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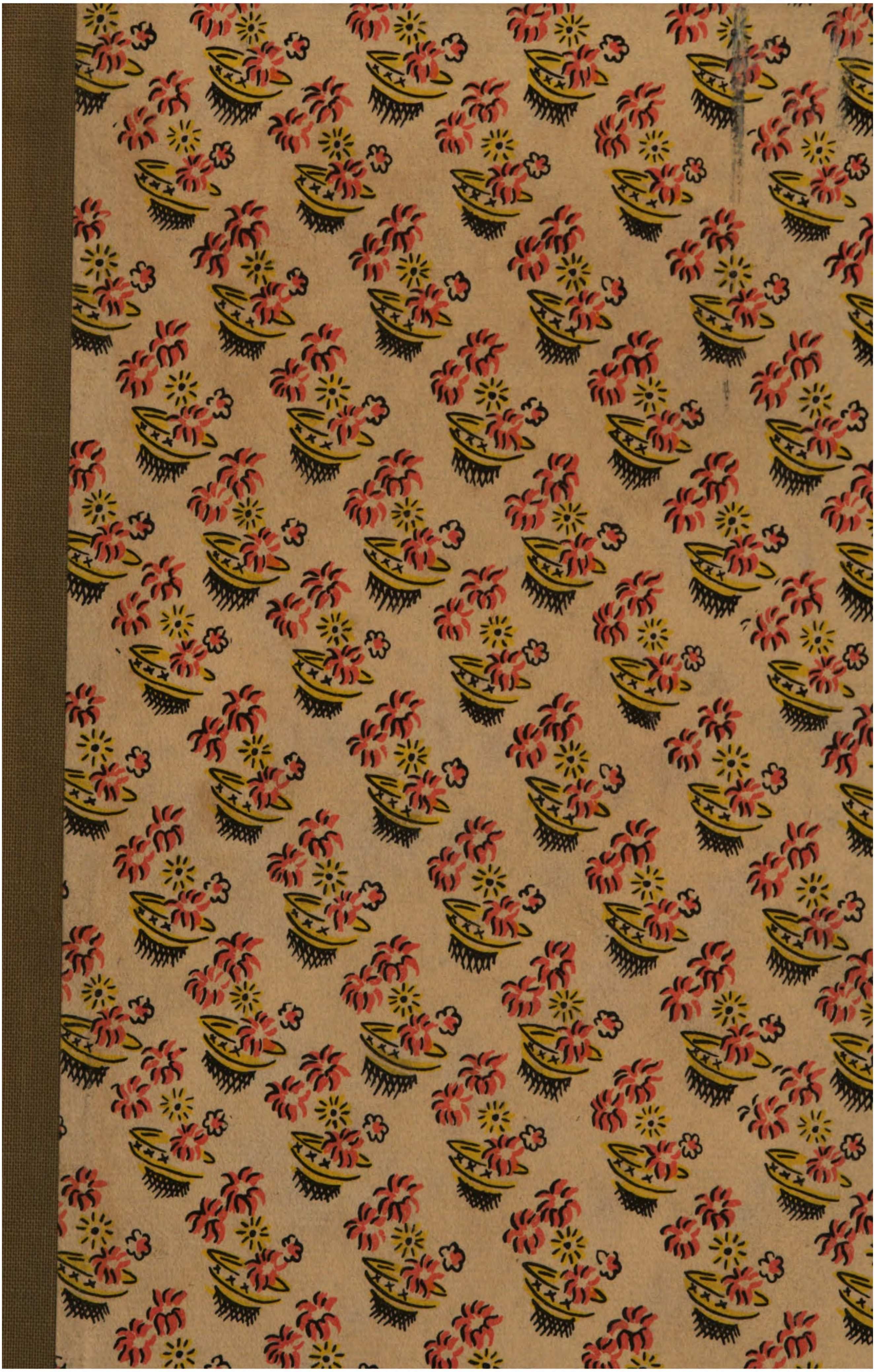

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XVIII CENTURY FRENCH ROMANCES

Edited by
VYVYAN HOLLAND

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[LA POUPÉE]

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II. THE OPPORTUNITIES OF A NIGHT

[LA NUIT ET LE MOMENT]

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A THOUSAND AND ONE FOLLIES

AND

HIS MOST UNLOOKED-FOR LORDSHIP

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HIS MOST UNLOOKED-FOR LORDSHIP

Translated from the French
of
JACQUES CAZOTTE
by
ERIC SUTTON
With an Introduction
by
STORM JAMESON

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NOTE

Les Mille et Une Fadaises *was first published in Paris in 1742 with the amusing rubric:* À Baillons, chez l'Endormy, à l'Image du Ronfleur.

Le Lord Impromptu *was first published in Paris in 1767.*

Neither of these tales has previously been translated into English.

INTRODUCTION

On an evening in the early part of the year 1788 a dinner was being given at the table of a member of the Académie. *All the talent of Paris was present, the gayest, the wittiest, the most speculative, the most daring: cynics and charming women, excited by a lavish flow of Malvasia and Constantia (those Grecian wines fancied by Alvare beloved of the devil), vied with one another in the exercise of 'reason', Condorcet, Chamfort, Malesherbes, the Duchesse de Grammont, Laharpe. Chamfort had already obliged with his stories* impies et libertins, *and the ladies had not blushed, nay, had not even raised a fan to mask a cheek. The talk grew wilder. Diderot was quoted:*

'The day on which the last king's neck
Shall dangle in the last priest's gut.'

Riskier avowals were hazarded, and M. de Voltaire was extolled for the revolution in thought that he had bred. On all sides it was agreed that philosophy was about to take the place of superstition and fanaticism; and the academicians, who, of course, were the centre of and motive force to liberty of thought, were asked when the final imposition of reason might be expected.

It was at this point in the conversation that one of the guests, an elderly M. Cazotte, the author of some extremely entertaining fairy tales, and known to be a follower of those curious mystics, the Illuminati, suddenly broke in. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'you may be satisfied that you will all see this sublime revolution. Yes, I am something of a prophet. It will surely come, but would you care to hear what it has in store for you?'

'Come, come,' sneered Condorcet, 'a philosopher cannot get annoyed with a prophet.'

'You, M. de Condorcet,' returned Cazotte, 'will die stretched on the straw of your cell: you will die by poison which you will swallow

to rob the hangman, by the very poison which that era of happiness *will have taught you to carry always on your person.'*

The pronouncement was greeted with roars of laughter, and many of the guests rallied the little old gentleman. 'Prison, poison, hangman! What have these to do with Philosophy and the reign of Reason?'

'Everything,' he replied. 'In the reign of Reason, in the name of Philosophy, of Humanity, of Liberty, your ends will come. Reason! why, there will be Temples of Reason!'

Chamfort expressed a hope that M. Cazotte would not be one of its priests.

'Indeed, I, too, hope not; but you, M. Chamfort, so worthy of the dignity, will take a razor and slash your veins in two-and-twenty places. And,' he continued through the laughter, 'you, M. de Nicolaï, will go to the scaffold; as will you, M. Bailly, and you, M. de Malesherbes.'

The laughter had by now grown a little forced: a note of apprehension had crept in. A few thought M. Cazotte's jesting ill-timed.

'The gallows bird!' muttered Chamfort. 'When is all this to come to pass, eh?'

'Before six years have fled all will be accomplished.'

'Miracles, indeed!' shouted Laharpe. 'You cannot mix me up in it.'

'Your fate is the most extraordinary, for you will turn Christian.'

'Aha!' broke in Chamfort. 'Now I feel safer. If we are not to die until Laharpe turns Christian, we are immortal.'

The Duchesse de Grammont, always ready to amuse and be amused, ventured that her sex was lucky, since it passed for nothing in revolutions.

'Your sex, ma'am,' said Cazotte, 'will not protect you. To the scaffold you will go, ay, and many ladies will share your tumbril, their hands lashed behind their backs . . . Yes, great ladies, greater even than you . . .'

'Greater? Princesses of the blood . . .?'

'Greater than that even . . .'

There was a general shrinking. No one dared put the question. Only Mme. de Grammont, to lighten the atmosphere, laughed. 'You see he doesn't even allow me a confessor.'

'No,' was the reply, 'not you, nor any of you, none, save one only. And he . . .'

He paused and muttered something.

'And who will be the happy mortal to have this prerogative?'

'It will be the only one left to him. He is the King of France!'

At this moment the host pushed his way through the crowd and brusquely told his guest that the joke had gone too far. Cazotte bowed and was about to retire when the inquisitive duchess suddenly asked him of his own fate.

'Do you remember,' he said, 'the story of the Jew who during the siege walked for six days along the walls of the city crying "Woe to Jerusalem!" and on the seventh, "Woe to Jerusalem! Woe upon my head!" and as he wailed, a stone flung from a catapult smashed him to pieces?'

The above scene took place in the sixty-ninth year of Jacques Cazotte's life, a life hitherto scarcely remarkable. He was a Dijonnais, and after finishing his education in Paris, he had passed into the Ministry of the Marine, in which he rose to the rank of Contrôleur, *with an appointment in Martinique. Already (he sailed to the West Indies in 1747) he had shown at least a small talent for literature; he had composed several songs of the 'joli mois du mai' variety and had written a fashionable fairy tale. The gentle life of the colonies suited him, and he set to work to produce a heroic-comic fable,* Olivier; *while during a period of leave in France he was so far honoured as to be permitted to compose two lullabies for the infant Duke of Burgundy. In Martinique he married the daughter of the Chief Justice of the island, Elizabeth Roignan, by whom he had two sons and a daughter, Zabeth. But the climate of the West Indies did not suit him, and in 1759 or thereabouts he returned to France, selling his colonial property to a friend, a Jesuit Father, who gave him as consideration* *bills on the Society of Jesus in Paris. On his arrival, Cazotte found to his dismay that his good friend in Martinique was already deeply in debt to the Society, which refused to honour the bills. So at the age of forty Cazotte found himself with the greater part of his fortune vanished. He had, however, a small property at Pierrey near Epernay, whither he retired and embarked on a literary career. In 1772 appeared* Le Diable Amoureux, *which took Paris by storm. He followed it up with* Le Lord Impromptu, *which also had a success. He became a figure in intellectual society, and Paris could not be without its Cazotte. He duly appeared in the drawing-rooms, where his gaiety, wit and lively conversation, his genuine kindliness and ready tact made him generally welcome. He had also a passion for music (he collaborated with a 'neveu de Rameau'—oddly enough a little deranged—in a comic opera,* Sabots*), and waged a fierce war against the encroaching Italianate music, which was ruining French taste.*

Then the kind gay little man fell under the influence of the Martinists, the French offshoot of the adherents of Spartacus Weisshaupt. He swallowed the doctrine of the Illuminati wholesale and proceeded to bore his friends, in season and out of season, with his new views. However, he still managed to produce contes, *though he wound up with a curious account of his spiritual progress by publishing a treatise entitled* Le Magicien.

But by now Cazotte's prophecy was nearing its time. The galley of Paris suffered the first sharp waves against its side, warning of the impending hurricane. The emigration of the timid had begun, and presently the royal family took flight to Varennes, to return prisoners in effect. Cazotte from his country seat watched with horror the impending catastrophe. One son had already fled to Germany to enlist in the émigré *troops under the Duke of Brunswick. The elder, Scévole, had in the beginning imbibed pernicious notions, and indeed become head of the National Guard at Pierrey, but later had repented and joined the Garde du Roi in Paris. Cazotte, overwhelmed by the spectacle of the foundering kingdom, began to enter into correspondence* *with Pouteau, secretary to M. Laporte, Intendant of the Civil List, as to the future of the realm of France.*

It is indeed a queer correspondence. Cazotte, who at Pierrey is on the way to the frontier, becomes a post-box for the King's party, goes half-frantic with things seen, things guessed and things revealed in visions. Again and again he counsels action; under his pen grow wild and impossible schemes of rescuing the King, who must bring a printing press with him; what about pikes to turn on the National Guard? he talks of what Worms, Coblentz, Brussels and Trèves are expecting; recounts his revelations; pours bitter scorn on the sans-culottes and the women of Paris. 'I demand nothing less than the complete accomplishment of Isaiah II or III . . . " Let the women be shaven " . . . The Duchesse de B . . . la demoiselle d'Auv . . . la Larochef . . . et tant d'autres en finissant par les dames de la halle. *These women in love with independence and novelty, who have ruined the men; they deserve the whip: let them be shorn, and God's will be done.'*

At last comes August 1792 and the fatal 10th. The Tuileries are stormed and M. Laporte's office broken into. Poor old Laporte is taken and perishes a fortnight later. Pouteau disappears, as does also Scévole, but in the cabinet are discovered the letters of the Sieur Cazotte, chief maire *of Pierrey. He is arrested and, accompanied by his loved and beautiful daughter, is taken to the Abbaye. Follow those fatal days, 2nd and 3rd September, when prisoners are hacked to death at the prison gates and the poor lovely head of Lamballe mops and mows at the windows of the Temple. The assassins rush at Cazotte. They raise their weapons, but the daughter flings herself between: 'Only through my heart shall you reach my father's.' Some of the Marseilles battalion, touched by the girl's beauty and distress, echo the cry. Mercy for once is shown. A way is made, and father and daughter pass down the alley of murderers over a pavement of blood.*

But Cazotte knew his escape was only momentary. 'My hour is come,' he told his friends. On the 11th he was again cast into jail.

Trial followed. His letters, those too incriminating letters, foolish as they were, proved him a king's-man: he had conspired against the nation—death! He was led to the condemned cell. The executioner cut his hair close: he asked and demanded that it should be sent to that faithful daughter. One letter only: 'My wife, my children, do not weep for me, do not forget me, and remember never to offend God.' So he went out to the Place du Carrousel. On the scaffold he turned to the crowd and cried, 'I die as I have lived, faithful to God and my King.' The knife fell.

As a master of French literature one need not take Cazotte too seriously. He is in the tradition of his age. In the beginning writing for amusement, he ended by writing for his living, and his work is therefore largely composed of fashionable fairy stories and frivolous Orientalisms. He is descended from the Cabinet des Fées *and Le Sage, with a pinch of Crébillon fils, but he did possess one clear little spring of his own which gushes out in that engaging work, his masterpiece,* Le Diable Amoureux *(1772): 'there is a fluid grace about that autobiographical* récit,*' comments Mr. Saintsbury, 'which is very rare indeed.' In truth he would be a very poor specimen of humanity who was not bewitched by that delicious devilkins, Biondetto-Biondetta, so graceful and so captivating. As for his other works,* Les Mille et Une Fadaises, *which was published in 1746, is an exceptionally agreeable and polite fairy tale graced by a charming humour. The author of course is in difficulties with his plot and is put to the extremity of producing a* Fidus Achates *in the shape of the knight-errant from the moon, but he is perfectly aware that his Brillandor is something of a self-centred bore, and, so soon as he has held up the action long enough, Cazotte impudently and adroitly extricates himself and the narrator of the tale by well-contrived interruptions from Gracieux and the sleepy 'sultanas'. It is also amusing to note Cazotte's sly allusions to Crébillon's recently published* Sopha *in the prudish and termagant Couch which talks scandal to Gracieux. 'There are sofas and sofas. I am a virtuous piece of furniture whose adventures* *would scandalize no one. It is much better to be a sofa than a weasel, a pumpkin or a cucumber. Provided one is not a sofa that . . .'*

Le Lord Impromptu *is the successor to* Le Diable Amoureux *and it must be admitted as many degrees beneath it. But save for the grotesque names and misspellings, which are quite possibly the fault of the Parisian compositor, there is nothing very absurd in the English* milieu. *True, grooms do not and did not carry shot-guns when in pursuit of the fox, but otherwise the household of Sir George Nettling bears a distinct air of verisimilitude, and might have been modelled on Peter Beckford's Dorset home at Steepleton, which was, as his pretty and modish wife noted, 'filled with the most agreeable mixture of fox-hunting squires and their virtuous dames. The men are too insensible and stupid to be made fools of, and the women have too good an opinion of their own charms to be jealous.' Indeed, one wonders whether Cazotte ever did manage to get to England. The hero's mother is so much in the fashion of Billie Taylor's dame, the lady who 'shot her true love William, with the bride upon his arm'; the gipsies are so competently Lovels and Lees; and the Welsh so remarkably Welsh (at least, to one who has never crossed the march), that he may very well have come among us savages. Perhaps readers may find* His Most Unlooked-for Lordship *a trifle thin, but then it must be remembered that Cazotte was an extremely serious person, and the writing of brilliant trifles probably cost him a deal of labour and trouble. As a writer he is neither more nor less than a specimen of his period, neither bad nor—save in the instance of* Le Diable Amoureux—*particularly good. It is as a man that he deserves the memory of posterity. Few gentlemen of letters have died better deaths.*

STORM JAMESON

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A THOUSAND AND ONE FOLLIES

A THOUSAND AND ONE FOLLIES

HOW THESE STORIES CAME ABOUT

When the Baronne de * * * came back from the country she went to call upon the Marquise de * * *. After the first exchanges of compliments, the Marquise observed:

'Pray look at me, Baronne, and tell me if you don't think me frightfully changed. I haven't closed my eyes for a fortnight, imagine my sufferings! I shall go mad.'

And, indeed, her sufferings were real enough. A pretty woman who cannot sleep suffers more than anyone. She feels that her fatigue is spoiling her looks, and she dies by inches.

'Truly,' said the Baronne, 'I do think you changed. However, I don't feel that so much harm has been done as you imagine: your eyes are as sparkling as ever they were. But have you tried no remedies? And talking of that, have you forgotten the learned discourse that the Abbé de * * * pronounced in your presence, which sent you so heartily to sleep? We all know the Abbé: bid him come and sit with you; and if one of his discourses isn't enough, he shall produce four; 'tis a torrent of eloquence.'

'Four!' said the Marquise. 'Nay, Madam, you can't be serious. Such a course of treatment would destroy me. Must I pay such a price for sleep?'

'What matters the price you pay?' asked the Baronne. 'Come, Madam, let us appeal to the Abbé. He is a man of many gifts. 'Tis not only in his composed orations that he excels: he talks as he writes. The other day he came to see me in the country, with his collection of worn-out stories and anecdotes. Why, he succeeded in boring us more than . . .'

While the Baronne was still speaking, the Abbé who was the subject of her praises was announced.

'Ah, my dear Abbé!' said she, 'we were just complaining of you. When we want the dear creatures, you are never there. The Marquise is ill; she is tormented by a cruel insomnia, and you desert her instead of keeping her company and amusing her with those little stories of yours that you make so entertaining.'

'Oh, Madam!' cried the Abbé, with a deprecating air.

'Oh, Sir!' said the Baronne quickly, 'you shall not pretend that you are not witty and agreeable: you have other faults for which, if you please, you shall make amends. In a word, you must dine here, and you must not leave the Marquise until she is asleep. You may talk, you may shout, you may do anything you like, but you *must* be amusing.'

The Abbé entered very readily into the spirit of the affair, and made no further objections. Dinner was served and eaten; dessert was brought and removed.

'Now, Monsieur l'Abbé,' said the Baronne: 'forward! And above all do not be disheartened: 'tis an obstinate complaint.'

'Where does Madam desire me to begin?' replied the Abbé. 'Will you have the news of the day?'

'By no means, my dear Abbé, we have the newspapers.'

'Then what kind of story would you like? You don't care for bawdy stories.'

'We like them very much,' said the Baronne; 'but they would be quite out of place here. The Marquise has been forbidden champagne, epigrams, bawdy stories, and, in general, anything likely to excite the blood. Besides, we have all the new books: we should know them already.'

'Then, my dear ladies, what would you like? Simple tales for the drawing-room?'

'Indeed, no, my dear Abbé: they would be taken from Pittaval. Tell us fairy stories.'

'I obey, ladies,' replied the Abbé, 'though I am but a novice in that style, and 'tis no easy one. The fairy story is a foolish mode, stale and essentially uninteresting, depending entirely on its originality and the freshness of its imagery: the mind must be kept incessantly in play, but never engaged. There is but little opportunity for instruction unless it be dragged in by the hair.'

'Ah!' sighed the Baronne, yawning as widely as possible. 'Bravo, my dear Abbé, we shall soon be asleep. Do but go on like that; why, you are marvellous! Your little exordium is quite priceless. Now for some introductory reflections: I adore them.'

The Abbé then proceeded as follows:

'It is a very hard matter to prevent a bad woman doing harm.'

'One moment, Monsieur l'Abbé,' said the Marquise, 'I am not sure that I quite follow.'

'Come, Marquise,' said the Baronne, 'you are here to listen and not to contradict. Contradiction is exciting and extremely bad for you. Proceed, my dear Abbé, proceed, and confine yourself to your story, since we are agreed that you have no talent for reflection.'

Chapter I

In which is related the birth of Riante, and in which the charming character of the Fairy Troisbosses is revealed.

There was once a lady quite without caprices. I am not very certain of her name, but I believe she was called Rare, a very exceptional woman, amiable without being proud of it: innocent of affectations and the vapours, and never maligning a woman prettier than herself; and, as a result, most unpopular. For so virtuous a lady must always be something of a nuisance. 'Tis but a story, my dear ladies (said the Abbé smiling); but to return to my heroine, equally detested by the prude and the coquette, by the gay and the indifferent, because her conduct was an imputation on them all, she was forced to retire to a château on the frontier, where her virtues could shock no one. She applied herself to books, and became a learned lady without becoming a foolish one, so singular was her destiny.

Although devoted to study, she had a daughter whom she brought up with care. Her name was Riante, either because of a smile—intelligent without being malicious—that was characteristic of her, or because (as some profess to believe) she marked her entrance upon the world by bursting into laughter instead of tears. Those who uphold this latter view relate an anecdote which may well find a place in my story. You know as well as I do that, in days gone by, Fairies were always present at the birth of children of important personages: it was one of their prerogatives, or it might more properly be described as one of the duties attaching to their office, for it was always rather a troublesome business. The children of the great are not born with any privileges, so the Fairies were thus fortunately able to repair the neglect of

Nature: to endow with beauty those who had it not, and add the graces that should adorn it, to combine the most incompatible talents with the gift of modesty that so seldom goes with them—in a word, to confer a number of admirable qualities that we now no longer see, since it has been decided, I don't know why, to do away with Fairies.

So the Fairies presided at the birth of Riante, but they had little to do. Never was anyone so happily endowed as this sweet infant. She was the most attractive creature, with a charming mind, heart, and disposition, a spoilt child of Nature. When they had bestowed on her the gift of being loved by every one, an advantage that the highest deserts cannot always ensure, she was as perfect as feminine character could well be. It was while they were attentively looking at her that she suddenly burst out laughing. A burst of laughter from a newly-born baby is a very surprising thing. They thought there must be a mystery somewhere, as indeed there was, whether from instinct or from sense, for Riante was precocious: she had not laughed without good reason for doing so.

A somewhat ridiculous scene, that she had apparently suspected, was then taking place in the chimney, from which the most shocking howls could be heard emerging. One of Rare's waiting-maids went to see where they were coming from, but a prodigious quantity of soot and of some malodorous moisture fell into her eyes, and was the sole reward for her curiosity. The Fairy Lyrette, who was of the company, then came to see what was happening, and soon discovered what the mystery was. Conceive her surprise when she recognized the Fairy Troisbosses, her enemy, stuck in the chimney and vainly trying to get out of it.

'Dear me! and what may you be doing there, my good creature?' says she. 'However, for the moment, you are caught, and must pay the forfeit. You won't get out until you have handed over your wand.'

'My wand?' repeated Troisbosses. 'I will bring it you at once. Just wait for me.'

So saying, she tried to extricate herself; but, by the spells of Lyrette, the chimney shrank so considerably that Troisbosses would have been completely flattened out had she not bethought herself of dropping her wand.

Lyrette picked it up and gave it to Riante, and it was hung round her neck like a rattle. So long as she kept this wand she need fear no misadventure, but she must be careful not to lose it. After this brief injunction, Lyrette retired, followed by the rest of the Fairies.

I observe, ladies, that you are impatient to know what Troisbosses can have been doing in the chimney. She was a deformed little witch, and had, in fact, three humps; I leave you to imagine on what part of her person she carried the third. Her mind was as distorted as her body, and her heart was as black as her face, which was very black indeed. As she was Lyrette's enemy, when the latter was bestowing gifts on children of good family, she would always appear and maliciously add some disagreeable characteristic. This was why, notwithstanding so many precautions for making them perfect, these children were often so very far from being so.

When Troisbosses heard of the birth of Rare's child she hastened upon the scene, astride the first devil that came to hand, to add some nasty contribution of her own to this feast of perfection. It had indeed been expected that she would not remain quiet. All the doors had been hermetically closed; but the chimney was open, and the wicked Fairy noticed it, so true is it that friends are less prudent than their enemies are dangerous. Fortunately for Rare and her daughter, Troisbosses was blinded by her malignant fury; the chimney was narrow, and she plunged into it without reflection. She wriggled herself and her humps, but all to no purpose: she was stuck. She made the most frightful grimaces, for it is easy to do that when one is ugly; she exhausted the repertoire of her most elaborate curses; she shrieked; she stormed; she struggled with her stunted arms and twisted feet, but all this disturbance did but serve to let the Fairies know what was happening; and, indeed, some maintain that all this gave rise to Riante's outburst of laughter.

As soon as Troisbosses had let fall her wand, the chimney grew gradually wider and allowed her to escape. She took herself off much ashamed, as every one is who has planned a wicked stroke and failed. But she was tormented by the most terrible anger that she had ever known, and her head was full of abductions, murders, revenges and plans for the most awful enchantments, but in vain; for what could she do without her wand?

In the meantime Riante grew up. All those appealing graces which were to enchant every heart began gradually to unfold themselves in her face. Not, perhaps, the hearts of her own sex; for they might already be susceptible of jealousy, although, in that primitive age, the passion of jealousy was hardly so developed as it has since become.

I have not yet said anything of the country and the people among whom lived Rare and her daughter: I will come back to this by way of a short digression. You must not expect that I shall inform you of the age or Hegira, the moment or the aspect of their birth. I am a poor chronologist and a still worse astronomer. They lived a long while ago, and that is all I know about it. France was their native land, but France was then Gaul, and Druids rubbed shoulders with the priests of Rome. Our worthy rough forefathers, simple, stolid, with their long beards, lank hair, and flat faces, were endowed with little but the commonest of common sense. Did they suspect that they would be the ancestors of an elegant, gay, polished and polite race? Could these broad-trousered fellows have conceived the prodigious revolutions in fashion, all the fantastic metamorphoses in our manner of wearing our hair and our faces, and the contempt into which that same common sense would fall? No, certainly not: these are the strokes of Fate, and we may not anticipate them.

(As the ladies began to feel the approach of sleep at this point in the Abbé's story, he withdrew with the intention of continuing it on the following day.)

Chapter II

Riante's education; useless precautions.

Riante lived in a little apartment that had been built for her by the Fairy Lyrette; it was not made of diamonds or lapis-lazuli: it was made of porcelain, and very convenient; which was all that was needed. By Rare's orders no man was ever allowed to approach it. She mistrusted her daughter's heart, for it is the best disposed hearts that are the most affectionate: she was anxious that her daughter should not experience love before she could recognize it. Moreover, a certain prophecy compelled her to take more particular care. Lyrette had read in the stars that if Riante was to be happy she must not have looked upon a man before her fourteenth birthday. In order to distract the lovely creature's mind from a knowledge that might be dangerous, all the jewels that are the delight of childhood had been collected in her palace, and indeed everything that could fill a heart that has not loved; for to one that has, they are so many useless toys.

Riante, who knew no other amusements than those that had been provided for her, at first took the liveliest pleasure in them all; but in time she began to grow up, and disquiet and desire began to stir within her, none knows how. Whatever care was taken to conceal from the lovely child the knowledge that there were men in the world, it was impossible not to speak of them in her presence, for they naturally enter into all feminine conversation. At last the word that she had so often heard repeated aroused her curiosity.

'But what are these men you speak of?' she asked her women.

At first they did not answer, which was the best way of making her repeat the question; but her insistence was of no avail.

'Of course,' said they, 'we may not tell you what men are; your mother does not wish you to know.'

That is exactly what governesses do: when they cannot satisfy a child's curiosity they provoke it.

'Oh, what can a man be?' cried Riante, flinging her arms round her mother's neck.

The question was unexpected and not a little embarrassing.

'A man,' answered Rare, 'is a person whose occupations are different from ours.'

'And what are the occupations of men?' asked Riante.

More embarrassment for the mother! She explained as well as she could the various conditions of men, not without a good deal of exaggeration to their disfavour. In order to warn her daughter against her coming inclinations, she made her believe that the soldier was savage and bloodthirsty and the lawyer pompous and cruel; she did not even spare Abbés.

'Oh, my dear Abbé,' interrupted the Marquise, 'do tell me what she said about them.'

'My dear lady,' said the Abbé, 'what she said about them was something quite new in those days, but would not be at all new now. Spare me a relation which would teach you nothing that you do not know already. Let it be enough that Rare succeeded so well in making her daughter disgusted with her fancy to become acquainted with men, that the subject was never again mentioned between them. Still, the hatred that Riante conceived for our sex could not have been very extreme, for one instant sufficed for its destruction. However, every one was highly surprised when, upon searching for the lovely child throughout the palace, she was nowhere to be found. How dreadfully Rare reproached herself for her negligence.

The fourteen years laid down by Lyrette had nearly expired without any misadventure to her daughter. She had latterly been rather less careful, and it was through her own fault that she had lost her treasure. Lyrette thereupon appeared and made matters worse by the bitterness of her reproaches. She spared the mother, who was indeed to be pitied, but she sharply rebuked the governesses.

'No doubt,' said she, 'some young man has been admitted.' And she made it clear to them that she regarded their fidelity as more than doubtful. However, the Fairy's expostulations did not improve matters: it was necessary to do something more practical, which was to consult the stars. Misfortunes never come alone. On four successive nights the moon was hidden. Rare's despair and Lyrette's impatience were such that they could wait no longer, so they had recourse to the Book of Magic, and this is what they found, word for word.

It was Troisbosses who had done it. (You will, no doubt, have felt that her hatred had been quiescent for a long time, but that was from want of power, not of ill will.)

Deprived as she was of her wand, she was almost reduced to the condition of a simple mortal (though an unusually malignant one), for she had never taken the trouble to acquire any of those sciences which enable Fairies to control Nature. For Honour and Ambition she cared nothing, but her anger and humiliation induced her to make the attempt. She shut herself up in her cave and busied herself with trying to discover a secret that might help her in her revenge. It must have been a tolerably difficult undertaking, for nearly fourteen years had gone by before she achieved her purpose. At last she succeeded in producing a talisman which gave her the power of taking any form she chose, and of transplanting herself in an instant from one end of the universe to the other: secrets which are of slight importance in the arts of

Faëry, where there are so many, but which may become formidable in the possession of so dangerous a creature.

As soon as her sinister scheme was complete, in the twinkling of an eye she appeared before Riante's tiny palace, invisible, and carefully awaiting the moment when the girl should be alone, before approaching her. The opportunity was not long in coming. Wearied after a walk that she had just taken, Riante was asleep under a thicket of jasmine. The wicked Fairy came and sat beside her and waited till she should wake.

I believe, ladies, that I forgot to tell you that Riante's wand could not be taken from her without her consent; unless that had been so, it was hardly probable that her enemy would have waited with folded arms for her awakening. However, she occupied herself with the horrid wiles she proposed to use, and, to make them more dangerous, instead of the disgusting appearance with which you are familiar, she took the form of the most charming but the most treacherous of all the gods, with whom you are no doubt well acquainted: indeed, who should know him better than you, except those whom you force to feel his power?

Chapter III

What Riante saw on her awakening, and how she learnt to dream.

The Fairy had adopted this delightful guise when the lovely girl opened her eyes. You will easily understand Riante's surprise at so unwonted a sight. Her impulse was to suppose that she was still asleep; she raised her hand to her eyes to open them. Then the Fairy spoke:

'You are awake, lovely Riante; are you surprised to see me?'

'But who are you?' asked the girl innocently.

'I am Love,' answered the Fairy.

'Love!' said Riante. 'What a pretty name! And you have wings: how did you get those? How lovely to have coloured wings! I must get Mamma to give me some. But you have no clothes on: that is not at all pretty. Pray what brought you here?'

'The pleasure of seeing you,' answered the Fairy. 'I was flying through the air—for I use these wings for flying—when I saw you as I passed. I thought you so charming that I could not resist the pleasure of stopping beside you. But it cannot be true that you have never heard of me? That you do not know who I am?'

'Not in the least,' confessed Riante.

''Tis very cruel to leave you in such ignorance,' went on the Fairy. 'You must understand that no one can be happy who does not know me. I dare swear you find life tiresome sometimes.'

'Indeed I do,' admitted Riante.

'Very well, then; listen to me,' said the Fairy, 'and you will never find it tiresome any more. Have not your mother and your governesses ever spoken to you about men?'

'What!' answered Riante quickly, 'those horrid men?'

