began to fold away the clothes, left lying on the floor and chairs. "I shall labour and labour for her, and one of these days, she'll fly off altogether, *without a thought of all I have done and suffered for*

her. There she is sparkling, every one flattering or petting her, and here am I alone, doing a servant's work." And Mrs. Templar persisted in putting the room in order, as though it had really been a necessity for her so to do. Well, it was a sort of comfort to her.

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

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

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

"You must dance your first quadrille with me," he was saying as Miss Wilton returned, bringing the fan. The companion suddenly stopped at the door; she did not give Louisa the fan until some minutes afterwards, when the other gentlemen coming in from the dining-room, made a bustle in the room. All eyes fixed themselves on Louisa with surprise; she stood modestly by Lady Theodosia without any sort of self-consciousness; the deepened colour of her cheeks was more caused by expectation than by timidity. She was longing to be at the ball.

"Miss Templar, my niece," announced Mr. Templar, pompously. He was at liberty at that moment to observe her, and also the effect she was producing; the next instant he was fidgeting about his white rosette, the badge of his being one of the stewards of the evening. He was of course *en grande tenue*, a white *waistcoat*, *coat-tails* lined with white silk, boots like

looking-glasses, his face, even, seemed fresher for the occasion; not a hair of his head, or his whiskers (cut English fashion), out of its place.

Lady Theodosia entered the ball-room with Louisa leaning on her arm. A little murmur followed their steps. "Ah, how pretty she is! how charming! scarcely more than a child." The crowd was as much touched as dazzled by the very youthful beauty. Lady Theodosia and Miss Wilton, who were aware in what absolute solitude Louisa had been brought up, wondered at her unembarrassed grace. She was a little serious, that was all, but even that wore off before the end of the first quadrille.

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

"Have you no tablets?"

"No, indeed!"

"You must trust, then, to the memory of the gentlemen."

Louisa had one partner more assiduous than the rest, the Comte von Schaunitz, a stout, tall, fair young man, with a profusion of light hair, and whiskers. The name and title were a transparent disguise, under which Crown Prince of — was travelling. He displayed his admiration royally. When not dancing with Louisa, he stood by her side, or where he could have a good view of her. Whenever she stopped in a waltz to recover breath, there he was, persuading, pleading, insisting on her taking a turn with him. Before Lady Theodosia retired, he and Louisa were laughing and chatting, as if they had been old acquaintances. He *knew where she lived and had lived, how she passed*

her time, how old she was, and that she thought a ball the most delightful thing in the world. Beauty holds a sceptre that brings all potentates to their knees.

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

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

"I have quite worn out my shoes, mamma," was the first news Louisa gave her mother; "I danced so much. I never was so happy. I wish there was a ball every night. Oh, dear! I *am* so tired — not myself, only my body."

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

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

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

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

"And Miss Wilton, did she dance much?"

"She had a migraine, and couldn't enjoy anything; *she was crosser* than ever to Captain Templar — she

would not dance with him. He asked me twice, but I could only give him one quadrille."

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

"I am not giving myself airs, mamma. I am telling the truth. Comte von Schaunitz *would* dance so often with me."

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

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

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

"Vanity is not one of her faults," thought the mother. Nature asserted her power in spite of Mrs. Templar's resistance. You could see the victory gained in the way she let down the curtains to shade the sleeper from the coming dawn — in the way she took up the small *shoe*, and examined with admiration its propor-

tions — in the cautious tread with which she left the room.

In the afternoon of the day after the ball, Capt. Templar, who had not shown much cousinly attention to the widow and her daughter, took it into his head to pay them a visit. It was already five o'clock when he made his appearance at La Forêt. At no time had he much to say, but on this occasion he surpassed himself in his power of silence. He sat apparently watching his hat twirl on the top of the cane he held between his knees. Mrs. Templar had to frown violently to prevent Louisa from laughing; but the young lady grew grave enough as the captain sat on. This was Saturday, and at six o'clock Gustave would be waiting for her at the swing. Gustave had been cross about the ball, and Louisa was unwilling to vex him a second time. The recollection of his annoyance was chasing away that of the pleasures of the evening before, and Louisa was one of those who have daring enough to get into a scrape or a quarrel, but once in, have not the courage to keep their own.

“One, two, three, four, five, six.”

“That clock is fast,” exclaimed the captain; “it is a quarter to six by my watch.”

“Yours is probably London time,” remarked Mrs. Templar.

“Ah, yes; true.”

The captain took his hat off the cane, Louisa half rose from her chair; the captain put his hat back on the cane, thrust his fingers into one of his waistcoat pockets, and took out a small parcel wrapped in silver paper, —

"My young cousin had no tablets on which to mark her partners last night," he said, addressing Mrs. Templar. "I have taken the liberty of supplying the deficiency. You have no objections — have you?"

"You are very kind," said Mrs. Templar. "Come here, Louisa."

Louisa, already full of repentance for having hated Captain Templar during the last half hour, came forward to receive his present.

"I am very much obliged to you," she said, as he met her half-way, and put the packet into her hand.

"Oh! mamma, see — how beautiful!" It really was an elegant trinket, and a valuable one also. "Thank you," went on Louisa; "do you think — I hope —"

"What?" asked the captain, with some animation.

"Another ball," said Louisa, looking at him with such an enchanting face — half deprecating, half hoping.

The gentleman scarcely heard what she said; he was so taken up considering her loveliness. The first words he said were, "Well, I suppose it's time for me to go — we dine at six."

He shook hands with Mrs. Templar, and then with Louisa, who repeated, "It is so very pretty, thank you."

"Where are you going, Louisa?" asked Mrs. Templar, as she saw Louisa take up her garden hat.

"Going out for a little, mamma. I have not been out all day."

"You are not to go far from the house: keep within sight." *And Mrs. Templar went upstairs.*

Away flew Louisa to her rendezvous.

"I was so frightened I shouldn't be able to come," exclaimed the breathless girl. "My cousin is only a moment gone."

"I see that it will be best for us to give up meeting here," said Gustave.

"Now, Gustave, don't be cross with me, just what I have been doing all I can not to disappoint you. Mamma asked me where I was going; I ought to have told her the truth, but I did not."

"If you think you are doing wrong, pray do come to meet me."

"If you would only be pleased when I do come, I should not mind," said poor, untaught Louisa, with a sigh, and quite ready to sacrifice herself in defiance of her good instincts.

Gustave made no answer.

"We had better begin," said Louisa. "We have less time to-day."

Gustave let her open the book and ask him questions, but his voice and averted face were sufficiently indicative of displeasure. Louisa's heart grew very full. She was more alive at this moment to Gustave's ill-humour, from its contrast to the bright smiles and attentions lavished on her last night, and she began to repent of having considered her kind cousin such a bore. And all for what? They heard the village clock chime the quarters of the hour; when it came to the quarter of seven, Louisa threw the book petulantly on the grass.

"I won't hear you any more. I won't teach you. *Why are you angry with me?* I have been doing

arm. I longed so to come and tell you all about the all. I have been thinking all day what a chat we should have; and now all the time is gone, and I haven't told you anything. If you make me so unhappy I won't come."

Not a word from Gustave; his back was turned to her.

"Gustave — see — *do* look — isn't it pretty?" went on Louisa, after a minute. "You *shall* look," and he ran round to his other side, holding towards her her cousin's present. When she did manage to get a view of his face — when she saw that his eyes were full of tears, and his lips quivering, away went the tablets after the book. She seized his hand, exclaiming, "Oh, pray, Gustave, forgive me — I didn't mean what I said — I don't want to vex you — I only said that I wouldn't come, to try and make you speak to me — that's the truth, indeed — now won't you be friends? I don't care for any of those people as I do for you."

"You are sure?" said Gustave.

"How could I? Why, I have only known them a day, and you — I can't remember when I didn't know you — and you have always been so good to me."

Gustave was conquered, but only after he had conquered.

"Stay five minutes longer," he pleaded; "I can't help being cross when I know all your new friends are doing their best to carry you away from me."

"What nonsense! They don't know even that you are in existence."

"*That has nothing to do with the fact that they*

will separate us; and, after all, they don't care for you. They have plenty of money — it's nothing for them to give you baubles — they do it because you are pretty — not one of them would let themselves be hacked to pieces for you as I would."

Gustave's whole passionate soul was in the eyes he fixed on Louisa's face. She reddened slightly; he went on, —

"Oh! Louisa, you are *too* pretty. I wish you were ugly."

"I think that a very unkind wish, Gustave," said Louisa, gravely.

"Yes — but I do — for then you would care more for me."

Some awakening woman's instinct made Louisa shrink from Gustave's complaints. She drew herself up and said, —

"I can't make out what has come over you to-day." A slight pause, then she added, "Good-by; I hope you will be your good old self to-morrow." She went away slowly, not with her usual deer-like step. Gustave ran after her with the tablets.

"Shake hands, Louisa."

She shook hands without speaking.

"What's the matter with you, Louisa?" asked Mrs. Templar, as they sat at tea.

"Matter with me, mamma? Nothing."

"You look vexed; have you and Claire quarrelled over the ball?"

"Oh, no, mamma; I am tired, that's all."

"Every pleasure has its accompanying pain," complacently observed Mrs. Templar. "You must go to *bed early*."

Louisa sat alone in the dusk of the evening, by the low window which looked into the broad green pastures. She was not tired — that is, not tired in body; but she wanted to be quiet. What wavelets of thoughts tossed through her quickening mind. She was downright vexed, that she was, with Gustave, yet she returned again and again to his tearful eyes — to his saying she was too pretty, and that he would let himself be killed for her.

When Aimée brought in the candles, Mrs. Templar said, —

“You don't practise half enough, Louisa. Go and sing over your songs.”

Louisa did as she was bid, but singing did not prevent her thinking; and back and forwards, and over and over again, did the incidents of last night and to-day chase one another before her mind's eye.

CHAPTER IX.

The Prince and the Prentice.

A VERY few days after the subscription ball open carriage drove to La Forêt, and out stepped gaily-dressed ladies.

Madame la Baronne von Ehrtmann, and her haired daughters, Ismay and Fioretta, had called on Mrs. Templar and Louisa. These ladies Hanoverians. I don't think any one knew why were living at Geneva; nor anything further them than that they had a fine house and a marriage. A great lilac and rose-coloured cloud set on a sudden to float round and envelope Mrs. Templar who, at that moment, was receiving a ceremonious from Lady Theodosia and Mr. Templar.

The baronne was a short woman, unusually so plain, that she herself would take notice of the circumstance to you the second or third time she visited your company. She asked you first to believe that a girl, she had been beautiful, with a skin as smooth as china; after this call on your faith, she went on to say, "An illness of a virulent nature robbed me of my looks, but luckily not of my spirits. I argued myself, that if an ugly man could make his way through the world, why not an ugly woman? There are advantages attendant on all states and conditions of being; mine were, no woman envied me, mothers did not fear me, *wives, nor daughters*; I was fêted and invited as *a foil can be*. I was praised as clever and as

which, to tell the truth, I was as little as I was beautiful. And the result was, that I have been twice married, — my first husband was madly in love with me, and as jealous as a Turk — I might have married a third time. Many of the beauties who spoke of me as poor Thedolinda are still spinsters, or worse still, are obliged to see after the cooking of their husbands' dinners, and mending the children's clothes." "Bah!" had said this experienced lady, when Ismay, her eldest daughter, declared she would give so many years of her life to be as beautiful as Louisa. "Bah, you will do much better than she will. With such a fine face and form, she will be buffeted by all sorts of adverse winds, and you'll swim on the same sea in which she'll founder."

These were the sentiments of the lady with frankly rouged cheeks, now making such courtly reverences before the half-abashed and wholly astonished Mrs. Templar, and who, in rapid and flattering phraseology, was explaining that her girls had made the acquaintance of Mdlle. Templar at Les Vignes, and that they had given her no peace until she had consented to venture on this visit to madame.

Poor haughty Mrs. Templar was perfectly incapable of replying properly to such graceful words, accompanied by such graceful curtsies. Her knees seemed to stiffen, and her tongue also. Lady Theodosia came to the rescue. Before the end of the visit, her ladyship found herself, quite against her wishes, positively engaged to a *soirée dansante*, for which the baronne was issuing invitations. Ismay and Fioretta had been down on their knees to Mrs. Templar to obtain a similar promise. *Coaxed, flattered, bewildered, over-*

powered, Mrs. Templar at last consented that Louis should accompany Lady Theodosia; and then away out of the room fluttered the lilac and rose-coloured clouds.

"Very nice-mannered people," observed Mr. Templar. "The mother's a mon'sous agreeable clever woman."

"Uncommonly plain," returned Lady Theodosia.

"Didn't strike me so," said the husband. "Make as good a curtsey, by George, as Vestris herself; not afraid of bending her knees."

"Really, men are the oddest creatures in the world," exclaimed Lady Theodosia. "So that they have never seen a woman before, they are delighted with her, whatever she's like."

Mrs. Templar had a way of her own of making known her assent to any satirical remark as to me. She closed her lips tightly, and yet you heard her laugh — a laugh that made every one else grave.

"No Englishwoman, only half as ugly as your German baronne, would have had the courage to put on that lovely pink bonnet," continued Lady Theodosia. "She went smiling and swimming about with all the audacity of a beauty."

"She's a mon'sous good-natured creature," reiterated Mr. Templar.

"Now, how *can* you know, Mr. Templar?" asked Lady Theodosia.

"I have only to look in her face."

"Ugh!" ejaculated Lady Theodosia.

Mr. Templar observed to his guests that day at dinner, that the German baroness he had met at the *Forêt* that morning "was a mon'sous clever woman,

non'sous pleasant creature, and thirdly, mon'sous raceful — made as good a curtsey, by Jove, as Verris herself."

"You ought to add," said Lady Theodosia, "and s ugly as a mummy."

The obstinate old man replied, "Didn't see it, na'am — didn't, 'pon my honour."

Madame von Ehardt had not told any of the Templar family that her soirée dansante was given expressly to please the Crown Prince. She had warned her daughters not to say so, but the fact might have been told without awakening any suspicions in the mind of Louisa's mother of any unfair play. Mrs. Templar considered Louisa yet as too much of a child to lay much stress on her attractions, and perhaps she was not so much alive as others to the loveliness of her daughter, nor to the fact of her looking older than he was.

Mrs. Templar was a person who regulated herself by her personal experiences, and believed only in those. She had never studied life in any other school. She consulted the events that had marked her own career as oracles; she would have been quite on her guard against any intruder like M. le Vicomte Granion, but for Baronesses von Ehardt she was without any compass.

Once more, then, Mrs. Templar's thoughts and fingers were busy with a new ball-dress for Louisa.

"Do let me help you, mamma," said Louisa.

"No, I will not have your finger all marked with the needle," replied Mrs. Templar.

"Mamma, indeed it is not right that you should slave *so for me*. *I had rather never go to parties.*"

Mrs. Templar laughed.

"Give me deeds, not words, Louisa."

"Indeed, mamma, I am ready to give you deeds I don't care or wish to go to this dance. I have seen one ball, and that's quite enough."

"You should have said so sooner; you know that now it is impossible to send any excuse."

The tone of this last remark implied that Louisa was insincere in her professions.

"Mamma, you are very kind and very cruel to me," said Louisa, beginning to cry.

"Upon my word, miss, you are getting quite spoiled by all your new friends. What have I said to cause your tears?"

Louisa did not answer immediately, then she said, —

"Deeds don't always show love. You are making my frock, but oh! mamma, a kind look, one of those kind words you once used to say to me when I was little, would better make me feel that you loved me. In the Rue de Varennes I remember you called me Louisa my life! Mamma, throw down that tiresome frock, and call me your life, and let us be happy, as we were long ago."

Louisa was kneeling by her mother, striving to take hold of the hand that held the muslin. She went on, —

"I try to be pleased, I am so much obliged to every one who is kind to me, but — I feel that I want something else. I want you, mamma, to love me; I want your heart to be open to me again. Why should you be cold to me, mamma, and all because of *that bad M. Granson?*"

By the mention of that name, Louisa lost her cause. Mrs. Templar shook her off roughly.

"I don't believe a girl ever had a more devoted other than you have, and no blessing can follow you, if you go on being so impertinent as you are. Go away, and leave me to finish your frock in peace." So saying, she pulled the muslin out of her daughter's hands.

Mrs. Templar looked and spoke bitterly. It was all Louisa could do to restrain herself from tearing the muslin to pieces; the healthy current of her blood stood still one instant, only to flow more impetuously the next. She recollected the glass of water thrown in her face years ago; she felt as if her mother had repeated that cruel act now.

Mrs. Templar perceived the struggle Louisa was undergoing; she was perhaps alarmed for the result, and she suddenly exclaimed, —

"Go away instantly, and don't dare to answer me."

Louisa ran out of the room into the garden. Père Anisset and his son were working there; she could not stay where they might watch her. She passed into the field, and instinctively went to the swing. She threw herself on the grass, face downwards; she hated the light. Thus it was that Gustave found her. He thought she was sleeping, and plucking one of the long, flowering grasses, approached her gently, and just touched one of her ears. She sprang up.

"Good heavens! what is the matter, Louisa?"

She was quite white, with red, swollen eyes.

"I am so glad you are come, Gustave; I want

some one to take care of me. I feel dreadful wicked."

Gustave took hold of both her hands, put her on the mossy seat, and sat down by her. He still held her hands in his, and was half-mechanically pressing them together and then separating them, as he had been wont to do when as a little child she had stood between his knees, learning her lesson from his lip. She said, —

"You are the same you used to be, but mamma not; and to think that she does not love me, only because of that horrid Granson, does exasperate me."

"He was a great villain," said Gustave; "and my mother told me that somehow you were the means of his being found out; the whole business hurt Mrs. Temple dreadfully, and I do believe she has never been the same woman since. I don't wonder she is bitter; it would make any one bitter to have been so deceived. You must not take to heart every cross word she says."

After a short pause Louisa began —

"How lucky that you happened to come here this afternoon; you have made me quite good again. I was in a dreadful passion. Lady Theodosia would never have called me Smiler again had she seen me. I love my mamma best of everybody in the world. I would do anything to please her, and yet I am happier and merrier with every one else."

"It does not depend on our own will to be happy with people," said Gustave.

"It's very stupid to be unhappy, unless a great misfortune happens to you," observed Louisa. "One thing is certain, I am always happy with you Gustave."

"Oh! no, I am not. I was not happy the other evening when you were vexed about the waltzing."

"You must learn to make allowances for my liking or have my own way, as well as you yours."

"But I should never think of being vexed with you, because you liked to have your own way, and to dance, or to ride, or go to parties."

"You would not care if I went to balls, and made new friends, and never came here?"

"I am not such a dog in the manger, Master Gustave, that because I couldn't have the pleasure I was to grudge it to you. No, indeed; I should be glad you were enjoying yourself."

Gustave sighed and let go Louisa's hands.

"Will you hear me read?" he asked. "Do you remember that it is a whole week since you gave me a lesson?"

"Oh! well, it's not my fault, it's my misfortune; you may blame all those tiresome dinners at my uncle's. I do hate going there now. Miss Wilton is grown so whimsical; I begin to believe she is mad. She looks at me so fiercely, I am half afraid to go near her. There, *do* begin to read, or I shall go on talking for ever."

Louisa returned to tea in a very repentant mood. Mrs. Templar received her as usual; the scene of the afternoon seemed as if spunged out of her mother's recollection.

Louisa enjoyed Madame von Ehrtmann's *soirée dansante* much more than she had done the ball.

She said as much to her constant partner, the prince, who received the information as a compliment to *himself*, and tossed his head somewhat saucily.

"I am afraid your pleasure won't last long," said he; "after you have had a year of them, you will grow as tired of balls as every one else does."

"I can't imagine that. I should never tire of this beautiful waltz. All my favourite songs I like better and better the more I hear them."

"Indeed! what a constant disposition you have. I am very fickle by nature and habit," returned the royal partner.

Louisa had not paid attention to his reply. She was looking away from him, staring intently at one of the windows. The room in which they were dancing was on the ground floor, and the windows opened into the garden.

"And do you like every one as well as every thing the better the more you know them?" asked the prince, wondering at the young lady not having taken up the ball he had thrown her; he did not in the least believe she was only fifteen.

"No, that I don't," she said, with an energy that startled him.

"You know how to hate, I perceive," he said.

"I would run a mile to get out of some people's way," she answered.

"That is a terrible proof of hatred, I allow."

He was now convinced that the tall girl on his arm was after all only a big child, but the loveliest child he had ever set eyes on. He looked into her face with quite a new interest — a new feeling stirred his heart. It would be something akin to sacrilege to flirt with her, as he had been trying to do. Under *this new impression*, his voice softened in speaking to her; *hitherto*, he had used a careless tone of persiflage.

n their conversation, which had kept Louisa from giving the least preference for the prince, except as a partner. She was well aware that all the other girls considered her as the most fortunate of her sex, and she divined that it was because the prince danced so often with her, that madame la baronne showed her such attention; yet Louisa's feminine instinct had once or twice almost driven her to renounce her honours, and openly to resent his serene highness's off-hand manner.

"May I inquire," began the prince, in his altered voice, "what it is that so strongly attracts your attention to that middle window?"

"I thought I saw some one I knew looking in."

"Are you acquainted with many people in Geneva?"

"Scarcely with anybody. Mamma never goes out. I thought I saw a cousin of my friend Claire looking at me."

"Ah!" ejaculated the prince; then, in an icy tone: "Perhaps you wish to make sure of the presence of this individual?"

"No, I thank you. I had better go to Lady Theodosia, if you please."

His serene highness's brotherly interest was shocked by the confession Louisa had made of her acquaintance with a friend's cousin, who could condescend to make one of the mob peeping in at the ball-room windows. Besides, this beautiful Miss Templar seemed to him alarmed at the mere idea of this spectator. With some stiffness of manner he led her to Lady Theodosia.

After making a silent bow to his pretty partner, he sauntered in an opposite direction to the window,

then suddenly retracing his steps, he went to examine the state of the heavens. He saw a black, starless sky. Turning his attention to the garden, he met a scowling pair of eyes close to the pane of glass opposite his own face. The prince turned on his heel, and invited Mdlle. Claire for the next quadrille. Claire, thrilling all over with delight, stole a glance at Louisa to see how she bore this defalcation. Louisa was at the moment full of wonder that Count von Bistönen, the grandee travelling with the prince — a haughty, middle-aged individual, with a very broad, white waistcoat — should ask such a girl as she was, to dance with him. Count von Bistönen, as a matter of course, led his partner to be the prince's *vis-à-vis*.

During the first quadrilles, H. S. H. deigned no notice of Louisa, but in a *grande chaine*, he softened and smiled as he received her hand; the smile she gave in return brought him back to her feet. He begged for the next waltz; Louisa had promised that; then for the one following.

At the close of the ball, the prince himself wrapped her in her cloak, and himself bareheaded, put her into Lady Theodosia's large English carriage. He lingered at the door.

"You look so comfortable. I wish I were going with you."

Lady Theodosia turned a deaf ear to the remark.

When she had dropped Louisa at La Forêt, she observed to Miss Wilton, —

"If Louisa were a year or two older, I should advise Mrs. Templar not to allow of her being asked *out to meet that sprig of royalty*. He was quite *lover-like this evening*."

"She is such a mere child," said Miss Wilton.

"A child to you and me, my dear," retorted Lady Theodosia; "but a youth of twenty may mistake her for a woman. It would be a pity such a pretty creature as she is, should be trifled with; girls are never good for much after a heart-crush. If her mother only takes common care of her, with such an angel's face, she must marry well. I should be glad to get her into a good set. There's nothing like beginning well — when a woman falls among the wrong people, she has nothing but trouble and vexation all her life. There's my sister's son; if he would only have made his wife obey me, I would have got her invitations to the best parties in London, in spite of her vulgarity. But he chose to continue his rebellion, and I shall never trouble myself about that doll of his again — he'll be tired of her before long. I wish he had seen her as I did in Oxford Street, with her sixpenny muslin gown trailing half a yard behind her in the dust."

Once on the theme of her nephew's plebeian marriage, Miss Wilton knew nothing would stop Lady Theodosia's tongue but the stopping of the carriage.

It was Gustave that Louisa had seen staring in at her as she waltzed with the prince; it was Gustave's angry face that had so fiercely confronted his serene highness's curiosity. We shall hear of Gustave's feelings at that moment again; for the present it will be sufficient to say that he felt as furious as he looked.

Louisa had not half so much to say to her mother on her return from the baronne's dance as after the subscription ball.

"Haven't you enjoyed yourself?" asked Mrs. Templar as she took off Louisa's dress.

"Thank you, mamma. Oh! yes, I have been very happy; I liked it better than the ball."

"Whom did you dance with?"

"Almost always with the prince. What nonsense it is calling him a count. Every one knows he is the Prince of ——"

"If he were publicly called prince, he could not be dancing with such chits as you."

"Couldn't he? Then I suppose he's looking down on me all the while; he is only pretending to be polite," exclaimed Louisa, with some indignation.

"Of course, he does not consider you his equal. You ought to consider yourself very much honoured by his notice."

"But I do not feel honoured," said Louisa, tartly.

"You little goose," said her mother, with a dry laugh. "But the prince did not dance only with you, I suppose?"

"No, he danced once with each of the Von Ehrtmanns, and once with Claire."

"Claire!" repeated Mrs. Templar. "That was carrying condescension too far."

"I don't see that," said Louisa, still smarting with the mortification of her mother's remarks. "I don't see that; Claire is prettier than either Ismay or Fioretta."

"She is not of the same rank. The Gastineaus have no business to be in such society."

Louisa made no reply, for she saw that her mother *was getting angry.*

She did not fall asleep directly as she had done

ter her first ball. She lay thinking how awfully conceited it was of the prince to put on such a respectful manner towards her, to hold her bouquet, and to stand bareheaded at the carriage-door — it was enough to make her hate him. She should like to make him know now that she understood it was all sham; but it was not probable she should see him again; and then she remembered Gustave outside the window, looking so queer — so angry — so unlike a — prince.

Next morning Louisa felt dull; she didn't know what to do with herself. She wished that Claire would come and talk over the party; she had a great mind to creep through the wall, and seek her friend. But she let time slip between the wish and the deed, till it came to be the hour of the Gastineaux' noon-day meal. She went to the piano, and was trying to pick out the notes of the waltz she had declared the night before she should never be tired of hearing, when a shadow darkened the glass-door. She saw Claire, and jumped up. Certainly that blush was not for Mdlle. Gastineau. The prince was there smiling, and far handsomer than he had looked at either ball or dance. His fine blue eyes were bright with happiness as they rested on Louisa.

Louisa was flattered, but she had not forgotten her mother's observations of the night before, and that was why she made him a low curtsy now, a quaint curtsy, by which she intended to convey to the visitor her sense of the difference of rank between them. A light flush mounted to the prince's brow at this reception; the curtsy threw him back far better than the haughtiest demeanour would have done.

*Claire was excited to a thorough disregard of all
vice and Again. I.*

etiquette. She patronized his serene highness; explained the motive of their visit. Count von Schaunitz was passionately fond of music, and particularly of part singing. She had been coming to fetch some of her duets when the pr — — the count had proposed to accompany her.

Louisa was shy and embarrassed as to what she should do about her mother. She took the music from a stand, and, laying it on the piano, said, —

“I will go and tell mamma.”

“Pray do not disturb madame on my account,” said the prince, with almost too much earnestness.

But Louisa was already gone. She had had the greatest possible wish to be out of the room; her heart was beating fast; she was vexed; at least she thought she was. She walked upstairs very slowly, knocked at her mother’s door, and obeyed the peevish permission to enter. Mrs. Templar was of course at her desk. Louisa had expected that, but not to see her the figure she was. Of late Mrs. Templar had taken to wearing a bonnet always; she had now turned it the back before, probably to see better, for her room was darkened by a large tree close to the window; she really looked droll, and altogether unsuited to receive a prince.

“What do you want?” she asked.

“Count von Schaunitz, the Crown Prince, is downstairs, mamma,” said Louisa, her voice faltering with suppressed laughter.

“What’s he come for? I can’t be bothered with him. I am not fit to be seen. What made you come up to me?”

“I thought I ought, mamma. Claire brought him.”

Then she may take him away again. Say I am
or out, anything you please. I don't want his
. Those little German princes give themselves
airs! There, go and get rid of him as fast as
can."

As soon as Louisa was outside the drawing-room
, Claire had observed to the prince, with the air
of a accomplice, —

You needn't be afraid; Mrs. Templar never sees
one."

I should be glad to make the acquaintance of the
sister of Mdlle. Louisa," said the prince, with a shade
of rebuke in his manner, which made Claire feel that
the young man did not accept the position she awarded
him; then he began turning over the music.

Louisa came back, and addressing the prince, the
red in her cheeks deepening with every word,

—
'Mamma is very sorry she cannot come down-
stairs."

He made a courteous reply, yet did not seem to
take the hint to go away.

They both continued standing by the piano, for
Louisa did not think it right to ask him to sit down
under her mother's charge to get rid of him. The con-
versation written down would be question and answer,
and a catechism. Little by little, however, Louisa
grew more at her ease, and at last, by some manoeu-
ring of Claire's she sat down to the piano, and sang,
in a low voice, *La Suisse au bord du lac*.

Whatever it was, it enchanted the prince. When
she looked up she thought she saw tears in his blue
eyes. The prince had, of course, heard thousands of

times far finer singing than Louisa's; but he had never before listened to the sweet voice of a girl with whom he was falling in love; or rather with whom he had been in love from the moment he had imagined he felt a brotherly interest in her, and that it would be sacrilege to flirt with her. Duets and trios followed the solo, and there was no want of sincerity in the manly tones in which *Idol mio* and *Mio bene* were sung. When the visit came to an end, Louisa was all smiles and gaiety.

"I hope we may have another practice soon," said the prince, in quite a low voice.

"I don't think mamma would let us," said Louisa, and her face grew grave.

Louisa walked into the garden with her visitors.

"You have nothing on your head, Mdlle. Louisa," said the prince, and the words sounded very like the words of the Italian love-song.

"I don't mind the sun," said Louisa, very softly.

The prince took off his straw hat, and held it as a sort of parasol for her.

"Pray don't," she said, but he persisted.

They parted at the garden gate.

"I will go in by the court," said Louisa; "there is no sun there."

Miss Templar was behind her time at the rendezvous of the swing. Gustave received her in a surly manner. She was very gentle to him.

"Indeed, I am so sorry I am late. I can't think how it happened, for I was not doing anything in particular."

"Those balls are spoiling you," said Gustave. "You could have seen yourself twirling about like

with that red-headed prince, you would never care it again."

He has not red hair," said Louisa, sharply.

A prince can't have red hair, of course," said she, sarcastically.

I know what he has, and what every one else not, and that's good humour," retorted Louisa; "Why should you be cross and rude to me because I dance — every girl dances?"

Take the consequences," said Gustave. "It's a sting to see any man allowed to put his arms round a young lady's waist, and breathe into her face. Oh, you had heard what the people about me were saying."

I don't want to hear what footmen say. You have no right to talk to me in this way. Mamma and Theodosia would not let me do wrong. You are always ready to quarrel with me now, Gustavè; we had better give up the lessons." And Louisa laid down the book, out of which she heard Gustave

No, don't do that," said Gustave, in a choked voice. "You are right and I am wrong. I will not quarrel any more; let's be friends again," and he held out his hand.

Gustave had done what all do when fearing a

It is strange, yet sadly true, that just when we are in all common sense to try to be more than usually polite, witty, and agreeable, we invariably choose the most unkind, uncourteous, and stupid.

Louisa dropped her dimpled, rosy fingers willingly into Gustave's outstretched palm, but she recoiled at the coarseness of the hand clasping hers. She

was so impressed, indeed, with the roughness of her whole exterior, that to make up for such a coarseness, she felt called upon to be doubly kind. She showed him all that sweet and ready forgiveness which oftener proceeds from indifference than from love.

CHAPTER X.

An Idyll.

I. GASTINEAU (Gustave's uncle) had, while in and, married an Englishwoman. He had been in London, and his wife was the daughter of a sman. She brought him a tolerable fortune, and most equable of tempers. Her parents would im against this placidity as against a fault, while hearts swelled with admiration.

Fanny is, what I call too quiet — nothing ruffles

If the house were on fire, she would sit knitting purse till desired to move," was a standing de-tion in her parental home. M. Gastineau carried e secret admiration and the outspoken joke.

Claire inherited the ideas of her father and grand-its. From the age of ten years old she had nized her mother, and at twenty she told her how ought to behave. Madame Gastineau had really to believe that she was an original, a creature apart by nature, a precious and curious specimen e cared for, and exhibited. It never came into one's head to trouble Madame Gastineau to think. regimen agreed with the lady. Her face was as th and fresh-looking as when M. Gastineau married

It was next to impossible to believe what was, ver, the fact, that she and Mrs. Templar were of ame age.

When Claire told her mother that the Crown Prince i of —, *under the title of Comte von Schaunitz,*

was coming to pay them a visit, and that she must put on her best lace cap with lilac ribbons and her pale straw-coloured China-silk dress trimmed with lilac to receive him, Madame Gastineau obeyed without asking a question. She was more pleased and excited by the visit than by anything that had occurred to her since the birth of Claire.

The prince, who was not in the secret of Madame Gastineau's being an original, paid her the attention ever well-bred young men pay to the mistress of a house. From her isolation as an idol, she had acquired a slowness of speech which, with her low English voice, gave her an air of refinement the prince had not expected in Claire's mother. Claire perhaps never appeared to such disadvantage as in the company of the mother she considered so inferior to herself. Indeed, Claire became odiously domineering from the belief that her guidance was necessary to prevent Madame Gastineau from committing some solecism in good manners.

When the prince had taken his leave, Madame Gastineau actually asked her daughter "why he had called?"

For a minute or two Claire remained silent from astonishment, then she said dogmatically, —

"It's the fashion for gentlemen to call on the partners after a ball."

"I never was in company with a prince before," observed Madame Gastineau. "I did not feel abashed as I had expected."

"One always expects wrong," said Claire, decidedly. She did not approve of her mother's asking questions and making observations.

His serene highness made his appearance a second

at Les Vignes, though there had been no ball the
ous evening. After this second visit, Claire desired
nother always to be in the drawing-room, nicely
ed, every day at two o'clock. "The prince wishes
arn some duets and trios with Louisa and me,"
ined Mdlle. Gastineau, "and you must chaperone
amma; do you understand?"

It will be very pleasant, my dear. You will tell
father, my love."

Oh, yes! I'll do all that. We don't want you to
ything but sit quietly on the sofa."

[. Gastineau, however, never heard of the arrange-
; he always drove into town at one o'clock, so he
met the prince and Count von Bistönen, who
ht it his duty to be in attendance on these occa-

M. Gastineau was not in the least aware of
excellent music he missed the pleasure of hear-

Are you not tired of singing so long, Miss Louisa?"
red Madame Gastineau one day to ask. "You
flushed, my dear."

I never tire," was the answer.

As soon as the visitors were gone, Claire went and
before her mother, with her hands firmly pushed
into her apron pockets. The little brown thing
the resolute air of one resolved to do or die.

Mamma!" she began, "you are *not* to say a word
s. Templar of your fancy that Louisa is singing
such. She is doing *nothing* of the kind, it's all
nse."

I never thought of speaking to Mrs. Templar,
," and the placid lady looked with admiration at
title *lawgiver*. "You are very handsome, my dear.

I am not sure I don't prefer black hair to fair — Louisa's curls are lovely though —" A short pause, then suddenly, "Do you like the prince's friend, Claire? I can't say his name, poor man."

"It would be very improper for me to confess any preference for a gentleman, before he has declared one for me, mamma," said Claire demurely.

"You are always right, my dear; only in England you know —"

"But we are not in England," interrupted Claire.

"No, no more we are; but you have English blood in your veins, Claire." Here the young lady shrugged her small shoulders. "I hope," continued Madame Gastineau below her breath, "I hope his Royal Highness —"

"Serene Highness," interpolated Claire.

"I hope he isn't, you know, making love to Louisa; she is so young, and, my dear, remember, he cannot marry her."

"Mamma! *have* you lost your senses?"

"No, indeed; but lookers-on do see more of the game."

"What game?" asked Claire, with fierce eyes.

"I couldn't bear to sit by and see such a thing," pursued Madame Gastineau, placidly. "I am a mother myself, and I could scratch any man's eyes out who was wicked enough — don't be in a passion, my sweet girl. Something warns me."

"Mamma, answer me one question. Do you want to make me miserable? If you send away the prince, you send away Count von Bistönen."

"Claire, it will end just as it did with M. Amedée."

"No, it will not, if you don't interfere. Louisa is

a child and the prince a big boy. Nobody but you would take up such fancies. Promise now, promise me sacredly, you won't be filling papa's head with such nonsense."

"Don't have Louisa here the next time they come."

"You are enough to drive any one mad," burst out Claire, and rushed from the room.

Madame Gastineau sat still, tranquilly and skilfully handling her crochet-needle.

That evening at tea, Claire, who was mounting watch over her mother, received a little note in pencil from Louisa. Her fit of sulkiness vanished. She jumped up, ran to her father, kissed him, exclaiming,

"Oh, papa, you won't refuse to let me go! Lady Theodosia is going to take Louisa with her to Chamonix, and Lady Theodosia has given Louisa leave to invite me to be one of the party. I may go, may I not?"

"Of course, you may; and Claire, say, if my carriage can be of any use you can have it. Your mother will manage without it for a week."

Away went Claire over the well to Louisa. It was not yet decided whether Mrs. Templar would go or not — Louisa thought she would not.

"What shall we do about the prince and the count?" asked Claire. "It would only be polite to let them know, that they mayn't be coming through the broiling sun for no use. I have a great mind to write them a note." Louisa was silent. "On the whole, better trust to chance. You don't look half pleased, Louisa."

"I am glad you are coming," said Louisa. "I shouldn't *have liked to be alone with Miss Wilton.*"

"She's jealous of you with Captain Templar, child. Stupid old thing that she is."

"I have a mind to tell her I don't care a bit for my cousin," said Louisa.

Claire had done a good deal for the development of Louisa's mind.

Mrs. Templar did not go to Chamounix; the prince and Count von Bistönen did. They were lounging about the front of the Hôtel d'Angleterre when the char-à-bancs containing Lady Theodosia's party drove up. The prince handed out the ladies.

"How odd that they should be here," whispered Louisa to Claire.

"Didn't I tell you I met them in Geneva the day I went to buy my travelling hat?" said Claire.

"No, you never told me," answered Louisa.

The Templars dined at the table-d'hôte. More than two-thirds of the fifty persons assembled there were English, and among them were some of Lady Theodosia's own set. None of the French or Germans or Swiss who saw the meeting between the Templars and their acquaintances, but must have been disabused of their prejudice as to British phlegm. How the Islanders shook hands, and how much they had to say to one another! The only indifference they showed was as to who heard their conversation or might be disturbed by it. As last comers, the Templars, the prince (whose rank had not yet transpired at Chamounix) and Count von Bistönen had their places at the bottom of the table. Lady Sophy and her husband Mr. Mitchell Mitchell, whose seats were further up, coolly sate down *next* the Templar party, ignoring all rights but their *own pleasure*.

The French lady and her daughter, whose chairs Mr. Mitchell and his wife had taken, remonstrated gently, whereupon Mr. Mitchell said, "Eh!" and stuck his glass in his eye.

"Does that gentleman opposite not understand French?" asked the incognito prince, of Louisa, by whose side he had secured a place.

"Pardon, monsieur," said Mitchell Mitchell cavalierly. "Je comprends parfaitement le français."

Here Lady Theodosia, who was next to Mr. Mitchell Mitchell, hurriedly whispered to him, and that gentleman, with rather a red face, applied himself to his soup and did not again look across the table.

Lady Theodosia asked the Mitchells to take their tea in her room. In those days there was no such thing as a private sitting-room to be had in any hotel in Chamounix. Lady Sophy, who had learned from her husband that the fair-haired soi-disant Count von Schaunitz was a real prince of a reigning house, was inclined to be very agreeable. In right of an infirmity of her eyelids, which, indeed, nearly concealed her eyes, Lady Sophy had passed for a beauty some years back. Her manner and movements suited the languid look given by the defect, and what with slow step and a sleepy look, Lady Sophy gained not only the unmerited reputation of beauty, but of gentleness.

"Who is that young girl?" inquired her ladyship of Miss Wilton. "She's rather pretty, isn't she?"

"That's Mr. Templar's great-niece, the daughter of his nephew."

"Oh, yes! she ought to have been a boy. I remember meeting her father once. I was quite a girl at the time. A handsome, brigand-looking man. People

told all sorts of stories about him. There was one about a hat. I can't recollect what it was; but I know he was a sad mauvais sujet. I was too young then to be allowed to hear certain things."

Lady Sophy was approaching that uncertain age when, in speaking of the past, women always mention themselves as girls.

"I wonder if that was before Louisa's birth?" said Miss Wilton, with an innocent face. "She is now within a week or two of sweet sixteen."

Lady Sophy did not hear the question; she was saying to Captain Templar, who had crossed the room in obedience to a smile, —

"Do try and get me some sort of a footstool. I am so tired, and these chairs are so fatiguing."

Captain Templar went off and returned with a bundle of cloaks and shawls, which he made into a sort of footstool.

"Too high, you see," said Lady Sophy, exhibiting her pretty foot on the heap.

Count von Bistönen came to help Captain Templar. Lady Sophy thanked her new attendant in very pretty German, which she had learned when her father was Minister at one of the German courts. Lady Sophy had no more smiles for Captain Templar; she was busy talking of the happy days she had spent in Germany when quite a child.

"You see a thorough-paced coquette," whispered Claire to Louisa. "An old woman flirting is the most odious sight under heaven."

"I don't see anything particular in what she's doing," said Louisa.

"Don't you? Everything about her is acting," said

Claire hotly. "Just look how affectedly she smiles and shakes her head and tries to laugh like a girl. I wish some one would hold a candle close to her face."

"Hush!" said Louisa, for Lady Sophy had begun to sing. The song was one which had been her *cheval de bataille* some eighteen years previously; it belonged to youth, required a girl's birdlike notes. She sung it well, but it suited her as little as a coral necklace, a blue sash, and red shoes would have done. Everybody, nevertheless, praised the song and singer, and she was pressed to condescend again to enchant the company.

"Surely one or other of these young ladies will keep me in countenance," said Lady Sophy, strong in her musical fame. "Miss Wilton I know has a beautiful contralto."

"I shall be very happy to sing," said Miss Wilton; "if Louisa Templar will take the first of a duet."

"I am afraid I shall forget the words," said Louisa, alarmed.

"I will prompt you," whispered Claire. "Oh! do sing, Louisa; it will enrage Madame Affectation."

"Now then, don't lose any more time," said Mr. Templar, as if time was of the greatest consequence just then.

Louisa, who stood in awe of her uncle, began at once. Even if her voice had not been as fresh and sweet as it was, she must have charmed every one. She looked like a cherub singing, so earnest, so innocent. The prince could not continue to gaze without falling on his knees to adore her, so he slipped into the deep embrasure of the window. There was such a silence after the duet that Mr. Templar fancied it had

been a failure, and to cover so bad a result roused every one by saying, —

“A doleful ditty, indeed! Can't you give us something merry. Lady Sophy, pray cheer us.”

But Lady Sophy was tired and sleepy, and it would be best to go to bed, as they were to be up so early next morning.

“I hope you hate that Lady Sophy as much as I do,” said Claire to Louisa, in the confidence of their bed-chamber.

“No, I don't hate her at all,” answered Louisa, laughing. “She rather amuses me; I never saw any one like her.”

“She's anything but original, I can tell you,” said Claire; “she's one of the kind of women who flatter men to get them to pay her attention. Of all detestable animals, an old married flirt is the worst.”

“Do speak lower, Claire; you don't know that she mayn't be in the next room.”

“I wish she *could* hear me; it might do her good,” said Claire.

Louisa had not remarked that Count von Bistönen had never left Lady Sophy's side the whole evening. Even had she observed this, she would never have supposed *that* to be the cause of Claire's exasperation against Lady Sophy. After Claire's confidences about a certain unhappy Amedée, Louisa could never suppose that Claire would ever again love any one. Besides Louisa was too happy to be able to understand or sympathize with hatred and malice. She felt at peace with all the world, ready to do any one and every one a service; her last waking thought was one of gratitude to Lady Theodosia for inviting her

ad to her mother for allowing her to come, to Cha-
lounix.

"I hope mamma is not feeling lonely to-night,"
he said to Claire. "I wish she were going up the
fontanvert with us. I wish it was morning — still
eight hours before we start — it seems such a time."

"Go to sleep, and you'll know nothing about the
time," replied Claire.

Mdlle. Gastineau was up and dressed before she
called Louisa.

"I am going downstairs to have a look about me;
you have just half-an-hour to dress in — make haste"
— and Claire was gone.

As six o'clock struck, Lady Theodosia's maid came
to summon Louisa to breakfast. The prince happened
to be on the stair as the young lady was coming down,
and they said "good-morning." He asked permission
to be her cavalier in the ascent of the mountain, and
she said, "yes," adding, "What a beautiful day; I am
so glad."

Never did two happier young faces catch the
eyes of the travellers flitting to and fro. The prince,
however, did not accompany Louisa into the *salle à
manger*.

Presently Mr. Templar came in rubbing his hands
joyously.

"Such a mon'sous fight," he exclaimed. "There's
little Lady Sophy giving it like a good one to big
Lady Ford. By George, the small one has the best of
it; there was a ring round them, by George!"

"What are they quarrelling about?" asked Lady
Theodosia.

"*My Lady Sophy wants the Spanish saddle, and*
Once and Again. I.

so does the stout citizeness. Says she, — ‘Only see how heavy I am, my lady. I can’t sit on one of the regular saddles; I can’t get my knee between the pommels; it’s only common humanity to let me have the Spanish saddle. You’re such a slip of a thing, it don’t matter to you.’ Says Lady Sophy, — ‘It’s nothing to me what you can or cannot do with your knee; it’s nothing to you whether I am fat or thin. I bargained for the Spanish saddle, and I am going to have it.’ ‘Indeed, I spoke first,’ says the other; ‘ask this gentleman,’ taking hold of the guide, ‘if I didn’t.’ ‘You shan’t have it, I tell you,’ screamed Lady Sophy, and up she jumped on the mule with the Spanish saddle. ‘Here I shall sit, and there’s an end of it.’ Everybody burst out laughing. The poor fat woman was ready to cry. ‘You can get a chair fastened on a man’s saddle,’ said Miss Gastineau; she’s a good-natured girl, that; she led Lady Ford away, and I do believe Lady Sophy is still sitting triumphant in the Spanish saddle.”

As Mr. Templar finished his story Claire appeared, smiling, as though she had just performed some good action.

During the bustle of the setting off, the prince lifted Louisa on her mule, put her foot into the stirrup and showed her how to hold her reins.

“You are not afraid?” he asked, for Louisa had owned she had never even mounted a donkey. “I shall keep close to you, and a guide will walk at the head of your mule. How splendid your uncle is — he beats us all.” And the two young people laughed merrily.

Mr. Templar was dressed in a green hunting coat

with white corduroys and yellow top-boots, and wore as important an air as if he had had intentions of leading a field.

"Where are the Mitchells?" inquired Lady Theodosia.

"They are gone on, and so is M. von Bistönen." Claire spoke as if she were quite pleased with the arrangement.

The little cavalcade moved on.

"That girl in the blue frock and straw hat," said an enthusiastic, very young Englishman, "has the face of an angel."

"How do you know, Bertie dear? did you ever see an angel?" asked his sister.

"Don't you be *stupid*," was the fraternal reply.

Claire's mule was the only one which showed any signs of restiveness.

"I think you had better ride foremost, Miss Gastineau," said Mr. Templar, who, in spite of his hunting costume, did not seem comfortable when his mule began to fidget.

"I will, sir," returned Claire, and passing him, and then Louisa, she came up with the prince. "I challenge you, M. le Comte, to a gallop."

"With all my heart, if you can persuade these poor beasts to move out of a walk.

She struck his mule with her switch smartly on the croup, and then her own; the blows were so well aimed that both animals set off at a gallop. They were on the plain which leads to the foot of the mountain.

"Take care," said the prince, laughing, "or you will *ride down that lady*."

The lady was no other than Lady Sophy, in her Spanish saddle.

"No fear," cried Claire, flushed and breathless. "You go on one side, and I'll go on the other."

As soon as Lady Sophy saw the galloping mule she began to scream. The prince tried to draw in but he might as well have tugged at a wall as at his mule's mouth. Lady Sophy's guide did his best to pull her beast out of danger, but it flung up its heels nearly sending Lady Sophy over its head, and she took the lead in the race, Claire following, whipping up with all her strength. She reached Lady Sophy where the path narrowed. The mules began to kick and both ladies were thrown to the ground.

Count von Bistönen picked up Claire, who persisted in declaring she was not hurt, though she bit her lips to keep in a cry of pain. Lady Sophy, who had fallen on soft ground, was frightened but not hurt; she, however, resisted all the prince's efforts to lift her up. She said she was mortally hurt, that she was sure her spine was injured. There had very nearly been another catastrophe; for even while Lady Sophy was protesting that she was killed, Mr. Temple almost standing in his stirrups, came tearing along a full tilt, crying, "Stop him, stop him!"

The prince, leaving Lady Sophy, placed himself right in the middle of the road, waving his hat; the mule stopped with a jerk that nearly sent Mr. Temple over his tail. The whole party were now assembled and at a stand-still. The guides had caught the ladies' two mules, and there was a consultation as to *what was best to be done*. Lady Sophy, who still lay *on the ground* moaning, was at last persuaded to tr

and move her arms; they were safe; then to move her feet; then to be raised, and finally to stand.

"You are all right, thank God," said Mr. Mitchell; "I hope the young lady has escaped as easily?"

"Quite, thank you," said Claire, though she was ching from head to foot.

"Are you able to go on?" asked Mr. Mitchell of his wife.

"Oh, no, no, no! I'll never mount a mule again."

"Then I am afraid you must walk back to the hotel."

At this juncture, fat Lady Ford, perched on a chair, came on the scene, escorted by her son.

"I say, I have an idea," said Mr. Mitchell; "we'll make an exchange with your adversary, Sophy; she can take the Spanish saddle, and give you the chair to be carried home in."

"No, she shan't have it," said Lady Sophy, stoutly.

"Oh! come, you know, we must do something; we can't spoil everybody's pleasure; either you must ride or be carried."

"I won't ride.

"Very well." Hat in hand, and in the most polite terms, Mr. Mitchell made his request to Lady Ford.

"Indeed, you are very welcome to the chair, sir. I hope your good lady is not much hurt — lucky she is not such a weight as I am."

"She is a lump of Christian Charity," said Mr. Mitchell, going back to Lady Sophy. "I am her knight for evermore."

The Spanish saddle was shifted to the strong, quiet mule, which had been selected for Lady Ford, and Mr.

Mitchell and one of the guides placing their poles under the chair, returned to Chamounix with the sulky Lady Sophy.

Claire, quivering with pain, remounted her mule and once more the party, with the addition of Lady Ford and her son, set out for the Mer de Glace.

"I am afraid your friend is really hurt," said the prince to Louisa. "If she would agree to return to the hotel, I am sure Von Bistönen would gladly escort her back."

But no! Claire would go on. Caillet was reached without further misadventure, though at every warning of the guides, "Penchez-vous en avant," Mr. Templar in the excess of his obedience, nearly went over his mule's head. At the fountain of Caillet, Claire was obliged to own she could go no further.

"Louisa had better stay with her friend," said Miss Wilton.

In spite of her affection for Claire, this would have been a sore disappointment to Louisa; nevertheless she agreed at once.

"No, my dear young lady," said Lady Ford; "I am shaken all to a jelly already, and I don't care to see the ice; it was only just to boast I had seen it, you know. I'll keep this poor thing company."

A couch was improvised for Claire with all the shawls the ladies had with them and a couple of jackets from the guides. The only person whose kindness Claire did not seem to remark was that of Count von Bistönen. She never answered one of his inquiries.

"This is the last party of pleasure I will ever undertake," said Lady Theodosia; "the whole day has been spoiled by the wilfulness of that Miss Claire

What could have put it into her silly head to make a mule gallop?"

"Young girls will be young girls," said Mr. Templar.

Louisa felt as if Lady Theodosia threw some of the blame of the disasters caused by Claire on her shoulders, and her spirits began to flag. Nothing, however, could spoil her rapture and surprise at the sight of the Mer de Glace. She could fancy nothing grander, nothing more amazing; and, luckily, there was no one by to mar the impression that "it was nothing in comparison to something else."

"Now, Louisa, remember, we are to have no more foolish tricks," said Lady Theodosia, more pettishly than Louisa had ever heard her speak.

"Will you permit me to take charge of Miss Templar?" said the prince. "I will answer with my life for her safety."

Lady Theodosia bowed stiffly, she felt more inclined to say no, than yes. She was cross, and she knew it, and refrained from speech, as she did not wish to be rude to the young man. As she saw them go away together, taking her silence for consent, she argued thus, inwardly: —

"Louisa is still a child, and he scarcely more than a boy — still — well — they would soon be back in Geneva, and then Mrs. Templar must really be cautioned to look more after her daughter; better send her to school, than let her run wild about the country."

While Lady Theodosia was thus reflecting, and preparing, with the help of two guides, to venture on the Mer de Glace, the subjects of her meditation were *already on the ice*. They both had poles shod with

iron spikes, but the prince held Louisa's left hand fast clasped in his right. They spoke little; their young hearts were too full to speak. An occasional broken phrase fell from the prince's lips — an effort to make Louisa understand the rapture overpowering him. It was the sight of that great glacier, sparkling beneath a sky of unclouded blue, which had revealed to him that he loved. Happiness untold is it, when a sublime scene of nature, or a sublime action of man, is that which quickens the heart. The prince was breathless, like one who has no air to breathe human language, has no articulate sounds wherewith to clothe such sensations as his. It is not a first love which is eloquent.

Lady Theodosia did not care to stand on the ice in thin boots. She could say she had seen all that was to be seen, and therefore she made the guides halloo, to bring in all the stragglers to take some refreshment. No reverie could withstand such shouting.

"I wish we could find the snow-flower," said Louisa, as she and her companion turned reluctantly to obey the summons.

"The soldanella?" he said; "we must look for it lower down."

Lady Theodosia was much pleasanter after she had had some lunch. She spoke quite kindly of Claire, and insisted on Louisa's drinking a glass of champagne.

"You look pale and tired, my dear child."

"No, indeed; I am not in the least tired," said Louisa.

The prince's spirits rose, and he told some capital stories of hunting in Norway. He was pleasant to

listen to, for he never made himself the hero of the exploits he described.

It was not till the guides gave the signal for departure that any one remarked the absence of Von Bistönen.

"He is probably gone to look after the ladies at Caillet," suggested Miss Wilton.

"Poor souls! they must be starving," observed Mr. Templar, as he complacently swallowed another glass of wine.

Thus reminded of the absentees, a packet of the remnants of the eatables was made up and confided to one of the guides, and then the signal for departure was given.

As the accident of the morning had taken from the ladies all inclination to ride down the mountain, the gentlemen, with the exception of Mr. Templar, agreed to walk. On mounting his mule, he said to his son, —

"Look after your cousin, Miss Templar."

When the prince saw Captain Templar place himself by Louisa's side, he offered his arm to Lady Theodosia.

They found Lady Ford and the count ravenous. Claire, it was evident, ate against her will.

"I believe I must have broken some of my bones," said Claire to Louisa. "I can't think how I am ever to reach Chamounix."

There was, indeed, some perplexity as to the means. The guides proposed to cut some sticks to make a litter.

"Oh! no use for all that fuss," said Captain Templar, *who spoke so seldom as to have got the nick-*

name of "Le Muet" from the prince. "She can be carried 'king's-cushion' fashion. Mr. Ford and I can manage such a light weight very well."

"Perhaps the guides would be safer," observed Lady Theodosia.

"Why should you trust her to any foreign fellows when she can have honest Englishmen to carry her?"

Luckily, none of the foreign fellows understood Captain Templar.

Claire, half-laughing, half-crying, was carried to the hotel by the two young men.

"Louisa," called out Lady Theodosia, "now Mr Ford has gone on with Miss Gastineau, you must remain with Lady Ford; we can't leave her alone with the guide."

There was no mistaking that Lady Theodosia expected still to have the assistance of the prince's arm.

The unfortunately stout lady, whenever her breath permitted, was profuse in her apologies to Louisa. She was not the least afraid to be left alone with her guide who seemed a very decent person.

"Do run on, my dear young lady, to your party; it's not my way to be a mar-sport."

But Louisa had a misty idea that Lady Theodosia's orders had not been given solely out of civility to Lady Ford; so she forced a smile, and obeyed her aunt. She saw the prince for a moment on the steps of the hotel.

"You are very tired, I fear?" he said. "I was obliged to leave you."

"Oh! yes; it couldn't be helped, I know."

Louisa hurried away, for she felt inclined to cry

without knowing why. When she went up to her room, she found Claire on the bed, groaning.

"Oh, Louisa! I am so glad you are come. Do help me off with my things; I am dying to get into bed. Take care — you hurt — oh! dear, what a fool I was. I am as stiff as if I had no joints."

"I wonder if we couldn't get a doctor. I am sure something ought to be done for you. Shall I go and ask?"

"Do, for I am one ache."

A Chamounix surgeon was sent for, who gave orders for embrocations, and bandages, and rest. This time it was Louisa who proposed to Lady Theodosia to remain upstairs with Claire.

"You are quite right, my dear; she's your friend, and you know Copus is not in the best of tempers; she's always cross when we are moving about."

Copus was Lady Theodosia's lady's-maid and tyrant.

The fomentations soothed Claire's pains, and her spirits were raised by a good supply of chicken and cakes, to the pitch of being able to talk.

"It's the biter bit," said she; "but I don't much mind, for I punished that cat Lady Sophy. I only wish she had fallen on the stones instead of me."

"You don't mean you tried to make her mule throw her," exclaimed Louisa.

"Well, I thought I would give her the chance. How vexed she was to see the fat lady get the saddle at last."

"Claire, it was too bad; you might have killed her, or been killed yourself."

"She shouldn't have interfered with me," said Claire.

"But how did she interfere with you?" asked Louisa.

Claire turned a deaf ear to the question by saying, —

"Had you a pleasant day?"

"Very," was the laconic reply.

"It was very cross of Lady Theodosia to leave me to take care of Lady Ford."

"Somebody must have stayed with her, as her maid helped to carry you, and I was the youngest."

"That wasn't the reason. I say, Louisa —" Claire hesitated, for as she spoke the last three words, a look of fear had crept into Louisa's face. Claire began again: "Louisa, I am older than you, and I know a great deal more of the world than you do. Promise me not to be doing anything foolish while I am away from my bed and can't look after you. Girls can't be too particular, dear; and Gustave would say it was my fault."

"I don't understand you, Claire." Poor Louisa blushed crimson as she made this assertion. "And you don't see what right Gustave has to blame you for anything I choose to do."

"Why, Louisa, don't you know as well as I do that Gustave is over head and ears in love with you?"

Louisa's hand had tried to stop the words from falling from Claire's lips.

"You are always talking of love," she said, in a very decided tone of disgust.

"Very well, now remember, Louisa, I shall never interfere again in your affairs. You may get

scrapes and out of them as you can, — I shan't trouble myself."

"I don't mean to get into scrapes," said Louisa.

"Don't you?" said Claire, significantly. "Mind you keep to that." And she turned her face away from Louisa, adding, "Pray don't stay up here on my account."

Louisa left the side of the bed, and sat herself down by the window, sad and disconsolate. There was no view to admire, nothing but a large yard bounded by the stables and out-houses of the hotel. She was angry with Claire, as angry as if Claire had uttered some sacrilegious words; her heart was burning within her. Still perseveringly looking out at the coming and going of stableboys and guides, she at last distinguished one of the latter who had been hired by the prince. Suddenly he took off his hat and stood bareheaded; he must be talking to a gentleman. Then she distinctly heard him say, "Mais certainement, monsieur." He added something in patois to his comrades, and left the yard.

During the evening Lady Theodosia came into the room to inquire for Mdlle. Gastineau. She sat down for five minutes.

"Lady Sophy had been very sulky," said Lady Theodosia; "but she was now in high good-humour, for Captain Templar and young Ford had made Copus dress them up as women — such absurd figures as they were, to be sure; and now they were making their handkerchiefs into surplices, and painting their thumbs as faces, pretending one was a priest and the other a Scotch parson, preaching such intolerable nonsense."

"Much we are missed downstairs," exclaimed Claire, when Lady Theodosia was gone.

"Claire," said Louisa, "don't be angry any more. I can't bear to quarrel." And she stooped and kissed her friend.

"I am not angry, but I mean what I said. I leave you to your own devices."

Claire rather despised Louisa for sueing for justice. Louisa answered,

"Claire, you should not bear malice for so long. I couldn't help firing up when you said such things. Do promise to interfere, Claire, *do*."

"But if you never get into a scrape, there will be no necessity for my interference," said Claire, with a spice of malice.

"Ah! you can't forgive," said Louisa, so fully. "What can I say more than that I am sorry?"

"Well, I'll forgive and forget if I can, the more easily as I owe you something for my invitation to Chamounix."

"Not at all," said Louisa. "Lady Theodosia got that out of her own head."

"You are a good little thing!" said Claire.

"Not so little," exclaimed Louisa, with renewed courage; "I am nearly a head taller than you are to-morrow I shall be sixteen; no one can call me a child after to-morrow."

Miss Wilton paid the two girls a ceremonious adieu as she was going to bed. She was either cross, full of spirits, or sleepy — perhaps all three.

"Louisa, are you asleep?" cried Claire, *after the lights had been put out.*

"No."

"What are you thinking of?"

"I am wondering whether you will be able to go to the Bossons to-morrow," replied Louisa.

"I *will* go, otherwise you will have to remain with me. Set your heart at rest on that subject. Now, then, I am going to tell you *my* thoughts. You know, if you don't know, that men say women are always jealous and envious of one another — it's true, and it isn't true. A woman is only spiteful to another woman when they are rivals; if it weren't for rivalry women would be the most amiable of living creatures, and to think they can hate one another for such a snipe of a fellow as Captain Templar! It passes belief."

Louisa laughed and said, —

"Thank you in the name of my cousin."

"With all my faults," went on Claire, "I believe I am the only woman friend you'll ever have, Louisa. You are too pretty to have friends. Now, that Miss Wilton, who is clever enough, hates you and every woman breathing, for the sake of that disagreeable little man; she fancies we all admire him as she does. If there were no men, women would be angels. I am sure Miss Wilton told Lady Theodosia to keep you up here."

"No, she did not. I asked to be allowed to stay with you."

"Good-night," said Claire; "and dream that Miss Wilton is your most loving and obedient servant."

The next day, the 22nd of September, Louisa's nineteenth birthday, was an era in her life. Claire was as good as her word, and bravely appeared at the breakfast-table. Louisa had gone down earlier, and

meeting Captain Templar, had begged him to secure the Spanish saddle for Claire.

"She is so good," said Louisa; "she is determined whether it hurts her or not, to go to the Bossons, for fear I should have to stay at home with her."

"You are two very nice girls, both of you," said the usually taciturn captain. "I promise that Miss Claire shall have the saddle. You may tell her from me that I admire her eyes extremely."

Louisa was thoroughly surprised, and something intimidated by this lively speech from Le Muet.

The prince did not seek to be by Louisa's side on the way to the Bossons. This glacier has perhaps now, what it had then, something the appearance of ruins. An arch led into a cave of ice. Claire and Louisa, accompanied by the gentlemen, went in. Louisa knew that the prince was by her, she felt one of her hands clasped in his, and her heart seemed to bound into her throat and half choke her. It was only for a minute, and then they were all in the bright light again. When the prince released her hand, Louisa saw a small folded paper in his.

"This is your birthday," he said; "and this is my gift. I picked it myself last night — my guide showed me where to find it." And he gave her a perfect specimen of the soldanella — the flower she had wished for the day before.

She received it in silence; he did not see when she put it for safety, for he turned away as he gave it to her. Louisa went to Claire, and walked by her *friend's* side all the way back to the hotel. *Once more that day* Louisa found the prince close to her.

"The sight" of the afternoon was to be that of the setting sun behind Mont Blanc.

"It is all over now," sighed Louisa.

"What is all over?" asked the prince.

"We set out early to-morrow morning, and it has been so happy here. I wish I had not seen the mountain looking so ghastly — it seemed to die before us, didn't it?"

The prince had nothing consolatory to say in reply. All day he had been trying to think what was right to do, at least he thought he had been striving to do this. On the contrary, he had been very sincerely trying to make pleasure and duty agree; he had failed, as people are apt to do in that attempt. His last waking thoughts were — "I must let circumstances guide me. Dear, sweet Louisa, I would not do you an injury for the world. Ah! if I were not a prince."

CHAPTER XI.

End of the Idyll.

THE first days after Louisa's return from Chamounix, she was restless and out of spirits; it seemed impossible for her to remain any time in the same place. She went from the house to the garden, from the garden to the house. The least noise made her start; the tears started to her eyes for the slightest cause; she felt tired without having done aught to tire her.

One evening Mrs. Templar, who had been watching her for some minutes, asked her what was the matter with her?

"Nothing, mamma," answered Louisa.

"You don't seem such friends with Claire as before your trip."

"Oh, yes! indeed."

"Then I suppose you are fretting because you have no gaiety in view. It's a poor return to me for having allowed you to accept the invitation; young ladies have a way of keeping all their agreeable qualities for strangers, and of sulking at home."

