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# THE AMERICAN GIRL IN PARIS

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Illustrated

BY ALEXANDER DUMAS, FILS.



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407 to 425 Dearborn Street, CHICAGO.

THE  
AMERICAN GIRL IN PARIS.

A NOVEL  
OF  
AFFECTION AND FASHIONABLE LIFE.

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FROM THE FRENCH OF  
ALEXANDER DUMAS, THE YOUNGER.

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TRANSLATED BY  
H. LLEWELLYN WILLIAMS.

CHICAGO:  
DONOHUE, HENNEBERRY & CO.  
1891.



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# THE AMERICAN GIRL IN PARIS

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## CHAPTER I

WHAT IS WEALTH WITHOUT LOVE TO SHARE IT?

It was a delightful May day when a young gentleman, coming direct from Havre, where he had disembarked from the Atlantic steamship, snatched a breakfast impatiently at the Great Western Terminus, and disdaining the cabs, hastened to stroll the boulevard asphalt, which is the native soil for true Parisians such as he.

Lucien Gerard was a son of the streets, having been found as a babe in the doorway of a store of the Rue St. Denis; but on learning that the storekeeper had the intention to retain the child as a kind of talisman, the mother had come forward. It was not a child of shame, only of poverty. Touched by her story, old Maroizel had gone farther in philanthropy than he had projected, and taken Madame Gerard under his roof. On the other hand, he gained in all directions by his charity; never was there a servant more devoted than the mother of Gerard, while, burning to repay her benefactor, she studied to make herself more and more valuable. When his head salesman, Mauriceau,

from the increase of the business, displaced her as book-keeper, she resigned herself to being his daughter's governess; the same learning which enabled her to educate the girl, served to fit her own son for a promising career.

As Catherine Mauriceau was the child of Maroizel's partner's daughter, Madame Gerard was only continuing in a direct line to pay her debt of gratitude; it was natural too, that she should build a castle in the air in which were to be united the young people, her son and Catherine. But she soon dismissed the idea. The world of Paris moved rapidly under the Empire in the trading center; on the death of Maroizel, his son-in-law, long since the piston-rod of the business, altered the gloomy store, dispensed with the haggling petty housewives' commerce and revolutionized the old routine. Already he had bought the adjoining property, running round into the Boulevard St. Denis, and one of those dry-goods palaces glittered and attracted not only the fashionable lights of the better part of the town but those foreigners who come to pour unstinted riches into the lap of insatiable Lutetia. Nothing remained of the Maroizel establishment but the old sign, the Three Sultanas, which Mauriceau, although too hard-headed to be superstitious like his predecessor, had sacredly preserved and had built into the Caen stone front of his magnificent Universal Emporium.

Long before this, Gerard had quitted the harbor of his youth.

Mauriceau had continued the tradition of being the

Gerard's helping hand; he had stooped to employ his business tact in following up some of the tangled affairs of M. Gerard, deceased, with a suspicion of having walked into the Seine at Courbevoie, to avoid the inquiries of the Tribunal of Commerce, and the sharp clerk who had grasped the Maroizel scepter had brought two or three vulpine creditors to book, after they had laughed at Madame Gerard. With these scraps from the wreck, she had completed the training of her son, who entered the Polytechnic School, where he distinguished himself. Indeed, his mother was more than a little proud of him when he came home in the neat uniform. There was another who saw him with admiring eyes—Catherine who had, from the same teacher having guided their first steps, regarded him as a brother.

But Mauriceau, with the expansion of his business, had an elevation of his ambition, if not as mattered to himself as concerned the daughter of whom he had good reason to be proud. He clearly saw that the girl was overcome with a passionate longing for Lucien, and while he acknowledged that the young man was in brains and physique not a match to be despised, he was now a millionaire, and he could not see any fair counterpoise to money-bags but in a peer's coronet. He blamed himself for having let the intimacy of the young people continue, and that, since Madame Gerard had remained in M. Mauriceau's dwelling as the young lady's instructress, the four took meals together.

It was imprudent, and the man who owed the foundation of his important fortune to winning his master's

daughter, began to fear that he was being undermined in the same way. On seeing that the course of love, whether true or mercenary, was running too smooth, he hastened to throw a dam across. He had a solemn debate with Gerard, who instantly recognized that the rich merchant-prince's arguments were unanswerable from the worldly point, and promised not merely to cease his dangerous visits but to offer the only guarantee possible of his sincere intention not to pain the man who had inherited the position of Gerard's patron, by exiling himself from the country. Scarcely out of his teens, but possessing a certificate of the Government School of Mining, which would provide him with a good income anywhere in the Americas, Lucien took his leave of all.

Madame Gerard, who had naturally, but unconsciously, lent her aid to the sentimental friendship of the young people, without thinking of the inevitable sequel, scorned to stay in the house whence her son had been expelled, and, besides, it was logical that she should cherish no more love for the man who had banished her only son from the country.

Before Gerard departed from where he left his heart, he reflected coolly and without haste on the course which would perhaps show the purse-proud Mauriceau that the protege of M. Maroizel was not to be always despised as the son of the governess who sued for the hand of an heiress to twenty millions of francs.

Should he also dip into the grab-bag of commerce and accumulate a pile that even a Mauriceau would

not scoff at? He felt that he had not the aptitude, for no one better than he, brought up in the sordid store where Mauriceau had learnt the tricks of trade, knew how ignoble were the means by which a lean sou is turned into the fat franc.

The army was open to him, but perhaps the Great War would not occur in his time, and meanwhile he felt himself composed of finer clay than is fit to perish in the swamps of Tonquin and the canebrakes of Annam. Politics? He was in no humor for jesting: the career was not inviting where the Premier of Monday is the fugitive in Belgium or Spain of Friday or Saturday.

No, his fate should be sought in the New World, where Science is a god, and its votaries can snatch golden ingots out of the crucible over her eternal fires. What was Mauriceau's "pile" laboriously gained in a life-time, to the discoverer's, the engineer's or the metallurgist's share in a Comstock Lead? Lucien Gerard kissed his mother good-bye; bade her tell the young lady, when they met, to be of good cheer, if their hearts only beat in unison, and sailed away for the Antipodes.

Australia had only immaterial treasures for him: on his explorations in the deserts and the bush, he wrote certain papers which the Academy of Arts and Sciences read and complimented him upon, and as a reflection of this European verdict, which has a great effect abroad, the Colonial Government offered him a post tempting if he had been willing to expatriate himself forever. But Catherine, a Parisian, an expert pianist

and vocalist, mistress of four languages, choice and yet striking in taste of dress as was inevitable in the daughter and granddaughter of dry-goods merchants, she would have been thrown away as the wife of the State mineralogist of Wallaby-gulch. He renounced this brilliant prospect, which caused his few friends to deplore that these erratic French have no practical qualities, and crossed the sea to hunt for those Gold Mines of the Gila which have been the *ignis fatuus* of destruction to hundreds of the daring-souled before he was born. There he had found the golden hoard of Nature, who, like Fortune lavishes her favors sometimes on the deserving.

Enriched, able to enter Paris like a monarch, rejuvenated, high-mettled by his success, here Lucien strode the asphalt like one of those modernized Greek gods which are the ideal of the popular romance of his era. Travel, hand-to-mouth living, hand-to-pick labor, the habit of keeping the weather-eye open for hostile elements and enemies of his kind more to be dreaded, the tropical sun—all he had gone through contributed to present him to the gaze, not often aroused into fixed attention, of the worn-out café frequenters in front of the plate-glass lounges, as a "type," a character welcome to their monotonous world as a dash of cayenne in an insipid soup.

His traveling suit showed that he had purchased it at the seaport on arrival, but the revelation in his alert, vigorous, graceful step of the unrivaled form, sufficed to turn aside the censure of the dandies, envying robustness which a bath of absinthe would certainly

not restore to them. In the quick but searching glances from unclouded black eyes, unquenchable ardor almost dazzled those who happened to intercept them; his black beard, trimmed in a shape which was not the imperial relegated to the policemen who still imitate the fallen emperor in that point, or that of the Americans of the comic stage, revealed the sunburnt tint, and had that touch of originality and individuality at which the boulevardier aims. This air of distinction marked the ex-Polytechnic scholar, and even when he invaded the refined region of the opera and the Boulevard Hausman, the fops of the first flight who chanced to be out on the pavement betimes, started as if they beheld a rival for the good graces of the ephemeral princess of Cythera.

Two or three ladies, in stylish carriages, stopping before those stores of the Boulevard Malesherbes, where objects d'art ostensibly are sold, but where, in the sumptuously fitted office, notes of hand are discounted and money—solid, cold—loaned on the intangible security of a lovely face or a splendid voice, these ladies, surprised out of the studied bearing of ultra-English and frigid, unconcerned by this manly apparition, deigned to honor him with a prolonged stare through the monocle set in the handle of their costly parasol.

This was a triumph of its kind, but the Adonis had not run the gantlet of the adventuresses of the gambling-dens of Melbourne and San Francisco and of Mexican fandangoes to succumb to the stare of a Parisian Phryne, and carelessly walked on.

But his pilgrimage, so far unchecked by his meeting any acquaintance, was brought to an end half-way up the fine promenade by the exclamation of surprise and heart-felt pleasure from an elderly gentleman alighting from a saddle-horse at the carriage-doorway of one of the handsome mansions. His groom hastened to take the horse away, while the gentleman, fairly seizing the young man's arm as if he feared he would escape, drew him into the portals. The deferential bow of welcome which the janitor, sticking his long-handled feather-duster under his arm in token of respect, hurriedly gave, denoted that Doctor Ramonin was the pride of the house; and these Towers of Babel shelter, with their sky-scraping roofs, heaven only knows what celebrities to whom even hall-porters do reverence.

The doctor occupied, indeed, the first floor, where princes, Brazilian ex-presidents and Argentine hide-merchants usually abide, and the pictures, statues, and massive furniture strengthened the weight of evidence that Lucien Gerard's old friend had a most profitable book of clients in the select classes of the Parc Monceau district.

"Why, my dear doctor," said the new-comer, "you must be the electric light of medical science of the capital! oh, the luxurious divan for the dainty victim of the morphine habit—oh, the commodious curule chair in which I suppose you install your somewhat rounded form to hear the hypochondriac Cræsus: Ah, this is an immeasurable distance from the cramped cabinet in the Municipal Maison-de-santé only a few



doors up in the Rue St. Denis, when old Maroizel had the Little Marvel of a bargain-store in the same block!"

Dr. Ramonin was about seventy, but ease of life had fought off the usual tokens of age, and one would hesitate to believe that he was not beginning practice when he had brought this hale vivacious young man before him into the world. His complexion was high, thanks to the horseback exercise which he never let weather prevent him taking, and though his flesh was plainly doomed to master him before he became a centenarian, his eyes were bright and kindly though of a steely gray, and his smile, on somewhat sensual lips, was not forced, but the outward sign of profound benevolence.

He looked upon Gerard with the more joy as he had guided his boyish steps toward the goal which he only realized his prevision in attaining. It was through him, rather than M. Mauriceau that the youth had entered the Polytechnic School, and he had counseled him to make a special course with a view to achieve an independency in the future not too remote.

"What a great boy you are for twenty-six, all told!" The doctor, having led his friend to sit near him on the divan which he had praised at sight and now found worthy of all praise as a masterpiece of upholstery. "How your mother and I have followed your wanderings through the parts of the world which are as fairy-land to those who think Montmartre their Mount Everest, and the basin of the Rond-point their Lake Nyanza. My eyes, sharpened by my profession,

but getting dimmer, I do not mind telling you, my boy, I can see that scar under the hair on your temple, where the wound was inflicted by the slug of those highwaymen of Sonora—the encounter with whom interested me in your modest telling it, like a chapter of the great Fenimore Cooper—you smile, Lucien?”

“Only my rudeness—the fact is that the compatriots of the author in question do not make two syllables of the first so that he seems the originator of the co-operative movement.”

Thanks for the correction, which may save me from offending my American patients; I have a large proportion of them—amusing people who, I hear, rejoice at any among them making money—whether of the manner born or not—none of them more sincerely rejoiced at your success than your old teacher. You return with a round sum?”

“And increasing—I have not sold out, but my conduit pipe in a Pactolus which may enrich my children’s children, if the science of mineralogy is not a vain thing like—like most of sublunary things.”

The young man looked gloomy; the joy occasioned by the meeting with the friend of his youth was fleeting. The latter saw clearly that he had questions to put which he dreaded to be met with unpleasant answers, and he hesitated a little.

“Of course, you have been out to Montmorency, and seen your mother in her little cottage—”

“Well, no, old friend; for the reason that I have mislaid the address, and that I hoped that you would

not only provide it, but would accompany me to her abode. At least, she is well?"

"She was in the best health only ten days ago, when a call took me to her place, and where I was able to assure her that your remittance to your banker's demonstrated that neither of you would suffer in the future a pang like the overplus you had to endure in your young years, my dear Lucien. Ah, I grant that the water in the gutter of the Rue St. Denis does not roll golden sands, but it carries more than one poor devil who bathed in it to a snug final resting-place on its bank."

"You allude to M. Mauriceau?" said Gerard, with a tremor.

"That is one of them. You certainly had the news of his wife's decease? She might have been pulled through if she had yielded to my advice and gone to a quiet hamlet of the Vosges, but it was the fashion, that year, to pass away at Schwarzesterden Bad, and the poor lady went to her account, in a coating of the infernal black mud in which Professor—somebody with an unutterable name—assured the rich and the rare that health and longevity might be found."

"Smothered," exclaimed the other, not familiar with the eccentricities of therapeutic *a la mode*.

"Bless my soul, no. Those Germans said it was liver complaint, but it was nostalgia. If Mauriceau had only let her go behind the counter for a day, a week in the gigantic stores which he had not yet sold for ten millions of money—though I believe he is still a sleeping partner—take my word for it that she

would have recovered health in measuring tape and cutting off dress-lengths. Look at me: two years ago, I determined on retiring, and resting on my laurels as professor at the College of France, and the mere idea of it gave me the first illness I had ever known. Pooh, pooh, don't suggest to me, laying down the burden to which I am accustomed. The old ass, like your warriors, is content to die with harness on his back!"

And the good doctor looked round the walls where some of the artistic chef-d'oeuvres were the testimonials of artists who had paid in kind, and smiled with resolution.

"And Mlle. Mauriceau," continued Gerard, who had time to steady his voice.

"Well, her mother's death threw her into a decline: she thought the world very hollow for a while; it was just at that period when you were wrecked in the Polynesian Archipelago and we had no news of you, good or bad; and to tell the truth, the delay was so long that I exhausted my stock of fiction," remarked the doctor, pursing up his red, full lips drolly. "She languished like her mother, who was not strong; the atmosphere is unfit to breathe in the stores, such as Mauriceau and his wife and their foregoers spun their cloth of gold in. This time, Mauriceau did not have recourse to fashionable M. D.'s, but let me and a brother physician attend to the case at home."

"A consultation?" muttered the young man gravely. "Was it so serious as that?"

"Nothing is serious to the young," answered Ramonin. "But let us not read any more pages of my day-book. You are sure to see soon with your own eyes that the young lady has a long and non-suffering life before her, for, with the pedestal of gold which you can appear upon and be rolled into any *salon*, you may count on meeting her."

"Scarcely at her father's," said Gerard, biting his mustache, "for we did not exchange one of those farewells which were like a prima donna's, merely the forerunner to many pleasant reunions."

"You have money, my boy; and Mauriceau will be glad enough to greet you—in his drawing-room—as elsewhere."

"But his daughter?"

This time, the genial doctor ceased to smile.

"To make a clean breast of it, Lucien, I have not been their way for some weeks—nay, months. How can I help it? Paris society is one of those revolving swings where your friend is carried up out of reach by the continual movement and sometimes the interval is long before you meet again. Then, no one has ensnared you in the great Republic, which we judge from the plentiful samples supplied us in person, to abound with consummate flirts?"

"No one," replied Gerard, moodily, not knowing any too clearly what question was asked.

"Well, so much the better," returned the celibate doctor. "Married life has its good side, but there is a good deal to be said on the silver lining of a single life at Paris, at all events. But in one of your let-

ters, the first you wrote after that second alarming long silence of yours—when you were in the private hospital at—at—”

“Westeria City. You need not consult the map. It was a town of eight thousand population when I met with an almost fatal attack there, but to-day what the Americans call the boom has past—a puff of wind that inflated a bubble, and the coyote steals up the Broadway and disputes for a dead horse’s bones on the jasper steps of the First National Bank of Westeria City.”

“But the beautiful girl whom you styled your savior—though, between ourselves, I believe the surgeon had the lion’s share in your recovery, for the Americans are commendable leaders in surgery, let me tell you—what became of her; did she ride away on the boom? ha, ha, ha!”

“It’s not so short a story,” said Gerard, agitated.

“I see that you are impatient for later and more precise news than I have of your dear ones. Pardon me, my dear boy: if you are agreeable, we will have lunch here—I can answer for my cook, who is the niece of La Conchon, whom you may vaguely remember. You can repeat the story of your adventure and the angel of the League of Lady Nurses, and then I will see you to the Circular Railway station for your run out to Montmorency.”

“But your time, doctor—your patients?”

“Do not fret. As you see me, returned from my ‘constitutional’ ride, I have already been to the hospital and attended to my poor patients here. . . . As

for the others who may call, I have an assistant to listen to their imaginary woes, and—in short I will be none the worse for the jaunt in your company after the repast."

It was clear that the doctor was going to make a holiday of this red-letter event; at the table he brimmed with joy, and one who saw him helping the paté and the caviared toast and the wine from a little vineyard on his own property in the Champagne country, while chuckling, would have believed that it was his own son welcomed home by a prodigal father.

"It was while I was in the flush of delight at having at last grasped a share in one of those incredible sources of the world's gold supply," commenced the young man, "that I stopped at Westeria City to have samples of ore verified and a chat with a geologist from the Germany which you do not love, I see, and I met one of those misadventures which seem so ridiculous to you gentlemen who dwell environed with the guards of civilized capitals. In plain words, while imprudently promenading the plank streets in the darkness, and dreaming of what my fortune might now easily accomplish, I was suddenly surrounded by half a dozen ruffians, who held me up to begin with, as their phraseology terms it, and proceeded to hang me up to one of those guards which prevent the stray goats and the town hog barking the young trees; I expect you will never experience the sensation of being the target for the revolvers of several intoxicated, half-savage, coarse fellows who have no idea of amusement

without brutal infliction of pain. They had taken me unawares, and I had not been given a chance to draw and defend myself—but when two of them closed in to deprive me of my weapons and rob me, I took advantage of the others lowering their pistols to cut at the pair with a knife which I carried in a sheath for such emergencies. Remember, I was fresh from the wild Indian country and, besides, when a man has a share of a gold mine, he is not to have his hold on life torn off with impunity. The sweep of my steel cleared the circle a little, and I was able to get my revolver out, but the combat was too unequal and again I was at their mercy, and worse off than before, as I was wounded in two places, the blood flowing generously, though I had a frame spare from my recent fatigues in mountain climbing.

“Without any pity, they continued their usual sport—like the red Indians, they shot at me with heed not to strike a vital spot, so as to prolong my agony.”

“Oh, that I had the dissection of them:” exclaimed the good doctor, jabbing his fruit-knife energetically into a compote of greengages.

“It will occur to you that firearms, even in the most cool and experienced hands, would not be a jot too well placed. In those of my tipsy experimentalists, perhaps not first-class marksmen to put it mildly, this was a pastime to be smartly repressed.

“It was right here, as the American expression goes, that the intervention of the goddess out of the machine was opportune, and my good star led her here. In a word a young woman, clad in a kind of semi-



masculine coat and unmentionables tucked into the full tops of natty and delicate Polish boots—for the American women have feet to which the Parisians alone may come into competition with any hope of reaching the second place—this young woman, I repeat, abruptly darted into the thick of the cowardly group.

“It seemed to me, as my glance revived out of a fit of despair, that she showed contempt for me during my martyrdom with too much calmness; but seeing the third of my antagonists disabled and partially sobered, she reconsidered her bad opinion of me, and flashed out a pistol.

“‘Here, you low down rough-scuffs,’ she remarked, suiting her language to the audience, and plunging into the ring with that fearlessness of the American woman which I had never entertained so high an opinion of to that moment, ‘hold on with your black-guard conduct, which is a disgrace to this rapidly-developing Queen City of the Continent. Put that man down straight off, especially seeing that he is a foreigner. Do you want to scare away French and English Syndicates?’ she added with fine irony lost on the stupor-stricken gang. ‘You will be behaving more like sensible folks if you let me have a look at him as well as at these noisy brother-toughs of yours, who seem to have broken their teeth in biting off a harder morsel than they could chew.’

“While the men sullenly obeyed and released me, for an American woman is obeyed where a czar would perhaps be jeered at, she stepped up to the worst

wounded of the men whom my knife had slashed and gave him an intelligent look. A gleam from a distant electric light, for this backwoods town had some of the luxuries of the Place de L'Opéra, illuminated the face, and she went on to say calmly, 'I belong to the hospital here. I am one of the Florence Nightingale Sisterhood,' and she showed a badge fluttering on her frock-coat. 'You need only carry this one and his pard. T'other will have gone up the flume before the ambulance calls.'

"The crowd only scowled on hearing this verdict that my bowie had executed the ruffian's death-sentence upon their leader. One of them, judging from my browned complexion and my black hair that I was of Southern origin, muttered that they were determined not to allow Spaniards to set the fashion in style in their city.

"'For shame!' she said, with flashing eyes, 'it is the man that we want out here, and it strikes me, (I am repeating the lady's speech, doctor), that he has struck you as became a man.'

"This was very flattering, but any glow of satisfaction which I might feel was damped by seeing that my champion only exasperated my tormentors into renewing the attack, and including her as an additional but—

"'Oh, you side with him, do you?' growled the man who became the new captain. 'Then you ain't a true daughter of your country. Who turned him loose anyhow? and ain't one of you got another lariat to tie her up along side of him? we will take a shot at him and

at her alternate—at him with the revolver and her with the “kisser.” I have never seen a prettier gal, nor one so queerly dressed, but woman is woman, whatever the sauce with which she comes to table.’

“This inaugural address of the new commander met with the approval always awaiting novelty in this world eager for a change, for roaring with laughter, unmindful of their wounded comrades, they were going to make a rush which I no longer had the strength to baffle.

“But my protectress, not content with her pistol, which might indeed seem contemptible to these fellows, armed with army-size shooters, pulled out of a shagreen case a long, bright blade of steel, horrible by its unusual shape and suggestion of sharpness uncommon; you in particular know, doctor, with what ghastliness the vulgar understanding invests the sight of a surgical instrument.

“‘This is a proof that I do belong to the hospital,’ she said not a bit daunted: ‘it is the instrument with which an operation has been performed for a virulent disease; I was taking it home to burn the virus out of it. You had better be careful, for a scratch of this is a death to which the tarantula’s or the mountain centipede’s nip is a feeble sting.’

“They all cowered, and another man pushed the leader aside as he confronted us and said, with a kind of effort at a proper feeling that did him credit: ‘I ask your pardon, madam; for we are in the wrong in this brush. And we back out according. As for your poison, we are total abstainers from that kind. Come

on, boys, we will carry our dead to our own burying-ground and give the Spaniard a lift to your Hospital. All facts sifted out, he fit fare and square, and I am sorry for one that I split his coat. The dust has run low with me, but I am prepared to contribute my quota toward his new outfit, and no man can say fitter than that.'

"It is not necessary to say that I excused the turbulent gentry from making the damages good. I accepted with some repugnance the transportation, but I was too weak to care keenly what hands supported me in my painful walk to the refuge. I was more seriously mauled than had been thought; when men whose muscles have been toughened by wielding the miner's sledge and pick strike in earnest, the bones are lame for long after. I had a bad attack of fever; and under heaven, I am compelled to believe that it is to the intervention of Miss Reina Vanness and to her unremitting attentions as my nurse that I owe the pleasure of being your *vis a vis* at the table again."

"Capital!" exclaimed the doctor. "We have our street vermin, but such an adventure could not be matched in our byways. The electric light, the latest scalpel, the lady in an *amazone*, and the offer to buy you a new coat—the story is delightfully original. Really, I must go over to America, and see the hospitals where the nurses are as able to cope with bullies on the pave as with the hydra of malady in the sick ward."

"And the sequel?" inquired M. Ramonin, as he untied the napkin in which he had swathed his rosy chin.

"Like all true romances, there is none. I dare say the lady has married, and been divorced, in the style of her country, two or three times while I have been concluding my roamings," said Gerard, without much interest in his heroine, who had charmed the doctor, perhaps because of the professional connection with him.

The old gentleman left the room, with a red spot on his cheeks and his eyes blazing like carbuncles. He was proud to have beside him, on their walk down the gentle slope, so handsome a cavalier, for whether the drain of the best men in the wars of the great Empire or Capuan enjoyments of the Second Empire have deteriorated the manhood, Gerard seemed a colossus among the exquisites, whose idea of dissipation was a lemon smashed in seltzer water, and of gymnastics a bout with a fencing-master too well paid to risk offense by buttoning a pupil.

At nearly every step, Gerard had an opportunity of verifying the extent of the fashionable doctor's circle: republican France though it was, he heard dukes and marquises as often announced as colonels and judges in the other Republic from which he arrived.

"You see," said the cicerone, delighted, "we could get you up a company to operate your gold field, with a list of aristocratic and plutocratic subscribers that would vie with that for the Panama Canal. You have fortune's wheel at your foot, to kick it into any direction you will."

"If not too late!" sighed Gerard.

"I tell you that M. Mauriceau, man of millions

though he be, cannot turn the cold shoulder on one who could match diamonds with him for the adornment of his daughter and the suitor's beloved. May the hope that has sustained you and saved you from that American siren be soon realized! and I am confident that it will. My day is broken up. I cannot attend to my affairs now. While you go to pay the filial visit to your mother, to whom I beg to be remembered, I will go to Mauriceau's and glean full particulars of his daughter as a regale to the breakfast. I want you to share with me at Bignon's to-morrow."

"As you please, the last friend of my father's, and *my* first."

## CHAPTER II

BY ABSENCE ONE ALWAYS LOSES

A large gathering of idlers blocked the way at the foot of the declivity, half-way to the boulevards, on the kind of esplanade in front of Saint Augustine's Church. They were staring at the files of elegant equipages, the panels of the carriages glittering with heraldic blazonry, the horses decorated with rosettes and streamers and the coachmen and footmen wearing bouquets nearly as large as their powdered heads. This congregation made passage difficult, although the pavement is broad. The ample portals of the holy edifice, where it was "good form" under the Empire to celebrate the alliances of the money-spinners' daughters and the mushroom aristocracy under the Empire, were thronged with more select gazers in their best clothes.

"A good omen," said the doctor. "Look at that—our steps are interrupted by a wedding. And a stylish one too. Tut, tut, what has come to my head that I do not know an event of this importance? Look, Lucien, the carriages are still coming from all directions. It reminds me of the fine days under the Exile of Chiselhurst—when the loungeur at least had his fill of show, if bread was sometimes scarce."

Dragging his friend into the chattering mass, with that ever-new, childish curiosity of the confirmed Parisian sight-seeker, the doctor ferreted among the carriages, reading off the family name and reciting little piquant anecdotes which the emblems recalled, as well ancient as modern.

"It is a very, very grand affair," he said while the young man remained indifferent, though a little nettled at the elegant cut and material of the wedding-guests' garments of his age, who clustered to receive their friend, the bridegroom, and the lady of his choice. Though Gerard did not frequent the best society, he was sure that he had brilliant specimens of it under his eyes. Their conversation, of which snatches came to him through the carelessness of the speakers, who did not regard the hearers not of their set as existent, their allusions to occurrences which one arrived from the Far West could not possibly divine, and the glib way in which the loftiest names were handled, all perplexed and stupefied him. They bantered the ladies who were seen passing in their carriages to go to shop on the grand boulevards, or to pay visits on the other side of the river. To them one was "the lady-love of the Grand Frenchman; another, the richest of the rich, Baroness Kirschwasser; another, the ever-young Countess Mortalez: this, the latest Italian beauty, that, the oldest Parisian one;" and still the gallery of notorieties streamed by, at each of whom the cynical throng had a bitter word to fling.

"Wait a minute," said the doctor, exchanging nods



and wags of the crooked forefinger in mimicry of the English hand-shakes; "at last I see the very man I want. It is M. Guy Deshaltes, the best informed man in all Paris. Eh, my friend; Guy, my dear Guy:" he repeated until a tall, slender gentleman approached in faultless attire, immaculate shirt and collar and cuffs rigid as steel, and with a smile submitted to presentation to the mining engineer.

"Whose is the wedding?" he repeated in a tone of as strong surprise as was proper to exhibit even to so startling an admission of incredible ignorance. "Faith, my dear fellow, it is you who must have come from the hyperboreal region. It is Septmonts who is the lucky dog; he catches the sop of millions, my dear old friend."

"Septmonts? the Duke des Septmonts," echoed the doctor. "There, I believe I did hear something on that head, but I never dreamt that he would marry and settle down."

"He would not, of his own accord, but the lady's settlements have dished his scruples. Besides, the pill is not only gilded thickly, but it is shapely beyond compare and flavored exquisitely. I repeat that this is not an execution of a good fellow over whom we shall mourn, but a gathering of the clans to congratulate their chief on a stroke of fortune in his favor."

"But who is the bride?" inquired Dr. Ramonin, testily, for the hubbub and the jostling of the genteel mob into which he had unwisely ventured, conduced to mar the good effects of the joyous meeting and breakfast with his protege.

"The daughter of the 'Three Sultanas,'" rejoined Guy Deshaltes merrily.

"A Turk?" began the doctor when given a clue by the mocking accent of the speaker, he remembered and was about to speak when he felt Lucien start violently at his side.

The second train of carriages had come, and there was a crush to get a peep at the young lady in white and orange flowers, whose odor ran on before to announce her as an elderly gentleman stepped out of an irreproachable carriage, drawn by English high-stepping and cruelly bitted horses, and turned round to help out the expected center of the ceremony.

"It is Catherine," muttered Gerard, losing color and quivering as if a terrible blow had fallen on his head.

"Then, it is Mauriceau's daughter," said the doctor, almost as much saddened and astounded.

"Yes, I thought everybody knew that he retains an interest in the Sultanas," concluded the tall dandy.

He left the pair in consternation and endeavored with unusual animation to pierce the concourse, already three deep, around the beaming papa.

M. Gregoire Mauriceau as of medium height, and the high heels of his patent-leather shoes could not lend him much elevation. He was inclined to become stout, but suddenly as if good living meant to be revenged by giving him unwholesome corpulency because he had neglected the table in earlier life. His face was still moderate in color, allowing for the pardonable flush on such an occasion, and was still

suggestive of shrewdness in the prominent cheek-bones though the lower part of the jaws was beginning to thicken. This, with the nose being slightly hooked, reminded one that the name of Mauriceau, another variation of Morris, Meurice, etc., is of Hebraic origin. Formerly clean shaven, he had recently cultivated a pair of the tufty side-whiskers, introduced into Paris by the English comedian, Sothern, in the character of a silly British nobleman, and strange to say, favored by financial and commercial persons as having a serious, business-like air. It was the aspect of one of those born usurers who, after resigning their lucrative but scarcely glorious vocation to a trusty cashier, join the church and contribute reasonably, to those charitable foundations that lavishly advertise the list of donators.

But the by-standers for once had not a great attention to bestow on the father of the bride, who is but the third personage in the tragedy—or farce, as you look upon it, of marriage in a fashionable temple.

The bride had the beauty of three sultanas compressed in one maiden—there was no denying this. Catherine Mauriceau was a trifle pallid with emotion, but it was nothing more than that "stage fright," from which the debutante in all the great events of society is encouraged not to be exempt since it makes her all the more interesting.

However plebeian her source, it was not apparent. One of our old proverbs says that the difference in the dairy-maid and the duchess lies in the dress, and Catherine proved it. If like her mother, she had

served behind the counter, the chance member of good society who saw her, in escorting his fiancée hither, would have come back at the hour of closing and tried to have the pleasure of introducing her at the milliner's, jeweler's and late supper-room keeper's of the side-streets: and even among the indubitable descendants of the peerage dating from the First Empire, Mlle. Mauriceau, thanks to native wit and the excellence of her instructors, had not suffered eclipse. She managed her step out of the carriage with infinite skill, and walked through the double hedge of those who envied her promised mate, with just the right measure of virginal trepidation and the jauntiness of the well-bred. Her wedding-dress was the supreme effort of the inventor of vogue, a basis of white on which floated lace of cream and *ecru*, while the endless garland of the hymeneal orange appeared here and there as if strewn at random.

Sighing for the vision, as so much loveliness flashing only to disappear forever, left a blistering impression on his heart, Lucien turned with frenzy to examine the husband to whom the family consigned her.

The Duke Maximin des Septmonts, to any but this judge returned from the wild West where the ideal of man is very primitive compared with that of the habitués of the cafés and night-houses, might have passed as a finished specimen of what his world looked for in the representative of a race whose "Seven Mounts" were almost as ancient as those of Rome herself. He was not yet forty, and all who had not the book of the nobility by heart took him to have

scarce stepped across the bar of the third decade. No doubt, his valet knew to what was due the clear complexion, the tint of color and the brilliancy of the bold, big black eyes.

The leader of society, male or female, does not sit at the toilet table without the spirit of science standing at his or her elbow. As Maximin had a square frame, he seemed to resemble his ancestors of the days when they could leap into the saddle though sheathed in a hundred weight of brass or steel. After the patriotic fashion of trying to appear military, he had his black mustache cut in the style of a heavy dragoon colonel's, and his hair cropped short, as if accustomed to the helmet, was artistically tossed in crisp curls. It was a sham; in the same manner as his father had eluded the Prussians during the war by residence at the safe distance of his mansion at Lancaster-gate, London, so the son, with all his demeanor of the chief of a regiment, instead of training for the impending conflict, merely pretended to ride hard, keep his hand expert with the sword of combat—for he was skillful with the fencing-foil and the saloon-pistol—and follow the wolf-hounds on his estate in Brittany. But what was one sham more or less when the duke dwelt in an age and among those who wore masks, hollow anthropoids. To the penetrative gaze of Gerard, the clothes of these manikins seemed transparent; these limbs that moved so regularly were but galvanized; the voice that was measured and musical though without variety, would suddenly die away; and the unnatural, unchanging bloom

on the cheek would scale off. The faultless suit would become too ample for the shrinking form, a miracle of the padder's art, the flaccid nerves would no longer respond to the hypodermic injection, and the last of the line that had not acted a noble part for a hundred years would be laid forever in the great necropolis of baseless admiration.

At present the noble intended of Mlle. Mauriceau was a substantial barrier to Gerard's hopes.

If only he could rebuke her with a look; remind her that he had preserved himself for a happier meeting than this with the only occupant of his heart? But that was vain, for she was too well taught for her new position to favor the external spectators with a glance. She glanced about her no doubt, but as the city lady does—sees all without letting the object most scrutinized perceive that he was singled out. As for the vulgar herd, among whom Gerard was placed, she ignored them as if already a duchess. Not even for one group had she a glance; the choice of her father's sales and work-people who, indelicate enough to set at nought the secrecy of Mauriceau's connection with his old enterprise, had brought a wreath and were trying to induce the Swiss beadle of the church to add it to other offerings. The obdurate official sneered at the joy and pride of these folk in the sight of "their young lady marrying one of the real nobility."

Catherine did not see them, or Doctor Ramonin, whom she did not know, or Lucien. To meet the forgotten lover thus might have caused the vulgar col-

lapse of a death-like swoon, for her corsage was glove-fitting, and Mauriceau would have blamed the doctor for having planned this evil encounter.

Nothing happened; too seldom does any block arise to such sacrifices on these altars; and the bride and her father entered the fane. To the debarred lover the portals, where incense floated and around which the strains of a wedding-march began to echo, would ever be like that gate of the Inferno "which the lost souls call Never."

Recovering from his dismay, the doctor dragged the stupefied young man by the arm locked in his, across the space now clear. Gerard yielded to his pressure like an automaton.

"You must go to your mother's now," said the old man firmly as one speaks to a patient whose mind is too full of a fixed idea. "I am not going to leave you for an instant, remember."

Luckily, it is but a step to the St. Lazare Station.

But many an important event may take place between two steps in Paris, and as the doctor was congratulating himself on substantial progress without his disconsolate charge offering resistance, or even showing that he had come to the end of his reflection, the two were brought to a stand-still by the darting of a carriage-and-pair athwart their path and so close to the foot-way that they had to retrace their paces not to be cut by the wheel or the brazen hub.

In such cases, the vulgar victim looks at the coachman to abuse him in the language which men of the stable best comprehend, while the better-bred inspect

the occupant to make sure if it is the rightful owner, or only the house-maid whom the knight of the whip is taking out for an airing in her mistress's cast-off finery and feathers.

It was a day for our friends to meet surprises, for in the lady, enchanting in tissue almost too summery for the season, sitting in the correct and insolent attitude of the carriage-dame, both recognized an acquaintance.

"Reina!" exclaimed Gerard, turning white and involuntarily throwing up his arms, but no one could tell whether to embrace or to repel, while the other, taking off his hat as to a sovereign, hailed the dazzling person as

"Miss Vanness!"

But, remarking that she had no heed save for the young man at his side, and remembering what he had just been told of the Western adventure, he said to himself with more pain than the sight of Mlle. Mauriceau going to the altar had caused him:

"Then this is his American Girl—in Paris! Poor boy!"