'Horrid men, indeed!' interrupted the Fairy: 'and pray, what has made you dislike them so much? How ridiculous! Know, my dear child, that you are being cruelly deceived. I see what has happened. Your mother, born and brought up in the barbarous principles of virtue, whose only delight is the defiance of nature, has fed you, while yet at her breast, with an unreasoning hatred of the human race. Don't you know that these same men, whom she has described to you in such odious terms, would be eager to bring you the greatest happiness you can ever know, if you did not avoid them as you do? They would be your humble slaves, with no will but yours, no eyes but for you. For you alone they would draw breath, and die if they could not be in your company. Well, then, you are not to think them unworthy of your regard. You are beautiful, Riante, and it seems more than likely that in mind and heart you are the paragon of women. Yet there is in this world one man who falls short of you in nothing, and who loves you—nay, adores you.'

'Well, and what am I to do?' said Riante.

'What you must do is allow him to come and tell you how much he loves you,' answered the Fairy.

'Will that be at all disagreeable?' asked Riante.

'Far from it,' said the Fairy; 'a delightful feeling of sympathy will draw you together, and pleasures beyond all description will be yours. Come, I see your feelings are stirred; I would hazard a guess that you are conscious of a strange and by no means disagreeable emotion. Ah, my dear Riante, you will feel many, many others. I will begin your happiness by showing you your lover's portrait.'

'What is a lover?' asked Riante.

'One who loves you and whom you love.'

'Will love be our only pleasure?' asked Riante. 'For I must tell you that my governesses say they love me, and I say I love them too, but it does not amuse me very much.'

'Well, will this amuse you?' said the Fairy, showing her a portrait; 'tell me what you feel.'

The portrait, ladies, was of an extremely agreeable young gentleman whom the Fairy had chosen for her purpose.

It produced the desired effect, or, rather, that natural attraction that can touch our hearts in a flash stirred the heart of our Riante.

'Ah, how charming!' she cried.

'Very well,' said the Fairy; 'if you will say nothing to your mother, come and sleep here to-morrow after dinner, and I will transport into your presence the original of this portrait.'

'Thank you very much,' said Riante.

'I do but follow my inclination,' said the pretended Love. 'I am the god of lovers: I only seek to bring their hearts together.'

'What!' said Riante; 'you are a god and you take so much trouble for me?'

'The noblest occupation for the gods,' replied Troisbosses, 'is to secure the happiness of mortals like yourself. Do but remember to say nothing of what I have just told you; and keep your word.'

The Fairy then flew away. The lovely creature watched her disappear into the distance, and returned to her little palace a good deal more thoughtful than she had left it. The governesses tried to discover her secret, but in vain: nothing makes a girl more discreet than a touch of love. Riante remained obstinately silent. They tried to distract her, to amuse her with games; they invented new ones; they even went so far as to revive the 'Goose game' of the Greeks. I cannot forbear reminding you that it had not been played since the Siege of Troy. Conceive, therefore, how entertaining it must have been. But Riante paid no attention to it whatever: Love must have made a great deal of progress.

It will, perhaps, not be inappropriate to throw a little light on the history of this portrait. It was, as I have said, the portrait of a very agreeable young gentleman; his native country does not matter. When Troisbosses showed the portrait to Riante she had three dozen others in her pocket, for she had determined to go on showing them until she had produced the effect required. But there was no need for such an extended display. As soon as Riante had seen Gracieux (that was the young gentleman's name) she was in no mind to look at any of the others. The Fairy, satisfied with her experiment, flew to the young gentleman to engage him in an intrigue on which depended the success of her plans. He was out hunting, which was his favourite occupation. The Fairy waited until he had just brought down a bird with an arrow. She picked up the bird, and put Riante's portrait in its place.

At this unlooked-for discovery, our young man was completely taken aback. His passions were warm, and he conceived the most violent predilection for the original of this lovely portrait. He sat down to contemplate it at his ease; he was entirely overcome, and trembled with astonishment and delight. While he was thus absorbed in admiration, Troisbosses appeared to him, not in her natural form; for, apart from a proper feeling of pride, since she had acquired the power of changing it her natural appearance was the one she assumed least often and with the least satisfaction. (You see there is some modesty in this world.) So she adopted an extremely imposing disguise.

Chapter IV

Describing the stratagems of Troisbosses, and how they succeeded.

The Fairy's appearance was, at first, not at all to the taste of our huntsman, not because he was timid, but because it diverted his attention in a manner that was not at all agreeable to him.

'I,' said Troisbosses, 'am a good Fairy.'

'I am delighted to hear it,' said he; 'you have come just at the right time; do you know who is the lovely creature whose portrait I have here?'

'It is some one,' said the Fairy, 'who is destined to love you dearly.'

'Indeed,' said Gracieux; 'and pray how did you discover that?'

'I know it,' said she. 'I even know something more, and that is that your happiness lies in your own hands. But you must do what I tell you.'

'Indeed I will,' said Gracieux; 'I would go to the centre of the earth if I must.'

'You need not do that,' answered the Fairy. 'I am called the Fairy Tropbonne. I have long taken an interest in your happiness, and so much so that I have already arranged for you a meeting with this lovely lady. But you must be careful and discreet, the merest trifle might ruin you.'

'A meeting!' cried Gracieux; 'and when may that be, Madam?'

'Listen,' said the Fairy; 'just one word and then I must leave you. I must tell you what you are to do.'

'Oh, Madam!' said he, 'you may rely on me. When must I go?'

'But how impatient you are!' said the Fairy. 'You will spoil everything. You must know that this damsel whose heart is destined to be yours is watched over by a fantastical, misanthropical creature of a mother, who holds the entire human race in execration. If you are observed, you will lose in one instant all that my kindness has done for you, the hope of being happy, and your life into the bargain. I will keep guard near you so as to preserve you from any danger that may arise.'

'Ah, Madam, how kind you are!' cried Gracieux. 'Indeed, I will devote the rest of my life to my gratitude if you will but spare me a few minutes for love.'

The Fairy yielded to his entreaties, and transported him to the jasmine thicket, where Riante had already arrived. As soon as they caught sight of each other, their conversation became extremely animated. Although they had never met before they had a great deal to talk about; but as they both talked at once, and I did not hear what they said, you must pardon me if I cannot repeat it. Besides, such feelings cannot be described. Riante called Gracieux 'my lover'; he was overcome with ecstasy, threw himself at her feet and kissed her hand, once and again; she made no objection; she did not even tell him to go away. And this rather makes one doubt whether Modesty is the child of Nature or Education.

In the midst of these transports, so favourably received (and even reciprocated), when, after having said so much to each other, our lovers still had everything to say, the Fairy hard-heartedly removed the young gentleman.

'Where, where are you taking me, Madam?' he asked. 'If you cannot leave me where I was, why bring me there?'

'Sir,' answered the Fairy, 'I was on the look-out here where you were lying; I saw some one approaching, and I was afraid that you might be discovered. You must not allow your beloved to run any risk. I say nothing of yourself, for you would care little for that. Have faith in me, do what I tell you, and to-morrow you shall see Riante again.'

'See her again!' said Gracieux. 'Oh, Madam! will you keep your word? Not before to-morrow? I am dying of impatience.'

'You must, however, try to live,' said the Fairy.

Gracieux was not greatly comforted, as may be surmised, but he tried to behave as reasonably as he could. On the next day Troisbosses kept her word. Riante, who, with a presentiment of her good fortune, had gone to the thicket, was transported with delight at seeing her lover; but no sooner had he explained how, and by what means, and why, he had left her on the previous day, than the Fairy tore them apart.

'Really, Madam,' Gracieux protested, 'this is indeed hard. I have hardly had time to look at her.'

'I must take you away, Sir,' said she. 'Riante's mother will find you, and you will be kept apart for ever.'

At this reply, Gracieux felt obliged to nurse his despair in silence.

The wicked Fairy was plunged in a secret and malignant delight: she saw her hour of vengeance drawing near, and she employed the intervening time in gradually accomplishing the misery of the innocent object of her hatred. To understand something of her singular behaviour, you must realize that her design was so to inflame our two lovers' affection for each other until they were nearly beside themselves. She had scarcely a week in which to conclude her intrigues, so she arranged that they should see each other for a very short while, never reach an understanding, and be continually longing for each other's company. Such a state of affairs is, as is well known, extremely exasperating to human desires. Troisbosses could not have been ignorant of the art of bringing a passion to a head in a short time. She had already brought Gracieux to the rendezvous for the sixth time and removed him at the most highly inconvenient moment she could have chosen.

'Really, Madam,' he said, as soon as he was able to speak, 'you seem to be envious of the happiness that you have bestowed on us. You must make up your mind: either spare me such cruel favours that do but increase my misery, and let me die, or, if it may be, let me enjoy my good fortune.'

'How unjust you are, Sir,' said the false creature, in a tone of commiseration. 'Don't you realize that this seeming cruelty is to your advantage? But you insist on a final proof of my desire to serve you, and I will give it. You may be for ever in Riante's company . . .'

'For ever!' cried Gracieux.

'Yes, for ever,' answered the Fairy; 'it all depends on her.'

'Oh, if that is so, it will be an easy matter.'

'You are a trifle too vain for the perfect lover,' said the Fairy. 'I will tell you the price at which you may buy your happiness. Riante possesses a wand which makes those who hold it in their left hand invisible; get her to give it to you and you may always be at her side, invisible and even unsuspected. But Riante will be very ill-disposed to give that treasure up: the happiness of her life depends on it, and she has been forbidden to give it into anybody's keeping. But I am sure you would not abuse her confidence.'

'Away!' said Gracieux. 'Riante may be sure . . .'

At these words the Fairy, who thought she could guess what Gracieux was going to say, did not stop to listen, but carried him off to the jasmine thicket.

'At last, sweet Riante,' said Gracieux, advancing towards her, 'I shall be able to spend my life in your company.'

'What!' said Riante, 'can that be possible?'

'Indeed it is,' he answered. 'The Fairy who protects us assures me so. It will but cost you a little confidence, and Heaven is my witness how I should loathe to betray it! Indeed, I should betray myself; the wand that you carry has the power to make me invisible in all eyes.'

'Oh, Gracieux, 'tis but a fable!' said Riante.

'It is not,' said Gracieux; 'and you may prove it. Take the wand in your left hand.'

The lovely creature obeyed.

'No,' said Gracieux; 'I cannot see you.'

And it was, in fact, true that he could not see her; for, dear ladies, the Fairy had cast a spell upon his eyes, an operation which was, to her, but a trifle of legerdemain.

'Is it possible that my wand has this power? Indeed, I was rightly told to keep it, and that my life's happiness depended on it, since I cannot see you without it.'

With these words the damsel gave up her wand, so true is the saying that love can refuse nothing. In a trice all was changed. Troisbosses snatched the wand from the hand of Gracieux and carried them off into the air. She resumed her ordinary appearance, which was the first shock for our lovers, for her aspect paralysed them with terror.

'Little fool!' said she to Riante. 'Know me for thy enemy. Dost thou imagine that I cared for thy happiness? Follow me. Thy misery has but begun. And thou,' said she, turning to Gracieux, 'unhappy youth! Away with thee out of my sight! I have done thee harm enough by awakening thy futile passion. I am satisfied.'

So saying, she swooped down to earth, dropped him in an unknown country, and disappeared with her prey, as fast as her attendant demons could carry her.

Agreeable lady, was she not? And I fancy the type is not unknown elsewhere.

Chapter v

Tells of how the Fairy Lyrette found Gracieux; what she said to him; his answer; her reply; his rejoinder; and what he did.

When Rare learnt into what hands her daughter had fallen, she was plunged in the extremity of despair. She had lost an adored child, the sole object of her care and affections; and how dreadfully she had lost her! Philosophy is of no avail in such a case: philosophy has no message for the heart.

'Oh, Lyrette, Lyrette!' said the Queen to her guardian Fairy. 'Imagine, if you can, what I feel. Can you help me in my misfortunes? Conceal nothing; spare nothing. If there be any risks to run, I, and I alone, will endure them all. I'll go anywhere, and face anything. Oh, what would I not do to rescue my daughter! But you do not answer. Is there no hope? Unhappy mother!'

'Calm yourself, Madam,' answered Lyrette; 'all is not yet lost. Love, who has stolen your child, may yet give her back to you. We need but find Gracieux and bid him rescue his beloved; I will undertake the matter; try to compose yourself.'

At these words Rare, who saw a ray of hope, recovered herself a little, and Lyrette, getting into her chariot, went to look for the cavalier in the four quarters of the world.

You will no doubt imagine that he was difficult to find; not so difficult as you might think, ladies. There are sure and certain rules for discovering unhappy lovers: they must always have an echo to converse with, and this excludes them, at the outset, from all flat countries. Guided by this principle, Lyrette scoured the mountain sides, and at last observed the handsome cavalier in deep meditation by a fountain. He held in his hand a paper, which he was reading so attentively that he did not notice the Fairy, though she had been before him for some while. At length she decided to speak:

'Gracieux,' said she, 'I am a Fairy and a friend of yours.'

'A Fairy?' he answered. 'Then curses be upon you and on all your race!'

'Gracieux,' admonished the Fairy, 'you must use your curses with discretion, and distinguish your friends from your enemies.'

'I suppose that means,' he answered roughly, 'that you are come once more to amuse yourself at my expense. Come, Madam, I know you adopt whatever may be a convenient disguise. 'Tis to you that I owe the misery of my life; I recognize your winning tones. Go, or I shall forget myself. I am unarmed save for the stones about me; but I can use them to some purpose, and you may find that out, however mighty be your power.'

'Gracieux,' said the Fairy once more, 'your attitude does not offend me, because I fancy you will soon change your tone. I know the mean stratagem that another fairy has used to plunge you in your present misery. I am come to offer you my sympathy—but not a sympathy forced and futile: I am come to bid you rescue Riante and to help you to do so.'

These words had the desired effect on Gracieux. No lover can resist the possibility of hope.

'Ah, Madam!' said he, embracing Lyrette's knees, 'what do I not owe you?'

'Arise,' said the Fairy; 'do not waste your time in fruitless transports. But what is that paper that you are reading so attentively?'

'I will confess to you, Madam,' he replied, 'that since the moment when I was so cruelly separated from Riante, believing that I could look for no help, I have been trying to find some way of rescuing her. I heard of a man in these parts who dealt in oracles. I have consulted him.'

'And what did he say?' interrupted the Fairy.

'He advised me,' Gracieux went on, 'to attend the market in the neighbouring town with my fingers in my ears; to take them out and replace them six times, for equal periods; to listen during the intervals, and to write down what I should hear. I have done so. I have read it, and I cannot understand one word. But since you must know everything, Madam, pray explain it:

Thoet. gghi. ffarenum. coc. ter.

'What can it mean?'

'Nothing whatever,' replied the Fairy. 'Did you pay a high price for the oracle?'

'Three pieces of gold,' answered Gracieux. 'What do you think of it?'

'I think you have been sadly sold,' answered the Fairy.

'Very well, Madam, then I will slit the oracle merchant's ears in a fashion all my own.'

'Your ill-humour is out of place,' said the Fairy; 'you have something better to do! Are you prepared for the most dreadful perils?'

'Am I not, Madam!'

'Oh, I doubt not that you are very well satisfied with yourself. 'Tis of a piece with your age and your condition. But the business in question is so serious that you must examine your heart. If you are to rescue Riante, you must not pause for an instant, whatever danger confronts you, and however tired and hungry or thirsty you may be.'

'Is that all, Madam?' interrupted Gracieux.

'Ah!' replied the Fairy. 'If you think so little of it, so much the better for our plans. You may start at once: I will see to your equipment.'

So saying, she struck the ground with her wand, and a fully caparisoned horse appeared.

'There,' said she, 'accept this steed; he is never tired. All that concerns you is to endure the perils into which he may carry you, though you may not foresee them.'

The horse had scarcely appeared when Gracieux leapt lightly into the saddle, bade farewell to the Fairy, and departed he knew not whither. Fortunately for him the horse knew the way. It was not until three hours later that our cavalier realized that he had forgotten to ask where he was to go, a matter of some importance. But as he had only thought of it too late to repair the omission, he adopted the most expeditious course in the circumstances, which was to recommend himself to Love, of whom he was so faithful a servant.

Chapter VI

Relates how the cavalier acquired glory at a very small cost, and how he profited by it.

The first stages of our traveller's journey were commonplace enough. He followed a well-frequented road. But as night fell he began to realize that his style of travel was not one of the most convenient. He was, in fact, a species of wandering cavalier, of rather a peculiar kind. Others could seek a lodging at châteaux, or sleep in the shade of forests—he was not allowed to stop anywhere, so much so that in the evening, when hunger came upon him, he did not fail to regret certain wild fruits that he had found by the wayside and had been, apparently, so fastidious as to throw away. He had to contend with this craving until the following day, when it became easier. I fancy it would be as useless as it would be tedious to recapitulate all the discomforts of the traveller—the dew in the morning, the heat of the afternoon, more dew in the evening, and sometimes rain at night. Had these matters made any impression on him he would not have been so deeply in love. But he met with more considerable inconveniences than these.

Infatigable (for that was his horse's name) was a quadruped who proceeded according to plan, and invariably went straight ahead: no rock was so sheer that it could stop him; had he met with a house in his way he would have scrambled over the roof rather than turn aside. In truth a persistent animal! He jumped over ditches and hedges, and across rivers: he would have swum across estuaries; you may imagine that when he came to a forest he plunged into the thick of it. As he was of Fairy breed the briars could not scratch him; but Gracieux, having no such ancestry, was most cruelly torn, and Fate, by way of further favouring him, led him into a sandy plain where a multitude of gnats, hornets and mosquitoes did their worst upon his unhappy person.

On the following day our cavalier got himself into even worse trouble; but the resulting glory was his consolation, as it has been to so many others in like case. But here I think that in order to make the matter clear I must go back a little.

Two kings, I don't know of what countries—at all events I shall not tell you their names, for I hate anachronisms, and I am sure to be guilty of one; I know myself too well—two kings, I say, were making war upon each other. I don't know for what reason; there must have been a reason, for people could hardly go to war without one. These monarchs had mustered powerful armies, and among the soldiers could be seen men from the banks of the Garonne, the Tagus and the Iser, men from the country of the sunset and the land of eternal noon, the wild American and the Norman.

('Monsieur l'Abbé,' interrupted the Marquise, 'spare us these pedantical descriptions.'

'Certainly, Madam,' said the Abbé. 'I merely intended to convey that the armies lying in Gracieux's way combined a very large number of persons.')

The struggle was then at its height. Our traveller wished to turn aside, not because he was afraid of opportunities for distinguishing himself, but because he had much more urgent business on his hands. He tried to make Infatigable take another road; but that inestimable steed, who, when so minded, felt neither bit nor spurs, continued his journey through the serried lances as calmly as though he were cantering over the countryside. He plunged among the contending squadrons, overturning to right and left everything and everybody in his way. Gracieux, for his part, was unarmed, but being very well aware how to comport himself on such occasions, he did wonders with his bare fists, and left many a bloody nose behind him. He made his way safely through the army, which was thrown into such disorder by his passage that it was cut to pieces a moment afterwards. Thus a famous battle was decided by a few random blows from a young gentleman's fist, though the winning side took all the credit.

Gracieux's performance did not pass unnoticed. One of the knights belonging to the routed army, being something of an amateur of exploits of this kind, was tempted to follow our hero and to make his acquaintance. He allowed his men to take to their heels—indeed, he appeared to take no great interest in them—and cantered after Gracieux.

'Noble Knight,' said he, 'I am of the conquered party, but I must ever admire brave deeds. What you have just achieved deserves the wreath of immortality. What? So young and unarmed! Suffer me to join you and never leave you more. I am tolerably bold and energetic; if my friendship can be agreeable to you I will try to make it useful likewise.'

'Sir Knight,' answered Gracieux, 'I am greatly touched by your frank address. You desire my friendship, but you know not what you ask. Would you share my fortune? Alas! I have nothing but misfortune to offer you.'

'Indeed, Sir,' replied the other warmly, 'I should be of but little account if, in offering myself as your friend, I refused to share your troubles. No, Sir, if you allow me to follow you, I care little whether fortune smiles on me or not. Yours will be the only misfortunes that will affect me. But I observe a verdant thicket, I hear a murmuring brook, let us withdraw into the shade; and before I fulfil the duties of a friend, let me accomplish those of a confidant. Besides, you must be in need of rest. Truly you dealt some prodigious blows; and, indeed, you are known in the army as the Knight of the Fist.'

'Sir,' Gracieux replied modestly, 'you attach too much importance to a very trifling performance. It is true that I am tired; but such is my fate that it is only by undergoing further trials that I can find ease from those I have already endured. I may not rest; but I shall not complain. The reward that awaits me is far beyond all my labours. I will relate to you my misfortunes. I know that it is neither convenient nor customary (it is indeed most unusual) to relate one's misfortunes while proceeding on one's journey; but you will realize from what I shall have to tell you that I can do no otherwise.'

Then Gracieux, not without sighs, gave a circumstantial account of his history, which the Unknown interrupted by ejaculations that he tried to make as varied as possible.

'Well, my Lord,' said Gracieux, as soon as he had finished, 'are you still anxious to follow me? Do you like the prospect of spending days and nights on horseback, living on wild fruits—in a word, living the life that I do, when your only motive is a feeling of respect or perhaps of growing friendship?'

'What, my Lord!' said the Unknown, 'can you doubt my sincerity? My regard for you is deep and sincere. I must give all my affection or none at all. But to inspire confidence in you I must in my turn tell you who I am. I ask only one favour: my horse is growing tired, let me share yours. He looks the sort of animal who would not feel an extra burden. I shall be closer to your ear: I shall find it easier to talk, and you will hear me better.'

No sooner said than done, and the Unknown began his story.

Chapter VII

The Story of Brillandor, which is interrupted in quite a natural manner.

'My name is Brillandor. You may observe that my complexion is inclined to be somewhat highly coloured; that is because I am a native of the Moon. You seem surprised. But you must not, on that account, regard me as a man fallen from the skies. I am not the first who has happened to exchange one planet for another.'

'But how did you manage it?' asked Gracieux.

''Tis quite simple,' answered Brillandor. 'Do you understand what is meant by gravitation?'

'Not the least in the world,' said Gracieux.

''Tis a most ingenious business,' Brillandor went on; 'but it would take me too long to explain it. Let it suffice you to know that as a result of this quality all heads that are full of brains gravitate towards the Earth, and those containing none, towards the Moon. You may therefore realize that my planet is populated exclusively by feather-heads, and the inhabitants of the Moon weigh so little that their feet do not touch the ground. As they are well aware of the risk they run if they do not keep their brains light, from their earliest youth they use a number of devices to help them to do so. They have books especially adapted for this purpose: when they have read them, they pass on to conversation of a like nature. And, finally, it must be admitted that they have not a trace of common sense left.

'These habits and customs never failed to disgust me, and far from taking trouble, in my youth, to empty my brain, I made every effort to fill it. I was not at all sorry to leave a country that I disliked, and to gravitate to this one, which already attracted me; so I avoided the company of young people of my own age, and used for my daily reading the works of one who had gravitated a century before.

'As a result of this régime, my head was soon filled with a quantity of strange humours; so much so that I was drawn towards the Earth by a force so powerful that I could not resist it. I had just time to wrap my cloak round me, by a stroke of prudence that I was thankful for, as things turned out; for by this means I escaped the very considerable risk of catching a cold upon my journey. The Moon was in her first quarter when I left her: there must have been some thirty-six full moons since that day.'

'What a wearisome journey it must have been,' said Gracieux.

'Why so?' asked Brillandor. 'The Heavens are quite interesting. Moreover, as the result of my profound studies I am liable to fits of abstraction that preserve me from the tedium of solitude and even of poor company. But what will surprise you is that I passed all this time without eating: one has no need to eat in these intermediate regions, either because the air is not good for the digestion or because it is sustenance in itself.'

'If the Fairy had been willing,' interrupted Gracieux once again, 'I would gladly have taken the same way. I should have been at least as well supplied with food, and there would have been no briars and brambles by the way.'

'I reached the Earth,' Brillandor continued, 'by sliding down a pink, orange, and blue rainbow. I must confess to you that my first sight of this world greatly appealed to me. It is not that the Moon differs essentially from the Earth: we have plains, rivers and forests, but all distorted and spoiled. Here you take the trouble to preserve the beauties of Nature, while up there they are busy destroying them. In short, my fellow-countrymen have created a habitation well worthy of themselves.

'The native of the Moon combines an agreeable exterior with a vivaciousness that is delightful and attractive; but if you are to live with him you must be as frivolous as he is, intent on trivialities, ready, for a mere nothing, to change your tastes, your way of thinking, your feelings, your character—'tis the life of a weathercock.

'The Moon-dweller never uses the same language two days running: one variety of jargon to-day, to-morrow another. In two minutes he will change his manners, his bearing—nay, his face even. You may leave one instant, and see him again a moment later; you will find a stranger, though he knows well enough what he is doing. He is prepared for any metamorphosis; he will adapt himself to any revolution with utter equanimity: he thrives on it. He is capricious, but his nature is so.

'The only divinities in the country are women. Each husband, in his own house, is a priest who labours to induce the goddess to look favourably upon her suitors, and to excite her irritation against himself; but he is a quite disinterested priest who asks for no perquisites. Far from it, he is charged with the upkeep of the idol, which is constantly in need of embellishment—otherwise the worshippers would be few.

'It is not a little difficult to give you an idea of the ladies of that planet: they have nothing in common with the women of this country. Here, when a woman has a few good qualities, such as sincerity and modesty, you ask for no more. Up above, such virtues are of no account. They have invented charms all their own, and, in their eyes, Nature is but a bungler.

'They are gay, sprightly, audacious, even a trifle reckless, but so amusing that one forgives them all their naughtiness.

I adore them still—not that I am indifferent to the women of this world. But if ever I had to choose between them, I should—well, I should have to love both kinds, and so spare myself the embarrassment of a choice.'

'A very good way out of it,' interrupted Gracieux.

'But with all their charms,' went on Brillandor, 'they cannot inspire love: they only excite an inclination. But they are quite content with that—they avoid anything that might constrain their wayward humour; amusements they must have, they do not care for passions.

'With them Caprice takes the place of Destiny, and its decrees are irrevocable. But I must not go on, for I could never exhaust the subject. Indeed, I am afraid if I talk too much about them I may be suspected of having suffered their neglect. It is true, certainly, that Caprice has not bidden them cast an eye in my direction; but as I have been no more successful on Earth, I have always thought that the fault was mine and not theirs.'

'Sir,' interrupted Gracieux, 'you must be fishing for a compliment.'

'Indeed, no,' replied the Knight of the Moon; 'I will even confess to you that, knowing myself to be made on the usual model, and wanting neither in wit nor courage, I have on more than one occasion been surprised to find myself the unluckiest gallant in the world. I fancy you too will be surprised when you hear my story.

'My first concern, on becoming established as an inhabitant of the world, was to choose a profession. As I am not indifferent to glory, and but little afraid of hardship, I decided upon knight-errantry, and I found it suited me very well. My taste for adventure confirmed me in my choice, for what is life without adventure but tedious desolation? Besides, I had made too good a start not to persevere. I will pass over my daily conflicts, those victories, sometimes gratifying, sometimes distressing, that are incidental to our profession. Let me proceed forthwith to events of greater importance.

'As I was crossing the Kingdom of Congo, I felt an impulse to visit Princess Houhoukeke, its ruler. I arrived at the capital on the day of a tournament. I entered the lists and carried off all the honours. This was a brilliant introduction to my visit. I received the prize in the arena from the Princess's hands. As I looked upon her, I fell in love with her: it would have been impossible to do anything else, for she was delightful. Any description of her could give but the faintest notion of her charms.

'My success served as an introduction to her Court. I thought at first from her expression that she was favourably disposed to me; but I soon lost even this trifling advantage.

'Houhoukeke, in all other respects delightful, had the ugliest hands in the world, and a mania for displaying them; but what especially astonished me was the eagerness with which they were praised by the Court. I preserved the coldest silence in the matter. I should have felt I was insulting the Princess were I to praise such ugliness, when there was so much that could be truly admired. My silence was noticed by my rivals; they understood it, and I fell from favour. But the matter would not have been beyond remedy if my competitors had not taken upon them to go as far as China to maintain in a tournament, under the style of the Knights of the Lovely Hands, that Houhoukeke had the loveliest hands in the world. At this stage, being unable either to remain at the Court, or to join these absurd people, I turned my views elsewhere.'

'But I don't understand you,' said Gracieux. 'You might well have gone to joust in China. You have often broken a lance for no reason at all, and this was for a lady's favours.'

'I care little for that,' said Brillandor. 'Not for all the Princesses on Earth, not though the world were ranged in arms against me, would I say that Houhoukeke had lovely hands, and I certainly would not break a lance to maintain it. I will not undertake to defend bad causes. After this adventure,' he continued, 'believing I had grown wise at my own expense, I resolved that, since women were only to be won by flattery, I would fall in with this feeling of theirs. As I was travelling slowly I reached China long after Houhoukeke's suitors had left it.

'Skobelousku, daughter of the King of China, was not nearly so beautiful as Houhoukeke, but she was more attractive.'

'I suppose, however,' said Gracieux, who had a positive talent for interrupting, 'that the heiress of the Congo was darker.'

'True,' answered Brillandor, 'but the other was more attractive, and I know what I am talking about. I had heard that, among other foibles (for she had a few), Skobelousku had a weakness for a well-turned leg. Mine are naturally rather slender; but, to flatter the Princess's taste, I thought it well to make use of a little artificial embellishment. My ruse was at first extremely effective, Skobelousku was lost in admiration, and I was consequently allowed every facility to pay her my addresses.

'I don't know if my jealous rivals discovered my secret, or whether I was so careless as one day to put my padding on askew, but my trickery got abroad, and it was decided to expose me. A tournament was arranged for the Princess's entertainment. I presented myself, very well turned out, and took my place by the side of my competitors. When the signal was given I tried to start with the rest; but at the first movement I discovered that my leg was attached to the barrier by a small iron hook. I set spurs to my horse, but all to no purpose—I had to leave the spoils behind me. Some page had played me this trick.

'The tournament was soon abandoned, and every one crowded round to laugh at my mishap; but their entertainment cost them dear, for as soon as I had freed myself I seized my lance in both hands, gave my horse his head, and galloped off into the open country, laying about me on all sides as I went. I suppose my anger must have lent me strength, for in this adventure I massacred more than two thousand Chinese.'

When Brillandor had reached this stage in his narration, he observed that Gracieux was asleep: so he waited for a little while. And then, since the latter did not awake, being too polite to disturb his slumbers, he decided to go to sleep behind him.

(As the Abbé uttered these words, he noticed that the ladies were more than a little drowsy, and considering Brillandor's intention as a suggestion that he might well follow himself, he left the room. It only remains for the reader to go to sleep too, if he thinks fit.)

Chapter VIII

Continuation of Brillandor's story; what became of that Knight.

Our knights had already been asleep for a long time when Gracieux was awakened by a dreadful blow on the head. He would have returned it, had he been able to discover the offender, for he had a quick temper; but he could see nothing, for it was very dark and also because there was, in fact, nobody.

'Oh, if I ever meet you!' he cried.

'Who?' asked Brillandor.

'The person who has just struck me,' answered Gracieux, binding his scarf round his head.

'Are you hurt?' asked the Knight of the Moon.

'Yes, in my head,' answered Gracieux.

'But we are passing through a tunnel,' said Brillandor: 'perhaps you knocked your head at the entrance, which is indeed very low, while I, not being so tall as you are, escaped.'

Gracieux, realizing that there might be something in this explanation, left the subject and excused himself to Brillandor for having fallen asleep, and begged him to continue his story. The Knight of the Moon, nothing loth, continued his narrative as follows:

'On leaving China, I thought that the Mogul's Court was worth a visit. I repaired thither, and lived there unknown for a long while, not finding any opportunity of distinguishing myself. I don't think I should ever have succeeded in making myself known, had it not been for my remarkable talent for guessing riddles, even the very hardest ones; I have, in fact, never been known to fail.

'Riddles were the favourite amusement of the three Mogul Princesses. They were continually composing them; they then put them to the courtiers, and offered prizes for successful solutions. My success in this regard was so marked that I soon began to attract a good deal of attention.

'As soon as I had assured myself a certain footing at the Court, I set about starting a love affair. I spoke of love to Mina, the prettiest of the three, although I was well aware I had a more favoured rival. But he was a poor creature, of mean parts and doubtful courage, and with nothing but his handsome face to recommend him. As soon as I found an opportunity to speak with the Princess, besides enlarging upon my own feelings, I threw in a few remarks to my advantage and a few epigrams against my rival, for I reckoned to make quicker progress if I could shake his position in her affections. On the first day, the Princess asked me some riddles, instead of listening to me; on the second, she had an attack of the vapours; and on the third I was denied admission to her apartment.

'Mortified by this treatment, I offered my heart to the Princess Belbé, the second sister, who, without being so delightful, was not without good points. She received me as some one else's admirer is usually received (there is, of course, a distinction of demeanour for those who have been successful and those who have not).