"Indeed, mamma, I am not sulky. I have felt done up; that's all. I will sing you some of your favourite songs; shall I, mamma?"

"If you are fatigued, you had better go to bed."

"I am not so bad as that." And Louisa went to the piano and did her best. But her mother's manner

ad not tended to make her more cheerful, and, it must be owned, she sang in a doleful tone.

It was the ninth day since her return from Chaulounix — a beautiful bright Sunday. Louisa had one as she often did, accompanied the Gastineaux to the church in Geneva, Mrs. Templar being glad of any excuse to avoid the long walk. Instead of going into the house when the Gastineaux left her at the gate of La Forêt, she went to the end of the field, where a little summer-house overhung the high-road. She had not been there many minutes when she saw the prince coming along. She drew herself out of sight, and sat down as breathless as though she were frightened. She was still wondering whether she had been seen, when she found the prince standing by her. He had easily climbed the low wall. They were both embarrassed. He asked her several questions, without waiting for any answer, talked of the heat and dust, laughing awkwardly. At last he took a long breath, and exclaimed, —

“This has been the happiest summer of my life. I shall never be so happy again; but everything, pleasant or unpleasant, comes to an end one day or other.”

Louisa understood at once and said, —

“You are going away, I suppose?”

“Yes — letters —” He did not finish that phrase, but burst out, “I am dreadfully sorry to go.”

“Are you?” And Louisa involuntarily turned to look at him. She could not guess that she was very pale.

He stamped his foot, and said quickly and loudly, —

"I hope you will forget me very soon. I don't deserve one single thought from you; but I am not good-for-nothing fellow; don't let any one make you believe that." And the great strong young man, covering his face, sobbed aloud.

"Pray, pray, don't," and Louisa laid her hand softly on his arm. "There's nothing for you to be so sorry about."

"Remember," he said, looking at her with swollen reddened eyes, "that if ever I can do anything for you, you must tell me. I would give my right hand half of whatever I may possess, to hear you say that I had helped to make you happy."

She said, in a very low voice, "Thank you."

"Will you shake hands with me?" he said, and held out both his hands.

She laid hers in his outstretched palms.

"You promise you will not let any one make you think ill of me. I swear to God I have always respected you in my thoughts, as I do the Holy Virgin." A great hot tear fell on the back of his neck as he bent over her. "I am not my own master, dearest, sweetest Louisa, and the more I care for you the more injury I might do you, and I would rather die than harm you! just say you don't hate me."

"No, indeed, I do not."

"I must go; I gave my word only to say good-by."

"Good-by," repeated Louisa.

He let go her hands, and left the summer-house.

She sat down utterly bewildered. Suddenly she heard the steps of some one running; she looked up and there was the prince again.

"I came back to see if you were crying," he ex-

claimed, wringing her hand. "I can't bear the idea of your being sorry; tell me you don't care a straw for me! tell me that I am a stupid coxcomb to dare to think you do."

"I don't care so very much," said Louisa, making an effort to say the words with a smile.

"Will you promise — promise faithfully," he went on in a hoarse voice, "that if you ever need a friend to help you, you will send for me. I'll never fail you, so help me God."

"I promise," she said. "Don't come back any more."

He lingered.

"And you don't hate me?"

"No."

"God bless you," he whispered, and once more left the summer-house.

Louisa heard his step in the road beneath, and then she took her way to the house. She went slowly, for suddenly she felt as if all strength had left her knees; she was glad to hold by any shrub that bordered the way. She crept up to her own room, and she lay down trembling on her bed.

In the meantime, Lady Theodosia had been enlightening Mrs. Templar as to what her ladyship had seen with her own eyes, and what Miss Wilton and her maid Copus had seen with theirs at Chamounix. There is no necessity to give Lady Theodosia's recapitulation of the idyll recorded in our last chapter.

"The prince is a very fine young man, though he is a foreigner," continued her ladyship, "and I wish

for Louisa's sake he had been only Count von Schautnitz. I have said nothing of what I told you either to Mr. Templar or Marmaduke — these sort of affairs are best managed by women. But when I took leave of his serene highness at Chamounix, I invited him to come and lunch with me on his return to Geneva. I was sure the expectation of meeting Louisa would bring him immediately. He made his appearance the very morning after we reached home. I managed to get every one out of the way, and once we were *tête-à-tête*, I began by various inquiries as to his native land, until I got him into a description of the grand-ducal court. Then I said, bluntly enough, that I supposed he was making the tour of Europe previous to his marriage. He reddened — stammering out some evasive answer. I begged his pardon for my indiscretion, but that my excuse was the having read several paragraphs in the papers on that subject. It was a transparent white lie, and he knew it was a lie. I was resolved, however, to give him his lesson. 'It wouldn't be fair,' I said, 'if the incognito of princes, or the secret of their matrimonial engagements, was too well preserved. Doubtless he recollected the fable of the boys and the frogs. What was play to one party was death to the other.' 'How does your ladyship apply that fable to me?' he asked, angrily. I answered that I left the application to his own penetration. 'I will not affect to misunderstand you any longer,' he replied; 'no word has passed my lips to the young lady in question, that angels might not have heard.' 'Of that I was quite certain,' I said, 'but —' *He interrupted me with 'Yes, yes, I know what you*

are going to say; you are quite right to take care of her.'"

"He stopped a moment, then went on in a voice that showed he really felt what he expressed: 'I pay dearly for my rank; never shall I see any one like her again; neither church nor priests can do me as much good as only being in her company has done; she has made me loathe everything that is not as pure and lovely as herself.' I really did not know what to answer. He touched me, I assure you. After a while he said, 'Well, Lady Theodosia, what do you require of me?'

"'You must give up seeing her,' I replied (we both avoided the poor child's name), 'indeed, the kindest thing your highness could do, would be to leave Geneva at once.' 'Very well,' he answered, 'I shall go, but not without bidding her farewell.' I said, 'That's exactly what I must beg you not to do.' 'I must say good-by to her,' he said, doggedly. 'No one shall persuade me to leave the idea rankling in her memory that I was a heartless fellow.' I proposed to give her any message from him; I assured him I would do it as kindly as he could desire. No, he was determined to see her — *he* could bear any pain better were it given by her hand.

"'I was sure,' I said, laughing, 'the young lady was not in any danger of the suffering he supposed. Her vanity might have been tickled by his attentions, but that he might trust my experience, that she did not yet know that she had a heart.' 'Then there can be no reason for any interdict as to my saying farewell,' he returned, sharply; 'you won't dissuade me,

Lady Theodosia, and I tell you frankly, I will see her, once more. I don't want to see her alone — what I have to say, I should be glad to say before the whole world. She shall know I am not a selfish brute. She shall know that it is an agony for me to leave her.' I said, 'You promise that you will quit Geneva after this one interview?' 'You have my word already — thank you,' he added, interrupting me as I was beginning to say that I would arrange that he should see Louisa, — 'thank you, I will find or make the opportunity for myself.' He bowed rather haughtily, I must say, but I forgive him. He left the room without another word. Count von Bistönen came to me an hour ago, to announce that he and the prince leave Geneva this evening; so, of course, the meeting has taken place."

Mrs. Templar had listened in unbroken silence to Lady Theodosia. She looked very angry, and said, —

"I shall take very good care that Louisa does not play any more such tricks again."

"Poor child! she played no tricks," said Lady Theodosia; "her beauty alone is in fault."

"Pardon me, Lady Theodosia; no man is ever forward with a modest girl, let her be ever so handsome. When men flirt it is always the woman's fault."

"I know there is some such maxim in Fordyce's sermons to young women," said Lady Theodosia; "the maxims and sermons of an old man. Elderly people like you and me, my dear, have forgotten what it was to be young and admired; besides, no preux chevalier could have shown more respect for the lady of his *thoughts* than his young highness."

Templar smiled the mockery of a smile as she

—
 ut my wisdom teeth too long ago, as you just
 minded me, to have much relish for these ro-
 ffairs. As for any love on Louisa's side, it is
 rous to speak of such a thing. Some girls of

I don't say but might have such feelings.
 thank goodness, is not a precocious young

on't think she is; however, my advice to you
 least said on the matter the soonest mended."
 saying, Lady Theodosia took an icy cold leave
 Templar. The ladies, indeed, parted with
 of mutual dislike.

oon as Lady Theodosia was gone Mrs. Templar
 search of Louisa. The poor child's pale,
 ace induced Mrs. Templar to put off her in-
 ecture. She could not, however, refrain from

—
 at freak is this, your lying down at this time

Are you ill?"

mamma."

an get up, and come down to your dinner."

n Louisa wished her mother good-night, she

low voice, —

eed, mamma, I have done nothing wrong."

m glad you have a quiet conscience — there,
 d."

this was all Mrs. Templar ever said to Louisa
 on to the prince. In fact, she was at a loss

say, for the more she thought over Lady
 ia's account, the less she saw reason to blame

Louisa. And then, after all, the principal offender had been a prince — a prince who would one day reign over an independent territory, and Mrs. Templar was inclined to be more indulgent to the errors of princes than to those of artisans.

On the first of October, the shutters of the Villa Androssey were closed. Mr. Templar, in taking leave of Louisa, had presented her with a bank-note of fifty pounds, and Lady Theodosia had given her some trinkets of which she was tired. Captain Templar's parting gift was a little white poodle which he called Prince — Louisa changed its name to Chamounix.

Not a word as to any future meeting had either Lady Theodosia or Mr. Templar spoken to Mrs. Templar, nor yet to Louisa, for Mrs. Templar inquired of her daughter if they had. The adieux had been without even a conventional hope of the kind.

Mrs. Templar was disappointed; how much so, she never told. She had always looked forward to Louisa's being introduced into the great English world by Lady Theodosia. Standing, as she was, as to her own dignity, Mrs. Templar had intended, if Lady Theodosia would undertake to chaperone Louisa, to remain in the background herself. Nay, more, she would have given all her income, save what was necessary to keep soul and body together, to allow Louisa an opportunity of figuring in the rank to which she was, by birth, entitled. Suspicious, vindictive, and implacable, Mrs. Templar had nevertheless a great capability of self-sacrifice, but her self-sacrifice always seemed more like a self-inflicted penance, than flowing from a generous affection, happier to give than to receive. Mrs. Templar did

things now and then; but she effaced their merit
considering those for whom they were done as
, and whom, every after, she was ready on the
it provocation, to reproach with what they owed

CHAPTER XII.

Château qui Parle, Femme qui Écoute.

LOUISA had been nearer the truth than she was herself aware, when she said to the prince by way of consoling him: "I don't care very much." She had felt the mere vague preference of a girl scarcely sixteen, for the first agreeable young man who pays her special attention. It had been a mere flash of youth; nevertheless she was not after that trip to Chamounix, and the ensuing interview in the summer-house, exactly what she had been before. It said much for the temper of her character that her first grief had done her good, not harm; it had made her more thoughtful for others, more tender in her obedience to her mother.

The whole romantic episode was somehow or other known to all Geneva; it would really seem as though stones and trees could whisper what passes before them. The comments on the incident depended on the peculiar disposition of the commentator; the world's ear is large and eager, and the world's tongue harsh and venomous. In this instance, however, it was Mrs. Templar and Lady Theodosia who were blamed; and Louisa pitied. In vain did Claire reiterate that Louisa never cared for the prince, nor the prince for Louisa; and that she who was Louisa's intimate friend, and had been a witness of all that occurred, must be the best judge. The world of Geneva persisted in the judgment it had formed, and even accused Mdlle. Gastineau of being actuated by jealousy of her friend *in her denials*. One person alone tried with earnest

will to believe Claire's assertions, and that person Gustave.

Louisa had still continued to teach him English up to the month of November, but the lessons had been limited to the Saturdays and Sundays; the rest of the

Gustave returned too late for any meetings at the wing, and Louisa excused herself from going over the other evenings to Les Vignes, saying that she would not leave her mother so much alone. Perhaps she had not forgotten Claire's assertion about Gustave, although kind and gentle to him, it is quite sure that her manner was more reserved than it had been some months previously. In fact, Gustave perceived that Louisa had completely passed out of childhood.

"You know enough of English now to go on by yourself," said Louisa the day that she complained that it was too cold to sit out of doors. "Why don't you read and to your aunt?"

"In other words, you don't wish to teach me any more?"

"No, I do not mean that; I will try to give you a lesson every Saturday afternoon at your own house." Louisa was scarcely better satisfied with Louisa's answer to Gustave; she openly reproached her with being reserved, with having grown reserved; and, as always happens in such cases, the reproaches only served to increase the evil complained of. Claire's sharp speeches destroyed all that confidence which is the charm of intimacy. Gustave also occasionally indulged in ironical remarks, which brought tears to Louisa's eyes; the moment Gustave no sooner perceived, than he added to the discomfort by his vehement expressions, and his fervent prayers for forgiveness. All this tended to

keep Louisa more at home. She borrowed some books of history from Mr. Gastineau's library, and unaided, set herself heartily to work to improve her mind.

All at once Claire's ill-humour vanished, her scoldings ceased. She began again to send tiny notes to her dear Loo-loo, about everything and nothing; she was always inviting Louisa to go on shopping expeditions to Geneva, or for a drive along the shores of the lake; or else the dear child must come over and have a singing lesson.

One day Mrs. Templar startled Louisa by saying, "So your friend has a new flirtation on hand." How did Mrs. Templar, who so seldom put her foot out of her own premises, know this? Noticing Louisa's astonishment, Mrs. Templar added: "My eyes are not very large, but they see uncommonly well. This time I believe Miss Claire will snare her bird: he is young and stupid enough to walk into the net."

The mother's words grated harshly on the daughter's ears. Sour elderly people have no mercy in flagellating the hearts of the young, with their cruel knowledge of poor human nature.

"When did you find it out, mamma?" asked Louisa, thus ingenuously admitting the accusation, and the faithfulness of the description.

"Never mind. Don't engage yourself to act as bridesmaid, for it won't be in your power to keep your promise. We are going away."

Louisa flushed with surprise and something with pleasure also, at the prospect of a coming change.

"We are going back to Paris," announced Mrs. Templar.

"Oh! how glad I am! We shall see dear M. de

Blacourt, and Denis and Marie again. Mamma, I wonder if we could find Félicie?"

Most unpleasant reminiscences were connected with his last name. Mrs. Templar answered waspishly: "So that's all you care for leaving your dear Gastineaux? Well, my dear, your feelings will never hurt your health; so much the better for you." And then Mrs. Templar walked away to her own room in excellent humour with herself.

This conversation took place on a Saturday, not long before Louisa's usual hour for going to Les Vignes to give Gustave his lesson. She clambered over the wall without delay, to make known the prodigious news, that they were going to leave La Forêt, going back to Paris. As she entered the Gastineaux' courtyard, Claire called softly from an upstairs window: "Louisa, don't go into the salon, come up by the backstairs to my room."

When Louisa saw Claire's face, she guessed that something out of the common had happened.

"Louisa! I am engaged," exclaimed Claire. "He is richer than I expected. Oh, Louisa! I do believe that I shall be happy."

"I am sure I hope so, dear Claire; M. Hébert looks very amiable."

"Papa and mamma are so pleased. Papa says he would have chosen him out of a hundred for me, and when the best of all is to come, we are to live in Paris. Henri is junior partner of a great commission house, and the head of the business lives in the country: Henri is going away almost directly to choose an apartment for us, and it is to be furnished as I like."

"How lucky!" exclaimed Louisa in her turn; "for,

do you know, Claire, mamma has just told me that we are to go back to Paris? I came over directly to tell you."

"Why are you going?" asked Claire.

"I can't tell, for mamma just told me we were to go, and no more, and you know she can't bear to be asked questions."

"Well, I am very glad for my own sake!" said Claire; "but what will Gustave say?"

"He'll say he is very sorry, I suppose," said Louisa, in a tone of impatience.

"Fie, Louisa! you are very ungrateful: anybody can see that Gustave is pining to death about you. His eyes are twice as big as they were."

"Claire, I wish you would not say such things."

"Well, I won't, since they anger your ladyship," said Claire, laughing. "Come and look at the presents Henri has given me. And she dragged Louisa to a secretaire and pulled out a handsome gold bracelet, with half a dozen little hearts pendent from it. "I mean to put Henri's hair, and papa's and mamma's, in three of them. How nice it is to have some one who thinks more of you than of all the rest of the world!"

"Do you love him already?" asked Louisa.

"I respect him very much," said Claire, with great gravity; "and I am sure I shall love him as a husband; the first necessity in marriage is to be able to respect your husband."

Claire was repeating her father's words to herself.

"Mamma guessed what was going to happen," said Louisa.

"Then she must be a witch," replied Claire, "fo

she never saw Henri and me together, that I am sure of."

This allusion to her mother's penetration had recalled Mrs. Templar's other observations to Louisa, and made her also remember Claire's confidences about Amedée and Count von Bistönen; but Louisa had no more judgment than usually falls to the lot of girls of sixteen, and in her interest in a real case of an offer of marriage, she did not reason on the unsteadiness of the feelings of the bride elect.

"We are to be married before Christmas," said Claire. "I wonder if you'll be still here, and, above all, I wonder why you are going to Paris?"

Claire's speculations were here interrupted by a summons downstairs.

"Come with me, Louisa, and get over the ceremony of congratulating the bridegroom to be."

"What ought I to say?" exclaimed Louisa, hanging back.

"Oh! anything; mumble something about happiness, but don't offer to shake hands. Henri is very French, and would feel quite awkward. You should have seen him the other day, when Madame Mercier, who is an Englishwoman, put out her hand; he gave her his left in such a grotesque way; I almost laughed out. He said afterwards that she ought to have learned better manners by this time."

Louisa, on entering the drawing-room, fixed her eyes on Madame Gastineau, and kept them so fixed, under some sort of impression that M. Hébert must feel ashamed before a stranger. She kissed Claire's placid mother, *whispering that she wished her joy.*

"That won't do, Louisa," called out Claire, to Louisa's amazement; "you must do your duty."

So summoned, Louisa went forward to the affianced couple, looking so prettily shy that M. Hébert was well enough satisfied merely to gaze at her. He made her a fluent oration of thanks for the congratulations she had not spoken. When he had ended, Claire said, —

"We are going to take a walk, and you must come and chaperone us, Louisa."

"It's the day for Gustave's lesson," replied Louisa, in a whisper, "and I shouldn't like to disappoint him."

"We can go and meet him," answered Claire, also in a low voice, "and I depute you to tell him the great news. I mean Henri to help Gustave," added Claire, confidentially: "he shall take him as a clerk or something. I have a sort of liking for Gustave, though he never did me the honour of falling in love with me."

The trio sauntered down the road to Geneva. It was one of those grey days common enough at the beginning of winter; the clouds of that particular neutral tint, which amateur sketchers find easiest to paint. There had been a frost in the morning, for you could see every now and then a heap of withered, fallen leaves, bordered and sprinkled with what looked like silver. It was not an unpleasant day: it had the charm of perfect tranquillity. They were within a bow-shot of Geneva before they met Gustave. The bookseller's clerk was a head taller than M. Hébert: a long line *would have served to portray Gustave's figure, so thin and straight* was he. In consequence of this meagre-

ness, his head, covered with a thicket of black hair, seemed out of proportion with his shoulders; his face was haggard, and his brow lined, though there was only as yet a down on his upper lip. Claire often hit the mark when she said, —

“I declare, Gustave, one would think you were half-starved, that you had nothing to eat all day.”

The truth was, that, in furtherance of the object he had at heart, Gustave put aside almost all the allowance made him by his uncle for his breakfast and dinner during the week, contriving to keep under the cravings of a growing youth's appetite with bread and water in the winter, and bread and fruit in the summer. He only dined once a week, and that was on Sunday. M. Henri Hébert, so plump, fresh-coloured and faultlessly attired, Gustave so lank, dark, with clothes that looked as if they had been made for somebody else, were types of prosperity and adversity. Louisa, who had more sensibility than her mother believed, was quite grieved for the supposed mortification Gustave must feel in being contrasted with so fine a gentleman as Claire's fiancé. She went so far as to admire Gustave's courage in not being as abashed as she was for him. It happened to Gustave in this instance, as it so constantly does to every one of us: we get credit for the doing that which we have not done, and none at all for that we have done.

Gustave had not remarked M. Hébert's dress; nor had he, would it have exercised any influence over him, or made him draw any comparison between himself and the wearer. Every day of his life, Gustave was in close *propinquity* with real fine folks. Geneva is a sort of *halfway-house*, at which most travellers of

distinction stop; and stopping, they buy books. One of the distinctive marks of the town is the number of booksellers' shops. Gustave had been politely spoken to by English peers and peeresses; they had asked his opinion and abided by his recommendation. In some respects, Gustave was already a man of the world. While Louisa was admiring his courageous indifference to dress, Gustave had never cast a thought on his own or M. Hébert's. Hitherto he had kept out of the Parisian's way, because he was in no wise interested in him. The moment Claire formally introduced him to M. Hébert, he understood that he was bowing to one who was about to become his cousin's husband. After the two young men had exchanged a few insignificant words, Claire and her lover walked slowly, to let Louisa and Gustave precede them.

"Claire bid me tell you that she is going to be married," began Louisa.

"So I guessed," replied Gustave. "I wonder if she has a little bit of heart left to give M. Hébert."

Louisa did not attempt to unravel this riddle.

Gustave went on, —

"Well, she has always been good-natured to me, and on her wedding-day she shall have my prayers for her happiness."

"She says she is certain that she shall be happy," said Louisa.

"We know she is not difficult to please," returned Gustave.

Here they heard Claire's strong, high voice, *saying*, —

"We must have a good-sized salon; women's dresses never show to advantage in a small room."

"I suppose the marriage will take place soon?" said Gustave.

"Before Christmas, Claire told me."

"You will find it dull without her."

Louisa hesitated; she had a distinct consciousness that the news of her leaving Geneva would pain Gustave; lately she had never felt easy in his company, and she had a growing aversion to anything resembling a tête-à-tête with him, and this though his manner was in general almost painfully humble to her. Avoiding a direct reply, she asked, —

"Do you find your English of the use you expected?"

"Yes, my master promises me an increase of pay. I am very grateful to you, Louisa."

"Oh! don't speak in that way, Gustave. You learn so easily it's no trouble to teach you."

He was watching every word that fell from her lips; he interrupted her by saying, —

"I can scarcely believe that it is only six months since you gave me my first lesson. You have suddenly started into a grown-up young lady."

"One must grow up some day or other," she said. "I wish I were not so ignorant as I am, and that's the reason I am glad we are going to Paris, for there I shall have masters."

"Going to Paris!" repeated Gustave; "glad you are going to Paris!" he reiterated.

"I am not glad to leave the good Gastineaux and you, Gustave; but I do long to have some education."

"*Since when did you know this?*" he asked, his

mind intent only on the fact that she was going away.

"Mamma only told me this afternoon."

"And when do you go?"

"Soon, I think, for mamma said I must not promise to be one of Claire's bridesmaids."

Gustave asked no more questions; indeed he did not open his mouth again during the rest of the walk.

"I am afraid it is too late for your lesson," said Louisa, as they stood at the gate waiting for the lingering lovers. Young as she was, she read the signs of repressed grief on Gustave's face, and tears started into her eyes. It is generally unlucky for themselves that daughters of Eve are all so impatient of the sight of suffering in men, and that they are so impetuous in their wish to console. To think now what a difference it would have made in Louisa's life had she not looked at Gustave, and looking, had not been moved to put out her little hand, but had said, "Good-evening," and tripped away?

As it was, Claire and her lover came up — Claire in high glee. Hébert had been promising her *carte blanche* for the furnishing of her new home. At that instant of her own supreme contentment, Claire wished everybody to be as happy as she herself was. There was not much penetration required to perceive that something was distressing Gustave, and Claire supposed that she knew what would best console him. To Louisa's "Good-night," she said, —

"What nonsense, your going away now! I am sure *Mrs. Templar* will expect you to stay and have tea *with us*. At all events, if you are afraid to stop with-

out leave, I will take Henri over the well, and introduce him to her — that will please her; and then I'll beg her to allow you to spend the evening with us. In the meantime go and give Gustave his lesson — there's no one in the drawing-room."

Louisa said, years and years after, in speaking of the scene that ensued, —

"I said what I did not wish to say; I did what I did not wish to do; I felt as if I could not help myself."

Louisa went up to Claire's boudoir, and brought down the English book Gustave was reading with her; it was *Evelina*, belonging to Madame Gastineau, who had brought it some five-and-twenty years before from England. Gustave found his place, tried to read a sentence, and fairly broke down.

"What frightens you?" he said, after a pause; "you are trembling."

"Trembling!" repeated Louisa; "no, indeed, I am not." And she kept her eyes riveted on the page of the open book.

"I had a letter from my mother this morning," he continued; "I want you to read it."

"I shall be very glad." And she looked up with that peculiar relaxing of the features which follows relief from apprehension. She took the letter he held out to her, and bent her head over it. Madame Gastineau wrote of her gratitude to Louisa for her kindness to Gustave, making many allusions to her charming ways as a child. The letter ended with an earnest prayer that Miss Templar might be as happy as she certainly deserved to be. All the while Louisa was reading, she heard Gustave's loud breathing — felt his hot breath on her neck. She shivered as one does

when one hears those mysterious sounds in woods or plains which precede a coming storm. Louisa shrank into herself. She might have got up and left the room; she might have gone to the window and spoken to M. and Madame Gastineau — she could see them in the garden; she might have desired Gustave to leave her; she might have done a dozen things which she did not do. She did as the canary did the other day. It was in a cage hanging under a trellis. A sparrow-hawk soaring past, lighted on the bird's gilded prison. The canary had only to go to the opposite side, or only to remain in the centre of the perch, and it was safe. It might have done so, yet it did not. Heaven knows what the fascination of peril is; but it went shuddering until within reach of the hawk's cruel beak.

Louisa did not even draw further away from Gustave; perhaps she had a dread of wounding him by any show of discomfort. She returned the letter, saying, —

“Thank you for letting me read it. Your mother thinks far too much of the little service I have rendered you. When you write to your mother, give her my love, and say that I have not forgotten the old days in Paris.”

She looked so tender and pitiful as she said this — she looked so like the sweet child of his boyhood, — that the temptation was irresistible: Gustave suddenly kissed her on the cheek.

“You should not,” exclaimed she, flushing, and pushing him away.

“Louisa,” exclaimed Gustave: — “Louisa, I wish *I was not* such a rough fellow. You used to love me

æ, in spite of my rags. You would sit on my knee, I put your beautiful little rosy face against my greatly dark one."

"I was a child then," answered Louisa, gravely.

"Don't be angry with me," he went on; "you don't know how I love you — I would die for you. If it had not been for love of you, Louisa, I should have been dead long ago. Mine was such a wretched life: at twelve years old I remember planning to kill myself, and but for you I should have done it one day after my father had beaten me till I was bruised from head to foot, and for no reason except that my shoes were worn out. I had gone to the hole I slept

I had fastened a rope round my neck, when I heard your little feet coming slowly and wearily up the stairs — the steps were so steep for you; and then you rapped impatiently at the door, calling out, 'Gustave! Gustave! come here directly, and teach me my lesson.' You saved my life then."

"I don't think that children have such happy lives as I hear people always boasting they have," observed Louisa. "I am sure I do not wish to be little again" — she could go along with Gustave's feelings as far.

"I never loved any one really but you, Louisa," said Gustave, passionately. "I could not love my mother, he was so cruel; nor my mother, she was so unjust to me for Ernest's sake. If you are to begin to hate me now, it's no use for me to live."

"Why do you say such things? Why should I hate you?"

"Now suppose, Louisa, — one may suppose what one likes, — *suppose a man just in such a situation*

as I am in now, were, by dint of talent and industry, to raise himself, — others as humbly born as I am have risen to be prime ministers of a great country, — suppose a man were to overcome all difficulties, all obstacles for your sake, that you were sure that you had been the spur to all his exertions, that all his thoughts had been centred in you, that he had fought and struggled until he had gained an honourable position, all in the one hope of winning you, — would it make you”

He stopped, for he saw alarm in every feature of the face he was so anxiously gazing on.

“No, — it’s no use to ask the question,” he said, abruptly; “you could never forget I had been a shop-boy.”

The agony of his voice as he said this, the tears that rolled over his cheeks, banished every other feeling from Louisa’s tender little heart save that of compassion. She said, unconscious of the strength of her assertion, —

“Indeed you are quite wrong, Gustave.”

“Am I? Oh! say so again; Louisa, say so again; you don’t guess all I have suffered this summer; it has made me more of a scarecrow than ever.”

This speech drove the colour from Louisa’s cheeks; the growing duskiness did not allow Gustave to see her change of colour.

“Look here, Louisa,” went on Gustave. “I have something worth in my brains. I have tried what I could do. I sent two articles to the *Revue de Genève*, and they have been printed; and I sent a story to one of the newspapers, for a feuilleton, and it is accepted,

id will come out shortly. No one, except the editor, has any idea that I am the author."

"An author! — a real author! Oh! Gustave, how glad I am — I am quite proud. Won't you tell your uncle? — I should like to tell everybody." Louisa poked with enthusiasm.

"It's all for you, Louisa. If I live, I will make you proud of your old playfellow."

He leaned towards her, and, in a choking voice, said, —

"Do not be angry again. Louisa, Louisa, give me some hope to live on!"

Louisa's brightness faded; she sat as if charmed to her chair; she was frightened, and yet she was softened. A man's pleading has an effect on a woman's nerves, not on her heart; and Louisa was not a woman, but an inexperienced girl, who had a certain amount of affection for Gustave; he had filled the place of an elder brother to her, and she had cared for him, without ever thinking how much.

She faltered out, "I am sure I ought not to let you talk so to me, Gustave."

"Why not? I have not asked you to marry me — I should be a fool if I did. No; I plead for very little, Louisa. I would serve twice seven years to win you — and think it only too little. All I ask is, that you promise to give me time to make my way in the world. Oh! Louisa, don't refuse, or you will kill me! You have the power for good or evil over me; you may make or mar my life. Be merciful, or the consequences be on your head."

"But I don't understand what it is you want me do," said Louisa, distressed and puzzled.

"Promise you will not marry any one for the years," said Gustave, quickly.

"I am going to school; there's not the least chance of my marrying," said Louisa, almost laughing.

"Laugh if you will, but promise to wait for the years."

"I don't mind giving you *that* promise, if it will make you happy," said Louisa; "but I don't see much use in it."

"You promise," he said, holding out his hand.

"I promise," she said, smiling. "You silly Gustave"

"Now then, a pledge," he exclaimed, and snatched off one of her glossy curls.

"You should have asked my leave first," she said, drawing away her hand.

"It will be my only comfort when we are separated," returned Gustave — "the only proof I shall have of your promise."

"You make me sorry I was so foolish as to give you any promise," she said, and left her seat.

She went to the window, and M. and Madame Gastineau, catching sight of her, came in.

Meanwhile, Claire and M. Hébert had paid their visit to Mrs. Templar, and had brought back permission for Louisa to spend the evening at Les Vignes. Claire was much too pre-occupied with her own concerns to take notice of Louisa's unusual silence, or Gustave's equally unusual excitement. Claire was like a small fireworks with her lover. She was forever exploding into some coquettish command — demanding

col or cushion, or scolding or rallying him. She
ved as a child does with a new toy; had M.
ert been breakable, she would certainly have
en him to pieces before bed-time.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Promise.

A WHOLE week passed before Louisa and Gustave met again. As far as Louisa went, she would have willingly dispensed with seeing him again until the expiration of the next three years. In her secret soul, she looked forward to that period as to the termination of a disagreeable compact. The recollection of what had passed between her and Gustave had in it a dissolving quality. Louisa was uneasy at the promise he had succeeded in wresting from her, and her disquiet produced a decided irritation against the person who had led her into so silly an act. She shared in none of those passionate sentiments which agitated Gustave, and which make wrong appear right, and right wrong. Gustave had much more nearly won her dislike than her liking. She was impatient to be away from La Forêt, to be where he could not worry her. It was Claire, that amateur of loveplots, who brought Louisa an entreaty from Gustave to meet him at the swing on the Saturday afternoon.

"You will be very mean, if you continue to avoid him as you have done," said Claire.

Louisa took her way to the rendezvous with slow, reluctant steps. Gustave watched her coming along, and that languid droop of her head, and, indeed, of her whole figure, gave him much the same sensation as that famed individual must have had, who, drawing *his head out of the bucket of water*, discovered that

thousand years of joy had been the illusion of a seconds.

Gustave leaned his back against a tree, and very and gaunt he looked.

'So you are positively going away in a few days?' began.

'Yes; it is quite settled that we set off next Thurs-

Louisa spoke gravely, but Gustave detected no of regret in her tone. Perceiving this, had he had any logic, he would have sighed, and left the matter unsifted; but folks in his position always fall to a furious desire of investigation.

'Your eyes sparkle at the thought of the change,' Gustave, reproachfully.

'There's no cause for my being unhappy because we are going to Paris,' said Louisa; "and I *am* glad I shall see dear M. de Blacourt."

'I hate separations,' returned Gustave. "Who can tell when they separate that they shall ever meet again?"

'Of course, no one can be sure of not dying,' replied Louisa, with the reasonableness of indifference; "there are as many chances in favour of living as of dying. After eight years, M. de Blacourt, and Denis, and mamma, and I are all alive and well. I can't see anything so dreadful in our going as far as Paris. M. and Madame Gastineau do not fret because Claire is to live there."

'That's different; however, it's of no use discussing the subject — evidently you do not care about leaving me, while I — —' he broke off.

"Suppose you were to get some employment, and had to leave Geneva, while I was to remain here, would you like me to be angry with you for what you could not help?"

"I am not angry, Louisa. I am only grieved that you have no sort of regret in saying good-by to me."

"Why do you care for me? You are always finding out something or other wrong in whatever I say or do," said Louisa, petulantly.

"No, not wrong in you, rather folly in myself. I am to blame, not you. Let there be an end of everything between us; I will never seek to see or speak to you more."

Certainly there was a look in Louisa's eyes as if she thought he had come to a most desirable conclusion. Gustave saw this, and the effect was just the contrary to that any one in their senses might have anticipated. He threw himself on his knees before her, exclaiming, —

"Don't mind my words. Do or say what you please, but for God's sake, Louisa, don't quarrel with me!" His lips quivered, his whole face twitched with emotion.

"I don't wish to quarrel, Gustave. I would be good friends with you, if you would only let me."

The instant Gustave showed agitation and suffered, Louisa was conquered.

"You don't care for me, Louisa.

"You are very unjust, Gustave."

"No, I am not. I have a consciousness that I am disagreeable to you; it was not always so. If you grudge the straw you have given me to keep me from

owning, withdraw it — take back your promise."

Louisa hesitated.

"It's the deceit towards mamma I hate."

"Have you made your mother the confidant of all that has passed at Chamounix?" asked Gustave, with a sneer. "If you tell Mrs. Templar, it will be a mere trick to get rid of me. You know very well that Mrs. Templar would force you to trample on me. Don't be a coward, Louisa. Cowardice makes men and women false; keep your promise without conditions, or retract it."

In her heart she longed to withdraw her word, but she quailed before the fierce, passionate young man. He answered, —

"I will keep my word."

"You will? May God bless you, Louisa, for the mercy you now show me!"

He made a movement as if he would have thrown his arms round her; she drew aside, and gave him her hand, saying, —

"I must go now."

Why did Gustave, who thoroughly understood Louisa's reluctance, persist in binding her? Why did Louisa, panting to free herself from an inconsiderate promise, repeat that promise? We refuse to follow the suggestion of our reason, we twist the rope of destiny for ourselves, and then pass the rest of our lives inveighing against our fate. The character of every man or woman is their fate.

"You have not told me," said Gustave, "why your mother has so suddenly decided to leave La Forêt."

"Mamma has been thinking of moving ever since *Madame Theodosia* advised her to take me to Italy for

singing lessons; the time of our house is out, and Madame von Ehrtmann has persuaded mamma that Paris is a much better place for education than any town in Italy. The Von Ehrtmanns are going to Paris themselves, and Madame von Ehrtmann proposed we should all travel together by *voiturin*, and mamma agreed."

"You don't suppose Mrs. Templar has any idea of going to England?"

"No, certainly not yet — not for a long time."

"Thank God for that, I shall be able to hear of you constantly from Claire, and Claire will talk to you sometimes of me."

This speech recalled to Louisa her mother's words as to the necessity of breaking off all intimacy with the Gastineaux.

"I have no intention," had Mrs. Templar said, "of sinking down into a tradesman's set. All my life I have managed to maintain my social position; Claire's marriage will be a good opportunity for dropping her. You must choose your associates better, Louisa."

Gustave continued, —

"I shall live on the news my cousin sends me of you." His voice was tremulous, once more he went over all he had expressed before; his determination to win a name for himself, in order that she might be proud of him. He only cared for success for her sake; he was ambitious of laurels only that he might place the crown on her head. In broken phrases he repeated — "You are my present and my future, Louisa; for your sake nothing will be impossible to me! Louisa, don't forget me!" he wrung her hand.

His emotion had communicated itself to her. Tears glistened in her eyes as she said, —

"I am sorry I was so cross just now — you must not remember any of my sharp speeches."

Gustave dropped at her feet, and kissed the hem of her dress.

"Indeed, I must not stay any longer," she said.

Gustave walked with her till they came in sight of the windows of the house, then he left her with a silent pressure of the hand.

Madame von Ehrtmann, in advising Mrs. Templar to leave the retirement of La Forêt, had given the little spur needed to rouse Louisa's mother into a more active life. The passionate feelings of resentment and mortification with which she had fled from Paris had worn themselves out in the eight years that had since rolled by. A new turn had been given to her thoughts by the arrival of Mr. Templar and Lady Theodosia; they had sounded a réveille to her ambition by their admiration of Louisa, and the prince's attentions had witnessed as it were to the truth of Lady Theodosia's assertions, that the girl was gifted with uncommon beauty. But then had followed the damper of her ladyship's reticence as to affording Louisa the shelter of her wing in her first introduction to the gay English world.

Madame von Ehrtmann, in her flattering way, had said and re-said to Mrs. Templar, "Your daughter is a diamond of the first water; you need only give her a Paris setting, and ——" a smile, a nod, a shrug, significant of untold triumphs, completed the sentence.

Madame von Ehrtmann really thought all she expressed or implied concerning Louisa, but of course she had some other motive than the benefit of the English girl for urging Mrs. Templar to take her to

Paris. Very often the advice we give or receive is influenced, involuntarily perhaps, by some latent interest of our own. Madame von Ehrtmann was quite frank with herself as to her own motives for the counsels she lavished on Mrs. Templar. It was for the advantage of her own daughters. The baronne knew that the Templars were connected with the English aristocracy, she exaggerated the connection — but that has nothing to do with the fact of her manœuvring. She had taken it into her intriguing head that through the Templars she could get into a good English set in Paris; and it was only among what is there called “les étrangers” — comprising, besides the English, the Russians, Poles, Hungarians, Bavarians, Austrians, that she coveted or hoped to obtain husbands for Ismay and Fioretta. The dowry of the sisters she was well aware was not sufficient to win any Frenchman in a tolerable position.

Mrs. Templar, in spite of flattery and persuasion, nay, even in spite of thinking Madame von Ehrtmann's advice good, might yet have lingered on at La Forêt but for the busybody's following proposal —

“We could all travel together by *voiturin*,” said she; “we are just enough to fill a carriage. I will undertake all the arrangements.”

No one but those who have acquired the habits of a recluse, and who shrink from contact with strangers, can imagine the relief given by such an offer. It decided Mrs. Templar to undertake the journey.

It was just as Mrs. Templar was beginning to indulge in the most ambitious expectations for Louisa, that the young lady hampered herself with a promise *which* might prove an effectual bar to all her mother's *projects*.

From the date of her determination to return to Paris, Mrs. Templar made more a companion of her daughter. She talked of her intentions as to Louisa's education; what masters she should give her, wandering off into anecdotes connected with her own young days, greedily listened to by Louisa, who had all a girl's natural curiosity to know about "Mamma when she was young," — a curiosity which had never been satisfied. Mrs. Templar had hitherto systematically avoided any reference to her early days. Once when Louisa had asked her, "When was her birthday?" Mrs. Templar had answered that her birth had not been remembered, and having lost her parents in her infancy, she did not know when she was born. Even now the incidents she related had nothing personal to herself in them. They were principally told to show that the end and aim of a girl's accomplishments were to procure a good marriage. Mrs. Templar told of a young lady, whose only gift was a fine voice, and who had sung herself into being a viscountess; another who had danced for an equally good purpose; there were tales of warning too, one which greatly amused Louisa, of a gay young man, who had committed the impropriety of going to the sisters of a gentleman to examine what sort of a nightcap he wore, by which heinous act she had forfeited the great landed prize of the neighbourhood. The pith of all Mrs. Templar's stories was, that there was no salvation out of the peerage. Louisa listened and felt herself guilty — beyond pardon. "If only the few years were past, and she could feel free." Mrs. Templar put on all her airs of a duchess, as she declared, when she paid her parting visit to the *tineaux*. She was the very pink of courtesy, and

had not neglected to provide herself and Louisa with handsome bridal gifts for Mdlle. Gastineau. "I am not going to let them say we owed them anything for their tea-drinkings and taking you out drives in the carriage," had observed Mrs. Templar, as she was choosing the earrings Louisa was to give her friend.

Louisa's heart contracted at these words. She was ashamed to offer Claire her present, purchased as a kind of remuneration. Many were Mrs. Templar's spoken good wishes for the happiness of the bride, but not one syllable did she utter referring to any future meeting. Mrs. Templar had the benefit of Lady Theodosia's example as to how to do that sort of thing well. Claire whispered to Louisa, —

"Your mother wants to cut me, but if you don't I shall come to see you in Paris."

"I shall always love you," said Louisa, not daring to take part either against her mother, or for her friend.

"You *must* manage to see Gustave once more," said Claire; "he is wretched enough, poor fellow."

"I will try and come over to-morrow evening, and see you all for the last time," replied Louisa.

The next evening, Louisa got leave to go over to Les Vignes for half-an-hour. She wept bitterly when it came to the saying good-by.

"We shall always be glad to hear of you, Mdlle. Louisa," said M. Gastineau. "Perhaps one of these days you may come with Claire, and pay us a visit. There, my dear, is a keepsake from all your friends here. Do not forget us, and try to change as little as possible from what you now are."

They all walked back to La Forêt with her. I

the confusion, Gustave's agitation was unnoticed, save by Louisa and Claire.

Louisa exhibited to Mrs. Templar, with not a little pride, the tiny gold watch with its pretty chain and seal, which M. Gastineau had given her in the name of the family.

"I did so wish for a watch, mamma, and this is such a beauty. Was it not kind?"

She did so hope to mollify her mother towards the Gastineaux.

"You have got it, because you have an aunt Lady Theodosia, and they think it will be a good thing for Claire to visit us in Paris. What is that, pray?" asked Mrs. Templar, pointing to a parcel done up in white paper.

"A book that Gustave gave me, mamma."

"He is beginning to make presents too, is he? I suppose it did not cost him much, as he is in the trade. For the future, Louisa, you are not to accept presents from any man not your near relation."

"I will not, mamma, but this is — —"

"It doesn't matter," interrupted Mrs. Templar. "I hope we have now done with all these Gastineaux."

Gustave was on the watch to see the Templars take their departure. He stood in a corner, round which came a biting north wind that nearly cut him in two. He had on a thin fustian coat, he would not even spend a franc on a neckwrapper; he was saving every penny for his great venture in Paris.

For three minutes, himself unseen, he could contemplate Louisa's faultless profile, unhindered by any bonnet. Louisa wore a Polish cap of dark sable, with a broad *gold band*; the sympathy for Poland mani-

fested itself at that period in ladies' head-dresses. This cap had been a surprise prepared for her by her mother; it was exactly similar in shape to those worn by Ismay and Fioretta, only twice as costly.

At the least proof of maternal tenderness, Louisa was ready to fall at Mrs. Templar's feet. In all these long years of coldness, often reaching to harshness, the passionate love Louisa had had for her mother as a child, had been kept alight by those eccentricities of indulgence often exhibited by imperious exacting natures. The sight of Mrs. Templar slaving at her needle to make her a ball-dress, the idea of Mrs. Templar remaining in solitude, while she was enjoying herself at Chamounix, the having a fire in her room all the winter, while Mrs. Templar denied herself one, had been more than sets-off, with a disposition like Louisa's, against the ebullitions of a bitter temper.

CHAPTER XIV.

Old Friends.

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

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

"I don't know," was the answer.

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

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

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

"*They are just as good-natured to me, mamma.*

Didn't you see Madame von Ehrtmann contrive a foot stool for me?"

"You are a goose, or you might have found out by this time that she is full of deceit; she always manages to get the best room for herself and daughter. While you are being so mighty civil in carrying the baskets and shawls, her girls have run upstairs and secured the largest, cleanest room for her. Ismay and Fioretta think first of their own mother."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We shall have a quarrel," said Mrs. Temple. "What tempted you to interfere now, after we have borne it so long?"

Louisa swallowed the reproof in silence. She actually quailed at the prospect of meeting the Ehrtmanns. The

howed no resentment, however; but in private the baronne remarked to her daughters, —

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

It was a long journey from Geneva to Paris by voiturin, and the travellers were heartily sick of one another by the time they arrived in Paris. Louisa had never recovered from Mrs. Templar’s lecture; she sat silent and forlorn, in order that her mother should not fancy she was neglecting her, and striving to please strangers. The oppression of a naturally tyrannical person is received almost as a favour, whereas a yielding nature making an attempt to keep its own is abused, and browbeaten, and trampled on. No sooner did Mrs. Templar see that the Von Ehrtmanns were cool to Louisa, than she became as pleasant as she could be — speaking in that peculiarly soft voice which imperious people use when on their best behaviour.

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

In the very first moment of arriving, Louisa had proposed that they should go and see M. de Blacourt; but her mother for a whole week persisted in her *refusal even to let him know they were in Paris.*

During those seven days, Mrs. Templar's temper was what the French describe in one word — "MAS-SACRANT." She had been accustomed for years to the cheapness of Germany, and to living as she pleased at La Forêt, which means denying herself very nearly every comfort. The prices of a Paris hotel filled her with terror; she declared that she was ruined — that she had been fooled by Madame von Ehrtmann, who had only wanted her to help to pay the expenses of travelling by voiturin. Louisa caught her mother's terror.

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

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

"That's how the Von Ehrtmanns manage, mamma."

"You have been telling them what I said."

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

That day Mrs. Templar ordered no dinner. She and Louisa went out about two o'clock, and crossed the Pont Neuf in search of some quiet-looking restaurant. But it is quite a different affair for a bustling, fearless woman like the baronne to go hunting after a cheap dining place, and for a reserved Englishwoman, who had never entered an eating-house in her life. Every restaurant she looked into she saw, as might have been expected, men seated at the different tables; and Mrs. Templar passed on. Louisa's beautiful face *also* attracted more attention than was agreeable. At *last* Mrs. Templar said, —

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

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

In the evening, Louisa said, —

"Mamma, we used to be very comfortable in Rue de Varennes; are we poorer than we were before?"

Mrs. Templar gave her an angry look, and said, —
"You forget that if I am to spend half my income giving you masters, we can't live as we did when we were little more than a baby."

"But if you can't afford it, why should you give masters?"

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

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

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

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

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

Louisa sat down joyously to obey this command. The following is the translation of what she wrote in French: —

"MY DEAR M. DE BLACOURT, —

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

"I am your affectionate

"LITTLE LOUISA."

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

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

"Let it go; and, for heaven's sake! don't look so if you were wild."

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

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

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

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

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

“There only needed that!” said her master.

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

Marie, according to her own declaration, never put any constraint on herself in speaking to Monsieur le *marquis*; as to that, no; it would not suit her, if monsieur required that one should be on one’s guard; *mon sieur*, my faith! must seek another *gouvernante*. No one, however, knew better than this sois-sant, out-spoken lady how to suit monsieur’s tastes and caprices, morally and physically. Marie had graduated in the school of rough flatterers.

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

“Sixteen, two months ago,” answered M. de Lacourt.

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

“*What a thing a woman’s mind is!*” ejaculated

M. de Blacourt; "never at rest in the present, always bounding on to the future."

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

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

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

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

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

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

She went by his side, still holding one of his hands, up to her mother, whose greeting was involuntarily cordial. Mrs. Templar did rejoice to behold the face of her former excellent friend. He sat down, bringing Louisa in front of him. He looked at her for five minutes without speaking, for he was really surprised by her beauty.

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

Mademoiselle, I beg you a thousand pardons for disrespect to your age."

Not mademoiselle, never mademoiselle, even in — always Louisa, your little Louisa."

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

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

"You are very little altered," said Mrs. Templar.

"Not a bit, not a bit; there's no change," said she.

"Mademoiselle, you are too amiable."

"You are just the same; that's just the way you go on with me."

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

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

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

"Paris groans under the weight of musical talent," said M. de Blacourt. "There's a style in the market

to suit every taste. I'll bring you a list of names with their peculiar merits, in a day or two. Is she musical, this Louisa of ours?"

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

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

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

"Languages?" suggested the marquis.

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

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

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

"The situation is excellent," observed the marquis "the low pitch of the entresol does not matter much in winter; but you English can never do without your tea in the evening, and for that you must have a kitchen and a *bonne*."

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

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

Mrs. Templar said she should like to feel herself settled; upon which hint, the marquis went and sought

an interview with the manager of the hotel; and terms were agreed upon for the small entresol which would sound so fabulously cheap in 1863, that they need not be mentioned.

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

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

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

"But I *have* already talked to Ismay about him."

"You are a perfect sieve," said Mrs. Templar, angrily.

"I didn't know any reason why I should not speak of M. de Blacourt, mamma," said Louisa.

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

"No, mamma."

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

"Mamma, —"

"Well?"

"*Do* be kind to me."

"How am I otherwise? Have I not come to Paris on your account? — didn't you hear me asking for masters? Do I deny you anything I have the power to give you? What can you want more?"

"*I want to be with you as other girls are with*

their mothers; — I want to feel at my ease with you."

Mrs. Templar paused a minute, then said, —

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

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

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

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

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

"Show your affection by something else than kissing."

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

They drove to the Rue de Varennes. The sight of her old home greatly excited Louisa. The concierge

and his wife were the same that the Templars had left. They did not recognize Louisa, who was ready to embrace them, so strongly did they recall to her the days of her childhood. She did fling herself on Madame Marie's ample chest and kissed and was kissed heartily, the housekeeper's kisses sounding so like popguns that the marquis came out of the salon to see what was going on. Marie, with the facility of her class for weeping, had great tears rolling down her jolly face.

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

For a few minutes Louisa sat demurely listening to the conversation between her mother and the marquis; then her head turned from side to side, seeking well-remembered pictures, until at last she got up and went softly and slowly all round the room, standing in contemplation before every familiar object. The marquis continued talking, as if he were not noticing her every movement. From the salon, she passed into the library; — there she lingered so long that M. de Blacourt was curious to see what detained her. He put his head in at the door: she was seated in his large chair, lost in meditation.¹

"Eh! bien?" he called out.

The abstracted look cleared from her eyes — she smiled.

"What was the subject of your thoughts, mademoiselle?"

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

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

"Have you seen Denis?" he asked; "I believe I am afraid of his feelings."

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

The marquis the emphasis.

"Another person must be more respectful now."

"Why? — I am not grown up yet."

"Pray, when is that operation to be considered completed?"

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

"Oh! I am glad you have explained the matter to me, — till three years hence another person will treat you as a moutarde."

"Now you are my dear M. de Blacourt again."

"Go and ask for Denis."

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

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

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

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

"She needs polishing," said Mrs. Templar.

"Let her alone as much as possible," returned the *marquis*.

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

CHAPTER XV.

Forewarned, Forearmed.

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

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

Mrs. Templar’s idea in having her taught the harp was merely to afford her a pretty accompaniment for her voice; but the harp-master urged her to study the instrument seriously, affirming that she took to the *harp as a duck to water*. Every day, and all day long, Louisa was busy with her music. She began :

even in the morning, and Mrs. Templar kept her steadily at piano or harp, or singing, till she went to bed, with the interval of an hour's walk in the Tuileries gardens and the time for her meals.

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

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

"Would there be room for Ismay?" exclaimed Louisa.

"Who is Ismay?" asked the marquis.

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

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

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

Mrs. Templar said, —

"Cannot you wait?"

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

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

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

Back came Louisa, flushed with delight.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I forgot, mamma — and it's only Ismay."

"*Only* Ismay — you pretend to be more innocent than you are; as if you did not know that you have

one just the same thing as introducing Ismay's pushing mother."

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

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

"Oh! mamma," and Louisa hung affectionately on her mother's shoulder.

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

Ismay von Ehrtmann was as different as possible from what you would have expected her mother's daughter to be. She was retiring, pensive, and given to reading tender poetry! She had large, soft, pale blue eyes, with long flaxen eyelashes, her hair was of the palest yellow, her eyebrows were scarcely visible. She had no colour, no brilliance, yet she always attracted and interested. M. de Blacourt never afterwards offered Mrs. Templar a box at the theatre without mentioning that there would be room for Ismay. He often praised the German girl for the very qualities Louisa was deficient in — for her repose of manner, for her gentleness — yet he could never, with all his acuteness, discover that he excited either jealousy or pique in Louisa; no, not even though her mother never failed to remark to her in private, —

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

Mrs. Templar's penetration misled her when she had decided that *Madame von Ehrtmann* would force her acquaintance on the marquis. *Madame von Ehrt-*

mann allowed Ismay to accept the amusement offered by M. de Blacourt, but the wily lady made no attempt to become acquainted with him.

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

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

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

“I knew the young man again directly; he had on a coat not to be praised, and he was walking along the extreme edge of the pavement, anxious not to be in anybody’s way, dreaming of something to do, or that ought to be done.”

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

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

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

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

Louisa grew first frightfully red, then pale as ashes

de Blacourt's head this time was turned away from

"I don't see any good reason why you should wish to do them. You used to see a good deal of Madame Geneau," said M. de Blacourt, who was always roused to indignation by any display of false pride.

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

"Who says he has? but the professor's brother is a shop-boy, I suppose, if he was living in a villa near you."

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

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

"Gustave did not like being in a shop, it was that which crossed his mind."

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

"Very likely," put in Mrs. Templar; "Louisa makes no secret of any one. I should be very much obliged to you, M. de Blacourt, if you would lecture her on that point which is due to her position."

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

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

"She was very kind to me, and so were her father and mother. I could not wear this," holding out her

watch and chain, "if I felt ashamed of knowing the persons who gave them to me."

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

Marc de Lantry made his appearance the very next evening in Mrs. Templar's salon. Louisa was hard at work at the harp, the light from the candles of the music-stand fell full on her. The visitor was dazzled by the beauty of the face which looked up at him in surprise. Louisa did not in the least recognise him. He had, as the saying is, fulfilled the promise he had given in boyhood of being tall; he appeared even taller than he was from being remarkably, even startlingly thin. His large brown eyes had retained their benevolent expression, his voice its pleasant cheerfulness, and his manner was perhaps as boyishly gleeful as it had been at seventeen. Mrs. Templar had begun by receiving him with her most Arctic zone manner, but she unconsciously thawed, for no one ever had or ever would resist the geniality of Marc.

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

"A clergyman!" exclaimed Louisa.

"Why are you so astonished?" asked Marc. "Don't be afraid to tell me."

"You are so merry, and you look so happy."

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

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

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

Louisa was a little embarrassed; then she said, —

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

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

Marc answered: —

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

Louisa shook her head, and then the subject dropped.

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

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

Louisa, in alarm as to what Mrs. Templar might say, stammered out that she should be glad to see her old playfellow again. With the terrible proximity of benevolence, and unsuspecting of being on tender ground, Marc went on requiring Louisa to answer question after question about Gustave, until to the poor girl it seemed as if he had some motive for his catechizing. A glance at his peaceable countenance, beaming with loving-kindness, made her ashamed of her thought.

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

Mrs. Templar answered this time: —

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

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

"I wonder what else he's fit for, now?" returned *her mother*.

"*Fit for anything,*" said Marc, cheerily. "A man

ble to write and read, and who has a strong will to boot, can always make his way in the world. Gustave was not a common-place boy."

"A very disagreeable one," remarked Mrs. Templar.

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

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

"Love," said Marc.

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

Mrs. Templar was flattered by the effect she had produced, and went on, with a sort of grim good humour, to favour the laughing pair with a discourse on the horrors of a poor marriage.

"I'll tell you in a very few words what are the results of marrying on love alone. It's to be frozen in winter, and stifled in summer; it's always to be

hungry and thirsty; it's to have good looks turned into ugliness, sweet temper into sour, youth into age, love — what you, M. Marc, call love — into hatred."

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

"I speak of poor *gentlemen* and poor *gentlewomen*," corrected Mrs. Templar. "As for labourers and workmen, they are born to privations, and don't mind them. There's no occasion to call specially on Heaven to help gentlemen and ladies, if they would make the same use of their reason as to marriage as they do in other affairs of life. For my part I would rather follow that girl there to her grave than see her the wife of a poor man."

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

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

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

Marc's first impulse led him to say a sharp good-

night, and take his leave for good and all. He had reached the door of the ante-room, when he suddenly turned back; — second thoughts are sometimes best. His face had recovered its usual serenity.

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

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

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

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

“I am sorry M. Marc is a French pasteur,” said Louisa, “he’s too nice for one. It’s quite different, isn’t it, mamma, from being an English clergyman?”

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

“Thank you for your frankness, Madame Templar.”

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

CHAPTER XVI.

A Bourgeois Dinner.

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

Mrs. Templar had a strong will of her own, and had taken a resolution to keep Louisa hidden from the world, until she had attained her full perfection of beauty: then, and then only, she was to burst, a vision of delight, on society. Mrs. Templar never having possessed beauty herself, had the most unbounded faith in its power. She believed it to be omnipotent, and the castles she reared for Louisa were as high as the tower of Babel. Could Louisa only be throned above those to whom she had a claim of kindred, and without obligations to any one but her mother, Mrs. Templar felt that the spites and disappointments of her life would be avenged.

But fortune was still unfavourable to her. Within a few weeks of Marc de Lantry's visit, Louisa was surrounded by a circle of the very people for whom Templar had the greatest antipathy. In her anxiety to avoid "the tiresome old Turk," Mrs. Templar went to reach Massimino, the singing master's house, and went up and down the streets abutting on the *levards*, instead of following the line of the Boule-

wards themselves. In one of those side streets, they had come face to face with Claire and her husband. Before she could speak a warning word, Louisa had rushed forward to greet her quondam friend, and with such a burst of open-hearted, open-armed joy, that Madame Hébert's stiffness was mollified, though she observed, —

“I wonder you are so glad to see me, after neglecting us all as you have done. Not even one letter to Les Vignes.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Rue de la Paix, Hotel de Hollande.”

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

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

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

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

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

"I never expected you to own that you were wrong."

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

"Purse-proud little fellow!" observed Mrs. Templar, "wanting to show off his fine chairs and tables, as if any one but an upholsterer cared what tables and chairs cost, and then they'll be asking us to one of their vulgar bourgeois dinners. I shall not accept any of their invitations, I can tell them. Have you lost your tongue, Louisa?"

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

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

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

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

"*But if they find out that we dine every Sunday*

with M. de Blacourt? You will be certain to tell, if the Von Ebrtmanns do not; you forget they know Madame Claire. You don't suppose I want to make enemies, do you?"

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

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

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

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

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

"I dared not write, mamma desired me not."

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

of all the world," said Claire. "Poor fellow, and as not a thought but of you — you ungrateful!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

Louisa; you are cleverer than many girls of your age."

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

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

You are altered to me, Claire."

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

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

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

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

"Don't talk any more about him; if mamma is angry in she will see at once that there is something wrong and she will cross-question me. Talk to me about yourself; pray, do."

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

Louisa made another imploring gesture.

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

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

"I want Henri to take a house at Passy, near the Bois de Boulogne, or anywhere near enough for him to come to the office every day; but he is only a junior partner, and it is one of the duties of a junior to be poisoned, and to get his wife into the bargain, by living where the office is. *That* hateful office; he is there all day. I shall be in my *mind* half so much, if he were quite out of res

ow he is only downstairs, and yet can't go out to with me or come and talk to me, keeps me in a of irritation, very bad for my health."

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

And Henri, if he only cared, but he is as happy ssible, and growing so horribly fat — I hate fat

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

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

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

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

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

I hear mamma coming in," cried Louisa.

p jumped M. Hébert, and Claire smoothed her d brow.

rs. Templar received her visitors more politely Louisa had hoped. Mrs. Templar had, as most ns proud of their birth have, a great reverence *he duties of hospitality*. In her own house it

would need great provocation to have made her show a visitor that he was unwelcome; so she was even urbane when Claire, after a whisper from the fat Henri, invited her to dinner for the Friday of the same week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

was a decided shrinking from Gustave himself as a husband.

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

She meditated on telling Ismay; but if Ismay should tell Madame von Ehrtmann, and that talkative lady betray her to Mrs. Templar, Louisa would be in a worse condition than ever; that she could not doubt. Mrs. Templar might some day forgive her, did she fear of her fault from herself; but there was no hope of pardon if the story reached her from a stranger, and one who had no motive for keeping silence on the matter. Louisa ended by doing what many more experienced persons have done in a difficulty — she decided to let things take their course: she must abide the punishment due to her folly, with the sorry consolation that, however angry and implacable her mother might prove, she would save her from the penalty of being the wife of Gustave Gastineau.

It was with some of the sensations of one about to be tried for a criminal offence that Louisa prepared

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

The salon, into which Mrs. Templar and Louisa were shown, was large, well-proportioned, and handsomely furnished, but dark and close. Neither the lady nor gentleman of the house was ready to receive the guests. Presently Claire's voice was heard in the next room, speaking in a high querulous pitch. Mrs. Templar gave a sarcastic glance at Louisa: the next instant the bride entered beautifully dressed. Five minutes later M. Hébert came in followed by a gentleman, at sight of whom Louisa turned rapidly red and white, and tore one of her gloves to shreds. After she had received and answered the salutations of her host and hostess, Mrs. Templar saw the stranger bowing in front of her.

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

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

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

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

"You should not speak so loud, Henri."

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

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

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

"No, sir."

Hébert now tried a whisper. The answer given loud informed every one what had been the question.

"It's of no use asking me about dinner, M. Hébert; when Annette thinks fit she will let us have it. What she does, or how she manages never to be ready, is a mystery to me. She has nothing but the cooking to do — it's a Parisian system, I suppose." Madame Hébert then addressed herself particularly to Mrs.

Templar, and went through a litany of complaints and gave quite a picturesque description of her sufferings from the extraordinary servants she had had to employ. "I have had, what with cooks and lady's-maids, sixteen in only four months, so I think I ought to know something of the subject."

A whole hour elapsed before dinner was announced during which time Gustave remained ensconced behind the table. The dinner was one half too much for the occasion; the splendid china dishes with their rich contents were served on a table covered with only a white cloth. The dessert was even more expensive than the dinner. The champagne was irreproachable; M. Hébert insisting that it was the only wine appropriate to such merry meetings — though any more lugubrious party there could not be. Claire spoke only to the servants waiting, and that to find fault. Louisa and Gustave who sat opposite to one another, never uttered a syllable, so that what conversation there was, passed between Mrs. Templar and her host. In the course of the evening Mrs. Templar made an opportunity to speak to Gustave, —

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

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

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

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

"You are very good, mademoiselle," said Gustave.

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

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

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

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

"Pray, pray bring her to see us very soon."

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

At ten o'clock the carriage that had brought the Templars returned to fetch them. At parting Louisa shook hands with Gustave; she had been quite softened by his timid manner and his look of suffering.

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

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

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

"By-the-by, Louisa, what do you mean by on yourself to invite people to come and see us? you know you should leave that to me? You great liberties; it's extremely unbecoming in a girl to be putting herself forward, and treating mother as if she were of no consequence."

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

"You talk very meekly, but you manage to do as you please; you force me to receive people I don't want to receive, by your ridiculous cordiality and insensibility, for I don't believe you care more for me than I do for these Héberts and Gastineaux than I do. You, Louisa, and you are as full of pride as a peacock but you like being flattered and fawned on; you will not allow me to usurp my place, and unless you will not have these people forbidden the house altogether you'll have the goodness to make them understood that what was tolerated when you were all children cannot be permitted now."

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

er way of adding up past grievances, and
ing them with most bitter insinuations. Louisa
and stood in mortal terror of these retributive
sms. Occasionally her impetuosity of feeling im-
her to take the initiative, but a natural timidity,
d into moral cowardice by dread of her mother,
bly compelled her into immediate abject sub-
l. It was fear, even more than respect for her
word, which restrained Louisa from any confes-
her mother.

? I tell her, she will bring it up against me all
e. No, I will manage to get out of the scrape
self."

at the way to do this should be by marrying
e, Louisa never contemplated; no, *nothing* could
ersuade her to do that.

was on the fête of the Ascension that Gustave
t Antoinette to see Louisa. Mrs. Templar was
own room when the brother and sister arrived;
could therefore make her reception of Antoinette
he pleased. Had she not been prepared for the
irl's appearance, she might have been too startled
cordial. As it was, she showered kisses on the
ttle humpback. Antoinette struck Louisa to the
y saying, —

ou are too good, mademoiselle."

all me Louisa, or I will call you mademoiselle,"
mpetuous Miss Templar. "Come and sit by me."
ou have not spoken to Gustave, and he is even
r than I am to see you again."

nisa, with her arm still round Antoinette's neck,
to greet Gustave, but without holding out her

hand. He was embarrassed, and so was she. Louisa was doubting whether Antoinette knew how she was situated with Gustave, and the doubt took away all her powers of speech.