“ ‘Reina!’ exclaimed Gerard, turning white.”—(p. 38.)



## CHAPTER III.

### THE SHELL THROWN INTO THE FORT.

Among the new and superb palaces which excite covetousness in the passer-by, in the Avenue de Wagram, stands the monument to the folly of the minister of state of a power, since swallowed up by the Empire of Germany, for the nine days tenancy of a prima donna whose loss of voice soon compelled her ordering her lawyer in dumb show to dispose of the white elephant to a fair bidder. But the taste inclined towards *bijou* residences, where the dainty furniture of the Dubarry boudoirs would not dwarf the "Petites Crevettes," and for years, the magnificent structure awaited its queen.

When M. Mauriceau sold out of the "Three Sultanas," his man of affairs counseled him to retain secretly a finger in the pie, as he facetiously put it, the agent who conducts a negotiation of ten million of francs, scrapes off enough of the gilding to be allowed a jest. When soon after, he purchased the Grand Chancellor's unlucky fool's-castle, the same prudent adviser suggested that he should not hand it over to his daughter and her noble partner, the Duke of Septmonts, free and clear; one never knew what might happen in this abnormal age; he had known

husbands turned out of doors by wives, in whose name they had only too tightly locked up their property; daughters and sons had not the virtue strong, of being filial; in short, M. Mauriceau's reputation as a sage would not be diminished if he retained for his private use a wing of the edifice, which would still be sufficient for a duke and his duchess and all their multitude of retainers.

Mauriceau was about to defend his daughter, to whom this suspicion of ingratitude was abominable to apply; but reflecting that the noble son-in-law was not on a par with her in the cardinal virtues, he took up residence under the same roof, and determined, except to receive his dividend as the sleeping partner, that the "Three Sultanas" should know him no more.

But the acquisition of this palace had made a breach in his fortune and he hastened to speculate on the Bourse, where he paused, the master of a round twenty millions.

Over a year had passed since the union of Mlle. Mauriceau and the Duke of Septmonts, of which the dry-goods merchant's gains had silvered the peaks. The latter told everybody that he was perfectly happy and that he found the new society, into which his daughter had introduced him by her marriage, delightful. It must be admitted that, at the outset, several haughty dowagers, lifted upon their ancestral trees as upon stilts, indulged in jokes about his having forgotten to bring his sign of the "Three Sultanas" from the boulevard to his wing of the Septmont's mansion. But Mauriceau's son-in-law had supplied

him with a stock of old scandals in which these cavillers had figured to disadvantage, and he had retorted on them in a vein not very polished but, perhaps, for that reason, more effectual in silencing their fire than those torpedoes in use in our times, so wrapped up that the explosion is innocuous because of the thickness of the envelope.

The cavaliers did not play any jokes. In the first place, the new recruit was willing to be a *bon vivant* and let his boon companions select for him at sales of cellars of wines; he made up card parties, even when the stakes ran high; he went to the races and betted, though as yet, his knowledge of the turf was at that degree, when he did not know a horse from a cow. Such an accommodating man raised no enmity. If some loose-tongued, flippant, gilded youths thought—which was not likely—of a good quip, they left it solitary in what they called a brain, unuttered, for the duke was reputed to be a swordsman from what his fencing master said, and two or three encounters when he was younger.

But after all, the majority of men are always on the side of a pretty woman, and there could be no doubt that Catherine des Septmonts was one of the fairest and most stylish of a circle, where no one soared above her on wings more purely golden.

But was the young duchess happy, the doctor had inquired of Guy Deshaltes; but the gentleman had hesitated.

"I dessay, she is. You know we love in our own peculiar mode in our sphere. We have our habits,

which we rarely alter, and almost never break away from, even for a woman's sake. But, see here, old friend—since this young duchess interests you so much, as one whom you brought into this world of duns and protested notes, some twenty odd years ago—why, here are a couple of tickets for the Charity caper, she and her set are going to cut next Wednesday—a 'fete de bienfaisance' for the benefit of the coal miners down on her husband's estate. Go and have a peep at her, and see that she is the most enviable of women."

Dr. Ramonin knew where to find Gerard. Morose, since the shattering of his illusions of woman's fidelity to her first love, the young engineer has striven to wear off his misanthropy, which became apathy as the only improvement; by the sparkling of his eye, the doctor saw that he had forgotten nothing; but fifteen or eighteen months' study of his protege had shown him that he had a rare self-command, and he had no misgivings in accompanying him to the festival at the duke's.

Indeed, it was not in this grand and stately house—not in these primly laid out gardens that a passionate outburst of a discarded swain was to be expected; here had roamed courtiers who had thrown their nieces or nearer ones in the path of the Grand Monarque, and the classical statues amid the shrubbery, hacked and hewn into unnatural shapes, constantly reminded one of self-control; the like lesson was impressed by the imposing entrance in red Sienna marble, with inlay moldings of old gold, and the

scenic coat of the Seven Mounts over the doorway: the peaks, gold on the azure field.

Usually, when a mansion is turned into a concert-hall or a bazaar, for any of the public who can obtain a ticket and suitable apparel, the sense of having paid your way in, gives the previously venerated pile a sordid air. Not so the Septmont's mansion; when the visitors handed over the handsomely printed paste-board to the steward and his assistants, in a roomy vestibule, walled with variegated marbles and statues by sculptors of fame, they were intimidated, while no little set-up by the honor.

The celebrated staircase, from the Exposition, which Mauriceau had bought for nearly a quarter of a million francs, half-covered with a carpet too luxurious for the foot of any but a princess, was well placed to abash the frivolous; the servants in blue and yellow, with heavy gold chains, the silence all over the rambling house, where still one divined, a numerous establishment was on guard; the glimpses through half-parted doors of treasures of comfort, art, and elegance—all had that gloss of the higher and reserved circle in which the unhabituated walk with respect, mistrust, repression and overdone courtesy to those whom they meet. It was not so much a palace as a temple of Aristocracy. The priests were also the saints to be adored—and Gerard was soon in the mood to adore alone, having laid aside revenge as a mean thing, at those massive gates. The doctor strolled with him in the grounds, where the stalls were set out and presided over by the ladies of

name and fame whom it was a glory in itself to have as allies to the duchess, who had become patrician solely by the march up and down the aisle of St. Augustine's.

It was here that the host met the doctor; he recognized the younger man, too, but he had already acquired good command and did not betray any repugnance. To both he extended the special invitation to carry their explorations into the portion of the house reserved for the duchess and her intimate friends. Among these he was compelled to include the family doctor, and M. Gerard had a claim that way, remembering how often he had eaten with her the Mauriceau bread and salt. He emphasized this loyalty, since he dared to revive old memories by presenting himself, but a glance at the face, as well schooled by the year's anguish as a Sioux warrior's, gave him confidence.

"Pray, go in and see my daughter. She will be delighted to see you. Only you must not expect too long a conversation, when she is literally besieged with friends. If we had fixed the tickets at twenty louis instead of twenty francs, we should have had the place crowded. It recalls to me the rush at the opening of a sacrifice sale—ahem!" but the other gentlemen had kindly looked off in another direction to relieve him of embarrassment at this slip of the tongue. It was no consolation that, better than any of the bystanders, these two were familiar with the incidents of his early life.

"Sacrifice sale? something recalls to you?" inter-



rupted a brisk young man who whipped out a notebook and a stylographic pen with the celerity of a piece of fine mechanism. "I could not have lit in this earthly paradise more happily. Dear M. Mauriceau, I have not only the honor to request of you details on this most recherché fete of the season, with list of names of the bevy of beauties tending to the sales, but upon the historic race of the Sept-monts, a very old family. A few dates, as I can fill up the gaps out of the Armorial of France at the National Library. But what I seek are some personal notes. The title of our journal authorizes me—empowers me. It is—" and he dexterously distributed a number of copies of a journal among the crowd which his address had collected, "it is 'La Personnalité Parisienne.'"

The unhappy host gave a despairing look toward Dr. Ramonin and Gerard, who smilingly withdrew, leaving him in the clutches of the reporter, who talked of drawing a parallel between the trade of his day and that of the present time.

"Only think that that man was not sorry when I had the six francs to pay for the dinners we stood in need of at Mother Salignon's in the Rue St. Denis," said the doctor in the dull ear of his young friend.

All that Gerard was thinking of was that in a few instants he would be in the same room as the girl who had thrown away the priceless jewel of love for a coronet.

"These money-makers never do anything else when they have a good-looking daughter. Their sole idea is

to marry her to somebody who is not nobody, and can introduce them into society where the gold key failed to open the door. He has been marvelously helped for our poor Catherine has a beauty and a grace, and a brightness of mind which would adorn any scene. But to whom am I recounting the eulogies of the—"

"The most mercenary of her sex," said Lucien bitterly. "I ask but to see her before—if I find her, as I suspect, calm, proud of her gain from trampling all that the right-minded worship as holy, under her feet—I shall return to the mountains where—unlike the golden hills of the family into which she has entered—the air is pure, and makes one braver and more lofty-minded. I cast aside the thought of searching with a bullet the black windings of his corrupt and shriveled heart. I can face him now and regard him from the height of my contempt. It is not such dogs that one arms himself to meet—the boot suffices."

"Lucien!"

"Lead on. Let me have this test-look at her. If she outfaces me, she was a woman not worth occupying my heart, and I shall make my new home in America without one longing left behind."

"In one respect, I may say the plotting papa has been foiled," observed the doctor, as they neared the house; "eighteen months almost wedded, and no little duke to rejoice the fellow. It has upset him, I can assure you, and he has flung himself into a sea of dissipation in which I hardly recognized my old Mauriceau of sterling conduct during thirty years of trade

and business. He was a model husband, too, but since his daughter has been married, he undertakes to live the life of a gay old bachelor. You doubt, but Guy Leshaltes and the merry crew know what he does, and they are amused over it. He brags that his sixty years are not felt by him, and he thinks his anchorite's course deserves some reward on this distracted glòbe—or globe of distractions, as the poet would say now. Mauriceau calls this unseemly behavior! smashing his pocket savings-bank: not a bad jest, but he is traveling on the road to the hospital for incurable sufferers with softening of the brain, mark my words."

But his hearer had not caught half his words. They were within the house and approaching the privileged rooms. Under a series of family portraits, brought from Septmonts' country-seat, for he had disposed of the town-house site long before Mauriceau came to his aid, Gerard abruptly paused.

"Doctor, did this know-all of a Guy also inform you how and where the lord here came into contact with M. Mauriceau? They are not of the same age or the same society. Was it simply that he lent the impoverished nobleman some money, and thus was led on to negotiations culminating in the sale of his daughter?"

"I have not the least doubt that whenever Mauriceau fell in with the duke, the latter lay under a cloud, but the son of a noble line, like these memorials display his to be, required more than merely the regilding of his coronet, as the saying goes. He sought a lady worthy by appearance, ability, accom-

plishments and character to wear the bauble in question. So, as a matter of course, he turned to the aviary of goldfinches, our American Colony.

"Well reasoned! The New World is, indeed, represented in many a family founded before the Discoverer of America was born."

"My sharp-sighted Guy tells me that the duke found what he was looking for, and our friend Mauriceau found him, that *he* was looking for, in the drawing-room of one of these foreigners, young, pretty, very odd and eccentric, in whom you will be interested when I add that it is Miss Vanness."

"Reina, again! Reina had a hand in this shameful white-slave traffic!" exclaimed the young man.

"Hush! not so loud at the antechamber of the lady's apartments. Miss Vanness had hardly more than arrived in Paris before her receptions were famous among the men about town, the highest bred, the most before the public, the most distinguished. I do not know what she said to the duke, who passed for being a most assiduous waiter on his turn to seize her hand as mistress of a great gold mine in the States, but when my old Mauriceau let her 'guess' what he was seeking, she brought him into the presence of the duke, and said: 'Here is the man you are looking for!'"

"She arranged this alliance, eh?" said Gerard, more and more perplexed and embittered. "Do such evils come about by sheer accident? Then, when she crossed my path, she was hastening to the wedding—she was not too late to have her share in the benediction!"

"I do not think so," returned the doctor. "She would not go among the ladies; they say no women are ever among her guests, and that she goes nowhere to meet her own sex. But you ought to know her habits; when she wore the masculine coat, had she then become mannish to the degree of forswearing the society of the gentler portion of mankind?"

"I do not know. Nobody understands that Sphinx. To study her enigmas is to court madness—to solve them is death."

"Everybody was amazed that the duke should not only have accepted his dismissal but have accepted a wife from her hand. He showed his gratitude by adding some precious stones to the hoard which makes her on her gala days resemble a jeweler's show-case in the Rue de la Paix. Not to be outdone, Mauriceau presented this amateur marriage-broker with a necklace of six rows of pearls which Guy avers had the stamp of the London court-jeweler's Store and Mortimer upon it. As the clasps were set with diamonds, it is reckoned to have cost ten thousand guineas, my dear! All things taken in account, our ex-dry-goods merchant acted as handsomely as my lord, since in point of fact he had really to pay the bill for both supplements to Miss Vanness' jewels."

"Did she accept her wages?" said Gerard.

"Your American girl is a practical woman in Paris, where sentiments have a market price, or how would we be able to value them? Guy said, she said 'it was a fair deal!' as if it were only the commencement of a game."

"Perhaps," thought Lucien, not trusting himself to speak. "It seems to me that she owes me a revenge."

"That is how Mauriceau's daughter was disposed of," concluded the doctor. "It must be confessed that when he started he made up for lost time; he bought seven hundred years of nobility in five minutes."

"And remorse for eternity," observed his hearer with solemnity.'

"If he be the kind of man I took him for. But if he is one of the vain and foolish, he will believe he made a good bargain."

"He used to say that if he had a son—"

"Ay, but that is altogether different. If he had a son, he would have invoked the Equality of Man and the Immortal Principles of 1790, and refused his hand to any titled beauty unless there were love between them. For his son, a Mauriceau, must have died a Mauriceau, unless he had won some new handle as a man of genius; luckily genius is not an attribute of these favorites of lucre. It is the appanage of poor scions of misery and the Pariahs. But remove from your face the least traces of emotion, for here we plunge into a sea where the swimmers must wear an unaffected mien though they drown."

In the reception-room, where the duchess was holding a council of her bosom friends, the two gentlemen entered without receiving more than a flitting glance from those who were on the edges of the gathering and who repeated the glance at a greater length not because they remembered the doctor but because his companion had a striking bearing. The doctor hap-

pened to catch the eye of Guy Deshaltes, and as soon as he had nonchalantly finished a cup of tea in egg-shell porcelain, the exquisite drew near the newcomers. The duchess' court was composed of two or three married couples with titles as ancient as her own, a Marchioness de Rumières, a lively and talkative dark woman as lissome and tremulous as a creole, the Baroness of Hermelines and her husband, as they were usually spoken of, and several dressmakers' models headed with barbers' blocks, who looked almost human.

"Ah, doctor," said the marchioness, "what have you done with our host? I do so want to compliment him on the daintiness of this fete."

"Say them to the duchess," replied Ramonin tartly, "I wager she had the greater share in projecting it if not in conducting it so successfully."

"Not so bad as that, dear doctor," said the lady. "I can answer for it that he had some taste. He was the first silk-mercant who had the idea to give his customers comfortable seats and set aside a room where one could have a biscuit and a glass of Malaga. It was a new idea, and with a new idea fortunes have been made in Paris."

"Sometimes with an old one, madame," interposed Gerard with a bow. The doctor hastened to present the speaker, on whose account she had added herself to the group.

Gerard submitted, but he was not partial toward these fashionable devotees of the fad or idol of the day; he might pardon their ignorance of the

outer world, but not their want of desire to learn; they were inquisitive enough to be a plague, but their curiosity was transient; highly impressionable, but absent-minded; sensitive but derisive of the finer emotions being manifested; ready to weep or to laugh with equal "gush" and the same insincerity; all the traits were visible in Madame de Rumières.

"What a mixed pack have come into the gardens, she prattled, trying to din Gerard if not enchant him. 'Whom do you think we spied from the window? M. Mauriceau's successor at the "Three Sultanas;" he has brought his good lady with him, a freak of the Fat Womankind from some museum; she is studded with diamonds to her very bodice; I have a mind to go down and tell him that he will never maintain his establishment at the height to which Mauriceau raised it. But, doctor, how is it that we never see you now?—unless we make a call to confer with you on ailments."

"Then we may never meet, for you are the picture of health and vivacity."

"Fie! your compliments are no more truthful than your articles in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes;', I undertook to read them, for we must encourage authors, when they are of our sphere; but though interesting, I had to renounce continuing, for my journal and my spiritual director say you are a shocking materialist—a brand for the burning."

And she indulged in a playful shudder of horror which made Guy and the doctor smile, while she shrank away from Ramonin almost into the arms of Gerard.



"Exaggeration," replied the professor. "But, what ails our dear young hostess? Quite the contrary of you, she has no delicious color, and indeed she is pale as one who has seen a specter."

"Just so; you are right, doctor," said the marchioness, looking toward the duchess, over whom had indeed come a sudden change: "pooh, it is the fatigue; she has been in and out of all the fancy stalls, and cheering the backward buyers to besiege the stock of rubbishing trifles which are so sillily the custom to exhibit."

"Dash it all," exclaimed Guy; "you would not have things of utility sold by your fair hands, would you? I should like to see M. de Rumières or M. d' Hermelines helping their pages or footmen to fill their carriages with brooms, soap and hat-brushes."

At this moment, the doctor perceived his protégé making a slight salute by a nod to one at a distance whom he guessed to be the hostess, but before he could put a question, the young man took the arm of Deshaltes and observed: "You are the godson, I believe, of the Bishop of Grenoble, whom we have on the board of the mining corporation to which I am consulting engineer? He has written your name in for a block of shares, and I make bold to presume that you will not be sorry to have the opinion on the investment, of one who has surveyed this modern Cathay?"

The two young gentlemen walking away in company, the marchioness had no wish to linger, and the doctor left her, to approach the young lady, who re-

ceived him cordially on hearing who he was. He fancied that her surprise was not at all great, and in fact it was not long in the course of the dialogue with one for whom her mother had cherished deep esteem, before she alluded to his companion.

"You brought into the room somebody whom I know and who too scrupulously kept his distance while saluting rather the mistress of the house than an old acquaintance."

"Yes: you may even style him 'friend,'" prompted the doctor.

"Why did he not come up to me?" she was inquiring when her interlocutor saw the Duke des Septmonts enter the room, and he eluded the direct demand by hinting that he would dilate on the agreeable subject at the earliest opportunity. "Maximin," she continued to her husband, "this is Professor Ramonin, whose essays in the 'Revue' are in everybody's mouth."

The duke smiled as he extended his fine, blanched hand.

"The doctor is no stranger to me, and I trust this is only the first of a series of welcome visits; no one can feel more grateful to him than your husband, since he introduced you into the world, as I come from hearing your respected father say."

The duchess had retired, and as the others had flocked around the rich Senora de la Marmalada, just entered, to admire her sapphires, she went unnoticed into one of the window recesses, where she appeared to study the scene in the gardens, while partly masking her countenance with a marabout fan. When she

was out of hearing, the duke went on with a wicked smile: "It is not so much by your 'Revue' that I know of you, doctor, as through the trumpeting of a fairer personatrix of Fame—the American belle, or as more say, the Belle Américaine, to whom many of us owe social advancement."

"Miss Vanness?" said the doctor.

"None other. She is one of my best friends," returned the nobleman, "and I do not care that I am overheard in that boast by our dear Guy Deshaltes. Guy, whom of course you already know, for he is the comrade of everybody, Guy is a brother collegian of mine. He did not drop me when I married, but continues to talk love to my wife and morality to me."

"Preaching in the desert in both cases," returned Deshaltes, sharply.

"Quite so," said the duke. "I am well aware that my duchess is a most honorable woman, and that I need have no alarm on your score, because of her virtue. It is as natural for you and the rest of the Light Brigade of professional danglers to offer homage to the Duchess of Septmonts as for me, as one of the Heavy Brigade, to salute the standard-bearer of the battalion of Transatlantic beauties who invade our *salons*. Gallantry forms part of the rights, one may almost say the duties, of the world to which we belong, and if we dropped it suddenly, society would not be worth maintaining. So pay your attentions to the duchess, my dear Guy; you may even condole with her on being linked with a monster; speak a little evil of me, but not too much! I expect the grilling

but not the red pepper too thickly. I warn you that you will only waste your time and pretty sugary speeches, and on the day when some malapert says aloud the jest which I read in our amiable but cynical doctor's eyes, I will teach him that what he considered extraordinary confidence was natural."

Laying his hand on the dandy's shoulder, he proceeded in the same vein of sarcasm and disbelief in man or woman of his circle, "Go to the duchess, Guy, while she stands by herself for an instant. It is the chance. And come you, doctor, whom I should not as soon trust with a pretty woman, and have a cup of tea. It is a present of Prince Gagaroff's sent by his brother, the prince suspected of Nihilism: the powers gave him the benefit of the doubt and instead of investing him with the Order of the Felons' Ball-and-Chain, of Siberia, they made him governor of as heaven-forsaken a spot on the Southeastern frontier where he augments his revenue by winking at smuggling. The tea, you will notice, has all the extra flavor of forbidden things."

During this, Deshaltes had gently edged up to the *distracte* lady of the house, isolated as too often that personage is when she lends herself to a human sentiment. She started slightly as the duke's envoy said in a low voice:

"Excuse me, I was sent by the duke."

"For what reason?"

"Say, for what nonsense. He does not like you to be alone."

"I was not alone, M. Deshaltes; I was with my thoughts."

As she still kept her eyes on the groups in the grounds, she started, for she descried Gerard, who had fled from her, it was clear, but who had surrendered at discretion to his gadflies, for he was the center of a cluster of women. It was too far to watch the play of their features, and the duchess could not guess that these ladies of the "End of our Century" were not putting petty questions in a loving vein but such as sound the good faith of the mining speculation of which he was a strong supporter.

"You tremble," said Guy with some sympathy; "what is the matter?"

"I am too warm," was her heedless reply.

"Why ensconce yourself in the open window then?"

"Because I was so cool," she replied, so little to the point that he shrugged his shoulders with surprise and began to give her more serious attention than the duke believed him capable of.

"The fact is that, since the wood of Boulogne was cut down and the young trees are so feeble, the wind that comes over it is too strong for the true Parisian. You will catch *la grippe*."

"Why should you distress yourself on my behalf?" she inquired with much surprise, and forgetting the vexation which his interruption had caused her in her watch of Gerard.

"Can you ask me *that*?"

He spoke with such profound feeling that she was astonished. It was not hard to remember that he had,

not long ago, declared that he loved her; but then from whom was a married woman to expect the first insulting but almost inevitable addresses but from her husband's dearest friend? The expression, "I love you," has the great advantage of being clear, and yet it is a phrase at once elastic, sonorous, empty, insolent, stupid and useless, according to who utters it.

"I see that you did not credit me," he added, with grave annoyance at the blow to his self-conceit; "but that was why this husband of yours authorized me to say anything to you that I liked, which, it is plain, is never what *you* like."

"He was right," retorted Catherine, having lost sight of Gerard in the swim which had encompassed him like bees on a flake of honeycomb.

"And since you cannot believe in my love, you could not in my friendship? That is another matter, for I am not forbidden to make the test of that."

She sighed, and quickly recovering a sarcastic tone, she added: "I put no faith in either."

"What do you believe in, then?"

"In nothing." With a happy smile as if this negation was a kind of felicity.

"You must have many pains in your loneliness," suggested Guy.

She seemed amused by his being earnest as the Chatelaines must have been when they heard the moral of the merry tale chattered by their jester. Never before had Guy Deshaltes been suspected of anything but the most shallow persiflage.

"Well, yes—I have headaches, sometimes."

"That is not the sort to which I allude; these are heart-aches," said he, searchingly.

"I do not know what you mean; nothing that our old Dr. Ramonin cannot charm away?"

He closed the window, through which the breeze came strong into the lofty room and swelled the silken curtains with Malines lace edging, like the sails of an Oriental galley.

"Are you afraid I shall catch the fashionable complaint?"

"Not exactly that, but you still tremble; it seems to me the first stage of a fever."

"Thanks. Call Dr. Ramonin, that I may revive old acquaintance. He will recommend me some remedy that will cure," under her breath she murmured: "or kill!"

"I am not so sure about the antidote, but," said Guy, with a smile that broadened as he gained in confidence, "but I wager that I know where the mischief is."

And indicating the duke, who was making himself agreeable to some new arrivals in the place of his wife, thus monopolized by his friend, per order, and to M. Mauriceau, still perambulating the gardens with his successor in business, to whom he was showing what eminence a man may reach on bobbins of thread and parcels of dress-goods, if he only accumulates enough.

"He does not love you."

"What follows?" she asked sharply. "Pests like you!"

"It is not the consequence, but a fact; you do not love him."

"It would be a greater misfortune if I did," said she, with another smile of serenity.

"Just so; but the worst of all is that he will squander your wealth."

"That is my father's lookout," she returned contemptuously. "But I took you to be one of my husband's—"

"Harpies? vultures."

"No; friends."

"It is the same thing. But you mistake. I am one of his companions of the dinner-table, the billiard-table and the card-table."

"Knights of the Round Table. And since a man cannot love and be true to both husband and wife, Lancelot takes an option for the disconsolate Guinevere? Too late, my chevalier. You should have presented yourself when I was in the marriage-market. I was so guileless that I would have believed you, and, as you are of as good and ancient a family as the Septmonts, my papa might have given me to you as readily as to him. Perhaps it would have been much the better. You are a traveled gentleman, and having learned that there is nothing lost by being polite to a woman even after she is a wife, you would probably have treated me tenderly, and for that I should have worshiped you."

"Poor woman," thought Guy, who had no doubt on the conduct of his noble friend in the seraglio of conubial life. "You speak the words which are for me



the sailing signal," he said, aloud. "I shall not be one who adds to your troubles. I am going on a tour of the world."

"What heroism," she railed at him. "It is the way of you men to mend a broken heart. A little excursion and you come home well as ever."

"You say that very positively!"

"I know it to have been tried."

Guy set to reflecting, but he only puzzled himself without seizing the clue, and he said: "Do I know the experimentalist?"

"It's another young gentleman," she replied warily.

"One who loved you?"

"He said he did so," but the answer was so low that Guy rather read it by the movement of the pale lips than heard the words.

He came near to asking if she had loved the man, but frank though she had been heretofore, he could not believe he would be clearly informed on what was her concern alone, and he contented himself with inquiring if the adorer dated from before the marriage or after.

"It does not matter!"

"I can 'guess,' as Miss Vanness says, when she conjectures. It was prior to the happy day."

The shot had told, for her color came anew, while her lips, fiery red, muttered, "Have it your own way."

He divined the grounds for her agitation; it was fever, but a fever of the heart; the gallant who had gone afar to calm his hopeless passion had returned, had been seen by the unhappy wife in this motley

gathering in the grounds, nay why not in this same room, for he had noticed the outbreak of her emotion at an early stage?

"I see that you still love him?" he ventured to say.

With a killing smile and a contemptuous curl of the lip she tried to intimate that hatred was a mild name for her changed sentiment. But Guy was sure that no man would scorn this beautiful creature, and he promptly rolled up his battle-flag, like one who saw that the procession was over. But Guy was a good fellow, and a champion of the woman who would never recompense him for his services—for the good reason that such are priceless.

"Whether you love him or hate him now, it is the same thing, if once he had the signal honor of deserving your affection," he politely said. "Shall I go and bring him to you?"

"He has been here, and fled as if I were the pestilence."

"Would you like me to go to him to remain with him, and cheer him up? I am not of the force of Dr. Ramonin in medicine, but I can 'minister to the mind' love-sick. I engage from the knowledge of the case, with the powder of sympathy, as the quacks say."

"Are you capable of doing this?" she said, with animation and her eyes sparkling with hope so that, with her returned color, she was transfigured and the most charming in the apartment.

Deshaltes pressed his hand on his heart to imply that he was capable of any act for her.

"But how about your own flame?" she mischievously protested, joyous once more at having found a confidant, the next best thing to the lover, when the latter is one who must not be avowed. "What is love without jealousy?"

"What is love without devotedness?" retorted Guy, with an earnestness which convinced her that he was sincere.

"Try me," he said as energetically as the proximity of scandal-mongers allowed. "Tell me the truth, and I swear to you that while I cannot cease to love you, I will love you in the manner that will be a reproach to neither of us."

The duchess shook her head sadly.

"And one day," she responded, "before a great while—no one can tell what will happen—am I to take a Lover Number One, from love—Lover Number Two, through spite—and others from the sinful habit acquired? And the friend will expect to be one of these lovers; is it not thus that the guilty course is run? Allow me to tell you that I do not understand anything of these ingenious and tacitly approved-of gallantries which deceive both the husband and the original lover. The day when I am sure that I love—and, above all, that I am beloved—I will belong to my love entirely. I will want to monopolize all the life of the man whom I believe worthy of me. I should give him all my own, and I should depart with him—"

She was interrupted by a sign from the enthralled hearer, surprised by this ebullition of long-pent-up emotion: a footman was drawing too dangerously near.

He was carrying a card on a platter of massive silver, elaborately graven with the armorial bearings of the family which had enlisted his giant figure, and clothed him in its resplendent azure and gold. He bowed as he offered this excuse for his intervention to extricate Guy Deshaltes from a peculiarly embarrassing position, and his mistress, with a languid air, took the pasteboard.

"The lady who sent in this card to your grace," said the lackey, in a grave voice befitting his dignity, "is waiting for the answer in one of the rooms in the lower portion of the mansion."

"What impudence!" ejaculated the duchess with a vehemence which made Deshaltes start, but the magnificent English Goliath winced not in a muscle.

"Who is it?" inquired Guy, marveling.

She tossed him the card scornfully for him to read, not only the name in the peculiar type called "Madisonian," which seemed Gothic to the two French Parisians who scanned it, but some writing on the reverse side in a hand without individuality or a trace of sex as it had been scrawled by a self-feeding needle-pen.

"Miss Vanness?" exclaimed Guy, in as profound amaze as the duchess, but without her aversion. "What a dilemma! what reply are you going to make?"

The duchess strode between him and the statuesque footman with an indignant bearing into the midst of the apartment, and said to M. Deshaltes, in passing him: "My answer will be the one that ought to be given."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AMERICAN GIRL

As if puppets moved by the same wire, all the ladies and gentlemen formed a horseshoe-shaped semicircle before the hostess, who said in a loud, clear voice:

"Can any of you, my friends, oblige me with certain information regarding an American or English lady of the name of Miss Vanness?"

To her amaze it was not one or two replies that came, but many, a mass, an avalanche—for it was plain that there was not one of the coterie who did not know of the person by hearsay, for almost all declared that they had never spoken a word to her. As for the gentlemen, their husbands or the bachelors, they were thoroughly well-informed, but as they were fond admirers of the lady, the sincerity of their accounts might be distrusted. It appeared that Miss Vanness held a kind of open house for the chief lights in the social galaxy of Paris.

"This is a good story," said Deshaltes, "which Bernecourt brings of her from Monaco. Out with it, Bernecourt."

Bernecourt was a dark-eyed, hook-nosed, free-lance-looking youth, who did not require much pressing to relate as follows:

"I was at the last of the public gaming-halls of Europe, merely looking on at the game, not playing —"

"Of course!" exclaimed the chorus, while one or two of the male hearers winked, for the narrator had cleared them out not so long ago at "blind hookey."

"I was giving more attention, I vow, to the players than to the table, when I suddenly saw a remarkable figure standing and imitating me, with a smile of which I am not poet enough to describe the singular fascination."

"Cut that!" interposed Deshaltes, who was sure that eulogy of another woman was not what the ladies were expecting.

"She was attired in a *flamme-de-ponche* silk with a gorgeous necklace and ear-pendants of amethysts which made the jewel-appraisers' mouths water. Tall and slender, her lovely head emerging from a Medici collar, reminded me of the picture in a Milan gallery where the artist has portrayed Satan tempting Eve, as an upright serpent having a human and feminine head. Her long, snaky fingers were cringing up bank-notes, and both hands insinuated themselves among the heads and other hands with a grace which seemed to deserve the pre-eminence they assumed. While others were rebuffed or repelled, she continued to put down fresh stakes and collect her takings without being impeded.

"I heard an American at my elbow, who was contemplating her with pride that she was his fellow-countrywoman, say in allusion to her perseverance in elbowing others aside, that it took 'that kind of girl

to get there'—meaning to arrive at her destination. She played the highest limit, the maximum, at every go. It seemed to me that, young though she was, rather girl than woman, she was seeking for an emotion which would not come. I reckon that she lost upward of eighty thousand francs before she turned away to go, saying, as if it were the dropping of a paltry score of gold-picees, 'I am down on my luck to-day?' From such fine and delicately chiseled lips, I assure you that the slang expression was altogether out of place. To tell *you* the truth—for I do not see my sister present—I dropped into the rooms next day, more to see this startling creature than the roulette. She came indeed, but to win an even hundred thousand francs, which she looked down upon with as little loss of self-control as on the previous occasion. "It is luck coming my way again," she remarked, in the same unruffled tone, partly fevered and partly frigid, which gave the hearer the sensation of eating a Japanese hot ice-pudding.

"Pushing the heap of notes and coin toward the inspector, she said: 'Be so good, Monsieur, as to send me this pile in the morning.' Whereupon, taking one of her arms plentifully offered her, she sailed out of the rooms, dazzling the most brilliant women like a star fallen in a woman's shape. I knew her escort of cavaliers—all leaders of fashion, and—and I obtained a presentation to her. Since then, I have called on her in town, and find her the same elegant beauty, devoid of emotion, and surrounded five deep by ardent courtiers.'

"A chapter of a modern novel to be entitled "The

Arch-Adventuress," sneered Madame d' Hermelines, "it is clear enough where the money won at gaming comes from, but it is not on the gains from baccarat that a palatial establishment can be kept up in Paris, where you men are peers of the professional card-sharpers, who are driven—poor fellows! to take refuge on the Atlantic steamers. But where does that come from which she loses so lightly?"

"My dears," broke in another dame of vast expanse, on whom a trimming of moonlight beads radiated like a Circassian coat of mail, "I saw her at the opening of the Delirante Theater; she had such 'rivers' of diamonds inundating her somewhat thin shoulders that she seemed a second electrolier."

"And attracts as many butterflies!" said Madame d' Hermelines.

"From what source do these rivers flow?" inquired Madame Calmeron, who was ponderous of physique and tried to make up for the effect by a forced sprightliness. "Did she invent a new Complexion Wafer or a Sanspareille Liquor?"

"My dears," remarked another kind soul, "the revenue of a quack medicine trust would not suffice for the display she made among the American Colony at the first night of Bassinet's fiasco, the opera of 'Prince Pharimonde'—M. Deshaltes christened the row the halo of halos; for these daring Republicans vied with one another in wearing coronets—nay, crowns picked up from the brokers who have been at the sales of extinguished princely families. Madame M' Crokay and her lovely daughter who married something Roman, the



amateur reportress for the 'Yankee Envoy,' Von Bellowitz of the 'Londoner,' they were all thrown into the background by the veritable blaze of Miss Vanness. Between ourselves, it's rather severe on the lady representatives of the Democracy of America that they shine in diamonds on a demi-toilette occasion like British peeresses at the Queen's own drawing-room!"

In the laughter which resounded, a little man in black with the green ribbon of some Turkish order at his button-hole was seen trying to obtain an audience. It was Madame Calmeron's husband, the legalized appendage of the last speaker.

"Say a good word for the target, Calmeron," observed Guy.

"It will excuse my wife saying a bitter thing for the pleasure of being cutting. It is not to advertise my house that I am compelled in justice to my client to say that we have received over two millions of francs for the account of Miss Vanness this year." He slyly paused to give the ladies time to turn over this morsel and continued, "not to mention a similar sum which she already honored us with the deposit of, and I have no doubt that the Bank of France would honor her drafts to at least the like amount."

Calmeron did not often make a hit, but when a banker of his solid position does speak it carries weight by its subject which a wit would like to secure by his finest shaft.

"I do not keep our books," observed Madame Calmeron, a little hurt, for after all selling and buying

gold is a trade, and the aristocratic element was in the upper hand around her; "so, perhaps, we may look to you for a hint from what quarter this tremendous income comes?"

"From the Golden States."

"Proprietress of a mine, like the M'Crokays?"

"The gentleman who sends it on owns a gold mine, among other things," proceeded Calmeron, swelling in importance at holding an auditory enthralled for once in a drawing-room as he would a meeting of shareholders to whom he read a company's report. Mr. Madison Clarkson is a living example of the opportunities and recompenses of life in the Transatlantic Republic; he was a river-fisherman's boy, a raftsman, a sawmill proprietor, the owner of a whole region of forests where a fire overrunning a hundred acres is no more than a cigar-light, a gold miner, a fleet-builder, a politician whom the President consults to choose for the foreign ministers, a philanthropist who endows hospitals and academies like a European State—in short, he is a potentate whose steward has to keep maps of his lands as a Lord-lieutenant of the district over which he rules. He is the most tirelessly enterprising, richest and honorable man in his wide country."

"And this most honorable man is her father?"

"Oh, no; on the last happy occasion of my dining with Miss Vanness—"

"What!" shrieked the ladies with one accord.

"With Madame Calmeron, too?"

She indignantly protested that her husband solely

was invited. "And very wise of her, for I should not have dreamt of going."