'"And so, Sir," said she, "you love me. Have you, then, forgotten Mina's charms?"

'I thought it well upon this to exaggerate Mina's beauty, so as to excuse my weakness for her. It was, in fact, one means of consoling Belbé for receiving my addresses, seeing that they had been rejected by a lady of such commanding charms. You will scarcely believe me, Sir, for I fancy the experience must be unique, but she turned her back on me and never looked at me again. This unfortunate *contretemps* made me leave the Mogul's Court sooner than I had intended.

There was nothing left for me but to make an attempt on the third, and risk another humiliation. I did not fancy the prospect, and decided to leave for Persia.

'I stopped on my way at the Court of Kandahar. The Queen of those parts, though no longer young, preserved the remains of beauty. I wanted to see if my star would favour me in that quarter; and the preliminary encounter was not unpromising. Among all the courtiers I was chiefly honoured with her confidence, and I shared all her amusements. One day I ventured to speak to her of love; I was met with persiflage, offended dignity, and even disdain. But everything must have an end, and finally, at a time when we happened to be alone together, and I was pressing her more warmly than usual, she confessed to me that I was not indifferent to her. At this, I felt that the spell was broken, for I had always believed that it was to a spell that I owed my failures with the fair sex. I flung myself at her knees, and I was nearly surprised in that attitude. She blushed. I got up, compelled to restrain my transports. But I displayed so much gaiety for the rest of the day that some ill-conditioned buffoon, who misdoubted what had happened, made up a story about it. It was a rather lively one, and the Queen never forgave me for it. She pretended that I had been wanting in discretion, and that a man who could not be silent about minor favours did not deserve to be admitted to the major ones.'

Gracieux went to sleep for the second time at this stage of Brillandor's narrative. The Knight of the Moon made up his mind that, in the future, he would choose a more suitable audience for the account of his adventures.

I don't think you need regret them, my dear ladies; you are losing little. He was a melancholy sort of booby who would not have amused you much.

While Gracieux was asleep, the Fairy Troisbosses made her appearance in the neighbourhood. She was travelling about on rather an anxious errand, the reason for which I will make clear to you later on. Can you realize that the Prince owed his preservation to the scarf which he had bound about his head and which prevented his enemy recognizing him? Thus, to escape death, he had to be told a story, go to sleep, break his head, bind it up—not to go back any further. How singular a concatenation of events!

But, by way of a further piece of good luck, he had to go to sleep again; otherwise he would have recognized the Fairy, become agitated and betrayed himself. Truly, all this is marvellously well arranged. I don't know whether Brillandor went to sleep too on this occasion. He must have been able to go to sleep at will. As for Gracieux, he did not sleep for long, and his second awakening was much less unpleasant than the first. Infatigable neighed loudly. The Knight opened his eyes and found himself at the gate of a magnificent palace. He at once grasped the fact that as the horse had stopped he was intended to enter. He took his scarf off his head in order to present a more respectable appearance and, dismounting from his steed, he hastened into the vestibule. The Knight of the Moon would have followed him, but the folding door clashed to before his nose. In this quandary, being forced to retrace his steps, he looked for the Fairy horse, which had disappeared; and at last he had to make a melancholy retirement on foot. There is no harm in that; in fact, it were much to be desired that this might be the fate of these inquisitive, tedious hangers-on, who pitilessly pursue their victims half across the world: they are always ready with their tongues, always asking questions, lavish of praise and blame that is always quite misplaced. They are continually talking about themselves, whether in their disfavour or not they do not mind, for they talk from vanity alone.

Chapter IX

In which a sofa will appear, and various incidental matters.

Gracieux passed through the vestibule into the courtyard and thence through several apartments in which, to his surprise, he found no one he could ask what he was doing there, for he himself was quite at a loss. Wearied at last by this fruitless promenade, he stopped in a room whose decoration took his fancy, being carried out in pink, his favourite colour. He sat down on a sofa, his mind and heart always intent upon the same object, Riante, for he had not stopped thinking about her since first seeing her. Perhaps I had forgotten to mention this before: a story-teller may well go astray, but the heart of a true lover never does.

While Gracieux was considering plans for the rescue of Riante, full of fears lest he might not be in time, and of diffidence in his own abilities, the sofa on which he was sitting made a movement. This seemed to him odd in a piece of furniture that was tolerably new; but as the motions increased he thought it odder still, until the sofa completed his astonishment by beginning to talk.

'Good morning, Sir Knight,' said this intelligent piece of furniture.

'And who are you that so addresses me?' asked Gracieux.

'I am,' said the Sofa, 'an unhappy lady changed into a sofa for having incurred a Fairy's displeasure. You need not be surprised: nothing is so familiar or more in fashion at the moment than metamorphoses of this kind.'

'It must,' said Gracieux, 'be very satisfactory to a lady to endure so fashionable a metamorphosis.'

''Tis a fashion that has not succeeded,' answered the Sofa. 'Moreover, it is not to be denied that my companions have undergone a good deal of inconvenience. You must not think that I have suffered in this way: there are sofas and sofas. I am a virtuous piece of furniture whose adventures would scandalize no one. This is the palace in which the Fairies assemble at certain times in the year. They have, in a spirit of commendable economy, furnished their apartments with the objects of their displeasure, and I am very grateful to them. It is much better to be a sofa than a weasel, a pumpkin, or a cucumber. Provided one is not the sort of sofa that . . . But you will understand me, Sir. Every one should carry on his profession as virtuously as he may; it is not wit, or outward display, that adorns humanity, but virtue; though at the same time one must be careful not to be tedious with it all. Every one knows that I am here for having been too virtuous. I would not mention the matter if I had not been put into such poor company, but really all the people here are deplorable. You see that Bell on the chimney-piece? Wretched little creature! She spied on the Fairy Belle who had an appointment with a shepherd. (He was a royal shepherd, a king's son, who looked after sheep to amuse himself, and the appointment was, I must beg you to believe, a perfectly virtuous one.) And she told everybody all about it. I did just the opposite. I gave shelter to two lovers who were being pursued: my crime was being too compassionate; 'tis a weakness of kind hearts. Look at that huge Armchair. He is a Bonze. What a horrid man he was! Liar, miser and hypocrite; he could have fitted out three villains from his own supply of wickedness. He imposed on people by his shaven pate, with its halo of scanty white hair, his measured gait, and his sanctimonious air. But he loved good cheer and all manner of pleasures; and he would have sold his pagoda rather than give them up. Further on, in the corner, you will observe a nodding Mandarin. Lazy wretch! We are allowed the use of our voices once a year, but he never uses his; it would tire him too much. He has spent half his life in eating and sleeping; he will spend the rest silent in his corner.'

'I see,' said Gracieux, 'that you have an intimate knowledge of your neighbours' discreditable pasts. But they do not alarm me. Do you happen to know what fate is to be mine?'

'I do know something of the matter,' answered the Sofa. 'Listen to a few more portraits: I want to introduce you to the surrounding company.'

'You had much better stop where you did,' said Gracieux.

'Oh,' answered the Sofa, 'I don't want to be blamed for . . .'

'Very well; go on,' said Gracieux; 'since your mind is made up. But I warn you I have no taste for portraits.'

'That elegant little ornament on the mantelpiece in the shape of a Candlestick is what is known as a Wit, who was so transformed for making fun of a Fairy. Do you know what a Wit is?'

'No, I don't,' said Gracieux; 'but I should fancy it is something extremely tedious . . .'

'Tedious, indeed! No one can be more delightful; and as for portraits, no one had such a gift for them as our little friend on the mantelpiece. The trouble was that he was too witty; and I have seen him blamed for it by people who did not so much as know what they were talking about. You should have heard him talk when his turn came: gay, eloquent, polished, and natural—he could be all these at once; and when he let himself go—what scintillations! What sparks and flashes and tempests of intellect! His imagination catches fire, and wit fans the flames: they leap up once more when they had seemed burnt out; nay, they rise yet higher! Marvellous! And reasoning . . .'

'I should hardly think that reason can play much part in this farrago,' said Gracieux. 'Truly, my good Sofa, you and your Wit are past all bearing. What a dreadful creature a Wit must be: if ever I become one. . . . But,' he continued, 'can you not spare me some part of this absurd conversation?'

'You may save yourself the trouble,' said the Sofa; 'I shall go on talking just as long as I please. I have been silent for a year listening to other people's nonsense; now it is my turn. I am now talking, and I shall continue to talk and you will continue to listen. Be patient for a moment, and I will tell you all. What are twenty or thirty portraits?

'The patchwork Screen is a young man with an amusing history. He was one of those effeminate boobies who, for that reason, think they can treat women as they please. One day, when in a certain company, he tried to persuade a Fairy that she was old, though she did not look more than forty-five. No sooner had he delivered himself of these unfortunate remarks than the others were amazed to observe a screen where there had been a foolish young man.

'The lady had taken her revenge on the spot without changing the creature's place or his function: for before his transformation he had his back to the fireplace, and served as a screen for the company in general.

'That Table, between the two armchairs, was a lady of a certain position in Society, passionately pious, but equally passionate in another direction, and even in more than one; her first was an aged enchanter, but she soon enlivened the affair with the assistance of a young Bonze. The enchanter discovered his rival, and sent him to the lady transformed into a scent-box. The lovely creature recognized him at once from the smell. A deadly cold seized her: she turned into marble, and there she stands between two ladies of easy virtue who are grateful to her for the trouble she takes to make them conscious of their wicked life.

'Why, I had almost forgotten my friend the Footstool, once the most elegant Adonis of all, so scented, weary, and listless. He is not here for having worn a fair wig and false teeth, or for having bragged of his successes, but for having asked for a rendezvous and emerged from it with very little credit. I fancy a good many young friends of ours would be in no better case, but they knew how to make plausible excuses.

'The Tongs are a lady reduced to that condition for being sarcastic; she is one of those desiccated creatures who ought not to talk about other people. The Clock is a gossip; the Chandeliers are coquettes; the Stool, a flatterer; the Mirror, a slanderer; the Andirons, parasites; the Shovel, a busybody; the Curtains, liars . . .'

While the Sofa was launched upon this torrent of invective, suddenly all the furniture appeared to be in a state of the most violent agitation. The Bell began the trouble: no sooner had it given the signal than the Chairs and Couches and everything in the room rose up and fell upon the Sofa. Gracieux, who was naturally much taken aback by the whole affair, got up and tried to reach the door so as to avoid the collision, when he came in contact with a silver chamber-pot that was rolling as fast as it could from under the bed to take part in the *mêlée*. He tripped and fell, and so became the unwilling witness of the most singular contest that ever took place; he was, indeed, rather intimately concerned, for he came in for a good many of the blows.

When the Sofa saw the storm about to break, she took measures to defend herself. The Footstool was her first victim: she flung it from her upside down, and the unfortunate object, as it fell, brought down with it the Shovel and the Tongs, which had entered the battle from a desire for vengeance, but without other resources than a trifle of courage and a good deal of anger; but the collapse of these three insignificant combatants did but involve the Sofa in fresh perils. A worthy adversary came forward, in the person of the Armchair. They manœuvred for a while before coming to close quarters; then they fell upon each other, and every blow they let fly would have smashed a furniture shop to smithereens. The Armchair made up in agility for its deficiency in strength, and for some time it even seemed to have the best of the struggle; but at last the Sofa, with a final effort, toppled it over and flung it on to the floor, where it lay like a cedar of Lebanon, felled and prostrate. At this the wrath of the rest, which had been held in check by the excitement of watching so magnificent a pair of combatants, burst forth once more. With one accord, they leapt upon their common enemy. Those who could not join in the fight inspired the others with their own indignation. The Bell rang louder, the Clock ticked twice as fast, the Floor heaved and swayed, and the Curtains rattled along their poles; they drew back, and then returned to the attack, infuriated at the narrow compass within which they had to fight. The Mirror tarnished itself so as not to have to record the horrors of the struggle and the defeat of its friends: for at length the Sofa, successful and victorious, scattered her enemies and forced them to make peace, having acquired immortal honour in that day. If anything were to diminish her glory, it was that she had conducted operations from the prostrate form of Gracieux, which had given her the advantage of position. The Sofa must have been a vigorous party in her time.

Chapter x (and the last)

Relates how the battle was really won by neither side; how Riante was found, and what became of Troisbosses.

While this singular encounter was proceeding, conceive, my dear ladies, the unhappy state of our lover who was the centre of it. Twenty times over he thought his last moment had come, and twenty times, like a gallant knight, he laid his life at lovely Riante's feet. However, contrary to all his hopes, he found himself still able to get up when the struggle was over, covered with bruises indeed, but more afraid than hurt.

His first concern, as soon as he was on his legs, was to get out of the Sofa's way, for he still remembered her conversation. He noticed a Chair lying upside down, no doubt too exhausted to right herself: he helped her; she was touched by the attention, and as it was the Chair's turn to talk:

'Sir,' said she, as far as her prostration would allow her to speak, 'I will requite your kindness. Riante is lying upon the bed you see before you, which took no part in the fight. Try to draw the curtains, and tear them asunder if they resist.'

At these grateful words, Gracieux rushed to the bed, and, realizing that the curtains were resisting him, he tore them to shreds in an instant.

Ah, ladies, how delightful it is to see one's own dear love whom one had thought to have lost for ever! It is only at such a moment that I would be in a lover's place: what infinite delight must be his! Gracieux was so beside himself that he did not notice that his lady was under a spell, and that all his sighs and transports made no impression on her. At last, when he grew somewhat calmer, he tried to awaken her by all the usual methods. He called her name, but she was deaf, even to her lover's voice; he pressed her hand—again to no purpose. He placed fresh water under her nose, and then strong waters; but in vain. He slapped her hands, and he pinched her. At last, he bethought him of stealing a kiss. That was a little more successful: Riante made a slight movement. I cannot guess what ideas his success put into our lover's head. 'Tis a secret I do not know, and perhaps I am better without it: I am told that the device in question does not always awaken lovely ladies, especially when they want to sleep.

I do not know what happened to our lovers, but I have no doubt that they were happy; at any rate they deserved to be. Rare saw her daughter once more, and consoled herself with the reflection that her son-in-law was an agreeable gentleman. I have but to finish my tale by explaining to you why Riante was found in the Fairy Palace.

When Troisbosses carried her off she intended her for a more dreadful fate: she provided her with dark and dismal garments, and set her to prepare drugs for enchantments.

One day, when the unhappy girl was sitting at the entrance to her cave and compounding a magical mixture of verbena, clover, bracken, and certain other horrid ingredients, the Fairy Bredouille, who hated Troisbosses, noticed her: and to look upon her was to love her.

Some time previously the Fairies had laid down an ordinance in accordance with which they undertook to transport to their Headquarters at the Fairy Palace all those upon whom they had cast spells. Troisbosses therefore was breaking the law in concealing Riante; but hatred knows no law. Bredouille informed her colleagues of this contravention: thus Troisbosses was deprived of the pleasure of a vengeance to which she had so greatly looked forward. All she could obtain was that Riante should be freed from the spell by the usual methods. So she tried to prevent this by searching everywhere for Gracieux, reflecting that if she could destroy him the hopes of Rare and Lyrette would be at an end. She found him, but she did not recognize him, and she learnt of the defeat of her wicked machinations before she could do anything to prevent it.

She was torn by rage, despair, and even madness; she thought herself mortal, and flung herself down a precipice, but merely succeeded in making her person rather more misshapen than it was already. Indeed, it is said that she raised another hump on her forehead which remains to this day: and I have been credibly informed that she has been seen about under the name of Fairy Quatrebosses.

The End of

A THOUSAND AND ONE FOLLIES

HIS MOST UNLOOKED-FOR LORDSHIP

A ROMANTIC TALE OF ENGLAND

HIS MOST UNLOOKED-FOR LORDSHIP

A ROMANTIC TALE OF ENGLAND

PART I

Richard O'Berthon had just completed his eighteenth year. He had been studying since he was nine years old, first in Town and later at the University of Oxford, with a view to qualifying himself in due course for his doctor's hood. His natural disposition, assisted by his teachers' assiduity, might well have made him a shining light of the Anglican Establishment; but quite another career was in store for him. The sincerity, simplicity, and sweetness of his character were no less remarkable than the winning qualities of his mind and heart; indeed, this precious endowment was written large upon his handsome face. He was of middle height, but perfectly proportioned, graceful and active; his features were perhaps too regular and refined for a man; his skin, hair and teeth were quite perfect. His feelings were quickly moved, but he gave no sign of those violent passions which trouble and sometimes betray the soul. He was provided with a moderate income, paid annually with extreme regularity: it was sufficient for his subsistence and his studies, and he cared for nothing else. In short, so far as appearances went, the dawn of a peaceful future seemed about to break upon our young friend, when the chaplain of a Gentleman of Quality in the neighbourhood of Oxford entered his room one day, his eyes bathed in tears.

'Oh, my poor Richard!' said he. 'I am so deeply sorry for you! You have lost everything. Mistress Hallen is dead!'

Mistress Hallen, widow of a brewer at Southam in the county of Warwick, of a moderate fortune but without children, had paid for Richard's education and provided for him at Oxford. The chaplain was a mutual friend.

At these words, 'Mistress Hallen is dead!' (the full significance of which O'Berthon did not as yet understand), he remembered his obligations to the lady; he was deeply moved, and his eyes filled with tears.

'Weep, weep your fill, my dear boy,' said the worthy chaplain, embracing him; 'I like such proofs of your good disposition; weep, for these tears will do you no harm. They are sweet compared with those that you must shed over your own sad destiny.'

'What greater ill could befall me,' said Richard, 'since I have lost the lady who took my mother's place?'

'Yes, indeed, my boy, she did so, and no one will replace her. You are now at the mercy of the world, this hard-hearted world, that knows not love and in which it is no easy matter to find the traces of common humanity. You must leave Oxford, my young friend.'

'Leave my studies?' exclaimed Richard.

'Who will enable you to continue them?' asked the chaplain. 'Do but read this letter from Mistress Hallen's greedy and cruel heiress.'

To Mr. Borton, chaplain at Woodstock Castle.
Sir,

I find among the papers of the late Mistress Hallen, my sister, a number of letters from you, and, among the rest, the last that you were at the pains to write to her, continually asking for money for a young Oxford student. The estate is not adequate to provide for such a purpose. My sister did very wrong by herself and by us in her extravagance over this young man. I am surprised, Sir, that she was able to find such an intermediary as yourself: you are indeed well suited for such employment. (Here a few lines were erased.) *However that may be, you will be so good as to abstain from further addressing us in the matter, and oblige*

Your very humble servant,
Anne Flust.

'Oh, Heaven!' cried Richard, raising his eyes. 'I am plunged in shame! And she dares to reflect upon my benefactress.'

'Stay, my friend,' said the chaplain; 'this is the moment that shall test you: forget this disgusting behaviour and summon all your courage. I do not know from what motive Mistress Hallen, who never opened the matter to me, had you educated to a condition to which you were not, by your birth, entitled; but when she died, she made no provision for continuing your subsistence. She never told me whether you belonged to her, nor who you were. To-day, deprived of her support, you find yourself upon your own resources: the seeds of virtue have been sown in your heart, so poverty, and the exigencies of that condition, should have no terrors for you. Think, my lad, how you may put them from you.'

'And what shall I do, Sir?' asked Richard; 'and to whom shall I address myself? You are my only acquaintance. I was intended for a studious life and I have striven to live in solitude and contemplation. I could have spent my time in the company of great noblemen, the companions of my studies, but I was too proud to accept it. I have even shunned the society of my equals, so as to avoid giving any occasion for jealousy; I have not one single friend.'

'And even if you had any friends of this sort, my dear Richard,' answered the chaplain, 'of what service could they be to you? They would ignore and abandon you, and you would only be the more unhappy. Besides, they are young people, they are not masters of their fortunes; and if they wished to help you, those on whom they are dependent would not let them use their resources in so worthy a manner. You have but read books, my boy: men you do not know. In past ages England produced a race of men, rougher indeed than those we see about us now, but more human, more sincere, and more warm-hearted. The English of to-day, under an appearance of greater polish, given up to sensuality, debauchery, and the greed that goes with them, have cast all human feeling from them: they have even lost their generous and enlightened affection for liberty; they are grown merely fanatical, and rush headlong upon slavery, hoping to secure the means of maintaining themselves in luxury and disorder. My poor boy, I shudder to think of you soliciting a Duke, a Lord, or a Baronet! If your fortunate endowments stirred one of them to a momentary goodwill, the forfeit of your self-respect, and an attitude of disgusting sycophancy, could alone maintain you in their favour. Those who stand between them and the common sort, devoured by the ambition to emulate their titles, copy their corruption in the meantime. O degraded, ruined, and abandoned race! You must look higher than your fellows, my boy, and put not your trust in them . . .'

'But what is to become of me?' asked O'Berthon once more, with increasing uneasiness and gloom.

'I have,' replied the chaplain, 'weighed all the possible prospects. I could get you an introduction to a wealthy establishment as a tutor to a son of the house; but you are only a youth yourself and look so young that no one would trust you. The army is no bad idea, if we went to war for better reasons; but England's interests are opposed to the disputes in which so many men and so much money are expended. Influence is necessary to obtain the most trifling employment; moreover, a delicate frame like yours, brought up in the sheltered life of college, could not support the fatigues of a soldier's life. Your disposition is good, and you will soon know what honour means: you would very likely lose them both in the company of ruffians who must be thrashed into an attack. To be a successful soldier, my boy, you need to be five feet six inches in height, strong, and persevering. Any further qualities are unnecessary, perhaps even dangerous. You are not young enough to go to sea: the endurance necessary for this sort of life must be learnt almost in infancy and, indeed, bred in the bone. The owner who fits out a vessel has his eye on the profits of the voyage, and thinks only of economy: he would not burden his ship with a useless mouth like yours. You could learn a trade, but an apprenticeship costs money. Oh, my dear boy! I tremble to have to tell you the only means by which, in this most favoured country, you can secure what, in the deadliest climates, the earth lavishes upon her children who live without work and without society—I mean those we call savages—you must go into service.'

'What! Wear a livery?' cried Richard, in horror.

'Alas, my boy, yes! a livery.'

The chaplain's discourse was intended to prepare the young man gradually for this painful degradation; but it was none the less a shock. He had no pride, but a good deal of dignity, and he could not contemplate the servile station to which he was to be reduced, without fresh floods of tears. The chaplain tried to soothe him, but he would not be comforted.'

'Why be concerned, my dear Richard?' he asked. 'The condition that I suggest to you is humiliating, but you cannot choose, and virtue ennobles everything. Though you have not the soul of a servant, you will carry out your duties faithfully: you may then become indispensable to your masters and they will grow attached to you. Instead of leading a lazy existence like your fellows, you will secretly cultivate the seeds of learning that have been sown by your studies. Who knows but that one day you may have the good fortune of my friend, Mr. Pighman! He was valet to Sir Charles Herfford, our envoy at Constantinople: the plague, so prevalent in that capital, and an accident, deprived the minister of his two secretaries. Sir Herfford had some important and secret dispatches to send off: he knew that Pighman wrote a good style, and was discreet and honourable; he made use of his services, and was not disappointed. Need I say more, my dear O'Berthon? My friend is to-day in retirement in Norfolk, enjoying a pension of one hundred pounds sterling, and the esteem of all his acquaintance. Be of good courage: 'tis the more necessary for a declension in the world than a rise in it, especially when the descent is so disagreeable: let the strength of mind that is to dictate your decision help you to carry it through, and you will see that a man can occupy the humblest station without being degraded by it.'

Richard was disgusted by the proposal, but it was represented to him as inevitable: his want of experience prevented his conceiving of any more honourable expedient; and he had to make up his mind. And so, like the gentle and confiding creature that he was, he trampled his pride and even his reason beneath his feet and abandoned himself unreservedly to his friend's direction.

He had to take leave of the university, of his landlord, and of the few people whose acquaintance he had made at Oxford. The chaplain helped him to carry out these trifling duties: his mother's death and the consequent family business were the excuse for his departure, which took place that very evening. Richard sold everything that would no longer be of any use to him in his new condition, and rode behind his friend to Woodstock House. The clergyman unfolded his scheme and informed him of the measures he had already taken to carry it out.

'You have only twenty-five guineas, my boy. These are very modest resources, and you would do well to look for a situation as soon as may be. You should leave the neighbourhood of Oxford; I need not explain why. I have a relation, vicar of the small village of Buttorf, in the county of Devon, a few miles from Excester. The living is not an important one, but he is very well thought of in the district. I have already written to him about you, and have informed him of that part of your history which may interest him in your favour. I have his reply: he hopes to be able to find you a place; so take my horse and set forth.

Richard betook himself to Buttorf. The vicar received him kindly, but the poor lad could not but feel somewhat humiliated by his reception.

'My poor boy,' said the clergyman, 'we will do all we can for you. Situations are hard to come by; still, I think we may rely on some insolent lackey in some good house in the neighbourhood losing his place within the next two months;

and, with my recommendation, I flatter myself you will be well received. Thenceforward you will depend on your own behaviour.'

Richard had not foreseen that there would be any difficulty or delay in obtaining so insignificant a post. He asked the clergyman in all seriousness whether there were any English among the servants in the houses he had in mind.

'They do not care to engage any others,' was the answer.

This reply was a fresh source of astonishment. How, among a free people, was it possible to find so many persons desirous of a menial position? In the seclusion of his college he looked upon his fellow citizens as if they had been denizens of Sparta and of Rome, and no doubt expected to find them worshipping idols or surrounded with Cappadocian slaves.

He concluded that the general prosperity of a country does not necessarily affect everybody, and that there must be many people in England as unhappy as himself: for only the direst necessity could induce a man to degrade, by his choice of employment, the noblest title in the world—that of British Subject.

So Richard stayed at Buttorf in a mean hostelry, living poorly, but spending more than his resources justified, and awaiting the result of his new protector's kindness. Three months passed while he was still in this disagreeable condition, and his means of continuing it were nearly exhausted. He had applied for situations, but others had been before him. He had obtained interviews, but was thought too delicate and weak. At last the vicar sent for him one morning.

'My friend, I have found what you want. Climb up behind my carriage. We are going to Clostern, the house of Sir Thomas Nettling, Baronet; you will be attached to Milady's service, and you could not find a better house.'

The carriage was ready, and they set forth.

Sir George Nettling, Baronet, one of the richest of his Order in England, was forty-five years of age and possessed neither virtues nor vices. Since he was always ready to give, he would have passed for generous, had he not been born so rich; but he had been surrounded by cheats and flatterers since his early youth, and as a result of his experiences with these gentry, he had come to the conclusion that to take any trouble over his benefactions was a waste of time. So that he might be said rather to let his money go than to give it away. He had too few resources of his own, and was too dependent upon others to be misanthropical, and plunged into Society, but without enthusiasm. In the company of the gentlemen of his neighbourhood he sat at table without drinking, and pursued the chase until he was tired. At horse races no one was more keen and enthusiastic: he bet large sums, and—hired a fellow to hedge for him. When in London he spent the day at the tavern, but in complete sobriety; in the evening he appeared at the houses where there were parties and high play, in which he pretended to be greatly interested, but in which, however, he never took part. At the theatre he would follow the fashion and mingle with the populace, and play the gallant by dancing with milliners' wenches at Wauxhall and Renelagw. He appeared at Court to pose as a man of consequence; he mixed with Dukes and Lords, seeking their intimacy by all sorts of means, hoping that he might at last be taken for one of them, but he was the only one who could forget the date of his ennoblement: it was too recent. Such was Sir George in his public capacity. In private he was a very easy-going personage: kind to his domestics, except for an occasional outburst of temper. He had a strong sense of property, and anything that belonged to him doubled its value in his estimation. A horse for which he had paid thirty guineas was worth sixty after spending a week in his stables.

This feeling extended to his estate, his family and his servants. Lady Nettling, his wife, was the only one of his possessions of which his ownership had not increased the value. He spoke of her in a detached sort of way, and lived with her without affection; and in this aspect alone he was, though in many respects so colourless, a true Englishman, and he might have been taken for one of the most distinguished noblemen in the three kingdoms.

Lady Nettling, a few years younger than her husband, had formed her character in his company, and had become as much of a type as he was. In her youth she had visited Paris, which she had thought an extremely tedious city: everybody had seemed impertinent and unpleasant. On her return she had bored all London, and wearied all the echoes of the county of Devon, with her accounts of the delightful things that she had seen in France. In her youth she had been good looking, and she still preserved some pretensions to beauty, well or ill founded; she prided herself on her intelligence, and was anxious to attract attention at any price; she succeeded in doing so by the singular method of making fun of the country when in London, and decrying London when in the country. In London she played the housewife, never grew tired of recounting the incidents of country life, and the charms of rusticity. When she returned home, the adventures of the Court and the Town, the Play and the Quality, and the latest novels, were the constant themes of her discourse. She treated the gentry of the neighbourhood as if they had been oafs and fools: she received their wives with exaggerated courtesy, diversified by studied and offensive neglect. Allowing for all this, it was no more difficult to get on with Lady Nettling than with the Baronet, her husband.

Miss Dorothy Nettling, sole offspring of the marriage of the Baronet and his wife, destined by her parents for the most distinguished alliance, combined an abundance of good health with a gentle, sympathetic, and contented disposition. Her education had been neglected, since her parents' characters did not admit of their devoting considered and sustained attention to the matter. Both of them were wanting in capacity and, indeed, up to a certain point, in proper feeling. In the eyes of her father, Miss Dorothy's greatest merit was the fact that she was his daughter; Lady Nettling thought her too pretty to produce in London, and considered that country Society was not fitted to form her character. So she consigned her to her own apartment, being not at all anxious that by going abroad into the world the girl should acquire talents and acquaintances.

Miss Dorothy was seventeen years old, her mind had been formed in the species of solitude to which she had been reduced, and she neglected no means of obtaining the education of which every one seemed anxious to deprive her. Her mother had, from a foolish desire for effect, installed an Italian musician in the house; and the young girl had secretly made good use of the virtuoso's lessons, and had picked up a fair knowledge of French from a maid of that nationality who had long been in attendance on Milady.

Such were Richard's future masters. Clostern, their principal residence, was six miles from Buttorf, and our friends were soon there. The servant was introduced: his origin inquired into and his appearance inspected; indeed, such an interview is too commonplace to call for description. If there was anything out of the ordinary in the transaction, it was Richard's extreme embarrassment and confusion. He was alike humiliated by his present condition and his future prospects. He could not bring himself to reply to his masters: the vicar, who had been informed of the position by the chaplain, had to do so for him. He stood in the attitude of a prisoner awaiting sentence: he trembled at the prospect of refusal, yet he dreaded to be engaged. However, a handsome youth, even when out of countenance, is still a handsome youth. His face was covered with blushes, but seemed all the more animated; he could not stand straight, his arms hung down and his eyes were lowered, yet he still looked a personable young fellow. He never seemed awkward, and his very silence betrayed intelligence.

Milady ordered Foible, for that was the name of the French maid, to try on his livery: the suit was a new one, and looked extremely neat and smart when he had it on. The lady expressed herself as very well satisfied, and ordered the maid to conduct the lad to the servants' quarters; and she did so with every sign of satisfaction.

'Now Richard,' said she, 'for thus we shall call you, Milady likes you, and she doesn't like every one: your prospects are excellent. Take some of this cheese (it is Chester), and you will find that small beer very good, we drink nothing else here . . .'

But he could not bring himself to eat, and burst into tears!

'What, my dear Richard? Are you crying? 'Tis from joy perhaps. You are delighted with your good fortune, and indeed I congratulate you. Eat, my lad: and look at me. Why, you have lovely eyes. Truly I've not seen anyone so handsome since Milady and I left Paris. But you must eat, my dear . . .'

Richard yielded to the lady's urgency.

'Ah, now I begin to be pleased with you,' said Foible; 'drink this up. You begin to look better. You must be my friend, Richard: I think I deserve it. Madam never makes up her mind without my advice: it only depends on you to advance in her favour. I shall tell you what you must do. You will need my help, Richard: you want experience and prudence to keep your position in a house like this: it is full of people, and among them are not a few crooked fellows, idiots, imbeciles, and oafs. You are now Milady's fourth footman: look at her other women with those large eyes of yours that are meant to see so clearly, and you won't be able to endure the sight of them. You must bear with your fellow servants; but you must not get drunk with them: I forbid it. Come, Richard, one more glass, and we will go to Milady's toilet . . . But you say nothing! Speak to me: aren't you happy?'

'Yes, indeed, Mademoiselle,' said Richard, rather mournfully.

'Then you will soon be happier still,' the lady went on; 'at least I hope so. And now to work. This evening I'll soon tell you what our masters are like, and, indeed, all the rest of the household. Just listen to me, and if you go wrong it won't be Foible's fault.'

Richard had fallen into good hands. Mademoiselle Foible had a melting heart, and she began to feel a strong inclination for him. Far from seeking to remove it, she yielded most wholeheartedly.