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

"After the first few minutes, I should," replied Louisa.

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

Seeing Louisa look distressed, Antoinette went on, —

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

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

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

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

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

“Dear good lady! dear good lady!”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“If you are afraid,” continued Gustave, “of any imprudence on my part, or that I shall exact any from you, you are mistaken. I ask nothing from you but

patience, for a little while. If I fail in my exaction, you will hear nothing more of me."

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

"Another piece of luck," concluded his mother, "Ernest has got a situation on the Lyons Road, thanks to M. de Lantry. Ernest is quite reformed, he promises to help our mother. Ah! dear me, haven't we seen evil days? — and you were so kind to us."

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

"Ah! we have been very fortunate in friends."

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

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

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

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

isa left the room to do so, wondering at the way her mother showed for Antoinette.

When the brother and sister were gone, a small bag was found on the sofa, directed to Mrs. Templar. Inside was a purse of fine crochet-work, ticketed "Pour ma chère Madame Templar," and an emerald collar for Louisa.

"All those to whom I ever was kind, Antoinette, are only one grateful, and I have done least for the good of Mrs. Templar.

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

"You have been crying; what for?"
"I have been foolish."

"No doubt; but I want to be made acquainted with you, my dear. Which of your masters are you in love with? or has mamma refused you a new

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

"I am asking the reason of Louisa's red eyes. You look so handsome to-day, mademoiselle."

"Has Louisa been crying?" exclaimed Mrs. Templar.

"Louisa touched M. de Blacourt's arm.

"Perhaps I am mistaken, and it's the wind or dust that has spoiled her beauty. Confess, Madame Templar,

that there is no city like Paris. Where do you see such a happy mixture of town magnificence and country beauty? Look at those lilacs and laburnums — you never saw such in London. France is the greatest country in the world, and Paris is its capital.”

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

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

“Women’s fingers are a deception, as well as everything else about them. You have left the mark of yours on my elbow. Now, what’s the secret?”

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

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

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

“You do not think a word of what you say,” said Louisa. “You are very sorry in your heart for Antoinette. I wish you could only hear her trying to *make out* that it is best for her to be crooked. You

re my greatest friend, you know, and I want you to help me to do something for Antoinette."

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

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

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

"What a tease you are."

"Clever, wise, good, a tease — go on."

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

That argument carried the day.

"Well, if I must, I must," said the marquis.

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

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

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

"You are full of sentimentality to-day," replied the marquis. "Now I think of it, I cannot see how I am

to assist your charming humpback. I don't wear
of those falbalas you women delight in."

"Ask M. Marc — M. de Lantry; he is a past
now, and knows Antoinette."

"Very well; give me his address, or get it for n

CHAPTER XVII.

The Beetle in the Rose.

LOUISA'S petition in favour of Antoinette produced widening circles of incidents. It brought about only an intimacy between the marquis and Marc pastor, but it also again introduced Gustave to M. Blacourt's notice. The beautiful Louisa, and the hump-backed workwoman, for a time, closely joined together three men, whose characters and walks of life were diametrically opposite.

Antoinette was to continue a workwoman. The marquis and Marc agreed that needlework was an occupation well suited to her; that to give her an amusement which afforded a healthy subject for her thoughts, was wiser than to secure for her a leisure which might engender morbid regrets for her unfortunate prior. M. de Blacourt's purse, however, opened widely to ensure her a more independent position. He was now manager of a first-class lingerie in the Chaussée d'Antin with a small share in the profits. Nothing could exceed Antoinette's joy at her advancement, except her gratitude to M. de Blacourt and Louisa. In compliance with Antoinette's earnest supplication, Mrs. Templar condescended to go with Louisa to see the comfortable room she was able to

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

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

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

Louisa, aghast, exclaimed, —

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

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

"And the clock also?" inquired Louisa.

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

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

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

"What worst?" asked Mrs. Templar.

"His examination for the baccalauréat."

"What use will that be to him, if he is in a hurry to get to the *merce*?"

"He does not mean to stay with M. Hébert — it's only just while he must gain enough to live by. He studies almost all night, poor Gustave — once he has passed, he will get a situation as usher in some lycée."

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Templar smiled sarcastically.

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

Poor Antoinette's spirits drooped. It is the misfortune of some people always to scare away joy. Because she had made her very uncomfortable, Antoinette felt much more respect for Mrs. Templar than she did for M. Marc, who always cheered her, or even than she did for M. de Blacourt, who, to such as Antoinette, was always most kind and encouraging.

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

Madame von Ehtmann came to the conclusion that the proper moment had arrived for introducing her daughters to society. Her first step was to leave the higher regions of the Hotel de Hollande, and to descend to a pretty apartment on the second floor. Her

next move was to announce her intention of one evening in the week for receptions. She card of invitation to M. de Blacourt, in a note worded thanks for his kindness to Ismay. Von Ehrtmann was pleased to secure M. de Blacourt, but she was not the woman to be too standing the rank or wealth of her visitors. "The last come to be first, one day or other," she argued she was civil and encouraging even to Gustave, who gained admittance to her salon as Madame de Blacourt's cousin. The slight former acquaintance between Von Ehrtmanns and Claire had ripened into friendship in the Paris air. Gustave made one of a group of young men, who frequented her salon, whose fortune at that moment was their illusions. By the method of hers, the sharp-witted lady had at her disposal a violinist and a pianist, both destined to become a figure in European capitals; she had budding artists who gave her charming portraits of her daughter, whose original sketches in Ismay's and Fiorelli's hands in a few years afterwards were worth more than treble their weight in gold. Madame la Baronne, by her good-natured lively way, turned every one to her account.

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

"My dear lady, I like young men for them," replied the German matron; "they keep the atmosphere of a drawing-room clear of heaviness; I get the atmosphere of art and music into the bargain."

One of Madame von Ehrtmann's most

visitors was M. de Lantry. It is so common a proceeding to find a plausible reason for doing what one wishes, that it is nothing to wonder at that Marc was able to account to himself very satisfactorily for being so often in the Von Ehrtmanns' company. He was a pastor of the Reformed Church of France, and they were German Protestants. Ismay and Fioretta were as ignorant of the faith they professed as they were of every other thing, except music and dancing. Marc set himself to the task of enlightening them, and for a period supposed that duty was the spur which sent him so frequently to the pretty gay apartment, *au second* of the Hotel de Hollande. When the bandage fell from his eyes, he discovered that he was in love with that fantastical trifler, Fioretta; Ismay had listened to, and benefited by his teaching; he had every reason to be proud of that pupil; why had he not attached himself to her, instead of to the last person suited to his own earnest character or to his sacred calling?

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

"She has no gall in her disposition," said Marc.

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

M. de Blacourt detested Fioretta for two reasons;

one, that something about her reminded him of the woman who had spoiled his life; and the other, that he saw Marc, whom he esteemed, on the point of making a fool of himself. "Madlle. Fioretta's pro-vocation in life," said the marquis, "is the stage, not the higher walks, for she is incapable of conceiving what is grand or beautiful, but she would be inimitable in vaudevilles."

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

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

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

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

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

As a matter of course, these attacks on Fioretta only made those two honest creatures, Louisa and Marc, more inclined to like her, to trust her, and to make every allowance for her freaks. And, in truth, Mrs. Templar and M. de Blacourt did exaggerate to Fioretta's faults; — she was a mere commonplace little manoeuvrer, fonder of fine clothes than she was ever capable of being of human beings.

Mrs. Templar, who was so proud of her penetration, — who believed that she could see further in a millstone than her neighbours, — did not, nevertheless, see what was so transparent to every one

guest in Madame von Ehrtmann's salon. She never perceived Gustave's adoration of Louisa. M. de Blacourt was not so blind; he very soon discovered the state of the young man's feelings, but being convinced of Louisa's indifference, he saw no good reason why he should bring about the exposure of a hopeless passion.

This was M. de Blacourt's opinion for a time; but one evening he received a sudden impression that Gustave's presence made Louisa uneasy. The marquis would have been puzzled to explain what had given him this conviction. Some situations are divined intuitively and immediately without any discernible process of inferences. The marquis had all that quickness of perception which distinguishes the Parisian man of the world. The most cleverly arranged intrigue would have cost him no effort to unravel; it was, in the first instance, the absence of all suspicion which had protected Louisa's uneasiness from his penetration. But from that evening he was certain that Louisa shared some secret with Gustave; in some way or other, for some cause or other, she was afraid of young Gasteineau. As to her being in love with him, that the marquis was convinced she was not. There was something so strange in Louisa, a girl scarcely seventeen, having any fear of any young man, that M. de Blacourt found himself almost wishing that he could have explained the case by the folly of mutual love. The more he studied Louisa, the more assured he became that love had no part in whatever formed the link between her and Gustave. Studying her, he observed that her spirits were variable, as are those of

persons who have some secret cause for anxiety there was none of the imprudence of love about.

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

"If," said the marquis to himself, — "if that young fellow took the least advantage of his experience, I'll grind him to dust."

Certain states of the atmosphere make the former flesh wounds felt again. Something occurs with past mental wounds. The idea that Louisa had, against his will, almost filled the void in her heart, should fall from her high estate of mind

candour, — that she should be deceiving mother and friend, — set the marquis's heart aching once more.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Once — twice — you won't have it?"

"Louisa," he exclaimed angrily, "you have no character."

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

"You are too yielding."

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

"And those two?" questioned the marquis.

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

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

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

"After all, I don't know any good quality I have, unless loving people is one," she said.

"The merit of that depends on whom you care for."

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

"I say that you are like all women, — when you

can't conquer by reason, you do it by coaxing and flattering."

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

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

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

"Are you sure that you have not?"

"Quite sure."

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

While watching Louisa, the marquis became aware of many things; he found himself as it were the spectator of a comedy. He discovered that Ismay was in love with Marc, who was captivated by Fioretta, who was in love with no one, but who loved the evidence of the feelings she excited. So far clear, but Louisa, who was for him the heroine of the drama, what about her? His interest, his anxiety, increased with every time he saw her in Gustave's company. He felt impelled even to multiply the opportunities for their meeting.

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

Winter was again at hand, and Madame von Ehrtmann was engrossed body and soul by the desire to have herself and daughters received at the Tuileries. For this end, she plied the marquis with every flattery; an introduction to his cousin Madame de Villemont, now one of the ladies of the Court, would ensure the gratification of the desire of her heart. To this end, one evening at his own house, Madame von Ehrtmann entangled him in one of those conversations about love and marriage, which enables a woman to envelope a man in a cloud of incense.

The marquis put forward his age as a shield.

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

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

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

This swinging of the censer, which reads so *fade*, and even vulgar, rarely fails of its effect even with the wisest. The fumes of the incense blinded M. de Blacourt, but only for an instant. Presently he moved *away to speak to Mrs. Templar, who was sitting alone with an affronted face.*

"Is Louisa to be launched at the same time as her friends?" he asked.

"No, indeed; I don't wish her to be classed with the Von Ehrtmanns. Louisa is nearly two years younger than Ismay; she can afford to wait."

The marquis twisted his beard, still black and soft.

"Perhaps it might be best to enlarge her circle of companions," he remarked.

"I don't approve of girls going out too soon; Louisa only seventeen; if she appears this winter, she will get the credit of being nineteen, and, by-and-by, people will be saying, oh! she came out years ago, and making her out to be five-and-twenty when she is only twenty."

M. de Blacourt opened his eyes, —

"And what will it matter what people say of her five years hence? In all probability, Louisa will be the mother of two or three children by that time."

"I don't mean her to marry the first man who asks

Has she promised to let you choose for her?"

"I don't understand why you should wish me to put my daughter into the world," said Mrs. Templar, in a most aggrieved tone.

"You mistake; I don't advise or wish you to do so. I was debating a question."

"I am, rather forcing Madame von Ehrtmann's opinion on me. I believe I am as good a judge as she is of what's right or wrong?"

"Certainly," answered the marquis.

He said to Marc, —

“Do you know what makes me understand of party spirit? It is the way women war on one another. What one says, the other contradicts; she ought and she oughtn't; worry, vexation, teasing — a constant ‘will and I won't.’”

The Baronne von Ehrtmann and her daughter were introduced to Louis Philippe's Court, and were invited to the Court balls, through the good offices of Madame de Villemont. After that, the young Vicomte de Villemont, M. de Blacourt's heir-presumptive, and friend of his, a M. de Luneville, occasionally appeared at Madame von Ehrtmann's receptions. These two young men brought thither the true French element. This being the case, the marquis thought proper to say a word of warning to Mrs. Templar.

“Remember,” he said, “Frenchmen do not marry for love. Madame de Villemont, for instance, will make her son's marriage. She and some girl's parents will agree that the station and fortune of their children suit; the girl will be brought home from some convenient meeting will be arranged, to allow the young people to see each other. If Raoul says, ‘Elle ne me déplaît pas;’ and she ‘Il me convient;’ a month after, the union will be solemnized.”

“Upon my word, Louisa ought to be much obliged to you for such care of her heart. She is not my daughter if she is won unsought.”

“How wrong-headed you are,” said the marquis angrily; “or, rather, wrong-hearted. You don't seem to understand what it is to have a disinterested friend.”

“I should rather call you Louisa's friend than mine. You never think of me, it's always of her.”

"Good heavens! is it not the same thing?"

"Pray don't speak so loud; you make every one stare at us."

Christmas came and went, and the marquis was no nearer the knowledge of Louisa's secret than he had been at Martinmas. But a crisis was at hand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Marc's Choice.

It was on the 6th of January that Major Templar walked into the salon of the entresol of the Hôtel de Hollande. Louisa was practising as usual.

"I am very glad to see you," she said, fluttered by surprise, and embarrassed by his silent way of shaking hands with her.

"You pretty little chap!" he exclaimed at last.

Louisa coloured, and laughed, because she was ashamed, and went to find her mother.

The major was looking out of window, flapping his right hand glove on his left hand, when Mrs. Templar came in. He gave her two fingers, more because he was holding his glove than from impertinence. Mrs. Templar stiffened all over. The trio sat in silence for some seconds. At last the major said, —

"They don't write often to you from home; so you didn't expect to see me, I suppose?"

"I hope all the family are well?" said Mrs. Templar, as if she did not care whether they were or not.

"Just the same; the old gentleman takes his walks and his pills, and Lady Theodosia eats eggs; she has given up meat — thinks it wrong, or is afraid of growing fat."

"And Miss Wilton," asked Louisa; "how is she?"

"As rough a brush as ever."

The questions and answers came to a full stop. Presently the major began again, —

"What are you doing with yourselves? very gay — up all night — asleep all day — eh?"

"You forget that Louisa is not come out yet," said Mrs. Templar.

"Isn't she? Why don't you bring her out, poor little soul?"

"She is only seventeen," said Mrs. Templar snappishly.

"The right age; I should fancy all girls are at their best at seventeen. It's a great pity that pretty things spoil so soon; a friend of mine declares that no girl has more than a few weeks of perfect beauty."

"What nonsense," exclaimed Mrs. Templar.

"Yes, so I say; but that's what he thinks."

"Any chance of Lady Theodosia coming to Paris?"

"Lord bless you, no; she is holding her court; busy with blankets and soup; she wouldn't leave Lambertton at this time of the year for the world; I ran away from all the bustle of old women and their blessings."

The major did not stare at Louisa, but he glanced sideways at her continually, —

"Would you like to go to the opera to-night?" addressing her abruptly.

Louisa's eyes brightened as she looked towards her mother.

"If you would, you know," continued the major, "I'll take a box for you there, or anywhere like."

"Mamma!" said Louisa, appealingly.

"As Captain Templar is so good —" began the major.

"Ah! you haven't heard that I have got a step—"

"No; we know none of your news."

"That's the only news, my dear lady;" then turning to Louisa again, —

"Do you really like the opera best, or have you a fancy for any other theatre?"

"Anywhere you choose," said Louisa, afraid in her heart that this constant reference to herself might annoy her mother.

"No, no; you must decide. I can't bear people to know their own minds."

"I have never been either to the Grand Opera or to the Français," said Louisa.

"Well, we won't go to the Français; it's too much trouble to understand what's going on. I'll go and get you a box at the opera."

"What are you thinking of?" he asked, looking at Louisa; "if you like the Français better, say so, come, out with your thought."

"Mamma, if we could take Fioretta; Ismay has been so often with us, and Fioretta never."

"Ask the young lady with the romantic name, she'll all means," said the major, as he left the room.

When the major was out of hearing, Mrs. Templar said, —

"Louisa, I thought I had warned you already; it's just what you did with M. de Blacourt; you were never satisfied till you obliged him to be acquainted with those Ehrtmanns; and now it's the same thing over again with your cousin. What *are* those Ehrtmanns to you?"

"I am fond of them, mamma, and Fioretta would like so much to go to the opera."

"What's that to you? Let other people find amusements for themselves, and don't you be setting up to patronise your companions; they won't thank you for it."

"Well, I won't do so any more, mamma; only let us be happy this evening. Who would ever have thought of my stupid cousin doing such a clever thing?"

"Your stupid cousin is not so stupid as he pretends to be."

"Oh, mamma, I am sure he can't help himself; but I mean to like him now and evermore for his good-nature to-day. I may go and ask Fioretta, mayn't I, mamma?"

"You'll see that monkey will begin a flirtation with the major."

"That will be fun," exclaimed Louisa; "and if he were to marry her, how glad Madame von Ehrtmann would be; she's always saying she wishes her daughters to marry Englishmen."

Louisa ran out of the room. Mrs. Templar looked after her with a puzzled face; it is really difficult for a double-minded person to believe in perfect simplicity of character.

To Mrs. Templar's surprise, Fioretta did not attempt to flirt with Major Templar; she was as much taken up by the novelty of the scene as Louisa. The two girls sat in front, and only remembered the presence of Mrs. Templar and the major, when they wanted some explanation.

"I like to see them," whispered Major Templar to the grim lady by his side; "they look so delighted and absorbed; they are as pleasant a sight as I have witnessed for many a long day — pity they'll so soon be used to it all."

"People can't go on being children all their lives" was the answer he received.

By-and-by, under the cover of the noise of drums and horns, the major observed, —

"Louisa appears to be as good as she's pretty — her wishing to invite that other girl is a capital sign of her."

Mrs. Templar had a vision of Louisa as mistress Lamberton Park. Curious enough, while the idea pleased her, she felt a sort of jealous anger. Why should Louisa be so lucky, and she so unlucky? Major Templar never did enter willingly into any praises of Louisa; but if any one hinted that Louisa was superior to all other girls, then Mrs. Templar fired in a most motherly style. Her way of showing affection was the purchasing some article of dress for Louisa too expensive for her means; and then, in return for her daughter's caresses and thanks, to say, "I don't kiss and call you love and dear; I give you something more substantial; show me your love by your obedience." More than this: you might have imagined

that Mrs. Templar had set herself the task of putting to the rout all her young daughter's sensibility as to what was beautiful or noble. Music she constantly spoke of as an accomplishment to be acquired for the sake of attracting, or of shining in public; drawing or painting the same. To speak several languages was desirable; it brought girls into notice; reading was loss of time — men hated blue stockings. Mrs. Templar could not give that which she had not, and she had no other opinions than those she expressed. To be the most admired in society, to make her way in the world, did seem to her the end of a girl's education; she did think all poetry rubbish; all novels poison; she approved of a certain knowledge of history, for instance, the dates of the reigns of the kings of England. Those Louisa would repeat as she did the Church of England catechism. Mrs. Templar was what every one acknowledged to be a thoroughly respectable woman; she paid her bills regularly; she believed there was a code of morals for the great, another for the little; one for men, another for women; she had always a stone ready for these last: in short, she was a woman so severe of aspect and of speech, that every matron would have held her at once to be an eligible chaperone. Brought up in this arid atmosphere, it was a wonder that Louisa retained any freshness of feeling; that she should have a very limited sense of the word duty was to be expected. The one plank of safety her mother had given her, on which to ride the world's rough sea, was a terror of the fires of hell. Louisa had been taught to dread punishment — she had no conception of fatherly love — or protection.

As a matter of course Major Templar was invited to Madame von Ehardt's receptions; the baroness made him recollect that they had been acquainted at Geneva.

"Really, Major Templar has improved," observed Madame Hébert to Louisa. "Fioretta wakes him up wonderfully; I wonder what Lady Theodosia would say to a German daughter-in-law?" The speaker watched Louisa.

"Oh! dear, Claire, Fioretta would never have him if she laughs at his chin."

The Marquis de Blacourt had his eye also on a side that was going forward. It was all very well for Fioretta to spend the evening turning over album with the English major, and to play off all her pretty little artillery against his heart, the shots only told upon Marc de Lantry. Mrs. Templar sat pretending blindness, but the sagacious eye of the marquis detected the pretence. The keen-sighted man of the world perceived that there was another besides himself studying the game being played — M. Hébert, the dark-visaged clerk was on the alert. If Gustav Gastineau did love Louisa, M. de Blacourt respected him for the power he now showed in maintaining the secret of his soul. Gustave never relaxed his reserve.

Meeting Major Templar at least three times a week the marquis had good opportunities for gaining an insight into his character. Each interview sent the Frenchman home meditating, not only on Louisa's chances of happiness with such a man, but speculating

on matrimony in general. The marquis however was one of those men who invoke Harpocrates to act as a sentinel over their thoughts, so the world never was admitted to know those meditations.

The clap of thunder which ushered in a change of relations in the two families domiciled in the Hôtel de Hollande, was Marc de Lantry's proposal of marriage to Ismay von Ehrtmann. If Ismay was astonished, Fioretta was doubly so.

"I thought you loved Fioretta?" said Ismay.

"I once thought so also," was the honest reply.

"Can't you forgive the mistake, dear Ismay?"

"It is not that, but perhaps ——"

There is no perhaps in the case," interrupted Marc; "I love you, and I honour and respect you above all women."

Ismay was only too happy to believe him.

When Fioretta was told by Marc that Ismay had promised to be his wife, her first exclamation was almost a repetition of her sister's. "I thought you loved me?" she said.

"You must have cared very little about the matter, or you would have discovered some time since, that my heart was entirely your sister's."

"Don't be angry with me," said Fioretta smiling;

"I am very glad; I am sure I shall make you a better sister than a wife; to be a saint is Ismay's vocation, mine is t'other thing; don't you agree with me?"

"Perhaps I do, but there is one thing I will not allow you to do any more."

"And that is, my brother?"

"To flirt with me."

"I'll try not," was the gay answer; "but I can't promise, on my word; it's first nature with me. Now I am going to kiss Ismay, and rejoice over her, poor lamb; she won't have to wear the green stockings, as I had expected she would."

Fioretta went off, with a smile on her lip and a tear in her eye. Did she care for Marc? or was it only her way of finishing off a game played out? Probably she did not herself know.

"News, news!" cried Louisa, jumping up from her piano, the first time M. de Blacourt called after she had heard of Marc's engagement; "somebody is going to be married!"

"Not you, I suppose?"

"Fancy my telling you of THAT, in such a way! Guess?"

"Of course, it's one of the Von Ehrtmanns. Mdlle. Ismay has accepted M. de Lantry, has she?"

"Now, who did tell you?" asked Louisa, mortified.

"Nobody; that is, my own eyes enlightened me."

Louisa looked at him with serious admiration.

"How clever you are!" Then she added, "After all, I don't know that I am very glad; the Von Ehrtmanns and M. Marc will go away. Thank goodness! we shall always have you. What would become of me if you were to go also?"

The marquis played with his breguet chain.

"Don't make too sure. What if I were also going to be married?"

"You?" exclaimed Louisa, with a merry laugh.

The tone of the exclamation, and the laugh, were not complimentary to the marquis.

"Why do you laugh, Mdlle. Louisa?"

She blushed the deepest scarlet.

"You are a silly child, Mdlle. Templar. Ask Madame von Ehrtmann whether I am too old to marry, for that's what you mean. Madame la Baronne will teach you better; she'll make you understand why I might pick and choose among the freshest blown roses."

Mrs. Templar said, —

"It is not my fault that Louisa is such a hoyden."

"She will improve when she has waltzed and galloped for two seasons;" and, as he spoke, he twirled her gently round, to see her averted face. Her large black eyes were dim with tears.

"What's the matter now?" he said.

"Don't think I meant to be rude; indeed I did not. There's nobody in the world good enough for you."

"There," said the marquis, turning to Mrs. Templar, "I told you she would improve. Madame von Ehrtmann herself could not have made me a prettier peech."

"But I mean what I say!" exclaimed Louisa passionately, and a large round tear fell over her hot cheek.

"You remind me of the Louisa of the Rue de Varennes," he said; and, as his voice sounded terribly *oft to himself*, he added, rather roughly, "But what

was in season then, would be out of season now; we are ladies and gentlemen, and we must behave ourselves nicely, and not give way to tears and violence. I think that's your cousin's ring."

CHAPTER XIX.

Two Confessions.

WHENEVER the marquis came to call on Mrs. Templar, he found Major Templar there; whenever Major Templar appeared at a later hour than usual, he found the marquis installed on the sofa.

M. de Blacourt could not say that Mrs. Templar encouraged the major's visits; on the contrary, he felt assured that she did not favour the suit of the heir of Lamberton. Perhaps that was natural. Louisa was undoubtedly extraordinarily beautiful; her mother might have set her heart on her daughter's wearing a coronet. What did puzzle the marquis was, that Mrs. Templar never allowed an opportunity to escape of showing Louisa in an unfavourable light to her cousin.

"She cannot endure the idea of her daughter occupying the place she ought to have had," thought he. "God help that poor Louisa; she has not a true friend even in her mother."

On one of the days when both the marquis and Major Templar were present, Louisa was describing to the former the vaudeville she had seen the evening before; the major was always taking her and her mother to one theatre or the other. At a play, Louisa was amused, and he might sit silent and admire her.

"Well, you are to understand," explained Louisa, "that the prince wanted to be loved for himself, and not for his crown; so he disguised himself as a student

— quite a poor student, — and then — how was it, mamma? — there was some one else, who wished to marry the princess's maid, and she would not have him; and he gave her a beautiful necklace."

"Ah, ha!" said the marquis, "that's the way to gain hearts."

"Exactly what the pretended student said," replied Louisa, laughing. "The princess was better than her maid; she refused a duke for the sake of the poor student."

"Allons donc! She had guessed he was a prince."

"No, no, she had not indeed!"

"You have grown very romantic since last night, Louisa," said her mother. "You then thought it very ridiculous of the princess to say she would marry the student."

"Because she *was* a princess, mamma; that was what I meant."

"Oh! let you alone, my dear, for setting a proper value on the good things of this world. It's a mistake your not having been born a princess."

Louisa did not answer.

A preposterous thought flashed across M. de Blacourt's mind, "Could Louisa really be that woman's daughter?" Mrs. Templar could not be bitterer if Louisa had been a step-child, or an impostor. Then he remembered the love Mrs. Templar had lavished on the child in the Rue de Varennes, and he had to place her present harshness, to the perversion of all her natural feelings, consequent upon the treachery of the *soi-disant* Vicomte Granson. Louisa was the scapegoat for that adventurer.

Abruptly breaking the silence, the major said to Louisa, —

“So you like pretty things, too, do you?”

“Every one does, I fancy,” said Louisa, in a subdued tone.

“I not only like to see them, but to have them as my own,” returned the major, and he came to Louisa’s side. “What pretty thing would you care most to have?” he asked, in a half-whisper.

“I should need a long while to decide that question,” said Louisa, laughing.

“You know the story of the three wishes,” said the major; “better make up your mind at once, or you will end with nothing better than black puddings.”

“If I had to say at this moment,” replied Louisa, “I should choose that beautiful piano we saw at Erard’s yesterday.”

“And where would you put it?” asked Mrs. Templar. “It would fill this room, or any room your poor other is ever likely to have.”

“I never thought of that,” said Louisa. “You see, I should need time for consideration.”

Major Templar seemed rooted to his chair; he looked at M. de Blacourt. Mrs. Templar, to get rid of him, called Louisa to her, and, in a half-whisper, gave her a message to take to Thérèse. Louisa was scarcely out of the room, when the major, as if released from a spell, rose, shook hands hastily with Mrs. Templar, and hurried away. He caught Louisa in the ante-room.

“I have got something to say to you,” he began,

and placed himself before her. He turned very white as he said, "Louisa, will you marry me?"

She was startled, and, in her fright, stammered out, —

"No, I thank you."

"You shall have the piano, and anything else you wish for."

"Oh! I can't, indeed! — pray let me go."

She looked at him, burst out crying, and ran back to the salon.

"What's the matter, child?" asked Mrs. Templar.

"Mamma, mamma, I am so sorry!" — here a sob — "but my cousin asked me to marry him, and indeed I cannot!" — more sobs.

"Well, no one obliges you. What are you crying for, in that baby fashion?"

"He looked so dreadful; his face was quite grey, and his nose — oh, mamma! it was so white and pinched. I am so sorry for him — so sorry!"

"Don't flatter yourself that you have killed him! he'll get over it, my dear. Men die and are buried, but not for love."

"He will never forgive me!" exclaimed Louisa.

"Probably not; but that's not of much consequence, since you don't care for him."

"But I do care for him as a cousin, mamma; he was very kind to me. I would give anything to be good friends with him again."

"You should have thought of that before you said, 'No.'"

"But I do not wish to marry him, mamma."

"Very well, then be contented; you can't blow hot and cold at the same moment."

In the evening, Louisa brought a small packet to her mother; she asked, —

"Mamma, should I not send back these presents?"

"Who put that into your head?"

"Myself, mamma."

"You may do as you please."

"May I not write and say that I hope he will forgive me? he may think I am offended, if I send the things without a word."

"No, you are not to write. Remember this, Louisa, you are growing up, — never write to a man who is not either your husband or your brother."

"Not even to M. de Blacourt, mamma?" exclaimed Louisa, opening her eyes.

"Don't be impertinent; you understand very well what I mean; though, no doubt, that great ally of ours is just as selfish and good-for-nothing as other men; the less you have to do with men, young or old, the better. When they want anything, how amiable and gentle they are! Never trust one of them — not one. I will write to Major Templar myself."

"Tell him, pray do, mamma, that I am sorry to have given him pain, and that I shall never forget how kind he has been to me."

"I shall write what I think best. You ought to have more confidence in your mother's judgment."

What was the use of Mrs. Templar's warnings to Louisa; *the girl was born warm-hearted and confiding.*

Impossible to graft suspicion on such a stock. "Ch away nature, and it comes back at a gallop," says French proverb.

Mrs. Templar's letter and the packet of trinkets were brought back to her. When her messenger reached Major Templar's hotel, he had already started for England.

"Take care of the things, mamma," said Louisa. "I could never have any pleasure in them again."

The following day, M. de Blacourt asked, —

"What has become of your other daily visitor?"

"You mean Major Templar, I suppose? He has gone back to England," and Mrs. Templar's face flushed, "Ask me no questions."

The marquis held his peace then, but the evening he was at Madame von Ehrtmann's, he took an opportunity when Gustave was within hearing, to say to Louisa, —

"So you would not have your cousin?"

Louisa grew scarlet. M. de Blacourt went on, —

"In my opinion, you have made a blunder. Rich well-born, young enough; I can't understand what you expect better, Madlle. Templar. What did you dislike in him?"

"I did not dislike him; but I did not wish to marry him."

"And why, pray? that is what I want to know."

"I was always inclined to laugh at him — I could not help it."

"I hope you have no worse reason to give?"

"Worse reason!" repeated Louisa.

es, worse reason," said the marquis, looking at and then glancing at Gustave, who was evidently gazing with intense interest or curiosity to their conversation.

Louisa's crimson flush faded away into a waxen pallor. The marquis rose and left her.

During the evening Louisa went to him, and putting her arm within his, said, —

"Do you fancy something quite wrong of me?"

"No I? I am afraid not — but I have no right to interfere in your affairs."

Louisa promised faithfully not to tell, or I would tell she answered. "Some day I may."

de Blacourt shook his head, saying, —

"Bad, bad, when a girl of your age has underclothings with a young man."

Louisa stood silent and hesitating, but still holding her fast.

"Don't, pray don't say anything to mamma. I don't want to be accused of acting dishonourably, and involving myself at another's expense; it will be all by-and-by. It's nothing so dreadful, I assure you. I promise not to speak to mamma."

de Blacourt spoke in a half coaxing, half commanding

de Blacourt was scrutinizing her while she

Louisa, in her turn, looked at him. The expression of impatience and anger in his face startled her as a frightened child might have done, she said, — "It's nothing bad; don't tell mamma."

Louisa felt that she trembled, and that seemed to pro-

voke his anger to an outburst. He did not raise his voice above a whisper, but what he said lost nothing in fierceness for all that.

"Ah!" he said, "you imagine you have a good natured blockhead to deal with; an old fellow that you can turn round your little finger with a few soft words. I hate deceit in you, as much as I do in others. You have only seen one side of my character, Miss Louisa. I despise all duplicity. Poor fragile creature," he added, as he led her to a seat; "the bloom is already off your heart. Rest satisfied, I shall not tell your mother to look better after you."

He turned on his heel and left her.

A struggle between the tears of a child and the pride of a woman, swelled Louisa's bosom almost to bursting. She was pale as marble, her lips had lost all colour.

"Are you ill, Louisa?" asked Fioretta, fluttering up to her: at the same moment Madame Hébert addressing M. de Blacourt, who was passing her, exclaimed. "What can be the matter with Louisa?"

"Is there anything wrong with her?" he asked.

"Look at her; she is as white as a statue," said Madame Hébert.

"How people love to exaggerate," he returned; "she is pale, certainly, but place her by the side of a white marble bust, and you would see the difference."

"At this moment," said Madame Hébert; "I am wondering if she is going to faint outright," and she went to Louisa.

"Sit down by me, Claire; I have something to say to you; I must speak to Gustave before he goes away

his evening. Manage it so that no one shall overhear our conversation!"

This was a commission after Claire's own heart; it was so long since she had had any love affairs to deal with. She nodded her head, whispering, —

"Then we must outstay that spying friend of ours; there is no preventing his hearing and seeing everything that's going on in a room. I am sure he guesses what we are talking about now."

"Never mind M. de Blacourt," said Louisa; "only don't let Gustave go away without my first speaking to him."

Madame Hébert presently made her way, by a circuitous route, to Gustave, and gave him Louisa's message.

"There is no occasion for manœuvring," he said; "I shall go at once to her. Being a guest here, gives me a right to address any one present," and he walked across the room to where Louisa was sitting; placing himself so as to screen her from general observation, he told her he had come in obedience to her commands. By this time Gustave's love for Louisa was saturated with bitterness; her avoidance of him, her cold good breeding, showed him her indifference. Louisa acted as she felt; whenever she thought of Gustave, it was to wish that the time of her release was come. There was no tenderness in either his face or voice at this moment.

"Gustave," began Louisa, "I must tell mamma this very night, of the promise I made to you."

"Indeed! What is the urgent cause which forces you to break your word?"

"I mean only to"

Here Mrs. Templar came up, and laying her roughly on Louisa's arm, she said, "I am go Turning to Gustave, she added in a voice loud er for every one to hear, "Well, M. Gastineau, hav got an usher's place yet? I saw your sister morning; she says her shop is prospering. Good n

"You she-wolf! how could I expect you to forth a dove?" muttered Gustave between his tee

"I don't approve of your allowing Gustave tineau to speak to you so familiarly," said Mrs. plar to Louisa, as soon as they were in their ow lon. "Do you hear me, Louisa?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Then you will please to obey: I saw severa sons staring with astonishment at you — the m for one."

Louisa had her night candle in her hand; she up to her mother and kissed her cheek; a cold cheek that seemed to repel her daughter's kiss.

"You are in a great hurry to go to bed," said Templar: "when young ladies act foolishly, they bear to be told of it."

"Mamma, here is Thérèse waiting to spee you."

"What is it, Thérèse?"

"Madame, the washerwoman has been to say she cannot find the missing pocket-handkerchiefs.

Mrs. Templar's anger took another direction *Louisa* slipped away to her bed-room. The m she was there, she began to regret that she h

seized the opportunity, and made her confession — it would have been over by this time, thought she: how shall I ever begin?

Boys and girls of seventeen do not often pass sleepless nights. Even while trying to determine in what words to disclose her secret to her mother, Louisa fell asleep; Mrs. Templar found her so, when, her conference over with Thérèse, she followed Louisa to continue her admonitions.

Mrs. Templar's hard features softened as she stood contemplating the sleeping girl. There was this quality in Louisa's mother; what was incapable of resisting her, she was tender to; no one could be more gentle to an infant, or to a pet bird, or a pet dog.

"How still she lies," thought the watcher; "how white she is!" and with a sudden panic, she bent down her head to listen for the sound of breathing; she drew the coverlet more closely round the sleeper's shoulders, and walked away on tip-toe.

Next morning Louisa could not eat her breakfast. Her first waking thoughts had been the avowal she had to make to her mother; she never flinched from the resolution she had come to over night; what gave her the nerve to do so, was her anxiety to re-instate herself in the marquis's good opinion. With Louisa, her affections stood in the lieu of principles, which, to say, no one had ever thought of giving her; she loved and revered M. de Blacourt with all the enthusiastic faith of a young girl in his superiority. She loved him the more, that she had so few to love; he stood for her in the stead of father, or uncle, or brother; *she must be at peace with him.*

"Are you ill?" asked Mrs. Templar, as she saw Louisa leave her roll untouched.

"No, mamma, but I have something to tell you." Louisa was trembling from head to foot; Mrs. Templar saw it, and with sickening fear of some unknown evil, she exclaimed, "Good God! what can she have done?"

"Oh, mamma! do forgive me," cried Louisa, throwing herself on her knees before her mother.

"Forgive you, you good-for-nothing girl! what have you done?"

"Don't look so dreadful, mamma; indeed it's not so very bad."

"What is it? speak at once!" said Mrs. Templar, actually shaking the terrified girl.

"I promised Gustave —"

"God in heaven, grant me patience!" broke in Mrs. Templar.

"Mamma, do hear me," and out it came in a fear-thickened voice; "I only promised him that I would not marry any one for three years; that's all, mamma."

"That's all!" repeated Mrs. Templar; "you worthless, vulgar, low wretch!" the scorn of her voice was blighting, she thrust away Louisa's hands, grasping her knees, and began walking hastily up and down the room. In a few minutes she said, stopping before the still kneeling girl: "When did you make this wise promise?"

"At La Forêt, mamma; I did not wish to do it, but Gustave —"

"Don't dare to mention that villain's name," almost

med Mrs. Templar, stamping her foot; "he deserves galleys, and he'll come to that some day," and she walked up and down the room; then as becoming to a standstill in front of Louisa, she exclaimed, "You are a fine precocious young lady — a gipsy, I ought to say; you're a famous actress, my word;" and Mrs. Templar burst into an hysterical laugh. "So that's the reason you refused Major Blar, a gentleman with good blood in his veins, a man of good station, your father's kinsman; and did it, for this dirty, lowborn, presumptuous cur? get out of my sight."

Louisa was rising to obey.

"Stop where you are, young madam. After keeping your secret so long, what made you tell me "

"I never thought of how wicked I had been last night, mamma; believe me or not, I did think at the time that I promised, I was doing "

"A lie! If you had not known it was wrong, you couldn't have made any secret of it."

"I did *not* think it wrong at the moment I gave my word — I did afterwards; but I had given a promise not to tell. It was done, and I could not help it, I hoped it would not much matter."

"I ask you why you tell now? Speak, and speak truth, if you wish for mercy from me."

"It was on account of what M. de Blacourt said to me last night. It was to give warning that I meant to tell you, that I begged Claire to bid that person "

(Louisa did not dare to say Gustave) "to come and speak to me."

"Ah! you remind me of Madame Hébert; she shall hear a bit of my mind."

"Claire had nothing to do with it, mamma; no one had but myself. Mamma, don't be angry with Claire; she is as innocent as you are."

Mrs. Templar did not seem to hear this defence; she said, —

"You will sit down this minute, and write to that low fellow, and tell him that he is not to consider you bound by any promise; that you will have nothing further to do with him. Get up out of that romantic attitude," she added, in louder tones, as Louisa did not, because she could not rise directly; her knees felt like water. Mrs. Templar pulled her up roughly, and pushed her to the table on which were writing materials. Louisa put her arms on the table, and laid her head down on them.

Mrs. Templar paused a few seconds; then she said, —

"Don't keep me waiting."

"I can't say what you bid me, mamma. I must not break my word. The time will soon pass."

"Write."

Louisa shook her head.

"Mamma, mamma, only last Sunday . . . do listen to me, my own mamma!" and Louisa seized her mother's hands, and hung on them and kissed them. "I do want to do right; I have told you all the truth; I am afraid to break my word. In the Psalms last Sun-

day, mamma, I read to you that one must not swear to a neighbour and disappoint him, though it were to one's own hurt."

Louisa had noticed this verse, as people are apt to do all that bears on their own case.

"That has nothing to do with you, Miss Cunning — write! You will not? — then take your mother's —"

Louisa sprang up, pressed her hand over her mother's mouth, screaming, —

"Mamma! — don't! — you shall not, you shall not!"

Then she began to kiss Mrs. Templar wildly, and to moan and wring her hands like one half-crazed.

"Be quiet, Louisa. Do you want all the house to now your folly?"

Louisa was too excited, too bewildered, to care for or understand any such arguments. She went on repeating, —

"You shall not, mamma! — pity your poor Louisa! — I am your only child! — don't be cruel to me! — God will punish me if I break my word!"

Mrs. Templar dragged Louisa, in this state, into her little bedroom. Loosening her dress, she said, sternly, —

"Lie down!"

And Louisa, with every limb shaking, and her teeth chattering, obeyed.

"Drink that," and Mrs. Templar gave her some hartshorn and water; indeed, she nearly poured it down *the girl's throat*. She then left the room.

The dose of hartshorn, and the solitude, gradually calmed Louisa's excitement; her passionate exclamations died into quivering sobs; she lay on her bed hours, she was frightened to leave it — frightened a recommencement of the scene of the morning.

"If some one would only come and tell her what to do. If she could see Ismay, and beg her to ask Marc — he was a clergyman — he would know what was best to do."

Louisa had not the courage to move; a straw waistcoat could not have held her a stricter prisoner than her terror lest that anathema which she had rested on her mother's lips should be pronounced. Bodily weakness, from want of food, also began to have its share of influence in nailing her to her bed. She had just enough activity of mind left to wonder at the stillness of everything about her. At last, Thérèse put her head in at the door, and asked, —

"Is mademoiselle not well?"

"I have such an aching all over me," said Louisa. Thérèse advanced her whole body.

"Then probably madame is gone to fetch the doctor."

"Is mamma not at home?" and Louisa tried to sit up, but the instant after she fell back on the pillow. "Oh! Thérèse, I feel so queer. Everything in the room is waving up and down."

"Mademoiselle is faint; mademoiselle had better have a bouillon;" and Thérèse, who was, of course perfectly cognizant of the morning's fracas, though *of its cause*, went and brought a bouillon.

"I can't take it, thank you, Thérèse."

"Mademoiselle must," said the maid; "mademoiselle is weak;" and she forced a spoonful of the soup between Louisa's lips. The second was not so difficult to swallow; the third was easy; and so on, till the cup was empty.

"Did you say mamma was out?" asked Louisa in a revived voice.

"Madame went out this morning before twelve, mademoiselle, and it is now nearly five."

"I don't know where she is gone," said Louisa, looking into Thérèse's face with awakening alarm.

"After all, there's no reason why madame shouldn't have had visits and shopping to do; time goes so fast when you are out of doors."

"Will you help me to get up, Thérèse? Is it not strange I should feel so weak?"

"Mademoiselle wants her dinner, that's all."

Louisa went into the drawing-room. She looked out of the window as long as there was light to see anything distinctly — the days were still short; then she watched the hands of the clock by the fire-light. That lazy clock, whose striking of the hours had made her laugh so often, it was so like a sleepy person trying to speak, from this time forth became identified with sorrow in her recollection. In all her griefs to come, that gilt Diana, with the knight's helmet at her feet, would present herself as an old fellow-nourner.

Six o'clock struck — half-past six. Thérèse, who, as happens with all her class, had a delight in the

anticipation of disasters, came into the salon, ostensibly to advise Louisa to take her dinner.

"No, I thank you, Thérèse; I had better wait for mamma."

This was said calmly enough; then, giving way to her alarm, the poor young lady added, —

"I am beginning to be frightened at mamma's being so long away."

"Madame is always so punctual," said Thérèse.

"What had I better do, Thérèse?"

"Suppose mademoiselle were to send for the German lady upstairs?"

"No, mamma would not be pleased if I did that."

"And M. de Blacourt, who has not called to-day, just because he is wanted. It's always so."

"If mamma is not here by seven, I think I will send for M. de Blacourt," said Louisa.

"Who will mademoiselle send?" asked Thérèse.

"The concierge can go, can't he?"

"I'll go and inquire," said Thérèse, glad of an excuse for a gossip in the porter's lodge.

Thérèse gave it as her opinion that the storm of the morning had been caused by mademoiselle having refused to accept Mr. Templar's proposal of marriage.

"He was rich as a Jew; no wonder that madam was furious."

Eight o'clock, and yet no Mrs. Templar. Louisa wrote three lines to the marquis, begging him to com

er immediately. She was, she said, in great dis-
, and signed, as usual, "your affectionate little
d, Louisa."

The porter had first better seek M. de Blacourt at
lub, on the Boulevards; if he were not there, the
must be taken to the Rue de Varennes.

The marquis *was* at his club. As he read her
ature, he thought, "she is more forgiving than
r." He put on his hat, turned into the first
a yard, threw himself into a cab, and said,
quickly to the Hotel de Hollande — Rue de
aix."

He was so impatient to learn what could make
sa send for him, that he forgot his usual for-
ance to inferiors, and remonstrated pretty hotly on
ime the driver lost in taking off the horse's nose-
and cloth.

Louisa, who, from the moment she had despatched
messenger, had been listening for the stopping
carriage, met the marquis at the door of the
t, and said almost in the words she had used as a
—

'Oh, sir, a great misfortune has happened to me.
ve made mamma very angry.'

'Where's your mother?'

'I don't know. Oh! M. de Blacourt, forgive me;
t you be angry with me too. I am so sorry for
; I have done. I told mamma all about it, because
uld not bear you to be angry with me.'

'I am not angry;' and he took one of her
ls in *his*. *It was burning hot.* "Come, tell me

what has happened. Don't cry, we are good friends again."

He touched her cheek with his lips, and said, —

"Thank you," so humbly, that tears sprang in his eyes.

"Now, then, make haste and confess your sins."

"I told mamma this morning that I had promised Gustave Gastineau not to marry any one for three years."

The marquis stifled an oath.

"When did you promise this?"

"At Geneva. I know now that it was wrong of him to make me promise, and very wrong of me to do so. I can't explain how it came about. I did not mean to do harm; he was so sorry that we were going to leave, that I was sorry also — and I had known him nearly all my life, and he had been good to me."

Louisa looked as if pleading for her life.

"Never mind all your reasons," said the marquis, "let us have facts. So you intended to marry him?"

"No, I did not; I wanted just to comfort him: I said it *would* comfort him."

"Well, and what next?"

"I told mamma this morning, and she was so angry she nearly — —"

Here Louisa broke down altogether. She buried her head on M. de Blacourt's shoulder. He felt her *trembling*.

"People in a passion say a great deal they don't mean," he said, soothingly.

"She's gone, and I don't know where," said Louisa, in an excited voice. "*Do* find her! tell me what is right, and I will do it. I don't want to break my word, it's sinful. Help me — *do, do* help me. I am so miserable!"

The marquis did not improve the opportunity for reading a lesson on her imprudence and folly; he tried to quiet her by saying that there was no good reason for alarm; probably Mrs. Templar had gone to the Iéberts' to seek young Gastineau, and, not finding him, she had had to wait for his return.

"Go and see, will you?" begged Louisa.

"Certainly."

"And you will tell mamma and Gustave that I am ready to do what you and she think right?"

"Very well: try to calm yourself in the meantime."

As the marquis reached the door of the salon, it opened, and Mrs. Templar walked in. Always thin and pale, she now looked spectral; her gown was mud up to the knees.

M. de Blacourt took hold of both her hands, placed her in an easy chair, and said, —

"Thank God you are come."

Louisa stood up, anxious to approach her mother, yet afraid to do so.

"A glass of wine," muttered Mrs. Templar.

Louisa *rushed away* for one; instead, however, of

offering it herself to her mother, she gave it to the marquis. The silence portended an explosion of some kind. M. de Blacourt could imagine nothing better to do, than to bid Louisa bring her mother's slipper. Louisa did so, and knelt down to unlace her mother's wet boots. Mrs. Templar stared at her child as if she did not recognize her, then said in a tone which made Louisa start, —

“Go away, go.”

Louisa ran out of the room.

“You had better change your wet shoes,” said the marquis, gently. “May I ring for your servant?”

For all answer Mrs. Templar broke forth into an incoherent rhapsody about her unfortunate fate, of the pitilessness of every one towards her, of the wickedness of the human kind in general, and of Louisa in particular — Louisa had broken her heart.

“I have toiled and saved for her, thought of her alone; ever since she was born she has been my ruling interest—” The marquis did not remind the poor lady of M. Granson. “And this is the return she makes me — a nasty forward—”

“Hush!” interrupted M. de Blacourt; “when you are cool, you will be sorry to have used such harsh words in speaking of your young daughter. She has only been as silly as most other girls of her age, and remember, my good friend, that you must have let her have more liberty than was good for her, or she could not have got into such a scrape.”

“Of course, I expected you to say that it was *my* fault. I believe if the heavens were to fa

d to crush the larks, people would say it was my fault."

The marquis held firmly to his point. He knew Mrs. Templar — knew that she must be mastered, at she was one of the few women with whom a certain brutality of authority would go further than unanimity or gentleness.

"It is rare," he continued, "that faults are all on one side; however, it's worse than useless arguing how an evil has been produced; the only sensible course is to find a remedy."

"I wash my hands of that young lady's fate," said Mrs. Templar; "as she makes her bed so she must lie on it."

"Pure folly to speak in that manner. Nine years ago, when Louisa burned her pinafore, you took the hint and bought a fire-guard, which you ought to have had before; apply my observation to the present case, and take better care of your child for the future. Come now, my good friend," and the marquis changed his harsh tone to one of persuasion, "do not let your feelings run away with you. I am not astonished at your indignation; you have every reason to be angry and indignant, but your excellent judgment must show you the dangers of over severity. First, you will give publicity to what had better remain unknown, and, secondly, you may drive your daughter into taking some irretrievable step — terror may drive a girl to elope as well as love."

"Thank goodness we are in France, where clandestine

tine marriages are next to impossible," said Mr Templar.

"So much the worse, if you frighten Louisa in seeking that young man's protection; she is not one that will long bear the lash. Spare her, spare yourself, my dear friend, future repentance! Have you forgotten what Louisa was as a child? She was one of the most high-spirited children I ever saw — prompt in defence and offence. I would stake all I have, on the gentleness and submissiveness towards you, which I have noticed since her return from Geneva, has their rise in remorse for having deceived you. Louisa is a strange mixture of timidity and rashness — beware!"

"I shall certainly never pretend to think wrong, let what will happen," replied Mrs. Templeton, "nor that I forgive when I do not. How she dared to do this, and Mrs. Templar once more gave way to invective and menace; she called her daughter "a bold minx" and declared she had the greatest mind to send her to the strictest school she could find, or shut her up in convent. "If she were not young and pretty, you would be the first to condemn her," wound up Mr Templar.

"Her youth and beauty are certainly what a judge would call extenuating circumstances," answered Mr. Blacourt. "If it will be any comfort to you to hear I can safely affirm that I am as much shocked at Louisa's conduct as you are. I am disappointed in her, she has fallen from her high place in my esteem."

Had M. de Blacourt spoken with the charity of an angel, he would not have succeeded so well in mollifying Mrs. Templar's ire against Louisa. His censure, so deliberately uttered, made her mother's pride wince. She turned upon him at once, —

"She has behaved extremely ill to me, and I have every reason to resent her behaviour. I don't see that she has done anything to make *you* despise her; she owed *you* no confidence or obedience. Little fool that she is, she thinks you perfection."

The marquis could have laughed; he did not try to defend himself by explaining that it was not the having given the promise he thought so wrong, but that his displeasure arose from the marvellous coolness with which, under trying circumstances, Louisa had kept her own counsel. He held her to be an accomplished actress. He said, —

"You see, then, that my advice to you is not from any indulgence towards Louisa."

The marquis rose to take his leave. Mrs. Templar had no intention of letting him go, she wanted him to force her to come to some decision.

"I am so weak," she said; "I have tasted nothing since breakfast! I have been wandering all day broken-hearted! Oh! marquis, I have had so many trials, so many disappointments — and now this seems the worst of all!"

Mrs. Templar was crying feebly from sheer exhaustion; she was so pale and haggard, her dress so wet and cold and muddy, that it was impossible not to pity her.

"Poor soul!" exclaimed M. de Blacourt; "very sorry for you."

He went to the door leading to Mrs. Templar's own room, where he guessed Louisa would be knocked. Louisa, with a terrified face, answered summons.

"Get your mother some tea, and try to find something that will tempt her to eat. Send Thérèse make a fire, and to take off her wet boots."

Before he could see what she was going to do, Louisa had bent down and kissed his hand. He went away without saying a word.

Presently Louisa herself brought in the tea; she poured out a cup of tea, and looked at the marquis as though asking him to give it to her mother.

"Louisa has brought you some hot tea; pray it, my dear friend."

Mrs. Templar took the cup without a glance at the culprit who was presenting it. The marquis coaxed the wearied lady to eat some of the *tartines* which no doubt Louisa had herself cut. When he had seen her something revived, he said good night; shaking hands with her, but with only a slight inclination of the head to Louisa.

Louisa's heart turned cold as the marquis closed the door on himself. Louisa counted on his affability and on his indulgence, and she was terrified to find herself alone with her mother. She remained standing just where M. de Blacourt had left her, awaiting

entence. At that instant she was ready to make any tonement that could be exacted from her, if by so doing she could escape another outburst of Mrs. Templar's anger.

She dared not venture again to implore mercy. She remained silent and cowering. There is no measuring time in such moments of suffering; Louisa's feet began to tingle, then they seemed to swell, until she was fast losing the sense of a firm footing. Mrs. Templar at last broke the awful silence by saying, —

“Why are you standing there like Lot's wife? Go to your bed, and pray to God to forgive you!”

Louisa approached her mother.

“Mamma —”

“I have nothing to say to you; I prefer deeds to words. Go to bed.”

Louisa smothered a sob and left the room. Her every thought was absorbed by anxiety to earn her mother's forgiveness. She was about to kneel down to say her prayers as that incensed mother had desired her to do, when her eye was caught by a note pinned to the pincushion on the dressing-table. It was directed to Gustave's hand; she opened it; there were but two lines, —

“Be true to your word, and all will go well. Remember the Bride of Lammermuir!”

Louisa threw the paper down with mingled disgust and anger. How dared Gustave address her in that

way? Her mother, then, was right in saying that her promise to wait was as good as an engagement to marry Gustave. He had laid a trap for her, for he must have been well aware that she had not understood her promise so. She hated him; she would do anything, everything to extricate herself. Certainly she would keep to what she had meant to bind herself to do; she would not marry till the three years were over, but she would neither see nor speak to him. The idea of his daring to send her a note by Thérèse!

Frightened and angry, Louisa forgot her prayers—she crept into her bed, thinking, “Here I am safe till morning; oh, if I could sleep away these next horrid two years.” But Louisa was not yet at the end of her day’s tribulations. Striving to plan out some means by which she could make her duty to her mother square with the duty to her promise, her ear was caught by a measured tread beneath her window, which was not above twenty feet from the pavement. Once her attention was aroused; she remembered that she had heard that footstep from her first coming into her room. She guessed that it was Gustave who was there patrolling up and down before the hotel. She got out of bed and peeped from the window; Gustave was visible, sure enough, walking on the extreme edge of the pavement, manifestly with the intention of being seen by her: he was wrapped in a large cloak, *Almaviva* fashion, and, as Louisa caught sight of him, he suddenly stopped, and leaning against a lamp-post that faced her window, turned his head upwards as if he *saw her*. She made one bound back into her bed, and,

crouching beneath the bedclothes, she thought in an agony of dread, "If mamma sees him, how shall I ever make her believe that I knew nothing of his coming?"

END OF VOL. I.

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ONCE AND AGAIN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

ONCE AND AGAIN.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“WHO BREAKS, PAYS.”

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

L E I P Z I G

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1865.

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ONCE AND AGAIN.

CHAPTER I.

"Learning what a Promise is."

DUISA was quite surprised when she awoke next morning to find that she had slept.

While she dressed, she debated with herself as to what she should do about Gustave's note. To show it to the Marquis de Blacourt was to get Thérèse turned away indignantly; and besides, though more indignant with the Marquis than she had ever before felt in her life, to frank from exposing his foolish heroics to her father's scorn — girls are more womanly at seventeen than youths are men at twenty — Gustave's age — DUISA keenly felt the absurdity of his language and it was the grain of sand which finally turned the scale of her feelings against him.

She had, as all girls have, an ideal — an ideal on a fantastic scale — superhumanly endowed in every respect — a something utterly impossible to find. A young man with his ingenuous heart opened before the eyes of a seventeen-year-old girl, has not the power over the imagination of a dark, reserved, morose man of the world possess.

The Marquis de Blacourt, a man on the very verge of fifty, had he tried, would have been more

likely to develop the romantic element in Louisa than one such as Gustave Gastineau.

Annoyed, mortified, and disgusted as she was, Louisa could not be wilfully or spontaneously cruel. If she overlooked his claims on her, she remembered all his misfortunes, his courage and perseverance. He was poor, humbly born, and plain in person, three reasons why she must not expose him to her mother's bitter ridicule. The result of Louisa's meditations was this speech to Thérèse, spoken with the sternness of a judge, —

“Thérèse, you must never bring me any letter or note unknown to mamma; if you should do so a second time, I must tell madame.”

Thérèse made no direct answer; she said in a loud aside, —

“Poor young man! I shall advise him to spend the night in his bed, rather than on the pavement of the Rue de la Paix.”

Louisa pretended not to hear this remark. She went into the salon, wondering whether she ought to practise as usual; perhaps if she did, her mother might come in and accuse her of want of proper feeling. Louisa felt as if there had been a death in the house — one of those deaths which exact solemnity of demeanour as a substitute for grief. Poor girl! she was unconscious that what was now occurring would for ever shut her out of the promised land. She was standing now on its frontiers; all that the future had in store for her would be a glimpse of its loveliness — an echo of its wonder-sweet nightingale's song of tenderest joy and soothing melancholy; she would see

those magic flowers which mortals may gather but once in a life; she would never pluck them.

Mrs. Templar had heard Louisa's step, and opening the door of communication, looked into the salon, and asked, —

"Why are you not practising?"

Mrs. Templar had very icy tones at her command.

Louisa went in a hurry to the piano.

Mrs. Templar continued, —

"You don't wish the curiosity of those German people to be excited, I suppose. Before them and every one else I shall set you the example of behaving to one another as we were in the habit of doing. I expect you to have sufficient proper feeling to follow the example I set you."

Mrs. Templar shut the door, and Louisa began her "do, mi, re, fa," with what interest or inclination one may imagine.

Mingling with her fear of her mother, there was a sort of pity, as she listened to these useless precautions. Thérèse understood all that was going on, and Claire must be also behind the scenes; and Claire, who had always confided her own unhappy love crises to the first willing ear, would think nothing of talking over Gustave's mishaps with the first comer. Louisa could easily fancy she heard Claire saying, "He is my cousin, you know, and of course we know all about it, and feel for him."

The utmost that could be hoped was, that the story might not reach the ears of that pale, cold-blooded Vicomte Raoul de Villemont. Louisa could never have the courage to face him and those other young men whom Madame von Ehardt loved to

assemble in her rooms, if she was to be pointed out as the heroine of a clandestine love-story. How she wished that she could see M. Marc alone, and beg him to prevent the exposure she dreaded.

All that day and the next Mrs. Templar maintained a resolute silence towards Louisa; in a word, she sent her to Coventry. Perhaps the girl's greatest trial was when her mother did speak to her with assumed familiarity at meal times, while Thérèse was present — Louisa acted her part as badly as possible. The marquis did not appear during those two long days: on the third afternoon, M. de Lantry called. Her first glance at his face told Louisa that he had heard one version of her case, and it also showed her that he was sorry for her. Would he speak about it to Mrs. Templar? Louisa grew pale at the thought. She had no faith in any influence over her mother, save in that of M. de Blacourt. She did not see in Marc's calm face that "temperamental or taming power," which, without knowing how to describe it, she instinctively recognized in the marquis's eye.

After a few sentences as to the weather, Marc plunged into the dreaded subject.

"I have come to ask you," he said, addressing Mrs. Templar, but including Louisa by turning his head in her direction, "if I can be of any use or comfort to you? I have heard that you are in trouble, and I consider as one of the dearest privileges of a Christian pastor, his right of entrance, wherever help or consolation are needed."

"Really," said Mrs. Templar, bridling, "I am not aware that we are in any trouble, or that any sorrow

as befallen us. Do you know of any, Louisa, my dear?"

Louisa covered her face with her hands, and Marc saw that she was crying bitterly.

"There are signs of grief here at least," he said, nodding towards Louisa. "Pray, recollect, Mrs. Templar, that I am not a stranger — I knew this young lady when she was a child; she has often sat on my knee. Believe, I beg of you, that I have her best interests at heart; and if you will give me credit for no better reason, believe me I am anxious to help her, because my affianced wife dearly loves her."

"So, then, the audacity of that good-for-nothing, low-born young man, and Miss Templar's folly, are known above stairs!" exclaimed Mrs. Templar.

"Yes," said Marc; "but I did not inquire how the story reached Madame von Ehrtmann and her daughters. The friend of both parties, I hope to be able to do some good."

"You might, if you could conquer the obstinacy of that young lady. As for me, as I told M. de Blacourt, I wash my hands of any further interference in her fate."

"Do you give me leave to talk over this affair with Madlle. Louisa?" asked Marc.

"Oh! certainly, as far as I am concerned."

"Then may we go into the dining-room?"

"Dear me! is a tête-à-tête necessary?"

"I think so," replied Marc, quietly.

Mrs. Templar said, "There's no occasion for you to move, I shall follow the fashion of the day, and give place to my youngers;" and so saying, she went into the adjoining room.

In fact, under this show of indifference or dis-pleasure at M. de Lantry's visit, Mrs. Templar hid her thankfulness that a mediator had come forward. A continuance of the armed neutrality of the preceding days was impossible, and Mrs. Templar had begun to wish for a crisis.

"I am so sorry for you," were Marc's first words to Louisa. "From what I myself have known of you and from what Ismay tells me of you, I am sure that the deception you have practised must have been sorely irksome to you. You must be glad that it is over at any cost."

Louisa let her hands drop on her lap; he could see the fingers trembling as she nervously intertwined them.

Marc said, "I want you to tell me how it happened?" — in other words, Marc was desirous of discovering by Louisa's explanation whether she loved Gustave. Whatever he did or tried to do in the matter must be modified by a knowledge of the state of her feelings.

The sisters upstairs differed in opinion. Fioretta said, "Louisa is just the girl to get into a scrape, and not to know how to get out of it again. I don't believe she cares a pin for the man;" and Marc inclined to think rather as Fioretta did, than to adopt Ismay's more sentimental views.

Louisa continuing silent, Marc said, soothingly, — "I am confident you did not wilfully set about deceiving your mother."

She looked at him with earnest eyes, the long *lashes* all wet and matted with her quiet tears, and pronounced a quivering "No." He did not hurry her.

out let her take her time. She went on in little broken sentences.

"It is not obstinacy indeed, M. Marc; — I don't think it is so easy to know what is right."

"I agree with you, and that's one of the reasons I ask you to confide your story to me, that we may try together to find out what is really the best for you to do. Duties do clash sometimes, and, perhaps, in your case."

"It's this, M. Marc: — I gave my word, and I do not think any one should break a promise."

"If it's a promise to do wrong, certainly every one should. Suppose that in a fit of passion or madness you had promised to murder me, ought you to keep your promise?"

"Oh, no; — but that's a downright crime. Now, is it really wrong in me to have promised Gustave Gastineau that I would not marry for three years? I never would marry him or any one else against mamma's wish."

"Did you tell him so?"

"He did not ask me to marry him; he said he wanted time to try and rise in the world."

"How old were you then?"

"I was sixteen and a month."

"Surely you had begun to comprehend something of what those sort of wishes and promises meant?"

"M. Marc, I think *you* will believe me, if no one else will; — you seem to understand people," said Louisa, still twisting and untwisting her trembling fingers. "I was sorry for Gustave, and I did care for him in a way. He vexed me, too, by saying that it was because he was a shop-boy I looked down upon

him, and that he had been writing books to make me proud of him, and he begged me so hard for time. I can't remember what he said" — (a proof, thought Marc, that she did not and does not love him) — "it was something about — oh! never mind; it was all very silly, I know that now; and so, to satisfy him, I said I would wait — that's all."

Marc could scarcely repress a smile at the honest, innocent confession. He said, —

"And you never felt troubled at having made such a promise unknown to your mother?"

"I was a little frightened just after; but what with masters and practising, I had not much time to think. Lately I have been uncomfortable, ever since we began to go to Madame von Ehrtmann's Thursday evenings — Gustave looked so cross and watched me so. — he had no right to do that."