"The young lady acquainted me with the relations of my chief client and the famous Mr. Clarkson. He was her husband."

"Her husband!" a cry in which even the least perturbable of the gentlemen joined.

"A married woman—under her maiden name—not even a grass-widow! she has a real husband, then," said Madame d'Hermelines; "how very, very naughty it was of some one who said she was never seen with any husbands but ours!"

"Stop, stop," interrupted Calmeron.

"Let him explain," pleaded Deshaltes. "What extraordinary creatures you are! you always blame us for speaking evil of women and yet when Calmeron is going to speak well of one, dash me if you will listen to him! Go on, Calmeron—you make Miss Vanness more of an enigma than ever—a wife who is no wife."

"If we were as familiar with divorce as the Americans of the newer and more progressive States, you would surmise the paradox. Miss Vanness, who was lawfully Mrs. Clarkson, became as lawfully Miss Vanness again by procuring a divorce from our man of enterprise. He sends her funds, not in the quality of ex-husband, but as agent for her and part-proprietor of her bonanza farm, immense sheep-ranch, metaliferous mountains, and all that."

"That is different," said the duchess; "but still, a woman in this anomalous state can hardly expect that men should call on her with their wives—"

"That is not it—she will not allow any callers but our sex," said Dr. Ramonin, coming from a useless search for Gerard, who had disappeared as if the modern residence of the duke was honeycombed with pitfalls and dungeons like the castle of his mediæval ancestors.

"Only men?" exclaimed Madame d'Hermelines; "in that case, let us drop the subject. Her house is not a dwelling, but a house-of-call for men about town."

"A man-trap!" added Madame Calmeron, who was not going soon to forgive a woman for having so much idle cash at a banker's as Miss Vanness, or her husband, or going to dine at her table. "What did she bait it with to catch our Cato of a doctor?"

"I will tell you all," replied Ramonin with a twinkling eye which to those who knew him promised some fun in store. "In the first place, by virtue—"

"By virtue?" echoed Deshaltes. "You forget that you are speaking among those whom you have known from their birth!"

"By virtue of my profession," continued the fashionable Galen tranquilly, "and my right as an observer to go everywhere and see everything, I called on Miss Vanness. You, ladies, would not know, and you, gentlemen, do not care—but it is a sad fact that the State is a niggard in its treatment of its laboratories. It is not any of you who will imitate the generosity of those Mr. Clarksons who think no more of giving a city a library, or a university a gigantic telescope, than you of presenting your winning jockey with the official stakes after a race. One day I was in despair, and in

my bitterness 'inspired' an article in a newspaper, painting our distress; the young gentleman whom you have noticed coming here with me and who was then exploring an untrodden tract of New Mexico, had sent to my department some medicinal herbs of which the natives and the old Spanish historians said wonders. A contribution of inestimable value for European therapeutics, for the universe was drying up and crumbling away for want of a few pieces of silver. Only the next day, I received a letter from Miss Vanness who had read the article. She expressed herself happy for the opportunity to repay in some measure the hospitality which she owed to France—"

"To the men of France," interrupted Madame Calmeron, nodding her Junoesque front toward her mite of a husband.

"She begged permission to offer ten thousand francs for our experiments. Naturally I went, as the professorial head, to thank the generous donatrix, whom I found to be gracious, and more than even as highly informed as the generality of her sex in her country. It soon came out that, merely to understand physiology and to be of utility to her sisters, she had walked the wards of a hospital. It was therefore a colleague whom I took dinner with, for she asked me to stay, and M. Calmeron will remember that we tasted, for the first time, some California wine, which, upon my reputation as an epicure, might compare favorably with our foremost vintages."

"M. Calmeron is not likely to forget it," said the banker's wife, with a smile which would turn the sweetest *cru* into vinegar.

"And are you not going to sound her praises, too," asked the duchess, awakening from the reverie into which the mention of Gerard's name had thrown her.

I have not a word to say because, though honored with an invitation, I never acted upon it."

"Afraid that she is a Circe who, not content with bewitching all men, tests on them at her table the New Mexican herbs which may not be so beneficial as the native historians and Spanish pretend?" said Madame d' Hermelines, spitefully.

"To sum up, then," said the hostess, putting on the mock air of a judge, "we have before us simply an adventuress who has more self-government, more audacity, more luck and more substantial wealth than her predecessors. She has traveled widely, and every stage of her progress has been marked with some scandal or a tragedy printed with the blood of her dupe or her victim. You say this divorce of hers was entangled with a mystery about two brothers who fought a fatal duel for her hand. You named the great Russian noble who perished in the opera-house which he built at Bucharest for her to appear, if for one night only, in an opera of his composition. You say that the famous diplomatist Malandraz blew out his brains because he had imparted to her the secret of the rifle which renders his country formidable even to Germany itself. Now," she resumed, glowing and gathering strength for her denunciation, "let her receive Socrates and win Pericles for a husband, like Aspasia, who seems to be the model of these Lady-wranglers who want to revolutionize society where the

blue-stocking was allowed only on sufferance mixed with derision; let her offer her riches to rebuild a new Jerusalem or Thebes, as Phryne did; let her captivate a king like her countrywoman, Lola, the dancer—for it hardly becomes us to boast when we have immortalized Ninon de l'Enclos and Dubarry—but, with these conditions, she must keep her Liberty Hall, 'for men alone,' for there cannot be anywhere in the world a woman who would consent to receive her."

"You will pardon me," interrupted Guy Deshaltes, "but you are mistaken in your conclusion from not understanding this new kind of being. I have met them in their own country—for their imitators in England and in Russia depart widely from the originals. This woman would not attempt to play the tyrant over her sex if ours did not refuse to let her be our ally and our companion. Either we or she must hold the whip while the other drives, or in the contest on the box the car of society will be upset and both be trampled under the hoofs of the flying horses. These women who are uplifted by their surpassing beauty are always enveloped by fiction with a throng of vague stories. Despite the fierce golden light upon them, no one can vaunt that he has seen the core. It is asserted that she caused a duel in one place and a suicide in another. Is it true, or not? Who can tell? She herself may not be certain in the matter. That men should ruin themselves to smother them in the first fruits and the finest flowers, it is possible; fools and their money were made to part, that fashionable tradesmen should retire every few years. That she

would stoop to pick up the flowers, I beg to doubt—she has dependants hired to do that. Everybody loves them, however odd they are, and treats them with respect, for they wrest respect from the cynic himself. For all I know they may step through stain and flood without being soiled. They represent woman almighty and triumphant, soaring over sordid realities, giving a fresh zest to the life of amusement, and allowing nobody the right to say that they conquered them on a given day. We men adore her, while you women hate her because of her power and fascination being in such a superlative degree. When she is Emma Lady Hamilton, the hero Nelson is her slave and the Queen of Naples her footstool. You spin around and think that you are revolving independently of her. Make no mistake! she is the pivot of society."

"Bravo, my dear Deshaltes!"

It was the duke who walked into the room which had the aspect of a hall of debate where a fiery orator dumfounds the other speakers.

"I do not know what the subject is, but I am sure that it is one worthy of the Muses since it has warned you, so reserved and icy, into an eloquence of which the Count de Mun would not be ashamed."

"One moment," interposed the duchess, confronting her husband with a steadiness of nerve which staggered him. It is more than ever evident that we are combating with no common foe. Monsieur, it is necessary that you should know how this person whom you champion so earnestly without knowing who it



is, and whom you may champion still more warmly when you hear her name—how she makes advances to enter the society which only have the garrison, gone out to fraternize with her beyond the walls. I have here the visiting card of Miss Vanness, on the back of which she has favored me with these lines: And disdainingly to read a second time, she held out the card by the tips of her finger and thumb as one might exhibit a curious venomous flower, and with bewilderment showing on his usually well-guarded face he repeated in a low but audible voice:

“Miss Vanness solicits of Madame the Duchess des Septmonts the honor of being received by her grace this evening of the fete day, and to take a cup of tea with the friends whom she admits into her intimacy. As Miss Vanness is a stranger to the Duchess des Septmonts, she desires to pay fifty thousand francs for this cup of tea, for those unhappy people for whom the fete was organized.”

“What are you going to answer, dear one?” inquired the duke, who had recovered his equanimity and seemed to be asking about a mendicant at the door.

“Monsieur, until you espoused her cause, I thought that such *intrigantes* should be kept in their eccentric orbit, never long intervolved with ours and only so at long intervals. Perhaps she disdains to be a duchess and, like the citizens of ancient Rome, is proud to be one of the Republic, pure and simple. On the day when she joins our cohort, she must suffer our discipline, wear our uniform, rise and march as we do; then she would abdicate her power and her attrac-

tion, which rest in her oddity. If the rattlesnakes of her forests attacked man in clusters, he would exterminate them; it is because they dwell isolated that they are the more deadly and the more successful where they fascinate. She crushes us women of the upper classes, because we never know with what weapon to contend with her—with what counter-bane to meet her sting. The only means to overcome her is to have her in the same pit, whence escape to the defeated is not possible, and there unmask her—slay her and grind her head under foot." The gentle duchess uttered the programme with an energy which thrilled all hearers, and Dr. Ramonin was delighted over the transformation in the creature whose life was partly due to his skill. "This is mere soundings of the trumpet," said Septmonts impatiently. "To the end: how will you answer?"

"In these terms, now," rejoined the lady, touching the spring of a dainty Davenport, of which the pearl inlaid lid magically opened in halves and formed a writing slab, on which lay ready for use all requisites. And she wrote with a diamond-tipped gold pen dipped in a deep black ink, on thick, plain white paper, which the vulgar would not have expected to see at the disposal of a duchess, the following words. The duke alone was privileged to read them over his wife's shoulder, but she recited them aloud in a measured voice as she traced them so that not one was lost to the farthest ear of the interested company.

"The Duchess des Septmonts will receive this evening Miss Vanness and will offer a cup of tea, provid-

ing that a gentleman can be found among the relatives or friends of the Duchess des Septmonts, who will take Miss Vanness into her presence on his arm. In the other event, it will be the Duchess des Septmonts who will put fifty thousand francs into the fund of the charity, in order that the poor shall not be losers."

The silence was complete and oppressive which the duchess broke by saying:

"Now, gentlemen, after what you think and have said of this lady, is there one among you who will consent to offer his arm—for thus I will receive her."

The silence began again. Certainly, it was a trying moment for Ramonin, Calmerin and the duke, to specify no others. The pause was growing onerous—painful, when Septmonts, shrugging his shoulders a little with the last of his fit of embarrassment, stepped into the breach.

"I was only waiting to leave one of your guests the pleasure, and the honor,"—he subjoined, on fancying that some one tittered, "of presenting Miss Vanness to you, madame."

He was interrupted by the abrupt entrance of Mauriceau. Having heard with dismay that the American had invaded his daughter's home, he rushed as it were to defend her, and the silence in the reception-room had deceived him into believing that he should find her alone. Under any circumstance, his look of surprise would have drawn a laugh, but the spectators of this scene in the bosom of the aristocratic family, even the most frivolous, presaged a tragedy impending."

'Good," said the duke, "you arrive in the very nick

of time. I see you are aware of who is standing at our doorway? you do? good again! I am only in wonder that you had not offered your escort and brought the waiting one with you. For," he said wickedly, "I made the acquaintance of yourself at Miss Vanness'."

The ladies glanced at one another and bit their lips, for it was nobody's secret that the American had brought about the union of the duke with the silk-merchant's daughter.

"But this is delicate ground and I feel that it is I who must rush in where foo--angels fear to tread! I do not believe in the figments which are perhaps re-echoed by you all, even those whom Miss Vanness honors with her trust and friendship. I hold her to be a person worthy of our society. As, under the circumstance which gathers us together, she has taken a step which is a proof of good taste and generosity—as in short, my dear wife, you stipulate that the privilege of entering into your circle depends on the arm of one of your friends or your kinsfolk—your nearest relative, your father, appearing to abstain—why, it is I, your best friend, I believe, who must carry out the programme."

The duke was really going too far; while his wife clinched her hands and closed her lips till they were blanched, and Guy Deshaltes begged the speaker to revoke his announcement, Mauriceau stood the image of perplexity.

"When I set about anything, I know what I am doing," said the duke emphatically, and frowning.

Ramonin and the other gentlemen stood aside, while their wives and the other ladies flocked to the duchess, whom they expected to see faint at the crisis. She was made of other metal, and it was wrath which had the upper hand in her agitated bosom. M. and Madame Calmeron prudently proceeded toward the door by which Septmonts was making an exit, as is said theatrically, not unworthy of a tragedian, when it was thrown open and the footman who stood at its side, thundered from having been upset in his nervous system by the puzzling inroad:

“Miss Vanness!”

“Be calm and collected,” whispered the marchioness in a tremulous voice.

“Was ever such audacity!” ejaculated Madame d’Hermelines, aghast.

Septmonts was nearest the door. He was, therefore, the first to see that Miss Vanness had not taken the liberty of coming up alone. But he was stupefied to see on whose arm she was lightly leaning, as she advanced with the light carriage of a princess to whom all the world had rendered homage since she first trod the flower-strewn path.

It was Lucien Gerard.

He had at last reached the threshold and was going away, perhaps never to cross it more when he had caught sight of Miss Vanness whom impatience on the result of her novel bid for introduction had driven into the passage from the waiting-room where she had been sequestered. In a moment he was informed of her predicament, for which she had herself to blame.

He offered the arm of which she stood so sorely in need and escorted her to the portals where the duke appeared too late.

"I have the favor to present Miss Vanness," said Gerard in a voice forcible without being strained, so that the melody of it was some alleviation of his bold step, as only the welcome guest of the hour. "When I was on the threshold of life and without a helping hand she risked all to lead me back from death opening its arms to clutch me, and it would be shame on me if I refused or even hesitated not to accompany her whither my guard, it appears, would remove all barriers. Madame," he continued to the duchess, "here is one who has so many praiseworthy qualities that I hope they will blot out the demerit that they obtained a no more distinguished friend of yours to be her guarantee."

No doubt the duchess had neither eyes nor ears for another than the speaker. But it was not so with her guests. Well-bred though they had the pretensions to be, they displayed the simple curiosity of children before the cage of a grizzly bear. They devoured the lady with their eyes. But there was this to be said in their excuse that Miss Vanness was the incarnate despotism of woman, with a charm which would have won in any circle the name of the "Fascinatrice."

That year, yellow was the rage, and she had attired herself in a walking costume of shades of that trying color with a subtle art which was a living lesson in the play of the gamut which one hue may possess. From the Henri Deux toque of amber Genoa



"I have the favor to present Miss Vanness."—(p. 82.)





velvet to the tip of the buff morocco shoe, she exhibited that novel style of apparel which is English for a suggestion of wear, and Parisian for its refined fantasy. Reina was tall, or seemed so from not being robust; her countenance, too, was rather longer than a strict oval, but the nose had not a sharpness nor any suspicious curve; contrary to most of her race, she had not only a full set of teeth but not a glint of dental gold showed in any interstice of faultless pearls. The mouth had too much resolution to please a European man of the towns, and her eyes were too defiantly bright and too prone to fasten on the person she addressed, to concord with ideas derived from conversation with convent-educated girls.

Here she stood in the midst of the titled dames, but she was an element which, as Dr. Ramonin would say, would never coalesce. She had apparently won her footing, if not the game; but no; to have been introduced by the duke might have fixed her position. Gerard's gallant act in repaying her hospitality to a foreigner, was natural—was the correct thing, but not enough.

Though superb, grand and adorable, she was still an *outcaste* Pariah, though by her own fault. In the States, she had unsexed herself by assuming the masculine coat in order to move with freedom among men; and here, in the walking costume of the latest fashion, a little modified by her suggestions, she was mannish. Her bearing was too combative; her glance sought an antagonist, not a friend; she seemed to have entered on a mission—to accomplish some feat,

perhaps desperate, and then retire still dazzling, like those fay queens of the stage with whom the electric beam vanishes with their exit.

She quitted the arm which had supported her, without even the slightest nod of thankfulness, and taking a step toward the duchess, she spoke in a firm voice as though she divined that she had carried the bar away with this onset.

Did she know that it was the escort whom she did not value correctly, whose presence checked the anger with which the hostess was consumed?

"Madame," she said in excellent French and aided by the nasal twang which alone lessened the witchery of a suave and insinuating voice, "no one could be more touched than I by your forgiving my anticipating the agreeable reply to my request—"

"Certainly," said the duke, fretting at the action of Gerard having pushed him into the second place in this scene.

"I had relied on the duke presenting me exceptionally to your grace; but the person matters not, as long as I shall be able to do a little good under your patronage."

The footman who had admitted her, stood at the door, holding up the Aubusson tapestry, not a little curious to see the upshot for the relation to make him a hero in the servants' hall. His mistress lifted her hand for his attention and said in a voice which she vainly strove to keep clear and steady: "Another cup!"

As she crossed the large room toward the tea-

table, the footman with long and measured strides reached it on a shorter line before her. She poured out the tea with her own hand, having only to depress the urn which swung over a spirit lamp, and while she was doing this, the enforced guest saluted the gentleman familiarly as among old friends, without as much as even noticing the ladies, as if they had been carved images. The eyes of the duke and of Gerard avoided hers, simply because they were fixed, like duelists' examining each other before the swords were handed them for the conflict.

"How do you do, M. de Bernecourt," she said sweetly; "I am expecting to see you soon, for I am going to have a house-warming of the residence of the late Mlle. Schweiner, of whose executors I have made the purchase—"

This made the ladies' eyes open more widely, for the comic opera diva's "bonbonnière" was quoted at a price at which even a Mauriceau would balk.

"I rely on your being on my visitors' list under the new roof-tree—and M. de Hermelines as well."

Oh, the savage looks the wives gave the implacable speaker as she poured hot shot into the unfortunate husbands, under the forts—their wives—which her boldness silenced. In truth, they feared that, at the next minute, she would have the coolness to invite them.

Was ever a cup of tea so long preparing? if the duchess were dosing it with poison, she could not have taken longer.

At last, it was ready, and rescinding her intention

to employ the lackey, she handed it to the intruder to have the gratification of self-conceit in not shrinking from matching herself with her, face to face. Was she not doubly a rival since she had coaxed Lucien into espousing her cause? She was glad now that, before his sight, she could bear the comparison with this parvenue who dared to measure herself with the peeresses of the Old Country. It is true that Catherine was a duchess of yesterday's creation, but duchess she was, and at least this designing woman could not take away her title in taking the duke's stray hours.

"Thank you, madame," said Reina, sipping at ease. Then seeing Ramonin who was trying to glide between the duke and Gerard and also cut him off from contact with Mauriceau, she called out: "Oh, is he your medical adviser too? Good afternoon, M. Deshaltes," she continued in the same tone, perhaps because the silence would have been complete unless she spoke; "I have been warned that you sometimes malign me. I regret it all the more as you have been in America, and you ought to have learnt that it pays best to treat all women with sugary delicacies. If ever you change your erroneous opinion of me, I shall be most happy to receive you and make you welcome among friends. I am delighted to see you at home, M. Mauriceau! I must compliment you on having such a pretty child of a daughter—I mean that, beside you, she seems youth itself; and I am very happy," she went on, trying to ensnare Gerard with a tigerish glance of appeased fury, that I conduced to her

elevation—although neither of you seem to bear it long in mind. I am habituated to being carped at, but not to making no impression. I must try next time we meet to do that which will prevent you forgetting me."

With a trembling hand, Mauriceau took the cup which she had leisurely drained and passed it to the footman. Then as leisurely, she took out her tablets, on one leaf of which she wrote a line or two which she showed to Calmeron who nodded; she left it on the table for the duchess, who would not approach to take it.

"For the poor!" she said.

No one breathed a word; no one stirred, not even Gerard, who had received a reproachful glance from the duchess. To delay was to spoil the effect which she had brought, of a loaded shell in a cartridge factory. She chose for her road to the outlet a line that would bring her near the hostess.

"It would make me most happy, madame, if you would return my call," she said so that all could hear, but, in an undertone meant and received by her own ear alone, she added caustically: "we will talk about our mutual friend, Lucien Gerard, whom I love perhaps as much as you, although he will perhaps never love me as much as you."

All that the others heard was her "Good-bye!" spoken in the tone of one who expected it not to be a farewell.

If Gerard had the intention of again baffling the duke—designedly, this time—by offering his arm, he

was not quick enough. As the duke took the American lady down the grand stairway, he whispered: "Will you not for the future believe that I love you?"

"Anybody can love, my dear fellow," she replied; "but everybody cannot win a woman's love."

Scarcely had the two left the room before the duchess aroused herself from the stupefaction of terror into which Miss Vanness' parting shot had plunged her and suddenly seizing the cup from which she had drunk, she smashed it on the floor, saying to the footman, who jumped as though a bombshell had exploded between his rounded calves: "Throw all the doors open! after that visitor, no one is too vile to enter here."

"My child—my dear child," stammered Mauriceau, but she repulsed him and walked out automatically by the door which led to her own rooms.

"Oh, Charity," said Dr. Ramonin, taking Gerard out in the midst of the crush of all eager to depart, "what cruelties are perpetrated in thy name."

## CHAPTER V

WHY, WITH SO MUCH LOVE ABOUT, ARE THERE UNHAPPY MARRIAGES?

Paris is not a city into which people come by pure chance, and for that matter, there is no such a thing as chance, which is a god solely for the ignorant.

On the day after the incident at the duke's where his wife had borne herself to the approval of Gerard, for he naturally thought all she did well done excepting her falsity to him, and of the Marchioness de Rumières, a better judge of aristocratic bearing, Dr. Ramonin called at Septmonts' house. Lucien could hardly take this step, and the doctor felt bound to ascertain for the comfort of his young friend what was the effect on the principal actors. But his call looked like labor lost, as the duke, after conducting Miss Vanness to her carriage, with a parade of being favored to cavalier her, went straight off to his club, where he played cards till two or three in the morning. According to his lights, he ought not to disturb his lady, although, it is said, married couples prefer the "wee, small hours" for arranging their differences raised during the day; it is the favored time of philosophers, anyway, so that they are not an exception. The duke was therefore asleep in his own apartments, or if

risen, grumbling over his toilet to dissipate the last of his vexation.

He admitted that the American girl had been somewhat overbold, but he was ready to tell all comers that the duchess had met the inroad with too much impoliteness. When a person sets up as the patroness of a charitable institution and, more than all, when she holds the benevolent picnic in her own gardens, there are some acts which she ought to learn how to do, if she is not capable of divining them on the spur of the moment. Miss Vanness was a foreigner, and in that capacity, might be allowed to be quaint, original and eccentric. This right had often been accorded to other exotics too often for anyone to be nice about giving her a loose rein.

Her whim for offering an enormous sum for a cup of tea was a queenly one, and the duke thought that his wife ought to have received her cordially, as by duty bound, made her the best courtesy and let her have the tea. At that price, she might have thrown a cake into the bargain. Most of the ladies standing by would have acted that way—receiving her kindly and pocketing the fifty thousand francs, which would have been the end of the matter—at least to those who do not know that the Miss Vannesses rarely take up the end of a thread without unrolling all of it off the spool. The duchess, whether to avoid him or not while his wrath was warm, had gone out to early church.

“I will await her return,” said the doctor, installing himself with the ease of a celibate, which is an-



other name for the sybarite, in the reception-room where Miss Vanness had passed a quarter of an hour in tribulation and where testimony of her stay was manifest to his nerves by the unfading scent of her favorite perfume, made uniquely for her.

The worthy doctor had a great deal to ponder over.

From the time when he caught a suspicion that the wedding of Catherine Mauriceau and the Duke Maximin had been no ordinary occurrence but one due to the far-sighted machination of Reina Vanness, his sympathies, already enlisted on behalf of Lucien, urged him to check the continuance of the unhappiness of the parted lovers and, by bringing them into the union which never ought to have been deferred, thwart the astute rival.

He had no better opinion of the duke than the rest of the world. When he captured the daughter of the "Three Sultanas," as the heiress was nicknamed, the alliance was considered a lowering of the crest of the Septmonts, but on a little reflection, it was seen that it was not so very "risky," outside the St. Denis district, where the trading classes abound and where a nobleman is still an object of worship as a figure of no ordinary clay, although he might be ruined and his reputation blemished, nobody would have let him have a daughter. Any hackney-coach driver could have told Mauriceau where the descendant of the Crusaders passed too many nights, and any sheriff's officer could have fully informed him on the ducal finances. If the girl's mother had been alive, a woman of intelligence, irreproachable morals and loftiness of soul, the

sacrifice would not have been consummated. She would have counterbalanced the arts of Miss Vanness when she seduced Mauriceau into becoming an instrument of her vengeance. What a vengeance, too! Ramonin thought of it with shuddering. He was horrified with the picture of that girl learning all about the love of Gerard, from being at his pillow as his nurse while he raved in delirium, and then speeding across the ocean to allure Mauriceau into giving his child to the spendthrift and "used-up" peer, so that a barrier that was insurmountable would be reared between the parted hearts.

Catherine had not been infected with her father's vulgar ideas of rank, and she saw that her class had the advantage of the superior ones in being able to marry according to inclination. But she did not understand men, or that Gerard had a capital in his honor, his strength of will, his working power, and his intelligence. She took his departure to the wilds as a desertion. She did not believe that the great fortunes discovered in the West are not the conclusion of fairy tales. She doubted she should ever see him again, and unable to comprehend why her lover did not overthrow everything in order to win her, she sank into despondency with Lucien far away. Old Mauriceau profited by this dullness to break her in for the fulfillment of Miss Vanness' project, and Catherine, saying that "if I am doomed to be unhappy, it may as well be under a ducal coronet as the storekeeper's wife's bonnet," became a duchess—and remained certainly as unhappy as before.

Dr. Ramonin had no doubt that the two young people were intended for one another, since their affection was unmistakable. He concluded that their union would yet take place. The obstacle—the duke—did not trouble him more than a chess-player is worried about a pawn which he sees is too far from the lines of the problem to affect the issue. At a fit period, he would disappear by the intervention of the gods, as the ancients use<sup>d</sup> to believe. It is true Septimonts was alive, able to draw checks on the bank where the father-in-law had deposited the inducement for this match, and with the human form, he acted like human beings, but the doctor knew it was only a sham. To his scientific eye, Septimonts was merely a *vibrion*. Any reader of the doctor's articles on this subject, which had its day of public attention, knew what a vibrion was. This is the name given to the vegetation springing from the partial corruption of bodies, visible by the microscope and long mistaken for animals on account of a slight undulatory action peculiar to them. Their office is to move about to corrupt, dissolve and destroy the healthy parts of the bodies where they reside. They are the work-people of Death. Society is a body, too, which decomposes in some parts, at certain eras, and vibrions of human likeness then appear; they are not men or women, however closely they resemble them, and they proceed unconsciously to spoil, separate and destroy the rest of the social body. It would be all over with us, according to the good doctor, if nature did not further life and was not opposed to its foe. Death is one of

her methods—life is her aim. Hence nature resists these elements of destruction, and hurls back upon them the morbid principles which they contain. Some night when the vibrion has taken a drop too much, he blunders through the door of the elevator, which it assumes to be the room exit, and smashes what serves as his head on the ground floor. Or, if the cards ruin him, or his Miss Vibriona deceives him, he fires a pistol-ball into what he flatters himself is a heart, or he runs up against a real man, who is so much stronger than himself that he is crushed like a nit. Men who have thoughts on their mind, see in this annihilation merely an item of news—students like Ramonin see it is the operation of a law.

He had reached this stage of his meditations while the massy footman hovered around him, knowing who he was and hesitating to try to obtain a prescription for the asking, for the epidemic of influenza, which, alas! had not spared the gentlemen of the gentlemen, when Madame Rumières came in to give a turn to the musings of both.

The marchioness was seeking the earliest news of the duchess. It was not sheer love of scandal, but sincere friendship for the new recruit to her exclusive army. Catherine was so gentle when not roused, so modest and so winning, that the marchioness had gradually given her special notice which from regard became friendship.

How are we this morning, doctor?" she exclaimed, offering her hand in a Suède glove artistically wrinkled; "I was delighted with the incident we witnessed

last evening. Our little Cit.'s daughter has won her spurs. I do not say that our little rascally duke came off so badly, for his offering to hand in that American girl had an air of chivalry to cover his impertinence. The creature herself cut the best figure. Where do they acquire the trick of tone and carriage? There must be a special training school for these witches of the backwoods who snatch all the prizes of the matrimonial arena from under our daughter's hands. Ha, ha, ha! was not the banker rich, that Calmeron, who had dined with us and acknowledged the draft of that splendid intruder, while chuckling over his discount for cashing it! Our society is getting to be a pretty Tutti-frutti, in which bitter oranges abound. But our duchess was enlivening—the smashed china, like the finish to an act of drama, the order given for the mob to be let in since she could no longer be particular when a Miss Vannessa had the *entrée*—my husband said that he would have given his mustaches—all that is dear to him in this world—to have been a looker-on."

"Miss Vanness—not Vannessa, who is a character in the history of authors, I believe—is not an ordinary woman, and her insolence is based on her right or her force of mind."

"Where did my pet pick up her lofty style—not in the convent school?"

"It came to her naturally when she was stormed in her castle before those whom she esteemed, standing passively by and the pilot of the invader the very person whom she hoped to be her truest defender."

"Oh, that young M. Jeremiah—"

"Gerard. He is my friend—my protégé, as the duchess is yours. It is only natural that an old Coelebs like me should adopt a son, while you have a family—"

"A family? you ought to know that my daughter has made me a grandmother!" returned the marchioness with a droll wry face. "She snubbed me the other day when I had the impudence to make some suggestions on the proper management of the nursery. I paid her out, though, shortly after, when the baby picked up a gray hair and said it was mine. Nay, my darling, I said, it must be your mamma's! As for my son, he is given to confiding his heart troubles to me, much after the manner of his father. He will soon be building a nest of his own, and flying away."

"What on earth did you marry for?" queried the doctor, amused.

"Because I thought I loved M. de Rumières; but it was more the wish to be loved than any desire to love, for I believe that we women do not love—the whole thing is that we want certain men to adore us. That makes us believe that we love; but as soon as the love has been inspired and the triumph obtained, it is seldom that we think of anything else. The goal which I have attained is not the seventh heaven which at sixteen I imagined it, but I help those to reach it who interest me. I am like the subscribers to the Opera season, who know all the pieces in the repertoire by heart, and can listen to some of the stock morceaux with gusto, while we encourage the young

ladies to go through the series. I am eager to carry the duchess farther than the piece where the lovers are divided—I should revive both Romeo and Juliet, and let them sit many a time and oft in the balcony, but a baby or two should play at their feet while Romeo lolls on the rail to which his silken ladder swung, and smokes his cigar—puff, puff to the lullaby of Juliet rocking the cradle.”

“You are as good a woman as any who never wore a marchioness pearl and ermine crown,” exclaimed the doctor, not ill-pleased to meet a colleague in the plan which he conceived.

And, since the coast remained clear—the duke not coming down and the duchess not coming in—he acquainted the lady with the story of the love of Gerard and Catherine, checked by the ambition of Mauriceau and a stronger block clamped across their path, thanks to the infernal prevision of Miss Vanness.

“Why it is a demon,” said Madame de Rumières trembling as much with a kind of terror as with resentment. “She is as rare a bird as your young man who loves platonically in a land where the word is without sense. He looked like a fine, manly fellow. My son is thought a credit to the army, but upon my word your engineer could eat him like a radish. Tell me, is there something in the air of America which gives the appetite by which one can devour space and enemies? All is clear to me, now. But for this intermediary, who hoodwinked our stupid Mauriceau, poor Catherine would have made a suitable match and they would be so happy. I do not mean that I would

give my daughter to him; it is all very well for a Duval to marry a Durand, of course, but I have always been taught, and I shall always teach, that it is unconditionally forbidden to unite the daughter of a noble house with a commoner, however handsome and celebrated he may be. Just imagine on a visiting card, Madame Duval, *née* Montmorency!"

The doctor paid the expected tribute of a laugh.

"Lucien is the most honorable of men," he said earnestly. "Some base-born men have the sentiment of honor in the same degree as some nobles have the greed for money on any terms. There is this difference between honor and nobility; honor cannot be sold because once it is sold, it is no longer honor and it is worthless. Your duke sold his title for the merchant's money, but Lucien Gerard, having promised that Catherine Mauriceau, and no other woman, shall have his name, will die unwed rather than tamper with his pledge."

Madame de Rumières was convinced of the possibility of such resolution, though she might never understand it.

"Do tell me, M. Ramonin, you who are able to make all things clear, how is it that, with such a superfluity of love upon the earth, there are so many unhappy marriages?"

"I should offer the solution at once were you not a woman," he answered with a smile.

"Do you mean that it is improper?"

"Not at all, but it is an abstract matter."

"And I am not an American nurtured in a college—I am too ignorant."



"Not so much that, as that you cannot give your attention long to any single subject," he replied, "frankness allowable in the medical fraternity."

"Give me a trial," she pleaded.

"When you cease to understand me, you would stop me by your inattention," he remonstrated.

It was rather a dilemma, for she would be compelled to hear him to the end under penalty of being deemed stupid. Still as she insisted, he began:

"The cause of marriages being rarely happy, notwithstanding the amount of love promising that better result, arises from love and marriage having scientifically no connection whatever. They belong to two orders completely different."

"Ah! I am glad you do not class them—marriage as order, and love as a disorder."

"Love is a matter of physics and marriage is comprised in chemistry."

This was so far from anything in the lady's comprehension that she did not trouble to understand it but frankly laughed.

"To explain," continued the professor, insensibly falling into the tone he used at his lectures, "love forms part of the natural evolution of the being. At a certain age, it is produced independently of the will and without a definite object. The desire of loving is felt before that of being loved. This is why love belongs to physics, as that treats of matters existing in the interior of things; while marriage is a social combination included in chemistry because that science treats of the action of bodies upon one

another and the resultant phenomena. The great law-makers, religious leaders and philosophers who instituted marriage on the basis of love purely and simply experimented in physics and chemistry in the highest and finest degree, with the aim of extracting out of them the family, morality, labor and consequently the happiness of mankind, which is contained in those products. So long as you conform to the first proposition, and choose two elements fit for combination, the operation goes on of itself; the experiment is a success, and the result must come forth; but if you are so ignorant or so clumsy as to try to mix two refractory elements, you meet with inertia instead of fusion, and the two elements will remain forever face to face without any power to unite. In human kind, however, as there is a soul besides, that intermediary between God and man, punishment falls on the creature who scorns the spirit, and instead of inertia, there arises a shock, explosions, accidents, catastrophes, tragedies."

The subject was dry and the treatment not attractive to the woman of fashion, but she was impressed by the solemnity with which the doctor spoke, and it was in bated breath, without the frivolous laugh with which she had hailed his commencement that she inquired:

"According to you, the duke and duchess are refractory elements?"

"They will never combine unless—" he hesitated before adding, "unless there comes up a new element which will aid them to unite."



"You mean that if a gallant excites the husband's jealousy and makes the wife see to what a precipice's edge coldness has brought her, they will come together to repel the household foe?"

"Not so much a lover, as love—the element lacking for the first experiment and which prevented the result by its absence. It may come in any of three forms: in the child, which is motherly love, in the faith, which is divine love, or in the earthly shape of a lover."

"Has the duchess gone to church this morning, think you, to seek religion as the consolation?"

"I do not know; but I don't believe that, like her father, she would be proud of being the mother of a dukelet."

"You dreadful man! do you not know that a lover never saves a married woman—he destroys her; he is a remedy but a mortal poison."

Dr. Ramonin shook his head, as if he thought this depended on the lover.

"Do you mean to tell me that there are men so noble and truly loving to respect the woman whom they cannot wed?" cried she with no little incredulity.

Firm in his judgment of our hero, *his* hero, the doctor smiled like one with full conviction.

"I can hardly believe it," said she. "I can understand that two Chinese—in china—may ogle each other eternally from one end of the mantel-piece to the other—particularly if there be a clock between them; but a Frenchman and a Frenchwoman in flesh and blood—oh dear, no! I cannot swallow that, as M.

Mauriceau says. Have you never been in love that you talk so?"

Ramonin intimated that a scientist has no time to make love.

"Well, doctor dear, I will admit that your M. Gerard and our duchess may love without a spot falling on her ermine, for some time—with the mantel-piece between—say for years. But what will eventually happen? These things must come to an end even when they had a very imperceptible beginning."

"There is no right end to such a love as theirs," said the doctor measuredly, "but marriage. One of these days, you will hear the happy phrase: 'The duke is dead! the duchess has married again?'"

"Doctor, this young fellow has turned your brain, after turning my dear Catherine's head."

"Hark!" They heard the duke's voice; he was inquiring the whereabouts of his wife of the servants at the foot of the marble stair where they congregated to greet him. On hearing of her absence and that two callers were waiting a responsible head to the house, he hastened to hide his vexation and welcome the marchioness, who was a family connection of his, and the doctor.

"I noticed that the duchess was not in the best of spirits yesterday," said the latter professionally, and palliatively, for he knew that his friendship toward Gerard would not endear him to Septmonts: "I wish to learn how she feels this morning."

"She seems to be hearty enough," replied the duke, "considering that she can race out, without her break-

fast, or even a cup of chocolate, to tempt the rheumatism always lurking in church corridors. However, it is a change to see her wide awake in the morning, for usually she is still asleep when I come home. We are talking of your daughter," he continued, "for the enlightenment of M. Mauriceau, who came into the house from his portion of it by a private way."