Two or three days passed without any event of importance. Mademoiselle Foible, observing the extreme reserve and melancholy air which Richard had not been able to throw off, suspected some secret sorrow, and from time to time reproached him for his want of candour. When Richard had carried out his duties with a scrupulous exactitude, he commonly withdrew to his room. He did not make as though to avoid his new acquaintance, but he did not seek her out. Foible complained greatly.

'What do you do in your room?' she asked. 'Solitude is meant for those who ought to hide themselves: look in that mirror, Richard; were you meant for solitude?'

'I do not hide,' he answered. 'I like to occupy myself. I read books.'

'Ah, then you know French,' said the lady.

'A little,' answered Richard.

'The dear sweet thing!' cried Foible; 'he knows French! I will be your French mistress, and I will make you perfect; I must teach you a song of my country.'

And Mademoiselle Foible sang a verse from a well-known vaudeville. Richard, led away by the temptation to show what little he knew, sang the second verse. His pronunciation was deficient, but his voice was clear and steady. Foible was quite overcome.

'Why, we'll sing it together,' said she; 'and I will teach you all I know. Miss Dorothy could well have finished her studies with me: she was getting on well, but an Italian rascal who came here last year, turned her head for her. Since he has gone she has done nothing but squeal the miserable ditties he taught her. That thing in the corner of the hall that looks like a box belonged to him. It 's a spinet.'

'A harpsichord!' said Richard quickly; 'is the key in it?'

'Yes,' replied Foible; 'but 'tis all out of order. As long as it was working Miss used to pick out the notes and chords for her Italian airs. I am teaching her French, and she was making no progress; and as I love her truly I reduced to silence the accomplice of her wasted time. By the way, Richard, I fancy you have found favour with Miss Dorothy. I have noticed her looking at you with kindness and even approval.'

At this Richard lowered his eyes and blushed.

'Might I venture to ask you if Sir George and Milady are satisfied with my service?'

'Milady,' answered Foible, 'likes everything that I tell her to. I form her tastes, just as I make her hats. As for the

Baronet, even though you didn't deserve your keep, he wouldn't exchange you for the private chamberlain of a Prince of the Empire, when you have been a week in his service.'

While Foible was talking, Richard was inspecting the harpsichord, and tried the keys in the manner of one who knew what he was about.

'What, can you play?' asked Foible.

'A little,' answered Richard; 'and if I might use this instrument I would try to put it in order.'

'Take it to your room, my lad,' said she; 'I know Couperin's serenades by heart, and I will teach you them.'

While Richard was at college he diversified his more serious occupations by the study of music. He was methodical, intelligent, and industrious, and he had made progress. Having got possession of the instrument, he went to Excester and brought back what was necessary to put it into working order. Soon afterwards Mademoiselle Foible was obliged to come and listen through the keyhole, for he carefully shut himself in his room in order not to be disturbed at his studies.

The lady was not daunted by his display of so much coldness. The heart that she proposed to win was as yet untried, and a strict education had kept gallantry at a distance. Still, he displayed a trifle of friendship and confidence, and if he was too cold for her liking, he was ice to the rest of the world. We build a whole edifice of hope on the most fragile foundations: besides, Lady Nettling was generous; the lady had not done so badly, and had amassed some comfortable little savings. She had her eye on marriage and a milliner's shop in London: and if the dream of such an establishment, shared with the handsomest husband in the world, was alluring to the lady, who allowed herself to dwell upon it, a young gentleman, who had been reduced by ill-fortune to wearing a livery, must surely be equally delighted with the prospect.

Foible was thirty-five years old. She had preserved her freshness; she was vivacious and had a good figure. Her address, which was naturally agreeable, appeared even more so by contrast with that of the English women of her station. The more she considered her advantages, the more certain she felt of victory. But neither her prospects nor her charms had the slightest effect on Richard's heart. He had been degraded to his present state by an ill turn of fortune, but he had not allowed his self-respect to suffer. He was ambitious to extricate himself: a serious alliance with a maidservant would have bound him down for ever, and any other kind of connection was repugnant to his training and his character. Perhaps a nobler passion, less conformable to his condition, but which was to rule his heart for ever, had begun to stir within him. Every day at meal times he saw Miss Dorothy, and he could not help being moved by the soft and winning grace that inspired the young girl's slightest movement. If he met her eyes, they seemed to dart and flash: he lowered his at once, a prey to some mysterious emotion that in his inexperience he could not understand. Had he been more enlightened, such was his upright character that he would have been shocked at his own feelings and kept himself clear of danger by flight: he only realized what had happened when the balance had been overthrown and his reason enslaved.

Still, the first symptoms of his malady began to produce their effect on his state of mind. The pleasure of seeing Miss Nettling every day made him forget his humiliating condition, and delight in the moments of leisure which he could devote to solitude. When in retirement in his chamber, though he did not notice it, his thoughts and occupations were directed towards his beloved. Hitherto lively airs had been more to his taste: he liked them gay and tuneful rather than expressive; but now he began to discover an inclination for tender and pathetic melodies. Mademoiselle Foible, as she looked through the keyhole, had the mortification of observing his ecstasy as he played the Italian pieces that she so detested. For the moment her patience deserted her; by dint of a persistent disturbance at the door she compelled Richard to open it.

'But, my poor friend,' said she, 'you are going mad. I am not surprised you are so abstracted and so mournful. You will soon die of a decline. Accursed be these Italians! They have banished gaiety from Europe, and in the last six years in England they have done more to spread melancholy than the reading of newspapers, fogs, coal, the ghosts of Drury Lane, or the use of tea, punch, and strong waters. Try Scottish tunes, or jigs, since I have made you dislike French ones. But if you persist in these melancholy cachinnations, I shall take the lock off your door and break the spinet, so that even you will not be clever enough to mend it.'

Foible's appearance and her reproaches shook Richard out of his languorous dreams. As he was singing, Miss Dorothy seemed to stand before him: he felt he could almost see her, and it was this waking vision that had called forth these tender and pathetic sounds, so revolting to the ears of Mademoiselle Foible. Having recovered himself, he was overcome with embarrassment, and asked her to sit down; and to dissipate her anger somewhat he played a few ballades she had taught him, and so appeased her.

While this scene was taking place in the garret, the jealousy of a rival of Foible's was about to plunge Richard into even more startling and dangerous adventures. Molly, Miss Dorothy's maid, was attracted by the young man, and as she detested the Frenchwoman, she tried to make fun of everything she did.

'Miss,' said she to her young mistress, 'the Italian master's harpsichord has been carried up to the attic. Mademoiselle Foible has turned Richard into a musician, and the pair of them spend their spare time in conducting concerts.'

'That can't be so, Molly,' answers Miss Dorothy. 'Foible knows no music and cannot teach it.'

'True,' said the maid; 'Foible knows nothing; but she makes him think she does, and waste his time in her company.'

'Have you heard him, Molly?' asked the young Miss.

'Yes,' answered Molly, 'and he makes a good deal of noise.'

''Tis a very worthy young man, and he seems to have been educated above his station,' said Miss Dorothy. 'I daresay he knows a few things that Foible could not very well teach him. But when does he play the harpsichord?'

'In the morning, and the afternoon, when he has done his work: for I will do him that justice, he does his work well, and does more than he need rather than less; his only weakness is in listening to Foible. That little minx will lead him astray: she 's always at him, and I think he has changed already.'

'That will do, Molly,' said Miss Dorothy. 'If you hear Richard playing in his room, and if he is alone, let me know, I should like to hear him. And I should so like to use the harpsichord to accompany myself.'

On the following day, about ten o'clock in the morning, Molly came to her mistress. Everything was quiet in the house: Sir George was out hunting; Foible was in attendance at Milady's toilet, and Richard was at his studies. Miss Dorothy went upstairs and listened at the keyhole. She certainly expected something more than was to be looked for from a servant, but she was far from supposing that he could both play and sing. As chance would have it, he was performing an Italian air, composed in England, and greatly in fashion. Miss Dorothy would much have liked to know it; but since Messer Pamphili's departure, she had despaired of ever learning it. She was tempted to make known her presence to Richard, and get the door opened; but she felt that such a proceeding would be unsuitable to her sex, her age, and her condition, so she went downstairs again in a very agitated state, and more disposed to be interested in the young English musician's talent than was quite favourable to her peace of mind. During the meal which followed the incident she looked at him more than once. She had, of course, seen his face before, but she had not really considered it: she had been struck by his features and the general neatness of his person, but the elegance of his appearance as a whole escaped her. Now she noticed it—and sighed; and this first sigh arose from a feeling of compassion and a very natural reflection: how could so many fortunate gifts be possessed by one who was destined to languish all his life in the condition of a servant?

Miss Dorothy's feelings were plainly betrayed in her expression. Richard caught her eye: her glance seemed to pierce him through; he trembled, and fell into an indescribable agitation of mind. His daily duties distracted him a little; but when supper had proved but a repetition of the incidents of dinner, Richard, unable to eat, withdrew to his room: his heart was so full that he could scarcely breathe. He went to bed, but tossed from one side to the other without closing his eyes, and got up much more tired than when he lay down.

Miss Dorothy was hardly less excited by the song that she had heard. Her taste for music had redoubled as the result of her parents' neglect to arrange for her to continue her studies; but how could she get into touch with Richard and his harpsichord? To employ Foible in this negotiation seemed beneath her; and if she approached Milady Nettling she ran the risk of a snub. She thought she might have better success by the help of Sir George. Her father often pressed her to sing: according to him she had the finest voice in England, and as he liked to be thought a man of taste, he would often whistle a few bars of anything that might be in fashion, when he could remember them. He happened, therefore, to be humming a few notes of Miss Dorothy's favourite tune.

'Ah, I wish you knew that one,' said he to his daughter; 'it is delightful. Mrs. Bell, our neighbour, thinks she can sing it; 'tis really pitiable.'

'But I could learn it, father,' said Dorothy. 'They say that Richard, Milady's footman, sings it perfectly.'

'I am not surprised,' said Sir George. 'Kalender, my huntsman, became, after six months in my service, the finest performer on the hunting-horn in Europe; he has been engaged for the Opera this winter. You say Richard sings: has anyone heard him?'

'Molly, my maid, told me so,' said Dorothy.

'Ah, no doubt Molly knows what she is talking about,' said the Baronet.

'But, Father,' Dorothy went on, 'he accompanies himself on the harpsichord: he put Messer Pamphili's instrument in order.'

'Then he must be an ingenious fellow,' said her father.

The Baronet was full of impatience to hear the new virtuoso. Richard was told to leave his task. The harpsichord was quickly brought down and set up in a little parlour looking out over the garden terrace; and the concert was to begin forthwith.

Richard had never had any audience except a very skilful master attached to the University of Oxford, from whom he had taken lessons. The Baronet's curiosity, eagerness, and enthusiasm greatly put him about: nervous by nature, he knew enough to feel very little confidence in his talent. He sat down: the music was before him, and his fingers on the keys, but he very likely could hardly have uttered a note or produced a sound had not Miss Dorothy, with her sweet voice said: 'But do please sing, Richard!' Such imperative orders he could not but obey.

At first his voice was unsteady; but gradually he recovered himself, and his performance was so satisfactory to his hearers that Miss was delighted, and the Baronet's applause was such as to reach Milady's apartment. She asked what was happening: and a maid, after inquiring, came and told her. When Mademoiselle Foible heard of her idol's appearance in public, she was torn between anxiety and delight. Milady observed coldly that Sir George was always finding miracles everywhere. He soon came in himself, and really made every one believe in his marvellous discovery.

'You shall hear him, Milady: you will be surprised and delighted.'

Milady replied with a mirthless grin, and the second performance was fixed for the afternoon.

We need not dwell upon unnecessary details. Richard sang: Miss Dorothy sang in her turn, accompanied by Richard. Milady Nettling, the Baronet, and the whole establishment grew accustomed to seeing the heiress of the house become the pupil of the virtuoso in livery. The master was hardly in the first rank, but he had a good natural taste; he was painstaking and patient almost to a fault; his pupil was industrious; she made surprising progress, and everything seemed to have turned out for the best.

Foible was the only one who was not content. When she wanted to give Miss Dorothy a French lesson, that young lady had no time for it; she no longer saw Richard except in Milady's room, and in the corridors, and, of course, at meals. He would practise in the room where the harpsichord had been set up, and she came sometimes and leant over his shoulder. No one paid much attention to her: sometimes one of the servants passing by surprised her in that attitude, and their raillery would hurry her away.

She was really in love, and her situation was becoming unendurable. She could not believe that Richard was made of stone; so she began to conceive, quite unjustifiably, that the unfeeling object of her passion had allowed himself to respond to the young Miss's charms, and as she followed them both with her eye, she soon became convinced that she was right.

One day she hid herself behind the curtain and watched the lesson being given. What was said did not go beyond the matter in hand, but the tones of their voices were so caressing that they seemed to be exchanging gallantries when they were but discussing tenutos, vibratos, and minor keys; but their languishing, appealing and passionate looks, their half-stifled sighs, the hesitating questions that too clearly betrayed their feelings—to the eye of a female connoisseur, the scene admitted of no doubt.

The spy emerged from her hiding-place, showed herself, and came forward. Her face was remarkably flushed, and became increasingly so. The young people were at first taken aback, but they soon recovered themselves and returned to their studies as naturally as ever, quite unconcerned as to whether they had, or had not, a witness whose loyalty was suspect.

The lesson came to an end. Mademoiselle Foible had taken up a position where Richard must pass; he tried to avoid her, but she seized him by the skirts of his coat, and pulled him back.

'You can't escape me,' said she; 'and I must speak to you. Are you mad, Richard? Are you impertinent enough to raise your eyes to our young mistress? Are you in love with her? And does she love you? If Sir George and Milady had the least idea of this, they would treat you like a criminal: to-morrow you would be packed off to the Colonies and condemned to perpetual banishment.'

Imagine Richard's amazement: he was a criminal without knowing it. He was taken aback by the accusation, and for a moment found no reply.

'How could I,' said he to Mademoiselle Foible, 'be such a scoundrel as to betray masters so worthy of my devotion and my respect? How could I venture to fall in love with their daughter, or she with me? You are mad yourself . . .'

'Then you are an innocent creature and know not what you do. Do but think what you are. You must give up your pupil, or my friendship for you and my duty to my masters will force me to do something for which we shall both be sorry. Cease to behave so foolishly to me, and I will drive these ideas out of your head. All this trouble, my lad, is your own fault . . .'

'Trouble, Mademoiselle?' exclaimed Richard; 'you cannot be serious. I am in no trouble whatever. It is a great pleasure to me to give lessons to Miss, and she is kind enough to accept them: Sir George and Milady are satisfied.'

''Tis more than I am,' said Foible. 'Once more, I won't have Miss Dorothy's head turned by a footman; and I won't have the footman packed off to Carolina, whether he likes it or not—But we are observed—I must go. Leave the door of your room open this evening; I have more to say to you.'

Foible left Richard in a state of mind hard to describe. He went away and locked himself in his room. He tried to resist Foible's explanation of the state of affairs; but she had, indeed, reached his heart. He proceeded to examine his conscience. His life before he had met Miss Dorothy seemed to him empty and meaningless, and it was so no longer; if he left her, he felt as though he should be engulfed in that emptiness once more. His feeling for her had always been one of the deepest respect, but he had given himself over to the pleasure of seeing her, hearing her voice, and passing whole hours in thinking about her.

'Good Heavens!' he cried. 'Can Foible be right? Can I be so wretched, so wicked as to love her? 'Tis then the end. Reduced by my unhappy fate to this dreadful condition, my heart filled with a passion that can but outrage my benefactors, death alone is left for me, and I must seek it. But Foible says that Miss Dorothy loves me; it cannot surely be true. In the lap of opulence, the centre of a distinguished Society, she may have cast a kindly glance on a poor lad who seemed to deserve it. But she cannot love me! Love me? Why, I should be mad to believe it.'

Such were the unfortunate Richard's reflections. Foible interrupted them by tapping on the door. He pretended not to hear, and then to be ill: and he did not open it. She went away in a furious rage; but he was hardly in a condition to receive a visit of the kind.

He passed the night in a state of the most violent agitation. When he came down next day to do his work he looked as changed as one does after a serious illness. When the time came for the lesson, he withdrew to his room. Lady Nettling, who happened to have got up rather earlier than usual, found her daughter alone at the harpsichord.

'But where is the master?' she asked.

'I suppose he is busy,' answered Miss Dorothy, 'for he is very conscientious.'

Lady Nettling gave orders that he should be fetched, and Molly undertook to do so with much satisfaction: for she had divined that these studies were not at all to Foible's taste.

Richard had retired to his room, but he appeared in response to Milady's orders. He tried to give the lesson, but he was trembling all over.

'What is the matter, Richard?' asked Miss Dorothy, in a tone that would have brought a dead man to life; 'has anything happened? Are you ill?'

'No, Miss,' replied Richard, but got no better.

'Perhaps some one has annoyed you,' said Miss Dorothy: 'I should be very sorry if that were so. I take a great interest in you.'

'No, Miss,' said Richard; 'every one is kinder to me than I deserve; I had a bad night.'

'Perhaps your bed is uncomfortable, Richard; I will speak to Milady, and she will see to it.'

'Indeed no, Miss, I am as comfortable as I can be.'

'No, Richard, you are too modest. I know your worth. And Sir George and Milady know it too.'

Poor Richard was much embarrassed; but he tried to extricate himself by starting the lesson.

'Does Miss wish to sing?'

'Certainly,' said she; 'let us begin with this piece by Signor Annibal, which you brought me yesterday. I think I know it perfectly: I like it so much.'

The master struck the opening chords with a rather unsteady hand, and Miss began. It was a duet, and his lady's part ran as follows:

If you understand my looks,
They will tell you that I love you.

Richard's part conveyed an extreme distress of mind on the part of the gentleman. Both were rendered in such a lifelike manner that the close seemed nearly tragic. Miss was so very expressive that Richard suddenly remembered what Foible had said, and thought he could read the truth in those two lovely eyes gazing into his. Full of a joy that he could not resist and also of remorse, anxiety, and distress, and unable to endure the shock and turmoil of so many conflicting passions, his head grew dizzy and his heart failed him; he tried to draw back his chair to get up and rush from the room, but he fell senseless at Miss Dorothy's feet. She was greatly moved, touched, and distressed: she called for help; two servants appeared and removed the sick youth; and the noise of his adventure soon reached the ears of Foible.

She was dressing Milady's hair at the moment. Her anxiety may be imagined: she hurried over her task, and Lady Nettling lost a curl or two in the process. At last, when she had finished more or less, she rushed to the sick youth's bedside. This time the door was not locked.

'What has been the matter, Richard?' said she.

''Tis nothing, Mademoiselle,' he answered, with an air of annoyance and embarrassment. 'You upset me yesterday. I did not sleep: and this morning I fainted.'

'Is that all, my dear? Are you hiding nothing from me?' said she. 'You are not honest with me, and you should be. You may trust me before anyone, you know that. Ungrateful creature! I adore you, and I cannot imagine any greater happiness than to pass my life in your company.'

'Leave me, Mademoiselle, you distress me,' said Richard. 'I have a feeling of friendship for you, and I am grateful to you for yours. But I should deceive you if I said any more. I am sorry that your happiness depends on your passing your life in my company, for I don't share your feelings.'

'Little monster!' cried Foible bitterly; 'I see the reason for your disdain; you could disguise it if you would, but I belong to a nation that you English hate and affect to despise; you do not think it worth your trouble to try to spare my feelings. You find my person detestable and you want me to know it; you think it beneath your notice, and your vanity would suffer if you let me think otherwise. Very well, then, I say once more, unprincipled wretch, you are abusing the refuge that has been so generously given to you, you have the audacity to love Miss Dorothy, and you have made her love you . . .'

'May Heaven strike you down, Mademoiselle, for having dared to pronounce so horrid a blasphemy against one who is the object of my deepest respect and of yours! Leave my room, and never utter such abominations again, or I will make you sorry for it!'

Nobody was more gentle than Richard. He felt a sensation of anger for the first time in his life; but a mind which is possessed by a great passion is at the mercy of all the others, and may plunge into the most dreadful excesses. Our charming Richard became formidable. Mademoiselle Foible was terrified, shut the door behind her, and fled in a panic, devoured by all the Furies of wrath and jealousy.

Anger brought back Richard's strength. He got out of bed and thought matters over. If he hid himself he might give rise to conjectures that would be discreditable to Miss Dorothy, and give colour to Foible's insolent assumptions. He finds his passion for Miss Dorothy no longer a mystery. Perhaps she loves him? But he is greatly struck by the danger of the situation for them both. He must make up his mind to leave the county of Devon for ever; but he must so disguise his reasons for his departure as to avoid all possible suspicion. The post is due to arrive on the following day: he will pretend to have received a letter and make this the pretext for his departure. The plan was worthy of his upright character; but he was destined to be the cause of two scenes at Clostern House which were to involve him in the strangest course of events. He left his room, and after a modest meal he went about his duties once more with an air of alertness that was likely to reassure those who had been concerned for his health. That day he was more than usually industrious. The company was just back from hunting; he went up to Sir George to hold his stirrup as he was about to dismount, and was just leading the horse towards the stable when a careless groom let a gun go off some distance away. Richard was hit and wounded. In an instant his face, his neck, his shirt, his collar and the sleeve of his coat were covered with blood.

The household was roused by the noise, and ran in the direction of the shot: all the women were at the windows. Miss Dorothy screamed out: 'Oh, Heaven! Richard is killed!' and forthwith fainted, though she collapsed upon a chair that had been conveniently placed behind her. Some of the bystanders tried to restore her while others ran to Richard's assistance. A bullet had carried away a small piece of his ear, and his wound, though trifling, was bleeding freely. A little gillyflower water soon put matters right, and when Miss Dorothy, reassured by the news, had recovered consciousness, the countenances of the numerous visitors began to resume their normal placidity. We need not give the names of the entire company: it will be sufficient, for the purpose of the story, to make known two of their number. One was Mistress Brown, a respectable dowager of the county of Sussex, sister of Sir George; and the other was Lord Scarecrew, eldest son of the Duke of * * *, both of whom had arrived on the previous day, for reasons that shall be explained later. Mistress Brown was an ordinary sort of creature of excellent character and exemplary conduct: she was childless, and intended to make Miss Dorothy her heiress.

Lord Scarecrew, who was twenty-six years old, had travelled far and lived hard: and his countenance betrayed the exertions and amusements which had occupied his time. But his appearance was distinguished and dignified. His manner was easy and collected, his address was frank; he had the gift of evading questions, and of ending a dispute with a jest. He had a notion of a great number of things, but little exact knowledge, and he had at his command all the fashionable jargon that can express everything agreeably without confining itself within any particularity of phrase. Of a scrupulous, though sometimes haughty, and often cold, politeness, such was his character; he was, in fact, a man of fashion. His host overwhelmed him with attentions, and referred everything to his judgement; the day's sport was intended as a diversion for him, and a little concert had been projected for the evening. Sir George, who was unwilling to lose the credit for an intended courtesy, came up to him.

'Alas!' said he; 'the shot that has just been fired, Milord, has upset an agreeable surprise that I had hoped to offer you. The servant who was wounded plays the harpsichord divinely, and I wanted you to hear Miss Dorothy sing some airs; but our accompanist is *hors de combat.*'

His lordship replied to Sir George by a slight inclination of the head; then, turning to Lady Nettling:

'Milady, do you know what the Baronet said? He was proposing some music: his daughter accompanied by a footman! I am astonished that you who know the world do not teach him that such a mixture of company is not customary. It may be possible, in the privacy of the household, sometimes so to ignore the livery; but . . .'

And Milady answered, with a shrug of her shoulders:

'What can I say, Milord, you know Sir George.'

And they changed the subject.

Foible had been much alarmed by Richard's wound. She had rushed to his assistance, but he had preferred Molly's attentions. He even repulsed the Frenchwoman with something like disdain. At last, with a light bandage round his head, he went back to his room, having reduced the poor lady to despair by his most callous demeanour.

On the following day he did not appear. He was busy with plans for his departure. Having heard from Molly of his young mistress's fainting fit, he clearly realized the necessity for leaving the neighbourhood. Foible came to overwhelm him with reproaches; he received her for a short time in his room, and conducted the rest of the interview through the keyhole. Finally Molly arrived at the door, sent by Miss Dorothy to ask after the wounded youth; there she found Foible and made a long nose at her. The latter was beside herself with fury and resolved upon vengeance.

Next day Richard resumed his duties in Milady's room, with a pad of cotton-wool over his ear. Molly at once informed Miss Dorothy, who had just heard a much less pleasant piece of news.

'Molly,' said she, 'I am going to the harpsichord. Tell Richard to come to me there if he is free.'

Richard received the order, and could not disobey. He found Miss Dorothy in floods of tears: he approached her with an air of consternation; he could not speak.

'Richard,' said she, trying to recover herself; 'I shall take no more lessons from you. I am going away. My parents are marrying me to Lord Scarecrew: all is settled, and all will be over in a few days. Farewell, Richard. My changed condition will be the easier to endure if it puts me one day in the position of being able to do you some service. I wish I could, and if I can, I will. Do not forget me.'

Miss Dorothy felt her tears begin to flow once more, and she observed that Richard was weeping bitterly.

'Do not weep,' said she; 'I cannot bear it. Farewell!' Richard, in his extremity of despair, knelt on one knee to kiss the hand she offered him.

Suddenly Sir George in furious rage and with a drawn sword in his hand burst into the room, and would have rushed upon the young man. He tripped over a chair, fell down, recovered himself and made another attack. Richard, in spite of his agitation over the scene with Miss Dorothy, upon the impulse rather of a natural instinct than prompted by his reason, evaded his aggressor and jumped out of a window that opened on to the terrace.

Sir George roared, foamed at the mouth, rushed through the house, shouting for his servants. 'Ho! help there! all of you! seize the scoundrel, the ravisher, and fling him to the hangman!'

Every one ran up. Miss Dorothy lay stretched out upon the floor in a state of collapse, lifeless and unconscious. They asked the Baronet what the matter was, and whom they were to seize.

'Richard,' he answered. 'That rascal Richard! He is in the garden.'

And Sir George rushed out after him, followed by the motley assemblage, whilst Foible and Molly carried Miss Dorothy to her room.

Milady was at her toilet and conversing with Lord Scarecrew the while. They heard the disturbance and came out to inquire the cause of it. Milady's servants were reluctant to tell her, but his lordship's valet concealed nothing. The effect of such an adventure on a gentleman about to conclude an alliance of marriage may be imagined. He took out his watch, looked at the weather, ordered his people to get his carriage ready, and, with a profound obeisance to Milady, asked if he could be of any service to her in London.

'You are leaving us, Milord?' said Lady Nettling, amazed at this sudden resolution.

'Yes, Milady: I have just been informed of some urgent business that will not wait. I have no time to take farewell of the Baronet, and must beg you to convey him my apologies.'

And without more ado he turned on his heel, and went off to hasten the arrangements for his departure.

Milady at last obtained an account of the adventure enriched with imaginary details due to Sir George's fury, Richard's flight, and the equivocal situation in which Miss Dorothy was found. The lady's own character was, perhaps, not above reproach, but an occurrence of this kind seemed likely not merely to ruin her daughter's reputation irretrievably, but to expose her mother to a good deal of ill-natured gossip (for she was not popular) and, above all, to deprive her of the coveted honour of being a Duchess's mother. Deeply annoyed and disappointed, she went to her daughter's room. Her intention was to extract some further details from her and then to cover her with reproaches; but the young Miss was not in a condition to satisfy her curiosity, nor to listen to her abuse. She had been so deeply frightened and shaken that she had not yet recovered her senses. Worthy Mistress Brown, her aunt, held her in her arms and tried to restore her to consciousness.

In the meantime the Baronet was scouring his orchards, his lawns, and his park, but as he could find nothing, he advised his men to get horses and search the countryside. An unwise sense of security had induced him to shut his eyes to his daughter's long *tête-à-têtes* with a young man: a rash confidence had prevented his noticing them. The Scarecrew marriage would have taken place; Miss Dorothy, when she became aware of an inclination that her pride and her good sense must disavow, would have tried to forget Richard. Foible's jealous fury suddenly changed the whole position. When Molly went to fetch Richard to come to Miss Dorothy, the Frenchwoman went to the Baronet, told him what she thought she knew, and led him to the room where the scene was to take place. Sir George arrived at the moment when Richard, on one knee, was kissing Miss Dorothy's hand and taking farewell of her. The faces of the pair were flushed, and their eyes bathed in tears; the Baronet saw more than there was, more than he had been told, fell into a ridiculous passion and proceeded to behave in a way that was even more imprudent.

Foible was avenged; but her remorse and her fear were a high price to pay for her gloomy satisfaction. Her heart was not bad, and her young mistress was dishonoured. She loved Richard with all her heart: if he were discovered he was lost. His youth, his inexperience, and the gentleness of his character placed him at the mercy of so powerful an opponent: and the law would be against him.

Such were the emotions of the inmates of Clostern House, from which Richard was escaping as fast as his legs would carry him—he did not know whither. From the garden he had escaped into the park and jumped several times over a brook eight feet wide, whose windings embarrassed his passage. At last he reached the ring fence of the estate—a wooden palisade—and leapt over it. He found himself surrounded by hopfields: the plants and their poles got in his way a good deal, but, at the same time, enabled him to go forward unobserved. He covered about three miles across country in this fashion. At last, when the house was out of sight, he proceeded along a path that seemed to lead him farthest away from Clostern.

He walked easily, for he was lithe and active. But his strength was hardly equal to his efforts, and he was often compelled to stop to take breath. He had started at eleven in the morning, and by seven in the evening he had traversed nine leagues. He reached the gate of a little secluded farm, exhausted by weariness and want of food. He went in: and the good people at once put refreshments before him. He ate but little, and asked to be allowed to rest. He was shown a bed, lay down upon it, and fell forthwith into a fever. He had but a guinea in his pocket. The rest of his money, which was with his clothes and his possessions at the house, amounted to ten pounds sterling. He gave his guinea to the farmer's wife, for her trouble in fetching him what he needed. Francy was the woman's name: she was old, and a widow, mother of several children who were now of an age to help her in the work of the farm. Francy went to fetch what was necessary to make soup for the sick young man. But it was help of another kind of which he stood in need. His mind and heart were in greater distress than his body. Uneasy about Miss Dorothy and about himself, aware that he was being pursued, he saw himself overwhelmed by shame and punishment. He had betrayed his masters. The clergyman at Buttorf, the chaplain of Woodstock, all Nature herself had become his enemy. How could he escape? The only clothing he had was the livery of the man who had resolved to hunt him down. All his possessions were in a place where he could not get at them. And his thoughts of Miss Dorothy, whom he adored, whom he seemed destined to plunge into misery and to lose for ever, completed the disorder of his imagination.

The fever lasted three days without intermission. Francy and her children, and among them Dolly, a daughter of eighteen years old, were assiduous in their kindness and care. On the fourth day the attack diminished in violence, and Richard slept: and, as the result of a copious sweat, the fever left him entirely. The sick youth, though weak, wanted to get up. He sat down in the general room which served them for parlour, kitchen, and shop. There, with his two elbows on the table and his head in his hands, he dreamed melancholy dreams. His reverie was interrupted by a burst of laughter and a clatter of conversation at the door. One of those women commonly known as gipsies was holding Dolly's hand, prophesying a speedy marriage, a comfortable subsistence, a numerous and handsome family, long life, good health, and joy and happiness of every kind. The young creature was in an ecstasy at the prospect of so flattering a future, and the witch, as if all this were not enough, added all manner of delightful details. Miss Dolly came in to tell her mother all about it; and the gipsy followed her, tempted, apparently, by the hope of some bread and butter and a cup of milk to reward her sagacity and goodwill. She was about the usual stature for a woman, with a dark complexion, a clear and lively eye, and aquiline features that attracted immediate attention. Richard was at once struck by her, and came out of his reverie to look at her; she stared at him fixedly for a while without saying anything, and with an expression of intense interest. At length she approached him:

'Well, my handsome,' says she, 'and what are you doing here?'

Whereupon Richard, who was chiefly concerned to conceal his identity, thought he had been recognized, and blushed.

'Do you know who I am, good woman?' said he, with an uneasy look.

'Perhaps I do,' she answered. ''Tis my business to know people, often better than they know themselves. But have no fear, I never betray anybody, and least of all agreeable young men: on the contrary, I am quite at your service.'

Richard took her by the sleeve, and drew her a little to one side.

'Speak truly, good woman; can you really recognize me?'

'Either I am not a witch . . .' began the gipsy.

'Oh, if you are no more than that,' said Richard, 'I am not afraid of what you may know, and I have no questions to ask you.'

'Listen to the little unbeliever!' said the gipsy; 'how you despise my art! You must have learnt that at Oxford.'

'At Oxford!' Richard broke in; 'and why, Madam, do you speak of Oxford? Can the clergyman of Buttorf have told you . . .?'