"I am afraid he had."

"Dear M. Marc, don't say that. I never did promise to marry him — I never did — indeed I did not."

"I am certain you did not think you had done so. How came you never to tell Ismay? — girls always have confidants."

Louisa changed colour. She said, in a low voice, —

"I will tell you the truth. When I saw him side by side with real gentlemen, I was ashamed of him. M. Marc, don't give me up; — I know it was a shabby feeling — I tried not to feel so, and to take his part in my own mind, but —"

"I have no intention of giving you up — there is no reason why I should, and every reason why I *should not*. You will have to suffer a good deal for

ot having known how to be truthful and candid at the right moment. You will try — will you not? — to make good use of this lesson. If Gustave feally loves you, as I believe he does, you may have done him incalculable harm. Nothing hurts man or woman so much as to have placed their trust wrong."

"I will hold good to my promise, and if you think I ought to marry Gustave by-and-by, I will — that is, if mamma will give me leave, or I will never marry any one else," said Louisa.

"That, again, would be undertaking more than you could perform. No, no; the first — indeed, the only thing to do, is to extricate both you and Gustave from a false position. Will you trust me to explain your situation and your sentiments to that unlucky right?"

"Please do, M. Marc; I do so long for mamma and M. de Blacourt to be friends with me again. Is my father not angry with me — is she?"

"Not in the least; she is grieved and is anxious to come and see you, but we thought Madame Templar might not approve of her coming here just now. Before she goes, let me as your old friend, and also as in some sort your pastor, give you a word of advice as to the matter. Do not be so anxious as to pleasing people; you are too much inclined, I see, to care more for the displeasure you may excite, than for the actual wrongdoing."

"I cannot bear any one to be angry with me," said Louisa, with a pitiful face.

"It is not pleasant," returned Marc, "but, in the course of right, you must learn to put up with anger and *misconstruction*."

"Perhaps it is because I know I am wrong every way at present, which makes me so frightened of every body. But I should never be afraid to tell you, whatever fault I had committed."

"I should not spare you, I promise you," said Marc, at the same time gazing at her with pitying kindness. "Good-by, poor child."

"What shall I say to mamma?" cried Louise, relapsing into alarm.

"Ah! I may as well save you that little suffering. Ask Mrs. Templar if she will be so kind as to see me."

"M. Marc," said Louisa, overflowing with gratitude, "I will try and follow your advice; I will copy Ismay, and then I shall be all right; shan't I?"

He smiled, and said, —

"Yes, she's a very good model; but I have preached enough for one day. Go to mamma now."

Mrs. Templar came with her stateliest manner; her lips closely compressed, as if neither persuasion nor torture should make her open them. There was really something imposing in her appearance. Marc, however, was the last man in the world to be embarrassed either by coldness or hauteur. His heart was always so thoroughly in the work he had on hand, whatever it might be, that he had a very minimum of self-consciousness. He drew a chair to the sofa on which Mrs. Templar had seated herself, and told her, in a respectful but perfectly straightforward way, the heads of Louisa's confession.

"You see," he concluded, "that it was no premeditated fault. Miss Templar erred from a kind-hearted impulse; the inexperience of her age got her

to the scrape. As one of Gustave Gastineau's earliest friends, I intend to counsel him as to the course he ought to pursue; and when I have explained to him the actual truth of the case, that Mdlle. Templar never supposed that the promise he obtained from her meant more than met the ear, he will withdraw claims evidently based on a misunderstanding."

"He has no claims on her," said Mrs. Templar.

Marc certainly heard the words, but he perceived no movement of the speaker's lips.

"I allude," he said, "to his relieving Mdlle. Templar's scruples."

A bitter, satirical twist of her features was the only answer Mrs. Templar vouchsafed. Marc, therefore, rose to take his leave.

"You do not go as an accredited ambassador from me, M. de Lantry. What you do, you do on your own account. As for that — person you call your friend, he counts as zero in Miss Templar's life; his bit can never cross hers; you had better make him understand that."

Marc bowed and left the room. As soon as he was out of hearing, Mrs. Templar called Louisa, and said, —

"Why are you not practising? you forget that I can't afford to pay masters for nothing."

As long as life lasted, Louisa never lost the recollection of the violent contradiction between her feelings and her employments on that day. She endeavoured to sing, but there was a tightness in her throat which strangled all sounds. She took to one of Herz's brilliant pieces, then in vogue — variations on the march of *La Violette*.

"You are playing out of time," remarked Mrs. Templar, pitilessly; "practise that passage for a quarter of an hour — look at your watch."

Before the quarter of an hour had elapsed, Thérèse came to say that Mdlle. Antoinette begged to know if madame or mademoiselle could receive her. Louisa jumped up from the music-stool.

"Stay where you are," said Mrs. Templar, in English; then in French to Thérèse, she added, "Beg Mdlle. Antoinette to excuse us, we are particularly engaged."

As soon as Thérèse was gone, Mrs. Templar said to Louisa, —

"If you had a spark of proper feeling, or any self-respect, the sister of that man is one of the last persons you should wish to see."

"I wanted to ask her to forgive me, that was all."

"Unstable as water, you'll never come to good, you'll fail in everything. You don't know what you would be after, or what you really wish, for two minutes together."

Louisa resumed her practising.

A couple of hours later, a letter from Marc was brought to her by Ismay. What a balm there was for Louisa in Ismay's tender kiss — in the gentleness with which Marc's affianced wife spoke to her.

"This is a letter from M. de Lantry, mamma," said Louisa, as she broke the seal.

"Oh, indeed!"

Marc, in brief words, informed Louisa that he had seen Gustave, that Gustave was impressed with the idea that Louisa was not a free agent — in short, that *nothing* would satisfy him, but receiving from Louisa's

own lips, the assurance that she desired to be set free from her promise. Marc strongly advised Louisa not to shrink from the ordeal; she owed it to Gustave to act with perfect frankness. "Men," he wrote, "are easily misled by women's vagueness and inclination to half-measures. You must now say, No, clearly; it is the greatest kindness you can do Gustave, under the circumstances. I wished to have spared you the trial of an interview. Bear this in mind, that what you suffer is nothing to what you have inflicted, and you will be willing to accept the pain. Ismay can bring me your answer. Always your affectionate well-wisher,

"M. DE LANTRY."

Louisa, after reading the letter, carried it to her mother. Mrs. Templar, without looking up from the work she was busy with, said, —

"It really does not concern me. I told you before that I had washed my hands of all interference in your fate."

Louisa flushed; she said, —

"A mother should not forsake her child in trouble." Then she turned to Ismay, "Tell M. de Lantry, I will see M. Gustave Gastineau at four to-morrow afternoon." Louisa named that hour, as the one at which Gustave would be at liberty. "Ismay, would you mind being with me at that interview? I shall need a friend by me."

Ismay answered with quiet firmness, —

"I will come." She whispered, as she left Louisa, "Be of good cheer, you are going to do right."

"Always appealing to strangers for help," said Mrs. Templar.

"You refused me yours," returned Louisa.

"How do you know that I shall permit you to receive this noble swain of yours in my drawing-room."

"I took it for granted that you would not oblige me to ask Madame von Ehardtman to allow me to see Gustave in *her* drawing-room; or I can meet him on the stairs, or in the street, I don't care. I *will* see him; he has a right to fair dealing, even though I were a princess, and I will not be frightened out of doing what a good man tells me I ought to do. I have striven all I can to make you take pity on me. I have owned my fault; I put myself at your mercy; I would have borne any punishment without a word; but to throw me off, to deny me a mother's help, when I want it so sorely, leaving me nothing to rest on but the compassion of strangers; — and I'll accept it, thankfully, thankfully, and pray to God to bless them for it."

The last words were uttered in a high, unnatural tone, and then Louisa rushed into her own room.

Mrs. Templar was startled; she had goaded Louisa into open rebellion, the very thing the marquis had warned her not to do. But to goad and to irritate, was a necessity of Mrs. Templar's nature. As soon as she had driven her victim or adversary into loss of self-command, she felt soothed, and began to negotiate for peace. She was, in truth, thankful, even grateful to M. de Lantry for bringing about a dissolution of Louisa's ill-advised promise, yet she could not help *doing that* which would have prevented most men from

interfering in the business. Louisa's storm of passion had dissipated Mrs. Templar's resentment.

“Mademoiselle has so bad a migraine she cannot come to table,” said Thérèse.

“Beg her to try and take some potage; eating is often a cure for a nervous headache,” said Mrs. Templar, in her most good-natured voice.

But Louisa could swallow nothing; her temples were beating, her heart palpitating painfully; she felt as if fire were running through her veins.

“I *must* be quiet, Thérèse; I must be left alone and in the dark. I shall be well soon, if I remain quiet.”

Thérèse, of course, sided with mademoiselle against madame.

“Mademoiselle wishes to be left alone; the only thing she asks for is to be left alone,” said Thérèse, sycophantically.

Mrs. Templar took the hint; the tables were turned; she was she who was now unwilling to face Louisa. At the same time Thérèse was again sent to inquire if Louisa would come into the salon, or preferred having a cup of tea sent to her. Louisa begged she might have her tea in her own room. Thérèse then helped her to dress, and put her fairly into bed. Mrs. Templar went to see her, and asked if the pain in her head was better? Louisa answered, —

“It is better, thank you.”

“A good sleep will set you all to rights. Good-night.”

“Good-night,” said Louisa.

Louisa was at the breakfast-table next morning, looking feverish. Mrs. Templar behaved as if nothing

had ruffled their intercourse. Louisa's manner was constrained and reserved; she never once used the word "mamma." Without waiting to be told, she sat down to the piano.

"If your head aches, don't practise, Louisa."

"Thank you, I am pretty well," and she continued her exercise of scales.

In the middle of the day, Mrs. Templar proposed a walk.

"I must be at home at four o'clock."

"It is not yet one," answered Mrs. Templar; "you have plenty of time."

They went to the terrace in the Tuileries Gardens overlooking the river, and walked there for an hour in silence.

"I wonder if all these people I see walking about are as unhappy as I am?" thought Louisa.

It was too early for fashionables to be abroad, but there were young wives accompanied by babies and nurses, and older matrons with young girls by their side; one or more couples were walking in the more retired alleys, deep in conversation.

"No one looks unhappy but me," was what Louise thought, and yet every one of those she gazed on except the babies, had their share of care.

When she said, "We had better go home," Mrs. Templar agreed with lamb-like meekness; she was alarmed by Louisa's appearance; she did not like the look of her bloodshot eyes. Mrs. Templar, with all her belief in her own infallibility, had to suffer the penalty every one pays who inflicts unnecessary pain.

As the hour neared for the interview with Gustave

Louisa had cold and hot fits; she could scarcely force herself to sit still, or when still, to control the trembling of her limbs. Ismay came according to her promise a little before four. Marc had warned her only to tap at the door, in order not to startle Louisa by a ring.

"She will be sadly frightened, poor little thing," he said. "Ismay, be brave enough to prevent Gustave from worrying her. Fioretta would have managed him better than such a little dove as you."

"I can peck pretty sharply at times," replied Ismay.

"Then pray make use of your beak on this occasion."

When Louisa heard Gustave's ring at the door, she clutched at Ismay's arm; but when Gustave entered the room, she seemed to recover her presence of mind. Mrs. Templar sate in a chair by one of the windows, and never raised her head or even her eyes; to all appearance she was ignorant that any visitor had entered the room. Ismay, full of pity for Gustave, broke through the rule of not shaking hands with gentlemen; and held out her hand to Gustave. By so doing she brought him close to Louisa.

He began at once, —

"I have come to ask you, Louisa — —"

Mrs. Templar very nearly forgot her assumed indifference at this familiarity.

"I have come," said Gustave, "to ask you, Louisa, if what M. de Lantry told me yesterday, of your wish to be freed from the promise you gave me at La Forêt, emanates of free will from yourself?"

"It does," said Louisa, speaking low but very distinctly.

Gustave was silent. He took hold of a chair, and leaned on the top rail.

"You may ask this of your own accord, and yet not because you yourself really wish to take back your word."

"I do wish to be freed from my promise, without reference to the wishes of any other persons," replied Louisa.

"Do you love any one else?"

Mrs. Templar looked up angrily, and Ismay gave Gustave a glance of reproach.

"I wish to be free because I do not love you," said Louisa, with a flash from her eyes that seemed to scorch him, for he laid one hand over his face.

After a little, he leaned down towards her and said, —

"Will you untie this ribbon?" and he showed her a broadish black ribbon hanging round his neck, to which was fastened a common glass locket containing, as Ismay could see, a curl of fair hair.

Louisa shrank back with unmistakable disgust. Gustave's features contracted; a deadly paleness overspread them. His mouth took a frightful expression, his look was a curse.

"You refuse so small a favour?" he said. "Ah, well, so let it be. Farewell, Mdlle. Templar. I don't know yet what will be the consequence of this day's act of yours — no good to either of us, I fear. It's a terrible moment when one loses faith in a creature highly prized, dearly loved. I think you have killed all goodness in me."

"Enough of this theatrical bombast," said Mrs. Templar. "You have had your answer, Monsieur

Gustave Gastineau, you have nothing more to do here. wonder you have not more pride than to go on wailing yourself in public."

"You are a fiend," exclaimed Gustave fiercely.

Ismay jumped up and took him by the arm, whispering, —

"Pray go away, M. Gustave."

"If you don't leave the room directly," said Mrs. Templar, "I shall ring for the concierge to put you out." Ismay tried to impel him towards the door saying, —

"Pray, M. Gustave, go; act like a gentleman for your own sake."

He obeyed. As he was leaving the room his eyes met those of Louisa.

"You are free," he said.

When Ismay came back Louisa threw herself on her friend's neck and with a violent shudder exclaimed, —

"I am frightened."

CHAPTER II.

By the Sad Salt Waves.

FROM this time Louisa ceased to be the child she had been. She and her mother observed a strict silence as to her entanglement with Gustave. This was but natural on Louisa's part; but that Mrs. Templar should forego the solace of all reproaches and recriminations was not to have been expected. It was just another of those instances in which Louisa suddenly assumed the upper hand, after having acted like her mother's object slave. The first time Mrs. Templar had opened on the subject, Louisa had said, with calm determination, —

"If you abuse him, I shall go and ask for pardon."

Louisa spoke as one in earnest. Mrs. Templar called her a fool — but she took the hint.

They went to the sea-side — to Dieppe — not then the renowned bathing quarters it has become. The Templars had quiet lodgings, and Louisa passed the mornings as she had done in Paris — practising her singing, and piano, and harp. In the afternoon she went to the sea-shore, accompanied by the little daughter of the landlady, Mrs. Templar caring little either for the sea or for walking for walking's sake.

Many and many were the successive afternoons that Louisa sat on the beach, watching the rolling of the waves, trying in vain to find a rule by which

to know when the larger would swallow up the smaller; many and many an hour she passed, hearing the rustling of unseen life among the shingle, listening to the song of the lark above, or idly gathering shells. But count, or listen, or dream, Gustave, M. de Blacourt, the Ehrtmanns, Marc, Major Templar, were for ever in her mind; they shifted places, formed new combinations; but were always present to her thoughts. What better could she have done? was a perpetually returning question. Sometimes memory recalled other scenes, further away — those Versailles days would reappear, M. Granson and Laura figure again before her, and she would say to herself, "Nothing has ever gone right with me since."

Now and then she almost regretted that she had refused her cousin; she should have had a comfortable English home, and relations who would have cared for her. She should have had a gay life, and perhaps Major Templar might not have been so odd had she known him better; she could not have been worse off than she was now. Never once did Louisa pursue a similar train of reasoning with regard to Gustave. She did grieve for having pained him (she had no conception how deep the wound she had inflicted), but there she stopped; she never had a moment's regret for having got free of her promise. She had put her finger on the true cause of her distaste for her former playmate, when she told Marc de Lantry that she was ashamed of Gustave when she saw him by the side of real gentlemen. What did make her downright miserable, was the belief that her dear old friend, M. de Blacourt, had given her up. She longed to write and beg for *his forgiveness*; nevertheless, a month passed

by, and she was still longing to make an attempt at reconciliation.

One morning the post brought a letter from Isma announcing that the day for her marriage was fixed and requesting Louisa to be one of her bridesmaids. Louisa laid the letter before her mother. Mrs. Templar inquired why she must read it.

"It is from Ismay; she invites us to her wedding. What am I to say?"

Mrs. Templar hesitated, then replied, —

"It will be inconvenient to me to accept the invitation."

"Very well," said Louisa, and sat down to write an answer.

"What makes you in such a hurry?"

"I must give Ismay time to look out for another bridesmaid," and Louisa's pen went swiftly over the paper.

"I suppose you are disappointed, and will lame to your friend the cruelty of your case?"

"No, indeed! I have not the slightest wish to go to the wedding, except for one reason."

"And what is that!"

"I want to see M. de Blacourt; his anger makes me unhappy."

Mrs. Templar made no answer to this; but when Louisa was folding her letter, she said, —

"If you are particularly anxious to accept Mdlle von Ehrtmann's invitation, you may do so."

This appearance of kindness once more softened Louisa towards her mother. She thought of her own *sullenness* and resentment, and said, with one of her *enthusiastic* outbursts, —

"You are very good to me, mamma; too good, my half. I really do not wish to be present at the marriage; they are very kind to ask me; still, I am sure M. Marc could not like to see me as one of my mother's bridesmaids."

"Nonsense," returned Mrs. Templar, who had remarked the resumption of the term "mamma," which Louisa had avoided so sedulously of late.

"But there is one thing I should be so glad to do," said Louisa.

"Give them a wedding present, I suppose?"

"Oh! yes, of course. I have some of my uncle's money left, haven't I? But that's not it, mamma; may I write to the marquis?"

"What for? If he chooses to neglect us, it's not our part to make advances to him. Let him alone."

"He is not neglecting us; he is angry with me."

"It's no business of his what you do."

"Yes it is; he has always been so good to me."

"I don't recollect any such mighty proofs of his kindness. If he had been really your friend, he would not have left you in the lurch as he did; that pastor behaved better."

"M. de Blacourt was angry at my having done wrong; he was my friend; he did care for me; I am sure of it; at all events I care for him."

"Let him alone, I tell you, and he'll come round. Men are all the better of a little neglect."

Louisa did not comprehend this sort of argument.

"May I write, mamma? I do so wish it."

"I wonder that a young lady, such an adept at clandestine arrangements, should think it necessary

to ask her mother's permission for the sake of the letter."

"Mamma, you are too cruel."

"Just now I was too kind."

"Mamma, mamma, you try me too much! drive me to evil! — this is the last time I will give you leave for anything;" and away went Louisa to the writing-table, where she wrote for some time. She then left the room, and presently after, Mrs. Templar heard steps below the window, and looking out, saw Louisa with the landlady's little girl going a round the street. Louisa had two letters ostentatiously displayed in her hand.

When Louisa returned, neither mother nor daughter alluded to M. de Blacourt. Mrs. Templar contented herself with sarcasms at Madame von Ehrtmann having gone to Paris to marry her daughters to Englishmen, and having to put up with a poor French pastor.

"M. Marc is not poor," said Louisa. "Madame von Ehrtmann told me, that if he had been as poor as he seemed, he should not have married Ismay. He had been putting aside money to help to build the Protestant church."

"Oh! so he has bought a wife instead of a church."

"That money is to be kept for the church; but it need not save any more."

"You seem very well acquainted with his concerns."

"I was told; I did not ask."

"What an old fox that woman is! she took very good care to keep everything secret from me."

"She told me," said Louisa, "and I suppose she expected me to tell you."

"Always contradicting your mother; if you go on this way, Louisa, it will be long enough before you are married; men watch how girls behave to their mothers, and judge accordingly. Suppose I am ever wrong, you are not the one who ought to set me right; however, go on in your own way, and see what you'll make of it — no blessing will ever follow disobedience and impertinence to a parent. Remember the fifth commandment; it is the only one that contains a promise of reward in this life. I have brought you up, spared on myself to give you advantages, done a thousand times more for you than Madame von Wurtmann has done for her daughters, and yet how differently they behave to her — their mother is their first object, while you — what are you staring at me for, in that rude manner? Go to your room, miss, and study your catechism."

Similar scenes between Mrs. Templar and Louisa were now of constant occurrence; they were becoming a rule and not the exception. Mrs. Templar's temper, always bitter, was growing cruel. It is to be supposed, however, that in her cooler moments, she repented of her harshnesses to her daughter; for always after some outbreak, she bestowed some indulgence. Louisa, though well sensible to any proof of relenting kindness, was growing to long for escape from such constant nagging. It was a bad school for a young heart; in fact, Louisa's youth was already blighted — mildewed. She had none of a girl's anticipations of happiness — none of those hopes which young creatures have, that they will grasp happiness, where others have failed.

Without being worldly, Louisa began at Dieppe to contemplate marriage, not as the result of a great and tender devotion, but as an escape from what was day by day becoming an intolerable tyranny. Loveless homes make loveless marriages.

For several days after sending her letter to M. de Blacourt, Louisa expected, and expected in vain, an answer. Mrs. Templar, who had watched her disappointment morning after morning, could not let the opportunity slip. She observed, "You will learn in time, Louisa, to abide by your mother's advice."

On the afternoon of the seventh day, Louisa was at her favourite resort on the sea-shore, very sad and very sorry, when her little companion left off hunting for crabs, and called out, —

"Here's a tall gentleman coming, mademoiselle."

Louisa jumped to her feet, for she recognized the marquis.

"I am so happy to see you — so much obliged to you." He took her offered hand, but he did not look pleased. "I was so afraid you would never forgive me," she added in a lower voice.

"My dear young lady, I must answer you as I did your mother a little while ago, in Figaro's words: *Qu'est ce que cela me faisait à moi?*"

All the brightness which the sight of him had brought into Louisa's eyes, vanished at this answer.

"It sounds hard, I know," continued the marquis "but after all, it is the truth. I am neither your father, nor your uncle, nor your brother. Accept my speech as a proof that I consider you have done *nothing* to offend me, and consequently, as I am

tolerably reasonable man, I am not offended, but am, as ever, your very humble servant."

Louisa's heart swelled to suffocation; this profession of indifference hurt her far more than would a torrent of invective, or a declaration of unrelenting anger. She walked on in silence by his side; it seemed to her that he had suddenly become a stranger to her. After they had walked thus some distance, M. de Blacourt said, —

"I preferred to say what I have now said to writing it, because I can explain away some of its apparent harshness. It is necessary, or I hold it to be so, that you should not place me in the false position with your family or with strangers, of one with any right to guide you. I shall always be ready to serve you whenever you call upon me."

"I am too unhappy," said Louisa, and her voice quivered. "I can please no one. I don't know how to do right."

"That is true," he replied in an unflinching voice; "you yield to every impulse — you never reflect."

"Yes, I do; but it's always too late. I can see now how foolish I was. Don't turn your back on me, this time. Don't, pray don't!"

The sternest moralist that ever walked on earth would have been melted by the entreaty of that passionate young voice, aided, as it was, by the pleading of the loveliest eyes that ever looked on man.

"There, there; let the past be past," said M. de Blacourt.

"But will you scold me, and be very severe to me, just as you used to be?"

"*Make some allowance, Mdlle. Louisa, for my spir-*

its not being so elastic as yours. You have given my affection for you a shock, remember."

"But you do care for me, a little?"

"I don't put off my affections as I do a coat. You will do many more foolish things in your life, Louisa: if we are to continue friends, let there be no more concealments — no deceits — no falsehood."

M. de Blacourt's voice showed rising anger. Louisa fathomed now, at this instant, how much she had grieved her friend; how much she had fallen in his opinion. She could have thrown herself on the ground, and kissed his feet, if she could have hoped for pardon or to have been reinstated in that place she had fallen from; but instinct told her to be quiet — to put on a seeming calm. They spoke no more till they reached the lodgings.

M. de Blacourt declined Mrs. Templar's invitation to stay dinner; he would see them again next morning. The following day he came immediately after breakfast, and proposed that they should drive to Arques, to see the ruins of the chateau. He was very conversible, very courteous — too courteous to please Louisa; the change in his manner towards her kept tears very near her eyes. She restrained them, put on a cheerful air, admired the country, picked a bouquet of wild flowers. She used a thousand little innocent artifices to obtain a kind word or smile from the marquis. The next day and the next day it was much the same thing — an excursion to some place in the neighbourhood; the same courtesy, the same agreeable conversation, displaying a fund of information on all subjects. Louisa plied M. de Blacourt with questions, *listened* to his answers as though they were oracles, had

eady smile, showed the same willingness to be sed. She went to bed wearied to death, saying to elf, "How can he be so unforgiving? he knows he is punishing me; yet he does care for me; he frightened when he saw me fall down the bank."

If the marquis was punishing Louisa, he was suffering more than she was — she did not in the least understand his feelings towards her. Mrs. Templar detected their true nature, and rather enjoyed her position as an on-looker; never had she been so able in her temper.

After a stay at Dieppe for ten days, the marquis mentioned one evening as he was saying, "good-night," that he purposed returning to Paris the following morning.

"I suppose you will soon be coming back?" he said to Mrs. Templar.

"I am not sure," she replied, "that I shall go back to Paris. I have an idea of returning to settle in my native country."

Louisa looked surprised. This was the first time she had heard of such a plan: up to that moment her father had always spoken of their return to the Hotel Hollande as a matter of course. The marquis replied, —

"Then perhaps I ought to say farewell, instead of adieu?"

"I have decided on no plan yet," continued Mrs. Templar; "my movements depend on a letter I am expecting."

"Under any circumstance," said M. de Blacourt, "you will let me hear of you occasionally?"

"*Louisa shall write,*" returned Mrs. Templar.

"Adieu, and all good attend you both!" Louisa clung to his hand. "God bless you, Louisa!" and he was gone.

Louisa went to the window, and stood for some ten minutes with her face pressed against the glass. Presently Mrs. Templar said cheerfully, —

"I have paid him off for his telling me our affairs were no business of his."

"Are we going to England, mamma?"

"Of course we are, but not till next spring; what should we do there in the winter?"

Louisa went to bed very much comforted. England was terra incognita for her; all her habits, all her friends were continental.

CHAPTER III.

One Wedding makes another.

THE month of November found the Templars again in Paris, in their entresol of the Hotel de Hollande. Elisa's life was what it had been before the discovery of her promise to Gustave; if there was any change, it did not appear on the surface.

Elsmay was gone away with her husband to one of the chief towns of a department in the north-east of France, where Marc had been appointed minister of the Reformed Church; but Madame von Ehrtmann still retained her apartment in the hotel. She had taken her daughter to Baden Baden to console her for the loss of her sister's society; they returned the same week as the Templars. Madame von Ehrtmann had never been affected by Mrs. Templar's frigid manner, but she had turned away to her as if to the most congenial of friends; indeed, the Hanoverian baronne ventured on conversations with her English acquaintance that no one else would have had the courage to broach. It was chiefly for the reason, that Madame von Ehrtmann was afraid of her, that Mrs. Templar, while abusing her, preferred the baronne's society to that of any one in Paris.

"My dear soul," said Madame von Ehrtmann, at her first visit, after having, with great apparent candour, told only what she wished to tell respecting Elisa's marriage; "I have come in person to invite

you to my Thursday evenings. I have sent no card to the Héberts; she is nursing — quite a pattern mother — *the* cousin has somehow or other got a situation as private secretary to some man with a system, he is safe on the other side of the river — of course, I pass *him* over also, so you can have no reason for refusing to let your lovely Louisa brighten my poor salon. I am very disinterested, for no one will observe Fioretti while Louisa is present; Dieppe has added to your daughter's charms; her complexion is even more transparent, her eyes softer. Mon Dieu! she may wear a crown yet. I hear that the marquis went to see you at Dieppe."

"Where could you have already heard that?" asked Mrs. Templar.

"Raoul de Villemont told me. Between us, my dear, that little young man and his mother keep a sharp eye on the marquis."

"Do they? What for, I wonder?" said Mrs. Templar in her most lamblike voice.

"It's easy to guess: should the marquis have no children of his own, Raoul, you understand, hopes to inherit."

"Oh! now I understand."

"I would not give much for his chance," continued the German lady; "M. de Blacourt is still a very fine man, erect, not very grey, an air of melancholy mystery about him — he would be a formidable rival to the young vicomte with some girls."

"Is Fioretta debating between the two?" inquired Mrs. Templar, slyly.

"Pon my honour, I wish she had the alternative *in her power*," cried the baronne, in a voice that

sounded honest; "no — no! Fioretta must be satisfied, as her sister has been, with something less exalted."

From the very first of Madame von Ehrtmann's *réunions*, Mrs. Templar remarked that Raoul de Villemont was often by Louisa's side, that he never failed to seek her when M. de Blacourt was talking to her, and that whenever the younger gentleman approached, the elder always ceded his place.

By-and-by Vicomte Raoul's mother appeared at one of Madame von Ehrtmann's Thursdays; was presented to Mrs. Templar, and announced to that lady, at that instant cased in triple mail of reserve, that she had long desired to make her acquaintance, and that of her amiable daughter. The following day Madame de Villemont called on Mrs. Templar, who, mortified at being found by a Court lady in a small entresol, was more icy than ever; but the French lady was nothing rebuffed, her manner was even caressing to Louisa. After his mother's visit Raoul left his card; Mrs. Templar flung it into the fire, saying, —

"Remember this, Louisa, I'll have no flirtations."

"I am not inclined to flirt," said Louisa.

M. de Villemont now occasionally was one of the guests when the Templars dined on Sunday with M. de Blacourt; he spoke scarcely at all to Louisa, devoting all his powers of conversation to Louisa's mother. Louisa began to hate these weekly dinners, they were becoming altogether ceremonious. Had she felt herself on the same happy terms as formerly with the marquis, she would have asked him why he brought his cousin there to spoil her pleasure.

Three months had passed since the Templars' return from Dieppe — three months of a dull, sultry

calm; all that agitated Louisa she locked within her heart. March was at hand, and she trusted that her mother had been in earnest in saying that she would go to England in the spring; she had the restlessness of one whose life has no wholesome aim. She rose one Thursday morning to go through her usual mill-horse routine — nothing in sky or on earth, out of doors or in doors, predicted that that day was more than the preceding one, to mark an epoch in her life.

At breakfast Mrs. Templar received a letter.

"I don't know the hand — the postmark is Lamberton." She opened the envelope, and drew out wedding cards, — "Major and Mrs. Templar."

"Who has he married, I wonder?" she exclaimed, and examining the envelope, she found "Ada Wilton" printed on the turn over. "Well, she has managed it at last, thanks to you! The idea of that common-place creature being mistress of Lamberton — ugly and old into the bargain! It is enough to make your father rise from his grave," and Mrs. Templar threw the cards to, or rather at Louisa.

Louisa said calmly, —

"I think she always cared for my cousin."

"You think! *my* cousin, indeed! prettily you treated your cousin!"

"He is not offended, or he would not have sent cards."

"She sent them, I'll be bound, to crow over you."

"I don't see that she could have done it otherwise than in kindness; she must have been very much obliged to me for saying, 'No, no,' to him."

"Grant me patience!" exclaimed Mrs. Templar, excited by Louisa's opposition; "I believe you were born

to drive me mad. Slave, slave, as I do for you — spare nothing on you — and I get only impertinence as a reward.”

Here Mrs. Templar began to cry.

“Mamma, do believe me, I don’t purposely offend you — I do try to please you — I really do — why else do I go on all day at that weary music, but because you wish it?”

“That’s right, reproach me.”

“It is not meant as a reproach; I would do anything to content you; if I had believed that you would have liked me to marry my cousin I would have done it — I don’t care about myself.”

“Very fine — when you were engaged to that low fellow — do you fancy Major Templar would have condescended to take you, after he found out what you were; Louisa, no blessing will ever follow you —”

“You have said that very often, mamma, but I can’t believe that a girl is ruined for life because she has once made a silly promise.”

“That’s your opinion, is it? Does M. de Blacourt behave to you now as he formerly did? A girl’s reputation, Miss Templar, is for ever tarnished by a clandestine affair. Do you think all those young men you meet at the Von Ehrtmanns’ haven’t your story in their mouths? I can tell you that vulgar wretch has you in his power for life.”

“Mamma, have pity,” gasped Louisa — she was the colour of ashes.

Mrs. Templar had gone further than she either thought or intended; she did not know how to retract what *she had said*. Suddenly assuming an admonitory

manner, that was at the same time apologetic, she said, —

“Come, come Louisa, don't let us make mountains of mole hills. I was angry — I suppose you have said things in anger you didn't mean — I was vexed at your cousin's speedy marriage — he might as well have tried his luck with you a second time. Come, now, don't look as if you were condemned to death.”

Louisa sighed and sighed, as if her heart were like to break.

“Let us go to England, mamma, and get away from all these people who despise me.”

“Nobody despises you; I told you I spoke in anger. Can't you forgive your mother?”

Louisa put her arms round Mrs. Templar's neck — laid her head wearily on her mother's shoulder. Mrs. Templar was softened — it was too late — she could not withdraw the poisoned arrow she had shot.

That night, after returning from Madame von Ehrtmann's, Louisa said to her mother, in an unmoved voice, —

“M. de Villemont proposed to me this evening, and I accepted him.”

“What did you do that for?” almost shrieked Mrs. Templar, falling into a chair.

“Because it suited me, mamma, and M. de Villemont was all respect, I assure you; he said that he spoke to myself, being aware that English girls were allowed the privilege of choosing their husbands themselves. He then asked me frankly if I would marry him, and I said yes, if he persisted, after what I had to explain, and then I told him exactly all that had occurred between Gustave Gastineau and me. He an

swered that he had heard something of the matter, but no one could blame me, and that it made no difference to him; that's all — oh, yes, I forgot — his mother is to come and speak to you to-morrow. This time I was resolved not to say no."

"Suppose I refuse my consent?"

"You will not do that; you cannot expect anything better for me, after my conduct. I am quite of your opinion that no particular blessing will follow me in his world. M. de Villemont is a gentleman — I beg his pardon, a nobleman. I shall be a viscountess; I am sure you will be glad of that."

"Louisa, I don't know you in this mood."

"Look here, mamma; you have chafed at me for years; you don't love me as other mothers love their daughters, I cannot say why; I am not happy with you, let me try to be happy with some one else."

"All you are saying has no foundation but in your imagination, Louisa; you have done a silly, a very silly thing. You have no money, and no Frenchman marries a portionless girl."

"No money?" repeated Louisa; "my uncle Templar told me he had given me five thousand pounds."

"He gave it to me," said Mrs. Templar, "to do with as I thought best for you."

"That's the same thing," returned Louisa. "Don't let us talk any more about it to-night; my head is splitting."

The next morning Mrs. Templar was with M. de Blacourt before nine o'clock. So urgent was the message she sent to him, that he went to her in his dressing-gown. He listened to the news of Louisa's *recipitate acceptance* of his cousin, without once inter-

rupting the narrative. "What *am* I to do?" were Mrs. Templar's concluding words.

"There's nothing to be said against Raoul," returned the marquis. "He is neither dissipated nor extravagant; he is attached to his mother, and that's a good sign of him; he is of a suitable age, and bears an honourable name. His fortune is small, but he will not find it difficult to obtain some post under the government — some *sous-prefecture*."

"You don't understand," said Mrs. Templar; "I am not objecting to M. de Villemont; the objection is more likely to come from him. Louisa has no fortune — if she had only acted with any sense or prudence!"

"Love laughs at both, madame."

"Love!" exclaimed Mrs. Templar; "Louisa cares no more for the man than she does for that cat, touching with the point of her boot the beautiful Angora cat, basking on the rug before the fire."

"I did not solely allude to Louisa, but to Raoul who astonishes me by the way he has set aside in memorial French customs as to proposals of marriage. Then recurring to Mrs. Templar's assertion of Louisa's fortune, he added, "Surely you once told me that Louisa's uncle had settled something more than equivalent to a hundred thousand francs on her."

"He gave me five thousand pounds to use for his benefit. I made an unfortunate investment, and, in fact, the money is lost."

"What all?"

"All," said Mrs. Templar.

"Who advised the investment or speculation?"

"That has nothing to do with the matter," said

Templar, and a flush passed over her pale face; cannot doubt my word?"

"At a whit: I asked the question with a view to some opinion as to whether you had lost your money by ill luck, or been swindled out of it. Of course you employed some man of business to investigate the affair?"

"No, I did not."

"Dear lady, half confidences are useless always, and dangerous. You must be clear with me, if you want my advice or my help."

Templar sat silent for some minutes, then she said, —

"You know how I have pinched myself to save money for her out of my income. I have never known happiness — always sacrificing myself, and working for it. I let her father mortgage half my property, and he never cared a straw for me — never. I was well towards her when I trusted her money to her. I wanted her to be rich and independent, and never feel the slights I had felt in my youth, never forced to marry because she was poor. For years I have scarcely allowed myself decent clothes to wear, and she was always well dressed. I suffered cold while she was warm; she has had the best of the who teach duchesses, and all but my gown is the best and yet she does not love me — she is ready to go away with the first man that asks her."

The marquis, in listening to Mrs. Templar, made two observations; first, that nothing makes a person so miserable as the sense of a personal error; secondly, that Mrs. Templar, with all her faults of temper, was a woman of self-sacrifice — and he held self-sacrifice,

even in a false direction, as worthy of esteem. This was what made him avoid any hint of blame, and say, soothingly, —

“No one can doubt that in all you have done you have had Louisa’s good in view. She has acted foolishly; her passionate nature leads her constantly into danger; but, my good friend, there is nothing to be done now but to tell her the fate of her little fortune.”

“I cannot do it; I cannot lower myself to my own child. You must tell M. de Villemont that I disapprove of my daughter’s marrying a Roman Catholic.”

The marquis laughed.

“For what do you take me that you propose to me to be the bearer of a falsehood? As you have done me the honour to consult me, I shall tell you what I conceive to be your best course. Go home and explain your situation to Louisa; let her decide what to do — that is, how Raoul is to be informed that she has no fortune. Truth is ever safe. Suppose you get rid of Raoul, the same case must arise again. Louisa believes she has money — the sooner she is undeceived the better. I am greatly mistaken in her if she will not be more eager than yourself to conceal the share you had in the loss of her money. Above all, don’t consider me bound to any deception with Raoul or Louisa.”

The last observation fired Mrs. Templar.

“You think Louisa so very superior to me. She never told you of her prince?”

“What prince?”

Mrs. Templar answered by relating what she knew

of the idyll of the crown prince. When she had finished, M. de Blacourt said, —

“You had better let her marry Raoul.”

“You don’t suppose he would take her without money?”

“Why not? — since he asked her to marry him without taking any of our usual precautions to ascertain what dowry she had.”

“As for that,” said Mrs. Templar, “Frenchmen always take it for granted that English girls have money.”

“We are arguing in a vicious circle,” said the marquis; “either wait to avow that she is portionless till the contract of marriage is about to be drawn up, or say so now. This last plan will be the wisest — it will prevent a scandal that must injure Louisa. Somehow or other, if this marriage is broken off, that story of her entanglement with young Gastineau will get abroad, and serious misconstructions of both circumstances may ensue.”

“You are very anxious to force on this marriage,” exclaimed Mrs. Templar, angrily, and suspiciously.

“Mon Dieu! what a woman,” said the marquis half to himself. “You come of your own accord, madame, to ask my advice; I give it, and you directly imagine I have some ulterior views; explain to me what interest can I have other than your daughter’s in his business. Seek in every convolution of your brain for any other possible motive than her welfare; if you discover one, I will pay you down the lost fortune.”

“You irritate me, and then you take advantage of what I say; you have no feeling, no compassion for me, and yet God knows there isn’t a beggar in the

street needs it more;" and Mrs. Templar covered her face and sobbed aloud.

The marquis paced up and down the room.

"That's the way with your sex — tears, the moment they are proved in the wrong — what weapons has a man against a weeping woman? What in the name of heaven do you wish me to do?"

"Speak to Louisa — make her understand it all. I have no one to help me if you will not."

"Very well; I will speak to Louisa; I will call within a couple of hours."

Mrs. Templar said, "Thank you," in quite the humble tone of a victim, which very nearly provoked the marquis into another outbreak. He contented himself with ringing the bell so violently that the bell-rope remained in his hand.

"I had better go now," continued the lady in the same resigned voice.

"You cannot walk from here to the Rue de la Paix. Denis will get you a coach."

CHAPTER IV.

Victory.

LOUISA received the marquis with an air of defiance - it was assumed to hide embarrassment. Mrs. Temmar had said to Louisa at breakfast that M. de Blaurt was coming to speak to her about M. de Villefont, and, from the expression of her mother's face, Louisa took it for granted that the promised interview was not likely to be an agreeable one.

On entering the room the marquis's quick eye discerned on a console the *bouquet de rigueur*, with which, in Paris, the *futur* salutes the awakening of the *future*. Louisa saved the visitor the trouble of seeking for a suitable beginning to their conversation by saying, —

“I know you have come to lecture me about my having accepted your cousin out of my own head. Before you begin, I want to tell you that I have given my word once again, and this time I mean to keep it. M. de Villemont behaved very nobly to me” (the marquis's eyebrows went up an inch). “I told him all that hateful story about Gustave Gastineau, and he said it made no difference. I am dreadfully tired of always being found fault with, and so it was quite a pleasant novelty not to be treated as a criminal. As for caring for M. de Villemont more than for all the world, he did not ask me to do that — it's not the fashion in France. I intend to make him a good wife;

that is, as far as such an unfortunately faulty creature as I am can do anything good. I shall *adore* him, if he does not scold me from morning till night."

All this was said volubly and with flashing eyes.

"Calm yourself," began the marquis.

"I can't be calm," interrupted Louisa; "there's going to be a fuss. I believe nothing in the world can happen to me as to other girls. There was Ismay, she was allowed to marry in peace."

"Louisa, do you not consider me as your friend?"

"I don't know whether you are my friend or not," she went on, always with more excitement; "you have not been very kind to me lately. I feel as if I were all over stings; it does not do always to be severe — at least, not with me; I am not a spaniel. Since M. Marc went away, I have not heard one word of kind advice; always something ironical from you, as if hitting at people was the way to make them open their hearts and be candid."

"Bear with me now for a few seconds," said M. de Blacourt, quite overpowered. "I have not come to reproach or to lecture you. I am commissioned by your mother to make a painful disclosure to you."

Louisa fixed her eyes in surprise on the marquis. His face bore, very distinctly, marks of suffering; the mouth was drawn down, the cheeks had fallen, the eyes were sunk, and all the features were twitching nervously. Louisa's passion fell at once, as every woman's anger does fall at the sight of pain in the countenance of a man who has any sort of hold on her affections. She sat down and said, as she shaded her eyes with one hand, —

"What is it?"

The marquis informed her of the entire loss of the money which her uncle had given her, and of her mother's distress at having been the unwilling cause of the disaster.

"Poor soul!" added the marquis, "she has never allowed you to feel any of the effects of the loss; she has denied herself every luxury, almost every comfort, that you might have the same advantages as if you had had the money."

"Are you saying that, because you think I shall blame my mother? How well and how kindly you judge me," said Louisa, indignantly, and she was leaving the room.

"Stop a minute," cried the marquis.

"I am coming back, I just wish to assure mamma that I don't care about the money being lost."

"Wait a moment; there is a consequence attending that loss, which you don't think of." As she did not seem to catch his meaning, he added, "I allude to how it may affect M. de Villemont."

Louisa for a while did not answer, then she exclaimed, —

"Suspicion — suspicion, nothing but suspicion. From the earliest time I can remember, I never heard of good motives for any one's actions. It's all of a piece; I do believe I was not meant to be bad. I believe that if any one had ever seemed to care that I should be good, I could have been so. But always to be taught things for mere show off, always to be hearing praises of riches and rank, never to be allowed to like people because I felt inclined, has made me grow violent and hard. I was glad when M. de Villemont asked *me to marry him*. I long to get out of

such a mess of a life as mine is. Now, you know all about what I feel; if your cousin won't marry me, I'll go and be a sister of charity or a nun; I must be done with this horrid singing and dancing; I turn sick at the sight of a piano."

"You imagine I also have helped to do you evil," said the marquis.

"I care for you a great, great deal," answered Louisa, firmly, "but, lately you have added to my wretchedness; how unkind you were to me about Gustave Gastineau; how different from M. Marc. Dear, good M. Marc! I wish he knew how grateful I am to him. I hope, oh! so much, that he will always be happy."

Tears, for the first time, softened Louisa's eyes.

"M. de Lantry never had half the interest in you, I have had and still have."

"He was *sorry* for me," said Louisa, "and it is such a blessing to see that some one is sorry for you." Had Louisa looked at the marquis, she would not have thought him less full of pity for her than M. Marc. She went on in a subdued voice, "Will you go to M. de Villemont and say that I have not a penny, that I was ignorant of having no fortune last night? If he draws back, make him understand I shall not break my heart on his account."

M. de Blacourt really could not speak; every word she had said, had gone to his heart; he held out his hand to her. A hand is always expressive; Louisa's expressed no faith in the kindness or sympathy of the person in whose palm she placed hers.

In the course of an hour, M. de Blacourt returned

he Hotel de Hollande; he found Louisa sitting just where he had left her.

He said, abruptly, —

“M. de Villemont and his mother will be here shortly.”

Louisa’s eyes brightened, —

“You see, that there is some disinterestedness in the world.”

“You mistook me, if you fancied that I asserted there was none,” returned the marquis. “There is no need to continue the debate just now. You must prepare to meet your visitors with composure. May God bless and guide your future life, Louisa.”

“Thank you,” she said.

Her thoughts were distracted, and to tell the truth, she was somewhat indignant at the doubts the marquis had insinuated as to M. de Villemont’s indifference as to her having money or not. All through life she went on blundering in our estimate of the people about us. In those mistakes lie some of the greatest weaknesses of life.

This was what had passed between the Marquis de Blacourt and his heir presumptive. M. de Blacourt had announced that he was commissioned by Mrs. Templar to make known to Raoul and his mother the fact that Miss Templar was entirely without money.

The vicomte replied by a question, —

“That is very unusual, is it not, in the case of English young ladies of Miss Templar’s rank?”

M. de Villemont had gleaned from the Von Ehrens the social position of Louisa’s family.

The marquis gave the explanation as to how and why Louisa, though the child of the last heir of Lambertton, was barred from inheriting the estate.

"Surely," remarked the vicomte, "Mr. Templar having, as it were, taken away his niece's birthright would consider himself bound to make some provision for her."

"Mr. Templar had fulfilled that duty," said the marquis; "the money had been unfortunately invested and was totally lost."

"But Miss Templar's mother must have money," remarked M. de Villemont; "the fact of her living in the Rue de la Paix admits of no other supposition."

"Mrs. Templar lived on the jointure left her by her first husband," explained the marquis; "in the case of her daughter marrying with her consent, Mrs. Templar would either pay yearly as long as she lived, the amount of what would have been the interest of Louisa's money in the English funds, or she would insure her life for Louisa's benefit. The interest would be nearly four thousand francs."

"How old is Mrs. Templar?" asked Raoul.

The marquis's face, which had been clouded throughout the conversation, now darkened ominously. Raoul remarked this, and, without waiting for a reply to his question, added, —

"You are aware, my good cousin, that my income does not admit of my entirely overlooking fortune in my wife."

"True; therefore the more reason you should not have deviated from the usual road in our matrimonial matters."

"Men act often from the impulse of passion when they should be guided by judgment," said Raoul.

The marquis shrugged his shoulders, and re-
 ed, —

"Luckily, your rash proposal is known only to us and Miss Templar, your mother and our two
 ves; withdrawn now, it need never be bruited to the
 rld."

"Is it part of your errand, my good cousin, to dis-
 ss me as Miss Templar's suitor?"

"My mission was confined to communicating to
 u that the young lady would have no dower."

"You will allow me to consult my mother?"

"Do so, my good Raoul," said the marquis. "A
 other's opinion, in a point like this, should not be
 erlooked."

Raoul had not the intellect of the marquis — far
 m it; but he had his own interests at heart, and
 at made him more than a match for his superior
 usin. Raoul saw, or fancied he saw, that the mar-
 is's face cleared at the prospect of a rupture.

Madame la Vicomtesse, after listening to all that
 r son had to say, observed, —

"If you don't marry her, he will. Trust a
 man's penetration; our cousin is in love with Mdle.
 uisa."

The French expression was more forcible, — "Nôtre
 er cousin est fêru. Acceptes, tu hériteras à cause
 lle."

Self-interest lent two shallow-hearted, shallow-
nce and Again. II.

headed persons a sagacity not their own. Raoul returned to M. de Blacourt, declaring that, armed with his mother's free consent, he was resolved to marry Miss Templar *coûte que coûte*. The young man made known this magnanimous resolution in excellent language, concluding with, —

“My happiness will be without alloy, if I have your approval also, my cousin.”

“In all that relates personally to the young lady whom you have chosen, my approbation is decidedly yours; as for the prudence of the step, I have some doubt. Sans adieu.”

When the marquis had left Louisa alone, bidding her expect Madame de Villemont and her son, Louisa gave the reins to her imagination. She exalted Raoul's disinterestedness to the height of heroism; she was prepared to receive him with hope and gratitude. Her enthusiasm vanished with the visit. No fault could be found with the vicomte's manner, nor with that of his mother; both of them said and did exactly what was proper on the occasion. But for the previous discussion with the marquis, Louisa would have been satisfied. But between the vicomte's proposal and his visit in form, Louisa had put him on a pedestal. It would be difficult to keep him there; and this poor Louisa felt. Nothing more sad than that effort to blind oneself to reality.

In the course of that evening, Raoul received a packet from the marquis; within was a note and a paper, evidently drawn up by a notary. Raoul read the latter first. It ran as follows: —

“*Je soussigné, Jean Marie, Marquis de Blacour*

Baron de Clairefonds, demeurant à 116, Rue de Varennes, Paris, dans le bût de reparer autant qu'il dépend de moi, une injustice à laquelle je suis pourtant étranger, declare par le présent acte, donner volontairement, librement, et sans contrainte, mon domaine de Clairefonds, avec toutes ses dépendances, pour en jouir immédiatement en toute propriété, avec ses revenus, à M. le Vicomte Raoul de Villemont, aussi soussigné, qui accepte et s'engage à la condition expresse et *sine quâ non*, qu'il reconnaîtra par son contrat de mariage que Mademoiselle Louisa Templar, sa future épouse, lui a apporté en dot une somme de cent mille francs.

"Dès l'instant de la célébration de ce mariage, M. le Vicomte Raoul de Villemont deviendra propriétaire incommutable et sans réserve du domaine que j'abandonne par le présent acte, que je m'oblige à ratifier dans les formes légales à la première requête.

"Fait et signé double ces engagements d'honneur
a — le —."

The marquis's note contained only these words: —

"MY DEAR RAOUL, —

"YOUR actual fortune could scarcely admit of your carrying into execution your project of marrying a lady without dower. You perhaps counted on being my heir. We can answer for nothing in this world. Your determination is one more instance that men will act, under certain circumstances, in flagrant contradiction to their sentiments." (Raoul winced at this.)
"Therefore it is possible I may marry, I may have

children. I make you the enclosed offer, in view of your possible future disappointment."

Raoul laughed as he read the concluding words, and going to his mother's room, threw the packet into her lap, exclaiming, "Victory!"

CHAPTER V.

It will be over soon.

AFTER this, M. le Vicomte Raoul de Villemont and Miss Templar went through the prescribed forms of French courtship. The inevitable bouquet appeared every morning; *lettres à faire part du mariage* were sent by Madame la Vicomtesse and her son to those relations and friends beyond a morning call, and cards with the cabalistic signs "A. F. P." were left at the door of those in Paris. Visits were paid to Mrs. and Miss Templar by the family and acquaintances of the expectant bridegroom, and the bride elect went with her future mother-in-law to return these civilities. Mrs. Templar had resolutely declined to accompany her daughter for that purpose. Raoul came every day to the Hotel de Hollande, *bien ganté, chaussé, et frisé* — well-gloved, shoed, and curled," — and either stayed an hour with his betrothed or walked out with her, in both cases chaperoned by her mother. The marquis had said so much on the subject to Mrs. Templar, had insisted so strongly on a rigorous observance of French etiquette, that Mrs. Templar felt compelled to comply with the advice. The marquis further admonished Louisa that she was never to remain alone with the vicomte; and if her mother were from home, she was never to receive him alone. In France they manage all *these matters differently* from what they do in Eng-

land — no tête-à-têtes are to be thought of between a betrothed pair.

Louisa had, in former days, heard much of love from Claire; she had read during her untrammelled life at La Forêt all the passionate scenes and descriptions in Delphine and Corinne; she had seen M. de Lantry's affectionate manner to Ismay; she remembered the boyish tenderness of the Crown Prince; had suffered from the despairing morose worship of Gustave Gastineau. She therefore was prepared for some marks of attachment from Vicomte Raoul, the more so after such proof of his disregard of fortune. But no, Raoul talked to her of the Corbeille, of balls, and plays — the word love neither played on his lips nor glanced from his eye. He seemed to her absurdly anxious about her dress when she was going on a round of visits with his mother, giving her minute directions as to how she was to behave, and to speak, or rather not to speak in French dowager coteries, and he often alluded, in not flattering terms, to the manners of her young countrywomen. Louisa chafed under this last infliction. His coolness as a lover she naturally kept to herself, but she complained to her mother of his incessant carping depreciation of England and the English.

"It is so disrespectful to me," observed Louisa, her heart very full; "I can't help feeling it as a mark of more than indifference."

"You did not accept him from affection, did you?" asked Mrs. Templar.

"No, but *he* professed to care for me, and since I *accepted* him, I have never been anything but *respectful to him.*"

There can be no drawing back now, Louisa. You always chosen to decide for yourself, and you submit to what you have brought on your own; make the best of it now. Better repent in a garret than in a garret. Lady Theodosia writes enthusiastically about your marriage. At all events, it has advantage, it places you on a level with them all; an't get everything, lucky when we can get some! It's too late to be finding out faults in the net. Look at these patterns, and say how you have the coronet worked on your handkerchiefs."

"You choose, mamma; I don't care."

Another circumstance increased Louisa's depression; she had received a violent letter from Claire.

"I could have pardoned you," said Claire, "if what had done had the excuse of love; but you are selling for rank and riches — selling yourself! Mind your words! you have thrown away the substance for a shadow, and my belief is, you will go to your grave hungering and thirsting after affection!"

The German baronne and Fioretta were the persons who did Louisa most good during the interval between her engagement and her marriage. They were always so charmed with everything, from the *joli lin* of a vicomte, down to the embroideries of Louisa's trousseau — always so full of congratulations, so enthusiastic over her beauty, and the beauty of her evening-dress; so good-natured in pointing out the advantages of being Madame la Vicomtesse de Villefort, that they, and they alone, could bring a smile to Louisa's face.

The marquis was absent; he had gone to Claire's to make some arrangements as to its transfer,

and to look after the welfare of two old servants of the family. Louisa as yet only knew that M. de Blacourt had settled the estate on Raoul, in consideration of his being the probable heir to all the rest of the De Blacourt property.

The marriage was fixed for the sixth of May. Mr. Templar and Lady Theodosia had been duly invited, but had declined on the plea that travelling of late days always gave Mr. Templar a fit of the gout; the old gentleman wrote a pompous, long-winded epistle as to the settlement of Louisa's money, strongly recommending Mrs. Templar not to trust to French law; he proposed himself and his son as trustees for Louisa.

Mrs. Templar had never really expected the owner of Lamberton Park to put himself out of the way for her daughter's marriage; nevertheless, she breathed more freely when she could be certain that he was not coming; she did not give the letter to Louisa to read on account of its subject, for since the day the marquis had enlightened Louisa as to the loss of her five thousand pounds, Mrs. Templar had avoided the topic with sedulous care. She had even stopped Louisa's assurances of indifference to the loss by saying, sharply, —

"You will be none the worse for it in the end; I am the sole sufferer."

On this occasion as she laid down the letter, all she said was, —

"Your uncle and aunt are not coming."

"That's too bad," exclaimed Louisa; "they owed it to me as my father's daughter to have come."

"It's just as well as it is," returned Mrs. Templar; "*Mr. Templar* would have wanted to meddle with what

did not understand, and given a great deal of unnecessary trouble. He has sent you a cheque for a hundred pounds, with which you are to buy what you please as their wedding present."

"I should have valued their coming more than any thing. I shall look like some waif or stray with not one relation of my own to meet all Raoul's family."

"Do call him M. de Villemont, Louisa; that name is hideous. If you can persuade him to go to England, the tables will be turned, he will have no relations present."

"It is useless to talk of that," said Louisa; "I must do as best I can."

The names of the bride and bridegroom appeared on the door of the church of the Madeleine, and in the office of the mairie of the first arrondissement. All the necessary papers, certificates of Louisa's baptism, her father and mother's marriage, of her father's death, and of the deaths of M. de Villemont's father and grandfathers and grandmothers were forthcoming, and the curé of the Madeleine attested that from his examination of the parish registers, neither of the parties about to become man and wife, had contracted any previous marriage during the last two years.

There is one crime which never figures in French novels — the crime, par excellence, of English stories; it is rarely ignored by French novel writers. It is, indeed, scarcely possible where such a chevaux de frise precaution exists.

Never were the preliminaries for a marriage arranged more smoothly than was the case for the union between M. de Villemont and Miss Templar. Louisa received *exactly thirty-five* bouquets from her betrothed;

long engagements are rare in France; the custom is to allow five or six weeks between the acceptance and the marriage.

Mrs. Templar, during all the bustle which ushers in a wedding, remained as cold and hard as though her only child was not on the point of becoming a wife. She was as exacting and irritable with Louisa as before, not a mark of tenderness. Only one person guessed that she was inwardly troubled; the marquis discerned it, to him she turned for advice or help, to him alone her manner softened.

Louisa's spirits were as variable as are the spirits of those who are battling with a heavy heart; one five minutes she was laughing at everything and everybody, her future husband included, and the next she would forget to answer when addressed, and often her eyes would turn from one to another, with a question in them which it seemed that her lips dared not utter. Once the look was so speaking that Mrs. Templar answered it; she said, —

“Yes, it is too late!”

The trousseau, the jewellery, the presents, large and small, had been all shown and admired, and packed. It was the eve of the wedding day. Louisa was in her own room, alone with Fioretta; the gay little flirt was to be Louisa's demoiselle d'honneur; in France one bridesmaid is considered enough, and in right of that office, the German sprite had been flitting about the bride all day. A score of times had Fioretta exclaimed, “What a lucky girl you are, Louisa” — to the twentieth exclamation she added, “but, of course, it was to be expected.”

“Why?” asked Louisa, idly watching Fioretta's

seen pleasure in examining her costly dressing-case, and its rich contents.

"Why? because you are so downright lovely. Mamma may say what she pleases, but beauty *is* the best thing a woman can have. You may be as clever and as good as you like, but nobody's eyes soften, nobody smiles on the good and clever as they do on a beauty."

"Well, I don't believe being beautiful makes people love you," said Louisa.

"Doesn't it?" burst out Fioretta. "Everybody loves you."

"Who?" asked Louisa, listlessly.

"M. de Blacourt, Gustave Gastineau — the prince; and all the young men who saw you at our soirées were in love with you."

"You have forgotten to mention M. de Villemont," said Louisa.

"Of course he does."

"I have a great mind to tell you something, Fioretta."

"Do," said Fioretta, delighted at the prospect of hearing a secret, and deserting the dressing-case.

"No, I shall not say it — second thoughts are best. Of one thing I am pretty sure, Fioretta; beauty does not make one happy."

"It would me," returned Fioretta; "just look at our two faces in the glass," and she drew Louisa to a mirror. "I should never be tired of looking at myself if I were as lovely as you."

"Then you wouldn't be so nice as you are now."

"You don't know what a trouble it is to be plain," said Fioretta; "first with one's bonnets — they are

always wrong; and then the continual cry, 'Don't look grave, Fioretta, it does not become you;' or, 'If you saw the difference it makes in you when you look pleased, Fioretta' — it would be the greatest of luxuries to look cross and handsome at the same time."

Louisa was smiling at Fioretta's earnestness, when Thérèse came in to say that the *lingère* begged to see mademoiselle for a moment.

"What *lingère*?" asked Louisa.

"It is Mdlle. Antoinette," answered Thérèse, "she is in the *salle à manger*."

Thérèse spoke in a tone that showed she knew that Antoinette was no mere workwoman for the young lady she was addressing.

"Oh! I wish she had not come," said Louisa, in a whisper, to Fioretta.

"Shall I go to her?" asked Fioretta.

"No, no. I can't send her away without seeing her myself; I will go."

Louisa had not guessed the emotion the sight of Gustave's little deformed sister would produce in her. It is said that drowning people see in a second their whole previous life pictured before them. In the moment of meeting Antoinette, all her intimacy with the Gastineaux, from childhood to girlhood — the games, the quarrels, the caresses, the lessons at the swing, Gustave's love for her, her unkindness to him — all rushed to Louisa's memory, and she flung herself on Antoinette's neck, exclaiming, —

"Forgive me!"

"You are so good," said the workwoman.

"Good! no, don't say that, Antoinette — how kind of you to come here; you don't hate me, do you? I did

mean to do harm — you *must* forgive me, for it's the same as if I were dying; this is the last of Lisa Templar. Forgive me, forgive me!"

"Oh! Mdlle. Louisa —"

"Say Louisa, I shall always be Louisa for you."

"You are pleased with the embroidery on your shoes, are you not?"

Louisa, surprised at the question, answered, —

"Indeed, Antoinette, I have not looked at it."

"I am so sorry," said Antoinette, mortified. "I mended all the coronets and initials myself."

"*You!*" exclaimed Louisa. "How came you to do anything to do with my trousseau?"

"Madame gave us all your linen to make, on account of your friendship for me."

In a paroxysm of grief and shame, Louisa fell on her knees before Gustave's sister.

"Antoinette, Antoinette, I did not know, I did not know! oh! mamma, you are too cruel. Antoinette, say to me, believe that I had no hand in this — promise not to tell Gustave. What a monster you must think me and you to come and ask *me* — *me*, if I am satisfied with your work."

Great sobs choked Louisa's words.

"Pray rise, mademoiselle — I have nothing to give: madame did it for the best. I see I was very wrong to come, but I did so wish to bid you good-by, and to tell you that I hope you will be happy."

Louisa made no answer; still kneeling, she took hold of Antoinette's work-hardened hands and kissed them, and when she rose, and they walked together in silence to the door.

As Louisa was bidding her mother good-night, Mrs. Templar said, —

“So Antoinette has been here?”

Louisa replied, —

“Mamma, you should not have done what you did.”

“On the contrary, I wished to serve the sister — all the more that, in doing so, I could give the brother a lesson.”

“Mamma, we are just going to separate; don't let us quarrel to the very last. Kiss me, mamma.”

“Wait a minute, Louisa; your tears are very ready for strangers. Pray, what is to come of me, now? You have never thought of me — that you were leaving me desolate and alone.”

Louisa did not answer directly. She said, after a little reflection, —

“I will beg M. de Villemont to invite you to Clairefonds.”

“It is rather late to make up your mind to that. After all I have done and suffered for you, I ought not to have been obliged to remind you of your duty to me.”

“Mamma, don't let us have any words to-night. You wished me to marry, you wished me to have a title; you see I have done so far to please you. It was only the other day I knew I was going to Clairefonds; I had imagined I was to live in Madame de Villemont's house. I do not intend to leave you desolate; I will try to do right. Kiss me, mamma; — say, ‘God bless you, Louisa!’”

“I have said nothing to put you in this state of ex-

citement, Louisa; it's impossible to speak reason to you!"

"Kiss me, mamma; I will try to be better in future."

"Always in heroics; why can't you be more like other people?"

"I will try."

Mrs. Templar let Louisa leave her without the asked-for kiss; but, by-and-by, she went to her child's bedside and kissed her.

Louisa was up and dressed, all but having on her wedding-dress, when Mrs. Templar entered her room next morning.

"It's a beautiful day," said the mother.

"Beautiful!" repeated Louisa.

"You should have waited for the hairdresser, Louisa."

"I could not have endured one this morning, mamma; if I haven't done my hair well, *you* must put it to rights. Mamma, you will come directly to Clairefonds; I *was* careless. You are not angry any more, are you? I did not mean you to be left alone; but I have no more head than a pin — you always said so. You know there's a large garden at Clairefonds, and the windows upstairs have the best view; there will be plenty of room for us all. M. de Blacourt says it is a large house."

"You must have a cup of tea and keep quiet, Louisa. I shall come to visit you, after my time of this apartment is out."

"It seems so odd to be going away with a stranger. What o'clock is that?" cried Louisa, starting.

"There's plenty of time," said Mrs. Templar.

"Come, you must not flurry yourself. I expect you to behave well; French people are very particular as to decorous behaviour; you must do your mother's bringing-up credit."

"I shall not make any scene; but waking and remembering that you are going to be married, gives a sort of qualm. I am not a sentimental young lady am I, mamma? — that's not one of my faults, now is it?"

Louisa tried to laugh, and the laugh turned into the most painful little low wail. The sound made her silent. Mrs. Templar hurried away and brought her a cup of tea.

Fioretta and the baronne came down to them. What a blessing it is, in some circumstances, to have to do with kindly indifferent people. No sooner was Louisa left with the Von Ehrtmanns than she became calm. The dressmaker arrived to put on the bridal array; during the bustle, Louisa descried a strange face — it was that of her new femme de chambre.

"Send them all away," she said to Madame von Ehrtmann. "You and Fioretta can finish dressing me; I won't have strangers. Where's mamma?"

"She is getting herself ready, my dear."