"Some women, mostly married ones," observed the marchioness, "have no comfort save in dreams. It is a habit, this sleeping when the husband is by, which is more agreeable than the morphine one and not so pernicious."

"I am not so sure about that," whispered the doctor, unable to suppress a witticism, though it went against the sentiments he had lately proclaimed. But the duke heard neither remark. He had accosted his father-in-law with acerbity, saying:

"This very much resembles a family council, and I am not all sorry. M. Ramonin is one of your oldest friends and whatever he does or says will be for the welfare of your family. Hence, we may have an explanation on the subject of your daughter, who made a scene yesterday which was as painful as anything in the world could be to me. I understand she is at church, where, indeed, she may well go frequently till she learns Christian charity! However, hoping for the best that, though it will come late, and as I cannot waste my day in awaiting her, I must entreat you, my dear M. Mauriceau, to tell her that her behavior is not such as consorts with the habits of my society. That was the reason of my publicly giving her the little lesson which she received."

Madame de Rumières shook her head slightly, but the self-opinionated duke took it for a nod of approbation, and said:

"I see that you are of my way of thinking, cousin. She ought to have accepted the money from the American lady."

"I certainly should have done so," admitted the marchioness, "but your wife may have reasons not to act as I would have done. Over and above what is tittle-tattled about Miss Vanness, the story goes that you show her attentions that a lawful wife has the right to be jealous upon. To say it all in one sentence, you are accused of being on the very best terms with Miss Vanness."

The doctor remained neutral, but Mauriceau approved the speaker with bobs of the head and encouraged her to proceed.

"Pshaw! that is only one slander the more. I am not on even good terms with Miss Vanness—more's the pity!"

"Really, you might have refrained from that postscript, which annulled your previous denial," said the lady.

"Well, admitting that the libel were true, these little peccadilloes are matters which a lady of fashion does not stoop to notice."

"Not when the lady of fashion loves her husband?" energetically remonstrated Mauriceau.

"My dear sir, you are well aware that your daughter does not like me," said Septmonts with lofty unconcern. "Far from me any idea of reproaching her

for it. Love cannot be commanded to go here and come from there. But, whatever the reason, we are man and wife: I promised protection to your daughter, and I am not going to break my promise," with a threatening glance which he did not want lost upon Dr. Ramonin as the silent advocate of the disturbing element which hovered unseen but sensible in this council. "In exchange, my wife promised obedience and fidelity, to both of which I hold, particularly the former, as I undertake to guard the other. When the duchess returns from church, I shall be obliged to you if you will kindly tell her that I firmly—nay, absolutely—rely on her returning to Miss Vanness the visit which that lady paid her yesterday. Miss Vanness desired it—she has requested it—she has to me reiterated the desire when I saw her to our door last evening; I could not refuse it to her for private reasons. Under certain circumstances, one visit entails another: but in this case, this return visit engages nothing further. In short, this must be so; it is my express will. *Au revoir*, cousin; you will excuse my tearing myself away, but I have an appointment. Good-bye, Ramonin! "See you later, my dear M. Mauriceau."

This was not the first breeze which had ruffled the sea under the shadow of the Seven Mounts, though perhaps it was the roughest and the keenest; Mauriceau took the mission without any repugnance.

"I shall bring her to reason," he assured his noble son-in-law. "But do not let the matter rest there, but come back to make the reconciliation lasting."

"Egad! I ask nothing better," said the duke, de-

lighted at having carried all before him. "Smooth it over, my kind papa, smooth it over with Catherine." And lighting a cigar in the doorway, he took the cane which a servant was waiting to be relieved of, and strutted forth, saluting, when he had reached the street, the brougham in which his wife was returning from the church. The flourish of the malacca was thrown away, for, absorbed in the gloomy apprehensions with which she had wrestled during the sleepless night and which appeal to the altar had not dispelled, she did not perceive him.

"There's a model husband," said Ramonin to the marchioness. "If yours were of that pattern, what would you do?"

"I should at the first do all he liked, and then, I should do all I liked!" was the candid reply of the woman of the world.

"Come, madame," said Mauriceau, who began to regret he had let himself be made the go-between in the family jar, "Catherine must come in presently—what do you advise in this matter?"

"That she should obey and pay the lady the visit which she sets so much store upon. The duke is right, as far as that goes. Besides, she is an enemy, and it is always a good thing to have had an inspection of the enemy's stronghold before the war opens. I say, in short, that it is wrong to have discussions which may grow serious over matters which are not so. Nobody will blame Catherine, but all will cry out against her prompter, her husband, if the affair is an ugly one in the outcome. You, gentlemen, our papas



and lords and masters have decreed that you are wisdom concentrated and that we ought to obey you. Let Catherine obey, therefore. The main thing is to have peace on the domestic hearth;" she rattled on, for Ramonin kept out of the one-sided debate and Mauriceau did not care for the details so long as the marchioness supported him and the duke.

He stood a little in awe of her, besides; the marchioness was not only a lady of title by marriage but a great lady who knew how to "handle" the fashionable folk, as he said to his cronies. He was sorry that his daughter was not just like her. She would become so, under her tuition, he expected. She had not the birth, she was not so old and the habits of a line of high-born ancestors had not been transmitted to her, but she was so quick to learn, so beautiful, and carried herself so proudly. Yes, the style would come.

"What were you saying about the marquis," he politely inquired, while eying the door distractedly to catch the first sound denoting that his daughter had returned home.

"My husband used to run after any woman who made a sensation in Paris. His caprices did not last long, luckily, but while he suffered from them, his one idea was to usher them into my house. I fancy that he thought a good deal of my opinion. I always gave it favorably to his whim, whether the new-comer was a Brazilian diamond-dealer's daughter, an English brewer's niece, or what you will, all the colors of the spectrum, as the doctor would describe the variety. Of course, I always pretended to be blind toward his

infatuation, and he took the utmost precaution to shield me from suspecting anything, if it had not been town-talk. In a while, these ladies, when they saw my poor old boy gallant a fresh conquest into my drawing-room, used to call me into consultation at the horrid way he was going on. They would say my friendship for them was only lukewarm, and fall on poor me, tooth and nail, for not being jealous of the latest guest, for their sake! They would as good as say, though in covered terms, that I was an idiot not to see what that person came into my husband's house to do. To wreck *their* peace! I had to feel piqued and declare to the complaining party that she pained me to the heart, and that if she went on in that style any farther, our relations would be impaired. I threatened to tell my husband that these querulous friends seemed to be false friends, and then he would say 'I wonder you did not see through her long ago?' The consequence was that she would be quieted; if not, I would execute my threat, and my bosom friend and I would meet no more—except in somebody else's parlors. Your daughter should do likewise, Mauriceau. Women in our position are never compromised by the bad conduct of others—only by their own. Tell her so. Are you going, doctor? you can have a seat in my carriage. I want to hear about the gold mine of your protégé: I have a few thousands lying idle at a paltry three per cent."

Mauriceau was left alone to await his daughter, for the callers were certain that they would only be in the way of the conflict between father and daughter.

"The marchioness is entirely right," he thought. "Here is a couple that might be as happy as she and her lord. They have everything needed for that. I grant that the duke must have had one or two ancestors who were plaguy disagreeable, for there is no concealing that he has a nasty way of saying things. When he might get what he wants by a little conciliation, he exacts it in a rasping tone which gives one the desire to do just the reverse. Oh, here is my daughter."

Going out into the hall he waylaid the duchess as she came indoors from alighting from her carriage. He led the way into his own snugery, but Catherine des Septmonts would not sit down to listen to reason as he suggested; in short, she hardly would listen to a word.

"Enough," she said curtly. "I shall not go to Miss Vanness'."

"No? your husband will be angry."

"Let him be angry."

He had never before heard this voice of recklessness.

"But he will persist."

"I shall resist."

"But with such a disposition as his, the difference may extend far."

"The farther the better, if it occurs between us."

"But it may be a serious breach." He was deeply astonished.

"If irremediable, it will be to my mind."

He stared at her as though she had gone mad.

"You cannot be in your right mind," he said, "for everybody gives the same advice as your fond old father."

"That is possible. They have their reasons and I have mine. They may be poor ones, but I am partial to things all my own."

"Catherine, I assure you that there is nothing going on between that American girl and him."

"Then she is a luckier woman than I believed her. It is useless for you to talk. I shall not go over her doorstep."

This stubborn disposition puzzled the other. There seemed something more in the matter than the pique of one woman against another. What grounds could there be for his daughter to defy both parent and husband?

"I have it," he suddenly exclaimed with a radiant face. "This all comes from your having seen that Gerard yesterday afternoon."

"It was well that the presence of a woman like my husband's friend should be counteracted by that of an honorable gentleman like mine. Yes, papa: Lucian Gerard is still my friend—I hope more than ever my friend, for since all the world is of your opinion—and that is, for me to humble myself to this foreigner—I never stood in greater need of a true friend."

Mauriceau was silent.

"Why do you not abuse him? say as much in disparagement of him as you would say in praise of your American beauty."

"My dear, you go too far. I wish America were sunk in the Atlantic, since we are always worried by its pork, or flour, or its coquettes—to say nothing of it spoiling our sons who are misguided into going out there, and linger because they can elude the conscription and drink a fair imitation of our wine."

"You need not have banished this one," she felt like saying, but she was too miserable to make this natural friend of her's an enemy by a sharp saying.

He probably understood what she had on her tongue's tip, for, sighing, he said: "Are you going away without a kiss this morning?"

"No! have one with all my heart."

He was surprised and pained to find her brow as cold as marble.

"What ails you, girl?" he asked, sorrowfully, like one who somehow feared he was no longer entitled to frank confidence.

"Nothing," was her mechanical reply, as she left the room.

"You know that, come what may, I am always on your side," he called after her, but she may not have heard.

She did not turn her head, to smile at him to the last as had been her wont.

"She is estranged," he muttered. "It would not matter if in turning from her father she went the nearer her husband. But there is something untoward in the whole matter—altogether the contrary to what I promised myself, and what that witch promised me when she enticed me into this match-making. It serves

me right. A man has no business to step out of his business. Look at the muddle all round: My son, the duke, marries beneath him and it works ill. Catherine marries out of her station, and things work no better. A woman of his sort would get along smoothly with him, I dare say, while he will go to pieces with Catherine not trying to help him, and she will be lost with him. He will break my bank—she will break my heart—and I honestly believe now that I would give every penny of my millions to be quits with this crew of aristocratic vultures. I do not see any way out of the whirlpool unless we can get a separation and let my lord run away with this foreign woman."

## CHAPTER VI

### DR. RAMONIN'S PANACEA

Catherine des Septmonts went to her suite with a weary step. She had not derived any alleviation for the distress which had robbed her of repose during the night. The priest had spoken the self-evident truths. He pointed out that she had little to complain of. She was young, and had beauty and riches above many of the favored of the capital. Her rank was an enviable one; the esteem that she had conquered among the nobles among whom she had ventured, was still more to be coveted. He suggested that she should beseech heaven for patience and resignation. Watch steadily, and succor would come in the bright morning of this dull, dreary and darksome night.

"Think," said he, "of the many poor creatures who were without homes, clothes, or even a mouthful of bread for their offspring, and you will see how far above any griefs that you can feel are what they have to bear."

But all this would never prevent the sufferer like herself from believing that the greatest torment was that she ached within.

She had always tried to lessen the miseries of which her ghostly father spoke; if she met one of their vic-

tims now, she would have relieved him until there was not a trace of the affliction. She would have replaced it with joy and happiness, with some of the money which she possessed beyond her desire and perhaps her deserts.

So, here she was again, with no one to solace her in her gilded misery. Who would restore her the illusions, the hopes, the faith and the dignity of her maidenhood? Where was the loving friend who would share with her his soul, as she would divide her purse with the unfortunate?

Her father? she knew he was the author of her woe—though somewhat involuntary or at the worst too pliable a tool in the hand of the plotter who had wrecked her life, and doubtlessly another's.

Her husband? he was the deliberate author of it. He might have prompted the woman who tangled their life-threads almost indissolubly.

These young men? of whom Guy Deshaltes was incomparably the best, for they paid their suit in order to add shame to the burden which already she bore.

In all the world there was but one to turn to—and he wavered on the margin of the forbidden ground where she was held in bondage. He appeared so much the nobler, handsomer, and brighter of wit than the others. It was he who had first set her heart throbbing with novel emotion—the first whose hand ever met hers without their pulse falling into a harmonious beating. He had inspired the first thoughts which the memory of her mother had not invoked—



the first dreams that ever disturbed her virginal slumber, and becoming a waking vision deprived of repose. To him she had given all that is contained of the ideal in a girl's heart. In a word or in a smile she had imparted it, without her knowing how, for Catherine had fallen into the habit of loving him before she was aware that it was love that enthralled her.

One day he wrote to her:

"You are rich, and I am poor; between us is a gulf which cannot be crossed. I have never loved, and I shall never love any but you. I meant to have devoted my life to you and I must now set it aside to solitude and labor. You will see me near you on the day when I have reason to believe that you are unhappy; when I am sure of it, you will see me beside you, and I shall be the supporter of whom you are in need."

Catherine had not understood this at the time, as she would have found it simple to live in poverty with him, though he could not think of living in wealth of hers with her. She was soon to learn what it is for an impoverished man to marry and live beside a rich girl. She thanked God that Gerard was not a Septimonts to do that kind of thing.

Very slender were the scraps of news and arriving at irregular and widely-parted intervals that proved little more than that Lucien was living. When, at last, she heard that he had attained a fortune, she wondered what more he lingered for—why he did not return home. At the sight of him, in the company of Dr. Ramonin, she was filled with hope and gladness.

He showed himself merely to disappear. He must

have wandered about the gardens among the sight-seers to inspect the features of her luxury. Strangest of all, when he came again, it was with that woman on his arm, whom she had detested ever since she learnt that through her instrumentality, she had become the wife—the thing—the tag of that man.

It was not because Reina was without a history that European society was familiar with, that she had no origin of fame, no avowed source of income, that the duchess had refused to receive the interloper, for all this would have little mattered if she had taken the wish into her brain. But she would never forgive this kind of slave-merchant who had sold her to the Duke des Septmonts, in plain words, sold her; a bargain struck in her house, between her father and the duke. It was not enough that she should thus have tried to raise a barrier between the lovers whom only an ocean and a continent divided—what is an ocean, what a continent to those who really love? but after the pain and the affront of seeing the woman in her house, came that of having her dare to whisper to her:

"Come to see me, madame, and we will chat about M. Gerard, who perhaps I love as much as he loves you."

This to a married woman, in the same room where her husband was standing—this was a shaft which struck to the heart. Whether she lied or spoke the truth, she evidently knew of her girlish love, and she meant to frighten her, mock at her and torture her in order to revenge herself for the slight the duchess inflicted.

But did *she* love Lucien?—was she loved by him? Had they met in the States, and under what circumstances? If he had loved her, whether he loved her now or not, she did not know of what she would not be capable in her turn. To win him back—to retain him she might act as basely and wickedly as this rival.

To whom should she turn?

Guy Deshaltes had behaved like a gentleman; he asserted himself to be one of those friends who wished her happy, and whom nothing would discourage in seeking that end. But she could not trust the secret of her heart to one so light.

It was better to end all this tribulation in the quickest and easiest way. She would go to Dr. Ramonin and obtain from him one of those draughts, striking to the life like lightning, and saved for those who were otherwise doomed to perish in agony too exquisite for a man to let even his worst enemy bear.

Avoiding her father, seeing nothing of her husband, she let the hour come for her afternoon drive. But when her carriage was rolling through the park she gave the coachman a change of direction from the established route of fashion, and she was set down at the door of Professor Ramonin, in the Rue Madame.

It was an austere building, and her footman, who remained on the pavement after having opened the carriage door and rung the house-bell, conversed with the coachman in subdued tones which the facade imposed. A taciturn porter, whom not even this elegant turnout awed, pointed to the carpeted stone staircase,

and she ascended to the professor's flat, where the mahogany door was opened by a servant who might for his wooden visage have been own brother to the concierge. The doctor was at home, and she was not kept long awaiting him.

Had he suspected the visit would occur? It was plain that it did not surprise him. But what she said, almost without prelude while he was just grasping her hand, had the quality of thrilling him with as much painful wonder as his heart would hold.

"Doctor, you helped me to come into the world—now I implore you to assist me out of it."

"I shall take great care not to do so without an adequate reason," he replied, trying to treat it as a jest, though in poor taste. "Death is not a gay thing."

"Is life any brighter?" retorted she.

"I cannot deal out my drugs without hearing the whole case. Speak my child. What has happened since that scene in your house? It alarmed me, and I called to inquire this morning—but you were out and your husband's presence was disagreeable to me."

She detailed her wretched story, and bewailed the fact which she regarded as hopeless.

"I cannot tell whether or not that American girl loves Lucien, but I will warrant his love for you alone."

"They are old acquaintances—"

"She has a wide circle of acquaintances; but he is only one of the thousand to her."

"Who told you so?"

"He—a hundred times this five hundred days since he has returned to his country?"

"When was the last time?" she asked, pretending to doubt.

"This morning. I was not going to meddle with what does not accord with my age or my character—but Guy Deshaltes dropped upon me like a thunderbolt—I did not recognize the Brummell of our day in one so agitated, with his collar-stud lost, his cravat twisted and his voice of calm flow quite faltering. He told me that Madame des Septmonts loved some one of my acquaintance, since I was such an old friend of her family. He said that you were very unfortunate and he entreated me to do all I could for you in this stress."

The duchess sighed. The poor fellow really had a heart and had acted finely.

"You say that Gerard loves me?"

"He has come home solely on your behalf, for he heard in some way that you were unhappy—or, rather, he guessed as much on learning from the newspapers which I sent him, that you had married for a title."

"I see it all. He will under one pretext or another come into collision with the duke, and there will be a duel. Which ever kills the other, I will be the most wretched of women. No, doctor, do not turn me from my first intention—give, oh, give me the means to end my despair!"

"Poor child, are you really resolute upon this extremity?"

She raised her clasped hands upward with a touching gesture.

"I ought not to refuse you your own solution of the dilemma, which you must understand better than anyone else."

"You will deal out the means of death—of relief?" she said in a strange unearthly joyfulness.

He bowed with a sad but firm expression, and slowly left the room. She kept her hands clasped, and prayed in order to calm herself before the return of the doctor with the fatal potion. But it was in vain that she attempted this means of quieting her nerves. After the assurance that Gerard loved her, her dominant thought was of him. But the course she had determined upon was the only one open. It would cause Gerard grief, but there would be no fear of her shame befalling her. On hearing the door gently open and a soft step reluctantly approach, she did not look round, but she held out one hand while she covered her eyes with the other. It was like a child, assured that the cup contained release from pain, but yet loathing to look upon it.

"Thank you, old friend," she breathed, with a choking in her throat. "No one shall ever know. Tell Gerard that I died blessing him."

But it was not a cold glass that she grasped mechanically—it was a warm and palpitating hand. She turned around, but nearly fell to the floor—would have fallen but for the hand which tightened its hold and strongly upheld her.

"Lucien!" she muttered.

"Catherine!"

But he led her to an arm-chair, supported her only



“She turned round, but nearly fell to the floor.”—(p 120 )





until she sank down into its arms, and standing off a step or two, waited for her to recover from her emotion.

This then was the doctor's panacea! how cruelly had he disappointed her. No, he had rejoiced her, for she had not felt such happiness in three years! Was this a meeting of real persons—was this her beloved? for he had but flitted through her rooms yesterday—under her husband's eyes, and that odious woman's; she had not dared gaze on him steadily as now. It was he? He had not changed—nothing had changed—since his love was unaltered. As his eyes beamed on her, she was sure that the love-light had not paled. He adored her above all in this world. Judging by her own repining, how he must have been agonized in this long parting.

"Did you try to forget me?" she abruptly asked.

He shook his head. He was greatly her superior by this touch-stone of love, for she had endeavored to obliterate him from her heart and mind. She had an excuse, however, since she belonged to another.

"But you have remained free—to no one you have disposed of your liberty?" she inquired, but in a careless tone so sure was she of the answer coming to her taste.

"Not one fleeting image has passed between yours and my ever-enrapt gaze," he rejoined.

"Then, that girl—"

"What girl?"

"The one who burst into my presence last evening," with a return of color to her cheeks and of

anger in her eyes where satiated love had till then been disputing place with tears of ineffable delight.

"Miss Vanness?" he questioned. "You ought to know all. I owe my life to her."

"Heavens! you were at the point of death? and I was not near. What would have become of me if that had happened? If your spirit had come to beckon me away, I should have rejoined you! sooner than I was willing to do at this moment. Why did you not send word to me?—you might have telegraphed to the doctor."

"What would you have done?"

"More than any other. I should have left all to travel to your side and watch over you—nurse you back to life."

"Not so? they would not have let you go. Your father, your husband would have stayed you."

"No one could have done it. Now, I lost my opportunity. That girl took my place. She tried to rob me of you there, as she is taking away my husband here. Oh, that she would be content with the exchange. She does not want for money—these republicans are only greedy for distinctions. Can she not take the ducal title and leave me tranquil?"

"She must have gleaned all she wanted to know from fragments of revelations in my fever, following my wounds," continued Gerard, with an angry voice but low in tone. "She hastened to Europe before me, and contributed if she did not design the marriage which is so great a sorrow to me and to you."

"Above all to me, Lucien."

He believed her, even if the doctor had not been the partisan of the girl-sacrifice by her father.

"You thought ill of me," he pursued, "because I performed a simple act of politeness in escorting her into your presence. I saw in her then only a lady of the country where my reception was warm and helpful, and besides, she is a kind of partner with the American magnate, Mr. Clarkson, who was her husband of a day—ephemeral union of which there are a few examples in the border States. Apart from this match of her contrivance she has always forwarded my interests. I did not know that she still wished you evil."

"Always—as long as you love me," said the duchess sadly.

"I doubt that she loves anyone or anything. Clarkson is a splendid man, and yet she separated from him for no reason—a whim or a fancy, just as she took a conceit for me."

"If she says she loves no one—that she loves you not, it is false," said the duchess vehemently. "She never met a man like you. Do you resemble others? Would I have loved you if you had? in brief, I am jealous. Do you know what it is to be jealous?"

In his eye suddenly blazed a fire which would have shriveled up the very soul of the Duke des Sept-monts if he had seen it, for he would have divined that he was the object.

"I see that I am wrong. I forgot; but it is so sweet to forget. I beseech you not to make me re-

member, the past is so dreadful; and you have been in anguish, on my account?"

"So wretched that I should have thrown away my life among the savages, red or white—there is no lack of chances to lose one's life on the frontier and in the mining-camp saloons."

"But you thought of your mother, fretting for you in the home so lonely. I was forbidden to call on her—my father disapproved of her name—your name being mentioned. She is still living? Ah, you complain of being unhappy, when you have a mother to console you—one in whom you can confide the secret throes of the heart. Well, she will have a daughter now. Again we shall be under the same roof. Ah, we were tranquil in those times."

"Do you think that she would go to dwell where the least of your menials would pride himself as being above your companion? things are changed with me, Madame la Duchesse—my mother could live in a palace, too, did she not prefer her pretty cottage covered with roses."

"I did not mean that she should come again to live with us, but that I would be living with you."

"You must be oblivious, indeed," he returned, compassionately as one speaks to a lunatic. "What about your husband?"

"Can I regard that puppet of the American girl as a husband? What is there in common between me and that burlesque of a man? I shall fling his title back to him—roll the coronet which he had dragged through the gutter and left in pledge at the pawn-

broker's, once again into the kennel. Do you think that I ever prized the rank? At any rate, during the short period of my wearing it, I bore it more worthily than he. Besides, I can exist without craving to be duchess, but not without a desire for love."

While she was feverishly rambling, Gerard had been meditating.

"Not to mince matters, and to speak plainly," he gravely said, "I am to understand that you propose leaving your situation, and fleeing into seclusion here—or, better, on the remote edge of civilization?"

"A wigwam—a hut of boughs and leaves—nothing but the sky to shelter—as long as you were mine," she daringly and fondly responded.

"Would you consent to be deprived, not merely of your rank, but of your worthiness, as woman? not only of your compeers' esteem but your own, and mine? I would not agree to it," he proceeded steadily. "If I reappeared in your circle, and entered your house, it was not to abase—far less to debase you—to compromise and to destroy. It was to show that I was at hand, to aid and sustain you. It was to fortify you against others, and perhaps against yourself. You have too long been without a support that would not bend, and you may rest on one now. I mean to save you. You would have cast away your life, which desperation would have broken your father's heart and mine. I prevented that, and now I am going to guard your honor, which is dearer to me than mine own. I do not wish to see in you aught else than what always met my eyes and was

cherished in my memory—a sacred being, a soul's companion, the creature of God whom I as your husband should adore, the mother whom our children should venerate, the woman whom society should respect and glorify! I never want to see you in any other guise."

She was weeping now—sobbing, but she listened spell-bound to such language as she was not likely to hear in the heights to which her weakness and her father's aspirations had unfortunately carried her.

"Events and men, however mighty the former may be and however cruelly the latter may act, cannot modify our conscience, and we ought not to permit them to lower us beneath our estimate of ourselves. I shall live and I shall die, for your sake, with no other reward than what you have not been able to give to a soul besides—your full trust, your esteem, your constant thought, your soul—that spirit in us which is divine and eternal!"

She thrilled, and was supremely exalted by this address. She loved him doubly, immeasurably more. She lifted her hand to heaven and vowed to live in the way that he directed.

"I shall do as you wish," she said, "for I am yours henceforth. Commence by ordering me to do something to prove my allegiance. Everybody, with the exception of M. Deshaltes, wants me to return the visit of Miss Vanness. Ought I do so?"

"Yes," Gerard replied simply; "unless you prefer that I should see her and call her to account for her treachery to me, and her attack on your peace by ensnaring your husband."

"No," she interrupted him quickly; "I would rather make the call myself. Being sure that you do not care for the girl, I do not object to patronizing her as much as they please. But you must promise me that you will not go near her, never, never, on any pretext."

It was readily that he gave the pledge. He owed Reina nothing since she had struck such a blow to his affection as to make the duke her keeper, so that Lucien's only wish in life should be foiled. He would not retaliate on her, as a woman, but she would be non-existent. If there was still a connection between her and Clarkson, in spite of the divorce, he would sunder his contract with the mine in which both the men were interested and that would end the American phase of his career. Catherine thanked him, joyous as a child. Dr. Ramonin hardly knew her when he came in. She was transfigured.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed, rubbing his hands with glee, and contemplating the pair like a sculptor proud of his work. "Love-making is the best reward of all crafts—I understand that some like it better than mathematics, for example. God bless us all, child, you have become a girl of eighteen again. Now, I must take Gerard away, and let you go. We have some excessively dry studies to get through, on the extraction of the precious metals by a novel process. You see, if by any chance, if our young genius should marry a peer's relict, he will have to be monstrously rich to keep up the style in which she lived."

"Madame la Duchess is prepared for 'a lodge in

some vast wilderness," returned Lucien, laughing. "I shall write to my friend, Tah-wee-wah-ka-wah, sub-chief of the Rickaree Apaches, to keep his cave-house in the Cimarron Mountains in good order for my arrival with my bride."

On seeing their mistress emerge, with the doctor hatless, bowing her to her carriage, the footman and the coach driver exchanged a look of pleasurable surprise at the brilliant change on her countenance.

"It's all right, James," said the lackey in a whisper: "my lady has had the tooth out that has been worritting her for an age!" And having shut the door, he slung himself upon the box, crying "Home!" with a cheerier tone than he had used for some weeks, so contagious is gladness, even when we are not in the knowledge of its nature.

It is needless to say that Mauriceau rejoiced when his daughter sent her maid to call him into her rooms, where she told him that she was prepared on second thoughts to yield to his wishes and her husband's commands; she would go to Miss Vanness'. The only condition that she imposed was the very proper one, that, as her father was an acquaintance of the American lady's, he should be her escort.

The duke pretended to be perfectly delighted at this submission, but when his father-in-law quitted him after repeating the news, he chewed his cigar with a bitter scowl and muttered:

"I do not like this a bit. She had a stiff resolution until after a consultation with that meddlesome old fossil, Dr. Ramonin, who is the mentor of this under-



mining engineer, Gerárd, and on her return home she goes back on her ultimatum. I must be very blind not to see that there is foul play under the board. I shall keep sharply on the lookout."

## CHAPTER VII

### A PAGE OF SOUTH-WESTERN ROMANCE

Miss Vanness occupied, until she should enter the famous little house which many a woman of wealth and elegance grudged her, a suite in a modern pile of flats in the Avenue of the Grande Armée, which entailed enormous expense from her habit of turning things upside down and spurning out of doors what did not please her taste, in order that some of her purchases should replace them. The rooms, therefore, had the aspect of a theatrical storehouse, where rich furniture of all periods was mingled together without any effect but that of variety. Nevertheless, the boudoir where she was installed to receive special company on this lowering afternoon, replete with thunder which would burst before dark, was rather in the English style, and comfort, coziness and chaste luxury had the sway.

Wearing a negligé attire of lace and Indian silk, with a hint of the sultana in her ornaments of Oriental pearls, Reina was carelessly but gracefully extended on a reclining chair, with her long but narrow feet, in cloth-of-gold slippers, of Byzantine embroidery, crossed on a footstool of satin packed with down, in which the shapely heel sank a little.



“Reina was carelessly but gracefully extended on a reclining chair.”—(p. 130.



She had not practiced the pose, for she knew that its neatness and temptingness came by that nature of the fine-bred American, who has become a tissue of nerves on a finished frame. At the same time as the dry, thin atmosphere sublimated the flesh, the moral air of the great cities, where all things travel at the wildering pace of the changes in a phantasmagoria, kept her invention on the stretch, sharpened her wit till she wounded even those who would have been friends without intending or perceiving it, and improved what qualities are liked in the medium degree so that in the superlative they became offensive. Reina's repose was coldness, her youthful brightness pert precocity, her grace too supple, and her voice acute and too precipitate in utterance.

"It is going to be a day of battles," she mused. "Gerard is coming—the Duke of Septmonts,"—she lingered on the title as if the words were sugar-plums out of one of the several open boxes of sweetmeats scattered at random on the occasional tables—"and his duchess. I am confident that I shall bring her pride into the dust—an upstart who comes from behind a dry-goods-store counter, and ought not to have lifted her eyes above the floor-walker of her father's. Wait, wait a little till I rule my new house, and I have her and Gerard at my table, on which shall shine the fifty-thousand-dollar gold service, bought at the sale in Florence of the Cardinal-duke de Maffeo-Maffei. They will see that I am one of those who do not pick up my plate at random, but by the complete set at once. And I expect Clarkson will come round from

the Hotel-Splendide, where I am informed he arrived last night. Poor Clarkson! nobody here can understand that we were married on horseback by the fighting parson of an Arizona mining town of canvas and plank huts, and that we were divorced in a month. That is too fast a pace for this effete Old Country. I don't believe I did the best for myself in discarding him. Bar Gerard, I have not seen a man worth holding his hat and cane. The duke—pooh!”

And flirting out from between her thin but exquisitely chiseled lip the core of a sugared almond, which had struck her as bitter, she hastened to draw a little console on ivory wheels over to her side by a silken cord, so that she could select another bonbon from a fancy coffer upon it.

It was not to the credit of the representatives of the exploded world for which she displayed so deep a scorn that the first of the expected guests was her fellow-countryman. In three minutes after she was informed through a speaking tube that Mr. Clarkson was at the door; that irrepressible gentleman had darted into her nest of confectionery and flowers, as if expelled from a bombard.

Madison D. Clarkson was a man of thirty or less, whose age was not to be measured by years, for he had the exuberance of a youth and the spirit which knew no ill effect from excesses of any kind. He could sit up all night playing cards for enormous sums and be out, scouring the plains, on a horse never ridden three days before. His tall form was not bony, as he was not of the generation which, with new England

parsimony, denied themselves the cream of their dairy; and active exercise had given his giant form the perfect grace and the flexibility of the forest warrior. On the sumptuous Transatlantic steamship, the "tonsorial artist" had trimmed the "Kansas chinners," or rampant imperial, and the flowing mustache which would have done honor to an ancient Gaul. He was, while preserving a grandeur not familiar among the decadents of the end of this century, a gentleman of the world, and a Parisian dame would have sooner received him than those British dukes who walk like grooms and talk like hostlers. For that matter, overlooking the impetuosity of his rush, in his bow as elaborate as a Spaniard's and in his word of pleasure at seeing his divorcée once more, was that air of devotion cultivated in the extreme in the land where men, out of business hours, live but for their womankind. Nothing was to be said about his dress, for it was of the first London tailor's, and that is the style which reigned over the dandies of Paris.

Having shaken Miss Vanness' slender, fragile hand with animation, but a delicate repression, as if he feared it would shiver like porcelain, he sat on the nearest chair with ease, and after a roll of the tongue—not to shove a quid of tobacco in a recess of his mouth, but by what Dr. Ramonin would call heredity of the chewing habit in his forefathers—he said in a strange voice, now drawling, now clipping the words as if he were alternately pressed for time and then puzzled how to dispose of unwonted leisure:

"Well, you see me, right end up and in going con-

dition, but I never believed I should sit in a Parisian saloon this side of last New Years. That's so," he added, not that she had lifted her penciled eyebrows in any doubt but as a kind of regular tail to a speech which he frequently repeated.

"You go ahead right away, and tell me the story," she answered, munching and mouthing, but with the daintiness of a well-fed kitten that returns again and again to the alluring plate. "Nothing happens worth getting out a special extra edition for, in this dull hole of a city."

"It is the story of your first dividend of fifty thousand dollars," said Clarkson. "After our parting by the courts, I felt the need of some employment. I had my doubt of the truth of the report that the vein to which we gave your name had petered out; and I made up my mind to investigate on my own behalf."

"You may smoke here," said Reina, suddenly as she fancied that her friend would discourse with greater ease if he had a Havana to puff in the intervals of the incidents of a tale which threatened to take some time.

Indeed, though the terse, curt sentences of the narrator absorbed less of the lady's impatient attention than in our repetition, they were none too brief.

Clarkson went on to say that, on reaching the mine in question in New Mexico, he discovered that its worth had been discredited so as to induce its abandonment. With imperfect implements and that curse of the insufficiency of laborers to contend with which hinders American enterprsie in the South-west, the



adventurous and indefatigable young man unearthed ore to such an amount and of such richness, that, roughly smelted he had bricks of the value of fifty thousand dollars ready for transmission to the nearest town with a bank. He intended to send this to his recently divorced wife as a token that their "little unpleasantness" had left no rankling in him. But it was not long before he learnt that the wagon had been waylaid by Indians and everything carried off, not to forget the scalps of the unfortunate conductors and guards.

A half-breed who had nearly incurred the death of strangulation common in that latitude, for being in possession of some fragments of the plunder, revealed the place of the massacre and offered to lead avengers to the spot where the trail began.

Clarkson regarded the attack on the love-offering to his ex-consort as a personal outrage. He buckled on his belt with cartridges for a brace of navy revolvers and a Henry rifle, and went off with the mixed-blood as guide in pursuit of the war-party. He might have made up a party of two or three companions, who would "as soon fight as drink," and whom this excursion would have entertained, for the entertainments of the boarder are not those of Paris: but he had a fit of obstinacy that day. His self-conceit was enlisted; he wanted to prove to the lost Reina that, as the money was hers, he was as much man to regain it for her as to find and dig it.

In coming to the scene of the affray, he was in doubt whether the attack had been made by white ruffians

giving the murder the air of an Indian surprise, or by the genuine sons of the desert and the mountain. The difference was really immaterial: if the former, in following the robbers home, he would corner them in a bar room of an ephemeral town; while in the other case he would tumble into that hornets' nest, a savages' village.

Afraid of either contingency, the treacherous guide fled one night with both horses and the supply of food. He would have taken the weapons which he gloated over when they were cleaned and loaded, but it is easier to draw a Western man's eye-teeth without waking him than steal his gun and carving-knife.

Then, dismounted, short of food and vainly seeking water, the lone wanderer began one of those Odysseys, where the hero totters between want and fortitude, upheld at last not by his courage and hope but solely by the invisible hand of heaven, which seems to the solitary more indubitably near him than in the haunts of man.

Worn to a skeleton, blackened by the sun, Clarkson was still erect on the twelfth day of his final stage of privation, with a record for subsisting on herbs and roots which a vegetarian could not match, when he walked into the midst of a group of Apaches who had been, with grim mirth, watching his staggering steps. He was disarmed in a trice. So shadowy was he that even they, sworn enemies of his people for good and sufficient reasons, contented themselves with snatching his firearms from the wasted hands, and gave him a chance to recover life by pouring some melted deer fat

down his shrunken throat. Marvel of marvels, he returned to life without having been injured in a vital organ. Frightened by this resuscitation, the party sagely concluded that he was destined to be a dread enemy, and hurried him off to the village to be dealt with by the chief and the elders.

Such an act of humanity was very naturally rebuked by these wise men, and poor Clarkson would have gained nothing by the respite but the intolerable pangs with which the body retaliates on the foolish creature not preferring death to reparation after starvation. He was doomed to be burnt at the stake where he would not yet have furnished much light to the Apache Country as a human candle.

To increase the pleasant state of mind which this sentence might be warranted to produce, it was stated with a wealth of detail which left no doubt of its truth, that the gold for which he had ventured so much in the first place and so far in the second, was indeed captured by these Apaches, who were the greatest red warriors in America. They had the ingots still in their hands, awaiting the coming, for its transmutation into whisky, powder and other necessaries of savage luxury, one of those gentlemen of the Facing-both-ways' policy known as Indian traders.