'No one tells me anything,' said the wise woman. 'Do but have a little more faith and goodwill and we shall both of us soon know more than the chaplain of Woodstock, the rector of Buttorf, and all the clergymen in England put together. Come out and sit with me under yonder chestnut tree.'

Richard obeyed, and they sat down.

'Now,' said she, 'give me your hand.'

'And what can you read there, pray?' he asked, still suspicious that the minister of Buttorf had spoken about him.

'A great deal,' replied the gipsy; 'this hand, those eyes, that forehead are plainly read.'

Richard shrugged his shoulders.

''Tis possible,' said he, 'that you have heard somewhere what little you so earnestly pretend to know about me; but I know too much about your art to expect any sense from it.'

'And here is an enlightened young gentleman wearing a livery! I should be surprised if I were less accustomed to marvels. Look into my eyes and take heed of what I shall tell you. I prophesy that in the space of a moment or two you will give me more confidence than I wanted from you, and will ask me more questions than even my art can answer. Tell me your name, and your age . . .'

'I shall tell you nothing, Madam. You say you divine the truth. Begin on those trifling facts that you seem so curious about. 'Tis not a very serious test.'

'What obstinacy!' cried the modest prophetess. 'Anyone but I would grow tired of you, but we have our books, and if we search them well we can find out some very strange things.'

Hereupon she took out of her pocket a little volume of about the shape and size of a calendar, and turned its pages, muttering to herself: then in a clear and steady voice she read out: 'Richard O'Berthon, born in London: eighteen years old last Easter day.' She stopped and closed her book: then, taking Richard's hand, 'You see, my friend,' said she, 'that we have the means of finding out what people refuse to tell us.'

Richard was soaked in a cold sweat from head to foot. He had just heard his own name, which had been so carefully concealed since he had left college. The gipsy went on to remind him of certain things he had been told in his boyhood at Southam by his benefactress, Mistress Hallen, and since almost forgotten. His convictions were overthrown: in the past he placed no faith in oracles and soothsayers, now he was like to believe in them too implicitly.

The gipsy looked at him fixedly.

'Come, young man,' said she, 'you may be a little astonished, but you must not be frightened. I shall do you no harm. My first sight of you gave me a singular pleasure, and I feel myself deeply concerned in all your affairs. Trust yourself to me, and I will secure you happiness beyond your hopes.'

'To you, Madam?' asked Richard, gazing hard at the gipsy in his turn. 'Indeed, when I look at you I am tempted to do so. When I first looked upon you something, I know not what, stirred within my heart. But your calling, held so justly in contempt, inspired me with disgust. But now that you have compelled me to admit the exactness of your art. I am afraid of you, and—I *will* trust you!'

'My child,' said the gipsy, looking at him tenderly, and speaking in an affectionate tone, 'you must get rid of your diffidence and alarm. How could I deceive you? You are young, unhappy, and completely desolate. What do you think my intentions could be? And if I only use my arts to discover your needs and your weakness, and to help and protect you, if my advice always serves the strictest virtue, and leads you in the paths of rectitude and contentment, how can you refuse to take it and follow me?'

Richard stared at the gipsy in amazement. He fixed her with his gaze: she did not drop her eyes, but returned his look. A certain air of sincerity, nobility, and even dignity that was apparent in her expression and manner transcended all the singular and ragged apparel that she wore.

Observing that Richard sat silent, she did not interrupt him for a moment; then, detecting from his expression that he had in some measure made up his mind:

'Time is precious,' said she. 'If my art does not deceive me you are torn by many passions that we must try to allay. You are uneasy about your safety and your life, and not yours alone . . .'

'Whoever you may be,' cried Richard, 'mortal, angel, or kindly demon come to help me in my abandonment, since nothing escapes your knowledge, tell me who I am, where I must go, and how I can extricate myself from so dangerous a situation. For myself I can do nothing. I hate, loathe and detest myself.'

'You must restrain this violence,' said the gipsy. ''Tis the effect of an unreasonable, and indeed quite unfounded, despair. Control your curiosity. You are now in a state of mind to which I predicted you would come. But a few moments ago you would ask me nothing: now you must hear everything, even what it would be dangerous for me to tell you out of due time. You are not what you seem; more I may not tell you. Unhappy youth, brought so low by the fault of your parents, you deserve by your resignation, humility, and patience to come into your own again. Seek not to know more. Let me direct you, and I must call for your implicit obedience. Sir George is tired of his fruitless chase and has given it up. Your tracks were well concealed. His servants have gone home, and a disguise will prevent your being recognized when you leave here. Under whatever form you may see me appear, do not be surprised: it will not be my own. But all I shall think of now will be your peace, safety, and happiness.'

Poor Richard's surprise and agitation of mind were beyond everything: the gipsy's astounding knowledge, which had quite convinced him; her impressive speech and manner; her flattering promises—all this might well have shaken him without deserving his confidence; but there was some stronger motive. Torn between fear and respect, he felt his heart drawn towards her, kissed her hand and bathed it in his tears.

'I have won, Richard,' said she; 'henceforward you are mine. Make ready, my son; you must allow me that tender address to-day; a time will come when I shall call you so with even greater satisfaction.'

'Alas!' said Richard; 'no one has ever called me that.'

'I know, my dear boy,' said the gipsy; 'you have been deprived of that sweet solace, and I would console you for your loss. But you must open your heart to me, and with all the confidence that you owe to her who calls you by that tender name. Have you forgotten Miss Dorothy?'

'Oh, Heaven, Madam!' cried Richard, 'you pierce my very heart. Never shall I forget her; her kindness so ill-requited, her parents' affection and esteem, which she may have lost because of me, will torment me all my life. Alas! Madam, at the bottom of my heart I was innocent, or at least I thought so. Indeed, some one did try to open my eyes, but I would not see; without knowing it I was guilty of the deepest ingratitude, and it nearly cost me my life.'

'You were very imprudent,' rejoined the gipsy; 'but Sir Richard and Milady were more so.'

'I have been most dreadfully punished!' cried Richard; 'I have offended Miss Dorothy. I may not see her; yet I cannot live without her; and I must soon die.'

'My dear boy, you must not give way to these tragic notions. You love her ardently. It is no doubt unfortunate that you have conceived so violent a passion for a person whose condition seems to be so utterly unsuited to your own; but fortune brings about changes sometimes.'

'Heaven!' cried Richard. 'I beg you to shower your favours on the lovely Dorothy, but do not ever let her fall so low that I can aspire to her hand without costing her a blush.'

'Your feelings do you credit, my son, you are worthy of a better destiny; you must not cherish too flattering hopes, but conduct yourself with care; circumstances may so fall out that Miss Dorothy may one day be able to accept your hand, without lowering herself in her own eyes or in yours . . .'

'Do you mean that she will one day marry me?' interrupted Richard, nearly out of his mind with joy. 'May I hope, Madam . . .?'

'I will not listen to these outbursts, or to these foolish confidences,' replied the gipsy; 'you must bethink yourself that human effort (with assistance from heaven) may so modify circumstances in your favour if you will help matters by being sensible and careful. Submit yourself entirely to my direction; and you had better begin by throwing away the clothes you are wearing, as they would be most inconvenient anywhere else but in this deserted spot. Let us go into the house once more, and I will give you a very appropriate disguise.'

Richard led the gipsy into the little room in which he had spent the night: she told him to stay there and wait for her. A quarter of an hour later she returned with her hands full of plain but scrupulously clean women's garments, which she had bought from the worthy Francy, and helped Richard to put them on. As soon as he was dressed, she made him sit down.

'Listen to me carefully,' she said. 'I am going to use a simple stratagem, the purport of which you will one day understand. Do but remember not to betray me either in word or deed.

'The widow and her family are convinced that you are the daughter of Tom Cawsson, a gentleman of the county of Kent. Your name is Arabella. It was intended to marry you to a man whose age was hardly suited to your own; you have fled the paternal roof to escape this alliance. Your parents have had you searched for throughout England. Your father has forgiven your escape and has opened his arms to you. After looking for you for three months he has found you in a house near by: he is now about ten miles away. I am now going to give him news of you, and he will doubtless come and fetch you the day after to-morrow in the morning. Farewell, Miss Arabella Cawsson, you will see me again very soon.'

No sooner had the gipsy gone than Dolly and her mother came in.

'Oho! Miss,' said they, 'we had always suspected the truth. You have a soft and gentle voice, and your livery suited you so very ill! One could see it was not made for you. At last all will come right. Master Cawsson, your father, will arrive the day after to-morrow, calm yourself. You have eaten nothing for two days: you must be sensible.'

This discourse embarrassed Richard; unskilled at deception, he blushed easily, and by keeping silence he played his part very well. The difference in sex had made Dolly and her mother hitherto very reserved in his company: now they threw aside all such diffidence, and their somewhat hearty caresses made his impersonation even more awkward. However, the evening and the following day passed off without any untoward discovery.

The day appointed for the departure of the pretended Miss Arabella had hardly dawned, when two men appeared at the gate of the farm. They were on horseback, and one of them was leading by the bridle another elegantly caparisoned animal. Every one was up, and Miss Arabella was ready for any adventure.

The horsemen dismounted, and one of them asked Miss Dolly if Miss Arabella Cawsson was in the house. At this inquiry the pretended young lady came forward; the more important-looking of the two horsemen, his face almost hidden by the collar of his riding-coat, went quickly up to her and embraced her affectionately. The other led up her horse and helped her to mount. Miss's father seemed busy talking to the family and thanking them. No time was lost, and a moment afterwards the company set out.

Richard, thus disguised, followed immediately behind his unknown guides: doubtless they had been sent by the gipsy. But what might be this benevolent being whose help he was accepting? His studies had tended to discredit palmistry, magic, and all the pretended arts of this nature. He could not imagine a soothsayer or a magician who was not a fraud. Moreover, what was the agency that set in motion all these miracles? His religion could hardly permit him to accept of help whose source was unknown and might be suspect. But they had spoken of leading him in the paths of honour and of virtue; how could a being, essentially corrupt and malignant, so expose herself and give such an undertaking? Torn by so many conflicting ideas, full of the works of Plato and Apuleius, he recalled the dæmon of Socrates: and very soon his credulity went farther still, and he began to dream of djinns and fairies. Truth seemed non-existent: all was appearance and no more; but he made up his mind to consider very carefully the advice that might be given him or the deeds in which he might be engaged, and find out to what they seemed likely to lead.

After three hours' rapid travel, the cavalcade reached Honyton, and drew up at the door of an inn. One of the horsemen dismounted first and went inside, the other stayed to hand the supposed young lady from her horse. She was shown into a low room, where she found herself alone. A young man who was seated at the outer door was displaying signs of the extremest distress, and bewailing his condition very heartily. Richard sat down in silence, too full of his own adventure to be able to take any notice of anyone else's troubles. A moment later one of the inn servants came to desire him to follow her.

'Your father awaits you in his own room, and I will show you the way.'

Richard followed. The servant pointed out the door and withdrew. He went in and found himself in the presence of a thin, but tall and well-proportioned gentleman. His features were distinguished and even striking, his bearing courteous and dignified. He appeared to be thirty-five years of age or thereabouts. The gentleman advanced towards him with an air of familiarity and freedom, embraced him, and observed:

'Well, my dear young lady, and are you tired?'

Richard, who was much embarrassed by all this politeness from one unknown to him, received it coldly, looked him up and down and could not remember having seen him anywhere. The latter laughed at his embarrassment.

'You cannot recall my face, my dear young lady, and yet it should not be entirely unknown to you. Two days ago you were a lad, your name was Richard, and I was your mother; this morning you were the daughter of Tom Cawsson, and I was your father; but now I am no longer a boorish countryman, I am Captain Sentry, an officer awaiting retirement, and you are my daughter. Come,' he went on gaily, 'here's to Miss Bekit Sentry! Prove that her feelings make her worthy of a connection with one who has deserved well of the State, and who will soon be rewarded by his grateful country by being placed on half-pay.'

'Alas!' exclaimed Richard, 'you may be what you please; tell me what I ought to be. I will go on being a girl if you like; but in appearance only, I venture to hope.'

The *soi-disant* Captain smiled.

'The role of a young and lovely girl is not to be disdained,' he answered: 'but I will not offend your taste in this matter. Your affairs make this disguise necessary for a time. Try not to depart from your role: and if you are taken to be of the sex you are impersonating, be very careful not to betray your own. If you should forget yourself, I warn you seriously that I will not be responsible.'

This threat was uttered in so earnest a tone that it gave Richard food for thought, and made his disguise more disagreeable to him than ever.

'I suppose,' said he to the Captain, 'that you will soon release me from this subjection?'

'On the contrary,' he replied, 'you will have plenty of time to get used to it. Indeed, I fancy you must not remain English: it suits neither your interests nor my views. You must be Welsh.'

'Welsh! I can't be! Neither man nor maid! I have never been in Wales. I don't understand a word of their jargon.'

'Everything existing in the world,' said the Captain, 'is but an appearance. Even I am not myself but another, and one day you will know who. You will not be Miss Bekit Sentry nor a Welsh girl: you will merely appear to be. However, we must not be too constantly dealing in the miraculous. We are now going to set out for Wales; you will stay in a comfortable house there and, when you have been properly trained, I shall introduce you to the role in which I want you to succeed.'

Richard, whose head was confused by all this mystery, remained silent. His expression betrayed his amazement and embarrassment.

'Poor child,' said the Captain; 'he is quite bewildered; I must talk to him about Miss Dorothy.'

'Miss Dorothy!' cried Richard quickly. 'Have you anything to tell me about her?'

'Your heart seems very full of her,' said the Captain.

'I suppose she is very unhappy,' said Richard.

'She has been in some measure consoled,' answered the

Captain. 'She has had to endure many reproaches, but her aunt, Mistress Brown, who is a kind, indulgent lady, spoke up for her. "Out of the house with the heartless wretch!" roared Sir George. "Then I'll receive her into mine!" cried the worthy aunt. "I shall disinherit her!" went on the Baronet. "And I shall leave her everything!" retorted the lady. "Abominable little creature," said Milady Nettling, "I can't endure the sight of her!" "And I can't see her often enough," answered the aunt. "I shall turn her out!" cried the Baronet. "I would take her home with me at once," said Mrs. Brown, "if it were safe for her to travel."'

'Is she ill, then?' asked Richard in great alarm.

'She is much calmer and better,' said the Captain. 'She has gone to her aunt, and is no longer tormented by her father and mother. They have both gone to a property of theirs in the county of Derbent: and if I am not greatly mistaken, Miss Dorothy's main anxiety this day is her uncertainty as to what has become of her poor Richard.'

'The sweet young lady!' cried Richard. 'She must love me if she is anxious about me. Ah! Sir, you are flattering me; but tell me . . .'

'I can tell you no more, my dear Bekit,' said the Captain, moving away with rather an abstracted air, and seeming to rest his gaze on something that was happening in the courtyard of the inn. The Captain's and Richard's travelling companion was there talking to the distracted young gentleman whom the latter had seen at the parlour door as he entered the inn. The man, who seemed to be the captain's servant, then broke off the conversation, came upstairs and announced to the young lady and her father that dinner was about to be served.

'Tom,' said the Captain, 'why is that young man so distressed?'

'He is the son of a neighbouring farmer,' replied Tom. 'During his father's absence he took one of the farm horses to go and see some races at Calliton. On his return he fell in with a robber in a dark and lonely lane a mile away from here, who compelled him to an exchange of clothing and took away his horse. The young man does not dare go home.'

'Tom,' said the Captain, 'the robber did not know the value of the overcoat he got rid of. Tell the young man to feel in the bottom of the right-hand pocket: he will there find a purse and some guineas, and the sight of them will console his father for the loss of an inferior horse.'

Tom went downstairs forthwith, and soon after the Captain and Richard witnessed the peasant's extreme delight at the sight of his treasure which had been revealed to him. While they were contemplating the scene, dinner was served, and when they had finished it they set forth once more.

It would be tedious to recount Richard's state of mind, his ideas, his reflections, his fancies and his surprises. The small company travelled speedily and reached Bridgewater in the evening. Richard, who had scarcely recovered from a violent attack of fever and four days' abstinence, felt rather disposed to rest, so it was decided to break the journey until the following day. The same evening, Tom, who passed as the Captain's servant, was dispatched to an unknown destination on an errand which his master kept to himself.

The inn where the Captain and his pretended daughter stayed was full of French prisoners of war. Among them were a naval lieutenant, two midshipmen, a surgeon, and two boatswains. These strangers, deceived by Richard's disguise and struck by his handsome face, shouted loud enough for him to hear, 'What a pretty young Miss!' The Captain and Miss Bekit pretended not to notice this covert compliment in a foreign language, and probably embellished by a few nautical endearments. Richard went to bed and slept late. The Captain went out early.

About eleven o'clock, Richard, having just got up, was trying, with the assistance of one of the maids, to put his dress in order, when a loud noise was heard in the house. The French officers came in cursing, followed by a mob pelting them with stones. They slammed the door on their pursuers, but shortly afterwards a constable armed with his staff made an attack upon it, knocked loudly, and ordered them to open in the name of the law. The innkeeper wished to obey, but the Frenchmen prevented him. The disturbance both within and without was indescribable.

Richard, who was naturally inquisitive, came out of his room, and asked the prisoners in French what the trouble was. They were delighted to find a young English lady clever enough to understand them, and replied:

'These low fellows have insulted and beaten us for no reason, and we defended ourselves. We are amazed that they should behave so, for we are under the protection of the government. They apparently intend further outrages, but we will bury ourselves beneath the ruins of this house before we will endure them.'

So saying, they drew their swords, and debated whether they should make a sortie against the mob.

Richard was rather bewildered, being little acquainted with international law, and could not tell which side was in the right. He observed that those inside the house were angry and determined men; he put his head out of the window and noticed an individual of prepossessing countenance, simply dressed, in a furious rage and engaged in exciting the populace.

'I will be revenged,' said he; 'I will go to the Justice of the

Peace, and the Admiralty, and Parliament, and the King. Smash the door in there: pull the house down if necessary.'

The tumult was dreadful, and both sides were in considerable danger. Suddenly Captain Sentry appeared in the street, and politely went up to the man who was haranguing the crowd, and the constable.

'Master Orchard,' said he, 'and you, officer, the people whom you propose to place freely under arrest are prisoners of war, whom you should respect. If they have done you any injury, if they have disturbed public order, if they owe you any reparation, or damages—I know them—and I will be answerable for them up to a sum of ten thousand pounds sterling. If they are to appear before the Justice of the Peace, they will come with me without demur. Send this crowd away. As soon as I enter the house I will see that the door is opened for you; and when you have investigated the matter, you will be glad I have dealt with it in the way I suggest.'

The constable turned to Master Orchard.

'Sir,' says he, 'ten thousand pounds sterling will pay for a great number of broken heads, and will quite discharge any damages that may be allowed in a Court of Law. This gentleman,' pointing to Captain Sentry, 'talks like an honest man who knows the laws of the country, and as an officer of the law I consider you ought to restrain your feelings and do as he suggests.'

Master Orchard was compelled to follow the constable's advice; the latter brandished his staff and gave an order; the mob understood and withdrew; and the Captain then went up to the door, which was forthwith opened to him. He addressed the French officers with friendly politeness, and spoke to them in their own language, with surprising fluency.

'Gentlemen,' said he, 'a man of honour, one of the richest farmers in the neighbourhood, thinks you have done him an injury. I am sure you are innocent, and that I can prove you so. But we must convince the gentleman himself and put the officer in a position to make his report. Both are disposed to listen to reason, and for the sake of your own peace of mind you owe them the explanation they ask for.'

The French officers fell in with these very reasonable proposals. They opened the door and admitted Master Orchard and the constable. They were accommodated with chairs, and Captain Sentry broached the matter.

'What is your complaint, Master Orchard? These gentlemen cannot speak our language: I will undertake to answer for them.'

'These Frenchmen,' replied the worthy farmer, 'met one of my daughters as she was coming out of church and crossing the meadow to go home. There were three of them, and they insulted her. Some village lads came up and tried to protect her, but they were beaten off. And in the meantime a friend of one of the aggressors was seen carrying off my child. As I came out from service I heard of this abominable . . .'

'Calm yourself, Master Orchard,' said the Captain; 'your daughter was not insulted. These three gentlemen, each of whom was carrying a nosegay, happened to meet her, and had the courtesy to offer her their flowers. She refused: they did not understand her language, nor she theirs. During a conversation thus carried on under difficulties, five young lads of the parish came up, and fell upon the gentlemen, who gave them a lively reception. Your daughter was frightened and on the point of swooning; a kindly Englishman gave her his arm and conducted her to your house, where she now is. The causes of the quarrel, the three nosegays, lie on the field of battle.'

'Can you assure me that this is true?' said the farmer to the Captain.

'I can, Sir,' replied the latter; 'and I will stand guarantee for it.'

'In that case,' said the farmer, 'the injured parties may go and get compensated where they like: and I beg you to ask these gentlemen to accept my excuses for having lent an ear to the vapourings of certain block-headed countrymen of mine. Perhaps you will then be good enough to accompany me and the constable before the magistrate, so that I may put an end to the affair.'

While negotiations were proceeding, the officers kept their eyes on the Captain and the farmer; but they observed Master Orchard's expression gradually growing calmer, while the constable displayed not a little annoyance. The Captain then addressed the Frenchmen.

'You may put your minds at rest,' said he; 'the dispute is at an end. Master Orchard acknowledges that he was in the wrong, and begs you to overlook his share in the abuse of which you rightly complained.'

The Frenchmen bowed to Master Orchard, who did likewise, and the three Englishmen withdrew.

Richard, who had been the only witness of the adventure (his knowledge of the two languages having enabled him not to lose a word), stayed with the foreigners. The oldest of them came up to him and said:

'Dear young lady, we have only half understood what was going forward; but it would seem that we are under the deepest obligations to your father. Surely he speaks French too well, and seems too anxious to save us, not to be French himself.'

'He has just done his duty as an Englishman,' answered Richard; 'I am sure he must be one.'

This answer did some violence to his sincerity. The more he saw of the Captain the more mystified he became. About an hour later the gentleman in question returned to the inn.

'Miss,' said he to the pretended Bekit, 'take your hat and gloves. Kind Master Orchard has asked us to dinner, and we must go immediately.'

The Captain's serious air, and his manner of address, disconcerted Richard somewhat.

'Really, Sir,' said he, 'considering what I am, you ought not to show me off in company. What part do you want me to play among strangers?'

'That of a young lady,' answered the Captain, 'without experience of the world and without fortune, ill at ease everywhere: my daughter, in fact. You will suit the part excellently well, but you must perfect yourself. I was very well satisfied with the way you behaved yesterday on our journey, and this morning at the inn; but you must try a larger stage, where you will be seen for longer and from nearer at hand.'

Richard, who had made up his mind to do as he was told up to a certain point, obeyed the Captain without further objection, and they both went to the house of their host.

Under the appearance of the greatest simplicity, Master Orchard's house breathed comfort and even luxury. Kindness and candour were written on the countenances of all the members of his family. Mistress Orchard, and her three daughters, glowing with freshness, youth, and beauty, came to meet Richard, and welcomed him with the most affectionate embraces: two strong tall lads saluted him with less grace, perhaps, but with modest self-possession. They sat down to dinner. The reader may imagine for himself a country dinner at the house of a rich farmer: more homeliness than elegance, more profusion than taste, kindness without affectation, hospitality without display, good humour without gaiety, tasty but not highly seasoned dishes, beer of King John's reign, and six kinds of puddings. Their hosts tried to discover Richard's and the Captain's taste, and continually pressed dishes upon them. The supposed Miss was constantly being teased by the young ladies, who looked on her as one of themselves; while the young gentlemen, who found her much to their liking, made eyes at her. When dinner was over, Master Orchard and his sons took the Captain into another room, in which was a cabinet of strong waters of divers kinds.

When the women thought they were alone, Mistress Orchard's daughters, who had hitherto been somewhat restrained in the advances they had made to Richard, let themselves go a little farther, and bestowed on him the most lively and flattering caresses. The situation of the *soi-disant* young lady was very embarrassing: ingratitude found no place in his character, and common courtesy demanded that he should return their attentions. If he allowed himself any liberties, he was afraid he might take too many. It was almost beyond endurance: he felt on the point of repulsing them or taking to flight. Fortunately the Orchard gentlemen and the Captain reappeared. The eldest carried a violin and the youngest a tambourine. A dance was suggested: Captain Sentry opened the ball with Mistress Orchard, and danced the hornpipe with the grace of a courtier, and the energy, agility, and vigour of a young man; and the naive graces of the Misses Orchard were much admired. All was going well, when the eldest son of the house came to ask Richard for a dance: he excused himself on the ground that he did not know how to dance.

'Come, Bekit,' said the Captain, 'you have never danced;

but much is overlooked in the country. You must learn, my dear child, to amuse yourself, and help to amuse others. One is awkward at first, and does not know what one is doing, but custom makes perfect. Take two turns round the room, listen to the tune; and then forward.'

Richard could not but obey, and he did very badly. Anywhere else he would have been laughed at. But there they all thought the more of him for his good nature: the ladies rewarded him with an embrace, and the Captain, too, pressed him in his arms with extreme affection. Tea time arrived; and thereafter they all parted company, promising never to forget each other. Richard accompanied the Captain to the inn.

'My dear Bekit,' said he, 'I cannot praise too highly your respect for my wishes: you have now quite won my heart. I would have had you sing just now; but you are too good a performer. I should have been greatly wanting in consideration to our hosts if I had allowed you to display before them so finished a talent and one so much beyond their reach. So I thought it better to get you to dance. Your very awkwardness proved your anxiety to make yourself agreeable.'

Richard, hearing himself continually addressed as Bekit or Miss, said gently:

'Sir, you have had me dressed as a girl: have you forgotten that I am not one? Those young women whom we have just left . . .'

'I understand what you mean,' said the Captain; 'they made you feel awkward; but such ordeals are necessary to fit you for the severer ones that await you. You must rid yourself of that peevish and discontented air, and do not "Sir" or "Madam" me. I am your father, or your mother, as occasion may demand, and I protest that, whichever I may be, Heaven could not give you a more affectionate one.'

The Captain, fearful that he might have mortified Richard by this reprimand, embraced him with such marked tenderness that the lad was quite moved and showed it. They entered the inn. A man in uniform came up to the Captain.

'Good morning, Sir,' said he.

'Why, can it be you, Sergeant?'

'Indeed it is, Sir; your servant, Harry Baggot.'

'I had thought you at Bath, Baggot.'

'I was going there, Sir; but I found one of my old comrades keeping an inn; he suggested I should try his cider and his beer. I am feeling much better as the result of this treatment, and if I go on doing so I shall let the waters of Bath flow down to the sea for all I care.'

'But, Baggot,' said the Captain, 'your discharge was sent to Bath. You are now free: your accounts have been cleared, your money has been forwarded to the Admiralty. You have but to apply for it. 'Tis a respectable sum, Baggot, and will put you in a position to establish yourself comfortably in whatever part of England you may choose.'

'May Heaven reward you a thousandfold!' cried Baggot, overcome with delight at so much good news. 'I understand this lady to be your daughter; may blessings shower upon you both. Ah, Miss, pardon my presumption, your father is the bravest, finest officer in the Service.'

'I am very sensible, my dear Baggot,' said the Captain, 'of these testimonies of your friendship and goodness of heart.' Then, turning to Richard: 'Daughter,' he said, 'I have no money about me; give the Sergeant something to drink my health.'

Richard looked at the Captain with an astonished air. 'But, Father, how can I give him any money, I have none?'

'You must have, Daughter,' said the Captain; 'remember the young man whom we met yesterday, and feel in your pockets.'

Richard did so: and, among certain odd feminine appurtenances which he did not know he possessed, he found a purse pretty full of gold pieces, took out a guinea and gave it to the Sergeant, who thanked him and made off. Richard, with the purse in his hand, said to the Captain:

'What shall I do with this money, Sir?'

'Do good with it, Daughter,' said he, 'and never lose a single opportunity of doing it: not one must be let slip.'

'Do you choose me, then, for your almoner?' asked Richard. 'I am honoured, and I'll do the best I can.'

Next day the Captain and his pupil left early. The day passed without incident. In the evening they stopped at a little village. An alehouse, in pretty poor order, was the only place they could find to pass the night. One room, with a bed that they had to share, was all it offered. After a light meal, Richard, being young and unused to fatigue, fell asleep at once and did not move till morning. When the sunshine fell across his bed he awoke, opened his eyes, and, not seeing Captain Sentry at his side, he drew the curtain a little and looked into the room. The Captain was not there.

A woman seated at a table, her back almost turned to the bed, in an agreeable déshabille, and wearing a peignoir, was engaged upon her toilet.

Richard, surprised at this apparition, crept to the end of the bed so as to get a view of the new guest who had come to share their apartment.

It was a woman, not in her first youth, with a distinguished air, and a complexion which, though not brilliant, was still clear and fresh. She had a quantity of beautiful jet black hair which she seemed to be arranging very carefully. As it happened, she glanced at the foot of the bed, and noticed Richard's head emerging from between the curtains. She got up and came quickly up to him.

'Well,' said she cheerfully, with a winning and affectionate smile, 'and how did my little Miss pass the night?'

Richard, with wide open eyes, stared at the lady for a while, and compared the personage before him with others he had lately seen. He thought he could recognize certain characteristics of the gipsy and the Captain, though altered greatly for the better. Her demeanour was quite different, and the movements and play of expression were no longer the same.

'Heavens, Madam!' cried he; 'can it be you?'

'What, again!' answered the lady in the dressing-gown. 'Truly, you are an obstinate little creature. To-day I am your mother, and pray not to forget it. Get up and come and help me. You must try to learn how to do all this for yourself later on.'

Richard got up, put on his skirt, and fell to assisting his mother with more goodwill than experience. The lady let him see enough without exceeding the bounds of discretion to convince him that she was a complete specimen of the sex that she had been pleased to assume for that day. As soon as her toilet was over, the lady ordered Richard to go and get the horses saddled: which he did. The keepers of the alehouse were a trifle surprised when confronted with the metamorphosis that had taken place in their house. They had no right to raise any question, for they had been well paid. They watched the ladies depart and said nothing, except to wish them a good journey.

Richard had no time to find the journey tedious. Even if his heart had not been filled with an ardent passion, his guide's behaviour and constant change of appearance, the mysterious bond between them, and the good fortune for which he was allowed to hope, would have provided matter for his meditations.

They had to keep to secluded roads; and the place at which they stopped that day to dine was, in appearance and convenience, even worse than the wretched hovel where they had passed the night.

Richard dismounted and sat down alone in a room of some size, but in a state of utter disorder. The lady had disappeared on some pretext.

Three somewhat ill-looking fellows who noticed Bekit from a small side room where they were sitting at table got up and came towards her. One of them said she was pretty; the second took her by the chin; the third made as though to fondle her with some freedom. Richard defended himself, cried out, and boxed the insolent wretch's ears. All three of them, in no way discouraged by her aversion, were attacking her once more, when the lady came in. The three men were wearing swords: the lady drew the one that came nearest to her hand and showered blows on what she called her daughter's ravishers. One of the ruffians turned to face her: she crossed swords with him and, beating his blade aside, disarmed him.

This vigorous onslaught suspended the attacks on Richard. The lady, brandishing her sword, looked like Medea in a fury. Her eyes flashed, and in a high and piercing voice she shouted words that seemed devoid of meaning; but the sound of them was dreadful. The three men, with terror stamped upon their faces, looked, listened, incontinently retreated, mounted their horses that were tethered to a fence near by, and galloped off.

The lady went out for a moment, said a few words to the keeper of the alehouse, and appeared once more with as unperturbed an air as if nothing had happened. Richard asked no questions: his guide was not, indeed, in the habit of answering them. They dined and again went forward without any explanation having been offered.

It must not, however, be thought that our two travellers always kept silence on their journey. On the contrary, as soon as the ground enabled them to approach each other, they carried on a sustained, informing, and animated conversation.

Richard was ignorant of almost all natural products. So his companion was kind enough to make known to him the methods of cultivating and improving them, and their various uses. She also described the places through which they passed; and if history had made them famous she gave a brief account of the events to which they owed their celebrity. As Richard listened he felt he was reading one of the best books he had ever read in his life.

For the last two days they had been travelling through wild country, when the lady said to her companion:

'Here we are, my dear Bekit, at the Welsh border, and we are nearly at the end of our journey. This evening I shall take you to the house of a lady who is well acquainted with your good friend Captain Sentry: remember that you are his daughter; and you must also know that I am his sister. The good Welsh lady, at whose home you are to find a refuge, has two very agreeable daughters; they will be your companions. To begin with, they will understand nothing that you say, and you will not find their conversation any more intelligible. That, as you will not fail to see, is something of an advantage: it will relieve you of many thorny questions, if you have not the time to think and put together your answers. When the ladies are able to understand you, they will ask you a great deal about their friend the Captain, about yourself, and about me. You can reply that you lost your mother very early; your father's enthusiasm for travel, or, if you like, the duties of his profession, compelled him to entrust your education to a worthy farmer of Bridgewater, by name William

Orchard, and you have seen but little of your father. You hardly know me, his sister, any better. Your answers should be brief; avoid confidences: your happiness depends on your discretion. Captain Sentry has taken care to make known our arrival: so we may expect a warm welcome. To-morrow I shall leave you: our separation will be painful to me, my dear Bekit; but I shall be continually watching over your interests. My care, however, will be all in vain if you do not take care of yourself. You may be bored in the retreat to which I am consigning you; so much the better, my dear daughter: you cannot become acquainted too early with that malady of the soul. It afflicts those in the highest places in Society, and, if one does not learn to support it, one is always unhappy, and seldom well-conducted.