Madame von Ehrtmann dismissed the dressmaker and sent away the lady's-maid.

Louisa suddenly exclaimed, —

"I don't want to be married! — pray, pray don't let me!"

"My dear, my dear!" screamed the baronne, "you must not say that; the carriages are at the door. See how charming you look. It will be all over very soon and you'll be the first to laugh at your panic."

"I don't want to be married! I don't know why I'm going to be married," cried Louisa, in an agony.

"Get some ether," said Madame von Ehrtmann to the astounded Fioretta, whose pale, frightened face looked absurd in its coquettish bonnet.

"I don't need ether, Madame von Ehrtmann. Help me! — do help me!" appealed Louisa, in great distress.

"Ma chère petite, the carriages are at the door. Indeed, ma belle, it's too late for any change."

"Ah, well! you won't help me? So be it, then; let us go — I am ready."

CHAPTER VI.

The New Home.

You journey past Meaux, and, of course, you think of Bossuet. You go bowling over the levels of Champagne, and look with curiosity on the succession of vineyards; and then you begin to ascend hill after hill, divided by the narrowest of valleys, which tell you that you are approaching the country of Alps. Firs of a dark blue green fringe slopes, which gradually change from slopes to steeps, and then you discover that you are in that department of France which was once itself a kingdom, and a very warlike kingdom. The inhabitants, some two hundred and odd years ago, preferred their own laws, customs, and princes to those of their neighbours. But *Might made Right*, as it sometimes does now, and they became French by the grace of Louis the Fourteenth's armies. They are quite amalgamated now, though there still remains to them, as to the Scotch and Irish, an accent of their own.

On the third day after leaving Paris (railroad in that direction there was none in that year), M. and Madame de Villemont reached Bar le Duc. Half of the town, styled the *ville-basse*, lies along the banks of the Ornain, a narrow, sullen river, often almost as yellow as the Tiber. The streets of this part are pretty much like those of other thriving provincial towns — some are broad, some are not; in summer

ey are dusty, in winter, muddy. There is a lycée, mairie, a theatre, and a prefecture, for Bar le Duc the chef-lieu of the department. Several factories and some breweries stand on the side of the river, and so multitudes of what may be called small garden houses. Almost every family, in easy circumstances, has one of these resorts — not large enough for sellings, but shaded as they are by trees, and surrounded by a profusion of flowers, they form pleasant spots for hot summer days.

Leaving the ville-basse, you wind up a steep ascent to the picturesque ville-haute, the heart of the old capital of the Duchy of Lorraine. Here grey and red mix in the buildings, just as a painter would desire. Next to a clean-faced, modern house, you find a finely sculptured building, almost black with age. The church of St. Etienne is where it was in the days of Louis the Eleventh; some of the old city walls, with flowers springing from between every bulging stone, show where once was the deep moat and the protecting towers. Of these there were seven — all razed to the ground by the conqueror's orders, save one, the Tour de l'Horloge, which still, with its great white disc, stands as a landmark between the upper and lower town.

Beyond St. Etienne there is a road, and there, at the outskirts of the town, is the domain of Clairends.

A bright setting sun was turning every window of the ville-haute deep red — it was making all the partitioned odd-shaped roofs look like so many painted targets — it was taking away all dreariness from the most rickety tenements. That gracious sun was adding

to the loveliness of the lovely hill sides, and bringing out those pretty purple tints which sometimes make vineyards comely. The evening song of birds streamed from the gardens and thickets, and the woods, which formed a belt round the ville-haute.

Intensity of feeling for nature is not common in very young persons; in general they are yearning unconsciously after other secrets than those of light, and shade, and form in landscape. Hitherto Louisa had never thrilled with the enjoyment a lovely prospect can bestow; now she did feel the spell, and turned to her husband with a sort of joyous thankfulness.

He said, "Well, I suppose you are rather disappointed; you did not expect the château to be so close to a town."

"Disappointed!" exclaimed Louisa. "Oh, no! I am delighted."

The carriage stopped at a large white porte-cochère, a misnomer by the way, as it admitted no carriage. The moment the bell rang, the doors flew open, and a little old woman in a short woollen dress and a white skull-cap, followed by a man something younger, dressed in a blouse, appeared. The one was Manette, the other Jacquot, the servants who had so faithfully served the aunt from whom M. de Blacourt had inherited Clairefonds.

In an instant Manette was tugging at the carriage door, striving to open it by main force.

"You can't do it, my good lady," said M. de Villemont; "let the friend by your side try."

"How? I can't do it!" shouted Manette, in a loud voice: "and I, who opened and shut madame's carriage

ty years. It is your carriage door that's too
h! here it is at last."

de Villemont jumped out; Manette pushed him
ad put in her hands, as if she had an intention
g the bride out like a package.

! madame is young and light," she exclaimed
me admiration, as Louisa sprang to the ground.

o you expect madame to be like our old
e?" muttered Jacquot, with his mouth stretch-
h pleasure from ear to ear; then to the lady's-
the box, "Now, mademoiselle."

st her alone," said Manette; "she knows the
the ground without help. This way, monsieur
dame," and she bustled along the straight stone
hich led between two plots of grass, to the
glass doors that opened into the vestibule.

onsieur and madame will have time to see
oms," said Manette, pointing to doors on either
here is the salon." She was silent for a mo-
gazing first at one and then the other, to espy
stonishment. "What do you say to it, mon-
there is not such another salon in Bar le Duc
not in the department; look at the height;
ceiling — madame used to say it was done in
s before the French came here; and the furni-
?"

is beautiful," said Louisa.

, it is not beautiful — it is old — but it is
ken care of — not a brass nail out of a chair
e, madame," patting a cushion of one of the
s; "sit down — good, isn't it?"

ry, but I don't wish to sit; I wish to see the
what a delightful garden!"

"Madame will have time to see everything; madame had better take off her cloak, and have her dinner."

"You seem a great manager, my good lady," said M. de Villemont.

"Monsieur, when the old madame was alive I *had* to think, or she would never have eaten anything. Madame la Vicomtesse, I will show you your room."

"You had better obey," said M. de Villemont.

Louisa was following Manette, when the woman stopped short.

"But madame wished to see the garden — well, madame can just take a glance;" and she opened other glass doors corresponding to those that gave access to the entrance hall.

"Upon my word, we are going to live in a glass house," said M. de Villemont.

"Not at all," cried Manette, indignantly; "there is not a more solid, better built house in the world — one that is cooler in summer or warmer in winter."

"No doubt; I am quite of your opinion; don't be angry, old lady," he replied.

The salon opened on to a terrace, which at that moment had a border of white and purple pinks; at regular intervals were orange-trees and pomegranates just blossoming. A flight of steps opposite to the door led down into a broad alley. There were parterres on either side, and intersecting paths; but the prettiest part of all was a walk running the whole width of the garden, which would be impenetrable even to a July sun. This walk, called the Charmille, *was on the edge of a precipitous descent; a high horn-beam hedge isolated it from the rest of the garden,*

d rendered it impervious to all eyes, whether from the house itself, or from any adjacent dwellings. It was protected on the side of the precipice by a low grey stone parapet — a *salle de verdure* terminated the walk at both ends. From the one, the eye plunged deeper down into one of the widest streets of the *ville-asse*; from the other into a road hundreds of feet low. The hill on which *Clairefonds* stood was so high, that the men and women, horses and carts, and carriages, viewed from its summer-houses, looked like children's toys.

Louisa, as she wandered about her new home, realised that she had closed a door on all that had happened before her marriage; she believed *that* phase of her life had passed away — that she had done with it, as with some old castaway dress or mantle; as we have ever done with any passage of our lives! If all that happens to us from our birth to our grave were not indissolubly bound together. It is a poetic licence to talk of broken links — our most insignificant action is still a part of the chain of our lives, and through every joint of that chain there is always ringing on a mysterious repercussion of either our good or our bad deeds.

Louisa began her married life with the most sincere desire to do her duty. She owned to herself, with regret, that she had married without loving her husband, but she had both gratitude and esteem for him, founded on the supposition of his disinterested action for her. Many were the earnest prayers she sent to heaven at this time to grant her the power to be a good wife. She abounded in affectionate attentions to *M. de Villemont*; his will was to be her law.

"Everything will be easy now," thought Louisa; "there can be no possibility of my getting into scrapes. I need not even be at the trouble of thinking for myself."

Poor young wife! she really was blind for a while to the impracticability of her project. When a man does not know his own mind, it is rather difficult for another person to do so.

As the weeks went by, Louisa had harder and harder work to maintain her respect for her husband. He was well born, bore an old title, and yet she became sensible, much against her will, that his manner was almost servile towards any one in a high position. She surprised him one day dusting and setting out some old china.

"What are you doing, Raoul?" she exclaimed, laughing.

"Madame la Prefette is to call this afternoon, and I want to give her a good impression of us. What dress are you going to wear?"

"Don't you think I am very well as I am?" asked Louisa.

"I would rather you put on a silk."

For that time, Louisa put aside a little feeling of contempt, and changed her muslin for silk. Other things began to puzzle Louisa. She was not vain; her beauty was an incontestable fact, it had never occurred to her to calculate the effect she was likely to produce, nor to expect compliments from her husband. She heard him, indeed, speak of other women's dress and style, and had wondered at the minuteness of his observations, but she never supposed his remarks were aimed at herself. It was, therefore, with more

of astonishment than mortification, that she did at length perceive that he was dissatisfied with her appearance whenever they went into public. As soon as she was aware of this, she asked what was amiss in her dress.

"I can't tell; everything; you don't look like other people. The English always dress ill."

"The poor English are not to blame for my wardrobe," said Louisa. "Every article I have is made by French fingers, and in Paris. Probably, I have brought the last fashions, and that's why I am dressed differently from the ladies here."

"You look so English," he said, and the tone was not complimentary.

"I cannot help that; but as you admire Madame de Neuville so much, I'll try to copy her."

"Her style won't suit you; you haven't her jetty hair."

"Well, whose style will suit me? it's my duty to do what I can to please you."

Louisa's girlish heart was rather full at Raoul's depreciation of her.

"Don't put on such a pitiful face," he said; "nothing so little to my taste, if you care about that, as gloomy looks," and he left the room.

Louisa had been married only two months when this dialogue took place. A woman has a very curious mixture of feelings the first time that she has a clear perception that the love and admiration she believed herself sure of, does not exist. There might have been nothing distressing to a bystander in M. de Villemont's words — no doubt a friend would have pook-pooed *Louisa*, had she founded on them a belief of

Raoul's indifference for her; nevertheless, Louisa not only now wondered at Raoul's having asked her to marry him, but she began to speculate seriously on *why* he had done so, in spite of her being dowerless. Once on this track, she rapidly reached the goal to which it led. Had he loved her even a little, he would not have gone to sleep every evening when they were alone, though she sang and played to amuse him; nor when they were in company would he have considered himself obliged to make some apologetic speech, or rude criticism, whenever she began singing or playing. It was either, "What a doleful ditty! I hope you have not many such;" or else, "What's the use of that tight-rope dancing on the piano?" Some men utter similar things, as bait to catch praises for the performances of their wives or daughters, but M. de Villemont really was ashamed of his wife — he did think an Englishwoman must be inferior in manners and accomplishments to a Frenchwoman.

There was another influence far more inimical to Louisa than that of the gay circle of beauties, of which Madame la Prefette was the graceful centre — an influence far more to be dreaded. M. de Villemont had chosen for his confessor and spiritual director the Chanoine Maillard, a ferocious bigot. M. le Chanoine's opinions were much too absolute to allow of his sparing his penitent on the subject of his union with a Protestant. He made himself master of the case, and having ascertained that no provision had been made that the offspring of the marriage should be brought up as Catholics, the incensed priest exclaimed, —

"Pray to God, M. le Vicomte, that you may never *have children!*"

This M. Maillard was a rosy, fair, blue-eyed, cherub-faced man; his cheeks were soft, his hands soft, his hair soft, like yellow floss silk. One of his most dearly-prized enjoyments was a whist table, and this was provided for him by three pious dowagers.

As he sat shuffling his cards, a chauffrette under each foot, he would exclaim, with a benign look, —

“Ah! those poor Protestants, damned without reservation! What is the trump? — damned to all eternity, my dear ladies!”

The Creator has given to all helpless creatures an instinct to warn them against their enemies. Louisa was afraid from the first of this fresh-looking priest; he tried, as so many inexperienced, defenceless persons have done and will do, to propitiate her foe by always speaking well of him, taking his part whenever he heard him ridiculed or censured by any of the gay world at the Préfecture. She had yet to learn that to turn a foe such as M. Maillard into a harmless acquaintance, you must crush him. An evidence, rifting indeed, but decisive of the Chanoine's influence over her husband, was M. de Villemont's ceasing to accompany her to the door of the Temple.* The first time this occurred Louisa attached no importance to it, but when Sunday after Sunday the same thing occurred, she suspected that the omission was done with intent to show his dislike of her form of religion; she was not long left in doubt.

Louisa's parting words to her mother had been, ‘Mamma, you must soon come to Clairefonds,’ and

* N.B. — Protestant churches are so designated in the towns of the departments of France.

after the first month of their arrival, she had often alluded to her mother's approaching visit, but Raoul had always left the allusion unnoticed. In her increasing loneliness of feeling, Louisa's thoughts turned to her mother; she had not forgotten, it was impossible that she should forget, Mrs. Templar's violence of temper; but after months passed with a man like Raoul de Villemont — who had himself thus described his temperament one day when Louisa was striving to make him give some mark of feeling, — "The De Villemonts are cold as fish, and I am a De Villemont" — she had grown disgusted with the monotony of a phlegmatic temper.

Lately Mrs. Templar's letters had begun to express vexation at her visit to Clairefonds always being mentioned in an indefinite manner; at last she wrote that she must know whether Louisa expected her or not, for the term for which she had taken her apartments in the Hotel de Hollande was on the point of expiring. If there were reasons why she should not be received at Clairefonds, she should have to seek some cheap hole, in which to hide herself. Louisa's heart rebelled against the idea that her mother should be obliged to wander about the world alone, while she had a large mansion with half a score of spare rooms.

"Mamma cannot fail to be happy here," thought she; "there will be no need for her to be for ever calculating about every penny she spends. There can be nothing for her to be angry with me about; she will not care whom I speak to now that I am married, nor for my practising; and there is the garden and the *phaeton*, or if she prefers to be alone she can. Poor *mamma!*" And here there was a long sigh, perhaps

f regret for the girlish troubles which had seemed so hard to bear.

The first opportunity that offered she said to M. de Villemont, —

“It is time that we should invite mamma to come to us; the term for which she engaged her apartments is at an end.”

“What prevents her from taking them on?” asked Raoul.

“Nothing, except that I have always said we should hope to see her here.”

“You should have consulted me before giving any invitation.”

“I could not dream that you would not wish my own mother to come and stay with me.”

“The vendange is at hand,” said M. de Villemont, “and I am sure that Madame de Villemont would like to be here at that season.”

“But mamma’s coming need not interfere with that; there’s plenty of room for everybody.”

“Thank you, my dear; two women in a house never agree, what would it be if there were three? Thank you, my dear, I would rather not,” and Raoul laughed at what he thought a good joke.

This mocking laugh of her husband’s was what jarred most painfully on Louisa’s nerves — it tried her self-control to the utmost; she had to pause before she spoke again.

“Do you mean that I am not to invite mamma? I must write her one thing or the other. I think you ought rather to be anxious to have her here, when you leave me to walk alone so much.”

This allusion to his having given up escorting her

to the Temple was unlucky; it hit Raoul's only ticklish point: he said, —

"The fact is, ma petite, I consider one Protestant in my house more than enough."

Louisa turned the colour of marble; the question rose to her lips, "Why did you marry me?" She did not utter it; she got up and left the room. She had never yet had a quarrel with her husband; never even till the last half hour addressed him but in a pleasant tone of voice — at that last speech of his, accompanied by another of his jeering laughs, she understood that her safety lay in flight. She ran to her own room, there she threw herself on the bed, and put her hands to her ears, as if she would avoid hearing something. She did hear it, though; it was a voice from her heart, saying, —

"I repent, I repent! I shall never learn to love him — never!"

When they met before dinner, Raoul said, —

"I did not intend to prevent your inviting your mother."

The words produced an immediate revulsion of feeling in Louisa; she said, —

"You are better than I am, Raoul."

He looked at her inquiringly, twirling his moustaches.

"I have been so angry with you," she went on. "You forgive me, don't you?"

"I would forgive anything, if we could only have dinner."

It is probable that Louisa had a feeling akin to *that of the Danaïdes filling their sieves*, when she received this reply.

Raoul's last words to her that night were, —

“You had better specify in your letter to your mother that you invite her for six weeks or two months, otherwise she may fancy she is to live here *ways*.”

To describe how little by little Louisa suffered disappointment after disappointment in her endeavours to attach herself to M. de Villemont, and to attach him to her; to relate how often she rose from failure to renewed effort; to enter on the detail of all the prickings he inflicted, would be a painful task. At the end of the first six months the decisive hour struck — Louisa renounced the struggle. She had come to comprehend that there was something in

M. de Villemont's nature which repelled hers — a something which neither interests in common, nor life in common, could surmount. She did not hold Raoul guilty for this, on the contrary, she cried, “*Mea culpa, mea culpa!*” She kept before her mind's eye the fact of her having wilfully married him, without any affection for him; *he* had given her distinct proof that he had *had* a preference for her — he had scorned the dowry, which even M. de Blacourt had thought so indispensable. What a plank of safety this belief in Raoul's disinterestedness was for Louisa! “No,” she repeated over and over again, “the fault lies in me. I have not known how to keep his heart!”

CHAPTER VII.

The Stormy Petrel.

LOUISA had resolved never to let Mrs. Templar penetrate into the secret disappointment of her heart; she did all that depended on her to give her mother an agreeable impression of her married life.

"I assure you, mamma, that we never have any quarrels."

"Indeed, then matrimony must have greatly improved you, Louisa."

"I hope it has; I am very sorry for many things, but I have turned over a new leaf, and I am going to make up to you now for all the trouble you have had with me."

Mrs. Templar would not be pleased. As she walked over the house, and Louisa pointed out to her the fine old furniture, and said, with the pride of a young housekeeper, —

"No one here has such beautiful things!"

Mrs. Templar observed, —

"It's more than you deserve."

"Quite true," replied Louisa; "that's why I value it all so much, and why I try every day to be grateful for my lot."

Mrs. Templar assumed a very high and mighty manner with her son-in-law. She spoke to him, as it were, from the tip of her lips — never praised any *thing* — neither the beautiful china (which, perhaps,

was what Raoul most valued of all his possessions), nor the pyramids of choicest fruit that graced each meal, nor Manette's exquisite entrées, nor the famed view from the salon window, nor the stately garden; no, nor even the luxurious comfort of her own room. She would not allow her trunks to be unpacked — declared it was not worth while, implying, to Louisa's surprise, that her visit would be a short one. She made every invitation that came to Clairefonds a cause of disturbance. Mrs. Templar, when she did agree to accompany the De Villemonts, was sure to get up a scene before or after. It was Louisa's and Raoul's fault that she was not treated with proper respect; it was Louisa's duty never to allow herself to be taken in to dinner until she had seen her mother, properly escorted, leave the room before her. She would not listen to Louisa's explanation that she was still receiving the honours of a bride at some houses. No; Mrs. Templar insisted that people took their cue from M. and Madame de Villemont's neglect of her. Thus it happened that Louisa had red eyes every time she went out. M. de Villemont never seemed to perceive Mrs. Templar's dissatisfaction, nor did he resent her accusations; this nettled her, but made Louisa really grateful to him. He began, however, to absent himself almost every evening: "I am going to the *Cercle*," he would say to Louisa after dinner; "your mother will be happier without me, and I'll bring you the newest bit of gossip."

For several evenings, Mrs. Templar made no remark on M. de Villemont's absence; she was catechizing Louisa, not with severity, but with affability. Louisa was so glad to see her mother becoming, as she be-

lieved, reconciled to her, that she was as communicative as Mrs. Templar desired. She mentioned the amount of Raoul's income — twenty thousand francs a year.

"The idea of a title and eight hundred a year," exclaimed Mrs. Templar; "Major Templar will inherit as many thousands."

"But you see, mamma, that we don't want for any comfort."

"Not if you remain cooped up in this out-of-the-way country town. I did not educate you for that — a fine finale for a girl with your advantages. Why don't you push your husband to apply for some Government situation? M. de Blacourt told me he had only to ask and to have."

"Raoul does not wish it, mamma."

"Lazy fellow!" muttered Mrs. Templar.

One evening after this conversation, M. de Villemont did happen to be at home, and Louisa, thinking to please Mrs. Templar by showing that she had not neglected her music, sat down to the harp; she sang song after song without expecting any observation from her auditors. At last she was stopped by a portentous snore from Raoul, followed by a loud sob from her mother. Louisa flew across the room, —

"Mamma, mamma, what is the matter?"

"Oh! my child, how you have thrown yourself away."

Luckily Mrs. Templar had spoken in English.

"Hush, mamma; pray, hush."

M. de Villemont awoke, and came towards the ladies to see what had happened. The sight of his smiling, rather pretty face drove Mrs. Templar into

her fits of passion — what she had said in she repeated in French — she told him he on the ruin of her daughter's prospects; he had her in. The moment he opened his lips, she him various ugly names.

suming on her knowledge that she was an a, Manette put her head in at the salon door, which Mrs. Templar went off into violent s.

oor old lady!" exclaimed Manette, bringing in of water. Louisa put it aside with an in- able expression of face, no doubt she recalled a scene at Versailles. Manette went away, and Jacquot and the neighbours, "that the young s was very hard to her mother."

s next day Mrs. Templar ostentatiously busied with her trunks. She asked M. de Villemont were voituriers to be hired at Bar le Duc.

rtainly," he answered.

shall be obliged to you, if you will bring me rms."

ith pleasure, madame."

ou hear the hint your husband gives me to go said Mrs. Templar to Louisa.

a, no! mamma, it's all a mistake," said Louisa. must not talk of going away — if you go, I) too!"

don't want coaxing, I want proper civility."

ust try us a little longer, mamma."

. Templar would neither say yes nor no; she l the habit of remaining in her own room, ex- at meal times, and for ten days she never te Louisa or M. de Villemont. He begged

Louisa to put no impediment in the way of her leaving Clairefonds, the next time she proposed to do so.

"But what is to become of her?" sighed Louisa; "I cannot bear to think of her living alone."

"Let her take an apartment near to us," returned her husband.

Louisa begged for time. Raoul shrugged his shoulders. Whenever Mrs. Templar now attacked him, she found she had met her match. Whatever she said, he answered by a little mocking laugh that nearly drove her mad. For some time she avoided any bickerings, and Louisa, who had resented Raoul's impertinence, began to believe it had produced a good effect — she was deceived. One morning at breakfast, Raoul took it into his head to discuss Colonel St. George's niece, Marguerite. "She will be famously handsome," he said; "I never saw such a peach complexion, and her hair is adorable; what smoothness, what lustre, what richness! I never saw anything to equal it."

"What colour is this wonderful hair?" asked Mrs. Templar, sneeringly.

"Black, raven black."

"Do you prefer black hair, to fair?" she asked.

"Everybody does," said Raoul, carelessly.

"I wonder, then, that you chose a fair-haired wife."

M. de Villemont answered by one of his provoking laughs.

"You are a devil!" she said, losing all self-command.

Louisa, from her mother's gesture, expected her to throw the cup she had in her hand at M. de Villemont.

"Raoul, pray, pray, go away!" said Louisa.

Scared at the tempest he had raised, he took her advice.

"Mamma, you should not speak so to Raoul, he does not deserve it."

"Doesn't deserve it? he cares as much for you as for me; your friend M. de Blacourt bribed him to marry you, that you might not wear the willow," said the enraged woman.

"Bribed him!" repeated Louisa in amaze.

"My words are plain enough; he gave him this very place on condition that he married you. You might have known it, for you heard the settlement read."

"I never listened to a word. Ah, mamma, I wish you had not told me!" said Louisa, in a pitiful voice.

"I can't bear to see you making such a fool of yourself, with your airs of submission and gratitude to such a selfish fellow as that. As for me, who give him a third of my income, you make me quite second to him."

"I don't understand you, mamma!"

Mrs. Templar said, "I pay him four thousand francs a year for you. You have nothing to thank him for."

"It would have been better to allow me to feel grateful to my husband, mamma."

"Pay your gratitude where it is due, to your poor mother, who has done nothing but sacrifice herself for you."

"I am grateful to everybody," returned Louisa, in

a broken-down voice; "I am everybody's debtor — I have nothing to give."

"Don't go back to your heroics, Louisa; remember you are a married woman, and behave like a reasonable creature."

"Give me advice how to do so, mamma."

"Do not go now and repeat to your husband what I have told you, and learn to make the best of the bad bargain you have made."

M. de Villemont came into Louisa's dressing-room before dinner. He said, "You must manage to get your mother away; I will not be insulted in my own house."

"I cannot bid her go; she gives us so much of her income, she has not enough left for her own comfort."

"Why, she has upwards of seven thousand francs left: what can an old woman want with more?"

Louisa winced, but she was still labouring under the weight of her mother's revelation; she felt sinking, sinking into some dark pit: nothing remained but an instinct that she must command herself; she said once more, "I cannot ask my mother to quit her daughter's house. You are the master, do what you think proper," and she went into her bed-room, and closed the door between them.

Then she gave way to the passion that was choking her — all illusion gone. In her ears rang her mother's words: — "He was bribed to marry you, make the best of the bad bargain you have made. Cruel mother, can you give me no other help?"

"Madame, madame!" cried a shrill voice at the door; "monsieur wants you in the salon."

"And I must go and smile, and talk, and know all the while that the man to whom I belong does not care for me, despises my boasted beauty, was bribed to marry me, and it's for life!" she clutched at her throat.

"Madame!" again called Manette, "you are wanted."

What might Louisa not have done but for that loud determined call.

"I am coming," she said, opening her door.

Manette's sharp eyes scanned Madame de Villefont; she said, "Madame had better arrange her hair."

"You do it," said Louisa, yielding to a wish that some one should show her some kindness.

Manette got a comb — "Sit down, madame," and the old servant passed the comb dexterously through the ruffled hair, then she smoothed the tumbled collar, she did it all kindly, as though a child were under her hands; "now, then, madame must go."

"Come here, Louisa, and help me to decide which of these patterns to take," called out M. de Villemont, as soon as he saw his wife.

A tailor was at a table displaying a long pattern-book of different materials for waistcoats and trousers. Mrs. Templar was seated at a window, calmly reading newspaper. Raoul never noticed the stony look of Louisa's face, he was so pre-occupied with the patterns.

"Which shall I take? do you think this is too light, or too thick? you choose."

She put her finger mechanically on one of the little squares.

"That is only suitable for winter, madame," observed the tailor.

She moved her finger.

"Madame has the very best of taste," said the man of coats.

At dinner, Raoul and Mrs. Templar conversed as if there had been no *fracas* in the morning. By a tacit agreement, neither of them asked Louisa what ailed her.

CHAPTER VIII.

Novels.

MRS. TEMPLAR had broken the staff over Louisa's head, when she told her that Raoul had not married her for love, that the Marquis de Blacourt had given him Clairefonds to do so. "I have no right to resent it," she argued with herself; "nor shall I, but now we are on a par; the one is no better than the other."

She fled from the world of reality into that of fiction: novels had for her all the savour of hitherto untasted fruit; she might revel in them now — she was married, she might read anything and everything. Of all that she read, those that she studied most were the works of Balzac. Passages were dwelt on, perilous descriptions perused and reperused, until Louisa's imagination was on fire. Summer and autumn rolled by, and little by little, slowly but surely, Louisa came to understand what she had done by marrying without love — she had sold herself into a bondage worse than Egyptian — her very thoughts must be controlled, she might die by inches, she must never lift up her voice in complaint.

M. de Villemont had become an object of contempt to her; she took almost a pleasure in unveiling his defects to herself; she seemed thus to acquire a right to despise him.

Mrs. Templar was always talking of going away

— yet never going — her trunks were packed every day and unpacked every night. Since a truce had been established between her and M. de Villemont, he had not mooted the question of her departure; perhaps he wished to gratify his wife, perhaps he had some compunction with regard to her, or perhaps he was merely one of those who submit to anything from daily habit. One day, Mrs. Templar awoke to a perception of the complete change of Louisa's demeanour towards her husband. The eager desire to do her wifely duty was transformed into utter indifference, shown with perfect frankness. If Raoul attempted to be flattering and caressing, which was sometimes now the case, Louisa had an infallible way of her own of stopping him. She was not rude or violent; she distanced him by pretending not to understand what he meant.

Perhaps Mrs. Templar had a twinge of self-reproach, when she marked this state of things; though her remorse is very conjectural. It is not true that consciences resemble Prince Cheri's ring, and prick us for every evil deed. Every one has a ready belief in their own immaculateness, the blame lies always with another; rarely will any one admit that a tittle of the fault may be their own. However that may be as to Mrs. Templar, it is certain that she began narrowly to observe Louisa. Mrs. Templar had a coarse sort of penetration, which on the slightest probability, concluded on the worst possibility. Rendered uneasy by Louisa's manner and appearance, she laid in wait for some indication of the cause; but she did not find that *for which she sought*; Louisa was cold as ice to every *man she saw*.

At last, one morning, Mrs. Templar stopped Louisa

As she was sauntering away from the breakfast table into a small room she had fitted up as a boudoir.

Mrs. Templar said, "Do you think you are right, Louisa, in throwing away your whole time on trashy novels?"

"I don't see much harm in it, mamma; I may as well read stories as embroider muslin, or do worsted work."

"It's a sin and a shame to neglect your music after all the expense and time bestowed on it."

"Girls only practise till they are married; it's no use afterwards, every one gives it up. Madame Arthur bredy never opens her Erard — her tapisserie takes up all her time."

"Even that would be better than filling your head with nonsensical lies; if you go on as you are doing, Louisa, you'll lose your husband's affection."

Louisa sat down and folded her hands on her lap, as if ready for a lecture.

"Ay," went on Mrs. Templar, "I understand your look of resignation, but it's my duty to warn you. When a woman does not make herself the companion of her husband, he finds some one else who will."

"M. de Villemont," said Louisa (she had given up the Raoul), "was not half so civil to me the first month or two after my marriage as he is now; I believe he likes me better as I am."

"Very well, go on, and see what you will make of it; a disobedient daughter is not likely to be a good wife."

"Mamma, I am no longer a child, not even a girl, don't let us have any disputes! Understand this, I do

as well as my nature allows me; do not rouse me from my vegetating existence, it's the best for me."

"Some of the rubbish you have picked up out of your novels."

"If you force me to alter my life," continued Louisa, and her eyes flashed, and her colour rose, "I shall become a regular dissipated woman; I shall not do things by halves. I *have* sometimes a longing for fun and frolic and dash, a longing to figure in the gay world — to shine — not to have a moment I can call my own; I sometimes pity myself for being shut up here. I have heard often enough of my beauty. Sometimes, do you know, I regret its *blushing unseen*, tarnishing as that old Venetian mirror in the lumber garret did, for want of air and light. Let me be, let me be, mother mine, give me plenty of novels and quiet, and perhaps I shall pass through life respectably."

Mrs. Templar held her tongue; for the first time she was wise enough not to exasperate Louisa.

A few days after this, M. de Villemont joined a party of young men who were going to a château near Clermont to shoot larks. During his absence Louisa received a packet containing a book fresh from the printer's hands; the title was merely the initial "L." There was a dedication to Madame L— de ——. It ran thus: —

"To whom can I better dedicate this true story than to you who have suggested every page of it? The few friends who have read the MS. tell me that the descriptions have that smack of truth which redeems *the poverty* of the style, and the want of novelty in *the subject*.

"Accept, madame, all the sentiments of gratitude I owe you.

"Your everlasting debtor,
"THE AUTHOR."

The book was a short one, not more than a couple of hundred pages of tolerably large print; Louisa never lifted her eyes till she had gone through the whole. It began with the description of herself as a child, and a contrast was cleverly drawn between her, in her elegant Bernese costume, and a hungry half-clad boy, trembling for the safety of his mother, exposed to the rage of a poverty-stricken father. The boy's first perception of the gulf dividing the rich and poor, was ably described. Then followed an idyll; the meeting of the same boy and girl in the country, the simultaneous awakening of the boy's love and ambition.

What Gustave Gasteineau had hinted at in a few broken sentences to Louisa seated on the mossy throne he had raised for her, was here detailed in full. "A rough Cymon, intent on his daily task of work, already hating the world in which his lot was so hard, blind and insensible to all those God-bestowed pleasures, open alike to great and small, suddenly had all his senses unlocked."

The orchard in which they had sat together, the snowy Alps rising before them, the rushing river, the calm lake, the murmur of the wind among the trees, the shade and sunshine playing at their feet, the sweet chimes of the village church; all the ineffaceable impressions of bygone happy hours, were noted down.

Of story, there was scarcely any, the writer had literally kept to the description of three phases of his

life: first, his childhood, then the quiet Swiss village, the irruption of the heroine's English relations, the ball, the prince; thirdly, the change to Paris, his jealousy, his despair, the whole was photographed from the life. There was only one invention in the book, and that, the motive assigned for the heroine's marriage.

Gustave had never sufficiently penetrated into the life Louisa led with her mother, to understand how she might have been driven into accepting M. de Villemont. Unable to credit that his passion had never met with any return, and that Louisa's friendliness for him was free of love, taking for granted that she had sacrificed herself to a mere vulgar ambition of riches and rank, he stigmatized her in the cruelest words at his command.

"This woman," he wrote, "who has transformed a warm-hearted youth into a callous wretch, who has robbed him of faith in his labour, who has taught him to curse love, driven him to the stupidity of meditating suicide, merits a greater punishment than to have her likeness published as a warning." The concluding words were: "I have eaten a little honey, and for that I die."

Not for half a second after opening the little volume could Louisa doubt the identity of the author with Gustave Gastineau, and she felt as he intended that she should feel; as if every eye in France was directed to her, every finger pointing to her, as the original from whom "L." was drawn. Her first impulse was to fly to her mother for help and protection; but she *paused*, after having opened her door — the first time *in her life* that Louisa had stopped to consider before-

hand the probable consequences of an act. She shook her head, and said to herself, "I dare not trust her," and shut herself into her room, and locked the door. Once again she took up the book, she read again the passage descriptive of the hero's love. "I was jealous of everybody, of everything about her, jealous even of the piano her fingers touched, of the flowers that she wore in her sash, of the sash itself. How grateful I was for the blue sky, for the song of the birds, for the flowers, the dew; while I loved, my heart was full of blessing: now, where my love was there is a void!"

"Poor Gustave! why could I not love him?" thought Louisa; "I did not care for him, for I never felt anything like what he describes, that something which seems to drive men and women mad."

Mrs. Templar remarked her daughter's absorbed manner during that afternoon and evening, and wondered what had happened.

Twenty times, Louisa was tempted to tell her mother what had occurred, twenty times she refrained, thinking "better not." She said to herself that it was very improbable it should ever be guessed by any soul who Madame L. was, and five minutes afterwards she was burning with a sick feverish dread, that M. de Villemont would hear the book talked of, and that there would be a duel, followed by some dreadful scandal; she went from one extreme to the other.

She meditated on the advisability of writing to M. de Blacourt, and asking his advice as to what she had better do; he had told her, too truly, she would never be free of difficulties and suffering, and she recalled how earnest had been his warnings against concealment.

But she could not bring herself to apply to him for help. After hearing the conditions he had attached to the gift of Clairefonds, Louisa had felt as if the marquis had assisted in bringing about her humiliation, and had been full of resentment towards him; not resembling the heartburning she had towards her husband, but that which springs from the drop of gall hidden in the germ of all human affections.

With the morning, however, came less sombre views of her position. She would wait—M. de Villemont seldom opened a book; why should he fix on this one in particular? Louisa watched for an opportunity, and thrust the story of "L." into the kitchen fire.

M. de Villemont came home full of vanity as to his own exploits in lark shooting. Louisa listened, and was sure he had heard nothing of Gustave Gastineau's novel. Yet every now and then he began a phrase, which seemed to her so indicative of a knowledge of it, that she turned sick; she could have borne to discuss the subject with Marc de Lantry, or to hear it judged by M. de Blacourt—both men whom she respected with all her soul; but to have to listen meekly to M. de Villemont, who was always so vain of any part in which he had to play the judge, to listen meekly to his common-place prolix denunciations of a case beyond the power of a limited nature to comprehend, to have him roughly handling the feelings of a man she had offended so cruelly, was what she could not do; she would be driven to say something she should live to repent of for the rest of her days. She *thought* of writing to Marc or to Ismay, they corresponded occasionally; but when she tried to explain

herself on paper, the words appeared to mean more than she wished to say. "It's impossible to write on such matters," she said, and tore her letter into little bits, which, for further precaution, she burned. It came to this, she would trust to chance.

CHAPTER IX.

Frère Prêcheur.

M. AND MADAME DE VILLEMONT'S domestic intercourse became extremely peaceable. They lived as did most others of their acquaintance; seldom meeting except at breakfast and dinner. Monsieur had his separate amusements and occupations into which madame did not inquire. Madame had hers. They attended to the etiquette of making their entrance together at the ceremonious dinners and soirées at the Prefecture and elsewhere, and that being so, no one had any right to conjecture that their ménage was not a pattern one.

Louisa saw pretty young creatures, many of them as young as herself, married to elderly invalids, or to men who neglected them or did worse; and yet, who dressed and danced, and laughed and sang, and enjoyed themselves mightily. Why should she not do the same? Why mope all her life over an irretrievable blunder? Free now from any care as to the impression she was producing on her husband, she was at her ease, and perfectly comprehended the powerful arm she had in her beauty. She smiled and in a twinkling had a train of courtiers. She enjoyed the homage she received, and what was more dangerous, she enjoyed in her turn the putting down of those who had been cold and sneering on her first coming among them.

she was without even the safeguard of a mother's sharp admonitions.

For Mrs. Templar had relapsed into her former habit of solitude. She remained in her own room surrounded by open half-packed trunks, by her side a small portmanteau bursting with papers; or else she slipped out of the house unseen to walk in the neighbouring woods. Even M. de Villemont remonstrated with her on this last point, representing that the woods were the resort of the soldiers quartered in the town, and that it was not well for a woman to go there alone.

"An old stick like me is safe anywhere," she replied; "however, for peace sake, I'll take your dog, stop, with me; *he* is fond of me, poor fellow."

On Christmas-day, Mrs. Templar as she sat down to breakfast, handed Louisa a bank note.

"What is this for, mamma?"

"For my board, my dear."

"There is no necessity for anything of the kind, I assure you, mamma."

"I don't choose to quarter myself on any one," replied Mrs. Templar; "if you don't take the money, Louisa, it will be because you want to get rid of me."

"You cannot suppose that," said Louisa.

"Very well, then do as I bid you. No need for your being afraid, my dear, of always having me, but as long as I am here, I shall pay you at the same rate; your husband approves, you see."

"Do as you please, madame," said M. de Villemont; "pay or not, go or stay, and I shall equally approve."

The belligerents had no real mind to quarrel, so

they refrained from further open warfare: it is possible that M. de Villemont had a consciousness that it was better for Louisa that her mother should remain at Clairefonds.

Louisa at this period wrote for the first time since her marriage to M. de Blacourt; her heart was sore against him, and her letter was short and ceremonious.

Before the anniversary of her wedding-day, Louisa was the leader of one of the gayest coteries in Bar le Duc. She had a fixed day for receiving; but there was one of her acquaintances who very soon had a pretext for paying a daily visit to Clairefonds.

Severin de Pressy was young, noble, handsome; in stature of middle size, in figure slight and graceful; he had besides a pair of most expressive brown eyes; with a countenance of which every line betrayed passion and sensibility; nevertheless it was well known that Severin's life was singularly irreproachable. All Frenchmen are not of necessity immoral. In the enjoyment of a place in the administration which was almost a sinecure, he devoted his many hours of leisure to study — of a desultory kind, perhaps — but all of a nature to refine and exalt his tastes.

A singular intimacy speedily established itself between him and Louisa; they had evidently just the coincidences of tastes and dissonances of character which so often form the closest ties of friendship. Severin assumed very soon the part of a mentor to his beautiful new friend. Without rendering any reason for his doing so to himself, he began to scrutinize her conduct, and this led to remonstrances on the way she wasted her time on yellow covered novels, and to

tures on the frivolity of the society she frequented. She laughingly named him "frère prêcheur."

He brought her books, read to her, made her know the best passages of the modern poets of France; they spent many an innocent hour over *Lamartine*. Louisa, however, would only listen patiently to the love story of Jocelyn, but Severin's earnestness generally prevailed over her unwillingness to be serious. One of his favorite pursuits was botany; and he strove very hard to inoculate Louisa with this taste: it was amazing the enuity he displayed in his descriptions, so as to make the knowledge of the dry nomenclature captivating to her. He led her to remark all the daily gradations by which spring glides into summer, summer into autumn. And all this time never had there been a lapse into unhealthy sentimental discussions between them; their intercourse was without any disturbance or agitation of the feelings. They discussed all subjects with candour and openness. As she might have spoken to M. de Blacourt, Louisa said to Severin, — "Do Frenchmen never marry for love?"

"Seldom," was the answer.

"Allow me to tell you, then, that your system is vicious," she said, warmly. "Will it always be so, wonder?"

"It is a pity," he said; "but in France there always has been something of ridicule attached to marriage. Our language abounds with comic expressions against matrimony, which date back as far as the origin of French. Frenchmen can't take marriage seriously, they consider it an absurdity to have a passion for their own wife."

"I think a passion of any kind an absurdity," said

Louisa. She went on, "It is possible I may be differently constituted from other people, but nothing I ever read or saw has made me understand what *that* is, which you call passion."

"Then I sincerely trust you never may," he replied, gravely.

"And I as sincerely hope you will not marry without loving your wife. Take my advice, M. de Pressy, rather never marry at all than marry as Frenchmen do."

"I shall probably never marry, but if I do, it shall not be without an affection for the person I marry."

"That's right," said Louisa, and shook hands with him to show her approbation.

Until his acquaintance with Louisa, Severin's name had never been coupled with that of any woman; it was now beginning to be associated with that of Madame de Villemont, but as yet only in whispers that had not reached him or Louisa. This ignorance was not to last long for either. One afternoon M. de Pressy found Mrs. Templar seated in the salon; hitherto he had never done more than catch a glimpse of that austere lady. He happened to have brought with him a new number of the *Revue des deux Mondes* to show Madame de Villemont an article on Comte's "Philosophie Positive."

Mrs. Templar interrupted him, —

"Poison!" she said, "keep it for yourself, sir. As long as I have any influence with my daughter, no man shall teach her philosophy."

Severin, who was of a shy, reserved disposition, shrank from this rude attack, and made his visit short.

"I fancy I have taught that fine gentleman something better than philosophy," said Mrs. Templar.

Louisa was very angry.

"Pray, mamma, may I ask why you were so rude M. de Pressy?"

"You thought me blind, my dear."

"There's nothing to see. Other ladies receive its."

"Lookers-on see more of the game than the players, Madame Louisa. You had better be on your guard, or that husband of yours will play you a disagreeable trick one of these days. You are cleverer, no doubt, than your mother; you can talk philosophy and the arts; but, my dear, I was born long before you. I have had you bodily before your eyes than your noble Raoul sneaking into that room there," and Mrs. Templar pointed to the glass-door by which Louisa's boudoir communicated with the salon.

This speech made Louisa recollect having once or twice heard stealthy steps in her boudoir during Verin's last two or three visits.

"God forgive you, mamma, if you are making a false accusation against M. de Villemont, and God forgive him if he has been so treacherous."

Only a couple of days after this conversation, Madame de Villemont received a letter, addressed in an unknown hand; the seal was black and of an enormous size and thickness. After speculating as to who could be her correspondent, Louisa broke the seal. The first words made her stare: they ran thus: —

"MY DEAR COUSIN, —

"I AM an old woman, but though I live like a toad in a hole," . . .

Louisa turned to the signature and read, —

"ADELE ST. GEORGES."

Before giving the rest of the epistle it will be as well to explain who the writer was.

Mademoiselle St. Georges was the sister of Amedée St. Georges, colonel en retraite.

Mademoiselle was now a lady of upwards of sixty, whom the colonel, her junior by a couple of years, ostentatiously called "Petite Maman." They were nearly related to the De Blacourts and De Villemonts, and as proud as they were poor. Their poverty, however, did not prevent their taking a third to share it, the daughter of a deceased brother — that same young girl, Marguerite, whose black hair M. de Villemont had praised so highly. "Petite Maman" was a mother to her brother and housekeeper as well. It was Petite Maman who cooked the dinner and curled the colonel's grey hair, and frizzed his white whiskers, who ironed his shirts with their high stiff collars, who drew on and pulled off his tight boots, who sent him forth to shine in that gay world whither she never went. It was by Petite Maman's management the colonel always had a five-franc piece in his purse to make a show with.

Now for the rest of the letter: —

"MY DEAR COUSIN, —

"I AM an old woman, but though I live like a toad in a hole, I hear all that is talked about in the town. I love your sweet bright face, and I am a

riend to open dealings. I shall tell you what others will not. All scandal comes to my ears, thanks to my good brother. Now, my very dear (*ma très-chère*), the colonel — I give you my authority — hears your name taken with that of M. de Pressy. You are surrounded by foolish women whose greatest pleasure would be to see you sticking in the mud of some bad road. My dear, be as wise as you are amiable. With my best salutations,

“Your all devoted,

“ADELE ST. GEORGES.”

How Louisa's soul rose and rebelled — *her* name taken in vain — *her* conduct speculated on — she who had not a thought she should be ashamed to avow, with regard to M. de Pressy or any one else. How she hated the world — a vile world — a cruel world. Innocence then was no safeguard — ah! by what a treacherous, dastardly set she was surrounded. For the moment she detested Severin; he must have known, though she did not, that people were gossiping about his visits; if he had had any real friendship for her, he would have stayed away.

When the hot fit of indignation had spent itself she had an ague of terror for that “dread tongue” which slays happiness and good fame with a word; she must know what, and all, that had been said. She put on her bonnet and shawl to go to the St. Georges' house, which was not more than ten minutes' walk from Clairefonds. She left word with her maid where she was gone.

As she was stepping out of the courtyard she met

M. de Pressy, and said more hastily than politely that she had a rendezvous with Mademoiselle St. Georges.

"Allow me to walk there with you," said Severin.

Louisa did not refuse, and he walked by her side. She knew as well as if she had looked in at all the windows she passed, that behind every muslin blind there was one or more pair of eyes watching her, and commenting on her being so accompanied; her cheeks burned and her ears tingled. She did not hear a syllable of what De Pressy was saying to her. A gentleman on the other side of the way lifted his hat as they passed; and Louisa saw or fancied she saw him smile significantly. But Louisa would have braved anything rather than Severin should imagine that she knew of her having had her name joined with his.

CHAPTER X.

Petite Maman's Advice.

MDLLE. ST. GEORGES herself opened the door to Madame de Villemont, and opened also her piercing eyes very wide at the unexpected sight of M. de Pressy. Almost before the door was closed on her, Louisa exclaimed, without uttering the usual greeting, —

“I met him as I was coming here, and I could not let him go away — I was ashamed.”

“Ah! that was vexatious,” answered Petite Maman, she led the way to the salon, which had all the comfortable closeness of an unused room.

“Your letter has made me come at once,” said Louisa, impetuously, “to know what people *are* saying out me. I ought to know, and I must know.”

“What you ask is difficult to answer,” replied Madame St. Georges; “no one ever speaks out plainly to such matters — half words and laughs, and winks, are made to express a great deal.”

“At all events you can explain what made you think it necessary to warn me? You need not be afraid to speak out; thank goodness, I can bear the truth.”

“Without question you can, poor dear lady.”

“Well, what was the grand accusation?” continued Louisa, raising her head, and giving a proud glance to the dear fat old lady, looking like a feather-bed in a brown check mohair dress.

Mdlle. St. Georges turned *her* head aside as she answered, —

“It is said that you are too partial to Severin de Pressy — that’s the naked truth. I don’t believe it; if I did I should not have written to you. It would have been of worse than no use — I should only have hurried your misery!”

Louisa’s features were rigid with emotion as she said, —

“Do you mean that the people I see daily, who come to my house, who kiss me on both cheeks, who send me invitations, and invite M. de Pressy at the same time as they do me; do you mean that they are the persons who talk of me in this scandalous audacious way?”

Mdlle. St. Georges replied, —

“My dear, neither you nor I can change the world; it’s just what it was in the time of Job, whenever that was. You Protestants read your Bible; well, you remember what David said of familiar friends?”

“I have a great mind,” said Louisa, “to dare them all, and go on as I have been doing; it will be as much as to confess I was wrong, if I make any change. What an idea, that a woman cannot have a man for a friend without danger!”

Mdlle. St. Georges drew her chair close to Louisa’s, and took one of her delicately-gloved hands in her own muscular ones.

“I am past sixty, and I have seen so much. I know many a sad, sad story — my dear, *you* cannot have men friends, they will all be lovers.”

“You are mistaken, mademoiselle; I am told I am good-looking, but do believe me, I am not attractive.

can give you an instance — M. de Villemont never has a bit in love with me.”

“Allons donc!” said Mdlle. St. Georges; “you want to make me take a lantern for the moon. I hope you never made that false accusation of your husband to Severin de Pressy.”

“It does not trouble me enough to make me talk about it. It was your assertion made me offer you proof in contradiction.”

“Ah! my dear, it’s a great pity your religion denies you the advantage of a confessor. My beautiful cousin, you have need of a head with more brains than I within my nob to counsel you. Your mother, she must have experience: talk to her.”

“Mamma did read me a lecture two days ago about Severin de Pressy. She has forbidden him to teach me philosophy, and means to be present at all his visits. Will that hush the tongues of my intimate enemies, do you think?”

Louisa’s manner had a recklessness in it which alarmed Mdlle. St. Georges; she began to have fears that Louisa had seen Severin de Pressy too often already. She said decidedly, —

“You ask my advice — here it is: forbid that young man the house.”

“And how? Am I to make him a curtsey and please, sir, give up my acquaintance — all the ladies and gentlemen we know accuse us of being in love with one another?”

“You are too clever not to be able to make him understand your real wishes as to his too frequent visits,” said Mdlle. St. Georges.

“But I have no wish to give up receiving M. de

Pressy — he is very pleasant, and, indeed, instructive. He is teaching me to employ my time rationally, and I should imagine from the grave warnings he gives me as to my frivolity and that of my associates, he must be almost as good as a confessor. No, if I give him up, it will be to please you.”

“Did Severin ever talk to you of his family?”

“No, never; he has always kept to literary and scientific subjects — he has made me comprehend the difference between a fulcrum and a lever.”

“Severin is the last surviving representative of one of our noblest and oldest Lorraine families. Of all the possessions of his house, he has scarcely anything but the name. His father espoused the cause of the Duchesse de Berri, and was killed in La Vendée. His mother lives in the hopes of his marrying a rich cousin, with whom he has been brought up, and thus redeeming his lost fortunes.”

“And you are afraid of my spoiling this wise plan,” said Louisa, laughing. “Set your heart at rest, ma cousine, I will not ruin M. de Pressy’s prospects — many thanks for your good advice. I must, however, leave you; I am sure all your neighbours are accusing me of taking a sentimental walk with this descendant of the Crusaders — adieu, ma cousine.”

Mdlle. St. Georges said to herself, as she closed the door on Madame de Villemont, —

“This is what one gets for meddling — poor young thing — ah! she’s in a bad way —”

A hasty ring of the door bell interrupted her monologue; it was Louisa again.

"I have come back to tell you that I have repented of my rudeness to you — I am grateful for the interest you have shown in me — I don't believe you had any other motive than my good — forgive me for being so thankless and ill-tempered — will you? I shall not allow L. de Pressy or any other monsieur to come paying me regular visits till I am past fifty. Now, will you always be my friend, and, when I am dull, may I come to you? I declare, I think I'll take to learning cookery — will you teach me how to make beautiful preserves, such as those you sent us — I never saw any so beautiful."

"Flatterer!" said Mdlle. St. Georges, tapping the pretty cheek upheld to her; "if you want work, sometimes give our Marguerite a music lesson — that will be a work of charity."

"To be sure I will," replied Louisa, in a cheerful, kind voice; "shall she come to me, or shall I come here?"

"My dear, we have no piano."

"That settles the matter," said Louisa; "will you send her every day at twelve?"

Louisa went home with a lighter heart than she had had when she set out. She had talked herself out of the fears of what the Mrs. Grundys of the town had said or were saying of her — she had the pleasant consciousness of having made a friend — she was pleased, too, with the idea of being useful to anyone.

Youth sees a hope in every new event — old age foresees a chance of trouble in every change. When

Louisa told her mother that she was going to teach Marguerite St. Georges music, Mrs. Templar said, sharply, —

“You have done a very imprudent thing; you will see that you have brought an old house on your shoulders.”

“Dear mamma, what harm can come of my teaching this poor child? Whom can it injure?”

“You’ll see,” continued Mrs. Templar; “it won’t stop with the piano. After that is settled, it will be something else, until at last you will find yourself saddled with the girl for good and all. However, it’s no business of mine.”

“What’s the use of continually dreading the future, mamma, and so spoiling the present?”

“I needn’t say take your own way, for you always did and always will; but just consider what you have made of it.”

“Surely in this instance, doing a kindness to those who deserve it, and who, as connections of M. de Villemont, have a right to kindness from me, cannot be wrong. My life is useless enough.”

“That’s your own fault; you have a husband and a mother to attend to.”

“I shall not be less anxious about you, mamma. I shall take nothing from M. de Villemont that he will miss. Do, mamma, approve of my teaching Marguerite,” and Louisa turned a pleading face to her mother.

“I have no authority over you now; so what necessity is there for my approval? I believe you will

to regret what you are going to undertake; if ever you do, remember I warned you."

Louisa could not be convinced that there must be some germ of trouble hidden in the music lessons to Marguerite St. Georges; so the next day she welcomed her pupil affectionately, and thus began the entanglement of the thread of their two lives. Had Mrs. Temple really possessed the power of seeing into the future, even she must have shed tears at seeing Louisa unconsciously preparing the way for the crowning grief of her life.

Marguerite was at that time a half-grown girl of thirteen; her features were irregular; nevertheless, there was something Raphaellesque in her face — in the peculiar arch of her eyebrows — in the roundness of her smooth forehead — above all, in the expression of her hazel eyes. Her whole air was demure, nun-like; so much so that the workmen and workwomen of her parish had given her the name of la Sainte Vierge. She had been sent as a child to the Convent of the Names Dominicaines, but after her first communion Mlle. St. Georges had insisted on taking her home. The girl was so pious, so absorbed in religious ceremonies, that the aunt, who had little turn that way, had taken fright lest Marguerite's religious feelings would be wrought up to the point of taking the veil.

Mlle. St. Georges had shown great spirit and determination in thus acting. She had been given to understand that, if her niece were left at the convent, the priests would find her a husband, which Petite Maman was unlikely herself to accomplish, considering

the tenuity of Marguerite's dowry. The old lady had persisted against advice and even reproach; she had pinched herself a little more to afford Marguerite a daily lesson of an hour from a governess, but she had had been a good utterly beyond even Petite Mama's energy to obtain, until she had made her appeal to Madame de Villemont.

Louisa was charmed with her pupil. The first thing she thought of on awakening was of the quaint little maiden, in whose innocent eyes beamed such admiration and love for her music mistress. This was Louisa's first initiation into one of the greatest of human efforts — that of being of use to a fellow-being who loved her — she took Marguerite to her heart with all the enthusiasm of a nature which craved for affection.

Louisa thought little more of Severin de Pres. He, on the contrary, when debarred of Madame de Villemont's society, first perceived how dear it was to him. He wrote to a friend describing his feelings. The paragraph ran thus: —

"Our affections do not always follow our judgment. *she* has few of the qualities with which I have hitherto endowed my ideal. There is no repose about her, no reflection — she acts solely from impulse; and that I account for her marriage with such an empty-headed empty-hearted man as her husband. She has talents — they are uncultivated — her mind is a wilderness but full of the sweetest wild-flowers — her heart is large — you never surprise her expressing an ungenerous sentiment. She is all purity and brightness but with a yieldingness of character contrary to

leas of the perfection of womanhood. After all, though, the thought of her pre-occupies me, I believe have rather a strong, calm affection for her, than that is vulgarly called a passion. Our pleasant intimacy has been interrupted by tittle-tattle as to my frequent visits; this has made my days more lonely than ever, and solitude has a bad effect on my nervous system."

The friend answered, —

"Your only remedy lies in flight; apply for a change, or for leave of absence; go and spend some weeks at home; cultivate your young cousin's talents, and don't break your mother's heart, and ruin yourself — in short, don't be an idiot. The strongest love does not endure so long as a good estate."

Severin wrote back in Anselm's words, —

"Can a man forget one who is placed like a seal upon his heart?"

"I have taken your advice so far; I have seen my mother, but only to tell her that she must look out for another husband for Solanges. I shall never marry her, or any woman I do not love!"

Severin continued to live in Bar le Duc; it was something to breathe the same air as she did, something to see the walls of the house which she inhabited; a great deal occasionally to catch a glimpse of her. They rarely met in society, for Severin never mixed in any gaiety that he could plausibly avoid. When he did find himself in the same salon with Louisa, a formal salutation was all that passed between them; it was Severin who so resolutely withdrew from Louisa, not *she from him*; she could not understand why he

should so rigorously avoid her. All gossip about them was at an end; why then refuse to be on the same terms with her as were the other gentlemen of her acquaintance?

CHAPTER XI.

A Shadow of the Past.

AT the end of the second year after Madame de Villemont's marriage, M. Remy, the old pastor of Bar le Duc, petitioned the Council General to appoint a younger and abler man to take his place. He was offered an assistant, but he declined on the plea of his age and infirmities, which rendered him incompetent for the duties of a Protestant minister in a populous town. The truth was that the newly-displayed hostility of the priesthood of the department towards Protestants had annoyed M. Remy for more than a twelvemonth. Difficulties were constantly arising in adjoining villages, whenever a member of the Reformed Church was to be buried; the old clergyman's tranquillity was disturbed — the finishing blow was given by the following letter, here copied with all its numerous blunders: —

“*CHER PASTEUR, —*

“*J'ai une nouvelle à vous apprendre. Aujourd'hui on a honoré notre place de cimetiére, en y enterrant une pendue, une femme qui, par plusieurs vols, cependant a été attrappée au fait, ayant elle même auparavant accusée une autre personne. Elle en avait pour cinq ans peutêtre, pour en terminer plus vite, elle s'est donné la mort. Me doutant bien que le curé ce gros Antichrist de G— pourrait bien commander sa fosse à cette place, j'avais commandé à mon mari de voir M.*

le Maire, et de le prévenir promptement de ce qui allait arriver, et que pour éviter quelques raisons, il ferait bien de prévenir le curé de chercher une autre place; ayant fait un nouveau cimetière il a grandement de quoi loger ces gens-là.

“Mon mari a été très mal reçu, surtout qu’il y avait beaucoup d’ouvriers à souper. Le Daniel (the writer’s husband) s’est trouvé bien honteux, car voici les paroles de M. le Maire; qu’est ce que vous me chantez. Ces gens là, on les laisse libre, on leur accorde tout, ils sont néanmoins de plus en plus exigeants — peu m’importe à moi, qu’on la met où on voudra.

“Ainsi voyez, M. le Pasteur, ce qu’il en resulta. Aujourd’hui tout le monde dit, on a mis cette coquine avec les Protestants, avec les chiens. Quand on a mesuré cette place, le commissaire et le maire étaient là, pour convenir de nous la donner, j’aurai cru qu’après cela, le curé ne viendrait plus à l’avenir nous amener, ses noyés et ses pendus, ou peut-être que M. le Préfet n’ayant pas souscrit aux conventions que l’on avait fait, pour cette place, comme il a souscrit pour une chambre, alors il n’est pas étonnant que l’Anti-christ ne vient nous braver jusqu’à ce point.

“M. Remy, si vous avez des droits, faites les valoir, *ou je ne sais ce que j’en penserai.* D’abord on vous a caché qu’il y avait déjà un pendu à cette place, cependant ce pendu est de mon temps. Aujourd’hui étant plus avancé, je croyais que l’on n’aurait plus cette effronterie. Le curé met au défi quel ministre Protestant que ce soit, de lui faire attirer un seul reproche — car dit-il ils n’ont aucun droit.

“Nous en sommes bien humiliés, bien mortifiés, nous prions le Seigneur qu’il veuille toujours nous re-

garder d'un œil de miséricorde sur cette terre, s'ils en est tant d'autres qui nous méprise.

“Mes cordiales salutations,
(*Sic*) “MICHELLE CORNOUIL.”

On receiving this missive, with its menace, “*ou je ne sais ce que j'en penserai,*” M. Remy hired a vehicle and betook himself to Vitry, of which Marc de Lantry was pastor. Marc gave both advice and help, and redress was easily obtained from the préfet, a man of a liberal mind, but the worry and uneasiness had fairly broken M. Remy's spirit; his application for removal was attended to, and Marc de Lantry was invited to become the pastor of Bar le Duc.

“What a lucky chance for me,” exclaimed Louisa.

Ay, to be sure, there are many good chances as well as bad in life — good influences as well as evil; only we are all apt to have a more retentive memory for what has been bitter than for what has been sweet.

Nevertheless, after the first pleasure of renewed intimacy was over, Louisa's spirits drooped. Admitted within the sanctuary of happy married life, she saw what love in marriage was; once more she keenly felt how she had thrown away her life — she relapsed into restlessness, novel-reading, dissipation — caring less and less for Marguerite's improvement. Petite Maman, struggling to content an extravagant old fop — patching, darning, marketing, cheapening; Petite Maman, resigned to all that had reference to herself, had been an encouraging example to Louisa. Ismay's victories over a naturally indolent nature, her patience and sympathy with every one — and they were

many — who came to her with some sad story or some suffering, were never so much as perceived by Madame de Villemont. All was merged in the nimbus with which Marc's devoted love surrounded his wife.

Louisa often sought the De Lantrys; she watched them with the intense interest of one bent on a discovery.

"Poor Louisa!" said Ismay, one day after one of these visits. "Marc, don't be so kind to me when she is here; it makes her angry."

"If the sight of the happiness of others has that effect upon her, then she needs a sermon, and she shall have one," replied Marc.

The opportunity soon occurred, but not the sermon. Louisa came to M. de Lantry with a second novel of Gustave Gastineau's, sent to her as the first had been, wet from the printing-office. It had the same dedication as the previous one; it contained yet more sneers against women, and it was stained by many a coarse description. Still there were noble pages in it; there were also painful pictures of the depression of spirit engendered by his poverty; here is one paragraph, —

"I learned to despise myself for the very thing of which I ought to have been proud — my labour. I did not feel myself a man; I could not be at my ease with rich men, who, I was well aware, must have gone to the poor-house, had they lost their money, for *they* were unable, like *me*, to gain their daily bread. What a debt of gratitude I owe to her who first taught me the overwhelming advantages of a long purse and a *title*, over brains and a heart," and so on.

Louisa rose from the perusal of the book with a shudder; she said to Marc, "Gustave Gastineau is my determined enemy, he is bent on revenge; he thinks me happy — ah! if he could know the truth!"

The words were uttered quietly, but there was such a reality of pain in them, that Marc's intended sermon went out of his head. The pastor gave place to the indignant man.

"Whether he believes you happy or not, what he has done is a bad action."

"Oh! M. de Lantry, to think that a girl's one foolish act should mar her whole life. If I live to be a hundred it must always be the same. You can never have an idea of what I suffer when I see you and Ismay together, when I see the comfort of mutual confidence, when I see that, let what would happen to Ismay, you would always cherish her. I feel when I am with you both, as the rich man in hell did when he saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom."

"My dear Madame de Villemont, don't use such language."

"I don't mean to be profane — you remember me in the Rue de Varennes, how every one petted me; all that seems so long ago, as if it belonged to another existence. I can scarcely believe I was ever that happy little Louisa!"

"Are you sure that you do not exaggerate your discomforts? that, because you have been disappointed in some things, you do not see every thing en noir? M. de Villemont is never unkind to you, I am sure."

Louisa said, "Do you suppose I did not struggle for happiness when I first married; that I did not try

to make my husband love me? Ay, that I did, and I have found out for my pains, that the only way to live tolerably well with him is to make him feel my indifference; he despises heart. Dear M. Marc, be my good counsellor, look after me, keep me from doing wrong. I am afraid of my own thoughts — years and years of this weary life to bear!”

“Courage,” said Marc; “you have failed in obtaining one sort of happiness — overcome the evil fate you helped to bring on yourself, and in so doing you will discover another kind of happiness. You have had a sort of triumphant pleasure, haven’t you, in battling with a stormy wind — that’s the sort of joy reserved for those who battle against trials. You talk of long life — the longest, what is it, but a few years, and then if we have done our work faithfully — an eternity of bliss.”

Another spring and summer went by: it was now autumn. M. de Villemont’s manner had changed to Louisa; he was often now rude to her before strangers, a savage look came into his eyes when they rested on her. Louisa terrified herself by thinking that he had either himself read or been told of those cruel books of Gustave Gasteineau. She never guessed that he resented her being childless, as if it had been a wilful crime.

Mrs. Templar had grown quieter; she still passed her days among half-packed trunks, but she had given up all talk of going away; she read her prayer-book a good deal, and more than once Louisa fancied that her mother looked as if she had been shedding tears. The mere thought that such might be the case, went like a stab to the daughter’s heart.