But before his advent, Clarkson would play the part of a Hindoo widow at suttee. He would not even have the slender consolation of the almost inevitable artist of the Eastern illustrated paper, to represent him like a male Joan of Arc, for the delectation of Miss Vanness. She had forgotten him, busy as she

was in her voyage to Paris, where she had projected to mar the love dreams of Catherine Mauriceau and of Lucien Gerard. She certainly was not the good angel to whose prayers were due not exactly the preservation of his life as the loss of that of the chief of the Apaches.

This worthy sickened and passed away, under an illness so mysterious that the wailing tribe did not hesitate to attribute the same to the mistaken kindness of the members who had brought Clarkson into the village. The medicine-man, or doctor whom M. Ramonin probably would not have recognized as a brother in his fraternity but who held a great empire over his patients, approved of the concentration of hatred and sentiment against the white man; but he asserted that the appeasement of the offended Wahcondah would only be attained if he were immolated at the change of the moon. This would take place just three days after the funeral of the chief.

The medicine-man had the politeness to repeat the news of this peculiar grace to the prisoner, speaking English with an accent not like that of the Rickarees. Indeed, on being reproached by the indignant American for going against his color, he retorted, to the applause of the bystanders, that he was not one of his kind of dogs, but a French Canadian, and that he hated all of English blood as fiercely as the red skins themselves. It was evident that he was anxious, by the sacrifice of the white man to the spirit of the chief whom he had failed to protect with his craft, to keep

good friends with the tribe to which he was an adjunct, not a corporeal member.

The surprise of Mr. Clarkson may be imagined when at midnight, at which hour an Indian village is quiet except for the continuous snarling of the prowling dogs over well-picked bones flung out of their masters' wigwams, a voice said, with the accent of the medicine-man:

"You have only one chance for your life. You cannot, any more than I, quit this barbarous hamlet living, but as the dead you may pass the bounds in the morning."

It is the province of these magicians to speak enigmatically, but this one abused his office. In the silence through stupefaction of the American, the other proceeded:

"The chief lies dead in his lodge, the third to the right of the single street, and opposite the Lodge of the Mysteries where I reside by virtue of my profession. Take this knife, steal into that dwelling of the dead, whence the squaw watchers and wailers have retired, fatigued with their recitals of his exploits and all that established rigmarole. Dig a shallow hollow, in which inter him, and apparel yourself in his finery and trappings. Here also is a stain of butternut juice which will give your skin the bronze tinge of the Apaches. As for your likeness, it is the closer, as I have noticed that the similarity of life on the margin of the wilds molds the Anglo-Saxon into a fac-simile of the Aborigine."

"I think I see your drift," said Clarkson. "I am to

let the funeral procession take me out and dump me into a grave; but if they should bury me as their chief less shallowly than I shall have the time to bury the real one, where is my gain? death for death. I would as soon go up like Elijah as go down into the vault like Lazarus—with no such expectation as his folks had for him, of being revived, unless you will uncover me.”

“You have not the whole idea of the programme followed on these occasions, at which I do not wonder, as your brothers take care to allow few of the Apache leaders to be tranquilly buried by their people. Substitute yourself for the chief, whom you must stow where the dogs will not pry him out, and you will rejoice in the family vault of the chiefs of the Apache Nation. As for me, while his successor is a protector of mine, not a little owing to a supply of opiates by which I plunge his opponents into timely stupor, I am not going to trust to his cover when the hubbub breaks out on the discovery that you have escaped. I shall light out, as your expressive Americanism has it, for that sugar-loaf peak in the north, with a couple of mustangs. If they do not break my neck, and if I succeed as smoothly in reaching that rendezvous as you, we will have a merry settlement together, for I have the knowledge of where the chiefs have hidden your gold and a quantity of other valuable plunder.”

“Good-bye, friend,” whispered Clarkson, for there was no doubt that this was a friend in need.

He obeyed his instructions to the letter.

He reached the home of the dead leader without stop, concealed the corpse in the ground and laid himself out in his stead; luckily, he was so enrobed that little of the live man's complexion was exposed. The funeral cortege to accompany the chief to his last resting place, came at an early hour to make the start, for it appeared that the sun was to kiss the dead one at the time of his rising. To further this feature, the body was not placed in the earth but on a kind of platform out of the reach of the wolves, adorned at the top of each of the four upright poles with the trophies of the hero and the tributes of his relatives. The slaughter of a dog for his meals on the voyage over the range to the west, and of a couple of ponies, concluded the ceremony which the object alone found too long. The Indians, children of nature in love of shows, would have protracted it, but there was some stir in the village, left to the cripples, the women and the aged. It looked as though the horses had been frightened into a stampede, or were running away at hazard. If the whole of their attention had not been diverted to the chase of their four-footed treasures, they must have been prettily horrified to behold their beloved chief spring off his mortuary couch, and seizing the tomahawk and gun suspended by his wooden pillow, race at speed like the fugitive toward the woods between the village and the conical mountain of which the friend in the wizard dress had spoken.

Before noon of the following day, they were reunited there.

Clarkson expressed his gratitude to his preserver

and wanted him to share the gold which he hoped to recover by the help of the soldiers whom he was determined to lead to the spot. But as his frank relation of his name and position was unfolded, the Frenchman seemed to be chilled—almost to regret the step he had taken at the loss of his post among the Apaches, and parted from him three days later at a military fort without even naming himself or receiving any substantial reward for his piece of strategy.

“I suppose he is one of those crazy fellows who live on the frontier, spared by the reds as a lunatic always is, and steering clear of the whites because some events in his early life made him hate his kind.”

“But you recovered the gold?” said Miss Vanness, heedless about the fate of the instrument in her ex-husband’s salvation.

“Certainly I got the gold, which I know you safely received. The colonel at the fort was rather slow about dispatching a troop to chase back the Apaches who had followed us nearly under his guns, so I collected some dare-devils and we marched in quest of the pillagers’ hoard. We had a fight for it, but we routed them out of the village, which we burnt, and we returned while the soldiers were putting on their boots, to be cheered by the people of the town.”

“You might have been killed, burnt, buried,” said Miss Vanness, with her first evidence of emotion.

“That’s so. But I had written my will, so that you would have come into my property just the same as though we were still husband and wife—and I do not clearly see why that is not a fact.”



"Perhaps it was a misstep," observed she, thoughtful for an instant. "I should not have been soon consoled if you had been lost. I am very proud and very fond of you, Madison!"

"Why did you not say so before?" he exclaimed with sparkling eyes.

"It was you that led to the parting. You said I was a flirt. And you bantered me on my appearance in the 'Mary Walker' dress—it is true I looked a fright—but I did not see that, *then*—and you were no gentleman to make fun of me. Men should always keep a store of indulgence ready like a reservoir of water in inflammable houses. But it is past praying for now. Do not let us deplore. Things are better as they stand. We can still see each other with pleasure, and we can chat about any subject like a couple who are sparking." And she gave him an ingratiating smile.

"I never see you without a great jump of my heart," he returned. "When I am out West, amid the toil and the hustling, I fancy that I have ceased to think about my wife of a day. But, just as soon as I set eyes on you again, I know for a fact, cold-drawn and no kicking against, that you are as much on my mind as my heart."

"It will wear off," she replied merrily and looking at a toy-watch rather than turn her head to see the clock on the bracket under a view of the Rocky Mountains in winter, a little toward her side. "Make yourself at home—I have no use for half this flat; order a carpenter in and partition off all the space

you like. It will be nicer than these French hotels where talk is cheap and you have to provide your own soap and towels if you want to wash more than your little finger."

"It don't amount to a row of pins where I camp down," said Clarkson, "for I am only laying over at Paris for a couple of days."

"Oh, I forget that I was expecting a call. Do not light up another cigar. They are real tobacco and—"

"These foreigners are so unused to it that it would knock them over, eh?"

"It is not that, but the caller is a lady."

"All right; you are the one woman who has a right to put my pipe out." And he calmly shut up his cigar-case and the patent pocket-lamp which he had produced to renew his smoking. "I am no good at the lingo, and if the lady is one who puts on style—"

"She is a duchess, that is all."

"Oh, my! then I had better be going."

"When you like. But you might let me know how Vannessa is getting on?"

"Our city—your city, since I gave it your name for luck. It is going ahead like steam. Did you not receive the folders about it?" She nodded, but with the compassionate smile of one who no longer believed in the panegyrics of land-speculators and city-projectors. "As you know, I selected a site on a feeder of the Colorado, where the three States or Territories soon to be admitted into the Union, would have to pass their products through our town—when the railroads are built. I was not going to wait for that, but

as soon as the Union Pacific came down in the rates to my figure, I contracted to have my houses of plank shaped for joining, transported to the spot. Among the frames were those for hotel, casino, school, newspaper and job-printing office—"

"And church—you did not forget the church?"

"I guess not," said Clarkson, indignantly. "One item in my calculations had to be altered, for the settlers went so strong for prohibition that the saloon had to be transmogrified into a Grange lodge. It is a metropolis by this time, with a palatial villa for you, when you like to come. We have an opera house, and I am looking after two or three big stars, now, to inaugurate it. We have the cash to deny ourselves nothing that Europeans can afford. That mine is a tiptopper—inexhaustible is a poor word for it. It has not a peer in New Mexico or Arizona except that prodigious one that the Santa Catarina Company are floating in London and Paris right now."

"The Catarina," repeated Reina, with lively curiosity.

"Yes: one that a young French prospector was told of by the Indians, the story goes. It says that he lived among them to worm out the secret, and one day a chief took him out in the desert to the right place, stamped his foot on the old bed of a river, and said 'My white brother seeks the yellow metal; there you are!' I am inclined to believe it, as I knew of such another case of a white man conjuring among them."

"Another Frenchman?" said Miss Vanness, thoughtfully; "And he names the mine the Catarina—which is Catherine."

"Those stupid red-skins despise gold," remarked Clarkson, shaking his head in inability to understand such density. "That is why the race lessens every day, and will disappear altogether before we celebrate another Centennial. Wampum has no show against the mighty dollar. Men have invented many idols since Adam was a little boy, but this one has never been dethroned. 'Time is money,' that is all very well; but I say, Money is everything."

"We are of one mind, Clarkson," said the American girl, enthusiastically and with an abruptness proving that his spark had fallen into a combustible shell. "I no more know what that power will lead me to, than you where death will cut your enterprise short. I adore its power and I proclaim—I advertise it to all the world. It helps me to possess what all desire, and weakens my regret about what I cannot clutch. I longed for this scepter when I was a child; and since I have seized it—not a little thanks to you, Madison—I wish to increase it. Make me rich, Madison—make me immensely, awfully rich, and one of these days perhaps, when I shall be tired of this old-time civilization, which appears to me very superficial and narrow, perhaps I will consent to going to occupy the queen-villa in the city which you have built in my honor. Then you can take me into your arms again, my dear Madison, and you will find on my cheek no kiss but that you placed there when we were wedded."

"Is that so?" ejaculated Clarkson, delighted and astounded, as he seized the hand which she extended with feeling, and covered it with caresses.



“ He seized the hand which she extended, and covered it with kisses.”—(p. 146.)



"It is the truth. Ah, I can tell you more: if you had been killed out there, by white or red, French, English or Spanish, or our own breed, I should have flung down my fan here and taken up the rifle there to revenge you."

The tapping of a servant's knuckles at the door interrupted an interview which may strike Europeans as odd, at its affectionate turn; it was to announce Doctor Ramonin, at whose name the lady frowned, but she gave the order for his being ushered in.

"Do not be backward," she called out, as he paused on the threshold between the Gobelins hangings, at seeing the strange gentleman whose attitude spoke of perfect understanding with the hostess. "You drop in to a connubial scene, almost. This does not shock a medical man?"

Nothing startled, the philosophical professor and he came forward imperturbably, though he knew he was a soldier who penetrated a mined fortalice.

Miss Vanness paused and looked almost anxiously toward the doorway, and bit her lip on becoming sure that the visitor came alone.

"Where is M. Gerard, whom I asked you to bring along?" she inquired directly.

"He cannot come," was the response in a voice which was a triumph of self-command, considering that the brightening fire in her eyes did not reassure him.

"Cannot come—or would not?" she demanded almost fiercely; and in the way of her lifting her head and stretching the long, pliant neck he was reminded of the serpents.

"He said he could not. He is busy in finishing the accounts and papers on the acceptance of which he dissolves an engagement with your Mr. Clarkson."

At the utterance of his name, the American, who had strolled round the room, idly scanning the pictures, turned and gave the doctor more attention than at the first.

"This is my Mr. Clarkson," said she, without a smile. "Let me make you acquainted. I present to you, Doctor, Mr. Madison D. Clarkson. Clarkson, this is Professor Ramonin, our greatest chemist, as well as the medical practitioner most consulted by the fashionables, although he is in a measure retired. You would know his name because he is an expert and an authority in the new art of reducing ores, of which his pupil M. Lucien Gerard is the active exponent."

"Ah, sir," said Clarkson, holding out his hand with the hearty admiration of the cities of the New World for a light of science. "I had you down, to be called upon. Let me tell you that the mountains of Arizona will yet skip and clap their hands, as the Scripture says, because of your discoveries. We have a 'chair' in the metallurgical branch of the Vannessa College of all the arts named in your honor. I say, I have some specimens of metal and ores at my hotel, and if—"

"My call is purely to tender my young friend's excuses," said the doctor, grasping at this chance of leaving the house, "and I will go with you thither, in my brougham, which is at the door."

Miss Vanness did not detain either. The staying



away of Gerard was a rebuff which made her dread that the day would not close as pleasantly as Clarkson's arrival had opened it. She listlessly repeated the gentlemen's farewell, and relapsed into a brown study before they departed.

"You do not lose time in preliminaries," said Ramonin to the American in the lobby, with admiration.

"No! it is a habit we acquire in my country. But tell me, this M. Gerard, whom I shall not be sorry to meet—has he been in the States that he seems to be so well versed in the geology of the tracts where few white men have trod?"

"He was there more than two years," answered the doctor, only too glad to expatiate on the prowess and lore of his protégé, on which subject he was speaking when, at the door of his carriage, on the pavement, he was compelled to interrupt himself to exchange greetings with Septmonts, who alighted from his horse, and rapidly present Clarkson. Septmonts, thanks to his father-in-law, had a footing in the world of speculative finance, and Ramonin honestly thought they might find each other useful.

"Oh, it is you, duke?" said Miss Vanness, as the nobleman came into her room, evidently disturbed in temper about some recent event.

"Yes; is that your Mr. Clarkson whom our much too sociable Ramonin insisted on my knowing?"

"So you have met him? does he not please you?"

"Well, no, when a man jerks his head to me, with his hat glued upon it, it is among the actions that do not charm me. I am accustomed to having people more polite toward me."

"Particularly when they do not know you."

"What do you mean by that?" he asked testily.

The lady was not in good humor at the slight which Gerard had inflicted, and she was not sorry to have even a Septmonts under her hand to vent her irritation upon. Accordingly she directed on him the lightnings of her eyes which Ramonin had prudently avoided, and she replied more tartly than he had spoken:

"You are in my house, my dear man, and if the style of 'my' Mr. Clarkson, or of any other Mr. Clarkson, does not suit you, you have nothing more to do than step out and not come any more."

The duke was too angry to utter an apology, but he was not going to retire without emitting a threat, after the manner of the viper which hisses as it flees from a superior force.

"Have it your own way," he said sharply; and with a malignant flash of the eye, which did not shrink from her own, he added: "but I shall not go far without telling the gentleman from the wilderness what I think of his manners. His having been for a brief spell a husband, does not authorize him to be insolent."

"You are not going to say anything of the sort to Mr. Clarkson," she rejoined in a saucy tone, "and you will act wisely in refraining. You will never find a better occasion of keeping your dueling-pistols in their case. I allow you to walk in and out of my lodgings and to move around me in my external life with so much freedom that some folks believe, and you may yourself have fallen into the notion, that you have won some rights over me and in my house.

But you ought to know that you possess none at all. You would injure me in reputation, if it were not perfectly indifferent to me what people think and say. I let the world's tongue wag, because it keeps me in the public eye, while you benefit by its advertising you and it may be of some service. But do not imagine you are the diamond, when you are but the thin rim of metal that holds it to the band and is scarcely seen in its luster. Some of those harpies who spy you in my box at the opera, fancy that you gave me the diamonds which I wear, perhaps, rather too lavishly. I was talking of diamonds. Well, you did give me a few, and your father-in-law gave me a few more; but you do not reckon them as presents, do you?"

The duke quailed under her scorn, as he remembered it was thus that he and Mauriceau had recompensed the amateur marriage-broker for the maneuver by which Catherine had been transferred to the ducal mansion.

"Very likely, when wine has made you maudlin in the company of those women, you whine over my cruelty which is driving you to drink. I do not care a cent of your currency for your airs and impertinences, but do not try on your jealousy and your touchiness as regards me, with Mr. Clarkson. He does not know you, spite of the good doctor's introduction: he does not care to know you and your class; you do not exist for such as he is; he only passes through Paris on business matters which are more important than a province of France affords; and as for fighting duels, pshaw! he risks his life at the point of the

bowie or the muzzle of a repeater against adversaries who are quite otherwise formidable than you. He will not fight in the modern Parisian manner—but shoot you like a rabbit! You have your warning, from one who has seen the man at work!”

Averting her head, sinking into a feline attitude of luxurious self-absorption, she mused, perhaps of the fairy city of the West over which floated the banner with her name, without a second idea that Septmonts remained in the boudoir.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A DUEL OF WOMEN

Part of the irresistible fascination that Riena Vanness exercised over the men of the Duke of Septmonts' stamp was her strangeness. If she had only acted oppositely to European habits, they could have comprehended her in time; but she followed an erratic course which was above their orbits. Never had he been so treated by women, but he still thought it natural to adore her.

Often had he asked himself the common problem in his set: why does Septmonts, having a young, lovely and accomplished wife, make a fool of himself by fawning on the hem of Miss Vanness' dress, when she does not throw him even the crumbs of a cake? He could not himself solve it, but he yielded without discussing to the lure. Why does the loadstone always draw? there are irresistible attractions, and in the American girl was fixed a magnet for a heart. Although he came for but a glimpse, he was impelled to see her daily. More than once he had been rebuffed, as on this occasion, but this had not repelled him; and he still lingered, gazing on the figure of such disdainful pose. It was little worth while to have the dregs of the blood of the famous old families of France in his

breast, to be snubbed by this daughter of the lineageless American! She had traits which were so remarkable. Not a shade of coquetry was in her. No scandal about her was traced to a firm foundation. The friends of the duke had watched her like private detectives on their own account, and never had they discovered anything compromising. They joked in his circle that she was a boy in the corset and flowing robe.

She accepted presents with an open hand which astonished men accustomed to the prudery of the English and the French; but she took them, however costly, with the air of one to whom they were returned, not bestowed. Any beholder would have thought that they had been borrowed from her and handed back. At the same time, she was capable of doing a good turn to a friend. Septmonts was "in a hole," as she expressed the situation, a bottomless pit, where he clung to the brink, aware that if he let go his grip he would go down and under forever; she, the stranger, had held out her hand and never rested till she had placed it in Mlle. Mauriceau's, which was his social redemption. She had not bragged of her intervention, but the duke was bound to be grateful.

He still fastened his eyes on her, as you may see one of the group of spectators do before the tigress' cage. These believe that they can subdue that devilish nature and tame them into being a kitten of a larger growth, to sleep on their hearth-rug and come to lick their hands at meal-times. Apparently they succeed, till the day when the creature bursts all the

fragile bonds and, springing on the tamer, devours him to the marrow. But in the disquieting charm is a fresh charm for the timid master; it makes him think himself a hero for being so daring.

Even this woman of steel and whalebone, with a spirit as varied and unsubstantial as the rainbow, must have a weak moment; if he were constant, he might be present at the right time; he would put ten years in the task rather than lose her.

He sighed so loudly that the lady deigned to glance at him and to pretend surprise that he had not departed.

"Come, come," he said, "you are a woman out of the ordinary run; one may talk plainly with you. Why do you not want me to pick a quarrel with Mr. Clarkson, if I am a burden to you?"

"Because I want you to live," she replied with bitter sarcasm; "I want you to be a sample of my good work in Europe—a memorial of my moral suasion. There would be no great inconvenience to me if you were killed, but how about your wife? No, you must settle down, my dear, and be a good boy at home—pattern husband and model papa. That will come in time. Talking of the duchess, what is the answer regarding her coming? bad, I suppose, since you have not heralded her."

"You are wrong. She will come. I ran before her to have a few words before her arrival."

The hostess sat up and brightened perceptibly.

"Good! but it would have looked better had you come together."

"She requested her father to be her escort."

"This is no longer an interview," observed Miss Vanness, laughing, "but a congress. She must be very much afraid of me to come guarded by all her family."

"If she only knew how you had received me, I should think she would tremble for her reception," retorted Septmonts with a sour face.

"Nonsense! the worse I treated you, the more chances that I should greet her warmly, because one of my grievances against you is your neglect of her."

"That is a pretty saying!"

"Why do you not cherish the lady?"

He made a passionate gesture as if to throw himself at her feet, in token of his love for her.

"If you were so deeply in love with me," she said, "you ought not to have married her."

"Why, you know better than anybody how I came to do that," he protested in surprise. "You advised me to it; you helped me to it; and you used to say: 'after you are married to the Mauriceau girl, we shall see—'"

"You are married to her, and 'you see what you have seen', to use one of your phrases. My responsibility is engaged in this matter, for I aimed at your happiness without wishing the lady to incur anything of the reverse. You seem to forget your own proverb that 'Noblesse Oblige'—you have ennobled the tradesman's daughter and you ought to treat the duchess with attention. Your ancestors, whose boon companions of the Regent of Orleans—the Maid of the same



section would have been proud of her lord, I guess! and the Fifteenth Louis, were plaguy vicious; but their vices had in their favor elegance, liveliness and a kind of probity, when they married beneath them, as you have done, to gild their blazons afresh; at any rate, they showed some respect for their plighted word—their signature to the marriage contract and the settlements. They paid their wedding debts as scrupulously as their gaming ones; they never made their consorts the laughing-stock of their domestics when they were young, sprightly, and handsome. If they were so foolish as to buy a title, at least the women had the glory and pleasure of continuing it. Do as your forefathers did, my dear Septmonts, and if affection does not make you decide for it, let your interest do so."

"My interest?" he repeated with awakened curiosity, for the American spoke with that sharp, clear, business-man's tone which he remembered she used when she was talking him into the engagement with the Mauriceaus.

"We are all mortal—the duchess may die, and if that happens without leaving any progeny, you will go to tarnal smash—I mean complete ruin. For the fortune will go right back to Old Man Mauriceau 'the father who puts up for you,' as you style him so gratefully. It has never for one moment occurred to him to appoint you his heir, or even trustee. Very often, the old papa will leave all his riches to grandchildren, who would not let their father enjoy any too much of them. A word to the men who marry for money! a further consideration is—"

"Go on, go on; your sound, commercial way of looking at such matters is as valuable as rare," said the hearer, not wholly sarcastically.

"Well, your duchess is a fond woman, and if one of these days, she should grow weary of the disdain shown toward her by the man from whom she has the right of due appreciation, she may look elsewhere for consolation. I do not mean toward the nunnery as your Ophelias do, I am told."

"How can you dare suspect—"

"Reserve your airs of the bull-fighter for a voyage to Spain, or when you produce 'Carmen' at your private theater. I do not know but your Othello would be more telling than your Escamillo, for you are splendid in jealousy—in spite of your extreme love for me."

He shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"Perhaps it is only your pride that was touched. I dare say you are not capable of the noble and natural jealousy springing from sincere love; but you may have in you that baser love which springs from jealousy! and I should not be astonished if, some day when you hear that your wife has taken a fancy for some other fellow, you took a fancy for her yourself. But take a fool's advice: do not wait for that time to come—make haste, my friend!"

Septmonts was hushed; the speaker had brought before him plainly what he had seen but vaguely up to this time. Just as a passenger, on a ship tossing on the tempestuous sea, pities the voyagers on another ship in sight without an idea that the same

fate menaces him, so most husbands, fortunately, mock at the peril to the domestic peace to which they believe only their fellows are exposed. This strange moralist was right: if his wife revenged herself for his perfidy by betraying him, she would not merely stake her fame and life like a single woman who deceives her sweetheart, but the lives and honor of all her race, perhaps during generations. The consequences of her fault might be disastrous for her dearest ones and the most innocent creatures; the worst of it was for a man in his circle, that no one cares to be the informer, and judge of an act which might lead to terrible catastrophes on the day when revealed to the person who ought to know all. But there can seldom be palpable and authentic proofs, and what is seen and surmised only supplies matter for witticism and slander a little better based than usual.

Suddenly he lifted his heavy head; his mask was convulsed and his frivolity was gone; he was about to speak with more than customary vehemence when the words were frozen on his lips by the tapping of the footman's knuckles on the door-jamb and the announcement along the corridor by the servants of "The Duchess des Septmonts and M. Mauriceau?"

The American looked at him with a glory of triumph about her fine, sardonic mouth, and said in her most dulcet tones: "Thank you, dear boy!"

She rose with a kind of languid alacrity and half-crossed the room to welcome the new-comers. Septmonts exchanged a nod with his father-in-law, but his wife did not let her glance become entangled with

him as she was gazing into the eyes of Miss Vanness with a guilelessness which she ascribed to the native impudence of the Parisian.

"I have never allowed a member of my sex to cross my door-sill," observed the hostess. "Bitter tongues have found for this singularity a quantity of reasons to which I am most grateful that you have not given more credit than they deserved."

The same as if she had not a word and as if her time to speak was not depending on the other's silence but on her choice coinciding with the pause, the duchess said in a measured voice:

"It is quite natural, madame, that I should bring you the receipt for the contribution you so kindly offered, being the lady-president of the foundation in which you interest yourself." She drew methodically from a Russian-leather pocket-book, embroidered with her insignia, a folded slip of blue paper such as legal documents are penned upon—atrociously formal, in short, as was her tone and bearing. "It is the least we could do for a donatrix of such importance."

This was the salute before a duel, and the two gentlemen looked hardly less disconcerted than Miss Vanness must have felt. She frowned a little and she chewed her under lip before responding bluntly:

"Now that we have exchanged the diplomatic preliminaries which restricts your ladyship to the reserve beseeeming her position, and myself to the dignity which suits my character, do me the honor to take a seat beside me. We have some grave business to

discuss which may take us a long time, or would appear so if you remained standing."

The duchess sank with stiff ease upon the chair pointed out to her, much as a martyr would by a masterly effort sit on the cage containing serpents.

"Good morning, Mauriceau," continued the hostess; "I am always delighted to see you, but still more so under present circumstances."

"Quite so," returned the other embarrassed: "there was some misunderstanding which had to be cleared up."

He was not relieved when she whispered to him, in an assured voice which anticipated no refusal: "Ask me for leave to view my new pictures, and take the duke along. I want to chat a while with your charming, cordial daughter, and make my peace with her."

Mauriceau looked incredulous, but while he knew the firmness of his daughter—of recent months at least—he also knew something of the speaker's blandishment, and he said aloud with a fair affectation of the rapture of the art-lover, as he caught his noble son-in-law by the arm with a plebeian pinch of finger and thumb:

"My dear madame, as I hear that you have been making some purchases from the leading studios, will you allow me to show them to the duke? It is a severe reflection on poor France that while millions are forthcoming for great guns and new powder, she has no means to stay the *deportation* to you, magnetic country of our Corots, Robert-Fleurys, and Bouge-reaus!"

"Most willingly," replied Miss Vanness, smiling genially. "Practice on the canvases the farewell which you would sooner be saying to me."

Protesting, the two gentlemen retired, and hardly had they passed under the hanging of the portal than Mauriceau said: "She could turn a bar of steel around her little finger. In ten minutes, my boy, they will be the best friends in the world."

Septmonts growled some sentence in answer, but it was not an affirmative. Since a little time, and without the American's suggestions, he had doubted his wife's blind submission to both father and husband.

On seeing that she was alone with the French-woman, Miss Vanness heaved a sigh of relief and said with an air of frankness not expected, for the sudden change surprised the duchess:

"Are you agreeable to our speaking with open hearts?"

"Madame," was the precisely-turned sentence in response of the well-bred woman who wounds to the last, "I should not be here were I not at your orders."

The flag of truce for a friendly parley was rejected, and Miss Vanness was bound to attack. She preferred to do it under the guise of self-defense.

"If I forced my way into your house as I did," she began, "and if I was firm on your paying me this visit, it was not for the paltry satisfaction of making you do what you did not like, or that of penetrating your circle. If I had any desire to be surrounded by you. friends, I should have simply to beckon with one

finger to have the whole flock fly hither around me. Yes, I have my secretary drawer full of arguments to bring that about on the day when the notion becomes useful or pleasant to me. I doubt that it will never trouble me, and it may be that in a brief spell your whirl of fashion will not exist for me. For one who has stood on a peak in Montana with hair intermingled with the starry locks of Berenice in the skies, one suffocates in your superheated *salons*. Your friends would run up to a sandhill Indian squaw if she came here with a fortune amassed in nuggets from the tarantulas' holes. You see no prejudices if they are thickly gilded. But I am ready to acknowledge that you are superior to your surroundings. I have the three most precious gifts desirable in woman—riches, youth and independence; they suffice me, and you will never hear of me again, after this call is ended, unless you wish it. I have not, therefore, laid any trap for you, and as you saw, you are here between your own folks. For all that, I allow that you ought to know with whom you are, and I am going to tell you, which confidence is more than anybody else can boast of. There are reasons for it which will be known to you hereafter.

"I warrant you have heard all sorts of talk on my head. The truth runs thus:

"You think yourself above me because you are allied to a race that has a tree which is rooted in the far-away past. That is all right, but your duke is, for antiquity, a poor mushroom to the live-oak from which I spring. My grandfather was the last of the Kings of the

Indians in the lower part of Florida; he was only dethroned by the whole available military power of the United States and their best general. He consented to exile to the West. He died after some years, not one of the promises of the captors being honestly fulfilled. His son, chief over a handful, compared to the tribe that followed their banner, still held a large tract which became valuable as the tide of civilization moved westward. What is very rare happened: a young and lovely woman, college trained, where she had taken high honors, quitted her home and friends and went out into the wilderness to marry this heathen. She converted him into a Christian, and thus began his ruin. He sought to carry out the doctrines which he had learnt, and acted upon them with the violence of a belated pupil to make up for lost time. He turned the other cheek to the striker; he divided his clothes, his food and his fruit with his neighbor—ay, with the stranger at his gate. With what result: those he benefited regarded him as an idiot, and his people considered him a stage worse. But his wife applauded him, and while that comforted him, I was born. He was so happy as a father that he thought my coming the tangible proof that the heaven which he had found was favoring him.

"I was six or eight years of age, one of the prettiest of girls of mixed blood, though gradually losing the red-strain characteristics, as not infrequently happens, when we had a great man come to stay a space in our tract. Trumbull Rasin was the son of a senator, and it was understood that he was studying the In-



dians in order to qualify himself for one of the finest posts in the gift of the administration—an Indian agency of a superior order. I know little about this whisper. He was a winning man, who soon enchanted me, as he had already done my parents. He was a distinguished orator; never have I heard a voice so melodious. Such must the serpent have had that tempted our mother Eve.

“For policy’s sake, my father was bound to make friends of the important visitor, for his kindness had resulted in his bestowing gifts on sycophants, signing papers and I know not what, which obligations were soon twisted into a cord to strangle him in the courts. He had renounced his race when I was born and was now neither an Indian, nor a citizen, since that boon was denied him. When he was most harassed he was informed that his wife had eloped with the traitor, supposed his bosom-friend, who had promised to plead for him in the court, and to move the powers in Washington. It was a time to test the truth of the vows my father had taken at the altar of the pale face. Well, madame, he came through the ordeal splendidly. Some swift and martial spirits, faithful in their allegiance to him, spite of all, pursued the culprits and brought them back tied hand-and-foot, two helpless, human logs. They rolled them contemptuously out of the blankets in which each had been enveloped on the horses, and left them on the floor of the house, furnished in the civilized fashion, where we dwelt. I had been brought up in such semi-savage ethics that, precocious enough to understand some-

thing of the crisis, I confidently foresaw that with the knife which my father slowly drew, but raised his hand swiftly to use, he would punish the guilty pair with two strokes like lightning. It was not so. He cut their bonds, not their throats. He said with tears in his voice: 'I forgive you both. Untrustworthy brother, take your life and redeem it by being fair and square to the people of whom I am one of the meanest now, thanks to the cupidity of your kind. Woman, your child was pining for you. Go to her, and leave her no more.' As if both were as the dead to him from that moment, he set to making preparations for a journey. It was plain to my young eyes that he was abandoning the blasted home to the false wife and my innocent self, and that his farewell was forever.

"Rasin had not dreamed of such a noble termination to the drama scandalously devised by him. Confounded, he crept out, debased, ashamed, but not so much at the lesson as that a despised red man had read it to him. Up to this time, my mother had borne all the contumely which her marriage beneath her had inflicted, without resentment. Now, pride of race awoke within her, and she stormed and raved as if she were the injured party. I thought her tirade grand because it was so noisy, and that she had the best of the battle because, without arguing with her, without chastising her even with his tongue, my father sought to go. Perhaps she feared that his resignation was feigned and that he meant to chase her par amour and deal vengeance the more terrible because

the wretched fugitive would imagine he was pardoned and safe. At any rate, he was checked by a change in her voice and manner, which he attributed to a sudden revulsion arising from her perceiving me, amazed and mute witness of this monstrous scene between parents, for a child to hear. She fell on her knees to me, embraced me, and amid tears and sobs, begged for forgiveness. He remained, and I was soon after put to bed. I slept in a little extension to the main house, in a pretty arbor-like room over the exterior of which the flowers climbed. I did not sleep for a long time, not only from my young wits being puzzled by the affair, much of it being beyond my comprehension, but by the perplexing sound of my father and mother talking near me, in that subdued voice which so exasperates one compelled to listen.

"At last, when I was closing my eyes with despair about understanding the enigma, I heard a horrid, blood-curdling and yet startling cry. After a pause, during which I heard hurried footsteps departing, I was called in a weak voice. It was my father's. When I went into the room, overcoming my awe, I found him on the floor, just extricating from his breast, the knife with which his wife had stabbed him—the knife which he had used to set her gallant free. He had barely time to embrace me, and to whisper 'Bear in mind eternally the name of Trumbull Rasin as that of the man who robbed me of a wife and you of a mother and a father. If you live, avenge me. For just vengeance, all methods are good. By all that is Seminoles blood in your veins, remember—revenge!' At

the last gasp, you will notice that the race triumphed over the teaching of the conqueror-race.

"Next morning, I was made heiress to his wasted possessions, his law-suits and the legacy of murder. Being a half-breed, I was, if possible treated more foully than my father had been. Little by little, the agents of the tribunals despoiled me. The tribe repudiated me, through the counsels of avarice. I was poor. At the darkest hour of my desperation, my only friend appeared. May you never know such despair, my lady, or, knowing it, meet with a real friend to succor you at the emergency. A white man, a gold prospector, passing through the town as I staggered from the court-house where the last of my appeals had been cast out, chanced to receive me literally in his arms. His name was Clarkson. He heard my story and offered his purse to fight my battles over again, his hand, his name. I should have taken gladly the silver from Judas. How much the quicker the gift of this honorable man. He was worth twenty thousand dollars, then. I was eighteen years old, and my wealth was in my beauty. My patrimony consisted in the vow of vengeance; and do you know, that thought engrossed me; soon as I thus had means to carry it out, I thought of nothing else beside. Divorce was readily procurable in that territory, especially when I paraded my Indian blood, which I claimed to be a secret for Clarkson. He was so dumfounded by my demand for a separation that he offered no defense; he aided me to take my alimony; and did not lift a hand to stay me. I carried, first,

his disesteem, next, five thousand dollars, a new outfit of dresses, fine jewels, all that a woman needed for a campaign against man. I went to Washington. The senator had not been re-elected, but he liked the Capital, and lived luxuriously there. His son had a fine plantation in Maryland. My mother was dead; a child of hers, a boy, dwelt with the father, who was proud of it. He cherished him as the apple of his eye, but this half-brother of mine was adventurous. He used to escape the parental supervision and go out on the river and bay, with a negro who also loved him. This negro was impaired in brain; he had been educated for the ministry, but study had tasked him too hard. He thought I was an octoroon of his blood, and conceived a singular devotion for me. I talked Scriptural interpretations to him by the hour, in a word addled him and brought him to that stage of the religious fanatic when such are capable of any deed. I instigated him to carrying out the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac. That is, for the good of the boy's soul, he was to send him to heaven while unsin-ning. Two days after, the bodies of this black and the boy were found in the water; no one but I knew that it was not a simple accident. This all but broke the father's heart. From a genial spirit, he became solitary, morose, quarrelsome if disturbed in his mourning. His father, who shared his grief, received his blame because he had recommended the old negro as being his body-servant during the War; they were both hot-tempered and their words ran high. The old man, mad at the hope of his line becoming

a hermit—thing unknown in our country where all apply themselves to labor—replunged into that inclosed sea of financial politics in which he had been famous, and enriched himself, and tried to multiply a fortune already vast. There is a period in the age of a man when he is the prey of quackery, and novelty charms those who have been hardened to all the stereotyped experiments. I set up as a lady broker, a lobbyist, to use our expression, and soon became the adviser of this veteran intriguer. I won upon him first by my intimate knowledge of how money could be made by land speculations in the Indian Territory by cajoling the red men. I had learnt this from seeing too late how my father and I were defrauded. The veteran began to turn his money briskly and put more and more faith in me and money in any scheme I proposed. At length, I had him solidly emmeshed, so that his friends were alarmed and drew his son out of his seclusion to remonstrate. The two had a quarrel which would have resulted in bloodshed if I had not interfered. This occurred in a hotel, so publicly that it was town-talk. In an interview, I related, as if innocently, damaging particulars of the wrongs by which Rasin had piled up his later gains. One of those cold waves of morality rolled over the Eastern States, and the ex-senator's associates fell from him. Deprived of support, he was wrecked in three days. This time, his son, reduced to misery, censured him. I myself know not how the tragedy was carried out, but the old gentleman was found in the road, lifeless, drawn from his carriage by a rob-

ber who had frightened away his servants. These roused the community. Men mounted in haste, the dogs were laid on the fugitive's track and before he had time to remove the disguising handkerchief from his face, they caught him, tried him before Judge Lynch, and Hey! Mr. Trumbull Rasin was hanged to the pliant bough of a giant birch! I had triumphed. Irony of fate! on examination of their papers, it was found that the father had left everything to his son and the latter, alone in the world, thinking of his past, had bestowed all on the child of the chief whom he had wronged, and of the woman whom he had married without the union holding good. Reina Vanessa, as I called myself, was now rich, for I who had entangled the old senator in quicksands, knew how to draw out the money-bags.