'You will have one indispensable occupation, and that will be to learn the language of the country, so as to make yourself understood. You will be glad, later on, to have studied it; and as your time will hardly be fully employed, you can distract your mind by making lace. Mistress Bullcock's daughters are extremely skilful in the art, and they will teach you with pleasure. You will learn how to use your fingers and acquire a composed expression, very suitable to your sex.'

'But, Madam,' Richard interrupted, with rather a discontented air, 'you are continually speaking of me as a girl; must I keep this up for long?'

'Listen to me, Daughter,' the lady went on in an angry tone; 'a time may come when you will be deeply sorry not to be a girl any longer.'

'But, Madam . . .' Richard began.

'But, Bekit,' she replied, 'I am not "Madam". Have you forgotten that I am your aunt, and do you think your obstinacy, impatience and peevishness will make you any more worthy to preserve the sex whose appearance is all that I have taken from you. You are mine: you are what I choose that you shall become; try but to obey me in what you do and to please me by what you say.'

Richard looked at his aunt, and noticed that she wore a severe expression. Disposed as he was by inclination, habit, and instinct to respect her and defer to her wishes, he thought he had displeased her, and was alarmed. The lady, who was afraid that the reprimand had been a little too sharp, threw her arms round his neck and embraced him warmly. He returned her caresses and peace reigned once more.

At last they reached the house of Mistress Bullcock, which was the name of the Welsh lady. Faces, clothes, language and customs, all were new to Richard. The lady was greeted with much respect, and he was received as befitted the daughter of the best friend of the family. He was given a comfortable room; the mother and daughters did their utmost to make themselves agreeable, and his aunt, when she went away, gave him to understand that he would not have to complain of any neglect in his new surroundings.

On the following day Richard found himself alone in a small Welsh Society: indeed, he had already begun to look Welsh himself. One of Mistress Bullcock's daughters was about his height; he was induced to accept of the loan of some garments, and was not allowed to leave them off again.

It is natural to wish to hear what one's fellow creatures are saying and to make oneself understood by them. So we need not be astonished that Richard applied himself earnestly to learn the Welsh language. His progress was rapid; nor is this surprising, for his early studies had trained his mind and his memory. At the end of a fortnight he knew enough to ask for everything he wanted; a fortnight later he knew the names for every object in common experience, and very soon after that he could carry on an ordinary conversation. These studies, combined with his apprenticeship in lace-making, filled up part of his time, and the rest of the day was passably occupied in his own reflections and in solitary walks in the neighbourhood of the house. The nights were longer. He spent them in dreaming of Dorothy, in trying to reconcile the hopes that he had been given of one day seeing and possessing her, with the singular methods employed by his mentor. Yet, as he considered carefully what had passed, though some of his guardian's actions had seemed fantastic and confusing, those few in which he could judge the circumstances were all that was generous, wise, and noble. These conflicting thoughts inspired him with an ardent desire to see his friend once more. Mistress Bullcock and her daughters encouraged these sentiments by talking about Captain Sentry every day, and expressing their anxiety at not getting news of him. He thought he might get some information from these ladies, and inquired whether their friendship with the Captain was of long standing.

'It is more than two years, dear Miss,' answered Mistress Bullcock, 'since a friend of his and ours brought him to see us. From that day he has looked upon us almost as his family, and Wales as his native land: he has spent all his spare time in our company.'

'But,' said Richard, 'did you know that he was married?'

'I found it out by accident, five years ago,' replied Mistress Bullcock. 'A lady of the neighbourhood, a woman of striking appearance and a certain age, well endowed by fortune, widow of a Justice of the Peace, conceived a considerable inclination for him, and he seemed to look upon her with some regard. I was, in some measure, entrusted with the negotiation. The match was an excellent one, and I was surprised at your father's aversion to the proposal. I pressed him on the matter, and it was then that, under an injunction of secrecy, he admitted that he was not free, and, indeed, had a child. I did not, in fact, know, my dear young lady, whether you were a girl or a boy.'

'You knew his sister, Madam?' said Richard.

'I did not,' answered Mistress Bullcock. 'Never was there a man who spoke less of himself and his belongings than the Captain. And it is not an effect of the reserve natural to his race. We Welsh are no more frank and open than he is, but in other company he lets himself go, and does not seem to mind what he says.'

'Do you find,' Richard went on, 'any likeness between him and my aunt?'

'A great deal,' said the lady; 'she is not so dark, and her expression is more open; but if she put on her brother's fair wig, and pulled it down over her nose, she would be his living image.'

Richard, wishing to avoid exposing himself to questions that might prove embarrassing, asked no more either. Besides, he did not seem to get much farther. The obvious conclusion that he drew was that the singular being who had taken charge of his fortunes adopted the disguise of a well-known and much esteemed gentleman in order to secure his admittance to the house. 'But what am I doing here,' he thought, 'and what will be the end of all these contrivances?'

Six weeks passed in this way, when Richard and his friends were agreeably surprised at Captain Sentry's sudden reappearance. Richard did not come forward to greet him, not knowing whether it was really the Captain or not. His anxiety was soon dispelled: a friendly air, an affectionate glance, put him at his ease. The Captain, surrounded by the family, explained his silence: some troublesome business, now brought to a happy conclusion, had been the cause of it.

He had, in fact, been disposing of some very important affairs that had been placed under his direction. Hitherto he had been a wanderer over the three kingdoms, but he had now decided to settle down quietly in the county of Sussex, and had come to fetch Bekit to take her there. Mistress Bullcock reproached him affectionately for having chosen a part of the country so far away from them; but he pleaded obligations that he could not avoid and made known to the ladies his intention of departing on the morrow. The conversation was entirely in Welsh, and the Captain was very glad to notice Richard's attention and eager expression.

Next day they bade farewell with every sign of mutual affection. As they proceeded on their way, Richard rode behind the Captain, and observed his graceful horsemanship and his air of soldierly alertness.

'What may you be thinking of, Daughter?' asked the Captain in the Welsh language.

'Have you forgotten your English, Captain?' answered Richard.

'No,' said the Captain, 'but you would do well to forget it. Besides, I can be plain Captain Sentry to all those who know me; but surely you and I, Daughter, owe each other rather a more affectionate address?'

'I beg your pardon,' said Richard; 'we change our relationship so often, that when I speak to you I forget whether I ought to address my father or my aunt.'

'Soon,' said the Captain, 'I shall put an end to your bewilderment. You will see me thus until the moment when you yourself become another being. Then I shall appear before you as I really am. I hope you will so conduct yourself that these metamorphoses may bring good fortune to us both.'

PART II

Our travellers reached the county of Sussex without any notable adventures. They arrived at a considerable village called Corntree, at the gates of a castle of some importance, opposite which the Captain had taken a small house of modest appearance and simply but appropriately furnished. The domestic staff was composed of a short buxom wench, and that was all. Captain Sentry sent away the horses forthwith, and the little household began to settle down.

Next day, when Richard awoke, he found beside his bed an entire new Welsh costume, and as he was looking at it the Captain came in.

'My dear Bekit,' said he, 'here you shall be a Welsh girl, all complete. Your talk is still too full of English words and phrases, and would betray you; but this attire will make the illusion perfect. I will help you to arrange your bodice, and fit the coif over your eyes and ears. Your face will be as attractive as ever; and your figure will lose none of its elegance: you will look perfectly charming, my dear Bekit. You need no longer trouble to affect fatigue: you must get into the habit of rising early. I appoint you stewardess of my little establishment: the serving maid awaits your orders, and mind you speak Welsh; if you let fall a single English word, I'll take you back to Wales and you won't see me for six months. Your Welsh is far from perfect, and the maid will find it difficult to guess your meaning. And, anyhow, I will translate for you.'

Richard, who was a novice in his new employment, proved rather an incompetent housekeeper at first. But in the last two months he had learned to adapt himself to anything, and when he had mastered the details of his duties, he divided his leisure between his domestic avocations and lacemaking.

The Captain went out and came back at stated hours. When he came in he greeted Richard with an affection that seemed always fresh, and left him with just as marked regret. Indeed, his attentions were almost excessive. His temper was always even, but he did not like to be contradicted. If his pupil asked him questions he replied with infinite patience and kindness to all those which did not pass the limits imposed on the young man's curiosity; he was quite willing to speak of Miss Dorothy, and never did so without giving cheerful news of her, and took a pleasure in encouraging the lad's sweet hopes of seeing her once more. If he was questioned on the constitutions, manners, and customs of the different States in Europe, he would give the most satisfactory and comprehensive answers. His ideas were precise, his definitions pointed, and his distinctions clearly marked; but sometimes, either from curiosity or to embarrass his teacher, the pupil would try to turn the conversation to the abstract sciences and the mysteries of Nature.

'Do not tempt me, Bekit,' said the Captain, in a serious tone. 'Even were I acquainted with all truths, which is beyond the compass of a finite being, I would not reveal to you even those which you will one day learn. Study: wring Nature's secrets from her if you can: 'tis the only way to become wise and prudent. You can never become learned: indeed, too much learning would very likely be dangerous to you.'

After these moral reflections, the Captain abandoned his severe tone, and dropped once again into the tone of familiar badinage that was customary with him.

One morning he came back rather early before dinner.

'Bekit,' said he to Richard, 'we must double our usual provision. A friend of mine is coming to dine with us: you will help me to do the honours. 'Tis the Rector of the parish, a most worthy gentleman. He will find some difficulty in understanding your Welsh, but I will act as interpreter: he himself speaks English as well as you or I; you won't lose anything he says. He may astonish you a good deal, Bekit, but you must command yourself; and mind how you behave and move about. I shall judge from your bearing how far I can in the future rely on your good sense. Above all, be careful to show a little more warmth towards me. You come from Wales: the Welsh respect their parents, but love them even more.'

After this brief instruction, Bekit, prepared for a surprise, went to give the necessary orders, and the minister arrived at the hour of dinner. His name was Master Jackmann; he was some fifty years of age, of a pleasant appearance and some slight powers of mind, but above all an honest fellow and a good clergyman. He had a considerable appetite, and spoke but little during the meal, though from time to time he managed to glance at Bekit. She cast down her eyes, which were already shaded by her Welsh coif; but he admired their beauty, and told the Captain so; finally he asked the young lady whether it was from attachment to the costume of her native country that she did not dress in the English manner. Bekit thought she ought to reply that it was more to please her father's taste than herself. She answered in Welsh, but there was enough English in the reply to make her meaning pretty clear to the clergyman.

'Bekit is deceiving you, my dear Rector,' said the Captain. 'She will give up the fashions of her country as soon as she can speak English properly.'

Bekit did not reply, and the conversation turned upon other matters.

'You have done well, Captain,' said Master Jackmann, 'to come and settle in this village. The situation is charming, the air is healthy, the soil productive, and the people kindly. You could hardly find a better place in all England in which to dispose of your half-pay to more advantage. The local lady of importance, Mistress Brown, widow of a distinguished personage, is in every way a most respectable woman. I will introduce you to her. We have already spoken of you; indeed, she asked me to offer you her excuses for not having yet been able to pay you a visit; but she has been indisposed for the last few days. Besides, she lives a very retired life, and almost the only company she sees is her niece, Miss Dorothy Nettling, whom the consequences of a somewhat absurd adventure have forced to take refuge with her aunt. You must have heard of it, Captain: the affair made a great stir.'

'No,' said the Captain; 'I know very little of what goes on in the country.'

'Well, I must tell you about this,' said Master Jackmann. 'It was so very odd. I had it from Mistress Brown, who saw it with her own eyes.

'Milady Nettling had a footman who was as handsome as Adonis and had a ravishing voice. The footman and Miss Dorothy sang and played together every day, and they seemed to have come to something of an understanding. Sir George thought he had surprised the footman offering a violence to his daughter. He drew his sword, made a dreadful disturbance, and ordered all the servants to pursue the ravisher on horseback, for he, it appears, had escaped. A great nobleman who had come specially from London to marry Miss Dorothy returned thither without more ado. The poor young lady lost her reputation, and, would you believe it, Sir?—the gallant footman, the ravisher, was—(here he pointed to Bekit) as dangerous as that young Miss—it was a girl!'

'A girl!' said the Captain. 'Is there any proof of this? Did you not say he ran away?'

'Proofs?' said the clergyman; 'a thousand; and as clear as daylight. Mistress Brown herself saw them, and had them in her hands: the family, the servants, all the country people of the neighbourhood are convinced of it. She was the daughter of Tom Cawsson, a rich country gentleman in Kent. He came to fetch her and took her home—'twas a maid, I do assure you; and still is one unless she has married. Miss Dorothy's reputation is entirely restored, and every one blamed the Baronet for his violent and hasty behaviour.'

'Very odd indeed,' said the Captain.

''Tis enough to make me die of laughing,' said the clergyman. 'But Miss Bekit does not laugh; perhaps she does not understand me?'

'Not quite,' said the Captain, 'but I'll explain what happened, and then she will laugh too.'

Whereupon the clergyman, having finished a bottle of excellent wine, got up and took his leave.

Richard sat gaping and stupefied.

'What!' he said in English, as soon as he found himself alone with the Captain. 'Dorothy at Corntree! And she thinks me a girl—proofs clearer than daylight! 'Tis you, Sir, who has played me this trick: you have bribed some impostor . . .!'

'Gently, gently, Bekit,' said the Captain; 'you must not abuse me; and you are forgetting your Welsh and my name. Up till now I have been wiser than you; why do you doubt me now? Your mistress is at Corntree: you are but a few yards away from her, you breathe the same air as she does, and you complain! Her reputation was compromised, perhaps lost; she had quarrelled with her entire family and, for love of you, had exposed herself to the bitterest distress. With one stroke of my wand I changed the scene. I put the scoffers on her side, and I made the ridicule fall on those who deserved it more than she did. I have even taken vengeance on Lord Scarecrew: he is mortally sorry to-day that he gave her up so lightly.'

'She thinks me a girl?' persisted Richard.

'I have only,' went on the Captain, 'deceived those whom it was in our interest to deceive. Even supposing she thought so, she would not be entirely unreasonable: your impatience and your petulance might well seem proofs of it. Remember that I can just as easily turn you into my daughter as myself into your father. This would be a severe penalty, and you will not push me to this extremity. I hope to find you more tractable, and to be proud of you and make you happy. You must not distress yourself when I am watching over your interests. Sit down to your lace and finish the piece you are making. I am going out, and when I return do not let me see any trace of this ill-humour.'

The Captain went out forthwith. Richard took up his work without knowing what he was doing, or what he had to hope or fear.

The clergyman had been delighted with everything in the Captain's house—his manners, his table, his wine, and especially Bekit's lovely eyes. All these attractions made him greatly attached to the little household, where he became a constant visitor: and, with a view to making himself useful and interesting, if that were possible, he suggested teaching English to the young Welsh girl. The Captain conveyed these proposals in all seriousness to his young charge; but he protested, pointing out that such studies would be futile, as he knew English better than his pretended teacher.

'Never mind, my dear Bekit,' said the Captain; 'learn it all the same: in this world, if one does not want to offend people, one is constantly in the position of allowing oneself to be taught what one already knows by people who know nothing about it.'

Richard, who did not dare to refuse, thus became, quite against his will, the clergyman's pupil. The lessons were long and wearisome, for he had to simulate complete ignorance. However, his master was easily deceived. If Richard, by mischance, pronounced a word too correctly for a beginner, his teacher regarded this slip in his pupil's performance as a mark of rapid progress, and attributed at least half this success to his own endeavours. He grew more and more enthusiastic in his task, and would have become intolerable unless he had often talked about the people at the Castle. For several days the news had been of no particular importance; but one morning he brought some intelligence which was like to have plunged Richard in despair.

Sir Archibald Hottwel, a Knight-Baronet of great wealth, and an old friend of Mistress Brown, returned from his travels. He was a man of good family and a most agreeable gentleman, and he was in love with Miss Dorothy. The aunt was openly in favour of his suit; and the two families united in encouraging an alliance so favourable to them both.

Richard, much disconcerted by this information, might have betrayed himself by a sudden exclamation had not the Captain reassured him with a look. The clergyman took himself off, and thus gave an opportunity for explanations.

'Here is the end of my hopes,' said Richard. 'I shall have lent myself to this ridiculous masquerade only to witness her marriage. And after all, who am I to claim the heart of a rich and charming lady in the face of a suitor so endowed by Nature and by fortune?'

'You are a restless little Welsh girl,' said the Captain; 'never satisfied, and always ready to rush to conclusions. A projected marriage is not a wedding. If it were, I ought to call you Mistress Jackmann, for my friend the Rector has made me a proposal for your hand. He offers (with himself) a private fortune of one hundred pounds sterling per annum, his stipend of two hundred pounds per annum, and the jewels, wardrobe, and all effects belonging to the late Mistress Jackmann. Mistress Brown, Miss Dorothy, indeed everybody, favours the alliance, and you almost make me wish it could take place. But I suppose you don't regard yourself as married?'

'Jackmann marry me! Me! And you encourage him in this idea?'

'I don't flatter his hopes,' said the Captain; 'but I don't let him despair. I am a good father, and would not force your inclinations . . .'

'But,' said Richard, 'do you seriously suggest I should marry the reverend gentleman?'

'I suggest,' said the Captain, 'that you do nothing in a hurry, and behave with courtesy to people whose intentions do you so much honour. Master Jackmann is preaching tomorrow, and has invited us to come and hear him: we owe him this mark of attention.'

The time for the sermon arrived. Master Jackmann came to fetch Bekit and her father, so as to find them, as he said, the best places he could. They stopped at the door of a chapel and went in. Richard was given a seat: he was, unknown to himself, within the precincts of the Castle. He raised his eyes: whom should he see but—Miss Dorothy, in a pew immediately opposite. She looked as lovely as an angel. A gentleman, of remarkably prepossessing appearance, was sitting behind her and talking to her. Our Welsh girl was mightily cast down by this unexpected sight. What were the passions roused in her soul! Love, jealousy, the fear of being recognized. The Captain, who noticed everything, pressed her hand, whispered in her ear, and bade her take courage. The service had begun: the ladies were at their prayers, and Richard had time to recover himself before becoming the object of their interest; but he could not evade the ogling looks of Sir Archibald. This gentleman took advantage of an interval between the service and the sermon to whisper in the ladies' ears and point out the Welsh girl, and soon the whole pew was looking in her direction.

What was merely an odd coincidence to Mistress Brown was a surprise and even a shock to Dorothy. Thinking herself unobserved, she kept her eyes on Richard. Far from suspecting that it could be Richard himself, she could not get rid of her astonishment at so perfect a resemblance: and Master Jackmann continued to deliver himself of his homily without any further attention from her. Richard, still ogled by Sir Archibald, observed with much attention by Dorothy, and not unnoticed by Molly, had not raised his eyes. The Captain bore a cold and abstracted expression as if he knew and saw nothing, and took no part in what was going forward, and he made ready to return home. Master Jackmann, followed by one of the servants of the Castle, came to invite him to dinner on the ladies' behalf. The Captain accepted, and Richard was drawn into the party: he found himself sitting opposite Miss Dorothy without having time to reflect on the embarrassment of such an adventure. He had gone into it (as they say) with his eyes shut.

Mistress Brown gave him and the Captain the warmest of welcomes. They all looked at the Welsh costume and praised its neatness and style, and they complimented 'her' on 'her' appearance. Miss Dorothy said not a word, and looked at 'her' eagerly, surprised to find so much and so little difference. The Welsh coif, drawn down over the eyes and ears, changed the cast of his face, and, to some extent, his features. His figure and movements were no longer the same: in fact, the *tout-ensemble* did indeed faithfully present a young, diffident maid from Wales, daughter of a retired officer, and asked in marriage by Master Jackmann; but, at the same time, uncommonly like Richard.

Dinner was served. Richard, who was seated opposite Sir Archibald and Dorothy, could not raise his eyes without observing that theirs were firmly fixed on him. The Baronet often spoke to the young Miss, and at times there was a suspicion of gallantry about his demeanour. Dorothy, though she looked somewhat abstracted, answered him kindly and politely. Every word of their conversation was a dagger thrust in our Welsh girl's heart: she thought that Mistress Brown already looked upon the gentleman as her nephew, and her niece seemed to treat him as her lover. He was stung by bitterness and jealousy; but fortunately his usual expression was not well enough known for the disorder of his countenance to be observed. The attention of the company was soon drawn in another direction: taking advantage of some question put to him by Sir Archibald, the Captain was narrating a somewhat extraordinary occurrence which he had witnessed. His story was lively, clear, amusing, and instructive; every one listened except Dorothy, who remained absorbed in Richard's appearance and attitude, and he had time to breathe and move himself.

When dinner was over, the time came to depart. Mistress Brown expressed to the Captain her satisfaction at having made his acquaintance and that of his daughter; she and Dorothy embraced Bekit, and the guests took their leave.

The young lady was greatly disturbed by the Welsh girl's departure; her emotions were confused; something more than a growing inclination spoke in favour of her new acquaintance; besides, it is hard to part with the portrait of the adored one. As for Richard, he was quite beside himself. The imprint of the kiss he had from Dorothy had passed into his heart: it was still impressed in fire upon his lips; he was, in fact, completely distraught. Master Jackmann and the Captain took his arms and brought him, nay, almost carried him, home. The worthy Rector congratulated his friend on the prodigious success of his visit to the Castle: everybody had been charmed, and Sir Archibald declared quite plainly that he would spare no efforts to gain his friendship, if that were possible.

After these remarks of the worthy Rector, it will not be a matter for surprise that the closest intimacy grew up between the two houses. Sir Archibald was most assiduous in his advances to the Captain: Mistress Brown and Dorothy were most punctilious in waiting upon his supposed daughter, and Bekit became their daily companion; but she was never in a good humour when she returned home.

'I cannot understand you, Daughter,' said the Captain; 'you enjoy the presence, the conversation, and the intimate acquaintance of the object of your affections, and you are not happy.'

'I was excessively in love,' answered Richard, 'and you have made me madly so. All I see ravishes and entrances me, and I am in despair: I can never be happy.'

'Never?' queried the Captain.

'Never,' repeated Richard. 'Or, if I may yet be so, if you wish to spare me torture, get rid of Sir Archibald.'

'If you do not want him as a rival,' said the Captain, 'you must take him as a lover.'

'A lover! I!' cried Richard. 'What new absurdity is this?'

'Absurd or not,' said the Captain, 'you must have patience, or you will make me lose mine.'

This brief encounter over, the Captain went out and left Bekit alone, which he had not done for some time. He was usually much at home, and faithfully kept her company.

Not a quarter of an hour had passed when Sir Archibald came in. Surprised to find neither Master Jackmann nor the Captain, he eagerly addressed Bekit:

'What is this, my dear? Have your indefatigable guardians abandoned you? Marvellous indeed!'

Bekit tried to explain that the Captain was very fond of her and most reluctant to leave her.

'Not a bit of it, my little angel,' said the Baronet, 'he does not love you as much as all that. He is a widower and still young: you must be in his way, and in order to live at his ease, he proposes that you should become housekeeper and nurse to an old village parson, and he hangs about you so continually from fear that a friend may enlighten you on the consequences of so absurd and unsuitable a union.'

Bekit stared at the handsome Baronet, wondering what would be the outcome of so singular an exordium. Sir Archibald, observing that she was listening to him, followed up his point.

'How I have longed,' said he, 'for the moment when I could speak to you alone! I cannot look upon you unmoved, Bekit: you must have noticed this the very first day I saw you. But we have always been observed: I have had to restrain myself; never has a man loved more ardently and passionately than I love you.'

While making this chivalrous declaration, the Baronet had seized one of her hands and kissed it. Bekit withdrew it.

'You mistake, Sir Archibald,' said he; 'you think you are in Miss Dorothy's company.'

'Indeed I am not mistaken, my lovely Bekit,' replied the Baronet warmly. 'Dorothy has many excellent qualities: our parents are anxious we should marry, and I have no objection to the alliance. But what a difference between my esteem for her and my passion for you! I adore you, my dear Bekit: I cannot live without you; I would give up my fortune and my life for you; but let me rescue you from this ill-assorted marriage, this mean and penurious existence, this wretched little village. London awaits you: come and share my fortune, and fulfil your destiny and mine.'

Sir Archibald, carried away by his passion, had fallen at Richard's knees and was embracing them, not without attempting a few trifling familiarities. He found himself kept at a distance by a pair of plump but powerful arms. However, a noise was heard without, and the Baronet resumed a more correct attitude. Master Jackmann came in; soon after him came the Captain, and found the Welsh girl standing with rather a heightened colour between her two admirers. She waited until the company had gone before expressing her indignation. When she saw she was alone with the Captain:

'Very well, Sir,' said she, 'you told me this would happen, and you have kept your word. Sir Archibald has gone the way of Master Jackmann. I do not ascribe these fantastic passions to the effects of my own poor charms: yours are much more efficacious. All this may be useful to you, and to me: I should like to believe it, but these people have lavished their goodwill upon you. Hitherto the regard they have shown you on every occasion has been the measure of the consideration and tolerance that I have shown them. Master Jackmann bores me to death: I never liked Sir Archibald; now I look upon him as your dupe, and I am sorry for him. How must I behave to them? Do you foresee any end to my embarrassment and their madness?'

'Really, really, my dear Bekit, you are positively scolding me,' said the Captain with a twinkle; 'I thought I had done more to deserve your confidence and your regard, and that you would be less distressed at what is going on around us, whether I took any part in it or not; but your feelings make you difficult to control. You would try the patience of any other than myself; but mine is equal to my affection for you and, consequently, has no limits. Hitherto I have given you nothing to complain of: can you not follow my advice a little longer? Are you disturbed by what you see? Suspend judgement as regards myself and all the rest, and let me proceed with my schemes without hindering me.'

'But,' said Richard, 'how am I to behave to these singular suitors that you have provided for me?'

'Blow neither hot nor cold,' replied the Captain; 'they'll run after you surely, but they won't go very far.'

Richard resigned himself once again. He saw Sir Archibald every day in the Captain's house and at the Castle; but as he was never alone with him, he got off with a few languishing glances from the Baronet or a tender pressure of the hand when it was time to go. This was not much, but one day he found the following letter in his lace-basket.

To the lovely Miss Bekit.

We are at the crisis of our fate. I have lately heard the Captain, Mistress Brown, and Jackmann speaking of your marriage, which is to be decided within a week. Oh, my angel! will you allow yourself to be sacrificed to this ancient parson? No one considers you; why should you consider them and risk a life's unhappiness? Be advised, my dear Bekit: consult your own heart and your lover. Dismiss these mercenary, low, and selfish schemes: you have me and my fortune at your feet. Your discreet behaviour to me makes me think I am not indifferent *to you. Oh, how ravishing a life, what a round of pleasures awaits us! A carriage shall be at your door any evening that you may appoint, and will drive you to London. There you will find a comfortable little establishment, and an agreeable and friendly society ready to receive you, and relieve the tedium of your solitude during the few days that my affairs, and the necessity of concealing our understanding, force me to remain here. How I shall suffer, my dear Bekit, during the short interval before the consummation of our pleasure! How delighted I shall be to rejoin you! Indeed, I am grateful to your kindness in concealing my passion from the Captain. Do not plunge me in despair, my dear Bekit: let one look, one touch of your hand, make known to me that you are not indifferent to this affection and the proposals of your adorer*

Archibald Hottwel.

'Take it, Sir,' said Richard, handing the letter to the Captain; 'shall I marry Jackmann? Or shall I consent to be abducted?'

'These are rather extreme measures,' said the Captain, 'and I think we can make some rather more advantageous arrangement for you.'

So saying, he coldly put Sir Archibald's letter in his pocket: a moment later he took it out and tore it up.

'I have just received,' he continued, 'letters from the county of Cornwall, and I am consequently obliged to make some trifling arrangements which will affect you. I am now going out, and I shall be able to tell you, when I come back, whether I have succeeded.'

Richard remained alone, thinking about the letter and Sir Archibald's plans, and the cold and abstracted air with which the Captain listened to all these matters.

He soon began to reason with himself. 'He compels a young man to fall in love with me,' he thought, 'by methods that are not in nature: can he not excuse the extravagances of a passion for which he is responsible? He has received letters from Cornwall and he has to make some arrangements about this which will affect me.—What have I to do with the county of Cornwall?—The farther I go the less I understand this man's intentions—Man, do I say? Don't I know that he turns into a woman when he likes? Do I know what he is? He keeps me in this fantastic disguise, makes me behave in this ridiculous way, so that every one else has to do likewise, and I begin to forget who I am. And yet I like him. Even when I feel disposed to resist, something forces me to give way: he has gained such ascendancy over me that I cannot even understand the nature of this compulsion; it is not unpleasant: it seems to draw its strength from my heart. Resistance is impossible, compliance easy; nor am I ever sorry for what I have done. My mind seems at rest as if I had but done my duty. Indeed, I am at a loss: I'm under a spell like Jackmann, like Archibald, like all those that happen to . . .'

The Captain, who came in at this moment, put an end to this soliloquy.

'My dear Bekit,' said he, 'my affairs compel me to be away for a few days. I should have had to leave you alone in the house and leave you to the tender mercies of a servant. So I consulted Master Jackmann, and we have made arrangements which, I make no doubt, you will find more agreeable: you will spend the time of my absence at the Castle, and you will keep Miss Dorothy company.'

'Miss Dorothy!' said Richard eagerly; 'and shall I see Sir Archibald all the time?'

'I suppose I shall have to get him turned out,' said the Captain reflectively. 'Very well, Bekit,' said he after a moment's silence, 'you force me to do very singular things. You will not see Sir Archibald again; forget the part you played in his adventure, and do not even mention his name. But, in return for this little indulgence, I think I may expect you to be guided by my advice. 'Tis a mighty delicate ordeal that is before you. Can you endure from morning to night the sight and perhaps the caresses of the being whom you love, without betraying your secret? And yet your happiness hangs on this. If you are discovered, Dorothy is compromised, my honour will be suspect, you will be betrayed, and your only prospect for the future will be an obscure retreat in Wales. If you forget that you are not a girl, and can find it in your heart to abuse the intimacies in which your disguise will involve you, then—you know that I am not without power. Vengeance will soon be upon you, and you will pay for your transgressions by the most humiliating change in your condition.'

The Captain had no time to enlarge upon his instructions. Master Jackmann came, on the ladies' behalf, to carry off Bekit.

The Captain had taken his leave; nor did the 'Welsh maid' find Sir Archibald at the Castle. Richard kept Miss Dorothy company, spent the days with her, and the nights in a small chamber adjoining the young lady's, in which Molly was already accommodated. He was petted and caressed, and his most trifling fancies satisfied. His was a mightily pleasant case, but it was nearly upset on the very day after the Captain's departure. It was suggested that Richard should dress in the English manner: he could not fail to look charming. The idea was welcomed with enthusiasm, and the wardrobe ransacked. Richard vainly tried to object: they thought he was merely being obstinate and paid no attention. Molly had already laid her hand on the Welsh head-dress, and was on the point of pulling it off. The young man, seeing that he was on the verge of being discovered, lost his head and fainted away. They were about to cut the laces of his dress and take most of his clothes off, when, by good fortune, Master Jackmann appeared, and saw his poor Bekit stretched upon the floor. They told him what had happened, and he picked him up in his arms and scolded everybody. His rescuer's sonorous voice brought Richard to his senses, and he swallowed a proffered glass of water. The swoon was over; no more was said of the English dresses, and the ladies gave up their scheme.

Miss Dorothy said to her aunt:

'How can Master Jackmann, at his age, think of marrying a little savage? For that is what she is: she is pretty, but she has no sense.'

'Miss Cawsson and she are as like as two peas, but only in face,' said Molly.

Molly's words brought a blush to Miss Dorothy's cheeks, but no one noticed it.

For his part, Richard was well aware of the bad impression he had made by his ill-humour; but he was quite willing to let anyone say what they liked about his Welsh character, provided he could avoid the kind of adventure from which Master Jackmann had just rescued him. Miss Dorothy forgave his prejudices and his awkward ways, showed him her usual kindness, and spent whole mornings in his company. She sang the airs which he had taught her at Clostern, gazed at him in the most intimate and affectionate manner, and if Richard seemed not to look at her, she tossed her head. A moment later she would take up a book. She used to read French aloud in the morning so as to perfect her pronunciation of that language. As she read, she would cast her eyes on the 'Welsh maid', and say in French in the same tone in which she would be reading her book:

'Poor Richard! These are your features, but this is not your soul—I hear nothing more of that worthy clergyman who came to Clostern to tell me about you, my dear Miss Cawsson: always Richard to me; how delighted I was when he told me your innocent ruse, your discreet concern for my reputation! How relieved I was to hear that your birth did not disgrace my own, and that I could give way to my feelings without a blush! "His fortune," he added, "is the only obstacle; and perhaps . . ." Where can the excellent creature be? He promised to come back. If he realized my affection, my impatience, my anxiety and my alarm—Ah, Richard, my dear Richard! I would prefer a cottage in your company to all the rank and honours with which they long to tempt me. Indeed, I shall never love another. I swear it before this image that is so like you: I shall love until my last breath.'