"I am putting all my papers in order," said Mrs. Templar one day at dinner, without particularly addressing either M. or Madame de Villemont. "I wish M. de Blacourt to look them over before any other person sees them."

"Mamma, you are quite well?" exclaimed Louisa, anxiously.

"Yes, but nobody can say what a day may bring forth. 'Put your house in order,' is a good precept. You need not alarm yourself, Louisa; making a will never killed any one."

Louisa watched her mother narrowly; she could discover no signs of illness in her; she walked as stoutly as ever, and even seemed more erect in figure; still she could not shake off a certain uneasiness.

After this conversation, whenever her mother was later than usual in returning from her walk, Louisa used to set out either with Marguerite St. Georges, or with a servant, towards the wood Mrs. Templar generally frequented.

On one of these occasions she met Marc de Lantry at the top of the hill and he joined her.

"How quiet the birds are," said Louisa, "and only a month ago there was a concert of song from every tree."

A yellow moss bee was creeping over the turf; a blackbird rose heavily with a "cluck, cluck," from beneath a tree, and hid itself among the branches. All at once there was a sound of loud laughter — that kind of laughter which gives the impression of disorder and impropriety. The next instant a woman, accompanied by two soldiers, came in sight. Marc

walked forward; as he did so the female drew away, trying to hide herself behind the trunks of the beeches.

"My daughter," said the pastor, "I regret to see you again straying from the fold of the Good Shepherd."

The person he spoke to slunk quite away into a by-path.

"Who is that woman?" asked Louisa, in a startled voice.

"A castaway — I am afraid one utterly lost. The first time I ever saw her was, strangely enough, in our little church at Vitry. She sauntered in out of mere curiosity. I guessed what she was, and I chose for the chapter of the day, the one with the parable of the prodigal son, and I made a few remarks that I thought might encourage her to forsake her evil ways. She left the church before the sermon was over. Ismay and I thought it our duty to seek her out; and my wife found needlework for her, and did all she could to induce her to live a respectable life; we had hopes of saving her — she was clever with her needle. Ismay supposed she must once have been a *femme de chambre*. However, after a couple of weeks she came to our house, gave the bundle of linen entrusted to her to our cook, and left word that she was tired of work. I have never seen her since until this moment."

"Is she young?" asked Louisa.

"No, she cannot be much less than forty — thirty-seven or thirty-eight she told Ismay. She has purely cut features, but her face is rather repulsive than attractive."

"I suppose it is nonsense," said Louisa, "but she

made my heart beat. Do you know, just the one glimpse I got of her made me suddenly remember that odious Laure, whom M. Granson forced mamma to take as lady's-maid when we went to Versailles? Mamma has never spoken to me on the subject; but from what I recollect, I am sure my poor mother was ill-treated. It is twelve years since then, and Laure must have altered very much."

"Not as much as you have done changing from a child into a woman," said Marc. "I do not imagine, however, you would be able after such a lapse of time to recognize Laure — why, you were not nine years old then."

"I have never forgotten her peculiar look; whenever I have had dreams even now, it's always about Laure and M. Granson. I am sure I should recognize either of them anywhere." She added, in a voice of alarm, "I hope and trust mamma has not met that woman — let us go on faster."

One person's real terror will communicate itself to another. Marc was almost as relieved as Louisa when, at the next turn of the woodland path they were following, they perceived Mrs. Templar. She was walking quietly, Stop, the Newfoundland, gravely marching at her side. Mrs. Templar saw M. de Lantry and her daughter perfectly well, but she gave no sign of recognition — she went on speaking to the dog:

"There's a wise dog, and a good dog, good dog — he is not ungrateful. Stop, my pet."

"Should you have supposed that mamma could speak in such a caressing tone?" said Louisa to Marc; "it's only to a dog, though."

"I never saw any one but your mother who gave

me the idea of a living tragedy," observed Marc, as the tall, gaunt figure in black came forwards, with a slow, almost majestic step. "Poor soul, she looks like one whose mind is jangled and out of tune."

"It is quite unnecessary, Louisa, your coming to meet me," were Mrs. Templar's first words; "why should you do now what you never did before M. de Lantry came?"

Mrs. Templar never would receive any attention from Louisa without repaying it by a poisoned hint.

"I do not wonder that Madame de Villemont is alarmed about you," said Marc. "The woods are full of sportsmen; we have heard a dozen shots, I am sure, since we came up the hill."

"I have not met a soul," replied the lady, "and the shots were in an opposite direction to where Stop and I were, — weren't they, Stop, my fine fellow?" she said, as she stooped to caress the dog. "Dear Stop, he is faithful and honest, he is — doesn't fawn on me one moment and desert me the next. Do you like dogs, M. de Lantry?"

"Very much," he replied; "but I prefer the society of human beings."

"So I should suppose from your very sociable disposition, I observe that you make friends of your carpenter and shoemaker."

"And capital fellows they are," returned Marc. "You don't figure to yourself all the help those men afford to their poorer neighbours: yes, madame, I allow it — I feel that every man and woman is my equal; they are fashioned as I am, have heads and hands and feet as I have."

"You would make a friend, then, of that man?"

and Mrs. Templar pointed to a dirty fellow, half tipsy, rolling from side to side of the road.

"I should not like to sit down to table with him, because he is unpleasant to come near, but I know that he is born with the same faculties that I have, and that the germ of all that is in me is in him. I have no right to despise him because he is unwashed and untaught."

"I would not believe that any other man who said what you say, lived up to his words, M. de Lantry. You were always a good creature. I remember how good you were to those wretched Gastineaux. I was kind to them also, and in return for my kindness they ruined me and that poor girl," looking at Louisa; "father and son were alike fatal to mother and daughter." Meeting Marc's questioning eyes, she added, "I owed Professor Gastineau a debt which his son's conduct has doubled."

"I am sincerely grateful to you for your good opinion of me," said Marc; "you have never resented my being frank with you, nor will you now, I hope, when in return for your expression of good-will towards me, I tell you that, you are wrong, wrong to yourself as much as to others, in cherishing unforgiving feelings towards any one. I don't know what might be the offence Professor Gastineau gave you; but, let it have been what it would, the command is express, 'Forgive your neighbour, though he offend seventy times.'"

"*I cannot*," said Mrs. Templar; "I allow you to tell me that it is wicked. I agree with you; nevertheless, as long as I have my reason, there are offences I shall never forgive — no — never."

Louisa lingered a little behind the speakers. Mrs. Templar turned round, and, looking at her daughter, saw tears trembling like dewdrops on those long lashes she had gloried over with a mother's pride, when Louisa was a child. Louisa's eyes met those of her mother; moved by a sudden impulse, Mrs. Templar said, —

"I am not alluding to anything you ever did, you silly child; do you hear?"

"That's right," said Marc, as Louisa hung fondly on her mother's arm; "comfort one another."

"As if I could mean ill by my own child," said Mrs. Templar, as they entered the courtyard of Clairefonds.

CHAPTER XII.

The Croix Rouge.

next morning, while they were still at breakfast, a maid brought Louisa a scrap of paper, on which was written in pencil: —

A colporteur by whom I send this, is a Protestant; he has an old Calvin Bible for sale; none of my friends, except you or Mrs. Templar, are rich enough to buy one. From the style of printing, it is of the date of 1750. I think it worth having. The man says he comes from an Anabaptist family in the Vosges.

“MARC DE LANTRY.”

“What’s it all about,” asked M. de Villemont, when he saw the paper Louisa was reading, suspiciously.

“I’ll read aloud what Marc had written; when I have finished, she said, —

“Suppose I may see the man here?”

“I’m sure you have Bibles enough already,” said M. de Villemont, in a surly voice.

“Buy it, my dear,” Mrs. Templar said. “You don’t give many presents, nor spend much on yourself. Let us go and speak to the man in the hall,”

Mrs. Templar left the room, followed by Louisa. They found, instead of the colporteur, only a boy, perhaps twelve years old. She held a large

quarto Bible in her arms. Monsieur Jacques had bid her bring it to Clairefonds.

"Why didn't M. Jacques, as you call him, come himself?" asked Louisa.

"I don't know; he sent me with the book. I am to have ten francs for it."

"Are you his daughter?"

"No, madame, he is lodging with my father."

"And who is your father?"

"Pierre Roussel, the carpenter."

"Are you sure you are telling the truth — that he told you the price was ten francs?" asked Mrs. Templar.

"He said ten francs, and that you were rich and could afford to pay."

"Let me buy it, mamma?" said Louisa.

"No, I meant what I said; there's the money; I daresay the hawker is a cheat. Now, take the Bible, Louisa; I give it to you."

About an hour afterwards, the pastor came to call. Louisa was singing some of Claude Marot's hymns, the words and music of which were at the end of the old Bible. Mrs. Templar, for a wonder, was in the room, and Marc's large, kind heart dilated as he thought, —

"Here's the beginning, I hope, of a new era for these two women. The Lord be thanked." He added aloud: "Pray go on, Madame de Villemont; it is a treat to hear you."

She sang another hymn; when it was ended, Mrs. Templar said, —

"I have an idea your protégé is pious, for he knows how to make a good bargain. I paid ten francs for the Bible, double its value, probably."

"I should not say so; if there had been the date, it would have been worth more, but what did you think of the man himself?"

"He did not come," said Louisa; "he sent Roussel's little daughter."

"I am sorry you have not seen him; I should have liked to hear what impression he made on you; women have a supernatural instinct in judging of characters. I am divided between his being a knave, a good Christian, or out of his mind. I heard of his being at Pierre Roussel's, and I was surprised at his not coming to my house, as our book-hawkers generally do, so I thought I would go down to the ville-basse to make some inquiries about him, in fact, to verify whether he had a licence. He was already in bed when I got to Roussel's, but I went to his room and asked to look over his books, and to see his licence. He made no difficulty as to showing me both; the books were in a box in a corner of the room, and his papers there also. He informed me that he had intended to come to me as this morning, that he had walked far, and was foot-sore, and had, therefore, gone early to bed.

"I entered into conversation with him; at first he was reserved, but he gradually relaxed. His voice and choice of words denoted a person of some education; I guessed he came from Alsace; his accent had a strong German twang. When I was wishing him good-night, he inquired if he were likely to find a purchaser for an old Bible, and then I mentioned Madame de Villemont as the only Protestant in the town likely to give the price he wanted; he asked me for your address and a word of recommendation. As I was for the second time taking my leave, he again

stopped me and said abruptly, — ‘Are you ever kept awake at night by thoughts about the Scriptures?’ I answered, ‘No; that I had always enough to do during the day to make me sleep well at night.’ ‘I have a question to propound to you,’ he went on; ‘have you ever considered what was the nature of Adam’s sin?’ ‘For what do you take me, my good friend?’ I asked; ‘a believer or an unbeliever in the Scriptures?’ ‘That’s not the question, M. le Pasteur. In reading and studying the story of Adam, did it never strike you that Adam had already sinned before he ate the half of the apple?’ I said, ‘Certainly I had not thought that.’ He went on quickly, ‘What’s the meaning, then, that we are told that God said, “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him an helpmate?”’ “What made God see that necessity but the knowledge that Adam had already sinful desires — eh, M. le Pasteur?’ ‘You go too deep for me,’ I replied. Without, as it were hearing me, he exclaimed, ‘And can you explain why the devil only appeared in person to Jesus Christ? I’ll give you my idea, sir: Jesus Christ was innocent, and Satan could not enter into his thoughts, therefore he must tempt him externally; he can enter into the minds and hearts of all mankind.’ ‘Yes, yes, we are all possessed, and our sins should not be imputed to us.’”

“I say the man is a knave,” exclaimed Mrs. Templar.

“He is crazed,” said Louisa.

The two opinions were expressed simultaneously.

“Which of you has guessed right?” said Marc.

“I confess the impression made on me was disagreeable. I came here intending to form my opinion by your; but as you have not seen M. Jacques, I shall go and have a look at my new acquaintance by daylight.”

"And what of that unfortunate creature we met the other evening?" said Louisa. "I can't get her out of my thoughts; if I could help to save her. . . ."

"Ah! that's a lost case, I fear. I met her as I left Roussel's last evening — she turned on me like a viper. 'You needn't seek me,' she said; 'I don't want you — let me alone, I tell you — why don't you go to those other houses? You might do the folks there some good, you can't me — I am on the road to hell, and I mean to go there — do you hear — I was happy once — I had religion — I am condemned, for I had light, and I chose darkness. I tell you, there's no hope for me; there's Martine drinks and lies; Suzette and Celestine — they thieve, and lie, and do worse — they may be saved, but there's no hope for me; I have sinned the sin that's never to be pardoned. Go along and don't waste your time on me.' She struck me on the arm and ran away."

"What strange things you see and hear," exclaimed Louisa, aghast.

"Yes; very different from what you see and hear in your world of show and sham. Lift the curtain, however, and you'll find the same passions at work, the same vices, even the same crimes."

"Do you really think ladies and gentlemen are as wicked as the lower classes?"

"Do I think it? I know it; why else the terrific warnings to the rich which abound in the gospel?"

As M. de Lantry went out of the courtyard gates, Marguerite St. Georges came in. As soon as the music lesson began, Mrs. Templar retired to her own room. Presently M. de Villemont came into the salon; he was in *his shooting dress*. He said, —

"Louisa, tell your mother that I have taken Stop with me to-day. I am going to try him as a retriever. Bredy will dine here; we have got permission to shoot in the royal forest," and he left the room with an "au revoir" to both ladies.

"How do you say 'au revoir' in English?" asked Marguerite, who was picking up some English words from hearing Mrs. Templar and Louisa speak to each other in that language.

"I don't remember any exact equivalent for it; we have no leave-taking so cheerful as au revoir; no, our good-by and farewell are blessings — they have in them no hint of meeting again."

"Dear Madame de Villemont, I should so like to learn English," said Marguerite.

"Don't ask me to teach you, dear; I could never teach any one English," replied Louisa, with quickness.

Marguerite was so accustomed to Louisa's always readily acceding to any request she made, that she could not help showing her surprise at this downright refusal. Nevertheless, Louisa said nothing explanatory, but proposed they should go on with the duet, "Giorno d'orrore," which they had been singing when interrupted by M. de Villemont.

As Mrs. Templar never went out before two o'clock, the hour at which she and Louisa were in the habit of taking a cup of soup or chocolate together, Madame de Villemont had not thought it necessary to go and give her husband's message about Stop until after Marguerite's lesson was finished. Mrs. Templar was then neither in her own room nor in the garden.

"Where's mamma?" inquired Louisa of one servant after the other.

No one had seen Mrs. Templar go out.

"It's so unlike my mother not to ask for Stop; I cannot believe that she has gone to walk," observed Louisa.

"Perhaps some one in the street could tell us if she has passed by," said Marguerite.

They had to displace a group of tiny girls playing on the step outside the great gates; the eldest of them answered that she had seen the tall lady in black go down the street, right up to the top: she was walking towards the wood.

What a lovely day that was! not like an October day — warm as summer, and not a cloud in the blue sky. From where they stood, Louisa and Marguerite could see the first group of trees, the vanguard of the wood, which was Mrs. Templar's favourite walk, and the general rendezvous of the townsfolk. In the autumn, the country round Bar le Duc assumes a strange appearance, which we never see in England; the vine-covered slopes are then no longer green, but a deep mottled red; and as for the woods, so full of limes and sumachs, they look all aflame when the sun shines; never more fiery than on this bright October day.

"I wish I had given M. de Villemont's message to mamma," said Louisa, more to herself than to Marguerite. As she spoke, a *billon*, loaded with *spes*, went past; the driver was tipsy, a young man and a girl were behind, the girl carrying a large

nosegay, with long particoloured streamers, the *bouquet de vendange*; they were all three noisily merry.

"I must find some one to go with me to the wood," exclaimed Louisa, in a panic; "if I can get no one else, I must take Jacquot. Perhaps your uncle is at home," she said to Marguerite; "let us go and see."

"Bring me my garden-hat, Manette," she called to the old woman watching them from a window.

When Louisa and Marguerite reached the St. Georges' house, Petite Maman had just finished dressing the colonel for the day. The old gentleman was charmed to be the beautiful Madame de Villemont's escort; he was ready to go all over the world with her, at the same time he was confident that no harm would or could happen to Mrs. Templar — had not the lady perlustrated the wood in every sense for months? — she had never met with incivility. Every one respected grey hairs (the colonel's were dyed).

"All you say is reasonable," answered Louisa; "but it seems so odd she should have gone out without inquiring for Stop, and not at her usual hour either; a dog like Stop is a great protection, and then there are so many people about shooting: it may be very foolish, but I am uneasy."

The colonel could not walk very fast over the stony road in his tight boots; once among the trees, on the paths strewn with fallen leaves, the old officer could better keep up with the impatient steps of his companion.

"My heart beats so," exclaimed Louisa, and stood still.

"No wonder, dear lady, when you walk so fast."

"It is not that," she said.

"You mean you are alarmed — a good sign," returned the colonel; "whenever I expected to be hit in battle, I always escaped; it's just when one believes oneself safest and happiest, that misfortune occurs."

Louisa tried to smile and look convinced. The wood was traversed in every direction by alleys. Louisa, followed by M. St. Georges, struck into one which ran north, for the reason that it led direct to the Croix Rouge; close to which was a bench, where her mother often rested. This large red cross stood on the edge of the royal forest, just where the path Louisa and the colonel were pursuing, debouched on a high road, dividing the two woods.

When M. de Villemont sallied forth that morning, Mrs. Templar had seen from her bed-room window that he was followed by Stop coupled with Sultan.

"That's to pay me off, I suppose, for taking Louisa's part about the Bible," thought Mrs. Templar. "Mean fellow!"

She had gone as far as the salon door to complain to her daughter, but the sound of the two sweet fresh voices united in a duet, changed her mood.

"Poor Louisa!" she said to herself, "how she used to hate practising, and now it is her great consolation."

The old lady went back to her room, and made restless by a certain irritation produced by the incidents of the morning, trifling as they both were, and

lured too by the glorious sunshine, she put on her bonnet and went into the garden, intending to return to the house as soon as Marguerite should be gone.

Jacquot was busy cutting down faded annuals, and the walks were almost impassable for stalks and leaves. Mrs. Templar left the garden, and strolled on, almost without intending it, into the wood, and so on till she was in sight of the Croix Rouge. The only living things that had crossed her path were a weasel stealing from one covert to another, and a pair of blue jays, which she knew had a nest in the beech overhanging the cross. As she was emerging from the wood, she perceived a man seated on the bench by the side of the cross; his back was to her, but his dress, the shabby black coat of an itinerant preacher, with the box of books at his feet, at once led her to conclude this must be the very colporteur of whom M. de Lantry had been speaking. At the sound of footsteps the traveller half turned round; that nameless something which makes us recognize at any distance those with whom we are familiar, now caused Mrs. Templar to hurry forward. She stared at M. Jacques — for it *was* he — for a brief moment, then, ere he could collect his thoughts, she had seized him by the collar of his coat, and shaking him with all the strength that passion lent her, she said, in the broken husky voice of rage, —

“Villain, cheat, swindler, thief! I have caught you at last — at last!”

These words were spoken in English, in tones scarcely human; they sounded like the snarl of a tigress. The man did not utter a syllable, he tried

by main strength to make his assailant loose her hold; he did not, to the credit of manhood be it said, strike her — he strove to wrench his coat from her grasp, but Mrs. Templar was a strong woman, and her strength was doubled by her fury. He untwisted her fingers from his collar, she had him again by the breast of his coat, by his shirt, by his hair, uttering at the same time short sharp screams for help.

Her cries reached the ears of two sportsmen in the forest, and they hurried towards the spot from whence they seemed to issue.

“Bon Dieu! mais c'est ma belle-mère qu'on tue,” exclaimed M. de Villemont, with a bound forwards.

At the sight of this new danger, the colporteur managed to throw Mrs. Templar down, and made off into the wood.

“Stop him — stop the thief!” cried Mrs. Templar; “don't mind me, I am not hurt. Stop him — stop him!”

“We'll send the gendarmes after him,” said M. de Villemont; “no fear of his escaping, we have got this to identify him by,” kicking the box of books.

Even as he spoke there was the sharp report of a pistol; M. de Villemont turned on himself, and fell to the ground.

“My God! he is shot,” exclaimed Arthur Bredy, stooping over his friend.

It was at this instant that Madame de Villemont and Colonel St. Georges issued on to the road; Louisa had instantly caught sight of her mother's crouching
figure

"Mamma! mamma! what is the matter?"

"Go away, Louisa, go away; take her away, you fools!" cried Mrs. Templar, half in French, half in English.

Colonel St. Georges, though he had no conception of what had happened, tried to keep Louisa back.

"Your mother is uninjured, dear lady."

"Somebody is hurt," said Louisa, with a shiver; "I see some one lying there; some one is hurt, pray, tell me?"

There was a dead silence; she pushed Colonel St. Georges on one side, and walked to her mother's side. Bredy had just wit enough left to cover the dead man's face with a handkerchief.

Louisa strained her eyes on the motionless figure, then said, —

"Why do you cover him? let him have air. Where's the doctor? Why don't you go for a doctor?"

"Run yourself for one, Louisa," said Mrs. Templar, with sudden presence of mind. "I and one of these gentlemen will remain here."

"I don't want any one with me," said Louisa and rushed into the wood.

On her way she met three soldiers; she stopped and told them that an accident had happened, her husband was wounded, and lying by the Croix Rouge. Would they go and help? "I am running for a doctor," she added.

The youngest man of the three said, —

"If madame would tell him where the doctor lived, he should get there faster than she could."

She told him, and he set off at a quick run, but though the sturdy young soldier ran as swiftly as he could, Louisa was always even with him in the race.

CHAPTER XIII.

Difficult to Identify.

DR. H—— was luckily at home, when M^r de Villemont arrived at his door. Louisa's tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, she could not utter a word, so it was well that the young soldier remained by her side to explain that a gentleman had been shot, close to the Croix Rouge, and that they had come to fetch a doctor.

Dr. H—— pressed Madame de Villemont into his house, but Louisa shook her head; she stood at the door till she had seen him set off, then went rapidly away to Clairefonds, luckily only a few hundred yards distant from the physician's house.

How she busied herself with preparations! She had the bed warmed, a fire made, the porte-cochère and the hall doors thrown wide open, that there might be no delay in entering. How long they were in company! Presently there arose sounds in the street, such as numbers running to gaze at some unusual sight. Louisa, who had been watching from a window, no longer heard that significant noise than she hastened into the vestibule from whence she could see all who entered the great gates. Her mother appeared first, leaning on Dr. H——'s arm.

"I have got everything ready, mamma,"
Louisa.

Four men followed the body.

"This way," said Louisa, "this way."

"No, no," interposed Mrs. Templar, "better here," and she opened the door of a spare room on one side of the hall.

Mrs. Templar took hold of Louisa, saying, —

"You must come and hear what the doctor has to say."

"How quiet he is!" whispered Louisa, straining her eyes on her husband; "what does the doctor say? Is there danger?"

"Yes, great danger; come with me, Louisa."

Louisa made no resistance, she allowed her mother to lead her to her own room. She knew what had happened.

There was, if you will, no overpowering anguish mixed with the thrilling horror with which Louisa met the knowledge of her husband's death. Nevertheless, she did grieve, she did suffer. Lives in common for our years are not suddenly sundered without pain. As she stood two days later by the side of the couch on which Raoul lay so passive, with that strange look of serenity that the face of the dead so often wears just before humanity begins to fade into corruption, she said, —

"I should not feel his death so much, had he been happier; it seems hard to die and not to have known what happiness is," she was speaking to M. de Blacourt.

Marc de Lantry had sent an express to the marquis, to make sure that the woeful news would be tenderly broken to Raoul's poor mother, and M. de Blacourt had accompanied the dowager Madame de Villemont to *lairefonds*.

The lady's grief was terrible to witness: she tore out handfuls of her grey hair; she raved; the house echoed with her shrieks; she called on God and man for vengeance. She would not see Louisa.

"She is nothing to me now," she said. "Had she been the mother of a child of my poor boy's, there would have been a tie between us; as it is, I wish never either to hear of, or to see her again. Ah! had he not married that Protestant, he might have been alive at this moment."

It was like a reprieve to Louisa, when the marquis told her, that her mother-in-law declined to see her. Those cries of agony which broke the silence of the night, made Louisa feel that her sorrow and regret would appear revolting indifference to the bereaved mother.

There was, of course, what we should call in England an inquest, at which the depositions of Mrs. Templar, Louisa, and M. Bredy were taken down in writing. Mrs. Templar was, indeed, the principal witness. The questions put to her naturally elicited her former acquaintance with the person calling himself M. Jacques, known in the department of the Meuse as a Protestant colporteur. Mrs. Templar gave a candid account, without waiting to have her knowledge forced from her. She told how, and by whom the murderer had been introduced to her; how Professor Gastineau had presented him to her by the name and title of Vicomte Granson, how he had shown her documents and letters, which seemed to prove that he was the person he gave himself out to be; and how he had informed her that was prosecuting his claims for the recovery of his paternal estate, which, he said, had

been appropriated by a kinsman during the emigration of his — Vicomte Granson's — father. She explained that any doubts she might have had as to his being the son of that Vicomte Granson who had, she knew, accompanied the Comte d'Artois to Holyrood had vanished, when day after day he related circumstances respecting Scotch families of rank and station, her own among the number, which only one mixing intimately in their society could have known. That, trusting to what seemed excellent credentials, she had given him her confidence to so great an extent, that he had actually by his advice sold out of the English funds, five thousand pounds, and had confided to him the whole of that sum to invest for her in the Docks at intervals, and in the Forges of A — —, which he assured her would pay 8 per cent.

The juge d'instruction asked, —

“And you ventured on this step without consulting your friends, or any notary?”

“I consulted no one but M. Granson,” replied Mrs. Templar; “I had full faith in the man.” She continued — “He paid me the first half year's dividends, and gave me what I supposed were the coupons of the shares.”

Then Mrs. Templar related how the supposed vicomte had also induced her to take a young woman into her service, whom afterwards she had had every reason to believe an improper character, and that it was the overhearing, one evening, a conversation between him and this Laure which led to a quarrel and the breaking off of all acquaintance between her and M. Granson. That the idea, however, of fraud had never presented itself to her mind, until the juge

de paix of Versailles had warned her that the police had their eyes on that person calling himself Vicomte Granson; that immediately after her return to Paris she had discovered, on showing the papers he had given her, that they were only promises of shares, and not the actual coupons; that the receipt for the money he said he had invested in the Forges de A — — was a forgery. The company knew nothing of any M. Granson, and had never heard of the name of Templar." Mrs. Templar concluded by saying — "That she had never had any news of, or seen the false Vicomte Granson until she had met him at the Croix Rouge, and that she was firmly persuaded that the shot which killed her son-in-law had been intended for her. He had no motive for killing M. de Villemont, but every reason for desiring to silence the tongue which could disclose so much of M. Jacques' past life."

Mrs. Templar, when requested to do so, produced the papers by which she had been deceived.

M. de Blacourt and Pastor de Lantry both corroborated Mrs. Templar's evidence in many of the main particulars. When Marc was asked how he had failed to recognize Vicomte Granson in M. Jacques, he replied, —

"That, in the first place, there was scarcely any light in the room where he had seen him, that the colporteur had kept the bedclothes as high as his mouth, and had, besides, drawn his cotton nightcap almost over his eyes; besides which, the lapse of upwards of twelve years, had quite obliterated his recollection of the soi-disant vicomte, and he was not sure *that even now, with his suspicions excited, that he*

should be able to swear to M. Jacques being Granson."

"I can swear it," said Mrs. Templar.

Hereupon the juge d'instruction remarked, —

"That it was strange how much more tenacious a woman's memory was than that of a man."

Mrs. Templar said to Marc afterwards, —

"You understand now how much Louisa and I owe to the Gastineaux. I wonder how much more of evil to us is to come from that hated stock."

The funeral of M. de Villemont took place on the fourth day from his murder. More than five hundred persons followed the body, some from respect and sympathy, others from that idle curiosity which leads so many to go where others go. As the long procession, swelling in numbers as it moved on, had nearly reached the cemetery, it was met by two mounted gendarmes coming from the opposite direction, one of them having a man handcuffed, fastened by a leather strap to the holster of his saddle. The gendarmes were on one side, saluting the hearse as it passed; it was an open hearse; the prisoner could see the coffin. The chanting of the priests and choristers ceased as they came on the group; in place of the holy song, there was a murmur of horror, for in an instant it was known that the prisoner was the murderer of M. de Villemont. Unpitying eyes turned to scan with curiosity the features of M. Jacques or Granson. Poor wretch, he could see by the uneasy way he moved his head from side to side, his staring first at the sky, then at the earth beneath his feet, how he shrunk from the gaze of the multitude.

He had been captured at a village within a league of Bar le Duc, and in this wise. In the town there was an old Protestant nurseryman of the name of Chevreau; that dangerous individual in an argument — the reader of one book — André Chevreau loved an argument on any subject, best of all on religion — in his opinion he always had the best of it with Catholics. There was one man who had beaten him with his own weapons, and that man was Jacques the colporteur, and Chevreau did not feel more friendly to Jacques on that account. When it was known that the hawker had shot M. de Villemont, Chevreau was among the most eager for his apprehension.

On the morning of the funeral, Chevreau was returning in haste from a commercial expedition, in order to hear Chanoine Maillard's oration at the grave, which was expected to contain violent accusations against Protestantism, when he espied some paces in front of him, a soldier. The opportunity for talking was too good to be lost.

"Hi — hi, mon camarade," halloed Chevreau, in his cracked treble.

The soldier turned round, and laughed at the shrivelled little old figure hailing him as comrade.

"You are going to Bar le Duc? let us travel the rest of the way together my friend," went on the gardener. "Good company shortens the road."

"With all my heart," said the other.

Chevreau began the conversation by a cross-examination. "Of what part of France was the young man a native? how old was he? how long had he served? and pray, where?" At the answer of "Algiers," to the last query, Chevreau suddenly placed

himself face to face with his companion, and looked him well over. "You have been so far, and come back without a decoration?"

"I had no good luck; it will come another day," replied the other cheerfully.

"And so you have been to the east, and you did not find out the cavern they say this beastly east wind comes from?"

"Where's that, I should like to know?" said the soldier.

"I'll tell you what," continued Chevreau; "if I weren't so old, I'd set off, and never stop till I had gone east enough, and then I would settle the matter by blocking up that sharp fellow's dwelling and get a cross of honour as big as two for my pains. Go to the east indeed, and do nothing!"

"I'll remember to look out for that same cavern next time I go, old gentleman," replied the soldier, adding, as Chevreau turned into a bylane, "If that's your road, we must part company."

"Not a bit; I'll take you a short cut through the vines."

They had gone perhaps fifty yards down one of the precipitous stony paths that furrow the sides of all the hills round the Bar le Duc, when Chevreau said in a low voice:

"Do you see that man skulking along there to the left?"

"Yes, I do."

"That's the rascally colporteur who murdered M. de Villemont, and has made his beautiful lady a widow: a vile hypocrite; we must seize him."

The soldier shrugged his shoulders, saying: "We

soldiers leave that kind of work to the gendarmes — it's their duty, ours is to fight. Good-day; I won't forget the east wind." And the young fellow turned sharp round, retracing his steps, until he again reached the high-road.

Chevreau, who knew every short cut, was at the Caserne de Gendarmerie, which stands at the entrance of the Ville Basse, in half an hour from the time he had seen Jacques creeping through the vines. The colporteur was quickly apprehended; he had been trying to satisfy his hunger with the grapes that had been left or dropped by the vendangeurs.

Chevreau was in time for the Chanoine's oration, the gist of which was, that Protestantism was the root of all evil: for instance, could any one deny that the marriage of M. de Villemont with a Protestant lady had indubitably led to his being foully murdered by a disseminator of the false principles of Luther and Calvin?

"I could soon floor that fellow if I had him to talk to, for an hour," said Chevreau to his neighbours.

The juge d'instruction lost no time in proceeding at once to the first examinations, or procès verbal, of the De Villemont murder. Jacques, alias Vicomte Granson, refused point blank to give any account of himself. He asserted that M. de Villemont's death was an accident, that he had never seen that gentleman in his life. He did not deny that he had fired (probably because the gendarmes had found a large horse pistol on him), and he was besides aware that M. Bredy, if not also Mrs. Templar, had seen him in the act of firing. He protested that he had aimed at a

blue jay; after that he lapsed into obstinate silence. In the local papers it was announced after the simple relation of his capture, that "la justice informe."

The third day after his capture, the prisoner made a demand to be allowed to see the Protestant minister, M. de Lantry. The request was granted. His first words induced Marc to suppose, either that Jacques was insane, or intended to feign insanity, in the hope of saving his life.

"You remember what I said to you, sir?" was how he began the conversation. "I have been pursued by the devil for years — he has got me now. I never meant to commit murder, not even to kill that old witch who has brought me to this pass. Satan whispered to me to do so, to stop her tongue; I heard the words as plainly as I hear myself speak now."

"What you describe is by no means an uncommon case," replied Marc, quietly. "The spirit of evil dwells in all our hearts. Every one of us has to keep watch and ward against its suggestions. You will find such a plea go for nothing with your judges as an excuse for a cruel murder."

"Homicide, not murder," retorted the prisoner. "The old Jewish law, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life, exists no longer in any Christian country; I cannot be condemned for that which I did not intend to commit, which I had no motive for committing."

"True, as regards M. de Villemont; but you admitted but now, that the devil whispered to you to kill Mrs. Templar — the bullet hit the wrong person, but the intention to murder was there, M. Granson, for now I do perfectly remember you."

A sort of half smile crossed the adventurer's face. With a sudden air of braggadocia, he answered, —

"I snap my fingers at your juge d'instruction; a solemn young ass, placed where he is from interest, not merit — I laugh at your little snuffy procureur royal; they can't touch me. *Civis Romanus sum*. I am a British subject. I sent for you not for spiritual aid, but to beg you, as an old acquaintance, to forward my demand for the interference of the English ambassador."

"A very Proteus," said Marc. "However, believe me, whatever may be your native country — I should not be surprised to hear you call yourself a Turk in five minutes hence — it does not free you from being amenable to the laws of the country in which you have committed a crime. Supposing it to be true that you are an Englishman, all that can arise from that fact will be some communication from the British Government, praying that you may have a speedy and a fair trial."

The prisoner mused for a while, and then said, —

"You will never persuade me that I can be condemned for anything but homicide."

"I am not your judge," said Marc. "I had hoped to find you sorrowing for the misery you have inflicted, sorrowing for the bereaved mother, the young widow — more than all, for the young man you so suddenly sent out of the world. I came here in the belief that you were repentant, for in my opinion you are a murderer."

"You have not much consideration for my feelings in using that term. Pray, M. le Pasteur, how do you know what you would have been, had you been in

my place? if you had had my temperament instead of your own? The force of circumstances makes us what we are — it's a mere chance whether a man turns out a hero or a rogue — the same qualities go to the making of both; it's circumstances, and circumstances alone, which decide. I have been a victim all my life to untoward destiny; we are doomed from our birth to be what we are. I see you are in haste to leave me, sir; I will not detain you longer. Be so good as to remember that I persist in my declaration, that I had no intention of killing M. de Villemont."

Marc, however, disgusted with the criminal's conversation and manner, sought an interview with the procureur royal, to inform him of what Granson, alias Jacques, had declared. "I own I believe his assertion," said Marc. The accused, himself, rendered this effort in his behalf of no avail. When the turnkey went the next morning to look after his prisoner, he found that he had hanged himself; he had evidently done the deed deliberately. The iron grating of the window to which he had fastened the end of his cravat, was scarcely high enough to keep the feet of so tall a man off the ground, without his own determination. He had written in pencil on a fly-leaf of the Bible, left in his possession, "I save my judges the trouble of condemning me: my real name is James Mc—" the last syllable was illegible. "I was once an officer in the British army. *Requiescam in pace.*"

It would be worse than useless to waste many lines on this miscreant. The revelation of his real country and station accounted for his knowledge of Mrs. Templar's relations. Not long after the story of his crime and death had gone the rounds of the public

journals, M. de Blacourt showed Louisa a paragraph in the *Débats*, elucidating how the pretended Granson had managed to obtain so many of the papers and letters of the real Vicomte Granson. This latter gentleman, an émigré, as his father had been before him, had served with the British army in Spain, and was killed at Vittoria. After his death, his papers and valuables were found to be missing, and it was supposed that they had been abstracted by a man who had been cashiered just at that period, and was known to have been in M. Granson's confidence.

CHAPTER XIV.

Youth and Crabbed Age.

Two years have gone by since Madame de Villefont became a widow. Towards the close of that period, Fioretta von Ehrtmann came on a visit to her sister, Madame de Lantry. Fioretta scarcely looked a day older than she had done at Louisa's wedding. She was just the person to retain her youthful looks and spirits. She had no heart, and excellent health; no doubt she will be one of the fortunate ones of this world.

The sisters were in the garden, seated in a rustic tower of Marc's own contriving. In summer, Ismay passed nearly the whole day there, busy with her needle, yet not so busy, but that she could keep a watchful eye on the three children rolling and tumbling on the grassplot. The little thatched pavilion was also Ismay's *salle d'audience* during the hot months.

"This is the sixth time we have been interrupted this morning," exclaimed Fioretta. "Have you never a quiet hour, Ismay? Must you always be at the beck and bidding of all your husband's congregation?"

"Of course," returned Ismay; "Marc cannot do everything." As she spoke, she threw down her work, for Edmée, her eldest girl, had fallen on a stone and cut her knee, and had to be comforted on mamma's lap.

"Tiresome child," said Fioretta, in an aside; then aloud, "Give her a sugar-plum. I have something

particular to say. Edmée, there's a pet, don't cry, and aunt Fior will buy you a doll."

When the small Edmée was, soothed into a subdued whimper, Fioretta said, —

"Do you know that Louisa and Gustave Gastineau will both be at the Prefecture soirée this evening. I would not miss the scene of their meeting for anything in the world."

"What do you expect to see?" asked Ismay. "The Provisieur is no longer the raw boy who did not know how to behave properly in society; he is a thorough man of the world, and depend on it, supposing he should feel any emotion, he is perfectly capable of hiding it."

"Of course, they will both do their best to appear indifferent, and they may manage to cheat strangers, but not me. I have an idea he got himself appointed proviseur here on purpose to be near his old flame."

"I hope not," said Ismay; "I don't believe he would have any better chance of pleasing Madame de Villemont, than he had of pleasing Louisa Templar."

"He is very much improved in appearance," observed Fioretta.

"He is grown uglier in my opinion," returned Ismay; "the expression of his face is very disagreeable."

"I don't dislike it; he has a thunder-cloud look which always creates a sensation."

"Thunder-clouds are not pleasant companions," said Ismay; after a little pause, she added "M. Gastineau's life has not been of a kind to make him an eligible acquaintance for women; he is only fitted to be the hero of a melodrama."

"How severe you ultra-pious people can be," ex-

laimed Fioretta; "you can't exact the same rigidity of conduct from a man of letters, as from a pastor, my dear Ismay. You have no idea how his books made him run after in Paris, and what grandes passions he was inspired."

"I don't wish to know anything about him, and if his novels are celebrated, so much the worse for France; they deserve to be burned."

"Ah! but he says, it was that unfortunate first deception that ruined him, and made him take to naughty ways."

"I will not talk of him, Fioretta; I am sorry you never read a line of his."

"Why do you allow him to visit here?" asked Fioretta.

"He comes to see Marc. I have nothing to do with him, and I hope you will adopt the same reserve."

Perhaps, Fioretta had guessed truly, when she conjectured that choice, not chance, had brought Gustave Pastineau to Bar le Duc. Gustave had achieved all that he had been ambitious of: he was one of the celebrities of the day, and he was now in a post, that of reviser or rector of the Lycée of Bar le Duc, which placed him on a footing of equality with the préfet and other notables of the department. He might now, certainly, address Madame de Villemont, without being accused of much presumption. If to do so, had been his motive in obtaining this appointment in the town he inhabited, if his love had really survived six years of dissipated life; he had shown great self-mastery, for he had never yet sought to meet her. Once he had inquired of M. de Lantry, whether the story he had

heard of M. de Villemont's death were true, and Marc had restricted himself to giving the precise details, including the discovery made as to the soi-disant Vicomte Granson, but Louisa's name had been mentioned by neither.

Marc, being a man, and judging as a man, had pooh-poohed the conjectures of the two women, for though Ismay had not said so to her sister, she shared in Fioretta's belief of the motive which had brought Gustave Gastineau to Bar le Duc. Marc said, it was one of those common coincidences in real life, which are somehow supposed only to occur in fiction.

Louisa had not heard of Gustave being in the town, without agitation. She had a terror of meeting him herself, and she was further afraid of the effect his presence might have on her mother and M. de Blacourt. She felt as one who just emerged from a period of anxiety and trouble, and longing for nothing so much as repose, feels at the prospect of new complications and vexations. M. de Blacourt was at this moment staying at Clairefonds; he had been compelled to be much there after M. de Villemont's death.

Raoul had left a will, dated a couple of years back, by which, supposing he left no child, he constituted his mother, should she survive him, his heir, with remainder to half a dozen cousins whom he scarcely knew by sight. Among other bequests was one of twenty thousand francs to Marguerite St. Georges. M. de Blacourt, astonished at the terms of the will, which could be regarded in no other sense than a proof of resentment towards Louisa, inquired of Marc whether there had been much dissension between husband and wife.

"No open disagreement," was Marc's reply; "but the same time no one could have supposed they had y cordial affection for one another. Madame de illemont had, however, always treated her husband th respect, and he could answer for it that she had ished to do her duty.

"Ah!" said the marquis, "none are so vindictive those whose passions have not been worn or rubbed own by the wear and tear of the world. This will is revenge for some secret wound inflicted on Raoul's nity."

Very quickly after she became a widow had Louisa ceived letters from men of business as to the succes- on of her husband's property — letters that were eek to her. She had taken them to M. de Blacourt r explanation.

"But Clairefonds — they cannot turn me out of lairefonds, can they?"

"I am not sure; they mean to try, you see."

"Have I nothing then?" asked Louisa.

"You have the dowry secured to you at your mar- age."

"It will be dreadful to be turned adrift into the rld," said Louisa; "I had so hoped this was always be my home. And poor mamma! she is not able r a rough life now. Would my money be sufficient buy Clairefonds?"

"No, certainly not," said M. de Blacourt.

Louisa looked very sad as she heard this decided gative: she answered, —

"If it is right that I should go, I must be resigned. Will you tell me what to do with these letters?"

The marquis could not leave this helpless young creature, so thoroughly incapable of defending her own interests, unaided. Up to that day there had been no resumption of their former habits of intercourse, broken at the time of Louisa's confession of her luckless promise to Gustave Gastineau. Though her heart impelled her towards M. de Blacourt, though she longed to break through the reserve subsisting between them, Louisa was withheld by a doubt whether the marquis had not really lost all affection for her; hitherto she had had only a feeling of mortification at his having secured her a dowry; she would have been glad to thank him now, to tell him that she principally desired to retain Clairefonds because it had been his gift. She would have willingly put the question to him why, not liking his cousin, he had done so much to facilitate her marriage with Raoul? She wanted to pour out her inmost feelings, to beg him to forgive her petulance that day when she had decided her fate; to say, you were too good, too generous to me, I was ungrateful, but it was in ignorance — forgive me, and let me be to you the Louisa of other days! There was, nevertheless, some barrier to her saying this — a barrier she could not overleap. Was it in her, or was it in him? She thought it was in him; one word said as of yore, and she would have spoken out; he seemed to rein her back from all effusion. As she sat before him with such scared eyes, such an anxious, helpless look on her lovely young face, she reminded him power-

illy of the little Louisa of the Rue de Varennes, who had always run to him for help, in her child's troubles. In a voice of repressed emotion, he said, —

“Will you let me manage all these affairs for you? Being in some sort your relation, no one can misconstrue my interference.”

Louisa, still the same Louisa of old, seized his hand, and kissed it in spite of his resistance.

“Oh! will you? Whatever you think right I will do.”

“You may trust me,” he said.

“Trust you!” she said, in such a grand tone of approval that he should imagine she *could* doubt him; then almost in a whisper, “You forgive me?”

“Hush! it's all forgotten, as if it had never been.”

M. de Blacourt found in the dowager Madame de Millemont a spirit of hostility difficult to deal with. She took her stand on the circumstance that the sum recognized in the contract of marriage as Louisa's dowry had never been paid. M. de Blacourt declared that his gift of Clairefonds depended on the condition of a hundred thousand francs being assured to Louisa.

The dowager shifted her ground; she would pay that sum, but her daughter-in-law must quit Clairefonds. It was only by the sacrifice of a considerable sum of money that M. de Blacourt could reinstate Louisa as mistress of Clairefonds. When the suit was stopped, all he told her was, that she was now in safe possession of Clairefonds.

The day that M. de Blacourt announced his intention of returning to Paris — he had been, with only short intervals of absence, an inmate of Clairefonds for months — *Louisa asked, —*

"And when are you coming back?"

"I shall wait for an invitation."

"How I wish you were not going away at all; shall feel so lonely when you are gone."

"You have the De Lantrys and the St. G all your staunch friends," he replied.

"That is true, but none like you."

"Well, I am certainly an older friend than them. You sat on my knee nearly a score of years ago; still, I am not sure that it would do for me to be here; however paternal I look, I am not a father."

"I am sure I love you as dearly as if you were my father," exclaimed Louisa.

He did not reply directly; at last he rose from his chair, and said, —

"Well, well, my dear, I will see you again in any difficulty write to me."

As he was passing one of the great mirrors in the salon, he stopped and took a look of himself.

"What a greybeard I am! Ah! one grows old so fast."

"Not you, indeed," said Louisa; "it's the light that makes you look ten years older than I am in that glass." A moment she went and stood by him.

"We make a nice contrast," he said, and smiled a little.

"We look very well together," she said almost proudly.

"You grow every day more like what you were when you were the child Louisa."

"It's the calm of my life," she replied; "I do not think the worse of me for what I am."

y," she added, almost in a whisper. "Sometimes I feel so happy; I can't help it."

"God grant you may have many years of happiness, my dear!" and he laid his hand as in benediction on her head.

She thought she saw tears in his eyes.

Many a victory won over self, for which there is no victor's crown. "Les plus vaillans sont parfois les plus infortunés," says Montaigne. All honour to those brave ones who dispute bravely, and inch by inch, the invasion of any meanness or egotism into their souls!

M. de Blacourt stayed away all one winter and spring from Clairefonds, but keeping up an animated correspondence with Louisa; he had at last again yielded to her entreaties to come and spend the summer with her. The only change that struck him on arriving was in Mrs. Templar; he wondered whether Louisa was as blind to it as she appeared; all the old lady's bitterness and sternness were gone, she showed childish obedience to her daughter, manifesting for her a sort of ecstatic admiration. If Louisa were long absent, Mrs. Templar would say, time after time, —

"My dear child, keep up your spirits; who knows what may happen yet?"

Once M. de Blacourt tried to sound Louisa on the subject, saying, —

"You are not uneasy about your mother, are you?"

"O dear, no. Mamma is very well in mind and body; she has nothing to vex her now, and that makes the difference you observe in her spirits. I assure you, mamma is very well and happy."

M. de Blacourt believed that Louisa was doing what so many do — she was endeavouring to ignore that which she was frightened to believe.

The reader has now a knowledge of Louisa's situation up to that evening in which she knows she is going to meet Gustave Gastineau — the successful man.

CHAPTER XV.

Old Friends meet as New Acquaintances.

MADAME DE VILLEMONT entered the great salon of the Prefecture leaning on M. de Blacourt's arm. A slight flutter of spirits had brought back to her cheeks the delicate rose tint which had belonged to her girlhood. She was probably more touchingly beautiful at four-and-twenty than she had been at eighteen; there was more of softness and feeling in her face now, than then; but the heightened colour made her on this evening look like the girl Gustave had known and loved.

"She has more the appearance of a bride than a widow," observed one of a group of men gathered near the door through which she had passed.

Louisa was dressed in one of those shining pale grey silks that have high white lights.

"What splendid eyes! Where did an Englishwoman find those black eyes?" said another. "How those long lashes sweep her cheek!"

"Gare! Severin de Pressy hears you."

"I'll lay you any wager you please that she marries that male duenna of hers before the year's out," observed some one else.

A little circle of her intimates formed round Louisa. Colonel St. Georges placed himself (in spirit) at her feet; Marguerite was seated by her side; it was Marguerite's first *soirée*. Fioretta was there, trying to

entice Severin into a flirtation; Madame Bredy with good stupid Arthur joined the party; M. de Blacourt stood behind Madame de Villemont's chair. Louisa strove to take her part in the conversation, to appear unembarrassed, but she had a sensation as if some power were forcing her to look in a certain direction. She resisted, conscious that she was resisting, for the space of, perhaps, ten minutes; at last, she was so overpowered by this unknown influence, that she could not understand what was being said to her; she smiled and felt as if the smile had become fixed on her face. She yielded and looked.

Gustave was standing by himself in the corner of the room nearly facing her, his eyes were fastened on her. She moved uneasily in her chair, opened and shut her fan, turned to speak to M. de Blacourt, all the time wincing under the dominion of that fixed gaze. Again her eyes turned involuntarily to the proviseur. How altered he was: he had gained, as Ismay had remarked, the air of a man of fashion; he was no longer thin, he was broad of shoulder, of an upright carriage, holding his head high. The thick rough hair which she used to laugh at and to scold him about, had acquired a gloss like that of the raven's wing and waved softly about his temples. He had had no beard six years ago, now he had one both black and curly. In spite of all these advantages the proviseur was not a handsome man, and certainly not pleasant-looking as he stood gazing at Louisa and forcing her to return his gaze. Presently Fioretta and Marguerite went away to dance. M. de Blacourt had acceded to the préfet's request that he would make one at a whist-table provided for the President of the

General Council, then on his rounds. Madame Bredy, too fat to figure in a quadrille, and Colonel St. Georges too old, alone remained with Louisa.

The proviseur came straight to her, making her a most unexceptional bow and begging to recall himself to her memory. Louisa, though she felt as if she were dreaming, and though she had a sensation as if she were falling down a precipice, played her part nearly as well as he did. In right of being a woman, she ought to have showed herself the superior in self-possession. But she now understood the pain she had once given him; she was repentant and a little alarmed also, whereas he was nerved by an undying resentment. He took a chair by her side and began by inquiring, "If she liked Bar le Duc?"

"Very much," she answered.

He arched his heavy eyebrows and said, "You astonish me. What attraction can this pretty gossiping country town have for you?"

"It gives me a pleasant home and good friends," she replied.

"Ah!" he ejaculated, with a sort of musing, absent air, as if he scarcely understood what she had said.

Louisa, seeing him close, was struck by the deep lines of his face. Had she not known his age, she would have guessed him to be at least ten years older than he was. At one moment she thought he was falling asleep; she would have wished to change her seat, but she actually had not the courage.

Presently he roused himself, turned his eyes full on her, and asked, —

"So you believe in friends, believe in disinterested affection?"

"Indeed I do," she answered.

"Then I must suppose you are capable of what you have faith in? We only believe in qualities which we ourselves possess."

There was something inexpressibly painful to Louisa in the way the proviseur looked her over. She drew her lace shawl close about her.

"Are you cold?" Was it only her fancy that there was mockery in his tone. Twenty times had she been on the point of inquiring after his mother and Antoinette, and twenty times had she repressed the inquiry. She confessed to herself that it was safer to keep to generalities; he might, and probably would, make her feel that she had no right to resume any intimacy. She herself was so busied with the past, that she made sure he must be equally so. Curiously enough, as he sat by her, speaking to her, she was fast losing the feeling of his identity with the Gustave Gastineau she had known. A tray with refreshments was brought to Madame Villemont. "Permit me," said the proviseur, and he presented her an ice with a nonchalant yet well-bred air. One of his hands was ungloved, and she remarked how smooth and white it was; the caterpillar had become a fine butterfly.

Louisa was thankful when Fioretta and Marguerite returned to her. Gustave relinquished his chair to Fioretta. She welcomed him gaily and plunged at once into reminiscences, winding up with this giddy *speech*, —

"You and I, M. Gastineau, are the only unmarried ones of our old set."

"Yours the fault," he answered with a laugh.

Fioretta evidently took this answer as a compliment. "My romance is to come," she observed; "the others have finished theirs."

"Remember, however," he said, "that a rose has its thorns as well as its perfume."

The band was playing a waltz; Gustave exclaimed, —

"That music is irresistible, is it not?" His eyes were directed to Madame de Villemont as he said this. "Nothing more charming in life than Strauss, and a sylph for a partner. Do you dance?" Louisa was about to decline, when he bent forward and in a low whisper added,

"Will you introduce me to your protégée with the same graphic expression?"

Madame de Villemont said, —

"Marguerite, Monsieur Gastineau begs the honour of dancing this waltz with you."

Louisa calling him Monsieur Gastineau struck the proviseur as being as unnatural as his leading off a young girl to waltz, did Louisa. When he had Marguerite's arm within his, he turned his head to Madame de Villemont, and there was a wicked smile on his face.

"He has not forgiven me, he never will," thought Louisa, and something like regret fell on her.

"So you and the proviseur have made it up?" said Fioretta. "I am so vexed to have missed seeing your first meeting. How was it? did you shake hands, did you ask his pardon?"

"M. Gastineau is too well bred to refer to anything that could make me uncomfortable," said Louisa. "My dear Fioretta, if you have any kind feeling for me, do not rake up subjects better forgotten. M. Gastineau and I meet as new acquaintances — do believe it, otherwise you will always be making some allusion that will wound one or the other."

"How tragically you take the matter," said Fioretta. "You had much better have been frank at the first, allowed that you had been two silly children and made it up. Now, *you* will always be in an alarm."

"I dare say you are right, but I could not do what seems so easy to you; promise me, to be on your guard, Fioretta."

"I'll do my very best, and if ever you feel awkward with your old love when I am by, I promise to flirt furiously with him for your advantage."

Madame de Villemont was not aware that two persons had been watching her with almost an equal interest during her conversation with the proviseur. M. de Blacourt had early freed himself from the whist-table and had been a spectator of the meeting. Acquainted as he was with the previous history of Louisa and Gustave, he understood pretty well every change of her countenance.

Severin de Pressy was the other watcher. He had no other interpreter of what was going on, but that singular power of divination bestowed by love. It was enough; he comprehended that the proviseur had some influence over Madame de Villemont, which he was *using* unmanfully.

He saw the malignant smile thrown back on Louisa.

t seemed to Severin like the fatal glance from an evil eye. As soon as Fioretta had joined the waltzers, he went to Madame de Villemont. He did not ask her to dance; he was certain she was in no mood to do so, but he exerted himself to amuse her, returning to the subjects which in those happy days when he was a constant visitor at Clairefonds, had had so much interest for her. Louisa listened and answered coldly. The very gentleness and kindness with which Severin spoke to her, worried her; she wished he would leave her: he was in her way: she did not want the chair by her side to be occupied by him.

Marguerite returned to her chaperone greatly excited by the knowledge that she had danced with an author. "And he spoke to me," said the novice, "as if he had been any other man."

The proviseur was at that moment, as Louisa perceived, surrounded by a bevy of ladies — the *préfète* among them — and all eager for his attention. M. de Blacourt thought she had had enough of it, and came forward to tell Louisa the carriage was waiting. He offered his arm, and Severin walked on her other side; Colonel St. Georges took care of Marguerite. As they were leaving the room, the proviseur followed them. He it was who found Madame de Villemont's cloak and wrapped her in it; he it was who led her to the carriage.

"Is Clairefonds forbidden ground?" he asked, in a very low voice.

Louisa rallied her composure, and replied, —

"I shall be very glad to see you there."

He put her into the carriage with a care for which M. de Blacourt could have knocked him down, and

Severin as willingly have shot him; instead of which, the three gentlemen exchanged bows.

For five minutes after leaving the prefecture, Louisa did not speak. When she recovered her presence of mind, M. de Blacourt was questioning Marguerite as to her sensations at this, her first dance. He was always successful in winning the confidence of young girls; there was united in his manner, when he chose, a gentleness and a sportiveness which made them forget his age.

Marguerite avowed "that it had been just what she fancied fairyland must be; she had never imagined there were so many beautiful ladies in Bar le Duc, or that dancing could be so delightful."

When Marguerite had been left at her uncle's house, Louisa took the opportunity afforded by their being alone, to say to the marquis, —

"The proviseur asked permission to call at Clairefonds, and I gave it. Was I wrong or right?"

"You had no alternative, my dear," replied M. de Blacourt: every day his manner grew more paternal.

"I hope mamma will not be displeased," went on Louisa; "I should be very vexed if she were to be rude to him; it is so different now from when we were both young."

"The proviseur must have been aware that your mother was living with you, when he made his request; he cannot have forgotten Mrs. Templar's peculiarities of temper and opinions; therefore, he means to put up with them."

"He has got on very fast, has he not?" said Louisa; "*he is very young to be proviseur.*"

“He is a clever, energetic man, and ambitious; besides, he has influential friends.”

“You know something about him, then,” said Louisa.

“Yes, his books have brought him before the public. I have never read a line of his novels myself, but I have been told that in spite of a deplorable laxity of tone, they show great talent. He is the spoiled child of a certain world of which you know nothing.”

The carriage stopped. What the marquis had said was meant to warn Louisa, without exciting her suspicions that he was opposed to her renewing her acquaintance with Gastineau.

The warning was unperceived; what had fallen from him only served to whet her curiosity. Louisa thought a good deal about the proviseur before she went to sleep; — thought of him not in any consecutive manner, but very chaotically. The result had justified his assertion, that he had something more than common in his brains; he had been right in having faith in himself; he must have had great gifts to have enabled him in such few years to conquer a name and position for himself; and so then the lover she had disdained had been eagerly sought after by many. She blushed as she recalled one of M. de Blacourt's observations as to Gustave's popularity. She wondered that he had asked leave to visit her — that did not seem as if he were unforgiving. How would it be? Louisa had not answered that question when she slipped off into sleep.

M. de Blacourt did not breakfast with Madame de Villemont and her mother; he had a small suite of rooms to himself on the second floor. Of all domestic

arrangements abhorrent to the marquis, that of three or four people always together in one room was the most so. He said that "neither reading, nor writing, nor even good humour, could be hoped for under such circumstances. To make social intercourse agreeable, we must earn it by a certain abstinence."

Louisa therefore being alone with Mrs. Templar at breakfast, could tell her in English, without danger of being understood by the servant waiting, that she had met Gustave Gastineau the evening before at the prefecture.

"How did he come there? — is he the butler?"

Louisa was startled by hearing again the old sarcastic tone which her mother had appeared to have entirely lost after the tragical deaths of M. de Ville-mont and the colporteur.

"He is proviseur of the Lycée, mamma."

"And what's that?"

"The same as principal of a college in England, I believe."

"A schoolmaster, you mean."

"No, dear mamma; it gives the person who holds it an excellent position, I assure you. M. Gastineau is also celebrated as an author."

"An author!" repeated Mrs. Templar, with supreme contempt. "He had better have stuck to his cousin's shop."

Louisa began to despair of inducing her mother to be civil to the proviseur.

"Now-a-days, mamma, authors rank very high; they are the honoured guests of princes."

"Ah! well, my dear, I know that customs have *changed* since I was young: an author would never

have been invited to my father's table. There's a story about Samuel Johnson and a screen — but my memory fails me sadly, Louisa."

The effect produced by the familiar and hated name was already evaporating.

"M. Gastineau asked leave to call here, mamma, and I said that he might come. I hope his doing so will not vex you."

"Nothing vexes me now, my dear." Mrs. Templar began to whimper like a child. "I don't wish to interfere with any one's pleasure, or to be a burden on any one."

"My dear mother, what makes you say such unkind things, so without any foundation," said Louisa, kneeling down before Mrs. Templar, and caressing her.

"I feel in the way, my dear. Old people should keep out of sight — they've had their day: make the most of your youth, my dear. I am sure if it is any pleasure to you to see this proviseur, I'll do my best not to offend him."

"My visitors must do their best to please you, mamma; if they do not, they must not come here. Now, then, will you come into the garden and gather the flowers? no one can make a bouquet like you."

It was some time before Madame de Villemont succeeded in restoring Mrs. Templar's serenity. When at last she had been coaxed into the garden, she turned to Louisa with a jaunty air, and said: "This sunny morn, dear Roger, gars my bluid run cheery."

Tears welled up to Louisa's eyes, as she heard the tremulous voice, and looked at the bent figure and the haggard face. The image of Mrs. Templar as she was

in the Rue de Varennes and at Versailles, rose before Louisa so vividly that she seemed to see her mother of that time standing by the side of the ruin of to-day.

"Come, no sad faces," suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Templar; "you have had real trouble enough, child; don't begin to be fanciful, you are at your very best now; who knows what may be in store for you? — it doesn't become you to look grave, Louisa — smile, my dear. What a merry child you were, never still an instant, and so sharp, there was nothing you did not understand. Lady Theodosia called you Smiler. Really I don't see any reason why you should look as grave as a judge, or go about hanging your head like a broken lily; walk, and dance, and talk, and you will soon get your beautiful colour back again. I am sure I've no idea why the young women of the present day should be so different from those of my time, now not one of them has the strength of a fly; I believe it's that constant stooping over books. My father said when a woman knew how to make a shirt and a pudding, and play 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' she knew as much as was good for her. I have no opinion of this new-fangled way of educating girls, as if they were to go on the stage. I let myself be persuaded by that German busybody to take you to Paris, and what has it done for you? — you're a widow, and as for her girls, one is a married slave, and the other an old maid. If I were to have fifty daughters, they should be brought up on milk and porridge, and only taught to do white seam. Remember what I am saying to you, Louisa, when you *have girls of your own*; your old mother is as wise as

her neighbours." And so maundered on Mrs. Templar, quite forgetful of Louisa having spoken to her of Gustave Gastineau.

Many an hour did Louisa spend hearkening to unmeaning chatter like this; she never tried to stop her mother by any overt interruption, no, not even by a moment's inattention. Mrs. Templar rarely spoke when there were visitors; if she did, her daughter knew how to obtain an appearance, at least, of respect for her mother's disjointed talk. No one, not even M. de Blacourt, was sure that Louisa was aware that her mother's mind was weakened. She showed now the same passionate affection for her mother which had been so remarkable in her as a child.

CHAPTER XVI.

Signs.

THE proviseur did not come, as Madame de Villemont had expected, the day after the soirée at the prefecture. He allowed three days to elapse ere he made his appearance at Clairefonds. During those three days, Louisa went over in her mind every event of her life connected with Gustave Gastineau, and the more she thought on the subject the more surprised she was that he should seek to renew any intimacy with her. His having sent her his books, those cruel denunciations of herself, was a circumstance of itself sufficient to bar any intercourse between them. She decided that it would be wiser that they should remain as strangers to each other, and when the third day came and went without a visit from him, she supposed that he, on further consideration, had come to the same conclusion.

During those three days, she read over the two novels he had sent her. This time of reading she dwelt longer on the description of his early love for the heroine. The episode was charming — redolent of the spring season of a human heart — it gave you the feeling you may have experienced when lying day-dreaming in some bosky glen, on the grassy bank of some clear, prattling stream, — so clear that you can see every pebble in its depth.

Tears dropped from Louisa's eyes over this picture

of Gustave's first love. She did not say it aloud, but she said it in her heart, "I did not recognize the precious jewel I possessed; it looked so like a common rough stone."

The history of the hero's sufferings, the subsequent degradation of his character attributed to the treachery of the woman he had so adored, pierced Louisa's heart, but still there was a fascination for her in every bitter word — in every denunciation. "How he must have loved me," whispered the inner voice; and it added, "Can such a love die?" The question engaged all her thoughts.

The proviseur came one afternoon when Madame de Villemont had ceased to expect him — she fancied he was agitated, perhaps he was — and she exerted herself to make him feel that he was welcome. She was indignant with M. de Blacourt for being so little cordial, though, in fact, the marquis, penetrating her anxiety, entered more into conversation than his inclination would have led him to do. M. de Blacourt was sorry to see Gustave at Clairefonds; he knew Louisa thoroughly; he foresaw, from her present solicitous manner, what was to be dreaded from her desire to make up for the past, and he had a repugnance to the proviseur he had never had to Gustave Gastineau. Within the last two days the marquis had bought and read Gastineau's novels; he found in them talent enough and to spare, eloquence and passion also, but also an utter want of purity and principle. Gustave's mode of analyzing and of tracking the motives of action betrayed a complete disbelief in disinterestedness. Now, M. de Blacourt reasoned thus: — Every *writer consciously or unconsciously puts himself in his*

works, and he who is unable to describe generosity and self-sacrifice, who, when he tries to paint a virtuous woman, gives us a stupid doll, cannot have much feeling for or appreciation of goodness.

M. de Blacourt had sought to turn to some account those three days between the soirée at the prefecture, and the proviseur's visit. He had spoken to some of the leading men of Bar le Duc. They had all given Gastineau high eulogiums for his admirable performance of the duties attached to his post; the members of the administration thought well of him. The most fashionable ladies of the town, who saw all things, heard of all things, talked of all things, had nothing to say against him. The proviseur was well spoken of everywhere. To say that the marquis was reassured would be to state what was not the case. He was as much dissatisfied as ever, for he was of the opinion of the man who asserted that the human being for whom every one had a good word must be but of little worth; the universally popular individual could have no fixed principles of his own, for fixed opinions indubitably bring the holder of them into collision with those of opposite views.