“‘It never rains but it pours;’ the saying is musty, but it has the modicum of truth of the old sayings. I received word from my transient husband, as I styled him, Mr. Clarkson, to the effect that he had his streak of fortune in the South-west; he had unearthed a gold mine of stupendous richness, and he made me a shareholder in it as he did in all his enterprises. It is the custom of these brave, honest, simple fellows to reserve a stake for their families, their sweethearts or their wives. I was touched by this unvarying devotion, and for fear of showing weakness of which I should be ashamed, I abruptly left my country for that tour of Europe which, in the case of a young, fair and colossally rich American girl, much resembles a ‘royal progress.’ Yes, I have paralyzed all

your capitals with amazement. Capitals are so easily paralyzed!" she interrupted herself to say, with a laugh. "I was regarded as the type of a class, the foremost of that army of invasion which matrimonially captures the choicest of your leaders in the heart of your camps, though guarded by ambitious tuft-hunters, designing mammas, jealous adventuresses, and sharp-witted dowagers. We capture your princes, and dukes on the steps of the throne—nay, the throne is not safe! that of Portugal, that of Bavaria—I enumerate no more—but you know that the American Girl is the sovereign. I was the most successful of all, because I defied the influences which subdue my sisters and transform them in a time into French, Germans, or English. I remained true to myself; I made no friends, no allies, no marriage—for myself," she added with one of those personal allusions which, emitted at unexpected intervals, enchained her audientress during the long and repulsive narrative; but it had the charm to the duchess of the confession of guilt which, for its horror, induces a criminal advocate to undertake the defense of a notable culprit.

"I was an alien to all your rules and regulations, your traditions and conventions; to many of your trimmed and warped enjoyments; but also to your genteel servitude. My whim was my guide. In my heart, mind and soul was an overflowing hatred of that being, called man—in which feeling I am the representative of the new sect—I behold in him a moral tiger, who fawns on woman merely to sully and to tear to pieces when he is glutted with her blood. He



shall not feast his pride and his pleasure upon my father's child. I thoroughly hate this king of creation, who proclaims himself the master of us women. I have calculated what his vices may earn for me, without my returning him anything in exchange. There breathes not the man on earth or beneath it, who can boast that he has obtained from me the least favor, as it is called in the prudish and complaisant language of your drawing-rooms. One of them, wittier than the most, styled me the Madonna of Evil. When I have extracted from these dupes all that they can yield, I pack them off to what they so well deserve: the jail, madhouse, and dishonorable death by murder or suicide. When other women shall have the consciousness of their power like me, man will become but a puny mortal."

It was evident from the shrinking away of the duchess that the preacher of feminine supremacy would find no proselyte in her. Mastering her indignation and loathing, she said with fine sarcasm:

"No doubt it was in the name of this peculiar philosophy that you obliged mankind by marrying?"

"Yes," returned Miss Vanness, without wincing. "In my apartments met the ambition of the retired dry-goods dealer, Mauriceau, and the ruin of the Duke des Septmonts: the happy negotiation which they intrusted to me was worth a couple of hundred thousand dollars—say, a million of your francs. This is omitting to mention a sum that the duke was indebted to me previously; I am bound to add that he had offered to settle it by marrying me. But to one

who might have been led to the altar by a Russian grand-duke, like a lady of my country, or a monarch of the Low Countries, like still another, to say nothing of a Roman prince or two, and the last of the Orgias, this French peer who was called merely 'Monsieur' and no longer 'my lord,' was a descent to the ridiculous. I rate my money and my freedom pretty high. So I informed the noble that I had already a husband—which was true enough, since poor Clarkson vows that he is staying single in order at any time to annul the separation and repeat our folly. Besides, we are still partners in a business sense."

The duchess was too well trained to show her weariness; on the contrary, she remarked that the story was very curious, but she seemed to long to know what was the drift of it all as regarded herself. She was promptly gratified, for, with a spiteful sparkle in the half-closed, insolent eyes, Miss Vanness resumed:

"At the end of this avowal which shows you my manner of fighting men and things, there is a detail concerning us two alone. Among all the men, false and odious, by whom I have been served, whom I have mocked at and on whom I have been revenged, I met one who was really great in mind and heart. I have no need to tell you that it is the one whom you love!" for the duchess had started as if a red-hot iron had been clapped to her temple, "and who," she added reluctantly, as though the syllables were drawn from her with agonizing but irresistible pincers, "who loves you. He is the only one who has not ac-

knowledged my empire, and I felt at the start that I might fall under his own; but I was not going to surrender quickly. I met him so dramatically in the States that, being a little superstitious, thanks to my Indian origin, I saw in it a decree of fate—a ‘pointer’ for my affection. When, the other afternoon, I learnt that M. Gerard was at your house, I felt a novel sensation—that of jealousy, and I wanted to see how you bore yourselves when together. That is the reason why I forced myself into your presence; and my enforcing your return visit here, is purely that we may confer at ease. I have never done any woman harm, from memory of my mother; some of us must be very weak to act as she did. More or less, we all have grounds of complaint, and I exclude my sisters from my receptions because I do not want to be mixed up with disputants whose cause I might have to champion. I wish to warn you fairly, and not to declare war upon you unless you constrain me to it.”

She paused to view the effect of her challenge, but the Frenchwoman held up her head like one set on the torso of a statue. It was more offensive than a statue’s, as it wore a faint smile of arrogant scorn. One may not be an aristocrat in France and yet the fellow-countrywoman of Joan of Arc, Jeanne de Montfort, and minor heroines, might be proud of her land.

“Is it really love for M. Gerard that I fear? I cannot tell, for I have never felt the tender passion. Is it another of my caprices—a fad that will hardly last a few more days? this is possible, too. I am

certain of this—that a novel curiosity pricks me, and that I wish to study thoroughly this passion which I have many times enkindled, for the sake of which I have seen so much infamy perpetrated, and for which I hear, many a heroic deed has been achieved!" she said disparagingly. "This man shall be mine, or none else shall have him, for a death will erase one of our names from the list of the living—it may be yours, it may be his, it may be mine. I do not fear death any more than any other eventualities. It is a friend or a foe, according to circumstances and the way one looks at it. But it is an instrument, like another. My advice is for you to take a journey with your husband, say, to see the midnight sun in the north, and never more see M. Gerard."

The duchess had risen mechanically as though her time had come to go away, and she did not deign to answer.

"Are you disposed to follow my advice?" inquired the American.

"No," was the curt response in a perfectly unruffled voice.

"You are not going to favor me with any explanation?"

"Not a word."

"You are taking this in a high key," said Miss Vanness, a little surprised at this alliance of gentleness and firmness.

"I used that which befits my station."

"Very well," returned the other in a lower tone, but one which contained no promise of relenting.

Half-way to the portal the duchess stopped and turned, and the other might for a moment believe that she had repented and was frightened into at least learning the consequences of her defiance. But no, it was only to ask, in the drawl of fashion and with that softened accent *grassouillement*, peculiar to the Faubourg St. Denis to which Catherine Mauriceau belonged by birth:

"Would you have the goodness to tell me, madame, whether I am to go and join my father—" she said father and not husband—"or am I to wait him here to take leave of you?"

Miss Vanness dallied with the reply, while giving even more attention than heretofore to this woman whom perhaps she had undervalued. Somehow she had a misgiving that she would be vanquished in the conflict, since old philosophy says that the good must always be victors. It is true that the temporary gains of evil look black for the antagonist, but if the observer continues to gaze he will see when the smoke of battle fades away, that the true colors float on the conquered battlements.

"But, at least, if I fall, I shall go down like a desperate soldier," muttered the American.

The embarrassing situation was ended by the arrival of Mauriceau, the duke having lingered in the gallery in order to stanch another few minutes conversation with the beauty, even though his conduct this day was decidedly ungentlemanly, not to say derogatory to a noble. The gentleman looked at his daughter and at the other with uneasy scrutiny, and he per-

ceived that there had been a contest, however strictly conducted under the regulations of courtesy.

"Will you see me to the carriage, father?" said the duchess, calmly. "Adieu, madame," she proceeded, again taking up the stately march to the doorway, which gave her father the chance to address the American unseen.

"Honestly, how do you like her?" whispered he unsuspectingly.

"De—light—ful!" was the reply, in the exaggerated enthusiasm of the day.

"I thought so," he said, following his daughter out, chuckling.

When Miss Vanness was quite alone, she gave way to a liberation of the nerves in an action which would have singularly edified those who thought her perfect in self-control; she took down from a trophy of Oriental arms, a Japanese sword, fine and pliant as a blade of grass, and cut into strips with a series of rapid, drawing blows, a magnificent, embroidered hassock. When at last she had carved it as Saladin did the silken scarf, and sent the last golden thread of a sundered tassel flying to the other end of the room, she looked up, panting, and saw that some of this extraordinary exercise had been witnessed by the Duke of Septmonts. She had forgotten that he had not returned from viewing the pictures with his father-in-law. She leant on the sword in an attitude not unlike that often given by the Old Master to Judith, and burst into a fit of laughter too strident to be sincere.

"You are astounded, my dear fellow? not at all! it is the newest feature in the esthetic gymnastics for weak woman to develop the muscles of the arm, and you know that I am a little of a physician, one who has liberally interpreted, 'know thyself!'"

"Pray let me put up the sword," he said, "for the keenness of these blades from the Mikado's realm always inspires a grim apprehension;" and he hastened to restore the instrument to its place on the wall. "These upholsterers are fools to use real weapons when theatrical ones would answer every purpose—"

"Not every purpose," retorted Reina, throwing herself on a divan like a bayadere after a dance and as suddenly sitting up with her clasped hands holding her bent knee.

"So my duchess has gone?" he asked, with a wandering eye as though he would not be too much horrified if he caught sight of her headless trunk under the jardiniers, after this exhibition of the trenchant steel.

"Yes, so long ago that you will not overtake her. I do not believe she waited for you. Say," she droned with an amusing mimicry of the urchin of her native streets, "let me put a question: do you know anybody of the name of Gerard—Lucien Gerard?"

There was little need of his affirmation as his emotion was answer sufficient.

"Of course, though—you saw him at your house, in your wife's private apartments when I looked in."

"Yes," he observed moodily; "why do you ask this?"

"In order to learn; not that it is the best way with

one whose words most often disguise his thoughts, to speak with the old diplomatists of your aristocracy, whose memoirs are somewhere on the table at your elbow."

"The gentleman has been in Paris a year—he was in America—do you know him?"

"Met him in both little spots—yes. I know him perfectly."

"He is an old acquaintance of my wife and her father; a neighbor's son where the old gentleman kept shop—if you want it put bluntly."

It always cost the duke a pang to be stretched on that bed of torture, the counter where Mauriceau had measured lace and dress pieces, but he preferred to do so himself to letting Reina do it.

"Did they tell you that he is the son of her governess, that they often saw one another with that shocking promiscuity of the vulgar, and that they used to be considered beau and belle—sweethearts—lovers—betrothed?"

"No," said the duke, as if stunned by this repetition of epithets. "Who told you?"

"I heard it from his own lips. The inference that I find in this bucket drawn from the well of the past—often a deep one not always pellucid—is that, instead of playing the poacher in the manors of others, you had better be your own keeper at home. Still, unless the young Lothair has imbibed the precipitancy of the Americans among whom he has been sojourning, you need not leave me so abruptly. I gave out that we should see you to dinner. I have invited



the Baron Von Kertch, the Cavalier de Sivona, the Count von Barnsturm, the Prince de Sant Orso, and I should not wonder if Clarkson drops in for the ice-cream—"

"Certainly," said Septmonts, chafing at the curb, but hesitating to leave the enchantress, even after her terrible warning that his place was within his own doors.

## CHAPTER IX

### HIS SOUL, HIS THOUGHT, HIS LIFE

Guy Deshaltes had resigned himself perforce to the only noble step before him; he could not boast that he had sacrificed the sentiment that Catherine inspired, because there could be no sacrifice but where might be reality, or at least hope. Where is the man to claim a right to vaunt of sacrifice when he not only is not loved but knows that his beloved loves another. All his heroism was thus bounded, and his sole resource, having some generosity in his soul, was to prove the sincerity of the feeling in his bosom by suppressing any farther expression of his passion, and even by devoting himself to the success of his rival. Knowing of the meeting impending between the duchess and Reina, he had fears and, had he not received a note asking him to call on the former, he would have paid the visit to set his mind at rest.

The duchess was glad to see him. She had not been weeping, but it was not possible to disguise traces of wrestling with the spirit.

Poor woman! she was alone, and M. Deshaltes was her only confidant, being preferable as adviser to Dr. Ramonin, whose age and gravity somewhat repelled the troubled wife.

"I hastened on receipt of your note," he explained.

"Yes," she answered, warmly shaking hands. "I have been unfair to you, for M. Ramonin has told me what you have done. There are times when it is so sweet to feel that one has friends, and this is that time."

"Do not be grateful to me," he protested. "In the first place, I have only done what an intelligent friend ought to do, and a great deal more for my sake than for yours. You love a man who has never loved another. I long to be the friend of this man as well as your own."

This was the more easy as she was expecting Gerard now; she had written to him at the same time as to Deshaltes, and she showed astonishment that he should not have been the first to arrive.

The duchess had written to the lover of her early days! How imprudent, for Deshaltes knew that Septmonts was spiteful as a monkey.

"Do not compromise yourself," pleaded Guy earnestly. "Do not allow your name to flutter from lip to lip escorted by another one than your husband's—remember that he is a proud man who would never pardon a slight."

"I have no need to be cautious—I have nothing to conceal," she answered haughtily, but her heart failed her a little. "I am loved as I longed to be and deserve, M. Deshaltes."

He was repeating his wise counsel when the footman announced the subject of their argument. At the name, Guy had a cloud pass before his eyes, and

vertigo seized his tormented brain which had not lately had needed repose since the discovery that his hopes were vain. He recovered himself, as Gerard entered the parlor, and presented a serene front, but it was a serious one, and it would be difficult for his companions to recognize the halcyon of sunnier days. Gerard, too, was moody, and, being clothed in black after a precedent as much American as Parisian, he seemed to have come from a funeral. The two gentlemen shook hands, when presented, with a steady grasp.

"M. Deshaltes is a sure friend to whom the hand may be held out in entire confidence," said the lady.

Guy had taken a long, searching look at the other while he, for his part, had no eyes but for the duchess; he did not know more of him than the biased introducer had said, but he saw enough to make certain that this man with the resolute features, bronzed by the ardent sun of of New Mexico, and an eye that could stare the eagles into dropping, was worthy of esteem and brotherhood. He said something to this effect, and Gerard, with the frankness and promptness of one accustomed to act in emergencies, accepted the comradeship and vowed that it was returned as unreservedly. This compact made, Guy did not delay, for the two had already forgotten him, and as the lady had not informed him of the outcome of her interview with the American, he left unsatisfied, but having that question in reserve for another call.

"How is it that you didn't come sooner?" she asked

impatiently and not without disquiet, as soon as she was alone with Gerard.

"I was not very sure about coming at all—I have such a fear of injuring you socially. What a society—you all seem sharks or wolves, lying in wait to see a weak point at which to fly, for the sheer pleasure of tearing the character to pieces."

"But my note urged you to come," she protested with carelessness as to consequences.

"What note?" he demanded with unqualified surprise.

"That I wrote to you yesterday," was her reply in almost as great a degree of the same emotion; "you should have received it at the same hour as one to M. Deshaltes—they were written together, say at nine in the morning."

He continued to deny that he had received any communication, and she rang up a servant who acknowledged that he had taken his mistress' pack of letters from her tiring-woman and left them all in the porter's lodge; in the division of duties in such a large establishment, this worthy would put the lot in the post, along with the duke's correspondence. There was no accounting for one of the parcels going astray, but he would go and inquire of the porter.

"What did you say to me in this letter?" asked Gerard with rising apprehension.

"I begged you to call that I might relate my conversation with Miss Vanness."

"If that was all—"

"But that was not all, though the lady was reluc-

tant to confess how imprudent she had been. The inevitable postscript which, in a woman's screed believes or reverses all that went before, was present. She had been unable to withhold her pen from assuring him of her affection, and she hardly dared repeat, and but imperfectly recalled the sentences damnatory from a married woman.

"How rash! if those lines have gone into the wrong hands and been read?" he said, shuddering.

"Well," she returned with an audacity which she did not feel, but she was averse to showing that she participated in his alarm, "In that case, someone will know that we are in love. As I am ready to advertise it to the whole world, this discovery by an individual is a matter of indifference to me," said the duchess with infinite loftiness.

"But if this one were your husband?" said Gerard, shaking his head.

"He will not know it too soon. As he must learn it, it had better be immediately, and through me than a stranger."

"But this will lead to a rupture."

"What matter? he cannot part us, that I defy him to do. When a woman really loves, is there anything in the world that can separate her from the man she loves? her sister, who is not ready to sacrifice everything for her love, may have reason on her side, but love is not there."

All was true; she was true to the girlish plight; Gerard's dreams when he sank to sleep, wrapped in the *serape* and lulled by the wail of the coyote, which

could not approach him in the chapparal of Spanish bayonet and prickly pear—they were coming—realizing themselves. She had no thought but for him. By the exaltation of her countenance it was beyond doubt that she would follow him out of the world if the avenging husband's pistol cut his thread of life.

The domestic returned to report, as might be expected, from the fraternization of his tribe, that the household was immaculate; the porter had as usual put all the budget in the postoffice.

"Perhaps there is a delay in the delivery," observed Gerard, without believing a word of what he said, so strong had his dread grown that disaster was impending if only because his joy was extreme, for in uncommon organizations one great emotion is followed by another of a contrary kind.

"No," she said gravely, for his fear was contagious. "Something else has occurred. Never mind! As you told me to go and see Miss Vanness, I have done so. She let me know that she loves you, but though she is a divorced woman and can, I suppose, wed again, I do not fear her—any longer, at least, if ever I did." Gerard, who had started with surprise, was calm and smiled slightly. "You may have associated sufficiently with savages to understand her ideas about plundering, cheating and murdering white people, but I doubt that you will applaud her. A Parisian is not made to be coupled with a red Indian girl, even if the chain be golden. Hence, when, after a long and fiery outburst of hate and a story like a chapter from *Gustave Aimard*, she talked of power to reap vengeance,

I mocked at her order, as it was, to take myself off with my duke and keep him from pestering her any more; and simply answering, No! I came away with my father. I wanted to draw a free breath. I was in haste to be afar from a creature who is not of our age, our world, our race, or my sex—she an American? not wholly, and what portion she derived from the people, whom you call your friends, was wicked. But let us drop these beings; life is not long enough at the rapid pace of Paris, for us to dwell at length upon them. What have you been doing, dear?"

"I went out to Montmorency, where I worked out some new features in the process of Dr. Ramonin and myself. I slept soundly right through the night—a thing which has not happened me in this country, and I woke up this morning with a song on my lips—

‘Come, hear me, all you hustling boys,  
Who’ve crossed the Gila’s shoals;  
Don’t take your ills like deadly pills!  
Your mountains are but moles.’

I beg your pardon; it astonished my mother, who had not heard me thus giving tongue to my gladness since my boyhood, when I used to come home from seeing you. With that intuition of mother’s—that is, doubly feminine—she exclaimed: ‘You have seen *her* again!’ I could not do less than tell her all the story. She listened to the end and gave me a kiss; she did not approve, but said: ‘Have a care! in a game of passions like these, her life as well as her honor are at great stake.’”



"She may fear for your sake—but you—do you fear anything? No, of course not. You are not of the sort that fear, and you need not do it for me. I shall go and see your mother; she was like one to me. For what have we gone through our destiny but to have that bond of community? But what blindness was ours—how easy it was for us to have been happy together, as we may be yet. Come, you are happy now?"

"Yes, completely happy," he seemed to say with his eyes, brimming with excess of rapture.

"Right, it is good to be happy, being so just and natural, above all when, only on the eve, one believed oneself the most unfortunate of mortals! Ah, I feel so untroubled in your presence. I am so sure of you that I do not distress myself about my safety. In your love I sun myself—I can rely on your honor; I can repose on my conscience. Miss Vanness had no need to dilate on the subject to explain that she loved you. It is readily understood that you would entrance a woman of that hybrid race—you who have ventured among the desperadoes and lived amid the ferocious demons of the border."

Lucien might have softened the colors in her ideal picture of the South-west, but that was not material when she might incur the fate of the Duchess de Praslin, murdered by her husband not so far from this place, with atrocious traits which a Navajo might not surpass. It is not only in jungles and canons that the human leopards skulk."

"What are your working hours?"

He looked his wonder that she should put this apparently impertinent question, but she insisted.

"All day long," he said.

"You mean when you are sad—have sorrows—doubts that I love you. But now that you are encouraged and ought to be contented, you sleep well, do you? How dare you, sir, confess that you sleep? Whoever heard of a real lover sleeping? Oh, I know what you are going to say—that it was to dream of me. Well, I, too, went to sleep like a child. Now, listen—since the heart no longer teases the mind, you ought to do twice as much work as before in a given time. And the time that is saved out of the hours of toil—better done, too, than before, as you will see—will be mine, for I want to see you every day, although it be only for an hour or two."

"You are not asking much," he answered amusedly; "but where could we see one another?"

"Anywhere!" she triumphantly declared; "in the public promenades, in the playhouses, the stores, the streets—at your mother's, here—everywhere!"

He frowned slightly, a trifle pained by this transport, which resembled the outburst of a girl who was disposing of her leisure to her affianced lover before the nuptials.

"Are you not—were you not my betrothed?" she said; "the one pledged to me under heaven? the eternal bridegroom? only, some delay occurred—you missed the train—your boat failed to connect for the Happy Shore Railway! but the mishap has not prevented

me and you loving right on. Nay, it is just the other way."

"But," he remonstrated, without joining in her laughter, a little forced, "during the postponement, the engaged one was married to another and—but you do not seem to understand what that means!" he concluded, springing away from her side.

"Stop!" said the duchess; "I do know what it means to most—to you—but to me it signifies nothing. I did belong to the man—but that is so no more. I was given away, as the saying so truthfully runs, when I did not know anything about it; but as soon as I learnt the value of myself and the worthlessness of the donee, I resume self-possession. All that episode is finished. Only one thing do I fear, that I shall not clearly remember the vow I was made to take in a day of doubt and ignorance, and call you 'Lucien' before all hearers as if you were really my husband. Let us pray to heaven for a new future, since that is the only means to repair the past, and in the meanwhile, let us take our departure forward on the solid footing that you give me your whole life, soul and thoughts. And when you shall have sworn this a hundred times, we will have you repeat it again, and yet again, day after day, till—no, there will never be enough of it, and I shall weary of it—never, never!"

While she was so passionately dilating, in a voice sweet as if she were in her sixteenth year again, Gerard had returned nearer her, took a chair beside hers, and he contemplated her, entranced. Like one

learning the rites in a holy ceremonial, he repeated as she prompted: "Thou art, in truth, my soul, my thought, my life!"

If the regained lover had his mistrust acute as regarded the carrying out of this hazardous programme, it was not so with the duchess. She knew that she was safe from trivial persecution in these rooms of hers. In plays, it is traditional that servants should act the spy upon their employers, but in households of the importance of the Septmonts, this kind of servant is rare. The staff expect not to be discharged at short notice by any accident; dukes do not become bankrupt like merchant princes and bank-presidents; if one dies, for they are mortals in that respect, the son of the next male heir succeeds while the wages run on just the same, and the son leaves the engagements as before with the steward or butler; he is bound by rule, and perhaps has to apologize to the establishment below stairs for bringing his own valet into their distinguished and select circle. At least, the duke had the manners and bearing of a nobleman and, this was soon proved for Gerard's enlightenment by his sending a menial in to ask the duchess' permission for him to enter. It was granted.

Septmonts bestowed on Gerard a suspicious glance, fresh come as he had from Miss Vanness, and always irritated against his spouse the more bitterly as the American was cold. However, he took and kissed his wife's hand with an elaborate attention which astonished her.

"How are you feeling to-day, my dear?" he inquired

with a good assumption of interest. She set him at ease about her health but it was superfluous for her to speak, for besides being rejuvenated, as Gerard gladly marked, she had an enhanced color which was not without its beauty, with her eyes so sparkling, too.

"I am not interrupting you?" he continued, glancing from one to the other.

"What should make you imagine that you disturbed me?" retorted the lady with a depth of scorn which he had not experienced in this quarter, and which she might have caught from Miss Vanness, whom it was perhaps dangerous for a woman to meet who not already joined the league of Emancipated Women.

Septmonts had an idea that he might be worsted in this encounter, for he turned away, and noticing that Gerard was observing him with some such look as a horseman gives a snake in the dust, in doubt whether to cut at it with his whip or ride by, he said, as insolently as can be done in the tones of perfect politeness:

"This is M. Ge—ge—gerard, I believe?"

"Gerard, yes, monsieur," replied the younger man, curbing himself with an effort.

"Ah, I could not be positive in such a trifling divergency. I did not have the opportunity the other day to cultivate the acquaintance, and I feared just now that I was interrupting a conversation entertaining to you two alone. Perhaps it was just as well that I sent my name in." He took a chair, and waved his hand for Gerard also to put himself at ease. "I understand that you are one of the duchess' friends of

youth, and were educated in company with her. Besides, you are the son of her first governess who must have been a most high-bred person to judge by the training she has given the lady who was then Mlle. Mauriceau. It is quite natural, that, meeting with the lady, as the Duchess des Septmonts," he went on with emphasis, "that you old acquaintances should have a number of topics to discuss to which a third party would be a superfluous hearer, even if the husband of the lady. I trust your respected mother is still in the land of the living?"

Gerard intimated in a brief tone that he was not yet wearing mourning for this dearest member of his family.

"That is well. Does she still busy herself with matters of education and deportment?"

"No, monsieur," replied the other sternly, "but—"

He was perhaps going to add that the business of instructing aristocratic malaperts had devolved on Madame Gerard's son here present, but a glance from Catherine, who was now preaching patience, froze the words on his palpitating lips.

'Retired—with a fortune, I hope," went on the duke, with the rashness of a boy provoking a badger into leaving its kennel. "The education of Mlle. Mauriceau was the only one which she superintended," said Gerard.

"What a loss to the community!" ejaculated the duke; "I should have been happy to recommend her to the parents of some young ladies who, in this age of perverted manners, stand in need of an instructress

who would not be worthily repaid though they made what appeared sacrifices of lucre."

Gerard rose to his feet much as if, to recall our parable of the horseman and the snake, it was he who had determined to strike the animal while hissing its spitefulest.

But the duchess again pleaded with a secret glance for patience, and he replied calmly enough to deceive Septmonts as to his character.

"My mother wants for nothing. I do not the less thank you, M. le Duc, for your kind intentions."

"Oh, pray do not give me my title, under the terms on which we meet now, and on which I trust that we shall meet; it is all very well for inferiors to continue the custom of 'my-lord-ing' and 'your graceing' although we are in a country almost as democratic as the Republic where you have been. As your mother is no longer in the service of my wife I do not see any gulf between us and with a little good feeling I dare say that in a short time, there will not be any difference."

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Gerard before the lady could come between, though she had risen with some briskness, and without giving the nobleman even the mild title of Monsieur.

"My meaning," rejoined Septmonts, as insolent as ever in tone, but unable to keep his voice steady from so suddenly finding his antagonist about to take him by the throat, "my meaning is that, as you are a friend of the duchess, you must become one of mine. To show you that I treat you as though you were or soon will be a member of the family, I beg leave to require

my wife for a few minutes private conversation. This is not saying good-bye for any length of time to you—for you might look in again, say, in an hour, if you care to renew the dialogue which I am cutting in twain. What I am compelled to say to the duchess is so very grave and confidential that it may not be uttered in your presence. Still, I do not imply that if ever the subject should arise again, I would not touch upon it exhaustively before you."

"Have it as you say, this time," was Gerard's answer, as he bowed comprehending the two, but less to the gentleman than to the lady, who had gone to the writing-table desk, and was scrawling a few lines in that enormous hand which is not the more elegant because it is favored by the fashionables of England. As the young man turned at the doorway to judge by a searching glance whether the duke contemplated mischief when he should have his wife at his mercy, the latter held up her hand with the note, which she had quickly folded, and beckoned him back a few steps to take it, while she said in a voice measured and unaltered:

"To occupy your time till your return, Monsieur Gerard—for I look forward to your coming back in an hour's time that we may dine together, if you are not better engaged for the evening—will you be kind enough to carry this letter to my father? he lives in the south wing of this house. I am asking him to come and dine, also, that is, he, you and I—a little committee of three. He told me that he would be happy to talk old times over with you. If he should



be at home, go in and tell him that I am expecting to see him as soon as possible." Then, infusing in her bland voice an acid which was of novel usage to her lips but which she certainly used with caustic effect, she went on: "I ask your pardon for charging you with this errand, but, yesterday, I wrote a letter which miscarried, and I fear that a similar fate may befall this one, which is in haste. No farewell, since we shall meet so soon again."

After giving him the letter, she gave him her hand; it was as cold as the paper, but in her eye shone a fire not to be dulled easily and to be extinguished only in the grave. He returned the clasp with his pulse beating rapidly, and bidding her good-bye confidently, he honored the duke, who did not like this unforeseen incident, with a defiant "Keep well till we meet again."

"Just so," muttered Septmonts, "I will admit to myself that with a robust Hector of your nature, fortified by exercises with cowboys and horse-breakers, that I have need of my health, too. Happily, it is skill that has much to do with the driving a foil to the heart or a pistol bullet to the brain. Now, for the duel of another kind."

When he turned, his feminine adversary was on guard and waiting for him to attack.

## CHAPTER X

### THE KIND OF LOVE THE DUKE DID NOT UNDERSTAND

In the situation in which the Duke of Septmonts confronted his wife, some husbands pardon, some plead, some speculate, others close their eyes and others still laugh it off. He was so thorough a man of the world that he was inclined to say, "What is the odds as long as they are happy!" but he had no hopes of handling the gold of his new friend, and he believed with Miss Vanness, that Mauriceau's would be withdrawn if he parted from his daughter.

His reflections should have been made before, since the duchess inferred from it that he was afraid of the lightnings which he had attracted toward him; and as the weaker vessel oftentimes does, she spurred herself into defense by making the attack.

"It was you who intercepted the letter which I dispatched yesterday to M. Gerard?" she began.

"Yes; that is, I found it. Intercepted—no?"

"Do not let us argue about words," she said contemptuously and continuing her line of assault, "and mine was the proper one. When a person does not send on to the address the letter which has fallen into his hands, that is intercepting it. And you read it?"

"Yesterday, after our visit to Miss Vanness, I had

a presentiment that you would write to M. Gerard. That came to pass. I found the letter, and I read it."

"By what right?" she demanded, with burning cheeks.

"By that which empowers a husband to know with whom his wife corresponded and the subject of the correspondence."

"I thought that the seal of my letters was as sacred to you as yours has always been to me."

He laughed low and scornfully at her thinking that in such matters the rule worked both ways.

"Let that pass," she said. "What do you intend doing with that letter?"

As he did not know, he remained silent, and she was obliged to repeat the question, stamping her foot and frowning.

"Have a little patience," he said, "for I had a great deal with M. Gerard, a while ago, although the desire to have him assisted out of the house between a pair of our English footmen was not absent from me. My not being so—my stooping to treat him as the son of an old servant of the family—"

He paused, expecting an outburst, but it was not on this point that she meant to cross swords.

"As the son of an old servant of the family, whose mother, the servant in question, was discharged by your father on account of the complicity she gave to your flirting with her dear Lucien—"

This time, Catherine winced, but she set her lip firm and said nothing, although the working of her

facial muscles, controlled creditably but with difficulty, betrayed that he would not gain anything by the firing being reserved.

"In short, I treated M. Gerard gently, as you saw, because it is with you that I should have the preliminary explanation."

"If you entertain such opinions, let me tell you, monsieur, that it will be better for us not to have explanations."

"Why so?" he demanded, throwing himself across her path, for she started to leave the room to him.

"Because that day will be most painful and humiliating when that takes place."

"For whom?" he asked, loftily as if he could not be a guilty accuser.

Stopping and looking him in the face, she responded:

"It will be for you."

"I will run the risk of that, because I foresee the end. Will you be obliging enough to answer me—ought I to kill that man?"

"Yes—if it is a crime for me to love purely and entirely."

"Purely?" he sneered as if he did not know the word. "You love him?"

"With all my soul!" she hurled into his teeth.

"And you persist in repeating 'purely?'"

"I am not trying to make you believe anything, but I do not shrink from answering when you question."

"It is of little moment, anyway," he said with a triumphant voice. "Your letter is couched in terms

which leaves no distinction between the truth and what looks like it; by itself it condemns you as guilty, if we should come to a trial for separation."

She smiled so gratefully that he saw that was an end she was looking forward to, and he hastened to add to diminish her pleasure, "But I am not wishful for it, at least as yet."

"I understand that, but I shall lodge the complaint and you will have to stand the trial."

Miss Vanness was threatened, now, and the tables might be turned.

"Though you won, it would be a barren victory," he said with spite, "for, previous to the delivery of the verdict, I should provoke M. Gerard into a duel and I should kill him."

"Unless he kills you—the times are changed, my lord, and you cannot go out to fight even a peasant's son, clothed in armor against his naked breast. You could not parade your dead before me, for I shall not survive his fall."

"Women talk in this romantic vein, but their lives are still the longest on insurance tables," observed Septmonts, sarcastically.

But, on seeing her proud and resolute mien, he doubted his taunt, for if there was a woman to act up to her threat, she seemed the one. "You speak of shortening your young life," he said with a complete change of tone, as he recalled Miss Vanness' hints. "Then, I should turn to another means, the only one I had in mind when I came in, I assure you."

She was not listening, but when he said "I intended

to forgive all and overlook all," she was amazed.

"How would such as you, so worldly, so earthly, how would you learn the divine art of forgiving?"

Through my love for you."

"Your love—love for me?" she tossed her head. "Is love then found, as one finds letters? But cease to jest. I assure you that we stand on unsafe ground."

"Why should I not love you?"

"You never have loved me."

"I did not know your worth before; I appreciate my diamond since friction with the rougher passions have polished it. Am I the first husband who repented and repaired his wrongs?"

"What is your drift?" she demanded coldly.

"You were frank with me, and I will pay you in the same unsophisticated coin. When I read that love-letter addressed to another, a strange thing took place within me. In the first place, admitting that its expressions were those of the most tender affection, such as would doom you in the eyes of the most impartial judges, still I felt at once that you were as pure and unblemished as on the day when I received you from your father. Behold what the human heart is! Instead of hating that man, I envied him; instead of accusing you, I understood you, and I tried to gladden myself by fancying that the letter was addressed to me. I read it more than once, and I said to myself: 'what eloquence! what nobility! I must some day receive from that hand such a letter as this!' In this mood, as new to me as to you, I came to see you. Do you want to know the motive of my bearing

toward M. Gerard? it was an impulse of jealousy which I could not restrain. I found a pleasure in humbling the man whom you love, in your presence, when his love for you was based on too much respect to allow him to answer me otherwise than he did. But I am ready to hold out my hand, unweaponed, to him, when he returns, if you like. It depends upon you. While you were so unjustly demanding what fiendish combination I meditated on the possession and manipulation of that note, I was only puzzling my brain for a method of restoring it to you as handsomely as possible, and I am ready to return it for the sole hope of receiving as welcome a one some day. Since your husband has been such a dullard as not to value you properly, allow me to correct him, being a new self now, and do all that is possible to make him forgotten. Perhaps I regret a little that wrath a while ago which became you so well, but I should take so much pleasure in soothing it; and indulgence ought to be admirable in you, if not better to see. Really and truly, I am no longer the same man since I read that letter, probably because you are not the woman you were before you wrote it. Say one word and you can have that letter."

He held it out to her loosely between his fingers, but she bade him keep it, and would have passed him by.

"You are cruel and imprudent," he hissed, grating his teeth.