Then she stopped a moment, and continued eagerly, still speaking French:

'That stupid Welsh girl looks at me with Richard's eyes: she will drive me mad.'

And this little display of feeling brought the tears to her eyes.

The reader may conceive Richard's state of mind. Imagine his astonishment, delight, and emotion! Who was this kind clergyman, who said he had been sent to Clostern on his behalf, and was conversant with a mystery that he himself could not understand? What! His mistress, thinking only of him, preferring him to all men, and distracted with such cruel anxiety on his account! What were his efforts to avoid betraying himself by throwing himself at the feet of so adored and adorable a creature! His was an extremely affectionate, grateful, and passionate nature, and his concealment made him suffer, as may be imagined, exquisitely; but he was able to master his feelings until he saw his Dorothy burst into tears. Then, for a moment, his self-control gave way; he flung away his lace-basket, jumped up with blazing eyes and open arms. He was about to speak. At that moment, the Captain's threat came into his mind and stirred his imagination. He remembered that he would lose Dorothy for ever. The detestable skirt he was wearing seemed to have taken root upon his person. He fell back into his seat.

'What is the matter?' said he, in his mixture of Welsh and English, in a strained and tremulous tone. 'My dearest Miss, you seem to be weeping.'

''Tis nothing, Bekit,' answered Dorothy, a little confused, and too preoccupied to have noticed the 'Welsh maid's' confusion. 'I was reading a French novel: it upset me, and would have the same effect on you, if you could read it.'

So saying, Dorothy went and shut herself up in her room, no doubt so that her tears should not be seen, and annoyed with herself at having displayed so much emotion before a stranger who, in spite of her want of experience and intelligence, might well partly understand her trouble.

For his part, Richard, on being left alone, gave way to his agreeable sensations of loving and being loved. He had made her shed tears: he would have shed his blood, given his life, to quench them; but his fears of dispelling hopes so precious to both of them forced him to keep his secret. None the less, he was afraid of yet more severe ordeals; he longed for, though he dreaded, the repetition of a scene that had plunged him in delight, though it tore his heart as well; but fortunately he was not to be exposed to such a risk. Miss declined to compromise herself again, and the Captain came back from the county of Cornwall. He inquired about his daughter's behaviour, and had reason to be satisfied with what he was told. He thanked the ladies for all their kindness to Bekit, and took her back to his little house.

'All goes well, Bekit. Jackmann is coming to-day; we will urge him to take this house, and then depart for Cornwall, where important business calls us.'

'Am I not to see Dorothy again?' asked Richard.

'To-morrow,' replied the Captain, 'you are to dress as a young gentleman once more. Do you feel inclined to present yourself, so dressed, at the Castle?'

'I shall be dressed as a man to-morrow?' asked Richard.

'You will be sorry for it,' said the Captain; 'as I said you would be. You must acknowledge my skill, and try to show a little more confidence in me.'

'I have never been lacking in that, my dear Father,' replied Richard affectionately, 'and after all your kindness I find I can trust you entirely.'

'We shall see, Bekit,' said the Captain. 'You think you can trust yourself; but I know you, and I am afraid for you: your hesitations are not yet past.'

But Richard believed that his trials were over. In the highest spirits he accompanied his father to the Castle, and said good-bye to the ladies and to Master Jackmann. The Captain was keeping his house at Corntree, and as he announced that he should only be away for a few weeks at the outside, the hope of meeting again very soon made the idea of separation endurable.

Next day, the Captain woke Richard before it was light, and made him put on a plain suit of man's clothes, in accordance with what he had said the day before. A comfortable carriage for two drew up at the door, the post-horses were put in, and they started.

Until they reached the borders of the county of Cornwall Richard saw nothing new in his situation, except that the Captain invariably addressed him as Richard, and 'my son'. But the moment they arrived in Cornwall the conversation took a turn as serious as it was singular.

'Hitherto, my dear son,' said the Captain to the young man, 'I have not been able to think of providing for your future and your position in life. We must now give our considered attention to the choice before you. You are a man: you have a duty to Society, and you must play a part in it. Reflect upon your disposition and your tastes. I would not put any pressure on your inclinations or your feelings; make up your mind, Richard; I can open the door for you to all the professions you can think of; all you must do is to make your choice and keep to it like a man of honour. But you do not answer me, Richard. Can you doubt my affection, my regard for you? Try to believe me, my son, and make your choice.'

In spite of himself, Richard again began to feel doubts of his companion, though he thought it better not to let this be seen.

'I scarcely know who or what I am,' he answered; 'and since I hardly know the various walks of life by their proper names, how can I compare their disadvantages and duties with my resources and my needs?'

The Captain undertook to help him in his choice. They passed all the professions in review: the less they seemed suited to Dorothy's husband, the less Richard liked them. The young man naturally referred everything to this standard, even though he did not take the conversation seriously. How could a young lady, as rich as she was charming, become the partner of a merchant, a plain country gentleman, a minister of the Church, a magistrate, or a junior officer? Nothing seemed suitable.

'None the less, my boy,' said the Captain, 'you must decide: you must take up something. The professions I have put before you are not, I know, distinguished; but I should have gladly seen you adopt one of them. Happiness does not depend upon one's station in life; but perhaps you have more exalted ambitions? Would you like to be a member of the House of Peers? An English Lord?'

'You insult my insignificance by this miserable badinage,' Richard answered; 'my views must be much more modest.'

'Nothing of the kind,' said the Captain; 'when I gave you the liberty of choice, I laid down no limits. Be frank: would you like to be a Lord, Richard?'

'Just as you please,' said the young man impatiently, and wishing to bring the joke to an end. 'I should like to be a Lord, a Peer: and now where is my Castle?'

'Your Castle?' said the Captain; 'bid the coachman pull up. You may see several from the top of the hill on which we stand. Choose. That Castle seems loftier and more important than the rest. Will that suit you?'

'Yes,' said Richard, wondering what it was all about.

'Very well,' said the Captain. 'I embrace you, Milord Earl of Westfield. Deign to bestow your favour on Captain Sentry, who will henceforth have the honour to call himself your tutor. Postilion, drive straight to Westfield Castle.'

The postilion obeyed, and the chaise bounded forward. Richard thought that his guide, his one-time father, mother, aunt, and lately tutor, had taken leave of his senses—or else that he himself was dreaming.

They drove into the courtyard of the Castle. Footmen in full livery hurried up to hand the Captain from his carriage, but he politely waved them aside.

'See to Milord,' said he, indicating his travelling companion.

And the servants took respectful charge of Richard, almost lifting him from the carriage, and depositing him on the flight of steps leading up to the vestibule of the Castle. His tutor then took his hand and led him through a succession of superb salons, among crowds of persons who bowed as they passed. They entered a small cabinet, in which a man in plain dress was seated. When he saw them he got up and came towards them. The Captain whispered a few words in his ear, and the man immediately opened a door, and went out of the room, shutting it behind him.

Richard stared about him with an almost idiotic astonishment. All at once a noise was heard without; the same door was flung wide open, and an imposing personage, almost fifty years old, came into the room. The Order of the Garter blazed in embroidered splendour on his coat. He greeted the Captain affectionately, looked at Richard for a while, and then embraced him with a gratified air.

'Bravo, Sentry,' said he. 'I am well pleased, and you will have reason to be so likewise. Our friends are here; take his Lordship to his room, he must be in need of rest. He must make a careful toilet, for I want him to appear to advantage. He must not mind my treating him so unceremoniously. I leave him in your hands: we shall meet again at dinner.'

Richard followed his tutor in silence. He was led to a very handsome room, where two valets took charge of him and undressed him. They made him put on a Dutch satin dressing-gown; they then placed a bath robe round his shoulders and curled his hair. His travelling clothes were replaced by a scarlet coat, lightly but gaily embroidered with gold lace, and he was ready.

While his toilet was going on, the Captain, seated at a window, was quietly reading a volume that he had picked up. Richard, in his magnificent apparel, complete to the last detail, stood before a glass without recognizing, indeed almost without seeing, himself.

'Well, Milord,' said the Captain, 'and how does your Lordship? Surely this fortunate change in your circumstances is not displeasing to you?'

'I am quite sure I am asleep,' said Richard. ''Tis all a dream, or you have surrounded me with visions. And what is your part in all this?'

'These are no visions, Milord, nor dreams,' answered the Captain, 'and your tutor does not mind what you may think of him to-day. However, he advises you to get rid of that air of astonishment which partly disguises your natural advantages. You are to appear in the great world. Make an effort; show a little confidence without losing your modesty, and before you are called on to give more searching proofs of your character, show yourself worthy, by the honourable assurance of your demeanour, of the rank in which your own choice has placed you.'

The Captain was interrupted by a servant who came to inform his Lordship that he was awaited at dinner. The Captain took him cheerfully by the hand and conducted him to the dining-room. The nobleman to whom the Captain had already presented Richard was in the room. He came to meet his new guest, and, with the most courteous air, placed him at his side. Two gentlemen of quality, each about thirty years of age, and Captain Sentry, made up the entire company. Nothing of any interest was said during dinner. When the cover had been removed, and the servants had retired, the nobleman at whose side Richard was seated took him by the hand, and observed to the two gentlemen seated opposite him:

'My Lords, I suggested that you should assume the name and arms of my house; but you would not. It may be that you thought that my ancestors and I have done it too little honour to make its re-establishment worth while. I was very anxious to persuade you; but you thought it beneath your dignity to give way, and I insisted no more. Here is a more venturesome young gentleman. He is willing, when I am gone, to see that this old Castle does not fall to ruin, and to continue in this county the humble and lowly race of the Earls of Westfield.'

This discourse seemed to confuse those to whom it was addressed. They looked at Richard with eyes of astonishment; and he, more flushed than his wont, looked as handsome as Adonis.

'You do not answer,' said the old Lord to the others; 'surely you know me. You are thinking of yourselves, and you care for nothing that does not concern you. Do you find it extraordinary that I too should consider my own interests?'

'But, Milord,' said one of the young gentlemen, 'you may not give away your children's inheritance at will: a name like yours, which is some concern of ours as well, is not to be assumed by the first comer.'

'First comer or no,' said the Lord, 'I like him, I adopt him, and I do not care whether you approve my choice. Still, I have a proposal to make to you. I do not want to do anything unjust, or to offend my relations. My private fortune, as I fancy you are well aware, is considerable; it is at my disposal, and I shall make it over to this young man if you disapprove my plan.'

At this proposal the young Lords ejaculated almost in unison:

'Milord may do as he wills. He is believed to be prudent and careful of his honour: no one will make objections . . .'

'I want more of you than that, Milords,' interrupted the old gentleman; 'I have none but you to attend to my business. I need influence at Court, but I don't want to make any acquaintances there. We will go into my cabinet, and I will give you papers and instructions necessary to ensure your success. That is not all: I want to arrange a marriage, and a rich one, for my Earl of Westfield. He must have an establishment of which none of us need be ashamed, and, with your goodwill, this can be managed without too greatly embarrassing our fortune.'

The young Lords answered that they were entirely at Milord's service.

'I am charmed by your kindness,' said he. 'There is,' he went on, 'in the county of Devon, a Baronet of no great family or personal distinction, but possessed of a considerable fortune. He has an only daughter who is well spoken of. She is the lady I want; but it would be unseemly for me to approach this gentleman, nor need you do so. He is a creature of your friend, Lord Halifax, who will hand him over to you, bound hand and foot. I want six thousand pounds sterling per annum, from landed property. That's my plan in outline. Now let us go into my cabinet and I will explain the details.'

'Captain Sentry,' said the Lord, turning in his direction, 'see to your charge.'

The Lords went out. The Captain took Richard into the park.

They walked side by side in silence. They reached a sheltered spot, carefully shaded by a number of trees that had been planted at random round it. It was one of those solitudes elaborately devised to lend variety to a park in which could be found beauties of all kinds. A tree trunk, seemingly overthrown by the wind, was the only seat. Richard sat down, his hat pulled over his eyes and his arms crossed upon his chest, in the attitude of a man absorbed by his reflections.

'Milord seems sad,' said the Captain.

'Call me not Milord,' answered Richard. 'I cannot be a Lord, and I would not be one. I am stealing this position from another, and I do not care to raise myself in the world by such means. You are all flattering me, intoxicating me with the hopes that lie nearest to my heart; you have done what you could to destroy my religion, but you have failed. Why, you yourself are always talking to me about virtue, and yet I cannot but mistrust you. An impulse of affection drew me towards you, but I look upon it as my most deadly foe. In a word—wizard, fairy, spirit, angel, demon or devil, whatever you are, reveal yourself! You have always read my heart: I could have no secrets from you. You have known me affectionate, obedient, and submissive to you; but you have never before surprised me in the cowardice and fear which I am ashamed to have displayed in your company. Abandon this semblance, which is doubtless foreign to you, and reveal yourself. You will not frighten me. Otherwise the unhappy Richard, who can but think himself your plaything, must leave you, and use the most desperate means to keep away from you for ever.'

'No, my son, my dearest son,' replied the other; 'we are not to part: you shall know and love me and live to be my consolation and my joy. No, I am neither witch nor fairy, neither spirit, angel, nor devil. I am a being like yourself, and even somewhat less than you are. I am a woman, a weak woman. Know that you are in the arms of Rebecca Westfield, sister to the master of this house, widow of Sir Patrick O'Berthon, and mother of this unhappy Richard whom I now embrace.'

'You a woman! You, my mother!' cried O'Berthon, in an ecstasy. 'Where am I? What have I done? I resisted the soft inclination that drew me to you; I tried to shut my heart; I would not know you; and I have been so unhappy as to fail in what is due to you. I fall at your feet!'

'You have done no wrong, my dear son, or, at any rate, your mother is equally guilty.'

'But,' said O'Berthon, 'what a succession of miracles!

Pray, how and by what means did you bring them about? All nature seems to obey you.'

'Alas! my dear son,' said his mother; ''twas but your imagination that obeyed me. I noticed that I had astonished you the first time I saw you, when I was, as chance would have it, disguised as a gipsy: you were in some peril, and I had to rescue you. Next I had to establish our position in the world, which was then far from secure. Your obedience and your entire confidence were essential: I wished to know and test you. And when I saw that you were struck by the idea of the supernatural, I resolved to strengthen it so as by that means to gain an influence over you. A little luck, a little wit, and your own sweet simplicity helped me to succeed. Now the game is won, and this was all the magic that I used. But as the need for disguise between us is now quite past, I will proceed to tell you the truth about us both.'

You will learn in time the story of our House: 'tis a noble one and of most ancient origin. But these qualities are none of ours, and we must claim no credit for them. Indeed, if we have any merits of our own, such pride would tarnish them.

I am the daughter of Edward Earl of Westfield and Lady Sara Tranquill. Heaven blessed their marriage by the birth of six children. You know the eldest—he is George, the present Earl of Westfield. Lady Heat-Moore, whom you will see, and William, the present Bishop of Lincoln, came next; then a brother who died in infancy; then Edward, killed at the wars, of whom I still have the tenderest recollections, and finally myself, the youngest of all.

My father was in possession of certain family estates, which have since passed to our eldest brother; and since my mother's portion had to be shared among the others, we saw ourselves reduced to rather meagre resources. My father, who had an important post at Court, lived there; his wife, whose health had failed early in life, withdrew to this place. But my eldest brother was sent to the University of Louvain for his education and studies. He made a tour among the various Courts of Germany and came back to England, being then in his twenty-fifth year, when I set eyes upon him for the first time.

He did not linger in the ancestral home for long. My father wished to attach him to Court, and compelled him to stay in London, so that I have hardly seen him since. The Bishop of Lincoln, then a child, was sent to Oxford. Soon after, Lord Heat-Moore paid his addresses to my elder sister. I was thirteen years younger than my sister, and when

Lord Heat-Moore saw me he took a fancy to me. He was on the point of changing his mind, but my elder sister's intrigues brought him back to her. I was too young to have any designs on him, and had done nothing to attract him. I was not in the least sorry to see him return to his first engagement; but my sister looked on me as her rival, and has never forgiven me for it.

My youngest brother died at Westminster, where he was at school. Edward was an ensign in a Guards' regiment, and except for the time which his profession allowed him to come and spend with us, I stayed here alone with my mother (whose infirmities had now confined her to her room), very impatient at my enforced solitude. My sole distraction was the reading of French novels, for I had learnt the language: they amused me in my solitary life, and inspired me with a curiosity about matters of which it had been just as well for me to remain in ignorance, and awakened a germ of passion which was to be fatal to my peace of mind, and gave me false ideas about men, the world, and the universe in general.

A certain jest for which my brother Edward was responsible gave me a taste for an even more dangerous amusement. I was about his height, and we looked very much alike. One day he had the notion of getting me to try on one of his uniforms. You see me now dressed as a man, but in my radiant youth I must have seemed a much more dashing figure in Edward's eyes in such a disguise; and to make it quite complete it was decided to have a suit made exactly to my measure, which was done.

In this novel guise I visited the houses of the neighbourhood, and at first was not recognized. I was taken for my youngest brother, whose death was not generally known. This success encouraged me. I persisted in my masquerade, and adopted the bold and confident air of a gentleman of quality. I learned to manage a horse, and finally, under the instruction of a servant of my brother's who had been a fencing-master in Paris, I became a first-class swordsman. All my mornings were spent in these exercises. I could hardly endure to put on the garments proper to my sex to present myself in my mother's room. I then developed a taste for hunting, in addition to my other propensities, so that very soon my whole time was given up to these occupations so very ill suited to my condition.

Edward's departure for London put an end to my excursions; but I was more enamoured of them than ever. I impatiently awaited his return to start them once more. He was soon back, having obtained leave at the end of three months, and brought with him an officer in the regiment named Sir Patrick O'Berthon. He was a cadet of an Irish family, son of one of the most distinguished and impoverished noblemen in that realm. He was about twenty years old. He had a fine, handsome, attractive face, and an agreeable, intelligent, and insinuating character. Edward liked him very much, and had him to make a third in all our expeditions.

Sir Patrick devoted himself to winning my favour, and found no difficulty in doing so. He made me a pretty candid avowal, and I received it with equal freedom. My dress made me bold, and was the excuse for my being so. I had but one defence against his attacks: our respective fortunes forbade us to think of each other. I knew my father's and my eldest brother's prejudices against the Irish; but I could not find it in my heart to offer this objection, which meant so little to me. Sir Patrick, in the pretended violence of his passion, took but little notice of so feeble a defence; he grew more ardent than ever, and became more and more persistent in his attentions during his stay with us, both in my brother's presence and elsewhere. At last, observing that his affair did not progress, he made use of an expedient quite unworthy of a gentleman, so as to put me under the necessity of soliciting his hand.

While all this was happening, my brother Edward, who had just been promoted Colonel, was killed while fighting at the head of his regiment. His death upset my father greatly, and he succumbed to his grief and his advanced age. Soon after, my mother, who had been ailing for fifteen years, left a world that had been so burdensome to her. Lady Heat-Moore and my brother, then a Doctor of Oxford, were with her at the last, while the new Earl of Westfield was taking his seat in Parliament, which had then lately met.

My relations soon became aware of my conduct, which I had kept pretty quiet until then. I had lost in Edward the only friend and protector upon whom I could rely among my family. Some devoted old servants (you know the kind) made known to Milady such particulars of my relations with Sir Patrick as our indiscretion had betrayed.

I was of age. Our affairs had been put in order: I had received my fortune of five thousand pounds sterling in bank notes. I was warned that Lord Westfield had been requested to come home at once, and Lady Francy, his wife, was expected in a few days. This lady was very like Lady Heat-Moore in character, and they were close friends. I was afraid that my family were going to combine against me, and I decided to go secretly to London to find Sir Patrick: my freedom and the possession of my fortune made it possible for me to assume boldly the name and quality of his wife.

A faithful servant got the horses ready for me, and I set off dressed as a man. I may well have looked so to other people, but, on a long journey, the inconveniences of a pregnancy now five months advanced made me realize that I was nothing of the kind.

Sir Patrick lodged in Piccadilly, and one morning I surprised him in his apartments. He was indeed greatly surprised. His views by no means squared with mine, as I found out soon after my arrival. He received me without enthusiasm and with an air of embarrassment and constraint. I thought he did not realize what had happened, and I told him of my condition and the extent of my resources. He seemed even more aloof and frigid. I pressed him, and tried to touch his honour. He became sarcastic and insulting, and in the end my soldier's uniform became very ill-suited to the solemn claims that I had to put forward. I fell at his knees, begging him to have pity on the child that I was about to bear. He repulsed me in the most outrageous manner. I managed to control myself, and determined to press him to the end, and I withdrew with dismay on my face and fury in my heart.

I hid myself in a furnished room near Sir Patrick's lodging, and I ordered my servant to watch him and find out what he was doing. He had become attached to the widow of a rich London jeweller and, in the hope of marrying her, he had dropped all his old acquaintances and devoted his time entirely to her. In the evening he went home alone and unprotected. I determined to lie in wait for him at the corner of a street, and did so. I saw him coming down the road and went to meet him half-way: we recognized each other by the light of the moon.

'Traitor!' said I, 'I demand justice.'

He replied with an imprecation, and tried to evade me. I drew my sword. Compelled to do likewise, he called for help, stepped back and tried to disengage himself. I pressed him, but he merely parried my attack. I wounded him, then he lost his temper and attacked me in his turn and, in an attempt to disarm me, rushed upon my point and received a mortal wound. He knew it at once, and fell.

'Ah, Rebecca!' he said, 'you have killed me!'

These words brought me to myself.

'Patrick dear!' I cried.

'You are avenged, Rebecca, and I forgive you: take care of me now.'

I rushed to the other end of the street and found a sedan chair. I had it brought to him, and went with the wounded man to his apartment; and while his servant was putting him to bed and trying to staunch the blood from his wound, I rushed for help. I soon returned with a clever surgeon. I was unwilling to leave him, but Sir Patrick insisted on my doing so.

'Rebecca,' said he, 'go and rest, and come again tomorrow more appropriately dressed. Please Heaven I may have time to repair your wrongs!'

I came to him early in the next day. Sir Patrick had sent for a minister, two lawyers and two of his friends. Everything was in readiness for our marriage. The landlord and a relation of his served as my witnesses, and before the wound had been dressed the ceremony had been concluded with all the precautions that could possibly ensure its validity.

Your father had received his death wound, and by my hand. I loved him. I will pass quickly to the sorrowful moment when I lost him, a week after our marriage. I paid him the last sad honours that I owed him and came to lodge, until my confinement, in a small apartment in the parish of Saint Paul's. I had sent my faithful servant to Westfield Castle, to know how my family had taken my escapade. All were in arms against me, and no words were too bitter for my behaviour. My brother, the doctor, who had lately been elevated to the Bishopric of Lincoln, shared Lady

Heat-Moore's hatred of me. Lady Francy, the Earl of Westfield's wife, joined them, and all three had beset my eldest brother and aroused his fury against me.

I respected his Lordship, my brother; but I was afraid of his prejudices and of his violent disposition. I realized that I must separate from my family, and remove myself and my unhappy state from my sister's hatred, and find some refuge where I could live quietly and comfortably on the modest fortune of which I was now possessed.

I could find no such place in London. My resources, including what Sir Patrick had left me, amounted to six thousand six hundred pounds sterling in bank shares; but the resulting income was not enough to support me suitably in so large a city where everything is so dear. I could retire into the depths of the country or go and live in France. I hesitated for some time between these alternatives, and finally I allowed myself to be persuaded by my own habits and inclinations. If I lived in England I should have to resign myself to the ordinary conduct and manners of a person of my sex, or, if I behaved at all oddly, lose the respect of those among whom I should have to live. If I went to France, wearing my soldier's garb, I should lose sight of all those I wanted to avoid, escape all kinds of constraint, and so, in a manner of speaking, double my income while securing my liberty. This plan attracted me, and I decided to act accordingly.

The time of my confinement arrived, and you, my dear Richard, were born. Among the friends of the family, Mr. Sterlook, a banker in the City, was the only one with whom I had kept in touch and who knew of my adventures. He was your godfather; two of Sir Patrick's friends were witnesses of your baptism in the parish of Saint Paul's: every possible precaution was taken to ensure its validity.

You were put out to nurse at Backway. Thence you were to go to Southam, as in fact you did, to receive your earliest education in the house of a worthy widow, named Mistress Hallen. Although every care was taken to conceal who you were, your surname was not altered. It is well known in England, and better still in Ireland; but it was shared by many other children of the house, and there was nothing to distinguish you in particular. This precaution, suggested by Mr. Sterlook, succeeded in dispelling all the doubts that might subsequently have arisen as to your origin. Our family and your father's family had heirs who then stood in the way of any hopes of better fortune for you, but I was anxious to secure your position and, in order to prevent any possible intrigues to your disadvantage, I left every one in ignorance of your fate and of my own. When I had made provision for you I recommended you to the care of Mr. Sterlook, and I put my little fortune in his hands. I confided my plans to him, and the place of my retirement, and I set out for France dressed as a man.

I wandered for a long time among the various towns on the sea-coasts of that kingdom, without being able to settle down in any one of them. At last I took a fancy to Marseilles, and stayed there. I became well acquainted with the language and customs of the people, and it was there, my dear Richard, from my daily experience of that wayward and charming nation, so tormented and so blind to their own slavery, that I, in my detachment and my English ways of thinking, began to ask myself whether France was not something like a vast caravanserai, entirely given up to the entertainment of the foreigner, in which the inhabitants, groaning under burdens they are at pains to conceal, are forced, by some secret impulse, to sing and dance all the year round for the amusement of their guests.

I liked distractions: indeed, I could not do without them.

I had no place in the world or in Society, and I had to escape from myself. I formed no regular connections: the capriciousness of the French frightened me. I did not care to make a friend of a man, and I found women insipid. I indulged myself in all the tastes of which I have told you. I kept horses and dogs. But I soon saw these were expensive fancies, and exhausted my modest income. So I tried to find distraction in the arts, in books, in the company of the learned, and in public entertainments. It was while I was thus occupied that I realized my desire to visit Paris. The people of the capital seemed to me more dissipated and less gay than those in Marseilles; however, I there found means of satisfying my tastes in every direction. I could spend the morning in fencing academies and other places of the kind. Lectures in the abstract sciences, such as were not beyond my understanding, filled the afternoon, and entertainments occupied the rest of the day. I got home in the evening extremely tired, and managed to forget myself in the profound slumber which I had thus induced. I took the name of Sentry, and have kept it ever since. In the various fencing academies I frequented I had the opportunity of seeing many young fellow-countrymen; but I did not make myself known to them as an Englishman, with a view to studying them more at my ease. From the slight Provençal accent that still remained with me, they took me for a gentleman from that province. There was something haughty, frigid and contemptuous in our intercourse. They treated me as a Frenchman, and I looked upon them as people who might have been turned into reasonable beings by improving their manners, and removing various prejudices that were quite revolting to decent people. As they were, they seemed to me impossible. As they did not suspect I knew their language, I heard them ridiculing one of their companions, with so much bitterness and so little restraint that I felt moved to take his side. There was not a fault of which they accused him that a sensible person would not have been proud of: he was unassuming, gentle, polite, and grateful, so much so that he took a pleasure in acknowledging himself a friend to the French, from whom he had received a kind welcome and certain trifling services. He maintained that one ought not to insult, in their own country, a people who never insulted the foreigners among them, and he could find no good reasons for despising them. Since they could not correct these misguided notions, his friends gave him up, and he was left alone with me. His name was Stephen, and he was Welsh. When he was alone I went up to him, and spoke such good English that he showed his surprise. I confessed I was a fellow-countryman of his, and agreed with his way of thinking: in a word, my son, as a result of these overtures, we became friendly and almost inseparable, and shall remain so all our lives. There was never so sweet, so sincere and so affectionate a disposition. I could tell you countless stories to his credit; but you will know him and will find out much more by being in his company. You have already received a few little services, indirectly, at his hands, and when you see him again you will recognize him.

I had known no other emotion but love, and I had little cause to congratulate myself on that. I plunged into friendship with all the warmth of which I was capable. Stephen, who was not rich, and had spent more than he should have afforded on his education, was contemplating crossing the Channel. I made up my mind to do likewise.

We went to London. I saw Mr. Sterlook, and had news of you. There were excellent accounts of your character and industry. I discussed with the worthy banker what arrangements I should make for your future.

The family situation had not changed. My fortune had not increased. You were delicate, and it was decided that you should be sent to Oxford in the capacity of a young man intended for the Church.

Soon afterwards Stephen went off to Wales, and I followed him. His fortune was meagre: part of it had to be set aside for the support of an aged and venerable mother. We were not very comfortable, but friendship makes up for many things. I spent six months with him contentedly, and occupied my time in killing the foxes which infested his little property. I then came back to France, having made up my mind to return to Wales every year for the future.

Nevertheless, it was two years before I could keep my undertaking. On my second journey, I found Stephen in difficulties: he had fallen in love with the eldest daughter of Mistress Bullcock, whom you know: she was then only fourteen. He did not dare to mention his passion either to Miss Anna, who had inspired it, or to her mother, or to anyone.

The circumstances were most unpropitious. Mistress Bullcock had just lost her husband, and the property he left her was found to be mortgaged to some Jew for £150 sterling: this individual was pressing for payment. The family was desperate and on the brink of ruin. My friend Stephen had not the means to help. How could he contemplate marriage in so dreadful a situation? Even supposing Mistress Bullcock's fortune could be freed from this obligation, it was unreasonable to think of such an idea. I made my friend promise to reserve the avowal of his feelings for a more favourable moment, and, having resolved to spend the whole year with him, I sacrificed the greater part of my resources to extricate that deserving and unhappy family from their difficulties. I wanted Stephen to take the credit; but he mentioned my name, and this was the beginning of my connection with them, which has lasted ever since.

When a year had elapsed I returned to Paris. Europe was at peace, and seemed likely to remain so for a long time. I happened to make the acquaintance of a musketeer, who came of a good family in Lancaster. His name was FitzMartin. Thinking he had noticed in me some signs of attachment to France, he told me that at my age (which he took to be twenty-four) it was astonishing that I did not try to join the army, which was the only profession suitable to a man of my condition. He was born at Saint-Germain, and though his pay was only fifteen hundred francs a year he lived comfortably, and had hopes of advancement.

I was weary of what I had been doing up till then, and was attracted by the idea of becoming a musketeer. FitzMartin presented me to the commanding officer as one of many gentlemen ruined by the wreck of the Stuart fortunes.

I found favour and was accepted. Once more I had to ride, but in the way of my duty. I often went to Versailles, and my taste for hunting revived. In a short time the King of France never chased a stag without my help or being a witness of his success. Indeed, the matter began to attract attention.

One day I arrived rather late at the meet. The King, who was no doubt used to seeing me, said, loud enough for me to hear: 'Ah! there 's my musketeer.' More than flattered at having merited such particular notice, I tried to attract more and more attention. I had doubled, nay, trebled, the size of my stable, and Mr. Sterlook warned me that I was encroaching upon my capital. I decided to go into retirement for a time with my friends in Wales, obtained leave, and left Versailles.

While I was living with Stephen, war was declared with Spain. Our politicians said that France would lose no time in taking part. I liked the King personally, but I could not serve against my own people. I was forced to take sides, and I sent in my resignation to my commanding officer.

Sir Thomas Colwill was at that time raising a regiment of volunteers to accompany Admiral Anson on his expedition to the Indies. We had met in France: he offered me a lieutenancy and I accepted it. This post was likely to give me the opportunity of employing our little fortune to good advantage and perhaps increasing it. I recommended you to Mr. Sterlook's care, and embarked on the *Rear-Admiral*, with a company of one hundred and fifty men. I will say nothing of the voyage and the expedition: you are only concerned with the outcome of the venture.

After four years' absence, and the most singular adventures, of the whole vast armament only a handful of men returned, in a leaky vessel, loaded with booty; and I was fortunate enough to be one of them. We owed our safety to that resourceful genius, our commander, and to our good luck, which brought us into port through an enemy squadron, under cover of a fog. Sir Colwill was dead, and I was therefore the rightful leader of a body of troops which had numbered five hundred men at the hour of departure, and was now reduced to thirty-six. I reached London, and rushed to see Mr. Sterlook, who was then seventy years old. He had fallen into second childhood, and his family had just had him certified insane; but my money was safe. I asked for the papers, but the inventory had not yet been made. Not a word could they tell me about my poor Richard.