However, he had no ground for any warning to Louisa, and the marquis could not resist the mute pleading of her eyes, to be friendly to Gustave; but what he did was far from satisfying Louisa. What with the marquis's coolness and Mrs. Templar's awkward inquiries about his mother and sister, Louisa felt sure that the proviseur would never repeat his call. She was dull and dispirited all the evening. She answered an observation of M. de Blacourt's captiously, saying, "I can't understand why people should always

unkind to the friends of their friends. It is such petty jealousy." She spoke with extraordinary penance.

"Do you accuse me of being jealous of Gustave Gastineau," asked M. de Blacourt, with a pitying gle.

"I am sure you have no cause," retorted Louisa, and that's why I wonder you should not have been more cordial to M. Gastineau; you know how ill I behaved to him."

"My dear," said M. de Blacourt, kindly, "beware extremes."

He always spoke to her now, let her mood be what it might, like an indulgent father.

"Ah! poor Louisa," interposed Mrs. Templar, "she always was either crying or laughing; never could do things easily." Then she added, "Come here, child," and when Louisa was close to her, she said in a whisper, "Don't behave ill to M. de Blacourt — he is your best friend — he loves you — your mother loves you so — and, Louisa, better be an old man's fling than a young man's snarling."

Louisa put a sharp curb on herself, and received the unpalatable advice with a show of patience.

We have all read of those enchanted roads, out of which unwary wanderers could never find their way until the genius of the place dissolved the charm. Louisa had already stepped into one of these magical paths, and her truest friend could not help her. All she could do was not to fret her spirit, and to wait until his aid could avail. He foresaw that the time would come when she would need a true heart and a strong arm.

Not an evening now save Sunday that Madame de Villemont was not from home. She accepted every invitation to dinner, soirées, or picnics. When she had no party to attend, she would go to Madame de Neuville's or the prefecture. The presence of one person had become necessary to her. As soon as the proviseur was in the same room with her, she subsided into tranquillity. The restless turning of her head, the inattention of her ear, the anxiety of her eye, all ceased. The tension of her figure changed into the languor of repose — her eyelids drooped, the long lashes making a shade on her clear cheek — her lips wore a happy smile, and when she laughed it sounded like a child's sweet laugh. She was often silent without knowing it.

Gustave watched her, divining her every motion with the penetration of a man who had for years applied himself to the dissection of the female heart. She often quivered from head to foot under his fixed gaze, and only when every involuntary gesture betrayed her feelings, would he place himself by her side. She would then take a furtive look at him, and a glow of pride, the pride of a woman in the man she worships, sent a flush to her cheek. "How superior were those strongly-marked features, that pallor of the large brow, to the mere everyday handsomeness of Severin de Pressy. How she gloried in the sunken eyes, with their circle of bistre, as proofs of thought and mental labour.

She had no idea how transparent to every one was her preference. She did not know how her colour *fluctuated* when Gustave came near her or left her. Women rarely imagine they show the symptoms they

so quickly detect in others. Louisa never perceived how men had begun to vacate their seat at her side whenever the proviseur approached. Some of the more mischievous of her acquaintance would speak slightly of Gustave's talents, declare they considered him over-rated, for the amusement of seeing her fall into the trap, and fire up in defence of him.

Severin de Pressy was the only one who persisted in offering to Madame de Villemont those attentions which she desired only to receive from another. He put a climax to his misdeeds when, on one occasion, he favoured her with his opinion of the proviseur's writings. He forced the subject on her, evidently that he might satirize them. He had no idea, poor fellow, on what doubly tender ground he was treading; he was a thousand leagues from supposing he was addressing the original of Gustave's heroines.

"M. Gastineau's style is smart, and dazzles at first," said M. de Pressy; "but as for ideality or poetry, strength or solidity, you seek in vain — a selfish, gross materialism pervades them."

Louisa wondered for an instant whether M. de Pressy had lost his reason; then she said, with biting coldness, —

"As our opinions totally disagree, we need not continue the conversation," and she turned her back on him.

Another person, and one who had hitherto been dear to Louisa, became, about this same time, an object of fear, and certainly of jealousy.

One morning, Marguerite St. Georges said abruptly to Madame de Villemont, —

"Madame, how shall I dress my hair when I am married?"

She had been having a singing lesson, and she was alone with Louisa. At this unexpected question, Louisa, who was still seated before the piano, turned round to look at the speaker, and saw Marguerite standing before one of the mirrors, smoothing with her hands the thick braids of black hair framing her face.

"Are you going to be married?" asked Louisa, astonished.

"Not yet," said Marguerite; "but when I do, this way of wearing my hair would not suit a married woman — it is only nice for a girl."

"It would do very well, if you marry while you are young. You would look a pretty figure in a cap with ribbons."

Louisa left the piano, and took her usual seat in the window, before her own little table, on which lay her favourite books, her desk, and work-box. The desk and work-box were elegant toys; they were not those of a person who habitually worked or wrote. Not an end of thread or silk hanging loose; the painted china stopper of the ink-bottle without a stain; the pens, the pencil-case, the velvet lining, all bright and fresh. The books alone had the appearance of being in constant requisition: a paper-cutter was in one, another was full of withered flowers (the flowers that Severin had taught her to know), serving as markers for favourite passages.

Marguerite left her station before the glass, and came and sat down at her friend's feet.

"Madame, how old is M^{lle}. Fioretta?"

se-and-twenty," said Louisa.

ge, and two years more, and not yet married!"

Marguerite, her eyes as widely opened as
ation allowed. "Oh! that is terrible!"

ere are many others whom you know who
married, and yet they are older than

; but there is a reason in their case — they
money, and they could not expect to be
that is never done, to be married without a
we a little money."

dear girl, would it not be better to live and
married, than to marry some one who marries
for your dowry?"

like my aunt! Oh! dear madame, I
rather throw myself in the river. Oh! no,

a bent down, and looked fondly into Mar-
face; the girl's eyes flinched from meeting
Madame de Villemont.

it has put this idea of marrying into your
sked Louisa.

erite played with the trimmings of Louisa's
en, with very red cheeks, and an attempt at
she said, —

an't be wrong to wish to be married; so
od people are married. You think me very
I see," went on Marguerite, tapping Louisa's
rouse her from a reverie into which she had

at all," replied Madame de Villemont, drily;
girls are so used to hear marriage discussed
mercantile affair, that they talk of marrying

as they would do of taking a house or going into business."

"And in your country, madame, is it different?"

"The persons who marry usually choose for themselves; they are allowed to know something of one another; and generally they have a little affection the one for the other before they are tied together for life."

"That does seem a better way," said Marguerite. "Madame, did you ever see Mdlle. Marsau Dupont?"

"Yes, I have seen her once or twice."

"Is she fair or dark?"

"Fair, if I remember right, with a high colour."

"Did you think her pretty?"

"Not very; but she has a nice figure."

"They say she is very pious," said Marguerite; "spends almost all the day in church; and she has eight millions, they say, and that she could marry any one she pleases."

"As for the eight millions, I doubt the fact; but even with the quarter, she will not need a lantern to find a husband," answered Madame de Villemont.

Louisa never thought of asking herself what connection there could be between Marguerite's projects of marrying and Mdlle. Dupont's personal appearance, or she might perhaps have recollected that it was rumoured that Mdlle. Dupont was to be married to Severin de Pressy. Louisa never so much as remembered M. de Pressy's existence; she was quite absorbed by a ridiculous preconception.

It is a way women have, that the moment they seriously care for a man, he becomes the only man worthy of affection in the world. If they suspect any

irl or woman of being in love, they are stone-blind to the probability, or even the possibility, of its being with any other than the one they themselves prefer. In the smallest pretext they become jealous, and therefore unjust. While Marguerite had been so suspiciously questioning her as to Mdlle. Dupont, Louisa had been weaving a romance of her own — the foundation of which was Marguerite's praises of the proviseur. Poor little Marguerite had still much of the terrible penetration of children (a gift which seems to diminish in proportion as experience augments), and, to give pleasure to Madame de Villemont, she would often talk of M. Gastineau, ask manifold questions as to his writings, and speak admiringly of his being so good-natured to such a poor ignoramus as she was.

Louisa now remembered all this, and at once jumped to the conclusion, that Margaret's sudden and anxious thoughts about marrying, were connected with this admiration of the proviseur.

To her own distress, Louisa began to feel that the presence of Marguerite was disagreeable to her. She would say to herself, why should I feel so resentful to her? she only expresses the current habits of thought of those about her. Louisa tried to blind herself to the state of her own feelings; she yet held back from self-examination. She did more, she began to occupy her leisure hours with speculations as to the likelihood of Marguerite attracting the proviseur, and fancied herself sincere when she decided that it was no affair of hers. She was cured of this self-deception by the help of Fioretta. This young lady had hitherto found flirting a very amusing pastime. She practised her powers on every man she met, and, of course, her former ac-

quaintance, the proviseur, seemed to her worthy game to be brought down by the shafts of her vivacity. But he declined her every challenge, which piqued the thoughtless little German into using the more subtle weapons of sentiment. She began, at first, by feigning a preference; a dangerous play, which often turns into sad earnest. Suspicious symptoms of a real malady were soon manifest in Fioretta — she took pleasure in saying disagreeable things of and to Louisa. It happened that Fioretta had been present at a conversation, when some one had remarked on the extreme youthfulness of Madame de Villemont's appearance; adding, that with such rare beauty, it was surprising to see her so unspoiled by admiration, and as simple and natural as a child.

Gustave Gastineau had smiled ironically, and had said, "I by no means suppose that Madame de Villemont acts a part — simplicity of manners belongs to her class; but it would be absurd to suppose that a married woman of four-and-twenty can really be unsophisticated. No, no, the height of art is to appear like nature — that is why I admire the perfection of her manners."

Fioretta repeated this observation to Louisa, in whose bosom it rankled. The next time she and the proviseur met, she treated him with reserve, not un-mixed with hauteur. He had shown no little astonishment at this unexpected change, and had been all the evening moody and depressed. How innocently Louisa rejoiced over what she accepted as a proof that she had the power to make him gay and gentle, or gloomy *and savage*. It was on that occasion that M. de Pressy had the pleasure of seeing Madame de Villemont

manceuvre skilfully to avoid himself, that she might be handed into her carriage by the proviseur. Severin was so close to them, that he heard Gastineau whisper, "What crime have I committed?" and Louisa reply, "I could not help it — I have been vexed by hearing how ill you think of me."

"I think ill of you!" exclaimed Gustave, and the intonation was that of an adoring lover. "You *must* explain to me what you mean."

"Not now," returned Louisa.

She went home that evening, her heart the abode of faith, hope, and charity.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Merry, Merry Days when we were Young.

LOUISA knew now what it was to be happy. Every faculty was in full play. Every feeling, every sensation, every enjoyment was doubled, nay quadrupled. The tables of the salon were loaded with books — reviews, magazines; heavy-looking volumes in German, French, and English — her music had been resumed with enthusiasm.

“Gone to school again!” exclaimed M. de Blacourt, as he watched her poring over Schiller with a dictionary by her side.

“I am so ignorant, so lamentably ignorant!” sighed Madame de Villemont.

“You are spoiling your eyes and complexion,” said Mrs. Templar; “stooping after dinner will give you a red nose — don’t, my dear.”

“Will it, mamma?” and Louisa rose and looked at herself in a glass. She saw how beautiful she was, and some loving thought awoke a smile. It was not that she cared to possess her beauty, but that she had it to give away. Every fibre of her being was vibrating with happiness. She was in that phase of feeling when a woman entirely forgets herself to think solely of the one she loves; when her personality is lost in his; in short, when the love she feels, gives her greater happiness than that she inspires. Understand, Louisa had never confessed to herself that she loved. She

only acknowledged that the world was beautiful, and that life was a beautiful thing. She was breathing that magic atmosphere which makes those who inhale it, see everything *couleur de rose*. She could perceive only goodness in every one she met; she had a ready sympathy for every call on her attention; her voice was softer, more caressing, her eyes found pleasure in all they rested on. She was never tired, never ruffled. It is better for us all to have felt once in our lives as Louisa then did; it humanizes us, makes us more indulgent, and indulgence for the errors, sympathy for the sufferings of others, bring blessings to the giver as well as to the receiver.

At four o'clock of every afternoon, Louisa might, with certainty, be sought for in the covered walk, overlooking the Polval Road. The view was well worthy her seeking. The vines on the hill-side nearest to her were at that season of a rich green with the sheen and shade one sees on velvet; beyond, there were fields of golden corn; the distance blue, deep blue, save where the sun shone, bringing out chalky headlands, or fallow ground with deep reddish tints; the sky was of the faint azure of midsummer with undefined downy white clouds in masses — vines and woods and hills were all mottled with light and shade.

The Charmille was no doubt a most inviting walk, and you might easily have supposed that Louisa went thither daily to enjoy the prospect, or she might go there to meditate and speculate on the difference of human lots, as displayed in herself and those vine-dressers opposite, working for hours and hours with bent backs, which at last never straighten. But if you *caught the bright eager expression of her eyes, you*

would comprehend that she was not day-dreaming; under the soothing influence of the hour and scene, you would guess that the view was unseen by her; you would perceive that all her attention was fixed on that bit of road, some hundred feet below, which was visible from where she walked. She came to the Charmille every day with the rosy flush of expectation on her face; three times out of seven she returned to the house wearing the livery of joy. To-day she is under the shelter of a wide-spreading clematis, its purple flowers streaming over her head and shoulders; she presses one hand to her left side, to try and control the tumultuous beating of her heart. When Louisa had first adopted the habit of going daily to the Charmille at four o'clock, the clematis was only in bud.

Screened herself from sight by the wavy streamers with their purple flowers, she sees at length a man's figure appear on the bit of road, visible from her leafy covert; she drew still further back into the shady nook as the gentleman in black, lifting his hat in salutation, showed that he perceived her.

Gustave Gastineau ran up the steps leading through the vine to the garden of Clairefonds, and in a minute or two he was with her hand in his. The expression of happiness in her face was more than he could bear; his eyes drooped before hers.

"How late you are!" she exclaimed, involuntarily; then hastily adding, "I mean that it is later than your usual hour for calling."

"I was detained," he said; "the préfette waylaid me, she wants me to write her a play; she and Madame de Neuville have taken a new whim in their heads: they are going to have private theatricals."

"And shall you write something for them?"

"Probably not; these ladies imagine an author to be of the nature of Robert Houdin's wonderful bottle; you have only to ask and to have, comedy, tragedy, farce, or melodrama; to free myself from these dames, I had to promise to ponder over the matter."

"You look tired," said Louisa; "will you come into the house, or sit down here?" and she pointed to a bench under the clematis.

"Let us stay here," said Gustave. And they sat down side by side on the same bench, with the purple lowers waving over their heads. A long heavy spray lay like a wreath among Louisa's clustering hair, for she had thrown off her garden hat when they entered the shady recess; the delicate pink fluttered on her cheeks as she felt Gustave's eyes dwelling on her face; he was still as a statue, save for the gentle signs of breathing.

"You should be painted just so," said Gustave, in a low voice, thick with emotion; "just so," he repeated.

Louisa, listening to tones so full of repressed passion, turned pale; she was seized by that mysterious dread which clutches at a woman's heart, when she expects to hear from the lips of the man she loves the words that will seal her fate. Very pale she had been, she became of a deadly white when, instead of hearing words of tenderness, Gustave suddenly burst into a laugh — she gave him a startled glance — Gustave's eyes were turned from her.

"I was thinking," he said, in a quite matter-of-fact voice, "of my conversation with those two great

How they bespattered me with flattery, and

in such a flowery style; I was their dear friend, their poet; they avowed with charming insincerity that they were aware they could not be good company for such as me, but still they knew how to value genius; why did I never go to see them but by formal invitation—a man without domestic ties, what solitary hours must pass? Not solitary, I assured them; I generally spent my evenings with a very pretty and pleasant woman."

Louisa's lips formed the word "Who?" but she refrained from uttering it; she had the consciousness that Gustave was meaning to pain her. She excused him: "He cannot forgive me yet, he does not know how I repent of my cruel folly." She said aloud, —

"I do not perceive much flattery in what you repeat; I am sure those ladies meant what they said."

"You, Madame de Villemont, seriously believe that Madame la Préfette and Madame de Neuville consider *me* as their equal, *me*, Gustave Gastineau, one of the people. You believe that Madame de Neuville would give me her daughter, if I asked the young lady in marriage?" Gustave's stern black eyes were searching Louisa's face.

"Ah!" thought the silly one, "he wants to know if I think of the difference of his rank and mine, and so believing, she answered, —

"Yes, your position puts you on a par with Madame de Neuville."

"My position," he repeated, scornfully; "but I have the unwarrantable pretension to wish that Gustave Gastineau, *the man*, should be married for himself, and *not* for his position."

"I was speaking of a mother, who would of course take position and fortune into consideration; the daughter — —"

"Ah! daughters — they are always so ingenuous, so disinterested, they only care for a man's heart," interrupted Gustave.

The conversation had taken an unlucky turn: a little more in the same strain, and it must become personal. Louisa said, with an effort to smile, —

"Do not let us quarrel about Madame de Neuville'sincerity."

"I was not thinking of Madame de Neuville," he said.

Louisa resolutely changed the subject by saying he had been delighted with the book he had lent her.

"What was it?" he asked, carelessly.

"Maurice de Guérin."

"And so you liked it? He writes much about the clouds, doesn't he, and about the inner eye and the tabernacle of humanity." Gustave spoke mockingly. "Guérin was too much given to introspection and to analyzing the minds of others — a sure way to grow dissatisfied; he died just in time for his reputation."

"You make me half ashamed of my liking for the book, but once I am interested I cannot judge or criticize."

"That is to say, you are a thorough woman?"

Louisa was silent for a little, then she said, —

"I wonder why it sounds like a reproach to say, 'you are a thorough woman?'"

Gustave laughed.

"Perhaps because Shakspeare has said, '*Frailty, by name is woman!*'"

Louisa was nettled, and retorted, —

“I once heard some one say, that if lions and tigers could speak, we should find that they thought of mankind pretty much as mankind thinks of them.”

“Your argument does not apply to women; they can speak, and pretty loudly too, in their own defence.”

Louisa, turning suddenly to her companion, said, —

“I have a favour to ask of you.” As she said this, she looked full at him; he met her eyes, and she saw him change colour so violently that she stopped.

“A spasm,” he explained, passing his hand across his brow.

“Are you suffering?” she said, in a voice that betrayed her.

“Yes, very much,” he answered, abruptly.

“What can I do?” She half rose from her seat.

“Nothing; a moment’s quiet, if you please.”

He could see the effort it cost her to say nothing, do nothing.

“Have you any objection to walk?”

“None,” she replied; and they walked slowly up and down the Charmille. Louisa never knew how nearly, when Gustave met her pleading eyes, he had renounced his revenge and fallen at her feet.

After two or three turns, he asked, in a ceremonious manner, —

“What commission was it that you were about to honour me with?”

“Not a commission,” said Louisa, “but a prayer. If you do write anything for the private ~~theatricals~~ h

you spoke of, pray don't say bitter things against women — don't — for the sake of the merry, merry days when we were young."

She said the last words in English. She had never before alluded to the past. She did not perceive the effect her speech had produced; did not see the savage expression of his face, for she had looked down in proffering her petition; but the concentrated fury of his voice made her shiver.

"Do not invoke the past to me, Madame de Villemont; to do so, you must either be without sense or feeling, or believe me to be a very forgiving Christian."

"I meant anything but to offend you," she said, with great humility.

"Merry days, merry days — a cruel mockery!" he muttered.

"No, indeed — a thousand times no! I was stupid, awkward — but, oh! indeed not unfeeling, not mocking!"

It was impossible to disbelieve the truth of Louisa's defence; useless to speculate as to what might have been the result of their having at last broken the icy silence in which they had shrouded the passages of their young life; for, to Louisa's dismay, she at that instant heard Fioretta's high metallic voice calling, —

"Where have you hidden yourself?"

Gastineau went forward at once to meet Mdlle. von Ehtmann; Louisa lingered behind a moment to master her agitation. Five minutes more, and she and Gustave must have come to an understanding; he would have forgiven her, and — — Louisa could scarcely restrain her tears. Why had Fioretta come now at this hour,

when she had never done so before? She stilled the quivering of her lip, though she could not stop the aching of her heart. She heard Gustave saying, in a cheerful voice, —

“You will find Madame de Villemont in a bower of flowers.”

“Quite like old times, eh! M. le Proviseur?” was Fioretta’s answer.

Cruel Fioretta! and Louisa remained where she was, waiting for his answer.

“Curiously enough, mademoiselle, we were just laughing over those same old times.”

Louisa did now again, what she had so often done before with regard to the proviseur — she interpreted his words kindly, and believed that he was trying to shelter her from Fioretta’s indiscretion. A generous nature is apt to give to the conduct of others elevating motives. Strengthened by her belief in his protecting sympathy, Louisa joined her visitors. She was astonished to see Marguerite St. Georges with Fioretta, for Marguerite had been at Clairefonds all the morning.

“Confess you are puzzled as to what could have made us intrude on you at this sacred hour,” said Fioretta, with a malicious, defiant smile.

Louisa had learned by this time that the safest course to pursue with Fioretta was to take no notice of any of her allusions. Louisa had come to acknowledge the truth of those words of her mother’s — “Fioretta is dangerous.” The German girl had a sly way of her own of misrepresenting; she could have blackened the purity of an angel, and yet claim not to have violated friendship or benevolence. It only

needs a good share of audacity to do this, together with a ready, ringing laugh, to show, in case of detection, that all is meant in play. Aware that she was no match for Fioretta at her own weapons, Louisa frankly asked, —

“Why *did* you come?”

“Because we expected to meet M. le Provisieur,” said Fioretta, coarsely. “Marguerite and I have a request to make to him.”

Gustave turned to Mdlle. Marguerite, who was blushing furiously.

“Mademoiselle,” he said, “you can have no request to make to me — lay your commands on me.”

“That is very gallant, only it is not true,” said Fioretta, sharply. “If Marguerite were to bid you jump down that precipice, would you do it?”

“I expect no such absurd commands from Mdlle. Marguerite,” said Gustave, with a reverential air quite unusual to him; usually, he was either reserved or careless with women.

“Pray, my dear,” said Fioretta to Marguerite, “make use of your power; give your orders to your slave.”

“But I have none to give,” said Marguerite, going close to Madame de Villemont. Louisa did not offer any encouragement to her little friend.

Fioretta went on, —

“M. le Provisieur, as Marguerite St. Georges is resolved to play her part of *ingénue*, she cannot venture further than a yes or no, so you must be so good as to listen to me. We have heard that Madame de Neu-

ville is going to have private theatricals, that you are to be author, manager, *amorouso*, &c. &c., and we have come humbly to petition you to obtain invitations for us."

"I will, be assured, mesdemoiselles, make the petition," said Gustave. "A request from Madame de Villemont, perhaps, would have more success."

"Not at all," said Fioretta. "You are the Jupiter of the Bar le Duc Olympus. We recluses of the ville haute hear what passes in the councils of the goddesses."

"How is it you have already heard of what has only been thought of during the last day or two?"

"Monsieur, it is the penalty attached to celebrity, to enjoy no secrecy. You were *au fait*, I suppose?" addressing Louisa.

"M. Gastineau told me of the project only within the last half hour."

They had been hitherto standing still. Fioretta said, —

"Now, then, having had our petition graciously accepted, we will take our leave." She added, in a half-whisper, to Gustave, "You are very good to be so civil, when you could beat us for the interruption."

"You are bent on quarrelling with me," he replied; "but you will find me obstinately peaceable."

The Charmille was too narrow to allow of more than two persons walking abreast. Madame de Villemont walked on before with Marguerite; when they turned into the broad alley leading to the terrace which

an along in front of the great salon, the proviseur came forward and walked by Marguerite.

"Are you fond of the theatre, mademoiselle?"

"I have never seen a play, monsieur."

"The provinces are very rigid to young ladies," said Fioretta. "Church is the only theatre they allow to maidens."

With a sudden explosion of frankness, Marguerite said to the proviseur, —

"I wish very much to see a real play, and I should like to read your books."

The colour mounted to his temples; he said, hastily, —

"Mademoiselle, I beg — I entreat — —" Marguerite looked in surprise at him.

Louisa came to his aid.

"My dear Marguerite, your aunt has laid an interdict on all novels. I once begged her to let you read *vingt Mars*, and she refused."

"Yes, but I thought I might read M. le Proviseur's."

"Mademoiselle, you have too good an opinion of me: one day I hope to write something worthy of your attention."

Fioretta, tapping the proviseur's arm with her parasol, said, —

"You have read *Faust*?"

"I have," he replied.

"I am sure I can't exactly say why, but really you and Marguerite remind me of the Doctor and

Gretchen; she displaying such simplicity and grace, and he so cunningly reverential and flattery, it did not end well for your namesake, Marguerite.

"I must refresh my memory," said Gustave. "I confess I have no recollection of any scene in that can apply to Mdlle. St. Georges and me."

"I do not profess to be ignorant," said Marguerite. "I am ignorant, and I should be more so but for Madame de Villemont." The girl slipped her arm within Louisa's arm. "My aunt and uncle tell me to bless God for giving me such a friend."

Madame de Villemont had put on her large hat before she had come forward to meet Fievet. As she turned round to answer Marguerite's question, Fievet exclaimed, —

"Good heavens! how pale and tired you are, Louisa."

"I am a little tired. I should be glad to lie down." They were all going up the flight of stairs as Louisa said this. "You will come in with me, you not?" she asked, opening the glass doors of the salon.

"I have already intruded too long," said the visieur. "Madame, I have the honour to wish you good-day."

"Go and lie down, Louisa; you are really faint," said Fievet, with just a touch of feeling in her voice; — she was almost sorry for having troubled her and vex Madame de Villemont.

"May I stay with you, dear madame?" asked Marguerite.

"Not now, dear; there's nothing the matter with me, except that I have been standing too long. Good-by." And she kissed Marguerite on the forehead.

As the proviseur walked away with the two young ladies, Marguerite said, —

"I fear that Madame de Villemont is ill; her lips were like ice."

"She's such a nervous creature," said Fioretta. "If she were really as delicate as M. de Blacourt would make every one believe, she must have been dead long ago."

Neither the proviseur nor Mdlle. Marguerite made any reply to this observation. Gastineau left the ladies at the St. Georges' door.

"I think M. Gastineau admires Madame de Villemont very much — don't you?" said Marguerite, as she and Fioretta stood together before entering the house.

"Perhaps," said Fioretta; "he was madly in love with her when he was a boy; but I have an idea that —"

She stopped.

"That?" repeated Marguerite, interrogatively.

"I have no foundation for what I am going to say, but I fancy he doesn't admire her as Séverin de Pressy does. Which would you prefer, Marguerite, the proviseur or M. de Pressy?"

"Marguerite will prefer him whom God sends her, Mdlle. Fioretta!" exclaimed Petite Maman, putting

her head, covered with a night-cap, out of a window on the ground floor.

"I am off," said Fioretta. "Adieu!" And she went away, light as a gossamer which sows a weed wherever it lights.

CHAPTER XVIII.

New Projects.

As soon as her visitors had left her, Louisa went up by a back staircase to her own room — she must be alone, quite alone. She sat down and closed her eyes to all outward things — she felt annihilated; no strength in her body, no courage, nothing, nothing but a faint wish that it were all over. This state of prostration was followed by one of fiery indignation. He was revengeful, unmanly, he enjoyed torturing her — there was something of the tiger in him — the tiger played with its victims. Ismay had been right in warning her against any renewed intimacy with him. Well, well; she had thought he did still love her in spite of all, — thought so till to-day. He had left her no possibility of believing *that* any more: he could ever have imagined that Gustave Gastineau would be harsh to her, almost insulting. There was only one way left for her now: if she wished to keep her self-respect, or to be respected by others, she must go away; she would leave the field to those ladies who made so much of him. If he married Marguerite, she hoped he would be happy; she would propose that every day that they should go to the Pyrenees, or to Baden-Baden: her mother's health might be the pretext, or what need of a pretext? people went to those places for pleasure, and why shouldn't she?

For a few minutes Louisa felt invigorated by this

decision. As the dinner-hour approached, a reaction took place. Once she had made the proposal to go away, she must abide by it: she had been over hasty so often; she must pause, lest she should be imprudent again; she ought not to expect to be so easily forgiven; she had inflicted a wound, she ought to have patience till it was healed — ah! if they were ever friends again, how she would make him repent having given her all these painful hours — she could *not* believe him indifferent. Why should he seek her almost daily if he hated her, and then had she not had other signs of interest? Her paleness vanished as she recalled how one evening when they had been looking over an album together, he had laid his hand on hers — and held it long so. The mere recollection gave her almost the same emotion as the reality had done. Surely no man would have behaved in this way out of mere love of trifling? And then that day at the picnic, when he had snatched her up in his arms, at the sight of a viper on the path: she had felt the wild beating of his heart, seen the expression of his face; there was no feigning there — oh! she must wait, must wait!

She appeared at dinner in more than usual spirits, and told of the intended theatricals, of Fioretta's coming with Marguerite St. Georges to ask M. Gastineau to procure invitations for them.

"It sounds so affected, Louisa, your calling that man M. Gastineau," said Mrs. Templar. "As for me, I shall always say Gustave Gastineau; he will never be a fine gentleman for me, I can tell him. Why doesn't he bring his mother, the washerwoman, and his humpbacked sister, to keep his house: it would be

more respectable. But he's afraid the *grandees* wouldn't notice him then." The sight of Gustave, or the mere mention of his name, always irritated Mrs. Templar.

M. de Blacourt defended Gustave. "In his position he is perhaps right not to bring his relations here. The *provisieur* has raised himself intellectually, as well as practically, and those excellent women could not be companions for him, nor associate on terms of equality with the persons who are anxious for his society; it would be useless discomfort for all parties — M. Gastineau has always been a good son, I know."

"Ah! well, many things have changed since my time, M. de Blacourt, but in my young days a good child was one who obeyed the fifth commandment: Honour thy father and thy mother."

Neither the *marquis* nor Louisa ever argued with Mrs. Templar — they now changed the subject.

That same evening *Mdlle. St. Georges* addressed her niece seriously, in these terms: —

"*Marguerite*, don't let English notions about marriage get into your head; you have only five and twenty thousand francs' dowry. Your uncle and I may live till you are forty, and there will be little to come to you then; you have no right to be difficult like *Mdlle. Dupont* with her millions. It is not so easy now-a-days to marry girls in the provinces, young men go off to Paris, and get married there. Look at the *demoiselles Ruvigny*, they are going on for thirty; *Mdlle. Solanges Mery*, twenty-six if she is a day; the two *Fauchers*, all with more money than you, and yet they have found no husbands. *Ernestine de Marsy* had to put up with a lieutenant of forty-five. You

must not look for an eagle, child; you must put up with a sparrow; for instance, a nice little Directeur des Postes, with a place of eighteen hundred francs a year, and a thousand from something else, I forget what, with the interest of your twenty-five thousand, will make up an income of nearly four thousand francs,* more than we three have to live on, and by and by there will be promotion. I have some one in my eye."

Marguerite ventured not a word in remonstrance. All her fine colour had left her cheeks.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Petite Maman.

"I have nothing to say, my aunt."

"You don't like the proposal. Listen to me, Marguerite; the man I mean will make a good husband — all the family are good folks."

"What is his situation, aunt? does he sit behind a grating and give out letters and take them in?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, and he ranks as one of the authorities of the town, and his wife may go into the best society."

"Is it — is it M. Bertin, aunt?" asked Marguerite, with a shudder.

"Yes; pray have you anything to say against him?"

"Nothing; but oh! aunt, I can't, I can't — he is not a gentleman."

"Not a gentleman! he has been in Paris! taken his degree! won't use any soap that doesn't cost thirty centimes! spends an hour dressing! and not a gentleman? You have seen him with the first young men

* Less than 200l. a year by 40l.

f the town. Child, you have lost your senses with being with Madame de Villemont. Do you expect the Marquis de Blacourt, or M. Severin de Pressy to propose for you? My girl, you are mad."

"Give me a little time to think, aunt — a little time," gasped Marguerite.

"Time — he has not proposed for you yet; perhaps never may."

"No, no, no," said Marguerite to herself as soon as she was in her bed-chamber, the little closet within her aunt's room. Early next morning she was up and went with the lady next door to the six o'clock mass, and then to confession. What she there said remained secret between her and the curé. She returned home pale, but with a cheerful face. Petite Maman called to her from the top of the stairs that she must make haste and iron a shirt and cravat for her uncle. Marguerite went at once into the kitchen. The ironing-plate was close to the open window, and the rays of the early sun entering, played on Marguerite's beautiful black hair, making lustrous her forehead, and shining down on her round bare arms; for on returning from church, she had taken off her muslin dresses.

It was one of those mornings which influence the spirits to gaiety, and Marguerite was in a moment of diversion from the depression of the previous night. She was comforted by having confided her trouble to the Holy Virgin and the curé; she felt sure that two such protections must suffice to win her cause.

As she smoothed out and sprinkled the colonel's cravat, she sung in a low, humming voice, Cinderella's song which Madame de Villemont had been teaching

her, *C'era un rè*. The choice was not quite a ch one — Marguerite's fancy was as busy as her h Her aunt had spoken as if there were a gulf bet her and a certain person; after all the distance not so great between her and him, as bet Cinderella and a prince — though she was poor, was wellborn.

She was a very pretty sight to see as she : there fresh as the dawn, apparently intent on household work, and Gustave Gastineau, out fo morning's walk, stopped to contemplate her. picture and the associations it awoke, pleased artistic tastes. It suggested a subject to him — 1 was matter for some beautiful pages. He crosse street and lifted his hat.

“Bon jour, mademoiselle.” Marguerite gave a start; he had awoke her out of a dream. She s charmingly as she returned his salutation wit any embarrassment. He leaned on the window and said, “Mademoiselle, if you were not M Marguerite St. Georges, that is, a young lady wit a spice of coquetry, I should accuse you of bei deep schemer.”

“In what way?” asked Marguerite, her eyes n ing his, untroubled.

“As you are now, you would touch the most durate heart in the world. You are far more dange thus than in a ball-room.”

“I do not wish to be dangerous,” replied : guerite, smiling. “You will get me a scolding. le Proviseur, if you prevent my finishing my : ing.”

“That is to say, you desire that I should go aw

"Don't think me rude; but I believe you *had* better go."

The proviseur allowed his eyes to rest a minute on Marguerite's pretty arms and then with a low bow, walked off. Marguerite did not resume her song; she thought to herself, "How strange it is that it is always some one that you do not care for, who says pleasant things."

The curé called during the day and had an interview with Petite Maman. He did not, of course, mention any matter that Marguerite might have confided to him in confession; but he made an occasion to say, that he should, with Mdlle. St. Georges' sanction, begin to busy himself in finding a suitable husband for Marguerite.

Mdlle. St. Georges launched out at once in favour of M. Bertin.

The curé put up his under lip and remained silent.

"You don't approve, I can see," said the old lady. "I say again, he will make a good husband — he is a young fellow of whom every one speaks well."

"No doubt, no doubt," said the curé; "but he won't suit your niece. She is intelligent, he is not; that's a danger, dear lady. Half the women who go wrong do so, because they find no companion in their husbands. A man, perhaps, not so — not so" — the priest hesitated for a word, then turned his phrase. "After all, the great requisite in a husband is to have the qualities that can master a woman's heart."

"And what may those be, if you please?" asked Mdlle. St. Georges, surprised at what seemed to her quite a new theory.

“Strength of character; a woman is happier when controlled. She must respect, look up to, rely on her husband; she must never blush for him as her inferior in intellect — love will come in time, if she can be proud of her husband.”

“And how and where is a poor soul like me to find one of these nonpareils for Marguerite?” said Mdlle. St. Georges. “To tell you the truth, M. le Curé, I never knew the man yet, whom a woman did not look down upon after any intimacy, — selfish, overbearing; always expecting to be considered gods when they are mere demons.”

“Oh! my dear lady — —” then the curé remembered that the speaker had never been blessed with a husband; so he murmured gently to himself, “The fox and the grapes — the fox and the grapes.”

CHAPTER XIX.

The Patrician's Daughter.

MADAME DE NEUVILLE'S large salon allowed of a hundred seats ranged in rows like the pit of a theatre: these were for the lady part of the audience; the men were to find standing room where they could. The folding doors leading into a second salon had been taken down, and a row of flowering plants, among which were hidden the footlights, marked the line of separation between the spectators and the actors. The scenery had been lent by the manager of the Bar le Duc Theatre.

The play-bills announced, "La Fille d'un Noble," to be followed by "Le Moineau de Lesbie."

The proviseur had found it possible to persuade Madame de Neuville to accept of an adaptation of the English play, "The Patrician's Daughter," but it had been beyond his powers of eloquence and tact to satisfy the *amour propre* of the two leading ladies in any other way than by having two pieces, so that each might have a first part.

In the "Fille d'un Noble" Madame de Neuville was the heroine; she was a woman of eight-and-thirty, and not handsome; but she had plastic features, which easily expressed every emotion, and, moreover, she was graceful. It was a pleasure to see her move or even sit. Every one said of her that she would have made a fine actress had fate not made her a fine lady.

It was to be seen on this night what her talents for the stage might be.

The invited were punctual; Louisa had her seat in the front row — the last chair but one on the left side. M. de Blacourt could therefore remain near her. She had urged him not to leave her — the title of the piece had alarmed her, though she had not said so to the marquis.

Gustave was to play the hero (the secretary to the old nobleman.) As the moment of the rising of the curtain drew near, Louisa began to wonder how Gustave would act; she had had no idea that he would agree to do so; in all her recollections of him there was nothing that could make her suppose he possessed any talent for acting. She grew so nervous with a dread of his failure that she forgot to think of her own presentiments.

The first scene represents a drawing-room in the patrician's castle — Alicia seated at work — Maurice at some yards distant reading aloud to her. As he reads, Alicia forgets to work, fixes her eyes on him, and listens with suspended breath. This whole scene was admirably played — Maurice's adoration penetrating through his every effort at reserve, as the sun through a veil of summer clouds — she with innocent zeal combating some of the aspersions thrown on woman's candour and disinterestedness by the author from whose pages Maurice had been reading. The by-play was consummate, preparing every one for the coming struggle between the prejudices of rank and the force of love. It was not alone that the patrician's daughter *would have to condescend*, but that Maurice would *have to do battle with his pride, which revolted against*

the humiliation that must attend the acknowledged love of the poor humble-born man who seeks a noble bride. There is an aunt residing in the castle who has fathomed the feelings of her niece better than Maurice. This dear lady warns Alicia to be more careful in her behaviour to the secretary, a fellow who aped the character of a Brutus, to practise on her ignorance and good heart; he had already given it to be understood by several of their acquaintances that the patrician's daughter was ready to throw herself into his arms whenever he chose to open them. Not feeling at all certain that the indignation she has excited in Alicia will be sufficient to insure a rupture between the lovers, the aunt has recourse to quite a Machiavellian plan. She encourages Maurice to make known his love to Alicia, whom she represents as pining for the avowal. Maurice seeks Alicia on the instant, reveals his long-concealed love, and, to his amazement, is sharply and haughtily refused. He instantly resigns his situation as secretary — the scene in which he takes leave of his noble employer and of Alicia is a very effective one. Alicia, strong in wounded pride, bears herself with dignified composure as long as Maurice is present — the moment the door closes on him, she throws herself on her father's neck with heartrending sobs.

As yet, there was not much in common with what had happened between Louisa and Gustave. She looked towards M. de Blacourt, and met his anxious face with a smile; he leaned over her chair, saying, —

“I once saw an English lady in this part, Miss Helen Faucit — the only Englishwoman I ever saw on the stage who thoroughly pleased me. To an elegant

appearance she joined an unaffected pathos that went to the heart; I shall marvel much if in the next two acts Madame de Neuville can come anything near to Miss Faucit's perfection of acting. You know the story, of course?" Louisa shook her head. "Then I will tell it you. Years are supposed to have passed between the first and second acts; this Maurice, as all heroes of romance do, has made his way to fame, riches, and station; he is a perfect Tom Thumb, annihilating all the giants that oppose him, he has become a cabinet minister, has met the Lady Alicia again, and, in short, is about to be married to her."

Just as the marquis had reached this crisis, the curtain rose: there was an universal "chut," and M. de Blacourt was obliged to be silent — the salon was not a theatre where one may disregard an expression of public opinion.

The second act opens with the marriage party all assembled: it is to be a marriage by special licence. Maurice is the centre of a circle of fashionable men and women, all desirous of a word or sign of friendship from him; his old patron is a mere cipher in comparison to his quondam secretary; at a given signal my lord goes to fetch the bride. There is in Alicia's manner an agitation far exceeding any to be attributed merely to the embarrassment natural to the moment; the glance she gives Maurice has in it fear rather than timidity; he approaches her, takes her hand, stands a minute in mute contemplation of her — she has lost the gaiety of youth, she is pale — he sighs. Every eye is upon the pair, every tongue is hushed, every one receives *an impression* of something unusual, something painful *about to happen*. Maurice speaks, in tones subdued

indeed, but with vibrations of passion, which find a response in every listener's soul; he tells his early history, the struggles of his boyhood, those of his early manhood, tries to tell of his love — here the voice of the actor broke down completely (it was not so put down in the play); the audience, all but Louisa and the marquis, thought it first-rate acting, and applauded vehemently. Alas! we often see similar fine acting in our soirées and balls, so fine that we do not recognize it as acting; we neither applaud it, nor weep in sympathy! Louisa felt herself growing blind, she involuntarily stretched out her hand gropingly in search of a support. The marquis took it in his and whispered, —

“Courage!”

The next moment she heard Maurice saying, in a low husky voice, —

“She refused me, not generously, not with the charity of a woman grieved to give pain, but —” here his voice rose shrill and loud, “but with biting contempt, trampling out the faith, the courage, the life of a man, and all, gentlemen and ladies, because — can you credit it — because I was poor. I had then the same eyes, the same form, the same heart, the same mind — but I was poor! It is my turn now — I could not honour her, nor worship her. I will not have her as my wife!”

A shriek from Alicia as she fainted, covered another shriek. Every woman present was in tears, many on the verge of hysterics. M. de Blacourt took advantage of the moment when handkerchiefs were covering every face to carry Louisa away.

In the last act, Gustave's eyes in vain sought to discover Louisa in the salon.

Overpowered by compliments and congratulations, the proviseur only paid attention to these words: "You have taken us all by surprise, Gastineau; do you know that Madame de Villemont fell into convulsions or fainted?"

"What a pity she did not remain to see Madame de Neuville die," said a girl's voice. "Oh! how charming she was; how did she manage to look so thin and white, and have such holes in her cheeks?"

"For my part, I detest these sort of domestic tragedies," said the marquis, as he and Madame de Villemont were in the carriage driving home. "If I am to be cheated into terror and grief, let it be for something grandiose in crime — Medea — Lady Macbeth, not by seeing a poor little girl breaking her heart for a selfish brute, who, strip him of his borrowed eloquence, is a mean, vindictive egotist; full of self-love, but ignorant of any other kind of love."

Louisa made no other answer to this tirade than, — "What will people say of my coming away?"

"Who cares?" said the marquis. "Besides, no one was thinking about us; there was such a weeping; no one was capable of seeing or hearing, and by this time everybody will be too busy complimenting or being complimented to take notice of our absence. Now, here we are at home; I hope you and all the young women who have seen "La Fille d'un Noble," will come to the conclusion that Alicia ought to have thought herself fortunate for being spared the being *the luckless wife of that mean fellow.*"

When Madame de Villemont opened her room

door, she saw her mother sitting at the table in the centre of the room. Mrs. Templar was even more spectral grey than ever, seen by the dim light of the shaded lamp. Louisa's heart contracted as her eyes met those of her mother. The same dread that she had experienced years before, seized her now; the actual room they were in vanished, and they were again in the salon of the Hôtel de Hollande.

"Mamma! why have you sat up?" exclaimed Louisa.

"I wanted to hear all about the play," returned Mrs. Templar, in the jaunty manner she occasionally adopted, and which inspired Louisa with fear and repugnance.

Mrs. Templar's gaiety had always had something weird in it; it resembled those sunlights which sometimes shoot from below a black thunder-cloud, a lugubrious contrast which gives a fuller sense of a coming combat.

"Send your maid away; I am going to undress you as I used to do, when you went to your first balls at Geneva: I never thought then of such a life as we lead. You can go," she said to Mdlle. Hortense; "my eyes are good enough to unfasten the dress of Madame la Vicomtesse."

As soon as she was alone with her daughter, Mrs. Templar got up from her seat and began unlacing Louisa's dress. "How did it go off, my dear?"

"Admirably," said Louisa, her whole attention engrossed by the appearance of there having been a search made in her room during her absence.

As Mrs. Templar drew her nearer the light, she discovered that the book her mother had been reading

was the last one that Gustave had sent her; luckily, the first had been burned. Mrs. Templar must have hunted out her keys — and opened her private cabinet.

“And that conceited fellow, Gustave Gastineau, did he make a great fool of himself?”

“No, he acted very well.” — The lace had been drawn through the last eyelet-hole. “Thank you, mamma, now I can do all the rest for myself; sit down and warm yourself, mamma; your hands are cold.”

In the large, lofty rooms of Clairefonds, it was necessary to light fires in the evening as early as the end of August. Mrs. Templar sat down, rubbing one hand slowly over the other; Louisa was at her dressing-table, taking the flowers out of her hair.

“Many people there?” asked Mrs. Templar.

“The room was crowded, and every one very smart, of course. Madame Bredy had a plume of red feathers, and some one else, sea-weed, à la mermaid. I have not seen such a gay scene for many a day; the lights were extremely well managed, so, in spite of red feathers and sea-weed, every one looked handsome.”

Louisa spoke with vivacity, it was acting, and quite as good acting as that she had just witnessed; she knew there was something disagreeable coming, and she was nerving herself to bear it. She could just see in the mirror, that her mother was leaning over the fire, holding her bony hands to catch the heat of the flame. The thin, ash-coloured fingers, with knotty joints, the attenuated bent figure, the head almost in a line with the shoulders, belonged rather to fourscore than threescore. It was a pain to look at her.

“Mamma, you must begin goat’s milk again.”

"Why? I am very well."

"You are thinner than you were."

"Yes, I grow more and more like the lady, all skin and bones; how you used to shriek when I came to the worms they crept in and the worms they crept out. Look there," and the old lady suddenly stretched out one of her legs. It was like a stick in a stocking.

"You must eat more, mamma. You were growing quite plump in the spring."

"It won't do, Louisa, I know you of old — every turn and twist of you — you want to put me off from speaking to you about that book. You thought I shouldn't find you out, but I watch and watch till I guess everything — ah, ha! my lady, you can't deceive your old mother. Do get a dressing-gown, your bare shoulders give me shivers. I wonder folks wish for children: mothers have all the trouble and none of the pleasures of them. It's unwarrantable, Madame de Villemont, for a widow to go out in a low dress, all for that nasty fellow too!"

"You forget, mamma, that I wore a high muslin gown — you unlaced it yourself."

"I have no power over you now, you are your own mistress; you fancy I am an idiot, yes, you do, but I am not blind, nor deaf; you sit talking, so fine and so learned, subjects your mother of course can't understand — knows nothing about; but she knows very well where Timbuctoo is, and that two and two make four and not five, and while young madame is as proud as a peacock with her palaver about books, the old crone in the corner is reading *men* — do you hear? and I tell you, that fellow you make such a fuss about, M. le Proviseur, this M. le Proviseur (she spoke the

titles in a mincing, affected voice,) is a heartless coxcomb! I am surprised at you, Louisa — you who have refused princes, letting yourself down to court a nobody, a plebeian: he is laughing in his sleeve at you; he does not care for you, *he won't have you, girl!*"

Louisa burst into tears; unnerved already, she could not stand any more attacks.

"Oh! if that's the way you take your poor mother's advice, I have done. It was my duty to warn you, but you can't bear the truth. Don't come to me for pity, whatever happens: at all events, no one will say that you have pleased your eye, for an uglier dog I never saw."

And with this parting dart, Mrs. Templar left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

A Proposal of Marriage.

FIORETTA VON EHRTMANN and Marguerite St. Georges came to call on Madame de Villemont the next morning.

"What made you leave so soon?" asked Fioretta. "Some one said you were taken ill."

"Yes, and M. de Blacourt brought me home."

"The last act was dreadful," said Marguerite. "Maurice would not believe anything as to Alicia having been deceived, till the poor girl came and died in his arms. How sorry he must have been afterwards."

"Oh! child," said Fioretta, "men are easily consoled for the loss of a woman; they tell you that, the better they have loved their first wives, the readier they are to take a second."

"It is odd, is it not, Madame de Villemont," said Marguerite, pointedly addressing her friend, "that men and women should be always speaking against one another? My aunt abuses men, and my uncle women."

"The consequence of being endowed with reason," said Fioretta, drily. "It was a pity, Louisa, you did not stay for the second piece — it would have put the tragedy of the first out of your head. The absurdity of Madame Delille was high comedy, she has exactly as much turn for acting as a parrot; she can repeat a set of speeches with few blunders, but she does not

understand a syllable of what she repeats; she exclaims 'I love,' with the voice and face she would have, if she had pinched her finger; Madame de Neuville acts well — admirably."

"And the proviseur, I positively forgot he was acting," Fioretta whispered to Louisa. "I fancy there *was* more of reality than sham; his thoughts, I am sure, were full of what happened in Paris — there's a drop of gall in his heart, he will never get rid of."

"Probably never," said Louisa gravely, so gravely that Fioretta was rebuked into letting the subject drop. "Warnings rain on me," thought Louisa; "I must listen to them."

The marquis came downstairs towards midday. He inquired how Louisa had passed the night — "had she slept?"

"Perfectly well," she replied.

"It is such a charming day," he said, "that I want you to let me drive you to La Fontaine des Fées. You have spent years within five miles of one of the most picturesque spots in the department, and you have never seen it."

Louisa had a violent longing to stay at home; she expected the proviseur to call. She felt certain he would come; he must have guessed that the play had troubled her, and if he did come and was told she was out, he would inevitably take it as an excuse, and understand that she wished to avoid him. Her first impulse, therefore, was to refuse the marquis's request; her second, to agree to it. She would be passive, bid farewell to all struggles.

During the first part of the drive, Louisa showed a *liveliness* which did not impose on the experienced

friend by her side. Her sprightliness, her constantly recurring forced laugh, made his heart ache.

"There's only one thing I should prefer to this," she said; "I should like to be on a spirited horse, and to go at full gallop through these green glades. Give the horses just a little touch; I do so enjoy speed — forcing my way through the air — wings — wings are what I long for."

"And the day will come when you will say as I do now, that the *summum bonum* is repose."

"A long while ere that day," and Louisa shook her head gaily.

"It will come. Nature is kind in that, Louisa; it gradually prepares us to appreciate, as a boon, that tranquillity which age makes a necessity. I once also invoked wings, now I prefer a good arm-chair."

"I cannot understand why there should be sorrow and death in the world," said Louisa, without attending to what he had said; "it would have been as easy to make happiness a rule — and why not a painless way of passing from one world to another?"

"I see you do require wings, and strong wings, my dear, to bear you up into those regions of speculation whither your words tend."

"Did you ever know any one who was happy?" asked Louisa.

"Yes, and among your own friends — Marc and his wife."

"I am not sure they are. Ismay is always anxious or uneasy about something or other."

"I never supposed you imagined happiness to consist in absence of emotion — the drowsiness of the lotus-eaters. Ismay is naturally full of selicitude for

her husband and children; that solicitude keeps her heart free from selfishness, the verdigris that tarnishes so many domestic firesides. Yesterday I found Marc and his wife walking up and down their strip of a garden; they were not clad in silk or velvet, nor had they a fashionable air. I thought I saw something like agitation in their faces. I said, 'Nothing wrong, I hope?' 'No, indeed,' replied Marc. 'Ismay and I were just talking over all our blessings, and our hearts are full.'

"See that now," exclaimed Louisa; "out of all our acquaintances, you can name only two whom *you* believe to be happy."

"My dear, you are too exclusive — you require too much."

"Halt there," said Louisa; "you are not arguing, you are asserting. If happiness instead of unhappiness were the order of the day, I should be happy, however I was constituted. No — no; the more I know, and the more I see, the better I understand that Job was right when he wrote, 'Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;' but why so? that's what puzzles me."

"Can you explain why the sparks are made to fly upward, and not downward?" asked M. de Blacourt. "My dear, there's only one certain road to contentment or serenity, or happiness — however you may choose to name the sensation — duty well performed."

"Those poor horses are performing their duty well. Do you think they are happier with those curbs between their teeth, and the rein, and the whip, or roaming free?"

... "Louisa—"

"Oh! don't scold me, dear, dear friend — no, you never scold me now. You are all goodness to me; but don't trouble to answer my nonsense. I *am* unreasonable, silly, but I am still young, and I do so long to know what happiness means — to grasp it, if only for a space between sunrise and sunset. Every one has a right to their share of joy. It is easy for those who have drunk of the spring, to preach patience to thirsty pilgrims."

"I am not going to preach patience to you; when the necessity comes, the virtue will follow. Let us enjoy the present."

But Louisa's vivacity waned. She strove to carry on the conversation; she admired the scenery, spoke enthusiastically of the picturesque fountain, got out of the carriage to gather a bouquet of wild-flowers, quite unconscious how often she used words, which proved how absent her thoughts were. The marquis had compassion on her; he proposed that they should return, and Louisa grew excited again as they neared home. She should like to travel all over Europe, just so, with a good pair of horses in an open carriage, stopping wherever fancy or convenience suggested.

"Not an impossible desire to gratify," said M. de Blacourt.

She was alarmed at once lest she should be taken at her word, and hastily said, —

"Yes; but poor mamma."

"Suppose we winter in Rome, Louisa; it would do us all good — your mother more than any of us."

She changed colour visibly.

M. de Blacourt went on —

"We could go easy stages on account of Mrs. Tem-

plar; take the route through Switzerland, and cross either the Mont Cenis, or go by the Simplon?"

"It would be pleasant," she said, reluctantly. "I must find out how mamma would like it."

Before she was well out of the carriage, Louisa inquired of the servant if any one had called.

"Madame Bredy and M. de Pressy."

She stood at the glass door of the salon, which led into the garden — the hands of the clock on the chimney-piece pointed to a quarter to four. At last she took a resolution, went into her own room, and laid aside her bonnet and mantle, returned to the salon, sat down at her little table, and opened a book. She valiantly tried to read, but every one of her senses had merged into the one of hearing. She was listening for the sound of the door bell, or for a step on the terrace below the window. The clicking of the clock and the beating of her heart disturbed her; they were both so loud.

"One, two, three, four — ah! he will not come to-day." Then she remembers that the clock is fast, and the way round to the porte-cochère longer than up through the vines to the Charmille — she will give him till a quarter-past four; after that she will agree to go to Rome, anywhere; if he does not come, she shall be sure that his choice of last night's play was intended to prove to her that all was at an end between them. It was impossible he could believe her indifferent to him — she had perhaps done too much — but, right or wrong, he could not imagine she did not care for him; and, if he had sought her day after day only to amuse himself at her expense, well, he

would not be worth regretting. Five minutes after four — he was not coming; of all days, if he had any heart, he ought to have come this one, and come early — ten minutes went by — common courtesy had brought others. This sharp pain — this fluttering cannot last long — others have gone through it, and been able to bear it, and why shouldn't she?

The door bell rung, and Louisa started as if she had heard the trumpet of doom. She could force herself to speak calmly, but the little hand the proviseur held was cold and clammy. His voice sounded to Louisa as though he were shouting to her from a distance.

He had regretted to hear of her having been taken ill the night before — was she better?

"Oh, yes, quite well; she had been that morning to the Fontaine des Fées — she had greatly enjoyed the drive and the quick movement through the air — it had been so pleasant that it had suggested to M. de Lacourt the idea of their all making an autumn tour in an open carriage."

"Ah!" was all Gustave's answer.

"I should like, of all things, to be able to talk German," said Louisa, as if she really thought what she said.

"I fancied you were busy with German."

"German could wait for another year."

Louisa was endeavouring to steer clear of the subject of the *Fille d'un Noble*.

"I am rather mortified at your not vouchsafing a mark on our last night's efforts," said Gustave, smiling.

"You and Madame de Neuville acted to perfection," replied Louisa, in a quick, nervous manner.

"And the play itself — how did it please you? The plot is simple — taken from every-day life — but perhaps you are one of those who think that tragedy ought to turn on some grander suffering than the breaking of a poor young man's heart. But I fancy that the pain is much the same whether it is the heart of a prince or a peasant which bleeds."

"The rank of the sufferer makes no more difference in my eyes than yours," said Louisa. "No; what shocked me in the play was Maurice's unforgiveness — it was very unheroic — I would have found a better way of revenging myself."

"You are too amiable to understand the gratification he derived from his vengeance. I sympathize completely with the feeling and the mode of showing it.

"Don't say so; can you not forgive? some day you yourself may need forgiveness and not find it; it is dreadful to think that you come to see me, that you seek me, talk with me — Gustave, I can't pretend not to know that you are thinking of the past — are you still angry — still offended with me?"

"Offended, angry with you, Madame la Vicomtesse —"

Louisa interrupted him —

"It is not Madame de Villemont who is speaking to you, it is Louisa — once your playfellow. Gustave, do you require me to ask you to forgive me?"

He had covered his face with his hands — he sat motionless as she made this appeal. Her feelings had

burst their inner bonds — she was carried away by the flood.

“You mistook my motives — you did — you did — so help me, God — it was not love of fortune or title — it was the ignorance and stupidity of an inexperienced girl. Don’t hide your face — look at me, and judge if I am speaking the truth.” He did look at her — her eyes were strained on him, dilated with fear and anxiety. “You believe me — do you not? — that I had no such vile motives as you said in those books — forgive me,” and she held out her hand.

He took it in his, then fell to examining it, laying it on his palm, measuring, as it were, its delicate proportions — tracing the blue veins with his fingers. She remained mute and still. At last he raised it to his burning lips, pushed back the cuff of her sleeve, and kissed her wrist — kissed it once and again — roughly, violently — then he let her hand drop. Louisa’s heart grew heavy. He went on —

“Do you know I found the other day, in an old English grammar, a withered lily of the valley — you must have picked it under the trees at the swing, otherwise I should not have put it into the book. You can never have an idea of the effect the sight of that little dry yellow flower had on me. I have read and written, too, of the pang given by the reopening of old wounds; but I have neither read nor written anything adequate to the real anguish. Love and hate rent my heart in twain; had you been near, I should have done you a mischief.”

She said, with all a loving woman’s sincerity, —

“*I should not have been afraid.*”

"Then you would have been very foolish; every man occasionally loses his spark of the divine nature, and when he does so, it is wise to be on your guard."

"You are trying to frighten me," said Louisa, now of a mortal paleness, "but I will not, I cannot be afraid of you," and all the while she was trembling, as the words dropped from her lips involuntarily — she was indeed striving to extort from him one of those reassuring words which can calm a heart racked by doubt.

"And why can you not fear me?" he asked, irritated by her persistency in expressing confidence in him. "And why not? Do you imagine that to have mortally offended a man is a reason for counting on his tenderness?"

"But I am so sorry —"

He interrupted her.

"Sorry! that's capital; she is sorry, as if she had mislaid her book, or lost her newest parasol!"

"What *can* I say? I don't know any better word — I *am* sorry — oh! so sorry!"

He was like a wild animal that has fleshed its fangs in some quivering prey.

"Why don't you fall at my feet, then, and wash them with your tears? *Sorry, she's sorry!*"

Louisa was scarcely able to keep her teeth from chattering, or to still the trembling of her body.

"You say you have read my books, and you fancy they describe all you have inflicted on me!"

"Speak more gently to me," she said.

"Poor weak woman!" he exclaimed, almost with contempt.

"I don't deserve it, I don't," said Louisa, in a broken voice. "I was an ignorant, ill brought-up girl; I did care for you before you made me give that promise; you should have had patience, not hurried me, Gustave. Forgive me, Gustave," and she seized one of his hands, kissed it, while there fell fast on it scalding tears of humbled pride and wounded affection.

"Do not, do not, I pray," she exclaimed, extricating himself from her grasp.

At this moment they were startled by a click of the lock of the door of Louisa's boudoir; they both turned, and both at the same instant saw a human eye watching them — a little bit of the silk blind of the glass-door was turned back. Gustave's emotion vanished; Louisa shrank back into her chair, and closed her eyes. Gustave's face wore the same menacing expression as it had done on that day when in the little salon of the Hôtel de Hollande he had received his dismissal. He said, —

"You have already condescended too far, Madame de Villemont, in apologizing for the rebuke you gave to the presumption of a raw boy. The son of a washerwoman, and the brother of a shopkeeper, had no right to address a declaration of love to Miss Templar! You have done a great deal for me to-day, you have shown me that aspirations senseless seven years ago, are reasonable enough to-day." He drew a long breath, and then continued, "You wish to atone to me for the suffering you inflicted; it shall be so; I will owe my future happiness to you!" He waited for an an-

swer

"What can I do for you?" asked Louisa, so faintly that it was more like an echo than a human voice.

"You must have a pretty clear understanding of what my private life has been, if you have read my novels; they were autobiographies. I have sworn many a false oath, shed rivulets of false tears, done what wild young men do when deceived by a woman. I had lost faith and happiness; I accepted pleasure. Lately, perhaps from satiety, perhaps from other causes, I have begun to dream again, to hope again;" he stopped, then said, "Did you speak?"

"Go on," she answered, in that same faint echo-like voice.

"I have pictured to myself a home, children about my knees; I am dead sick of what is called society, of nerveless, heartless, bedizened women grimacing at me. I believe that I could make a wife happy; I have had plenty of experience to help me." Again he paused and examined Louisa's countenance — not one word had he uttered but had a hostile intention.

There are instants when we see the sword about to fall on us, and yet remain helplessly to receive the stroke. Louisa knew what was awaiting her, knew that Gustave was preparing to give her the fatal stab; he was withholding his blow only to have the full perception of his own ingenuity, and her lingering torture, and yet she could not move a finger to frustrate his design. But if her lips were silent, and her form motionless, the expression of her features was terrible to see. Gastineau looked away, he was unable to bear

the sight of that marble face; not the less did he persist in his resolve; wounded self-love can make a man not only very ridiculous, but very wicked.

"To carry out my idea," continued Gustave, "I must choose a young heart, one so ignorant as to have confidence in others: as for a companion, I must wait till I have taught my young inexperienced wife to be sane. I have found my ideal here — here, by your side, Louisa. By way of sealing our reconciliation you shall help to bestow on me the happiness you once robbed me of — you shall help to restore me to the paths of virtue; use your influence to obtain for me Marguerite St. Georges as my wife!"

Louisa's white stony lips muttered, —

"Are you a man?"

"Such as you have made me," he replied.

"You're a liar — a liar," shrieked Mrs. Templar, who had slipped into the room unnoticed. "Get out of this house, you vulgar — vagabond!"

She rushed at him with extended hands — followed him with hisses.

In his haste to escape from the execrations of the infuriated old woman, he ran against M. de Pressy, who was just entering the hall.

Severin found Mrs. Templar leaning breathless against the side of the vestibule door. "A vulgar vagabond," she was repeating to herself.

"You are ill, madame; allow me to assist you."

"No, I am not ill — my daughter is ill; you must not see her — she has been insulted by that —"

Mrs. Templar's words were arrested by the sight

of Louisa herself, deadly pale, but calm and erect. She offered her hand to Severin; perhaps in that moment she was grateful for his love; he touched her hand as reverently as if it had been that of a queen in misfortune.

"Mamma," said Madame de Villemont, "go and lie down for a little — *do*, to please me."

"Very cunning, she's very cunning, sir; she wants to screen that low fellow, but I'll not let her; no, I'll be even with him yet."

Louisa's eyes sought those of M. de Pressy; he understood that she wished him to take his leave.

"If I can be of any use or service to you?" he said, anxiously.

"I will apply to you," interrupted Louisa.

His eyes filled as she spoke. The gentle dignity with which she mastered some inward anguish, touched him more than any outburst of grief would have done.

That evening, Severin did not go to the club. He paced up and down, till far into the night, the public walk which runs along the sullen river. There was no one there to disturb his thoughts. He was speculating on the triumph of evil here below, so strangely manifest in the history of mankind from the very beginning. The cruel lesson is forced upon us all one day or other, if we live long enough to have to bear the struggles and disappointments of life. He wondered of what was formed that chord which so strongly drew Louisa's heart to Gastineau. Why should her eyes brighten — her placid lips quiver and smile only for that bad man? Wherein the charm? or was it only in

fulfilment of that mysterious doom, which seems ever to track the steps of all that is loveliest or noblest in this world? With heart aching and soul perplexed, Severin returned to his solitary lodging, as the first pale yellow streak above the hill announced the coming of another day.

CHAPTER XXI.

Conditions.

MRS. TEMPLAR had cruelly humiliated the proviseur in the very moment of his pitiful triumph over Louisa. The burning shame and exasperation of having been driven like a chastised hound from the presence of the woman he had hoped to see at his feet, strengthened his resolve to prove to her his utter indifference to her love. The whole world might unite to defend *her*, to humble *him*, but none could take from him the power to make her suffer.

Uncertain whether she would choose to understand that he had been in earnest, in requesting her to be the channel for his proposal of marriage to Marguerite St. Georges, he went to Madame de Neuville, and begged she would undertake the negotiation. In the meanwhile, however, Louisa dreading that delay might bring her some fresh mortification, had written to Petite Maman to communicate the proviseur's offer.