"It is possible that the strange speech which I have just heard hides some secret thought," she said, re-

flectively. "I prefer to believe this than admit that the insult was to be greater and, that, for the acme of infamy, you are sincere. I do not wish to study the matter deeply; I wish to know nothing about it, but I want the conversation to be clear and precise because you have required it, and it will undoubtedly be our last. When I married you, my lord, I did not love you, but I firmly believed that I no longer loved the man who had given me up through dignity. In my ignorance of things, I craved no more than oblivion of him, and had you then, in good faith or otherwise, held the language just now employed, it is likely—nay, certain, that I would have been a happy and faithful wife. It takes so little in a husband to convince a girl, to whom the representatives of heaven and other men say that she has all the duties to perform and he all the rights to exercise! Unfortunately you married me wholly to pay for the faults, follies and rovings of your past life, and to continue them at your ease. Your friends were commencing to blush for you, your family were on the verge of repudiating you, your club was about to expel you, on account of your unsettled gambling debts, and your society only waited for a flagrant scandal to 'cut' you, when you liquidated your scores by means of a plot which I begin to get a glimpse of."

"A plot?" repeated the duke, only now able to check the flow of pent-up fury, which rushed upon him and overwhelmed him slowly but unremittedly like a glacial stream.

"A plot, Monsieur," returned the duchess firmly,



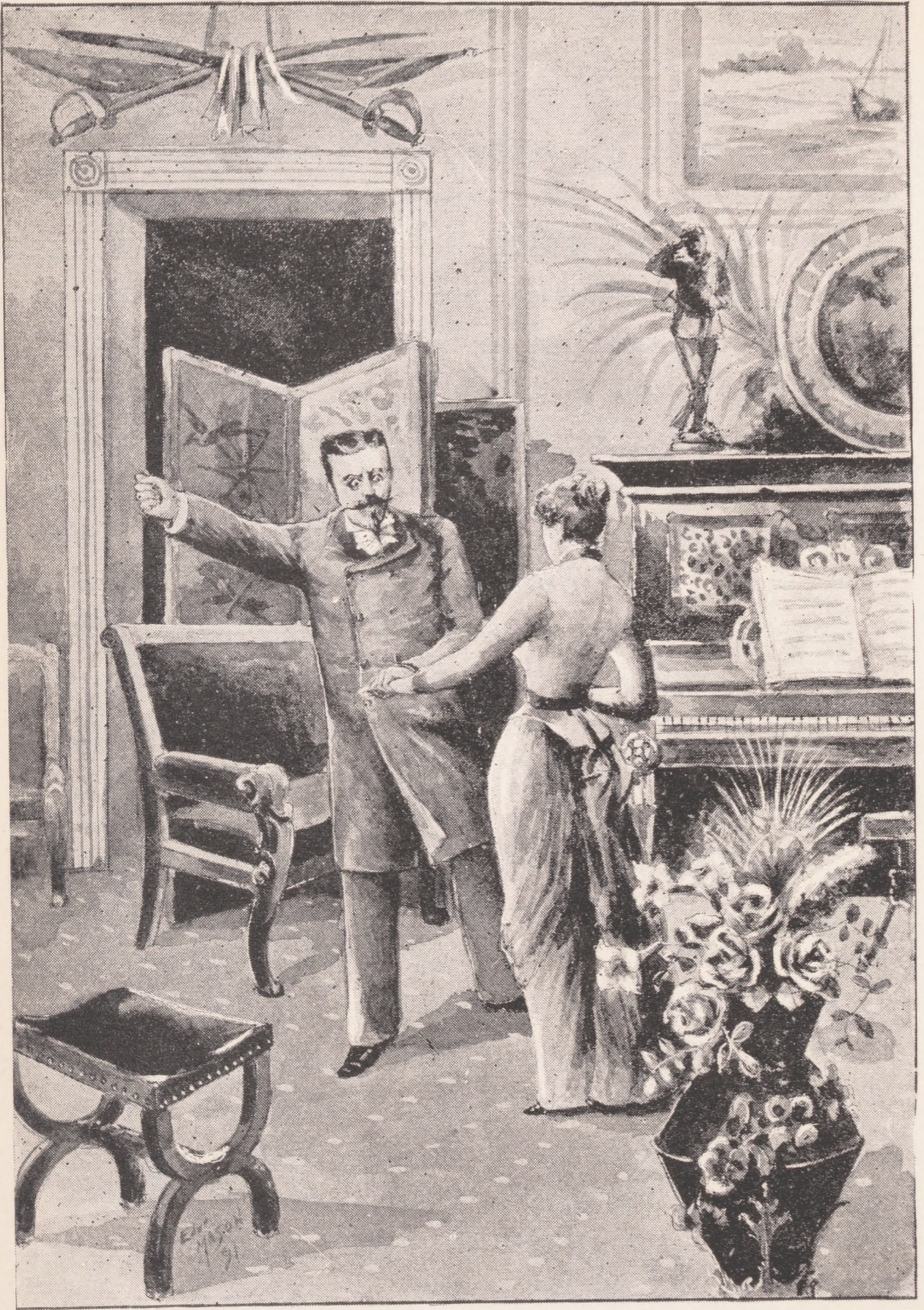
with flashing eyes. "You were going to catch at the raft of succor so often floating across the Atlantic for you, impoverished noblemen. You were on the brink of marrying Miss Vanness, but she by far preferred that I should be the prey—she told me so yesterday," she said sharply to forestall his half-hearted denial. "I know it is hard to believe this, remembering the historic name which you bear—which we bear, fortunately for you. As a matter of course, I was plunged into ignorance of all this; the footpad and the instigator of a crime do not give the victim a hint of their scheme.

"But I forgive you for what is not your fault. You were reared in idleness, luxury and pleasure; you were never taught to toil, and your self-respect was worn off. But what makes me hate you, and what I shall never forgive you for, is that you did not know how to esteem and respect the maiden who not only restored you to your self-respect but to that of others; I reintegrated you in that society which was on the point of casting you out. That maiden who was handed over to you, ignorant and defenseless, has been assimilated by you with notorious bad women; she ought with these hands," she said, darting them out with such energy in illustration that he started back in alarm, "she ought to have turned you out of the nuptial chamber where you staggered in, tremulous with drunkenness and debauchery. I have so deeply blushed for you and for me, that I buried these dreadful memories in the depths of my soul, whence they would never have been exhaled if you had not

had the audacity again to offer me what you style your love. You are a wretch!" this she hurled at him so that he could no longer maintain the pretense of indifference, and sprang to his feet, quivering with rage and wounded pride. "Yes, I have recovered the friend of my girlhood—my sweetheart, if you like to hear me call him so—a generous heart, a haughty and loyal spirit, to whom anew has gone out my heart entire. Yes, on coming out of the gilded den of that American lioness, which visit you imposed on me—by the way, she is worth in one finger all your body—I wrote to that man the letter which you stole, one in which I strove to tell how much I despised you and loved him. Because he is a true gentleman—because he comes from a country where a woman is always treated properly, and the dog who fails in that line is promptly spurned as a cur—he let your rudeness pass, but if you are deficient in respect to him a second time, he will cuff your ears, and if you resent your fit correction and appeal to the arms of gentlemen, he will slay you. He will not fear the pocket pistol with which you have threatened me until I bade you tremble lest some night I should snatch it out from under the pillow and lodge the lead in your skull. And then I shall be his entirely, for there will be enough blood shed and tears poured forth to efface all traces of your abominable kisses."

Such a frank outpour and so much contempt raised Septmonts to the highest paroxysm of anger; he flew at her, and seizing her arm, lifted his right hand to strike her on the mouth that would still denounce him.





“ ‘ Silence!’ he screamed.” —(p. 207.)

"Silence!" he screamed.

"If you dare strike me," she replied, "and make the list of your brutal acts complete—the more cowardly as you know that I should no more tell him this than the rest."

But he heard steps on the other side of the tapestry and not wishing to have a servant as a witness to what would have discredited him utterly, he let go his clutch, which left a livid ring on her shapely arm, and drew back. It was none too soon, for Mauriceau entered without knocking, thinking to find his daughter by herself.

"Oh, good! it is you, father dear!" she exclaimed. "I wrote to you to come as I foresaw what has happened; I regret that you did not arrive sooner, that you might have seen with your own eyes what is the sequel of the unions formed by paternal ambition, filial ignorance, and marital baseness. The termination was a scuffle, in truly exquisitely aristocratic taste, between this gentleman and myself. This incident will at least have the advantage of making reconciliation—any meeting between us—henceforth impossible. I have had enough of the man you chose and—I leave him. Listen: he knows that I love another man. He has found—waylaid, abstracted, intercepted, stolen a letter of mine, with which he means to excite a scandal; try for your sake that it shall be as mild a one as possible. It is all the same to me. If he wants money, give him some. The main thing is that I shall see him no more."

She wished her father good-bye but did not favor

Septmonts with even the nod of politeness to a stranger. The duke had never seen her carry herself with an air more beseeming a lady of rank; she was so much improved by this animation and the heightened color that, altogether he doubly suffered by this threatened loss of the pearl of which he had miscalculated the value. He did not make any attempt, even with words, to stay her, but quickly taking the seat she had placed at the writing table, he scratched a few lines. He rang for a servant, and did not say anything to the questioning-eyed father until after the footman had taken the note, which was for Mr. Clarkson, and withdrawn.

"What does this mean?" inquired Mauriceau.

"Your daughter has acted in such a way that a duel with her paramour and a trial for divorce have become unavoidable, although I have done all I could to prevent them."

"A duel? a divorce case? a scandal? you dare assert that my daughter—"

"She had a lover!" interrupted Septmonts, more bold than when he had the woman to face.

"That is false," cried Mauriceau, clinching his fists and making the duke recede a step from the furious countenance which he assumed.

"The letter which I hold proves that," he sneered triumphantly.

"A letter? a woman's letter—illegible anyway, and full of nonsense if interpreted," said Mauriceau with equal scorn.

"It is addressed to Lucien Gerard," said the duke deliberately.

"Gerard? Gerard has never ceased to esteem and respect your wife. I have come from seeing him, and I will answer for it that he is the most honorable man in creation."

"If he was all that, why the deuce did you not give him your daughter? These high characters in extremities remind me too much of the scene on the scaffold where the priest, having absolved his good subject, the criminal, and pronounced him pure and perfectly worthy heaven, lets him be guillotined—if he were half he says, they should make a bishop of him. If your M. Gerard is half what you say, why did not the Americans make a President of him?"

"You are going the right way to work to cause me soon to regret that I blundered," returned Mauriceau tartly. "Do you say this letter condemns Catherine?"

"It accuses her—that is enough for me," snarled the duke.

"How did it fall into your hands?"

"You heard correctly enough—I stole it."

"Catherine lost her temper; I implore you to think that the reputation of my daughter is at stake."

"It was she who ought to have borne this in mind," said the duke sullenly as on the paper still before him, with the wet pen, he drew crazy lines which betrayed the clashing ideas in his brain.

He was walking on the sword-blade edge now; a misstep and he would be lost forever. This time, he would be a beggar, and the heiresses who were hunting for titled partners would not dare to grasp at his sullied coronet.

"Gerard was her friend in girlhood—in childhood! A letter to him would not be a fault, but only a piece of thoughtlessness."

"People have to pay for such slips," said the duke spitefully.

"Is that all," said Mauriceau, brightening up, for he began to believe that the affair was not so serious, and that his noble son-in-law was frightening him in order to extract a large check by a new device. "What's the figure?"

And he went to the writing-desk, and taking the chair vacated by the gentleman, was drawing out his private check-book when Septmonts stayed him with a gesture in well-assumed lofty indignation.

"No," he said, "she will have to pay more dearly than you calculate. I see that you imagine this one of those storms in a teacup which blow over. The culprits will only have to be more wary when they meet in public, and the members of our set who have the cue need only draw their skirts a little closer round them when the duchess goes by. A few of the pious, severe old dowagers may keep up a frigid reserve, freezing but endurable, but as we are not bound to have them by our side at every meal, we will not let their attitude pain us. No, Monsieur, this is not so petty a matter, but one which will be carried unflinchingly to the bitter end."

"Reflect on what you are going to do," still remonstrated M. Mauriceau, rising and throwing himself between him and the doorway.

The duke had given the problem due reflection; he



did not like to lose the money of this merchant, but he thirsted for his rival's blood. If only he could have decoyed Gerard into a gambling duel and "rooked" him before he sent a bullet to his heart!

"A duel on this account and a case of this sort are dishonor to a woman," said Mauriceau, sadly.

"But to hush it up would be shame and ridicule to the Duke des Septmonts."

"Confound you all!—spill blood if you must, but I do not want my daughter to be spattered. Will you or will you not return that letter?"

"Are you going over the same ground again?"

Time was when this unheroic little merchant had taken the "bounce" out of a saucy commercial traveler or a shop-assistant by the exhibition of righteous indignation in an unexpected form. He flung down his hat this way, pulled off his coat and flung that in another direction, and without word of warning, placed himself where he cut off the duke's retreat. Then, raising his fist in a naturally pugilistic position not devoid of merit for an amateur, he said in a voice supporting the attitude:

"By heaven, I tell you that you must give up that letter to the lady!"

But Septmonts had become the calmer as his antagonist grew violent.

"Threats are useless," he said; "I have foreseen everything. That letter which I dispatched was for Mr. Clarkson, who will be my second."

"Clarkson, your second?"

"Exactly—a man who has eaten his man before

breakfast. He is just the supporter for a duel to the death—for I assure you that this will not be one of our affairs of honor, in which a second or the surgeon is wounded by a blundering shot, and all animosity is drowned in champagne at breakfast."

Before this determination, Mauriceau resigned himself, and he began to hope a little that his son-in-law would receive a lesson from the Americanized Gerard, in spite of his complacency as a dead-shot. But in any event, the outlook for his daughter was one to becloud him, and he was grave when, instead of a servant, Gerard stalked into the room. The duke smiled with satisfaction.

"If you are looking for the duchess, Monsieur," said he most quietly, "you may spare yourself the trouble. The lady is not here, but retired to her own apartments."

"I am not seeking Madame la Duchesse," replied the new-comer, "but you, Monsieur. And the lady is the less wanted, as what I desire say to you is not to be uttered in her presence—that is why I withdrew from it a while ago."

"Can it be spoken before this gentleman?"

"Fully so," responded Gerard nodding to M. Mauriceau. "Monsieur, you spoke of my mother then in terms which I do not allow, and it was before a lady."

"The lady of your love," added Septmonts, without the slightest consideration for Mauriceau, who had his faults but still was the father of his wife.

"The lady whom I love," said Gerard, "that is so."

"I had no intention to hurt your filial feelings, Monsieur," went on the duke, "but you certainly meant to hurt mine by speaking thus. In making such a declaration to me, you are giving me the right to take it as an offense."

"If it is not enough of one to be answered," said Gerard, advancing with an evident intention to strike the duke, "then let this blow—"

This was the third time in one day that Septmonts had been exposed to being struck—by his wife, by her father, and now by her lover; decidedly, it was time to save his ears by cutting a throat.

"Enough," he said, keeping his marked coolness, "in an hour, friends of mine will present themselves at your house to settle merely the time and place for our meeting. Being the insulted party, I have the choice of weapons," he concluded with ill-disguised satisfaction and a malignancy which made Mauriceau's blood run cold.

"You tried to have it this way," he muttered.

"You have hit it," said the duke, with a smile.

"Then, you are —never mind what. Gerard," said the dry-goods prince earnestly, "let *me* be your second."

Lucien accepted the hand held out to him, and with him left the room. The duke was abandoned to his reflections, on the threshold of his wife's apartments, which he had not the courage to invade.

"After I shall have killed him, we will see," he murmured.

"Mauriceau is mad. People will say that he was

an immoral father who connived at the amours of his daughter. At the least, they will say that he was an imbecile—but what will they say of me if the whole story is told? that I am a blackguard. I must at least show that I fought well—if only to please Reina.”

## CHAPTER XI

### DEATH SHALL NOT DIVIDE THEM

M. Mauriceau had not far to seek for a companion. In Guy Deshaltes was the very second that was lacking to Gerard. He knew more of the differences in the Septmonts house than others, and understood all at the first word from the merchant. His daughter had pointed out Guy to him as a gentleman in whom he might place entire confidence. He was not long discovering that the frivolous dandy, grown sober, held her in high esteem, and respected her none the less for her behavior in the trying dilemma in which she was placed.

As a matter of course, Dr. Ramonin was chosen for the surgeon, without whose presence a duel becomes a great crime in legal eyes, in order that a wound only severe should not become mortal for want of skilled attention in time. Mauriceau persisted in his primary resolution to be Gerard's second, as the only means he had to publicly affirm his daughter's innocence.

He felt certain that an attempt would be made to disguise the true cause of the duel, and that instead of championing his daughter, Gerard would seem to fight for his insulted mother, a most popular ground to win the approbation of a French jury. But he be-

lieved that nobody would be deceived, and he had resolved to act straightforwardly. His pride and stupidity had led to a sufficiency of blunders and miseries, and he was going to try to repair them. If the duke were killed, that would settle matters; if he survived, a separation was inevitable between Catherine and the coroneted one. The duke would do all he could to prevent it, and make it cost Mauriceau dear, but the latter's appearance as the second of his opponent would render the divorce imperative. In the trial, so certain to take place, the old man was also fixed on the open course; he would tell the truth about the noble fortune-hunter, even though he were obliged to expose his life beside the other's, as well as his daughter's. When the tribunal should hear how the marriage was contrived and what it had cost the dry-goods merchant to make a duchess of his girl, some might say the father-in-law was a fool, but others would add that the son-in-law was a scoundrel.

Deshaltes was busy as a firefly; a second finds plenty to do on the eve of a deadly encounter, particularly when he alone is learned in the duello, and Mauriceau had to leave all to him. He showed astonishing sympathy for the distracted parent, when most fashionables would have made a jest of him. Mauriceau had a grudge against the upper classes, but he was grateful for the honor which Guy did him.

Another of the set turned up trumps, as the much affected merchant said: it was the Marchioness de Rumières. Although a relative of the Septmonts, she felt too deep an interest in the young duchess to

abandon her in trial. She heard all the news in the way usual among the aristocracy. Their idle servants peep and listen even if not always with evil intentions. The duke's valet, who had overheard the discussion between the married couple, had run to relate all to his lady-love, who happened to be the Rumières' first waiting-maid. She naturally repeated it to her mistress, out of the lively and kindly regard she was good enough to entertain for her lady's protégé. At once, the marchioness had the horses put to her carriage.

She found Dr. Ramonin, as a kind of guard, at the door of the duchess' apartment, in the absence of her father. He had intended to be close, but he perceived that she was as well informed as himself.

"You will excuse me, but one is bound by discretion, unless one is a servant," he said, to palliate his first lack of cordiality.

"Quite so; to say nothing of your humiliation from your chemical combination not succeeding. Your third element, the reactive one, has been rather too violent. Your vibrion seems to me likely to triumph, and do considerable damage to the hale parts. If the gods that ought to arrive to save the heroine are not telephoned for and their train is not an express, it strikes me they will drop on us too late."

"You seem to be delighted," he sorrowfully said.

"Not at all—that is my way. All women are sure to be on the side of Love, and if Maximin be killed, we shall chorus, well done!"

This was a pretty funeral sermon from a cousin.

"Is M. Gerard anything of a swordsman?"

"He can make the steel travel in a straight line as becomes an engineer."

"But I thought that fencing was taught in the Polytechnic School?" questioned the lady.

"He went in for mathematics; but he has learnt the use of arms in a rougher and better school, in the Western United States. And he has a good conscience on his side."

Madame de Rumières hummed the word from the *Huguenots*, "In my good right, I hold my trust!" and smiled.

"I have a good conscience, and try hard to preserve it. But in extreme cases, like the present, or a fire or shipwreck, I should not be sorry to add a ladder or a boat. You see, on such occasions, justice and right, clamored for on all sides, might be otherwise engaged and unable to fly to our appeal; consequently we would get burned or drowned—which is always a nuisance. I am quite aware that we are promised a second life to repair the injuries we suffer in this one, and the bores we have supported merrily; but it is just these promises of another existence which make me a trifle uneasy. I would sooner have my happiness at once, although I should be judged more severely afterward. However, this is the rule—we can do nothing. But since you tell me that M. Gerard has picked up a hint or two from those ingenious people, the Yankees, I shall go home more tranquil on his score."

"Yet a mishap may arrive," muttered the professor, odily.



"You are a Job's comforter."

"The luckiest thing may be the worst."

"Oh, you mean that if he kills the duke, he cannot marry the widow?"

"No, he can change his country with her—a woman's country is wherever she gets wedded."

"Take her away to America? then I shall not see her any more—to say nothing of my not having seen him as yet—though you promised me I should. I shall die or he will, without my seeing that he is not a myth."

"Yes, you shall, if you will wait awhile. He is expected here."

The marchioness stared. The rival in the husband's residence on the eve of a hostile encounter; but the house was owned by his father-in-law, who was going to stand his supporter in the duel. She saw that this Americanized Frenchman and the enriched commoner upset all traditions and put the petty conventions of society at nought. They made the position a clear and precise one. There was detestation in the very spot where love had been bargained for. It was relentless war, in which the duke aimed to kill Gerard, and defame the duchess, in spite of his knowing she was thoroughly innocent. Gerard meant to kill the duke, which might not be an easy matter; the father-in-law took a hand in the fray, and fought for the woman against her husband.

"Strange situation!" commented the marchioness, "it is enough to make one wonder why marriage was invented when the only happy people are those without its pale!"

Ramonin, being a celibate, did not combat the proposition, but the argument went no farther, from the entrance of the hostess. She begged the visitor to excuse her delay, as she was fond of her and usually ran to meet her; but she was tired. The strain was telling on her, and if the American had any hatred very personal she might be gratified in seeing the hollowed and brown-circled eyes, the slightly sunken and pallid cheeks, and the languid carriage that had been almost too alert before and inclined to the plebeian. The new-comer had an excellent excuse on her part for intruding on a non-visiting day. Knowing that she hardly ought to stay in the mansion, nominally the duke's, on the day of the duel, she offered her shelter under her roof. With a storm of town-talk about to break forth, it would be a good thing for her to be under the wing of an unassailable lady of the highest rank. The walls of Rumières house were too high for any stones to smash the glass there.

The duchess had contemplated the change, but she thought that it would be taking steps far enough if she transferred herself to her father's portion of the building.

"Not cover enough," remarked the doctor, as his parting word. "It is natural, and no more. Nothing is proved by a father taking the part of his child. Wild cats do no less."

He had hardly gone out, leaving the ladies in debate when Mauriceau took his place, and his part. He thought the marchioness right, and thanked her warmly for what she had done.

"Go with her," he said with emotion, "for she will take the place of the mother whom you lost too early, and of whom I have badly played the substitute. What authority would I hold over public opinion?"

And, almost glad to have Madame de Rumières as an auditress in his self-flagellation, he showed himself up as a vulgar, ridiculous blockhead, a common fellow who had imagined that honors and happiness could be purchased for his children with bags of money like sacks of potatoes, lands or a business.

"I have not 'scaped my deserts," he went on murmuring. My daughter loved an honorable young lad, who loved her; it was plain that they ought to have been united and I was such a dunce as not to see that! I am the cause perhaps that this youth shall lose his life and my daughter die of grief. I dare say that I shall be pitied—I, who ought not to interest anybody, although I am certainly fully unhappy enough!"

His sob was grotesque and the expression of his face, which he veiled in an Indian silk handkerchief, would have drawn a smile upon Madame de Rumières' features at another time, from being droll, but she turned away her eyes as he sank on a sofa, oppressed with grief. Catherine ran to him, threw her arms around him and proceeded to comfort him, though her heart was a lump of lead. But he gently shook her off and kneeling on a hassock in spite of her hands and of the other lady's remonstrance, he besought her pardon for all the harm and sorrow he had brought upon her and that which still might befall her

and be due to him. It would have been a striking lesson for other fathers who think of sacrificing their loved ones on the altar where Hymen is backed by Plutus. It was clear that the affection between them was profound and that, if Catherine pined away in the event of the death of her beloved, the old man would follow her into the grave ere long.

"Be calm, M. Mauriceau," said the marchioness, sobbing and not seeing that tears were in her troubled eyes.

Under her soothing words and the caresses and assurances of his daughter, Mauriceau recovered some coolness, and he was presentable when Gerard came in to confer with him, relative to the hostile meeting. Their arrangements made, the marchioness took Mauriceau into the adjoining room so that the young people might have the interview, not to be refused them, when the man was about to face a deadly antagonist with pistol or rapier in hand.

It was settled between the ladies that the younger should accept the other's invitation and be housed with her that evening. The marchioness was favorably impressed with this brief glimpse of Gerard, in whose stalwart and alert, though firm bearing, one hardly divined the Parisian, emasculated by late hours, the vitiated air of the cafés, indulgence in fantastic bitters, and the frequentation of the gambling houses.

"I accepted Madame de Rumières' invitation only because my father said that I could not go to your mother's."

Madame Gerard, since her son's return, had been transferred from Montmorency to a larger and finer villa in Fontenay-aux-Roses. From the cherries of Montmorency to the roses of Fontenay was a step worthy of the wealthy engineer.

"I came to tell you," he said.

And what more? all about the encounter which a lady might hear; the seconds were Deshaltes and Mauriceau against Clarkson and M. de Bernecourt for the duke. The time was in the morning.

"But never mind this," said he, seeing how she trembled and blanched still more after the pink tinge had disappeared which suffused her wan countenance when he had first arrived. What are you going to do after going to Madame de Rumières?"

She gazed off absently, for it depended on the outcome of that unavoidable meeting.

"If I survive?" he queried bluntly.

She placed her hand steadily in his—meaning that it should be his wife's.

"Alas! that is impossible, and the parting will be eternal between us, even if I come out all right."

By her look of wonder it was evident that she did not understand.

"The reason is that men have foreseen everything in their cruel morality," said Gerard. "One must go among the savages to see what the unsophisticated impulse is. America is invaded by the creeds of olden Europe; there, too, it is not the cause, the reasons, the excuses that are taken into consideration, but the result alone. The slayer is forbidden to marry his conquered

foe's widow; it was foreseen that the murder might be a means of divorce."

She simply repeated the gesture of giving her hand to him forever. She did not care for the title of wife in this case. All that was essential was their being in the world together. Like Riena Vanness, she mocked at the laws framed by man; they had made Catherine suffer too keenly for her to care much about them. If widowed, she would be free, and there were no descendants to whom she would have to render an account.

"But if I fall?" breathed the young man, who, in contemplation of this treasure felt a dread and horror of losing her which had never tormented him in his experience, when he dealt with life in his hand among the red-skins in the character of the Indian doctor.

"That would merely mean that we should part no more. In death as in life I am yours. If you die—" an eloquent gesture completed the meaning. It was indubitable that she would leap into his grave and be buried with him, as Laertes promised to do with his sister's corpse.

"No," he said sharply, "for I shall prevent it—I will order you to live by the right of the loving and beloved to command those whom they adore. If death comes between us, why should you invite his dart? With eternity before us, what matters a few days, more or less—above all when those few days may turn to the consolation of other living beings next the survivor?"

"My father?" said the duchess, but not with an excess of sentiment.

"Your father, who made a grievous error," returned Gerard, sadly; "but he loves you and he is in pain. An error should not be expiated as though it were a crime, and who will make recompense for my crime against my mother? for I have sacrificed her in your behalf. If I am to die, robbing her of a son, remember, let me at least leave her a daughter!"

The duchess understood and throwing herself into his arms which upheld her relaxed form without warmth and without embracing her, she murmured:

"It is well—I will live."

"In that case, poor, dear victim of human error, you will accomplish your sacrifice unto the end," said he consolingly as he held her still swooning on his swelling heart. "And if heaven really shall unite us in its golden groves, as is affirmed to us and as I believe, like all those who love profoundly and exclusively on this globe, then will you arrive before the spotless Throne with your account complete, since you awaited the hour fixed for your coming. Should I perish on the morrow, of a violent death, and in the act of trying to kill another man, my excuse will be that I was defending the honor and liberty of the woman to whom the Creator willed that I should be united, since she loved me as I loved her."

That was all that they had need to interchange at that extraordinary hour, to elevate and fortify their souls as they stood facing death, but with love, holding their hands together, between them. Love and death! the two links by which man is joined to infinitude.

He was thankful to his Maker that neither had any cause for self-reproach. When he had seen her again, a short time since, believing that he had many long years yet to enjoy life in, he vowed that his idol should remain immaculate as far as he was concerned, since she was not free. He prepared to go; he might die without remorse and she could live on, without shame.

"Yes go," she said, tearing herself from his arms, "you require all your strength and courage. I do not wish you to have the last remembrance of me as a weak and weeping woman."

Indeed, the footman who came in, a few minutes afterward, to say that Mr. Clarkson had called on pressing business with the duke, noticed nothing out of the way in the bearing or countenance of his mistress or the young gentleman. The man said he intruded as his master was not in his suite, but perhaps he was a spy. He added, however, that Mr. Clarkson, who was in a hurry, "like all Americans," expected that the duchess would know what the duke wanted him for, to confer about, and if so, he would feel honored if she would receive him.

She reflected for a moment, and without consulting Gerard, even with a glance, she ordered the lackey to show in the Westerner.

"Why do you welcome him?" inquired Lucien, surprised, for she knew he was the duke's second and the reception was strange under the circumstances.

"He seems to want to speak with me," she answered so absently that he was surprised again.



But he was in haste to depart, not liking this appearance of the domestic, and after saying that a note would find him up to the last minute at his mother's new address, which she jotted down, they were parting with too prolonged a grasp of the hand when Clarkson came striding in.

He came to a full stop as he caught the whisper, "Eternally!" but it was not so much the word, or the amazing emphasis which both threw into it, as the confrontation with Gerard.

"Go," cried the duchess, startled at the effect of her lover on the new-comer, and that Gerard wore a singular smile.

"Hold on, right there," exclaimed Clarkson. "No, you just don't give me the all-fired cold shake, my friend." And dashing forward as though he were traversing three yards of prairie instead of a boudoir carpet, he threw one arm half-round the Frenchman in the Spanish-American embrace and clutched with the other hand the right of Gerard, almost shouting with joy:

"It's the Canuck-Injin Doc., by the great horned serpent of the Mokis! Well, if I ain't monstrously delighted to grip you, then this lady ain't a prize beauty, and I—Lord-ee! whar have you been shelving your noble self all this time from me, and me just a-hunting all the footstool for you!" and embracing him again with a sort of hug learned from ursine practices apparently, he choked off an Indian war cry, and, between sobbing and laughing, repeated in all the tones of gladness, "My old pard.—my bono com-

panyero—my *camarade!*” to the stupefaction of the duchess who had never seen such an unfettered giant or any man in such an exhibition of unschooled effusion of the heart.

“I cave,” replied Gerard, trying to release his crushed hand and using a language as incomprehensible to the third party as the American’s; “you have me tight. I am the Indian doctor, and I am overjoyed that my prescription for you was acted on so that you are hale and hearty.”

“Why did you not tell me who you were when you took the engineering contract for your new process, and wait till I got within tomahawk throw of that Dr. Ramonin, who ought to have given me a hint.”

“Because I threw it up on learning that Miss Vanness had an interest in your enterprise—”

“Miss Vanness—My Mrs. Clarkson that was,” and he laughed huskily. “Oh, that’s another pair of mocasins—she and I are two. You need not do anything to benefit her, but you and I must paddle a little longer in the same canoe—see?”

With a gesture, Lucien reminded him that there was a lady present to whom the inroad had been too boisterous not to be alarming.

“I beg your pardon, Ma’me,” said he with a long sweeping bow of which a native Californian would be proud and which quite reconciled her to Gerard’s friend. “Let’s ship him out of the way, and I am entirely at your majes—your grace’s service! Got the handle right haven’t I, M. Gerard—since you are M. Gerard. You trot along. I am testing the

solidity of the chairs in the Hotel Splendide. Run along little boy!" he concluded, all but shoving the half-amused Frenchman out of the room.

"Lucien Gerard?" he repeated, in a fit of musing so that he forgot his Castilian manners. "It is he whom the duke don't seem to cotton to. Hello, 'Eternally!' I heard them say when I bounced in off the flunkey's bat—great Winfield! this ain't the gal he left behind him, is she? it looks uncommonly like a couple of sparks. Wonder if I am the big, blundering bellows that begins to blow as the flame wants feeding and kindles all to a blaze?"

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SECOND BECOMES FIRST

After this singular observation to himself which seemed dictated by intuition, the American turned to the spell-bound lady and said:

"Well, I really beg your pardon, Ma'me, for being shaken off an even keel, but I never for a moment s'pected that M. Gerard was one who snatched me out of a human yaller jackets' nest. But never mind that now. Enough that we are old friends, partners, as our saying is, and your being a friend of his, can handle me like an old whip. You can hit pretty hard with me, too, without much fear of me flying off the handle. But that is *onter noos*, if you will allow for the twist in the accent your beautiful language gets on the plains when it has met a norther. I made bold to squeeze in because when I looked in at my diggings, I found a note from your better-half, saying he was bound to see me right away, without letting on what the business was. I hear the duke has stepped out. That is a queer way of keeping an appointment, but I do want to know what he wants to yank me out of my comfort to do for him. Now, if it is something in which your ladyship takes stock—if I have to stop a train, blow up an ocean greyhound or

find funds for a default in a bank of which he is president, count on me to the last grain of dust—savey?"

The duchess only partly understood the strange speech, in which Americanisms struggled with French of school-book cast not much like that of fashionable Lutetia; but Gerard's evident good-will to him, and his frank expression of owing his life to her lover, converted him into one of her own coterie.

"I should have thought that M. des Septmonts would have given you an idea."

Clarkson shook his head.

"Did not his note contain an inclosure—another letter to be held by you as a deposit?"

Clarkson replied in the negative.

"Are you really speaking the truth to a lady?"

"I never lie; I am too busy; lies tangle a man up and lose such a heap of time."

"This is some secret to be preserved. It may be that the letter I mentioned has been confided to Mrs. Clarkson—"

"You mean Miss Vanness—she dropped my name when she cut adrift from me," said Clarkson ruefully. "She would have said so when I stated that I had the call from the duke and was going."

"Divorced, she is not bound any longer to tell you everything," said the duchess slyly.

"She must be rather sweet on you if she tells *you* anything."

"It is just the other way," returned Catherine, recalling the women's war; "she did not conceal how she

detested me, and was going to do me all the harm she could."

"Harm you," repeated Clarkson, like one who had caught a fiend torturing a lamb or lovely bird, and could not believe his eyes.

"What for? What have you ever done to her?"

"Nothing. I have known her two days only; but—no, it is her secret, and she alone may tell it to you. Once a husband, always a husband, I have been brought up to believe."

At this phase, which opened boundless possibilities, the thoughtful brow of the breezy stranger became corrugated and fire was kindled in his deep-set eyes.

"My father was told by the duke that a letter had been sent to you which I wrote. Know that it was stolen from me and with it all that evil will be done me which Miss Vanness threatened me with."

The hearer's mien assumed a pained expression which the lady did not understand.

"A stolen letter, eh? we must learn straight off if she has this letter. I will write to her to come over right away as I have something important to communicate to her. Will you give your janitor the order to let her in? I ask, because I have already noticed that your door-keepers are as high up as our own over thar."

While speaking, he had drawn a wallet out, in which he found what he wanted; he wrote on a sheet of paper which, when ingeniously folded up, became a paper inside an envelope, and he fastened it up and directed it.

Meanwhile, the duchess had touched the bell for the servant.

"We will have an explanation right here," continued Clarkson. "When a man has built a hustling city and named it after a woman, whether she remains his wife or not, she ought to pay a little scrap of attention to remarks of his. Be sure of this, madame, that I will never lend my vote to any motion against you or any other lady—no, Ma'me, I come from a country where woman is boss."

Then, pulling at his mustaches to hide a dry smile, he added half to himself; "though I don't mind allowing that most of them go the right way to work to making that line of duty mighty hard to travel."

The footman deigning to stride in, the duchess said, while Clarkson handed him the note, "Have that letter sent on. Do not let it go astray, as it is not mine, but this gentleman's."

The sarcasm might not have pierced his epidermis, but it was otherwise when the American, following him to the door much as the guard accompanies the deserter with fixed bayonet, hissed in his ear what—being English, he perfectly comprehended:

"You lose that, and you'll lose your ears. I want a brace of jack-ears to give me luck at poker—no such fetich to hoodoo the players as jack ears," he remarked as he quitted the terrified man, and returned to the amused lady, pocketing a large knife which he had shown.

"And so it's about this letter of yours that was abstracted that the duke wants to discuss with me, eh?"

"As far as I know, Monsieur; the matter concerns me, but yet does not distress me. All I beg of you is to hear the whole story and act as an American, a friend of M. Gerard and the avowed champion of my sex feels prompted to do. One moment," she said on the point of leaving but inspired by a new idea, "could I ask a service of you?"

"Fire away, as the French guard said to the English ditto on an historical occasion, of which I forget the name."

"I should much like you to confer with the duke here—not in his room. It has the advantage of solid walls and the words will not leak out into strangers' or treacherous ears."

"I see! the servants in Europe all wear a sneaking, eaves-dropping cut to their jib. Look at this sample," he said as the footman came back to report that he had started the call to Miss Vanness; "Look here, John!" in that incisive tone which seems effective on menials from Alaska to Adelaide, "I want you to tell the boss—the duke, you know—that M. Clarkson has come to an anchor in the blue and spangled bud-war, and if he wants to hold a congress of us two emperors, it has got to be here. Skip, Johannes!"