Poor Mdle. St. Georges was in a sore strait how to trim the balance between her niece's interests in this world and in the next. To marry the Protestant proviseur was to the advantage of the first and to the danger of the second. The old lady never dreamed of the possibility that there might be yet another difficulty in the question. How should she? She had never known of a well brought-up girl excusing herself

from accepting an eligible husband, on the plea of liking some one else better.

In the dilemma, Mdlle. St. Georges sought the advice of the curé of her parish; a priest, by the way, tolerant of Protestants, and on good and friendly terms with M. de Lantry, the same who had helped Marguerite in the matter of M. Bertin. Mdlle. St. Georges placed the case before the curé, candidly avowed that she wished to accept the proviseur's offer for Marguerite — it was all she could hope or desire for her niece — if it could only be arranged, without spiritual danger to the wife — M. de Villemont had married a Protestant — and the Duke of Orleans. What did M. le Curé advise?

M. le Curé promised to see M. Gastineau; there were circumstances which might even make such a marriage agreeable in the eyes of Holy Church: if the husband, for instance, showed an inclination to enter the true fold. The curé should know better what counsel to give, after he had conversed with M. Gastineau.

M. le Curé was an urbane, courteous man, indulgent from temperament, but he belonged to his order. He did not hesitate to tell the proviseur that Holy Church condemned all mixed marriages as detestable and abominable."

"Allons donc! we are in the nineteenth century," Gustave had replied with a smile.

"True," insisted the curé, "but in matters of faith there can be no compromise."

"I am to understand that you bring me a refusal?" And the priest perceived that Gustave was really

troubled; yes, Gustave was troubled; he believed that his revenge was about to escape him.

"That depends on yourself," replied the keen-eyed curé; he guessed that Marguerite's suitor was in the mood to make concessions. "Holy mother Church draws a wide distinction between sins of ignorance and sins of knowledge. Mdlle. St. Georges and her brother would sin with knowledge, did they consent to their niece, a daughter of the true faith, becoming the mother of heretics."

Gustave smiled again and muttered, —

"Il y a toujours des accommodements avec la conscience."

The curé cleared his throat so loudly, that, perhaps, he did not hear this quotation; Gustave continued, —

"What are the conditions which would induce you and the young lady's friends to entertain my proposal favourably?"

"Entire freedom in all that regards your wife's religious observances, non-interference with her choice of a confessor and with her obedience to his counsels; further, that all her children should be brought up as members of the Church of Rome."

"And why not of the Gallican Church?"

"The larger contains the smaller. Rome clasps within her mighty arms all her true daughters."

"Well, M. le Curé, so be it, I am no bigot." — The curé here gave him a sharp glance of observation. "If the knowledge that Mdlle. Marguerite St. Georges was a Catholic did not deter me from proposing to be her husband, certainly the request to guarantee her the free exercise of her form of worship, will not make

we draw back. We both believe in the same fundamental principles."

"The lesser does not contain the greater," interposed the curé. "Why not pray to God, monsieur, to enlighten your understanding? pray sincerely, ardently, and He will illuminate the darkness of your soul. Knock, and it will be opened."

"Always provided you do not, by your precautions, close the door when half-opened," said Gustave, promptly.

"Sir, I will pray for your conversion; God grant my prayers may be heard!"

"May I hope, then, that the obstacles to my suit are removed?"

"If you engage to ratify the stipulations I have made, Colonel St. Georges and his sister withdraw any opposition to your proposal. We cannot answer for the scruples that Mdlle. Marguerite may have; nor will I promise to do aught to overcome them."

When the curé had given this summary of his interview to Mdlle. St. Georges, her conscience permitted her to determine that Marguerite should not throw aside the good fortune so unexpectedly offered her, for the want of a little gentle coercion.

At the mid-day meal on the following morning, Mdlle. St. Georges was grave and silent, manifesting an indifference as to the appetite of her brother, to which he was unaccustomed.

"What has happened this morning?" asked the colonel; "are we grown rich? or are any of us going to be married?"

"My friend, you never know when to be silent or when to speak," returned Petite Maman; "you have a

want of tact, that has told on your fortunes. Considering all the grandees to whom you have been aide-de-camp, if you had had a crumb of tact, you would have secured some good berth for yourself — other men get the good things of this earth, and why? because they don't speak when they should be silent, nor laugh when they should be serious."

"I shouldn't wonder if there's something in what you say, old lady." And the colonel subsided into his usual attention to his plate.

Marguerite proved that she had some of the tact in which her uncle was deficient by asking no question; besides, she was certain to be told the secret in the course of the day, which the colonel was not; one of Mdlle. St. Georges' prejudices being that men always let out whatever is confided to them. It was, therefore, with no little surprise that Marguerite listened to her aunt's next speech to the colonel.

"You are not to go out this morning, my brother, until I have spoken to you in private.

"Come with me, Marguerite," continued Petite Maman.

Marguerite's heart gave a leap into her throat — something dreadful was going to happen, for never before, within her memory, had Petite Maman left the breakfast-table to be cleared by the *femme de ménage*.

"All the good luck, my niece, which I never had, comes to you." It was thus Mdlle. St. Georges opened her battery. "I understand now, that when you declined M. Bertin's proposal, you had your own reasons. *My dear*, I could not guess that such a fine gentleman,

the pet of all our great ladies, would ever cast his eyes on such a little goose as you."

Marguerite's lips opened; but she had not the courage to put the question she was dying to have answered. Fear and hope agitated her.

"Men talk as if they admired sense and talents," said Mdlle. St. Georges; "but they act as if a pretty face was the only thing they cared for in a woman; not that you are pretty, Marguerite. I am your aunt, and can be honest with you. You are fresh, you have a nice red and white, and good eyes and hair; but you'll be plain enough at thirty, or before. Your mouth and chin are not good, my dear. Madame de Villemont, now, she'll be a pretty woman at fifty. Talking of her, this proposal first came through her."

"Through Madame de Villemont!" ejaculated Marguerite.

"Yes. Now remember this, Marguerite. Your choice lies between marriage and the convent. If your friends approve of a man, you ought at once to say, yes."

"If one has no repugnance, aunt," said Marguerite, in a low voice.

"Repugnance!" exclaimed Petite Maman; "repugnance to what, I should like to know? What does the child mean? it's some Protestant notion you have picked up from Madame de Villemont — it's a vulgar, highly improper word in a young lady's mouth; never let me hear you pronounce it again. Yes, it was through Madame de Villemont herself this proposal has been made; and Madame de Neuville has sent me a letter of four pages. All this ought to make you

understand that you can have no reason for refusing the gentleman who seeks you in marriage."

"You have not yet told me his name, aunt," said Marguerite, anxiously.

"He is rich — is going to Paris."

"Paris?" interrupted Marguerite, and there was hope in her voice.

"Paris, mademoiselle; you know very well who it is — don't pretend ignorance."

Marguerite had nearly pronounced a name, but she stopped.

"Who is it, aunt?"

"Somebody you have seen pretty often, I suspect — M. Gastineau."

Marguerite sat very still.

"Well!" exclaimed Petite Maman, impatiently.

"Madame de Villemont wrote about M. Gastineau for me?" and Marguerite looked inquiringly at her aunt.

"Wrote it to me with her own hand, and Madame de Neuville, I tell you, has written also — it is quite true, child. M. le Curé saw M. Gastineau yesterday on the subject: he is going to resign his appointment as proviseur — he is going to Paris as editor of the — *Gazette*: he is on the high road to fortune. M. le Curé expects him to be Minister of State some of these days. Come, come, Marguerite, you guessed who it was from the first?"

"No, no, I did not!" said the girl, vehemently.

"But you have no objection — *can* have no objection to M. Gastineau; he is rich, young, clever, — you will be as well off as Madame de Villemont; a carriage, perhaps. Marguerite, it will make your uncle and me so happy."

But how can I marry M. Gastineau? he is a Protestant."

"Ah! that is the only drawback; but one cannot have anything quite perfect. My dear, I would not speak to you, till I had done my duty in that matter. M. Gastineau behaved beautifully — he leaves you quite free; and if there should be a family, he will guarantee their being brought up as Catholics — he gave every assurance we could desire to the curé."

"And M. le Curé, too, approves?" said Marguerite, in a quivering voice.

"I tell you, yes, child," returned Mdlle. St. Georges' angrily. "After all, Marguerite, it is better to be married than single — a woman is nothing, a nobody without a husband; who cares for an old maid? What's her social position? what can she do? and with your small portion, if you don't marry, you must come to settling lodgings to officers, while here is a clever, rich young man —" and Petite Maman entered on a second recapitulation of Gustave's attractions, and of the advantages to be derived from a marriage with him. She ended with, "Upon my word, Marguerite, the more I think of it, the less I understand why he wants you."

"That is just what I feel also," said Marguerite, tearfully.

"But that's no reason for refusing him."

"Aunt, I must see Madame de Villemont and M. le Curé."

And Marguerite put on her bonnet, and went to Clairefonds. She was told that madame could not receive any one. She had scarcely again reached home, when she received a note in pencil from Louisa.

"DEAREST MARGUERITE, —

"PARDON my refusing to see you. You must first make your decision.

"Your sincere friend,

"L. de V."

Marguerite then sought the curé.

"I hope our little heart is not an impregnable fortress," began the priest, jocosely. Marguerite saw that all those interested in her, favoured M. Gastineau — she listened in silence while the priest told her of Gustave's willingness to give her entire liberty as to her religion; he spoke with enthusiasm unfeigned, of the noble victory she might achieve by bringing her husband into the true fold — quoted, in Latin, the text of the believing wife converting the unbelieving husband — impressed on her the reward promised to those who save a soul.

Marguerite said with a humility quite pathetic:

"I do not feel worthy of M. Gastineau!"

"And the reason, my daughter?"

"When I have thought of marrying, my father, it was not of him I thought."

"Ha — and the other," said the curé, "has he given you reason to believe he thinks of you?"

"No — oh, never!"

"He has attracted you by the display of great virtues — great talents?"

"I do not know."

"The eye is very deceitful, Mdlle. Marguerite." And then the curé spoke to her in a soothing paternal way, of her duties to her protectors — "See, my

daughter, what joy you can spread around you—the load of anxiety of which you relieve your good aunt, and better than all, think of the noble mission you will have fulfilled, when by the ascendancy gained by your wifely affection, you have opened your husband's eyes to the true light. And, my daughter, supposing you have had a childish preference for some partner at a ball, carry that fancy to the altar, and lay it there as a sacrifice," and so on *ad infinitum*.

Marguerite went home consoled, but not convinced — she would entreat M. Gastineau to give her time — she did not wish to be ungrateful to any one, she wished to please all her friends, and they all evidently considered that she ought to marry M. Gastineau.

The next day Mdlle. St. Georges desired Marguerite to put on her blue silk (this was Marguerite's gala dress), and one of the neighbours came in and dressed her hair. Marguerite's courage was at a very low ebb; she never ventured a word of remonstrance; it seemed to her that somehow everything had been settled for her, between last evening and this morning. The shutters of the great salon were opened, an event in the St. Georges' life, which did not occur three times in the year, *i.e.*, for the purpose of receiving visitors.

M. Gustave Gastineau was a man of too many and too varied experiences, not to be aware that Marguerite had no preference for him. He therefore went to pay this visit, resolved not to run the risk of further negotiations.

Marguerite was standing by her aunt, flushed and breathless, when he came into the salon. He hurried up to her, and before she had the slightest conception

of his design, he had bent down and kissed her on the brow, murmuring impassioned thanks.

This was altogether a compromising and unprecedented proceeding. Mademoiselle St. Georges was very angry, yet did not know what to say or do — her nephew elect inspired her with awe.

Poor little Marguerite from that moment understood there was no escape for her, and she resigned herself to her fate.

Pastor de Lantry's house was nearly as possible opposite to that of the St. Georges', and Fioretta, whose bedroom looked into the street, had seen Gustave arrive.

He had never visited at the St. Georges', and Fioretta, who never could see a man and woman together without suspecting a love-affair, at once set it down as certain, that the proviseur had some matrimonial project in his head regarding Marguerite. She ran downstairs to Ismay to impart her conjecture.

"If he marries that child, he is a wretch," said the excited Fioretta.

"I shall pity Marguerite," said Ismay.

"And after the way he has pursued Louisa, after all the public attentions he has paid her, getting her talked of, and keeping other people off," went on Fioretta, raging.

"To hear you talk," said Ismay, "any one would imagine that Madame de Villemont was eager to marry somebody or anybody."

"I shall tell M. Gastineau my mind," said Fioretta.

"You had better not interfere, it is no business of yours — I am sure you would vex Marc if you meddled with M. Gastineau's private affairs."

"Marc is not my husband, so whether he is pleased or angry, it cannot hurt me."

CHAPTER XXII.

Le Cercle.

ALL the town was talking of Gustave Gastineau. of his good fortune, of his marriage, of his approaching departure. The hopes that were entertained of his conversion were as yet only mentioned among Mdle. St. Georges' intimates. As many visits were paid and received in every house as if it had been New Year's time; Bar le Duc was thoroughly roused. Fioretta von Ehrtmann's voice was heard loud in many a salon; she told everything she knew of Gustave's early life, of his first love and disappointment, and wherever she went she left the impression that Gastineau was behaving extremely ill to Madame de Villemont; she sacrificed Louisa to do a bad turn to Gustave.

Severin de Pressy was Fioretta's most attentive auditor; hitherto he had neglected his opportunities for flirtation with that young lady, now a sort of intimacy grew up between them. She, finding what subject interested and kept him by her side, never let it flag for want of matter. One day she betrayed to M. de Pressy that Gastineau had meant to represent Louisa in the heroines of his novels; the burst of indignation with which Severin received this piece of information surprised Fioretta, and made her say, —

“For Heaven's sake never let any one know I told you; I fancied you must have guessed it long ago.”

“Impossible! You could never have supposed that

any one honoured by Madame de Villemont's acquaintance would identify her with one of those unhealthy creations!"

Fioretta said in an off hand manner, —

"Of course I don't mean to say that Louisa really resembles his L——s or his Lucretias; promise not to say I was the one to let you into the secret."

"You may be easy on that point."

Once assured that she herself ran no risk of annoyance, Fioretta was perfectly easy in mind; the excess of her shallowness made her unable to apprehend the possible results of the activity of her love of intrigue.

It was in the afternoon of that same day that Marc de Lantry went to call on Gustave; he did so in consequence of a report which had reached him that M. Gastineau was about to be received into the Roman Catholic Church. The pastor found Gustave alone, and with anything but a look of triumphant happiness on his face. The light of the late autumn day was already waning.

"I am not interrupting you, I hope," began Marc, observing the table before which the successful man was seated, to be strewn with letters, pamphlets, and circulars.

"Not in the least: I am very glad to see you."

And this was really the case, for Marc had aroused Gustave from a bitter meditation; he was in the state of collapse which follows the end of a struggle. He was a successful man; he had achieved renown, social position; he had achieved his vengeance — and what then? Why, life at that instant seemed to him *stale and unprofitable*; his thoughts had strayed back to the

Rue de Varennes, the squalid garret, the brutal father, the over-worked drudge of a mother, the cowed and beaten children: he recalled it all, and also the one thing that had brightened and softened that miserable atmosphere for him — the lovely little girl that sat on his knee, with her arm round his neck, her rosy cheek pressed to his, doing what she could to comfort him. Gustave had shut up rancour and hatred in his heart, and his heart was now in revolt against these cruel guests; he was suffering from his own hatred. Little by little all the tender recollections he had so sedulously striven to banish came stealing back: they gained on him.

It was at this point that Marc de Lantry appeared.

"Your visits are so few, they are the more to be prized," said Gustave, with emphasis.

"My time is given to those who most require it," replied Marc; "I have little leisure, I assure you, for making calls of ceremony or pleasure."

"Yet your duties are not very onerous?"

"Pardon me, I have much actively to do; besides, I must study."

"Study — what for?"

"For my sermons."

"They are pretty much the same always, are they not?"

"Why have you not taken the trouble to find out for yourself?"

"I am not a hypocrite," said Gustave. "To tell you a bit of my mind, I look upon all churches, whatever their denomination, as nests of superstition; all the talk of freedom of conscience among Protestant preachers — humbug; they ride rough-shod over their

flocks just as much as Catholic priests do. For my part, if I am to belong to a church, let it be the Church of Rome; it is logical at any rate."

"A logic which forbids the use of your own reason and free-will; a logic to which *you*, Gustave Gastineau, can never and will never submit; the speech you have just made almost makes unnecessary the question I have come to ask you. In your present state of mind you are incapable of feeling the force of arguments which can only tell on a free heart and open conscience; I fear that to whatever church you openly adhere, it will be a mere homage paid to public opinion. Many, Gustave, respect and admire this generation of ours, I do neither; it is an age in which questions are raised, but not answered, in which uncertainty is thrown on every doctrine, and even the holy ramparts of sacred history are attacked, as though they were a burden on the souls of men; at the same time there is a most cowardly outward conformity to the ruling religion. A Roman Catholic in a Roman Catholic country, convinced that Protestants are right, would not openly avow his conversion; it would, maybe, distress his family, or hamper his advancement, so he secretly enters the fraternity of "*libres penseurs*," and — goes publicly to mass. Well, that is bad enough, but I can, though grieving that it should be so, allow for the influence of family affection, even for ambition, but I can make no allowance for a man who professes a conversion, to further a stupid petty revenge for a wound to his self-love!"

Gustave did not answer immediately; presently he looked at Marc with hard, dry eyes, and said, —

"The wound was not so wide as a church door,

but it was big enough to let out a life; *she* turned my heart of flesh to stone; from that day I have never felt its pulses stir for any woman; my eyes have never seen a glory round any woman's head. I am young, not yet thirty, and I cannot love; whose the fault — she has stolen my share of the fire from heaven, the only spark of divinity we possess!"

"Then you do not love Mdlle. Marguerite?"

Gustave shrugged his shoulders, saying, —

"I am not indifferent to her. The spotless purity of a young girl has an indescribable charm for a man like me — a rose unsunned, a violet of the woods. Your suggestive sister-in-law once likened Mdlle. Marguerite and me to Gretchen and Faustus; her comparison reminded me that the philosopher and the devil both agreed that the attachment of a simple girl was man's greatest boon. I mean to make her happy, and I daresay I shall succeed. She will always feel that she is not sure of me — a great element in a woman's happiness. I want a quiet home; I wish for children; I have a notion that parental love would do me good; it is unknown to me; perhaps I shall live to deplore that also. I see by your face that every word I utter adds to your bad opinion of me; but believe me, Marc, no man's actions are wholly bad, nor wholly good. Man's feet are attached to the earth, but his head rises towards heaven. Vindictive and selfish as you think me, I have been merciful enough not to sacrifice Madame de Villemont to the purgatory of a marriage with me. I did mean so to punish her; I have not done it. I had loved her beyond words, then hated her intensely. Love, once dead, has no resurrection; but I *shrank* from watching the light fade from eyes that

had been so dear; I have done the best I could for her and myself."

"I pity you," said Marc; "but having, as you say, spared Madame de Villemont, why sacrifice an innocent little girl to a heartless marriage? You talk of having been robbed of your share of the divine gift; why rob another? Are you not afraid that Mdlle. Marguerite may wake some day to bring the same accusation against you?"

"I shall take very good care she never does that," said Gustave. "It is men's weakness which causes the faults of women. I shall make myself master of my wife's heart as well as of her person. I know of what stuff women are made."

"I don't doubt the excellence of your tactics with a coquette, but you have had little experience of single-minded women; they carry a sort of Ithuriel spear with them. The interest which the remembrance of your boyhood still keeps alive, must be my apology for having come to expostulate with you." Marc took up his hat.

Gustave said, "Then I suppose I may expect a refusal, were I to request you to officiate at my marriage? It would go against your feelings to give me the nuptial benediction?"

"It would be my official duty to perform the ceremony, if you required it," said Marc. "As for the blessing, if Christ says, bless your enemies, how could I refuse to bless you, over whom I sorrow, but not in bitterness? Adieu."

"Wait a moment," said Gustave; "our conversation has not been of a nature to make a man good company for himself. I will walk so far with you."

The two men left the house together.

"Have you seen Madame de Villemont?" asked Gustave, abruptly.

"No."

There was a momentary silence, and the pastor fancied that Gustave was about to give him some painful commission, so he added to his bare negative, —

"Here our roads part."

Gustave did not seem to hear.

"Tell her," he said, "that the recollection of M. de Villemont separated us more than my desire for retaliation."

"I will be the bearer of no such message," said Marc. "Adieu."

"Au revoir," returned Gustave, and took his way to the Cercle.

Severin de Pressy was only some yards in the rear when Gustave and De Lantry separated. De Pressy had been striving to walk off the irritation produced by Fioretta's revelations. He had been for the last hour pacing up and down by the side of the canal. So uncomplaining, so considerate of others, generous, full of intellect, yet modest as the most unlettered could be, brave as the bravest Frenchman, he was surely worthy of Louisa's love. That he felt something of this, he showed, by the constantly-recurring thought, "I could have borne it, had she given her affections to one of a noble nature."

At this moment, as he caught the sound of Gustave's "Au revoir," he imagined it to be a note of triumph. Severin recalled the feeble old woman's rage, Louisa's sorrow-stamped face, and the hatred of Cain suddenly

awoke in his breast. His agitation was so violent that he had to turn back on his steps to regain his self-command. Five minutes later he bounded up the stairs leading to the billiard-room. From the ante-room, he could hear Gastineau's trenchant, domineering voice, high above all the others. When he entered the billiard-room, the ex-proviseur was on a chair close by a window leading into the balcony, the light of a lamp falling on his strongly-marked features.

There was a chorus of welcome when De Pressy walked in.

Gustave put out his hand, as did several others. Severin turned away abruptly, as if he had not remarked Gastineau's gesture of welcome, and shook hands cordially with the other men. Gustave was visibly embarrassed. He left his seat and pretended to be engrossed by a search among the newspapers scattered about, for one worthy of his attention; he ended by selecting one a week old. In the meanwhile, Severin had placed the balls on the billiard-table, and taken up a cue. Had he formed any plan of insulting Gastineau? No one ever knew.

"Which of you will have a game with me?" he asked.

Two persons replied at the same instant — Gustave Gastineau and a young man named Louis Lemonnier, who had been looking over the whist-players. Severin's eyes glanced disdainfully at Gustave, and fixed on Lemonnier, to whom he offered the cue he was holding.

"We will play twenty, if you like, old fellow," he said, with unusual familiarity; for Severin's manner was reserved, except to intimate friends.

The game began. Gustave, strongly and disagreeably excited, kept moving restlessly near the players, a prey to the discomfort a man feels who is aware that offence is intended, and yet knows not how to bring it home to the offender.

They had been playing some minutes, when Louis said, —

“Apropos to nothing, have you heard that Madame Dulau has at last thrown off her weeds, and that she is going to resume her receptions? Are you one of her set?”

“No,” said Severin; “you meet too many in her salons, whom you meet nowhere else; people who seem to go only for the supper and the lansquenet that follows.”

Severin was perfectly cognizant of the fact that Gastineau was one of Madame Dulau’s intimates, or *habitués*.

“As for me,” retorted Gustave, in his most dictatorial manner, “I go wherever I find amusement.”

“Have you ever observed, Louis,” continued Severin, “how many people there are in the world who say they go wherever they are amused, and who are only received, because their folly affords amusement?”

This time there could be no mistake as to Severin’s intention. Gustave’s pale face became scarlet.

“M. de Pressy,” he called in a loud voice.

Severin had his back to Gastineau; he was in the act of pushing his ball, and was holding his cue horizontally. At this haughty pronunciation of his name, he turned sharply round, and the end of his cue hit Gustave’s hand sharply. This time the powder exploded.

Gastineau snatched the cue from Severin, broke it in two, and would have sent the pieces at Severin's head, but that his arm was caught by Lemonnier.

"You are an insolent fool," shouted Gastineau, with eyes that glowed like hot coals; "you shall answer for your insolence."

Severin still retained his semblance of composure. Pale and haughty he approached Gustave, and said, in a low, but distinct voice, contrasting with the stormy tones of his adversary, —

"I am at your orders; I shall wait at home to-morrow till mid-day, to receive any friend of yours, only if you do not wish the police to interfere and save you further trouble with me, you will do well to moderate your voice."

He immediately left the room with Louis, and one or two other young men.

"What, in the name of heaven, made you provoke Gastineau?" asked Louis. "He seemed inclined enough to be civil to you."

"I could not resist the pleasure of insulting him," said Severin. "Dear friends, the world is not large enough to hold us both. One or all of you must arrange preliminaries between us."

"But explain what is his particular offence?" cried Jules Gerard. "You are not going to fight simply because you don't like the cut of his features, or his coat. It is clear as day that you gave all the provocation."

"My dear fellow, right or wrong, I am going to fight him; "all I have to beg of you is to settle matters for me with M. Gastineau's friend. Accept whatever weapons he proposes, and allow of no delay

beyond the morning after next. I should have ferred settling the matter instanter, but I have set heart on going to Madame de Neuville's ball to-mo- night. I would not die without seeing two or t of my partners again."

"Die!" exclaimed Louis. "What an idea! the of Greek and Latin will have small chance ag such a marksman and fencer as you!"

Severin's answer was, —

"He is a successful man, and have you n remarked the triumph of evil here below?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

Dernière Invitation à la Valse.

It had been from Mrs. Templar, that M. de Blacourt first heard the news that Gustave Gastineau was about to be married to Marguerite St. Georges. He had found the old lady alone in the salon, walking up and down the room, twisting and untwisting the strings of her apron. She had said abruptly to the marquis, —

“Good riddance of bad rubbish; I have given him a lesson he won’t easily forget; he won’t show his face here again, a low-born rascal.”

M. de Blacourt made a shrewd guess as to the person to whom she alluded; he asked, —

“Has the proviseur been here?”

“Hasn’t he? He fancied he had only Louisa to deal with!” Here Mrs. Templar laughed; it was that sparkle which belongs to bitter angry old age. “I was up to his tricks. I watched him through the keyhole. I am neither blind nor deaf, thank God! Can you believe it, he dared to ask my daughter, the Vicomtesse de Villemont, to mix herself up in his paltry affairs, to ask her to be his messenger?”

“Taking a great liberty indeed,” replied the marquis, humouring her. “And what was his request?”

“To offer his hand — *his* hand, forsooth, as if he had been a prince of the blood. You know Louisa refused a crown prince; she might have worn a crown,

had she been little less than an idiot. I have had very hard trials, M. de Blacourt, and many a disappointment has that girl given me." Mrs. Templar was whimpering. "A child's ingratitude is sharper than a serpent's tooth, and the sooner I am under the sod the better. I am of no use; she despises my advice."

"No, no," said M. de Blacourt. "Louisa can't do without you yet; only this morning, she was saying she should like to go to Rome, but that she could not go without you."

"I am too old to travel; if she wants to do that, she must manage by herself."

"You are not a bit too old to do anything you like; you'll live to dance at your grandson's wedding."

"Dance! I was once a fine dancer. I wonder if I could?" and she actually attempted a step.

"But you have not told me yet what it was the proviseur asked Madame de Villemont to do? You and I must see that Louisa is not imprudent."

"She is so wilful," said Mrs. Templar. "I give it up, trying to manage her — I begged her not to make or meddle in his affairs. If he wants to marry that doll-faced Marguerite St. Georges, let him go and ask for himself. What business has Louisa with it, I should like to know?"

"You are right, madame; and I will tell Louisa so; where is she?"

"In her own room; she has got a headache — always has one when she can't have her own way. Louisa is violent, M. de Blacourt — you remember how she screamed like a fury when I came back from England. Time flies — and here she is a widow."

The marquis unconsciously sighed. Mrs. Templar caught the sound — she chuckled.

“It will be all the same a hundred years hence, monsieur; the heart that beats fastest and loudest will be still enough then; what’s the use of making such a fuss about this and that; let us eat and drink, and be merry.”

M. de Blacourt said, —

“I will not disturb Madame de Villemont;” and hurried away from the sinister old woman.

Louisa was a sight to give the heartache; but if she paled and flushed at every moment, her voice was firm, and her attention ready. Nevertheless, you could see by the distended eye, the sudden drawing up of the figure, accompanied by a quivering of the breath, the pain that had to be controlled. The marquis longed to be alone with her, that he might lead her to give way to her feelings. Mrs. Templar, however, remained a fixture in the room.

After dinner the old lady fell asleep, and then M. de Blacourt said, —

“Shall we go to Rome?”

“By and by — give me a little time — by and by,” repeated Louisa, adding — “I am a poor, weak creature,” and she looked at him with sad, wide-opened eyes. “I shall soon get over it; just at first when masks are raised, and you see deformity where you expected beauty, it gives one a shock.”

“I am not asleep,” exclaimed her mother. “I hear all you are saying — I found out what was below his mask long ago. For heaven’s sake, show some proper spirit, Louisa — marry, my girl — marry a rich man with a *grand title*, and dash past that vulgar fellow in

your carriage on your way to court. Wouldn't I crush him." And Mrs. Templar lifted her foot and stamped passionately on the floor.

"Poor mamma!" and Louisa kissed her mother fondly. "I have given you so much vexation — we are going to be happy now, and live for one another."

"Do you think that seeing you mope away your existence is the way to please me; I wouldn't wear the willow for any man breathing."

M. de Blacourt drew Louisa back to her seat. Mrs. Templar peered into her daughter's face —

"I am glad you are not crying. If you could shed a tear for old Gastineau's son I would disown you."

"Mother, mother," cried Louisa, "it is because he is not worthy of a tear that I am so wretched."

Mrs. Templar rose from her seat, and said, sternly —

"Don't talk stuff; in my day no woman would have owned she suffered for a man." And she left the room."

Fioretta von Ehartmann was the good-natured friend who told Madame de Villemont that it was said she was breaking her heart for Gustave Gastineau, and that no one expected to see her at Madame de Neuville's ball.

"I always intended to be there," said Louisa; "I will take you, if you please."

"That's right," returned Fioretta, encouragingly.

"My dear Fioretta, I wish you would not speak to me as if I were a sick child."

"You cannot make *me* believe that you don't care; I shall always take your part, and say that Gustave has behaved atrociously ill to you."

Louisa shrugged her shoulders — she knew how useless it was to argue with Fioretta, or to try to make her hold her tongue. She had proposed to chaperon M^{lle}. von Ehrtmann to have an excuse for declining M. de Blacourt as an escort; Louisa had a terror of any meeting between the marquis and M. Gastineau.

In the course of the day she received other visits. Madame Bredy and another lady called, and found Severin de Pressy at Clairefonds.

He had wanted to make sure that Louisa would be that evening at Madame de Neuville's. He had entreated her to promise to dance the last waltz with him, and when she hesitated he enforced his petition by telling her that he was going away.

"Are you? That's sudden, is it not? I hope it is on account of promotion," said Louisa.

He evaded a direct answer, and, observing this, she did not push the subject further. He went on to say that he had lately received some books which he thought would interest her — might he send them to her, and would she kindly take charge of them till his return? He intended they should remain with her as a souvenir, whatever the length of the journey he went. We all struggle against being forgotten. He had thought it possible to bring Louisa to say that she

was sorry they were not to meet again soon — even the most conventional words of regret from her lips would have been a consolation to him. Madame Bredy interrupted them — she was full of gossip. She had just come from Mdlle. Chabot's messe de mariage; it had been highly amusing to see how the bridegroom fidgeted; he kept talking to the bride all through the ceremony. "It is a love-match, Madame de Villemont; that will please *you*. M. Gastineau was there — somebody asked him if he was taking a lesson — he stayed till the very last words."

"As for the sermon," said Madame Bredy's companion, "I could repeat it by heart — it's the same M. le Curé has preached at every marriage for these last five years. I shall beg him to give us something new when Marguerite St. Georges is married; indeed he must, for M. Gastineau is a Protestant." And then the speaker suddenly stopped short, as if she had made a blunder.

Both ladies inquired if Madame de Villemont was to be at the ball that evening, and the inquiry was made in a tone of interest which proved to Louisa that Fioretta had told her the truth as to there being much tittle-tattle on float about her and Gustave Gastineau.

When Louisa entered Madame de Neuville's salon, it was with a dread of seeing the proviseur. A quick glance showed her he was not among the group of men near the door. Gustave had abstained from going; he was not sure he could command himself enough to

meet either Louisa or De Pressy with a display of indifference.

By a mere accident, Louisa was dressed in black lace with white flowers in her hair. This startled Severin, for he was seeking omens in everything. Between the dances, he went into the card-room, and did what he had never done before — betted high. He gained every bet; he had said in his heart, we shall see if fortune be on my side.

He avoided Louisa during the first part of the evening; the draught of joy he should quaff in the last waltz should not be weakened by any previous sip.

When the moment came, he would have fain put it off; half an hour, at most, and nothing would remain of his happiness. His lips twitched nervously as he led Louisa to a place in the circle; he turned giddy as he put his arm round her, and then they whirled away among the other couples. There was a laugh; some one had fallen; a fat gentleman was on the floor, and his short-sighted partner put up her eye-glass to find out what had become of her cavalier.

“Never mind,” cried Severin; and he clasps Louisa again, and her fair curls come waving against his cheek.

“That will do,” said Louisa, stopping; “I am a poor waltzer.”

She had perceived something strange in Severin’s look, and she wanted to get away from him.

“We will go slower,” he answered. “It is the last time — my last waltz — perhaps I shall never see you again — be good to me this evening.”

No: certainly what she had feared was not the cause of his excitement. They went on again.

"Press your hand more heavily — lean on me," he said, in that tone which inexpressible tenderness imparts to the voice.

They danced to the last note of the music.

"You will walk about a little," he said, to put off the evil moment. "Come and have a peep at the card-players."

"Do you go soon?" asked Louisa.

"That reminds me," he said, without answering her question, "that I have left the books I mentioned to you this morning, directed to you. You will receive them to-morrow; keep them till I come back."

She looked at him — she could not help it. Most of us have heard the strings of a silent instrument, forced to respond to the sounds drawn from another. We have been told, if we do not know it from our own experience, that sometimes a note sung by a powerful voice will crack the glass shades of candles in the same room. The passionate feelings of one human heart will coerce that of another to render an answer. Severin saw Louisa change colour as he spoke to her; he felt her for an instant lean heavily on him, then seek to withdraw her arm from his.

"Not yet," he said, and drew her hand back to its former resting-place. She was on his left, and she could feel the hard, quick throbs of his heart. A sort of desperation of grief seized her; she knew what ailed him; it brought back her own pain in its full intensity, and she had a mad inclination to cry aloud and ask *him* how he dared to make her suffer thus. What

ould she do? she was not to blame that he was unhappy.

A number of couples hurried by to form a quadrille.

"Come and be our vis-à-vis," said a voice.

"Will you dance?" asked Severin.

"Oh, no!"

Louisa had taken her arm from his; she was no longer acted upon by the vibration of his anguish.

"Then I will bid you farewell."

She offered him her hand, stammering, —

"I am sorry — I hope — —"

"Thank you," he said, after waiting in vain for the end of her phrase. He took one long, yearning look at her and turned away.

What a weight of agony we civilized, well-bred men and women can bear without a cry?

Louisa sat where he had left her, thinking — Were other women's lives as full of incongruities, of heartaches as hers? Madame de Neuville, who was so mad after pleasure, did she ever weep? Why not? Had she herself not been whirling giddily a quarter of an hour ago; her step as light as if her heart had not been heavy as lead?"

"What has happened to you?" asked Fioretta. You have a Niobe look."

"Have I?"

"Dear me, yes. What have you lost?"

"Lost? — nothing."

"Yes, you have; you have lost your partner."

"I am not inclined to dance any more. Are you ready to go home?"

“Indeed, no; I wouldn’t miss the cotillon for the world. Don’t stop for me; the Bredys or some one will take me away with them.”

Louisa was led to her carriage by one of the young men of twenty, who seem to go to balls for the purpose of looking after missing cloaks and carriages.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Margaret's Votive Offering.

M. DE BLACOURT seldom or ever saw Louisa until after mid-day. Early on the morning after the ball, he sent a message begging to see her. He waited for her in her boudoir. At the first glimpse of his face, he knew that something dreadful had occurred.

"What has happened?" she asked.

"Severin de Pressy is dead — killed in a duel by M. Gastineau."

"And the cause?" exclaimed Louisa, breathlessly.

"A woman, of course," he said, with that sudden elevation and throwing back of the head familiar to him when indignant. "Is there ever any other reason for a man's misfortunes?"

Louisa burst into a passion of tears; the first she had shed since Gustave had taken his cowardly revenge of her.

M. de Blacourt did not appear touched by her motion.

"Ay, ay, women have an old leaning towards what is evil. Show them goodness and they turn from it — it is prosy and stupid; wickedness excites their imagination, there is nothing in goodness to whet their insatiable curiosity; they will trample on and forsake the good man, and cling to the reprobate — struggle for him, defend him, suffer for him, die for him. If you weep, Louisa, weep for yourself, not for the quiet

dead. Your loss is greater than his; he loved you with the chivalrous love of an honourable gentleman — you were far dearer to him than himself or his self-love.”

“I do weep for myself,” said Louisa; “I bring misfortune on every one who comes in contact with me — ah, dear, best of friends, your Louisa’s heart is broken; if I could go back only a few months — hopeless — hopeless. I can undo nothing; but believe me, do believe me, I have tried to do right.” She hid her head on the arm of the sofa, and sobbed piteously.

The poor marquis was ready to do as much. He sat down by her, praying her to forgive his bitterness; she must not lay a stress on words spoken in a moment of angry agitation — she must not be hard on him. “Come, come, they must make friends again.”

Louisa turned her tear-stained face up to him, and put up her trembling mouth to be kissed, just as she had done at eight years old.

Mrs. Templar coming in, asked, “What was wrong now?” When she was told of the duel, and that Severin had been killed, she exclaimed in her broadest Scotch accent, “The deil’s aye kind to his ain.”

No one had thought it necessary to take any precaution in telling Marguerite St. Georges of the tragical event, and her uncle and aunt were utterly amazed when they saw her go down all of a heap on the floor. The first words they said to the poor girl when consciousness returned, were, “M. Gastineau is quite safe, there’s no cause for anxiety.”

“M. de Pressy is dead?” said Marguerite, in a dreamy voice.

“My dear, I am sorry to say he is,” replied Petite Maman, wiping her eyes. “I am thankful for one

thing, that his mother died last year — how proud she was of her handsome boy.”

“He really is dead?” persisted Marguerite.

“He was killed on the spot. M. Gastineau’s sword pierced his heart. They were fighting, my dear, and M. Gastineau had to do his best.”

Marguerite drew her breath sharp between her teeth.

“Blessed be God,” went on Petite Maman, “he did not suffer long.”

“I will go upstairs, aunt,” said Marguerite, and ran out of the room.

Mdlle. St. Georges looked after her with a puzzled expression, then turned her eyes inquiringly on the colonel.

“It will put off the marriage,” he said. “Gastineau gave himself up at once; he is in prison — a matter of form; he will be sure to be acquitted, for it is positive that poor De Pressy provoked the challenge.”

“Such a gentle-mannered young fellow as he was; it’s a riddle to me his provoking a lamb. What do people say they fought about?”

“Well, it is whispered that it was about Madame de Villemont; that’s what the women think. Young Lemonnier told me that Severin came to the Cercle, evidently with the intention of provoking Gastineau.”

“Then what makes them mix up Madame de Villemont’s name in the matter? I’d lay my life she has as much to do with it as our Marguerite.”

“You had better look after Marguerite herself; she looked dreadfully ill when she left the room.”

"I know what to do and when to do it," returned his sister; "let me alone, colonel, in the management of the house, or take it on yourself — there's the keys, and there's the purse; make the best of them both."

"I did not interfere as to the house; I reminded you of the girl upstairs." And the colonel took his hat, and in a twinkling had escaped from the domestic storm within.

To be out of temper is the way some very good people have of showing their grief, and Mdlle. St. Georges had an angry pain at her heart. She recollected Severin as a child and as a school-boy; she had seen him grow into a fine young man, and she felt an irritation against Gastineau, which she was conscious was dangerous; her attack on her brother was like the opening of a safety-valve.

When Mdlle. St. Georges at last went up to her niece's room, she found Marguerite on her knees before a small ivory crucifix, which hung over a small ebony vase for holy water — Marguerite's treasures and inheritance from her mother; Petite Maman waited in silence till Marguerite rose from her knees.

"You have done right to pray —"

Petite Maman stopped at sight of Marguerite's face; she laid her hand on the girl's wrist.

"You are feverish, my dear, lie down and keep quiet."

"Thank you, aunt, but I don't at all want rest; give me something to do — something that will make me move, tire me; I don't want quiet." And then she burst into a little quick sobbing. "*Do*, aunt, something to do, something to do!"

"Come downstairs with me; will you go out for a walk? Will you go and see Madame de Villemont?"

"No — no — no!" She put her hand to her throat, so hard!"

"What's so hard, my poor child?"

"I did as I was bid; I will tell you some day. Give me something to do, aunt, pray!"

A real strong emotion always exercises dominion the time being; Mdlle. St. Georges meekly offered Marguerite the basketful of stockings to mend.

"I can't sit, aunt; something to do in the kitchen." With this Marguerite betook herself.

Mdlle. St. Georges remained behind with the ladies, pondering over Marguerite's agitation, always arriving at the same conclusion, that she could not understand it.

Madame de Villemont and Marguerite were both in church during the funeral service performed for M. Pressy. People wondered to see Marguerite there; she was in deep mourning, and so far from not seeking consolation, she walked steadily down the nave to the pews surrounding the bier on which the coffin rested; she never rose from her knees during the whole ceremony; she resisted her aunt's entreaties to return home, and followed the procession to the cemetery. There she managed to get near the grave, and M. de Court, who was one of the gentlemen who held one of the lowering ropes, observed her throw something into the grave; when every one was moving away, she remained as if rooted to the spot; the marquis offered her his arm, and led her away to Colonel St. Georges. Marguerite's conduct was much commented on, and was generally blamed; every one was of opinion that it was a *mark of consideration* for her betrothed she ought to

have stayed at home, at all events avoided doing anything that challenged public attention. The colonel and Mdlle. St. Georges were scandalized and grieved, but, as they confessed to their friends, Marguerite had never been herself since the duel.

“And no wonder,” said those who received this confidence; “never was a more awkward situation for a girl; still it would be better if she could be induced to imitate Madame de Villemont’s avoidance of all occasions for drawing on herself any remarks.”

Louisa had made many attempts to see Marguerite — had written to beg her to come to Clairefonds, but Marguerite charged her aunt to excuse her to Madame de Villemont. Mdlle. St. Georges was to say that Marguerite was trying to recover her spirits, to regain composure; that she could not see Madame de Villemont without a recurrence to distressing and painful topics; as soon as she had thoroughly mastered her grief, she would go to Clairefonds.

It is according to circumstances and characters that passions reveal themselves; they may have smouldered for years, and then burst forth with the force and rapidity of lightning. This was too evidently Marguerite’s predicament; but for Severin’s cruel death she might never have known the breadth and depth of her feelings for him.

M. de Blacourt again urged Louisa to leave Bar le Duc; he could not at first fathom the cause of her unwillingness to go away from a place so fraught with painful recollections for her, and indeed for them all; at last she explained to him that she would not move until after Gustave’s trial was over.

"Public opinion," she said, "is hard upon him; I wish to remain in his neighbourhood in case that I could be of use to him."

"And afterwards?"

"Anywhere you like," she said, and voice and gesture expressed the indifference she felt.

One day early in October, M. de Blacourt announced to Louisa that he was going to St. Mihiel to attend Gastineau's trial.

She looked at him wistfully.

"Remember," she said, "that I am not guiltless in the matter; it was my folly which laid the foundation of all his sorrow and wrong-doing."

"False reasoning, my dear. You might as well say that it laid the foundation of his celebrity. It is the bad seed in the man's own heart which has brought forth the evil fruit."

"I know I am about to ask a great deal of you," she said; "but for the ease of my conscience, if you see a need for it, give him *your* support — if you merely own him as an acquaintance — it must do good."

"He will not require my assistance, but if I see a reason for putting myself forward, I will do what I can for your sake."

"Thank you; I am very grateful."

The same evening M. de Blacourt brought Louisa the news of Gustave's having escaped with merely a fine of three thousand francs. It had been clearly proved that De Pressy had used provocation, which allowed of the plea of extenuating circumstances. The

procureur royale prosecuted, and confined himself to a bare statement of facts — there had been no pleading against the accused — St. Georges was present, but there had been no call upon either of them for any protestations of good opinion. In common justice, the marquis must admit that poor Severin did not leave M. Gastineau any alternative but to fight. !

Louisa put no further questions. After a little she said, —

“I will begin my preparations for leaving this; I have had plenty to make me dislike it; yet, strange to say, it gives me real pain only to think of going away. I wonder if I shall ever come back again.”

“No doubt,” said the marquis, who wished to encourage her to seek change of scene.

“I am going because I see you are anxious that I should,” she said; “have you fixed where?”

“I thought it was settled we should winter in Rome — we must first go to Paris, and take our final departure from thence.”

“You must undertake to persuade mamma,” she said, and then the subject dropped.

About a week afterwards Marguerite St. Georges came to see Madame de Villemont — Louisa was in her own room, busied sorting books and music — what she meant to take, and what to leave behind. Marguerite was very much agitated when she first came in — breathless and unable to speak. Madame de Villemont, taken by surprise, was embarrassed also.

Marguerite was the first to begin the conversation, —

"So it *is* true that you are going away."

"And it is also true that I am sorry to go, Marguerite."

"When do you leave, madame?"

"Not till the middle of November; there is a good deal of preparation necessary — a good many things to settle."

"I am glad you are not going sooner; I have come with a petition — one that I do not think you will refuse."

"I would not deny you anything in my power to grant you, dear."

"First, will you tell me about M. Gastineau?"

"What is it you wish to know?" asked Louisa.

"You were very old friends, were you not?" and Marguerite looked Louisa full in the face.

Louisa sat thoughtful for a few minutes, then she said, —

"Yes, it is right you should understand it all: I was a very little child when we first saw one another; his father and mother lived in the same house as we did; his father taught me French, and that brought Gustave and me together as playfellows. At that time we loved one another very dearly: his father was killed by the explosion of Fieschi's machine, and his mother fell into great distress. They all left Paris, and so did we, and we never met or heard of one another till five years later — when I was fourteen. It was in Switzerland; my mother, by chance, took the house next to that of Gustave's uncle. I

was very glad to see Gustave again, and I was very sorry for him; he was in a bookseller's shop, working hard to save money out of his salary to enable him to return to Paris. I saw him very often, and he asked me to teach him English, that he might get better paid, and I did, and that made us more companions than ever."

Here Louisa stopped — her colour rose, and her breath came short; Marguerite remained perfectly still with her eyes riveted on Louisa.

"I believe I loved Gustave with the same love I had had for him as a child; I never thought of any other kind of caring; but he was older, and he loved me differently; his cousin Claire used to joke me and tease me about him, but I tried not to believe her. He used to tell me of his plans, and how he was already writing; he said one day that it was all for me, and that he could die for me. I was very sorry I had an affection for him, though he will never believe that now." Louisa's voice broke. "Oh! Marguerite, I was a foolish, untaught girl, allowed to run about wild; I couldn't bear to see Gustave unhappy so I promised him in secret to wait three years before I married. I said this to comfort him — only to satisfy him, and prevent his looking as if he were going to kill himself; and then we came to Paris, and so did he; and now here is the mean part of my conduct: though I knew he was of more real worth than half the people I saw, I was ashamed of him — ashamed of his dress, ashamed of his ugliness. I ought to have gloried in his courage, in his perseverance in his self-denial. I was glad, yes, glad, to do as my

mother bid me, and break my promise to him. I did it unkindly, and he has never forgiven me."

Marguerite exclaimed, —

"Why should he have begged you to ask me to marry him?"

"Marguerite, dear," said Louisa, "all that he has of good is his own; if he has shown unforgiveness to me, I deserved it. Make allowances, dear, for his harsh manner: he has suffered much, been soured and embittered by me. You will be patient and kind, dear, for my sake: you love me, Marguerite, don't you?"

Marguerite covered her face — she wept, but she did not say yes.

"I love you, Marguerite; for the sake of the love I bear you, be patient with him; he would have been happy and good but for me. I taught him to despise women; teach him, my darling, what a good woman is?" There was an angelic smile on Louisa's face as she said these last words.

Marguerite leaned forward and kissed Madame de Villemont on the mouth; when she had first come in, she had barely allowed her friend's lips to touch her cheek.

Louisa clasped Marguerite in her arms, and then they both began to cry and call each other by tender names.

"You are very thin, Marguerite," said Louisa, laying her hand on Marguerite's shoulders.

"I am quite well," returned Marguerite, hastily.

"Madame de Villemont, I have come to ask you to go with me to the Mairie the day I am married?"

Louisa hesitated.

"M. Gastineau might not like it."

"I beg it as the greatest favour; if he loves me, why should he mind your being present?" Marguerite spoke with the sudden heat of one whose nervous system is too irritable to allow of her bearing contradiction.

Louisa's face lighted up with the same sweet smile which had touched Marguerite's heart a few minutes back.

"I promise," she said. "Are you to be married in church the same morning you go to the Mairie?"

"No," was the curt reply.

"And when is it to be?" asked Louisa.

"I will let you know a day or two before — good-by."

"I hope I shall often see you now, Marguerite."

Marguerite shook her head.

"I would rather not; I do love you, and you must not imagine I have any unkind feeling to you, Madame de Villemont, but indeed, it is better for me that we do not meet till that day!" Marguerite was trembling with excitement. "Don't be angry with me!"

"No, indeed, I am not in the least angry; I have a keepsake for you, Marguerite."

"Not to-day, not to-day." Marguerite stooped and kissed Louisa's hand.

As she went away, Madame de Villemont thought, "Poor child! she is jealous of *me*, of *me* — women's hearts are strange things, ill to satisfy, craving for more, even in the full bloom of love!"

CHAPTER XXV.

The Civil Marriage.

It was on the evening of the 28th of November that Louisa received a line from Marguerite, —

“The hour is ten to-morrow at the Mairie.”

To say that Louisa was not agitated would be to exaggerate; she had been schooling herself for the occasion ever since she had yielded to Marguerite's entreaty; nevertheless, she had now a momentary reaction — she was indignant that this trial should be forced on her; recollections of her own repentance and love and expiation made her heart full. It was with difficulty that she brought herself to write in answer, —

“I will be punctual,” and then she had a sort of pleasure in the anticipation of draining to the dregs the bitter cup.

She spoke of Marguerite's request to Mrs. Templar and M. de Blacourt with perfect self-possession.

“What impudence!” exclaimed the former.

M. de Blacourt waited to hear how Louisa had decided.

“Of course I have agreed to go,” continued she; “I don't ask you to accompany me,” turning to the marquis. “I should even decline your escort,” she went on; “there is no cogent reason why you *should* give your countenance to M. Gastineau on the day of his marriage, and it might even seem a slight to poor M. de Pressy's memory!”

"I can see no more cause for your than for my going," returned M. de Blacourt.

"Marguerite made me promise. I should not like it to be said that I was afraid to go."

"Very unlikely that Mdlle. Marguerite or her aunt should say anything unkind of you."

"Fioretta would certainly not spare me."

"I warned you, long ago, against that girl," said Mrs. Templar. "I always told you to keep clear of her."

"I have been too fond of having my own way," replied Louisa, gently.

"It's very well to say so, but I doubt whether you think as you speak. Don't go near those people tomorrow."

"I promised Marguerite."

"I thought so; catch you without a reason for doing as you please. And you mean to go alone? How do you know but that you may be insulted?"

"M. de Lantry will be there, he will look after me."

"He's going too, is he? a pretty proof of his friendship for you!"

"He goes, mamma, in his professional capacity."

"You really do not wish me to accompany you?" asked the marquis.

"Decidedly no."

"And what are you going to wear?" inquired Mrs. Templar. "Don't be silly, putting on something simple, by way of not outshining the others. You are full of that sort of sentimental nonsense, and much good it has done you. A handsome dress always produces its effect."

"You shall choose what I wear yourself, mamma."

"Oh, yes: now we have got our own way, we can be all that is yielding. You must go in your own carriage, I insist on that; ring the bell, and give orders that it shall be properly cleaned, and desire Jacquot to make himself as smart as he can. The idea of your not allowing him to wear livery, not even a cockade! — another of your ridiculous freaks, as if you or any one else can make folks equal; there are ranks and degrees in heaven, and nothing can prevent servants from being servants."

Louisa was only too thankful that her mother's thoughts should run on the carriage and on her dress.

The following morning was as beautiful a morning as one could wish for a wedding-day. The weather was more like that of opening spring than of dying autumn. The variegated leaves still on the trees glittering in the sun had a false air of youth; a soft south wind was blowing, and an early shower had moistened the earth, from which arose a grateful aromatic perfume.

Louisa was dressed according to her mother's taste in a rich dark blue silk, which enhanced the beauty of her clear fair complexion — her inward flutter sent a delicate flush to her cheeks, which brightened her eyes — her bonnet was a structure of gauze from Paris, that did not hide her pretty rebellious curls. It was a study to watch Mrs. Templar as she presided over the adorning of her daughter. If Louisa had been the bride herself, her mother could not have been more anxious. When Louisa turned to her and said, "Shall I do, mamma?" pride, admiration, triumph, all appeared on the old lady's strongly marked face.

"Yes, you'll do," she said, slowly. "There's rather difference between you and that moonfaced Marnerite; but 'comparisons are odorous,' as Mrs. Malaprop says. Oh! what a fool you have been, Louisa, but it's no use lamenting, — what can't be cured must be endured — go and show yourself to M. de Blacourt, but don't go away till I have seen you again; there's plenty of time."

To Louisa's dismay and astonishment, Mrs. Templar joined her in less than ten minutes, with her cloak and bonnet on.

"Yes, my dear, I am going to see the play played out. I have no idea of trusting you in such company without me: you look at my dress — I am well enough for Gustave Gastineau; he does not expect the honour I am about to do him. Come, come along," and Mrs. Templar tripped lightly down the stairs.

"It can't be helped," said M. de Blacourt, half laughing; "perhaps it is better that she should accompany you."

The hired carriage conveying the bride and her uncle and aunt was just passing as Madame de Villefont's coupé reached the top of the street. Mrs. Templar put her head out of the window and nodded, and waved her hand gaily. Further on they came up with the pastor and Fioretta on foot; Mrs. Templar again went through the same dumb show of pleasure. When he drew her head in, she laughed that painful hysterical giggle which always made Louisa shiver.

"What a surprise it will be to the bonny bride-room to see me, eh, Louisa? I am one of his oldest friends — *his friend*, when he had not a shoe to his

foot — I suppose he has fine varnished boots now, like a gentleman?"

"I suppose so," replied Louisa, scarcely knowing what she said.

"There's a proverb in my country," went on Mrs. Templar, "that you can't make a race-horse out of a cart-horse, stable him and groom him and train him ever so well."

"Mamma, you will not say anything unkind at the Mairie, for Marguerite's sake; it would seem a sort of treachery in me."

"My dear, I am unburdening my mind to you. As for Gustave Gastineau, my presence will be worth volumes of speeches to him."

The carriage stopped, and Mrs. Templar could see Marguerite entering the Mairie in a plain straw bonnet and her little checked blue silk dress.

"It's only to be the civil marriage to-day," said Mrs. Templar. "There was no occasion for Marc de Lantry to come bustling here, and with that busybody Fioretta."

Marc at this instant came up and handed out the ladies from Clairefonds.

"How wonderfully got up we are," whispered Fioretta to Louisa. "You are determined to outshine the bride. What could have brought your mother?"

"Her own wish." A quick glance informed Louisa that Gustave was present, between two gentlemen, evidently strangers and with the stamp of Paris on them. He seemed startled at seeing her. She had taken it for granted that he would have known of

Marguerite's invitation to her to be present; then Louisa saw, as women see, without looking, that his two friends spoke to Gustave manifestly about her, for the eyes of all three were fixed on her.

Gustave was pale and thin; an air of suffering pervaded his whole appearance. Louisa was sorry for him.

The friendliness of the maire to the company assembled, froze into the stiffest politeness, when he had to address the bridegroom.

Louisa was sorry for him again.

At last the official ceremony commenced.

Gustave and Marguerite advanced to the table before which the maire had taken his seat. M. le Maire then commenced reading aloud that portion of the Code Napoléon, relating to the duties which the law imposes on husbands towards wives and on wives towards husbands. That concluded, he said, —

“M. Gustave Gastineau, native of the canton of Geneva, furnished with the consent of his mother, his sole surviving parent, having had his banns of marriage duly published at the parish church of Notre Dame in his town, and also a notice in writing of his intentions of marriage, duly affixed to the walls of this Mairie, is now about to contract a marriage with Mdlle. Marguerite Celestine St. Georges.”

The maire then turning to Gustave Gastineau, said —

“Will you take this woman, Marguerite Celestine St. Georges, for your wife?”

Gustave answered in a strong voice, "I will."

Addressing Marguerite, the maire put the question to her, —

"Will you, Marguerite Celestine St. Georges, take this man, Gustave Gastineau, for your husband?"

Marguerite's breath came loud and hard, she rubbed her hands on one another, shifted her feet, looked down, then suddenly raising her eyes to the magistrate's face, she distinctly said, "No," and stood like one transfixed.

For an instant there was a profound silence; you might, as the saying is, have heard a pin drop. Immediately after followed a buzz of agitated voices: Mdlle. St. Georges and the colonel were vehemently questioning and expostulating with Marguerite.

"The biter bit," came from Mrs. Templar in English, luckily only understood by Louisa, perhaps by Gustave, but he showed no sign of having heard the comment.

He began, "Monsieur le Maire" — every tongue was hushed — "Monsieur le Maire, and ladies and gentlemen, there is no occasion to detain you here longer. I respect Mdlle. Marguerite St. Georges' decision."

He bowed to all the party. He stood alone like one deserted. His eye caught that of Louisa; she went up to him and held out her hand to him. He grasped it tightly, saying, —

"You did not know her intention."

"On my word, I did not."

"I deserve it," he said, gently.

She was very sorry for him; her eyes filled with tears.

“God bless you, Madame de Villemont.” And he went out by himself. His departure was the signal for the rest of the party to disperse.

Mrs. Templar described the whole scene with infinite relish to M. de Blacourt; she looked and spoke more like herself than she had done for many a day. She wound up thus, —

“I am heartily glad of it; it’s poetical justice, whatever that may be. The recollection will soothe the rest of my life. It turned my blood to see that villain prospering in everything.”

“Poetical justice, like all justice, my dear madame, does not, in striking the unjust, spare the just.”

“He is punished, that’s sufficient for me,” said Mrs. Templar. “It is curious, M. de Blacourt, but it is a fact I can verify, whoever injures *me* comes to evil.”

M. de Blacourt avoided any direct reply to this assertion; Mrs. Templar, he saw, was relapsing into her usual moody flightiness.

“What was Marguerite’s reason for making her refusal so public?” asked the marquis of Louisa.

“That does not concern us,” interrupted Mrs. Templar; “the result was all that could be wished.”

M. de Blacourt’s question was one very generally put: — Why had Marguerite chosen to make her refusal so insultingly public?

On the afternoon of the very day that had been intended for her marriage, Marguerite retired to the Convent of the Dames Dominicaines, and from thence sent a message to Madame de Villemont, begging to see her. Marguerite was in a high state of excitement,

her whole appearance had undergone a sudden change; the red and white, once so cunningly mingled in her young face, was gone — where the hot feverish flush was not, the skin had a yellow tint. There was an almost defiant expression in Marguerite's eyes, which were so sunken as to make her forehead look more prominent than ever.

"I am in disgrace with everybody," she began. "But I don't regret, I glory in what I have done. They will get tired in time of railing at me. His own play put it in my head how to turn the tables on him, I caught him in his own trap. My aunt says I have broken her heart; I wish mine would break as easily; but it won't. I shall have to live and sorrow and sorrow, and all the sorrow in the world will not bring him back to life."

"Marguerite, my poor child, what are you saying?"

"You don't know, then, why I hate M. Gastineau? why I would rather have killed myself than marry him?" Marguerite spread her hands over her face, and tears trickled through her fingers. "He's dead! he's dead! why need I be ashamed now — he can never know — never know."

"Poor Marguerite! I never guessed," said Madame de Villemont, on whom a new light dawned.

"How should you or any one have guessed?" then speaking in a sort of ecstasy, "He was so high above me — high as the angels above common men, and yet so gentle, as if he felt every one to be his equal; so kind to all humble, weak things, and he loved you, Madame de Villemont, and you — you could alight

him for — Ah! and he died for you — you know he did — and you only felt for his murderer. I pity you — I do,” and Marguerite gave a look of contempt at Louisa.

“You saw him so seldom,” said Louisa, bewildered by the girl’s passion and anger.

“Seen him seldom — how do you know? Once we lived next door to him, when his mother lived here; we have played together, and he protected me because I was the smallest of all; he was the champion of the little ones, and he would sit telling us stories always of some one brave and good — and now he’s dead.”

“Marguerite, you should never have accepted M. Gastineau.”

“Shouldn’t I? Well, I never meant to marry him after he had committed murder. I threw his betrothal ring into the grave, but he didn’t know — ah! you wonder I should have accepted M. Gastineau, you forget what you said about French marriages — matters of business, like taking a new house — I obeyed my aunt, and I am so glad that I did. I was half mad when they told me M. Gastineau was acquitted; it seemed there was no punishment for him; but I, the poor girl he meant to use as a rod for you — the poor simpleton, he thought he might do as he liked with — she managed to punish him.”

“Marguerite, Marguerite, revenge leaves a bitter taste in the mouth.”

“Death is something worse. Wish me good-by, Madame de Villemont. I don’t know why I asked to see you; you make my heart burn. I ought to love you for all your goodness to me, but I can love nothing.

Alas! alas! I care for nothing, believe in nothing, but that there is a blind chance — say good-by to me," and she threw herself on Louisa's neck, holding her in a close embrace.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Soon the sweet spring comes dancing forth,
And nature smiles again.

It was the day before they were to leave Claire-bonds, and Louisa and M. de Blacourt were walking up and down the Charmille. The purple flowers of the clematis had long since vanished, the leaves of the hornbeam hedge strewn the path, the few still fluttering on the branches were withered and lifeless. Their conversation had been about Marguerite.

"Her friends ought to be reconciled to her," said Louisa; "otherwise, they may drive her into some other rash step."

"Luckily," said M. de Blacourt, "young ladies cannot make themselves nuns now-a-days, in the first pain of a love disappointment."

"I used to think convents worse than prisons," observed Louisa. "I have altered my opinion; it is not a bad idea to provide hospitals for invalid souls and hearts, as well as for sick bodies."

"My dear, *you* would fret yourself to death in six months, behind a grating and a black veil."

"I don't know. I have an immense longing for repose, for quiet monotony. I feel just like a collapsed india-rubber ball."

In spite of her smile, Louisa looked pale and sad.

"At this moment, perhaps," said M. de Blacourt. "These dead-looking branches, Louisa, will put forth buds and blossoms next spring; all that is so dreary now will be gay and full of animation then; birds will sing, and flowers will perfume the air, this biting wind will be a soft zephyr. Sorrow and regret are like winter, only for a time."

"Why, why has everything gone against me all my life?" exclaimed Louisa, passionately. "What radical fault is there in me, which has made all my good gifts null and void?"

"What the ancients called fate, the moderns name law, my dear. Your bringing up made you what you are. The consequences of mistakes fall not only on the person who makes them, but also on those who have suffered from the blunders. You have plenty of vigour of mind, use it to control circumstances; that's the difference between strength and weakness. Struggle, action, work, is the true meaning of life."

"I cannot understand it — I cannot make it out — why, if it is a necessity that man should live in a struggle, why is he here at all?"

"If this earth were the universe the question would be more puzzling, but, my dear, are you growing sceptical?"

"I don't know what I am growing — I do see that theory and practice disagree. All the striving I have come in contact with, has been to have a box on four wheels to drive in, and to be better lodged than your neighbour. To me," went on Louisa, impatiently, "the world seems growing more silly every day. Where are there men like the prophets of old, or the women like the heroines of the Bible?"

"They were in the minority then, as great minds always will be," answered M. de Blacourt. "They rote and preached against the follies of the day, as our great men do now; but, my dear, I believe we cannot go further in this line of argument for want of the things you were longing for the other day. You were miser at eight years old. All our wisdom comes to what I heard you say then. You had been to church in the morning, and I heard you talking to yourself. God's eye here in this room on me, and in the next room watching Marie and Denis, watching the ships on the sea and watching everybody all over the world — I can't understand it — bah! I shall know all about it by-and-by, when I go to God.' Now, my dear, we had better return to the house; it is getting damp."

"You are very, very kind and patient with me," said Louisa, and looking up at M. de Blacourt, she was struck by his worn appearance. There came over her that dread which seizes on us, when we catch on some beloved face the fatal shadow of the angel Azrael. It appears mercifully at intervals, to warn us to show love and duty while it is yet in our power.

"There is one most precious thing in the world, and that is a true friend," said Louisa, putting her arm within M. de Blacourt's. "Promise, promise that we shall never be separated. Where you go, there I must go also."

"Not cured of rash promises, Louisa?"

"This one I will keep joyfully and truthfully."

After this date Louisa passed out of the realms of fiction into those of reality.

She is now a happy woman; and here I will make an end in the words of an old writer, —

“And if I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired: but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.”

THE END.





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