As the tremor of one swinging foot as he negligently scratched the heel of the other shoe indicated a desire to kick, the domestic quitted the apartment with alacrity which his mistress had not before observed.

"Now I am going to leave you, dear M. Clarkson," said the duchess with one of those smiles which



none but Gerard or one of Gerard's friends might hope to be sunned with, "I must leave you, for it is not a conversation which I ought to hear, if it is what I forecast. Come what, come may, I shall never forget that I have made the acquaintance of a gentleman, and that you have done all you could to oblige me."

"Bless you, I haven't begun to do anything yet," stammered the American, daunted for once. "I am ready to—she has gone, just when I was scaring up a pretty speech. Well, I do not blame Gerard after all for leaving America, and for saying he reckoned he might not go back. Bet I wouldn't leave the country where such a charming little person as that was enshrined, nohow! there is something between her and Lucien, that's patent—but if I can make sense of half what she had been saying, then you,"—he nodded familiarly to an enormous Chinese mandarin in porcelain which was lolling his red tongue at him in a corner—"you are one Dutchman, and Madison Clarkson is another."

He was at this point of his bewilderment when the duke, apprised of the American having inaugurated his advent by selecting his site for the interview, arrived with surprise. But he had every reason to conciliate and not to irritate, and he said in his suave voice:

"I was so sorry not to be in—but as what we have to say concerns men only, suppose we adjourn to my rooms. This is one of the duchess' private suite and—"

"Adjourn nothing!" returned the American, suddenly taking a strong aversion to the speaker. "I am quite at ease here," and certainly in this attitude, with boot heels on the level with his head on the back ledge of a double-ended sofa, there was no lack of unembarrassment. "The walls are solid and the door is a piece of Belize mahogany that would laugh at a rifle-ball."

The duke went and closed the door in question as well as the one at the side where Catherine had gone out. As an excess of precaution he let down the hangings so that if there had been a crack in the panels, no eye could have obtained a glance of the two men.

"It puts me in mind of an old play," muttered Clarkson. "I regret that I listened to my courier and laid aside my revolver." The duke gave a wary inspection to make sure that the two were almost hermetically sealed up together. "Luckily, I always carry my toothpick." Then smiling to himself, he thought contemptuously, "a pin would, however, be large enough at the point to impale this minnow."

"This is the affair," said the duke, coming to the lounge where his visitor had installed himself. "Tomorrow morning, I am going to fight a duel!"

Clarkson lowered his feet and sat round a little, but it was in respect to the name of the thing, as it was evident by his smile that he thought poorly of a French duel of the period.

"It must terminate only with the death of one of the combatants," continued the nobleman, perhaps suspecting the incredulity of his auditor. "I am the

offended party, and, consequently having the choice of weapons, I select the steel."

"Then, I judge that you fence well?" queried the other with an ill-concealed sneer.

"I believe that I am one of the best fencers in Paris; but the friend of mine whom I rely upon to second me in this affair, is one of those punctilious gentlemen who want to argue out every clause in the code of honor—"

"Like the old Georgian or the back-country Kentuckian," remarked Clarkson: "I can see the character from here."

"So I want you to spur him on and prevent the discussion occupying days. I thirst to have the meeting immediately." He spoke with plain fury.

"It is clear," said Clarkson, who had assumed a more stately attitude, "that you Frenchmen give these little difficulties an importance out of place, and put on no end of solemn frills which we Americans do not appreciate; we settle them in five minutes on a hotel veranda, or the street, before the town in general!"

"Exactly why I apply to you. Of course, you do not object to officiate for me?"

"With all my heart:" replied the American, with every appearance of cordiality as he proceeded to play the new line which he had promptly resolved upon. "Ex-Mrs. Clarkson, if you will allow me to style her so—wanted me to be agreeable to you when the chance came round. You seem to be an old acquaintance of hers?"

"So, so," replied the duke guardedly yet with some complacency as he quickly reflected that the pair were separated. "Some four years ago, I met her, and I am not going to conceal from *you*, dear boy, that I am under weighty obligations to her. I was a poor old bach, in those days. One day, I had dropped a tremendous sum—a facer—a staggerer—at cards; I was trying to gather a hundred and fifty thousand francs all in vain as I was completely in the shallows, when Miss Vanness—or, the Ex-Mrs. Clarkson, if you prefer it, came to my aid. Yes, sir, she generously lent me the sum, which I have since repaid, of course, with interests, equivalent to the capital."

"You don't say," interrupted Clarkson; "a pretty sum to repay, and with such heavy interest. Lost some of your old folks, I suppose? in Europe, the loss of a father or such is a great resource."

"No, I was an orphan and had scattered all I ever came into. I had nobody to look to for a windfall, so I married for money."

"That so?" remarked Clarkson, eying the speaker as a microscopist studies a new insect: "You Europeans have that pull over us yonder, for we only marry when we like the woman. In a case like yours, a broke-up man would put on a flannel shirt and roll up the sleeves, get between the handles of a wheelbarrow and go straight ahead till he struck something so hard that it knocked out his brains, or so rich that it filled his pockets. One or two of your Frenchmen are like that; I met them out there. However, every country has its peculiarities. Excuse my interrupting

you. All this does not fit into my schedule. Let's finish up with that duel."

"I am delighted to afford you all the details. You might otherwise be startled to see as one of the seconds on the other side, M. Mauriceau."

"You never mean to say, your wife's father?" cried the American, shaken out of his imperturbability.

Septmonts nodded, smiling with enjoyment at the good joke.

"This beats me. He, the second of your adversary—I did not think you could get up anything new here, but you have done it."

"Well, you can guess that there are circumstances under this affair which must not be laid bare to everybody."

"But you do not mind me—"

"Not for a moment. The apparent reason of the duel between M. Lucien Gerard and me—"

"Gerard!" echoed, Clarkson, starting up to his feet and towering over the dapper Frenchman. "Are you telling me that you are going to fight with M. Lucien Gerard?"

"Do you know him?" faltered the duke, in equal surprise.

"Well, I haven't what you would call worn the acquaintance out with frequency," replied the American warily; "but there's no disputing that I have met him; and then again, I heard the Ex-Mrs. Clarkson speak of him as one to whom she had done a great service—it is a sockdolager what a heap of folks that angel divine in feminine shape has done to

creation. She saved this M. Gerard's life when she was a kind of lady saw-bones, see?"

"Ahem," coughed Septmonts as if he had a spark in his throat, "I am inclined to think that she does not cherish the same disposition toward the gentleman," and while slowly saying this, he watched the American's face, but it had become a kind of bronze mask with pliant features once more.

"Why should she want to cut him up?" said the latter, "if that is what you mean?"

"Women are so fickle," returned the Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders and blowing an imaginary cloud of smoke from an equally imaginary cigar.

"Gates of Jerusalem, the Golden!" ejaculated the American with one of those oaths which are long and drawled out to give the utterer time to frame his next speech. "Is she in love with him?"

"The Ex.? Well, hardly, since she wants to have him killed."

"I do not know so much about that," remarked Clarkson, with an air to imply on the contrary that he had had a wider experience of the gentler sex. "I have met instances where a woman has wished the lover ill, when she loved without response. I doubt it is because the lady, once my wife, loves M. Gerard that you have called him out?"

*He* frowned so menacingly that the duke was not sorry that he could answer in all sincerity:

"No; it is because he has the audacity to make love to another lady who is nearest to me—"

Even facing a stranger to the persons concerned,

he would have hesitated to use the expression "the dearest," and Clarkson noticed the omission.

"The duchess, I guess?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"She's a bewitching woman, and I can understand the captivation."

Septmonts made a gesture to imply that he understood the result without admitting it was excusable by him.

"If she does not care for him, it is only the tribute due to Cæsar's wife," returned Clarkson, with that allusion to the classical worthies best known which infallibly garnishes the discourse of the American of free-school education.

"But I hold in my hands a letter which proves that he is improperly regarded."

Clarkson gave him a long and searching look before replying slowly:

"This alters the face of affairs. I am completely at your service, for I have been a married man, *pro tem.*, anyhow we are bound to stand up to—I mean for one another," he said with a singular twinkling in the eye not nearest the duke. "It would not become me to wink at such goings-on."

"What an obliging fellow you are," said Septmonts delighted more than ever. "They say you Americans never do anything by halves. This is not all that I crave of you. We must foresee everything, and if I fall I want to be still avenged from the offense having been of the worst kind."

"How are you going to manage it?" inquired Clark-

son, as if, in the position of one who might be similarly placed, he longed for the expedient.

"I want the letter in my possession to be made public."

"Posted, eh? I have been editor of a paper once, but I am not one of the Republic of letters just at present. How can I serve you in this?"

Septmonts carefully drew from his secret pocket a sealed letter which he handed over to a hand which received it with as little feeling as though it were a dish of ice-cream.

"I am going to intrust it to you."

"All right."

"If I come off unharmed, you will restore it to me intact; in the other event, give it to the court to be read to the public. It will be known that I was avenging my honor, under a pretext not the real one, and this will so blacken M. Gerard and the duchess that they cannot meet one another anymore."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Clarkson with sublime contempt, "after you have gone over to the majority, what does it matter what the minority say?"

"I am rather set upon it, my dear sir," said the duke. "Just do it for a fellow, won't you?"

"Oh, anything to oblige a fellow," returned Clarkson with so droll a burlesque of the exquisite's voice and style that, though he meant it in earnest, the duke laughed.

But becoming grave instantly, he asked: "You do accept the commission?"

Clarkson was holding the edge of the letter perpen-



dicularly to his lips and so close to them that he seemed testing by the scent for concealed bank-notes, then, whistling on the edge like a school-boy, he gave it all a moment's meditation.

"Consider it is done," he finally rejoined. "But come to think of it, it is likely, almost certain, that I shall not be around here when this trial comes on. I was thinking of making a new start to-morrow early. I will hold over till the afternoon to be agreeable to you and help you through this duel; but this is about all I can do."

"Well, then," answered Septmonts who had also been musing. "Just have the kindness to turn the letter over to Ex-Mrs. Clarkson with the hint that I have given you, and it will be in hands as reliable as yours."

"That's so," responded Clarkson, dreamily, and with another mechanical, "All right." He examined the letter as if only now he grew aware that the task was no sinecure. "A blank envelope. Where is the proof that the damaging letter was directed to M. Gerard?"

"The envelope with his address is inclosed," said the duke with the grin of a monkey who has listened to the sounds within a shaken cocoanut and is confident that it contains milk.

"Found the letter, I reckon?" queried Clarkson with an admiring reflection of his smile.

"Yes, I found it before it went into the post."

"And having suspicions—"

"I am always suspicious, since I became a benedict," returned the Frenchman, smiling.

"Anyhow, you unsealed it."

"You have it."

"I must ask pardon for questioning you so closely, but this style of doing things is fresh to me. But you brought it on by saying that I ought to be fully posted. You know that the relations of the duchess and of M. Gerard have lasted since a way back?"

"They knew one another, boy and girl, long before the marriage," answered the duke carelessly.

Clarkson looked so long and even tenderly toward the door by which he had seen the duchess leave the room that Septmonts, disquieted all at once, went on with his revelations in a less reckless way.

"They fell in love and I dessay they would have made a match of it had not the papa had another idea in his head."

"Oh, this young Gerard meant marriage did he?"

"Of course, while he had some chance, but as soon as Mauriceau became very rich, he was ass enough not to spoil her prospects, you see—and backed clean out, because he was plain Gerard and had not a golden feather to fly with." So spoke the heiress-hunter with every symptom of disgust and miscomprehension of high motives.

"Well, it is rather a bit from a play, but it is handsome of the Romeo," said Clarkson, but as if he were not taken by surprise.

"He went off to the Antipodes or your parts, and dug some gold and came back to show his gilded seams, as our expression goes."

"And as soon as he came back he renewed his love

toward Madame la Duchesse?" said Clarkson admiringly of the daring.

"That is where you are too sudden," said the other coldly.

"Then if the young people behaved themselves as in a Sunday-school, what are you kicking at? what do you say?"

"Only that the letter will make everybody believe the worst, and that amounts to the same thing," replied Septmonts with entire satisfaction.

"Well, of all the—that takes the piece of confectionery," exclaimed the American in his high-charged language.

"I do not understand; but you do not seem of my mind?"

"Well, you see, I cannot go the whole hog. I understand that a man should hit back at those who strike him, but not hurt those who do him no injury, and I have not a high opinion of those who would revenge themselves on a woman, even if she be guilty—so, when she is not that sort, and she has done a man a good deal of kindness, for between ourselves, M. Mauriceau's girl seems to have smothered you with kindness—it is clear now why the old man sticks up for his daughter and likewise for M. Gerard, from the time when he is sure of their double innocence. Does he know this letter was written?" Septmonts involuntarily rubbed his throat as he hung his head and sullenly muttered:

"Yes, and he tried to take it from me by force."

"Well, I wonder he did not choke it out of you, for

he carries more metal than you?" said Clarkson with the air of a connoisseur in fisticuffs.

Septmonts chuckled and replied: "I had the presence of mind to tell him that I did not have the letter on me, but had sent it on to you."

"You are right smart," said Clarkson admiringly, so that the duke was completely reassured that he and a brother-knave were communing.

"About then, M. Gérard having challenged me, the old gentleman fancied he would come out strong and turn the table on me, by roaring out in my ears in a deuced ungentlemanly way, 'I will be your second.' You have the whole story."

"Well, duke," said the American, putting his hands—one holding the letter—on his knees, and leaning forward, but still a head above the Frenchman, who had taken a chair, "I come from a section where the folks have the habit of plain speaking and mighty plain dealing. I am going to sum up that all these folks strike me as honorable—honest as the sunshine. Your little darling of a wife seems to me the victim of manners, prejudices and contrivances, which we barbarians of the Far West cannot get the clear idea of—and don't want to. I am not setting up our society of a hundred years standing against your moss-back and creeper-covered one; no, sir, but right among us, if Mlle. Mauriceau was loved by a fine fellow like M. Lucien Gerard, her father would have made no bones about transferring her to the new proprietor, or, if there were any getting his back up, on the old man's part—these old fellows do act cantankerous now and

then, and that's a fact—well, she would just step out one fine day to pay the butcher, hook onto M. Gerard's arm at the corner, and the pair would drop into the mayor's office and get hitched. That's so. Mebbe, old Grimes would not stump up lively, but the young fellow would buckle to, all he knew how, and the young couple would scramble along somehow. As for our M. Gerard, he is a man of talent and ability, and he's got a heart. We are fond of men who work, out west, anyhow, and we are that kind of savage that respects them, no matter what country they hail from."

It was clear from this rhapsody, delivered with a lack of excitement which puzzled the hearer, that they did not share the same sentiments on this question.

"I am giving you this explanation because I fancied that, in choosing me to be your second in this duel you reckoned on the sons of Uncle Sam as being less clear-headed or less clean-moraled than your people. In short, you believed that I would lend a hand to all the dirty little tricks which you have related with a candor that does you credit."

Septmonts recoiled, conscious that he had made the greatest error in his life. But rallying as he recalled the words still stinging him, he almost screamed, so high was the pitch of his voice from rage: "Is it to my practices that you apply the epithet of dirty?"

"You are the man, since there are only two of them here, though I have my doubt about your de-

serving the designation. But, if you itch to have a hearing, call in the whole street."

"What, you say this to my face?"

The two had risen to their feet, with the contrast between them of a mastiff worried by a turkey-cock.

"I tell you to your face that it is the act of a loafer to squander an inheritance, lose at cards the money you have not got, borrow from any woman that comes in handy, without any notion of how you will pay her again, marry to discharge one's debts, and continuing your capers, try to revenge yourself on an innocent wife, steal her letters, abuse your skill at weapons to kill a valuable man—I say that this is the act of a loafer, which means cur, cad, scamp—and what lays over me is that fifty men have not told you this before I had to, and that I have had to travel over four thousand miles to inform you on the subject—for you look as though it were news to you and as though you were not yet convinced."

It required Septmonts' exercise of the utmost self-control to meet this explosion with affected tranquillity, but he managed it; he perceived what a trap was opening, and that he might not cross it to execute his revenge. His desire for it was two-headed now, for he believed that Clarkson was not as content with his divorce as his wife, and so, after disposing of Gerard on the dueling ground, he might wound this American defender of his by despoiling him of his wife. He remembered too late that he had closed the doors and that this room was one of the most retired of the building; he had congratulated himself on this

fact when he had conjugal broils with Catherine; he deplored it now.

"Monsieur," he said, with an effort to be statuesque, "you know that I cannot call you to account until I shall have finished with your friend. This may be the grounds on which you ventured to bluster. But we can have a meeting soon enough to furnish a fresh carcass for the cold-meat box on the Transatlantique steamer. Meanwhile, I need not trouble you any longer with the charge of that letter." He held out his hand with a gesture of confidence which would have not discredited those robber-dukes of old, who knew not what refusal was, when they lusted after anything.

"Not the least trouble," replied Clarkson, putting it in his inner waistcoat pocket and buttoning the flap deliberately over it. "But I am not going to hand it to you. It goes to the address of M. Gerard, for I have been in the service, and I know to whom a letter belongs in transit. If he likes to hand it over to you, all right, but I do not advise your asking him for it."

"You will fight?" said the duke, frothing a little at the mouth like a panther whose dinner in the menagerie is delayed.

"As much as you like, you bet!" returned Clarkson, working his jaw like an old sailor turning the quid.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A VARIATION OF THE DUEL A L' AMERICAINE

"Well," said the other, whom the tone of eagerness did not gratify, "when I shall have finished with the other, we will have it out together."

"The next day after, I presume?"

"The next day, yes."

"Unfortunately I am on time here," observed Clarkson. "I want to clear out of this to-morrow evening."

"You will wait," said the duke saucily. "In the meanwhile, go!"

No sooner had he flung the order out as to a dog or a menial than he regretted it, so far was the American from looking like the kind of man who might be ordered about.

"Look here," said Clarkson calmly, "can't you see by the blood in my eye what I have made up my mind to? I am not going to be defrauded by your fighting any Gerards before I have a go at you. Gerard might snap you in two, and if he spoils you, I should not have the glory of tackling one of the finest swordsmen in Paris—an amusement I want to tell the boys about, over the big pond. While, if you were to hurt him bad, you would cause irrepa-



rable woes. If you believe I am thinking of his personal felicity, you are away off. I am alluding to his scientific worth, and catch a Westener letting a brainy man be wiped out who can make a saving of twenty-five p. c. in the rendering of auriferous ore. No, sir, not this evening. Come, prove that you have grit even when you do not have things altogether your own way. I propose an American duel. No dust, no muss, no scaring up your friends for seconds, but a simple settlement without drawbacks. Got any shooting-irons handy? or stickers? Quite right—it is your lady's apartments and they would not be here. Your know-nothing tailors forgot the hip-pocket and the collar of this coat is too low down for a pistol, but I tell you what I have brought along—for you have some sand-baggers on the external boulevards—this is the picker—” and he drew from a secret pocket a long and terrible Spanish dagger-knife for which a Mexican “cutter” would have given an eye out of his head. “This is the *menu*: we will put out the light, throw the knife aside at random and the first that finds it, uses it on the other.”

“Barbarian!” ejaculated Septmonts, rushing toward the bell-cord, but already the other had sprung before him with the flashing blade.

“Hold your horses!” interrupted he, in a low deep voice, as he frowned and his eyes spouted flame. “No, you don't! no playing the noble duke and ringing up the flunkeys to cane me out—or, as true as I am ‘Mad’ Clarkson, I will kick you right straight through the whole house, before the whole gang and half-way to the Madeleine.”

An awkward pause ensued. Oh, if the room had not been so secluded! Then, a sudden thought occurred to the cornered nobleman, and showing his teeth, he hissed: "Very well, Monsieur, I will commence with you."

"That's talking. I guess I shall catch the train right slick. The next item on the programme is to secure the safety, before the authorities, of the survivor. You have such a pestering band of worriers here when gentlemen have met to regulate their little divergencies. Luckily, a sheet of paper will do the trick, and here is the material. Write if you please in duplicate, for my hand is spoiled with the typewriters, and p'raps it would take too much precious time to seek them in this slow-paced capital! 'For reasons not concerning the world which I quit, I leave it by the shortest cut. Let no one be held to account for my death, freely and even gladly administered. Witness my own hand.' Date and sign in your case, duke, with all the flourishes, and hand me the other for my splatter-dash. While you are getting that slung on the paper, I will see that we are shut in snug."

With a methodical step, he made the circuit of the apartment and tested to his satisfaction that they would be plunged in darkness when the lights were extinguished.

Septmonts had recovered his tranquillity after the reflection and he wrote the dictation without altering the phrases. He signed one, and the American glanced over them both before affixing a bold signa-





“ ‘Go!’ shouted Clarkson, honorably shooting the table out from him.”—(p. 253.)

ture in the Madisonian hand, which was Miss Vanness' peculiar caligraphy also, to the duplicate.

"It is understood, then, that, if you are disabled, I can regain that letter," said the duke, panting with a tigerish eagerness.

"Just so. Will you put out the gas while I throw the knife at the third count of One, Two and Three?"

"Would not this be fairer? shove that center-table against the wall, with the knife on it; it runs on castors. As you give the impulsions with your foot put out the gas with one hand—then let the best man get the knife and use it as best he may."

"I don't care," replied Clarkson, stationing himself by the round-table and laying the knife on it in the middle. Over his head gently shone the subdued light of the gaselier.

"Ready?" he questioned.

"Quite ready," answered Septmonts, standing at a distance but preparing apparently to make a spring toward the point across the room where the table would be brought up against the wall.

"Go!" shouted Clarkson honorably shooting the table out from him, and at the same time turning the gas off.

In the complete darkness and the silence, the two men heard the soft swish of the ivory castors in the deep carpet until the table edge struck the wall, where the violent shock repulsed it a little. The heavy knife, set in motion by this stoppage, slid forward and fell on the floor.

That fall was what saved Clarkson, for he instantly

threw himself on the ground to reach the weapon, by a bound like a mountain-cat's, long and low. Simultaneously the room was illumined by a flash of fire and a sharp crack resounded. The duke had not changed his position, but, drawing a small pocket-pistol with which he had often resolved, in his cloudy days, to put an end to his life, treacherously fired at his antagonist. The bullet traversed the room about breast high, but we know why it failed to enter the living target. By the flame, the latter had caught sight of the fallen blade. He asked no more, but, with a whoop of joy which he must have learnt while captive of the Apaches, leaped upon the weapon. Septmonts had also seen him and felt a shrinking of the heart at his failure. Afraid to fire at random, as the pistol was a Devisme which held but two shots, he shifted his stand noiselessly to intrench himself behind a Sevres jardiniere on a stand, and waited for his opportunity.

Clarkson might have evaporated into mist for all the token which he gave of his presence: not the cracking of a joint, which defect has often betrayed a large man to his foes, not the phosphorescent gleam of his eyes. A man had need of more nerve than had sufficed Septmonts in his duels, to bear without a flutter this silence, for he divined that the foe was not quiet but creeping insensibly and steadily as an instrument of fate upon him, with all that intelligence of the borderer supplemented with the red-skin's science of strategy.

Like a boudoir in the extreme fashion, this was

bristling with articles of bric-a-brac, and it seemed impossible that a stranger, six feet in height and large in bones if somewhat spare, could grope about it without demolishing an urn or a statuette, a gimcrack or a what-not laden with curios.

Not a crash—not a sound—not a breath, but the duke, like a maniac to whom hallucination had become reality in his reverse world, was sure that the enemy approached circuitously, gliding like a rattle-snake around all impediments, and would soon thrust that sharp steel out like the tongue of an adder. He felt like screaming a taunt or something to elicit a warning cry in reply—but it was too late. As he thought he perceived with his straining eyeballs, before which danced odd specks of light, something like a pair of eyes, and leveled his pistol, he was seized round the body by two arms and somehow he was aware that Clarkson had taken the knife between his teeth in order to master him thus securely. He fired the pistol but, so held, the bullet was uselessly sent into the ceiling.

"You are done for," said the victor in a quiet tone, as if the transaction were a business one. "What a vicious little toad you are. They don't seem to know you clean through in this section or they would vote me a testimonial for ridding them of you. You make love to a wife like mine! you?" he repeated with contempt that made the Frenchman writhe. "You ain't good enough to tie to a stake in a swamp and tempt the alligators. It's a public blessing to root you out and leave those young folks to spend a

happy life right on till they are gran'ther and gran'mother among their chicks and biddies."

"Help!" gasped the duke, crushed by the embrace, and fancying that he heard a hand on the door-knob.

"Hush!" but the word need not be said, for the duke felt one of the sturdy arms unwind and the point of a knife pierce his chest. "Mercy!" And with one of those efforts of which small but wiry men are capable of in extremity he tore one arm free and grasped the hand upon the knife.

What was his redoublement of horror when he felt the under fingers twine within and upon his own like the feelers of an octopus, and gradually change place so that they held his down on the handle. He was holding the knife, but he was held in turn by the avenger. Thus impelled, it resumed the stroke, and thus the duke was compelled to stab himself.

But to the last he struggled nervously, and suddenly the American uttered an execration which drowned the expiring groan of the last of the Septmonts.

"Confound the tough bones—they have broken an excellent knife worth a car-load of dukes!" such was the epitaph of Maximin des Septmonts.



## CHAPTER XIV

### BETTER LOVE COMES LATE THAN NEVER

At the portals of the room where this tragical scene was transpiring, a sentinel was keeping watch whose presence was as singular as the rencounter within.

It was the duchess.

Thus posted in the antechamber, she prevented any intruder, but she had sent for her father, as the prolongation of the explanation between the American and her husband increased her alarm. Three times she had started to flee, so strong was the emanation of horror from that room where a dread silence had succeeded the murmur of excited voices. Lastly, a faint gleam of rosy light, that had filtered through the hanging and traced a line from the key-hole, went into eclipse. She heard no more; she dared not peep; she was glad that she heard nothing. Curiosity was dead within her before the certainty that a tragedy of the first import was enacted. A clock on the marble mantel was ticking with the feelingless beat of mechanism, and all its mocking mower told her, as he ceaselessly swung his gilded scythe was, that one of the moments which he reaped would be her destiny. They were planning, these two men, how to kill her beloved on the morrow. This Ameri-

can was an ally of her husband's from the time when blood was to be spilt. Ah, she had read of the Western duelists enough to enlighten her.

If she could only go away and let what was inevitable be accomplished; but the voice of her conscience was not to be stifled. The looker-on in such a case was guilty. If one of those men slew the other she would be his accomplice.

Would her father never come?

At last, she heard steps. But it was a woman, not a man who came into her presence.

"Miss Vanness!" she exclaimed, having forgotten that hers should not be an unexpected call.

The American was attired in a sang-de-boeuf walking dress, trimmed with a lighter shade of red, with black lace and a black plume in her hat; the gory tint made the duchess shudder.

"Why, did you not know that I should be on the spot?" said she in surprise and taking this movement as one of repulsion. "Mr. Clarkson sent me word that you and he wanted to talk to me here at once."

"But," said the duchess, trembling and listening for the sound that might come from the boudoir, "since Mr. Clarkson wrote, something has happened which he did not foresee—nor I—nor you even, who seem to foresee so far."

"What do you mean?" demanded the American with signs of anxiety on her own part.

"While the duke was explaining to Mr. Clarkson the reasons that he saw fit to give for a duel between him and M. Gerard, that which you brought about,

madame—Mr. Clarkson, who thought these reasons neither sufficient nor honorable, suddenly took up the defense for me, for my father, for M. Gerard, and so hotly that at the present moment—ah!" she shrieked.

Although faintly, they both heard the first of the two pistol-shots fired by the Duke des Septmonts.

"That's a gun," remarked Reina, without being disturbed. "Do you mean to tell me that they are fighting together—the principal with his second? You French are the originals!"

"Pray do not laugh," said the duchess. "One of them may be dying now?" and she tottered toward the door.

"Pooh! that was only a popgun," sneered Miss Vanness; "Clarkson carries heavier metal than that."

"But, madame, we must prevent this duel!"

"Rather a one sided duel—more like an assassination—you see I know your dukes. Why should we stay it?"

"I do not want either of them killed in my behalf," faltered Catherine, trying to open the door.

"How does it concern you? It is more my business, I conceive, as both the fellows are sweet upon me. But they are full-grown men and I judge that they know how to manage their business without any women's aid. No more can join in, as the croupiers say in the gaming-houses, and the ball must not be touched until it stops rolling. You wanted to be free, did you not?"

With wringing hands, pale as death, which was stalking up and down in the next room like Mephis-

topheles between Faust and Valentine, the poor young woman moaned at the door, unable to lift her voice to call for its opening.

The second shot cracked, and she started with another shiver of horror.

"Two," counted Miss Vanness. "That's better—I mean, that is more like a duel. You are quite right to want to be free, and I warrant that one of those shots has done the deliverance. Clarkson is hot-headed and he goes off the handle with little provocation, but you have no notion how lucky he is in his blunders! It looks to me as if you had been praying to the providence which has pulled the globe through many a deep rut during ages, and is not going to be satisfactorily superseded by any of the new gods that the moderns are trying to put up for candidature. Providence has heard you, and has made use of me and mine while I flattered myself that I was working this game beautifully all by myself. It is justice, even if I am the under dog. In the part I have played against fate, I always knock under when the throw is against me. I fear it—it is for you; let us discuss the matter no farther."

The door opened while she spoke—the duchess fell on her knees; there loomed up before her as she drew aside the hangings, the somber figure of Clarkson.

Miss Vanness gave him one look and no doubt read on his impassive features what was unintelligible to the Frenchwoman, for she exclaimed with a kind of gratitude: "What did I tell you? Clarkson pulls out every time. You are a widow!"

The two women, with a curiosity very pardonable, sought to pry into the room, but it was too dark, and they could barely perceive a form on the floor half-wrapped in the velvet cover off a table, which, by its vague resemblance to a human one, sent a shudder through them.

"My dear Reina," said Clarkson gravely, as he handed his fellow-countrywoman the letter in the blank wrapper about which the duke had so fatally blundered, "kindly pass this on to Madame la Duchesse, as she might feel some repugnance to receiving it from my hand, and she must have it restored to her. This was certainly the last wish of her husband; he had no time to write it with his brief farewell to her and the world at large."

"His farewell?"

"Just so," returned Clarkson tranquilly; "I did my best to hold up my end of the argument but he overruled me, and he put an end to the discussion and his life. I never saw a man more bent on his doom. After writing the testament in question, which you will find on the writing table, he fired two shots and then ran a knife he borrowed from me without my leave, I assure you, into some vital part. All his *coups*, I have heard say, were not so *clean*."

Miss Vanness seemed to have a great weight off her mind. She gave the letter to the lady without any reluctance, saying:

"I told Dr. Ramonin that, if I lost this game, I should do it handsomely. I have lost and I must pay up. Through me this marriage was arranged—through

me it is canceled. Now, Clarkson, you are a fine fellow, but we must pull up stakes and make tracks. Yes, I am going home with you," she said, to his infinite joy. "I have had enough of this Europe of theirs—it is too small for my kind of woman. Besides, can't you understand that I ought never to have applied for a divorce? Bless you, I am in love with you again. Let us get out of this hole—I stifle!"

"Well, you don't want to get out no livelier than I," replied the executioner of the Duke des Sept-monts, as he almost gayly offered his arm to his regained wife, and the two departed, leaving the duchess still on her knees at the doorway, praying.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dr. Ramonin called in time to succor the poor woman, a prey to a fever which had to be fought in time. Asked by the commissary of police to report on the cause of the death of the master of the house, he performed his task "with pleasure," to chronicle his slip of the tongue in his satisfaction that death had sundered the bonds upon his young friend. Mauriceau grieved no more. He was not quite cured of his aristocratic penchant, for he hinted that M. Deshaltes was in the matrimonial market, when his daughter was entitled to lay aside her weeds. After she had chosen in another direction, and became Madame Gerard, he was heard to lament the duke as not so bad a bargain, all things considered, but the old man was not so sharp as in younger years, and nobody heeded his tales of when he lived among the peers.

The newly wedded couple went on an American tour that Catherine might form a clear idea of what her husband had gone through, to obtain a fortune which would buy a score of dukes at the standard of Septmonts, but they did not go near Vannessa, and they saw nothing of Clarkson or his wife.

Less than two years after, when the engineer—retired to the lovely suburb of Villas-Gerard, built by him and named in his honor—was mayor, a child was born to him and his wife, who looked so young in her happiness that one could hardly believe that she was ever the widow of the Duke de Septmonts. In accordance with an old idea, the inhabitants were consulting over the form in which they should offer a testimonial to the mayoress for the auspicious event, when their doubts were set at rest by the following singular cablegram:

“VANNESSE, New Mexico.—Hearing that the Mayor-ess of Les Villas-Gerard has happily been accouchée of a babe, the mayor of this city, who has peculiar reasons to be grateful toward France for hospitality to him and his wife, *née* Miss Vanness, has the honor to beg the town authorities to accept as a homage to their chief magistrate's wife, a little token of our native product and manufacture.”

Ten days subsequently, a large packing-case, of unusual weight for its dimensions, was opened in the town-council rooms, and to the delight of all the good fathers of the borough, there was unswathed from wrappers of ramie and cotton cloth, a magnificent

bassinette of wrought gold, embellished with precious stones of the country, perhaps not in the most refined taste, but worth more money than the recipients dared to calculate closely.

We do not say that the infant of Lucien and Catherine slept any the more soundly in this gorgeous cradle, but certain it is that the fond and proud parents exhibited the double treasure to their friends with a prayer in the heart for the felicity of the American Girl.

**THE END.**



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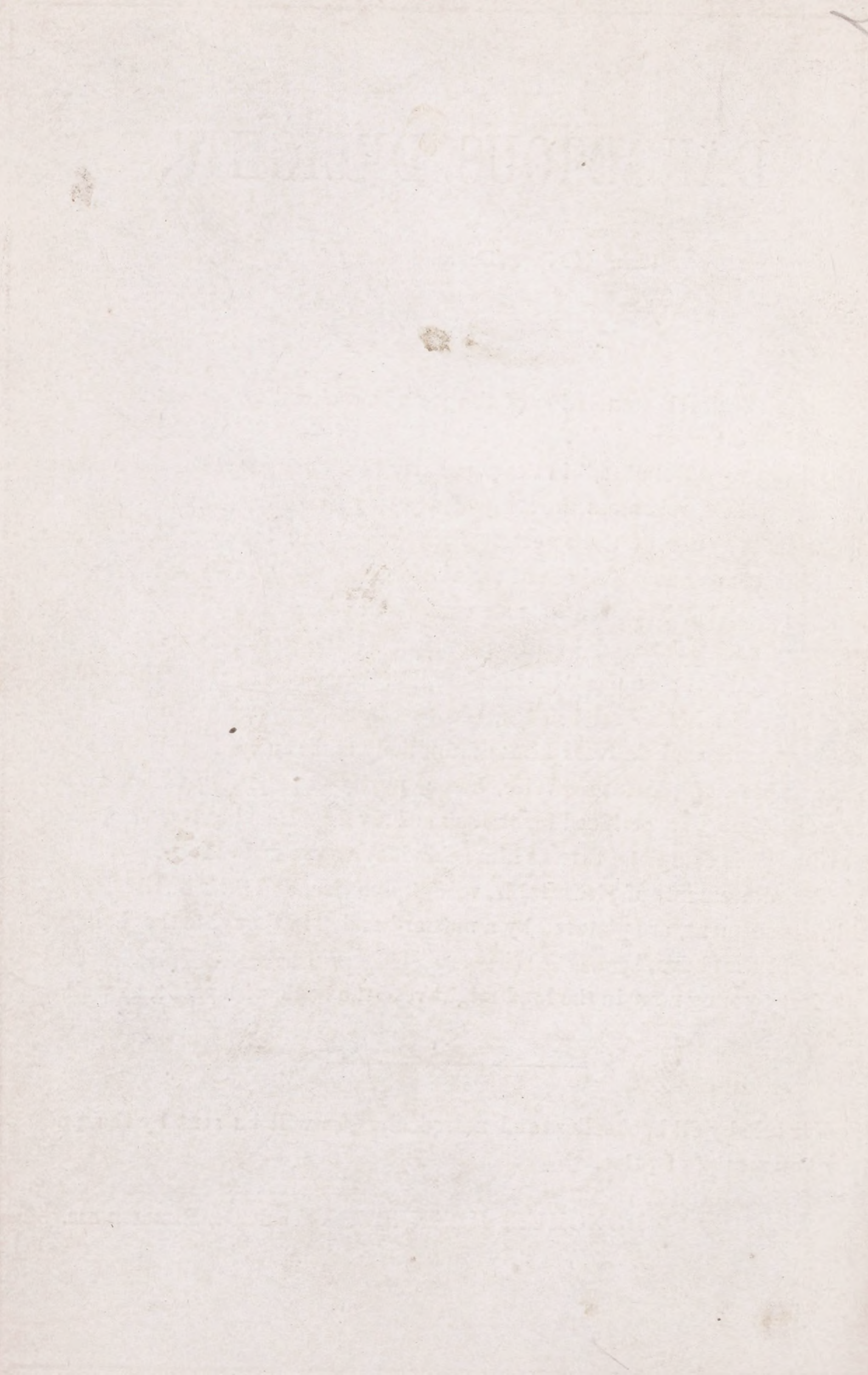
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