I had the duty of presenting the accounts of my regiment and representing its interests at the distribution of prize-money won by the squadron, so I could not leave London. I wrote to Southam, to Mistress Hallen, but had no answer; a second and a third letter were no more fortunate. In a state of dreadful anxiety I asked for a week's leave to go to

Southam; but the Commissioners of the Admiralty, who had found my services too valuable, refused it. At last I wrote to my friend Stephen and begged him to come and join me, as I was in urgent need of him. He answered that he could not leave his mother, who was on the point of death. My situation was desperate: if I left my duty I should risk losing the fortune I had amassed for you by so much danger and toil, and yet I feared for your fate.

In all this turmoil, the hope of seeing you take a position in the world worthy of your name induced me to approach the head of the family. Lord Westfield was, I knew, in London. I found out that he was living in a furnished apartment in Southampton Row. A lodging above his, in the same house, was empty, and I took it. I had no fear that my brother would recognize me in passing, for I knew him to be absent-minded. My uniform and my position protected me against any possible suspicion on his part. I should have preferred that chance should bring us together, that he should express some curiosity about me. I liked and respected him, but I feared him still more. If I chose the wrong time, or if I approached him at a moment when he might be ill disposed, I should risk failure in my enterprise without any opportunity of repairing the damage. He had just lost his only son, and was still mourning him. My servant had heard this from his Lordship's servant. His daughters had been married three years before to Lords Mellfont and Etherge, Knights of the Scottish Order and Peers of this kingdom. He was much neglected by his family, and lived almost in solitude.

I also found out his habits. Apart from his Parliamentary duties, he was much involved with the chief brokers in London in their business of discounting Government paper, and in the evening he was regular in his attendance at the performances at Covent Garden. When they were over he would enter a coffee-house and sit there reflecting for some time, and then go home about eleven. I followed him everywhere, as soon as my business would allow me, taking every possible precaution not to arouse his suspicions.

I must give you an idea, my dear Richard, of your uncle's character. He is one of the most estimable and most singular men that England has ever produced. Your grandfather, his precursor in the title, wished to attach him to the Court and kept him in London so long as he was alive; but as soon as your uncle was independent, hardly had he taken his seat in the House of Peers, when he gave up every prospect of royal favour. He withdrew to his estates and developed into a well-informed and careful landed proprietor, and the best of masters. He carried his charity to his impoverished peasants and to distressed persons of every kind to the point of lavishness. When he returned to London, he fitted out commercial expeditions overseas, interested himself in the establishment of manufactures, followed the movements of the public funds, and, in general, played the part of the man of affairs. In the House of Lords he displays all manner of excellent intentions, and is inaccessible to any form of underhand influence. He shows ministers little indulgence, but he never opposes them unless he suspects them of a plot against the public welfare. He despises the House of Commons, and will have nothing to do with it: indeed, his rigid attitude is somewhat to the disservice of his own Order. He has many other prejudices—I might even say many manias; but these you will recognize from what I shall tell you later on. Apart from them, please Heaven that you may resemble him in uprightness, justice and benevolence.

I had been following him for about a fortnight without finding the opportunity that suited both of us, when one evening, in a coffee-house in Covent Garden, three ill-looking fellows who were sitting not far off and talking in a low voice mentioned his name. The play had begun, and I had not been able to get a seat. I sat with my head in my hand, plunged in reflection, and I might well have seemed asleep. The name of Westfield attracted my attention, and I listened carefully without changing my attitude.

'He dined at "The King's Arms," said one of them, 'with such and such: there were three brokers on 'Change in the company, and no one else. Bradshaw told him he had disposed of bonds worth a hundred thousand sterling on his account.'

'Bravely done!' replied one of the company. I did not catch the remainder of the conversation: they had got up, and had gone to find a more suitable place to consider their plans.

The play was over. Lord Westfield entered, wearing, as he usually did, a plain overcoat. He asked for some warm lemonade and sat down: the three rascals had disappeared.

At eleven o'clock Milord sent for a chair: he had not even a servant with him. The chair was brought. He got in, and I followed him, but at some distance. No sooner had he turned into Southampton Row than I heard a noise. I drew my sword and ran up. The chair had been stopped, and the villains were at the door. They noticed me, and one of them left his friends and came towards me, brandishing his sword. I stretched him on the ground with a single thrust, and rushed upon the others; but when they heard their companion's cries, they took to their heels. I found Milord struggling and shouting in the chair, which had been abandoned by the porters, who were very likely accomplices. I helped him out, took his arm, and we went home to his lodging together. I was still carrying my sword, which was dripping with blood. As I entered the house, I told the landlord to go and report what had happened to the Watch.

Lord Westfield, still upset by the mishap, said nothing.

Two servants appeared with lights. He took their arms, and they assisted him to his room, whither I followed him. He then sat down, and looked at me fixedly.

'So it is you, Captain, my neighbour: you have just rendered me a most signal service. They were after my pocket-book: here it is with a trifle of a hundred thousand inside it. 'Tis you that have saved it from thieves.'

I tried to explain that I thought myself very fortunate to have been able to do him any such service.

'Well,' he added, 'you served yourself as well as me: the pocket-book now belongs to both of us. Take what you like: never fear that I shall mind.'

I did not even look at the pocket-book. I was in the company of a brother whose friendship I would buy with the last drop of my blood. I was still disturbed by the danger he had been in. My uneasiness at my own situation, remorse for my past conduct, so unworthy of him, my longing to reveal myself and fall at his knees and beg his favour for myself and for you—I was torn by all these feelings simultaneously.

His Lordship was surprised at my expression, and, for a moment, was silent; then he said:

'What is it, Captain? Do you imagine I am not generous enough to make you a present of thirty, forty, fifty thousand sterling?'

'No, Milord,' said I. 'I know how generous you are. A regard and affection for you, of which you do not know the motive, has led me to do you a service which you are good enough to think of importance. I aspire to a much more flattering reward—to your friendship.'

'My friendship!' cried his lordship. 'And, pray, who are you? You have come back from India. Have we met somewhere? Indeed, your face seems somehow familiar to me. Are you English?'

I knew not what to reply. I trembled as he looked at me, and a strange hard expression appeared on his face.

'Answer me,' he went on.

'No, Milord,' said I, quite overcome. 'I am—French.'

'I thought so,' said he, 'from your accent and your gestures. Am I to be the friend of a Frenchman—an enemy of my country? Come, Sir; I will forgive you for being anything you like when you have taken my pocket-book.'

'No, Milord,' said I; 'I may not sell my service at such a price.'

'You won't take money, won't you?' said he, in a semblance of anger; 'and pray what will you take? Why had you to leave your country? Why are you in arms on our side? Answer. Have you been in trouble? I'll make interest for you if necessary: I'll recommend you to all the Ministers, to your own King. I would pull you out of Hell were you to fall into it.'

'No, Milord,' I answered. 'I serve England from affection, and do not wish to leave the country. I owe no allegiance to France. I have done nothing to expose myself to the rigours of the law, and I would ask you to use your interest elsewhere.'

'So you wish to serve us,' said Milord. 'Well, you are a brave fellow. You don't care for money, so you won't betray us. I will use all my influence with the Lords of the Admiralty to secure your advancement.'

'Once more,' said I, 'I have been so fortunate as to be useful to you: I have asked you for the reward I look for, and I will take no other.'

'What! Frenchman, you want to be my friend? But I refuse. I care for no one—not even for my children. No, no! You shall not leave this room without saying what you want of me.'

'I cannot tell you to-day, Milord.'

'When will you?'

'In a month,' I answered.

'Very well, then; you will come and visit me at my country seat, where I shall then be. Here is a shilling, which I break in two halves: take one, and whether you come yourself, or send some one else, do not forget to convey this piece of money to me.'

I left Lord Westfield and retired to my room. Next morning he left his lodging above mine, and went to take another near St. James's Park.

But I was still deeply anxious as to what might have happened to you, when I saw Stephen arrive, wearing deep mourning. His mother was dead, and realizing from my letters how much I needed his help, he had come to offer it. My business could now have been disposed of in four or five days, and I should then have the time to go down to Southam. My impatience would not let me wait: I sent Stephen. I charged him to see Mistress Hallen, and to bring me certain news of a young man entrusted to her care, in whom I took the greatest interest. Stephen departed. I worked with the utmost industry and assiduity to bring my business to an end. The spoil brought back by Admiral Anson had already been valued and allotted, and my share came to more than fifty thousand pounds sterling, in addition to my pay, which amounted to eighteen hundred pounds. I duly received these sums, added them to what I had in the bank of Messrs. Sterlook and Sons, and so was able to satisfy the proper claims of all my company.

I had just finished my work when Stephen came back. He came to see me, and entered the room looking worried.

'And what of the young man?' I asked. I then learned of Mistress Hallen's death, your departure from Oxford, your journey to Devonshire, and your entrance into the household of Sir George Nettling. The Chaplain of Woodstock and the Rector of Buttorf, whom Stephen had found it necessary to visit, had informed him of all these particulars. Imagine my frightful distress, my dear Richard, when I heard the melancholy condition to which you had been reduced through my absence, Mistress Hallen's death, and the illness of our old friend, Mr. Sterlook.

When I was free to go and see you I made arrangements to go down to Devonshire. Stephen and I arrived at Clostern. We stopped at an inn opposite the Castle in order to discover how matters stood. I noticed a good deal of commotion, with which, of course, I never connected you. The landlady had been Milady Nettling's nurse. All manner of people were hurrying in and out of the house. I heard your name mentioned, and in very heated terms. I went up to some of them and asked what had happened to Richard. He had seduced and deflowered the daughter of the master of the house! He had taken flight, and was to be pursued: Sir George and his people were mounting their horses. I took Stephen aside: we took our horses and rode along the edge of the park, and we soon departed in different directions. You must have been wearing your livery. Your age and your clothes would make you easily recognizable. I recommended Stephen, if he found you, to take you to a little farm at Billy-Barnes, where we had spent the night.

I had made the acquaintance of the farmer's wife, whose name was Mistress Bitterton, and whether or not I had been successful in my search, I arranged to join my friend at that place at midnight. I cannot describe to you my anxiety. Everywhere I went I found Sir George's emissaries scouring the countryside. I wanted to gallop up to them, kill their horses, and disarm them. If you had been in their hands I would have rescued you at the risk of my life. I spent the day wandering round the Castle to see if you were brought back there along any of the roads that led to it. Night fell as I was thus employed, and the time came for me to make my way to Billy-Barnes. I found Stephen and looked anxiously about to see if you were there.

'Take courage, my friend,' said he. 'The young man is not here; but I have taken care that Sir George's people shall not find him, and I know pretty well in which direction he has gone.

'Yesterday, about two o'clock in the afternoon, I met, four miles from Clostern, a peasant leading some cattle. I described the young man, and asked whether he had seen him pass. He showed me the road by which the young man had come and the direction he had taken. I started at once in pursuit, but I observed two well-mounted horsemen approaching. I suspected them of being Sir George's men, or one of them might be the Baronet himself.

'I gave the peasant a guinea and promised him three more, if, when these people questioned him, he would say that the person they were looking for, mounted bareback on a chestnut mare, was escaping at full speed along the road I pointed out. At the same time I dismounted, tied my horse to a tree, and made as though I was tightening his girths.

'The horsemen came up, the questions and answers were such as I had arranged, and Sir George's men galloped off to follow the false clue with which I had provided them. I would have liked to set off in the direction the peasant had pointed out; but when I had given him the three guineas I thought I had better keep him in view for the time being. I could still hear other horsemen about in the neighbourhood, and it was possible that my friend, in the expectation of further reward, might tell them another story. Time was passing: I was afraid of missing the road to Billy-Barnes in the darkness; and I made my way there, glad to be able to inform you of the success of my poor efforts.'

I thanked Stephen, and we parted once more: he was to return to the inn at Clostern, wait for news of me there, and in the meantime find out exactly what was going forward at the Castle. If you had been brought back there, he was to present himself at once and claim your release as belonging to one of the most distinguished houses in England, have you brought before the magistrate, bail you out for twenty thousand pounds if necessary, and offer to keep you in custody until the bail had been arranged.

Everything was in disorder at Billy-Barnes. The farmer had been arrested that very day and put in prison for debt. There was no means of getting a bed for the night, so I went into the barn and threw myself upon the straw. I had as my companions in discomfort five or six gipsies who had been wandering about the neighbourhood for several days. I could not sleep: I thought over every possible means of rescuing you without betraying myself. I reflected that, as I did not know you, if I went in search of you dressed as I then was, I might frighten you, and drive you to conceal yourself from me as you would from every one in such a garb. So I had the idea of disguising myself as a gipsy. By this means I should secure admission to all the houses in the country, and thus find means of making more extensive inquiries. You know how I succeeded: only on the second day, when predicting good luck to an old woman, I found it myself, and learnt that I should find you in Dame Francy's house. It was essential to extricate you quietly and put an end to the activity of those responsible for your adventure with Miss Dorothy, the details of which I did not then know.

I arrived at the little farm where you were, with my plan all settled. I dressed you up as a girl, made up a suitable story, told it to the family, and you carried the matter off. I announced the speedy arrival of Tom Cawsson, your father. I then abandoned my witch's attire, and came to rejoin my friend Stephen at Clostern.

I had much to do. I wanted to make Miss Dorothy's acquaintance and find out what had passed between you. She was reputed one of the richest heiresses in the kingdom, and everybody joined in singing her praises. If she loved you, and if she was to my liking, I wanted to secure you her hand. But how was I to arrange an introduction to her?

Sir George and Lady Nettling were no longer at the Castle. Your sweetheart had stayed behind under the care of Mistress Brown, a pious, charitable and simple-minded dame. I needed some pretext for a visit, and this is the one I chose.

I instructed my friend Stephen to get for me, at no matter what price, an outfit of clerical clothes. He found one, much soiled and worn, for a few guineas; and I went to Billy-Barnes to invest myself in the disguise; I then came back to Clostern. I was announced as one of the neighbouring clergy who wished to speak to Mistress Brown. I went in with a very self-possessed air.

'Madam,' says I, 'the farmer of Billy-Barnes, poor Master Bitterton, has been put in prison, at the instance of Sir George's steward, for a sum of seventy guineas. A certain parishioner of mine, moved at the man's distress, and perhaps from some slight feeling of remorse, has placed in my hands the wherewithal to discharge this debt; but, Madam, whatever may be the motive for his action, he would urge that his identity may not be disclosed to Master Bitterton or to Sir George's steward. If you, Madam, would be so good as to pass for this poor farmer's benefactress, my friend's intentions will be completely satisfied. Your charity would be no surprise to Bitterton or anyone else.'

My appearance, my demeanour, my proposal, and my discourse at once produced the desired effect. Mistress Brown fell in with the suggested benefaction: she did but express regret that she had not heard of the matter before, and herself come to the rescue. She was about to dine alone, and kept me to dinner with her. The good lady was in distress of mind, and aching to talk about her niece. My garb and my mission to her were well calculated to attract her confidence, and as I myself tried to win it, we soon achieved our several ends—she, to talk about her niece's affair, and I to hear what she had to say. She assured me of her niece's innocence and was certain that it would soon be established in the eyes of the world. I remarked that a friend of mine, a gentleman of the county of Kent, was in much worse case. He had an only child, whose face and charm, talents and disposition, made her the delight of all who knew her. She had disappeared from his house, and he had been seeking her for six months, but in vain. I merely mentioned the story in passing and said no more about it then.

A servant came in to say that Miss Dorothy refused to take her soup.

'The poor child will kill herself,' said her good aunt; 'she will take nothing: I can't make her listen to reason.'

'Would you allow me, Madam,' said I, 'to speak with her in private?'

'Ah, Sir!' replied Mistress Brown warmly, 'how extremely obliged I should be to you if you could induce her to take care of herself.'

'I will go, Madam,' said I.

The lady got up, and we made our way to the young Miss's chamber, preceded by the servant and the soup.

Mistress Brown introduced me as one of her friends, made her niece promise to give me her best attention, and withdrew. I took the soup from the servant's hands, put it on the table, and went towards the bed.

We were then alone. The young Miss received me with a serious air. I opened the conversation with a few moral commonplaces, which seemed to meet with rather a cold reception. I tried to speak about the subject of her troubles, and I mentioned Richard's name. I thought I detected signs of emotion. I continued, and simulated a certain interest in him.

'Poor Richard!' says I.

'Do you know him, Sir?' asked Dorothy, in what seemed an encouraging tone.

'Yes, Miss,' I answered. 'I know him better than he knows himself.'

'Do you know where he is, Sir? Is he safe? I suppose he is quite destitute: all his possessions are here.'

'No, sweet Miss, he wants for nothing, and at the moment you are the object of his deepest disquiet: he cannot forgive himself for having been the innocent cause . . .'

'Innocent indeed, Sir! Alas! I showed him some slight kindness, and the poor boy kissed my hand when he said good-bye to me. If you see him, you can tell him that I forgive him with all my heart; but I wish I were in a position to do him some service. There are a few guineas in this purse: desire him, I beg you, to accept them from me.'

'No, Miss, I may not carry him this present, he would have no use for it. But your generosity, your tender feeling for him, will touch him very deeply. He is, I thank Heaven, relieved from want.'

'Ah, Sir! I am so overjoyed to hear it. Why did he stoop to the position of a servant? He did not seem to me born to that condition.'

'No, Miss, I would tell you more, if I did not suppose that the interest you take in him is but a feeling of pity.'

'Surely, Sir, a young man like Richard, reduced to becoming a lackey, deserves a great deal of it.'

'I think I understand you, Miss, and far from considering him an object for sympathy, he seems to me the happiest of men, since you recognized him for what he was, in the abject condition to which he had, for a brief moment, been reduced. Nay, do not blush, sweet Miss: he is a man of good family; and, indeed, he is not without fortune; but his cannot be said to equal yours. He loves you: he felt for you as you deserve, and as only an honest heart can feel. In his dubious situation he did not think he ought to declare himself. He has charged me to come and offer you his respects and his excuses, and to let you know that he was about to use an innocent device to put an end to the troublesome notoriety of his adventure which forced him to leave this place. My instructions went no farther: I managed to secure admission to your aunt . . .'

I would have continued, but Mistress Brown entered: she came to see if our young friend had drunk her soup. As soon as I heard her step I offered it to Miss Dorothy and, although it was rather cold, she swallowed it at once. Mistress Brown was delighted to find her niece more reasonable: she even thought her in better health. All this was regarded as the result of my exhortations, and I was not allowed to leave the Castle until I had promised to come back; but I did not keep my word. I mounted my horse and went to change my clothes again at Billy-Barnes. There I met Stephen, and we made our arrangements to go and remove you from Mistress Francy's house. When we reached the farm, while Stephen was helping you to mount, I took the farmer's widow aside, handed over your livery to her with a letter to a French maid named Foible. Stephen had heard at the inn at Clostern about your adventures with her. Every one was talking about your hard-hearted behaviour, and it seemed that the poor girl lay sick and like to die, of her grief at your flight, and of chagrin at being the laughing-stock of the village. Here is the rough copy of my letter:

Tom Cawsson, Esquire, to Mademoiselle Foible.

I thank you, Mademoiselle, for the kindness you shewed to my daughter, while her folly kept her in the service of your masters. She was very fortunate to find in their house so obliging a personage, and she asks me to assure you of her gratitude. I send back the livery which was the cause (so I hear) of such an uproar and such scandal. However, all that unfounded gossip will soon be forgotten. I would have written to Sir George and Milady to ask them to accept my daughter's apologies and my own; but I hear they have left the house. I venture to ask you to convey my respects to them and to Miss Dorothy. As my daughter is returning to her proper avocations, the remaining effects which she left at Clostern are no longer of any service to her, and I would ask you to give them to the children who will hand you this letter. Among them you will find ten guineas wrapped up in a piece of paper: my daughter and I are desirous that you should accept them as a mark of our friendship.

The farmer's widow gave this letter to her children to carry to the house. I gave them two guineas, and all three of them went off together very well pleased with what they had to do.

They reached Clostern House, and handed over the letter and the clothes; and they were questioned with much curiosity. What they had seen with their own eyes had taught them their lesson, and their account of what had happened was consistent and unshaken. Mistress Brown remembered what a certain clergyman had said to her the day before. Foible found the ten guineas, and some means of escaping the jests with which she was overwhelmed. Excellent reasons were found for believing the story, which was much embroidered and exaggerated. Twenty-four hours later, all the neighbourhood for twenty miles round knew you were a girl, and soon after Sir George and Milady knew it too; but Miss Dorothy, who had been warned of my little plot, was not taken in.

During this time we were on the road to Wales, where I had decided to keep you hidden for a while. You took me for a witch, or some supernatural being, and every one took you for a girl. I decided not to disabuse you about myself, and to keep you in your disguise. I wanted to be able to control you without your knowing who I was, and it was important for both of us to maintain our concealment. You could not secure an honourable position in Society if Lord Westfield refused to acknowledge and protect you. I was sure that Lady Heat-Moore, the Bishop of Lincoln, and Milord's daughters and sons-in-law would defeat my intentions if they became aware of them before I had taken certain other precautions. I took you to Mistress Bullcock, having made up my mind to disguise your appearance to such an extent that we could with impunity risk appearing in public, even in London, and brave the company of the witnesses of my marriage and your baptism without being recognized. I was determined to mystify you about myself as much as possible, and I took every opportunity of astonishing you. I entered the inn at Honyton before you did. I saw a young man in despair, and asked the cause of it. I was informed that a thief had stolen his horse. I arranged with Stephen, who was playing the part of my servant, to slip a purse containing a few guineas into his pocket, and when I thought the appropriate moment had come I caused him to find it. At Bridgewater, having gone out early to buy a woman's dress and appurtenances, which I was proposing to use on the following day, I noticed the quarrel between the French prisoners and the English countrymen over Miss Orchard. The young person was in an extremity of terror, and on the point of fainting. I took her by the arm and led her home. When I got back to the inn, I found means of reconciling their differences by using all the influence which truth and reason can have over people who are disposed to listen. When I entered the inn once more, I fell in with the Sergeant of my Company, and a precaution that I had taken in the morning caused you to find in your pocket the purse I had put there.

All that had passed since we left Mistress Francy's house was calculated to persuade you that I was a man: when you awoke on the following morning, you saw me as a woman. My intention was not merely to astonish you. We were going to Mistress Bullcock's; I wanted to feel quite free, to protect myself from a number of questions which I did not want to answer, and to be able, above all, to go away when I wished. Under the name of Captain Sentry I should have been constrained; by passing for the sister I could do as I liked. Before we reached our destination we met in the inn where we had stopped to dine, three ruffians, who, imagining you to be a girl, insulted you. I came in; I recognized Ralph, an Irishman, one of the three rascals who were in the coffee-house of Covent Garden, plotting the robbery of Lord Westfield. I attacked and disarmed him.

'Ralph,' said I, in his own Irish tongue, 'get out of this. The magistrate has your description, and you will be arrested on the charge of Lord Westfield.'

The scoundrels were terrified and fled. I was delighted. We might have met them in the daytime, when not pursuing, as they thought, a lady's favours, and I should not have found it so easy to get rid of them.

At Mistress Bullcock's I found a letter from Stephen, whom I had asked to go back to Clostern. He acted as a spy for me, and the post had just arrived. He informed me of the result of my letter to Mademoiselle, and he gave me even more interesting, though more disquieting news.

Before Lord Scarecrew had entered the lists for Miss Dorothy's hand, a young Baronet from the county of Sussex had put forward his addresses. The aunt, who was delighted to see his Lordship disposed of, had just written to the Baronet's family to bid him return from France, where he then was, and it was anticipated that the marriage would take place at Mistress Brown's house at Corntree: indeed, all arrangements were made for a removal there.

I wrote to Stephen to go at once to Corntree, and to hire a small apartment for me there. My plans were laid, and I determined to take measures to dispute the ground step by step with Sir Archibald Hottwel. At this juncture I had to act in person. My accounts were sent in to the Admiralty, but they had not been accepted. I had to go and put matters straight. This meant a journey to London. I left you under the care of the Welsh lady, Mistress Bullcock, and set forth. I was asked for explanations; I met with all manner of difficulties and delays; and I was compelled to wait upon the convenience of junior officers. At last, after a month of tedium and irritation, I was dismissed with all in order: my accounts were cleared, and I retired from the Service at the same time.

I wanted to come back to you at once; but I looked forward to being able to bring you the news of my reconciliation with Lord Westfield, and to show myself at last in my true form. The period at the end of which he said he would be on his estate had already elapsed. I decided to leave London, and I arrived at the Castle gates without the least notion of how I was going to open this very thorny matter of discovering who I was. I asked to see Milord, and was told he could see no one. I asked a servant to tell Milord that a foreigner, a Frenchman, who had come at his own request, desired the honour of seeing him. He laughed in my face.

'Milord,' he said, 'is not wanting a dancer, a hairdresser or a cook, and has no need of your services.'

I withdrew to an inn, and, bethinking me that the half shilling which Milord had given me might be useful, I enclosed it in a letter informing him of my arrival, and gave it to the landlord to deliver.

The talisman worked immediately. A quarter of an hour later a footman came to lead me to the Castle, and ushered me into my brother's study.

He was alone.

'You have been a long while,' said he. 'I was afraid you would not keep your word.' Then, observing that I was trembling: 'Sit down,' said he, 'for you seem tired. Tell me what it is. I am in your debt, and the obligation weighs on me. Have you come to give me an opportunity of discharging it?'

'Yes, Milord,' I replied, throwing myself at his feet. 'I come to seek at your hands peace, honour, and the happiness of all that I hold most dear. All this is in your power.'

'Rise,' said he, 'rise. I thought you a man, but you are weeping!'

'I am not a man, Milord.'

'Not a man! Are you the devil?'

'What?' I continued, almost suffocated by the torrent of my tears; 'does this sad face recall nothing to you? Does nothing speak for me in the depths of your heart, when mine is like to break?'

'What do you mean—your face and your heart? You are a woman: what can I have in common with a woman?'

'Blood, Milord!' I cried. 'The unhappy Rebecca . . .!' I could not go on.

'Rebecca!' said my brother; 'my sister Rebecca . . .!'

He had no time to say more: he had fallen back in his chair. I held him in my arms and wept upon his shoulder. He looked at me in amazement, with his mouth open, and seemed incapable of movement.

Suddenly he got up, and pushed me back on to a chair.

'Leave me!' he ordered; 'you must not make me weep. My sister Rebecca! But what has happened to you? Whence have you come, you foolish creature?'

My brother was touched, I could see it.

'Listen, Milord,' said I, at his knees once more; 'promise me your forgiveness for what I have done, and promise that my sisters, Milady Mellfont, Milady Etherge, our brother, and the whole family shall forgive me too.'

'Rise, rise,' he again said, hastily. 'You are not to humiliate yourself over such people. If you have been foolish, so have the rest of us, beginning with myself. The Bishop of Lincoln is a fanatic; Lady Heat-Moore is a hypochondriac; my sons-in-law are dolts, and my daughters are fools who ought to be in Bedlam. You are not to trouble yourself over that crazy crew. I don't know you very well, but I can assure you that I already think more of you than of all the rest put together. You call yourself Sentry, and you are the Captain Sentry of whom every one speaks so well. You have done good service to the State, you saved my purse and perhaps my life. You may not be a virtuous lady, but you are a brave and gallant fellow.'

Encouraged by such an auspicious attitude on his part, I began the relation of my adventures, and he listened to me with attention and interest. I spoke of your birth.

'So you have a son,' says he; 'is he alive? Is he a good lad?'

These two questions seemed to promise well for you, and I continued my narrative with the greatest confidence. When I had finished:

'I have listened to you with pleasure, Rebecca,' said Milord; 'you have greatly amused and interested me. Ah, my fine sons-in-law! So I have not lost everything! There are still some on whom I can bestow the natural affection that is their due. You must open your heart to me, Rebecca. Since my son's death, my daughters and their husbands have been nothing but a source of annoyance to me. They regard my fortune as belonging to them, and me as their agent, and they have no regard for me at all. Since Lady Heat-Moore is childless they take no notice of her, and they treat our clerical brother even more cavalierly. He tried to remonstrate with them, but they called him a pedant, which made him extremely angry. We will do all we can for your son, my Rebecca. Go to him, go and see to your business, and do not come here until I have the matter in hand.'

So saying, he embraced me and was about to dismiss me, but held me back.

'Wait; can you assure me that your son has not a drop of that cursed Irish blood in his veins?'

My reply set his mind at rest.

'Rely on me,' said he; 'we won't even leave him his Irish name, but say nothing to him as yet: he knows not who he is, let him continue in his ignorance. He is young, and he might not be able to hold his tongue, and we must keep everything as secret as possible. We are dealing with men about the Court, and their intrigues might well defeat our purposes. Good-bye, my Rebecca, let me have news of you, and I will send for you when the time comes.'

I came to you at Mistress Bullcock's house, and we set out for the county of Sussex. We arrived at Corntree. I had to secure an acquaintance in Mistress Brown's establishment. I found means to enter into relations with Master Jackmann, and we were soon admitted to the Castle. Sir Archibald was paying his addresses to Miss Dorothy, though making but little progress in her heart. But both families were urging the alliance on the young lady, and as the suitor was agreeable, she might well be persuaded to decide in his favour. By introducing you to the house in your Welsh costume, I enabled you to get on familiar terms with her, and find an opportunity to declare yourself if it should be necessary. Then I should have told you who you were, the honourable estate which was your right, and I have no doubt that you would have made her refuse the Baronet's brilliant offers. But he did not give us the trouble of disputing his mistress's heart. He ruined himself by his own caprice and want of principle. I observed that he took particular notice of you in the early days of our arrival at the Castle. He overwhelmed me with compliments of you to my very face—he threw himself at my head: in a word, his behaviour was un-English, and surely insincere.

I had made certain inquiries as to his character, and I suspected his motives. I was careful to be constantly in your company, so that the sense of restraint should lend more ardour to the passing fancy with which he honoured you. He took advantage of the first moment I left you to send you a letter. I pretended to tear it up at the moment you gave it to me; but I was deceiving you. Obliged to return to Westfield, I mentioned to Master Jackmann my embarrassment at leaving you in charge of a servant.

'I will take her myself,' said the worthy man.

'She is very young,' said I.

'Very well, then, I'll suggest that Mistress Brown should take her.'

'But that,' said I, 'would be to expose her to even greater danger: to deliver her over to her enemy.' And I handed Sir Archibald's letter to the minister. The honest parson, who was referred to in the letter in no very complimentary terms, was deeply shocked at such a proof of wickedness and immorality. He took the letter to the Castle and gave it to Mistress Brown. An hour later the good lady herself dismissed the Baronet without giving any reasons to Miss Dorothy, for we were afraid that, as you were to be much in her company, this might set her slightly against you. Between my return to Corntree and the moment when we got into our carriage to come here, nothing happened which needs any explanation from me; but, when we were six miles from Westfield, being in a position to turn the conversation in whatever direction I pleased, I opened the subject of the various situations in life. I teased you and irritated you, and I compelled you, in a manner of speaking, to ask to become a Lord, simply to defy me. Far from being out of countenance when you had made your choice, I suggested that you should try your title on all the castles we could find in the neighbourhood and choose the one you liked best. Just at that moment the Castle and park where we now are was in full view. I offered it to you, and you preferred it to four or five private mansions, handsome indeed, but less magnificent; which was quite natural. The story of my adventure with your uncle will explain what has happened to you in his house. Forgive me, my dear son, for having abused your credulity.

Up to a certain point I could not help myself. Besides, though it may be a fault in persons whose principles have been embellished and strengthened by their education, age, and experience, 'tis none in a young man just leaving college: he may doubt and believe, and no one will think the worse of him, if he be not merely light and capricious. Since he has not yet gone very deeply into matters, his very indecision is a proof of judgement and natural sagacity.

It only remains for me to tell you what are our expectations. Lady Heat-Moore and the Bishop of Lincoln are completely reconciled with me and prepared to recognize you: you will be the Bishop's heir; and Lady Heat-Moore is about to present you at once with a magnificent estate of hers in the county of Somerset. It produces an income of three thousand pounds sterling; but there is one condition attaching to the gift. She needs twenty thousand pounds sterling to put her affairs in order: I am lending this amount to her free of interest, and she will leave it to you in her will. His Lordship, your uncle, is arranging for you to inherit the family title, and this estate which bears our name. The rent-roll is more than four thousand pounds sterling, and you will come into it at his death. He will make a suitable settlement on you at your marriage. For myself, as I have decided to live with you henceforward, I shall only keep the barest necessities. In this way, my son, you are a suitor that Miss Dorothy's family must regard as by no means ineligible. While Lords Mellfont and Etherge are negotiating at Court for your elevation to the Peerage, and with Lord Halifax to induce him to ask Sir George Nettling personally for his daughter's hand on your behalf, Lady Heat-Moore, who knows Lady Nettling, will undertake to obtain her consent, and I shall set out for Corntree, where I shall try to influence Mistress Brown in your favour. I leave you, my dear boy, with your uncle:

you must be well aware, by what I have told you, of the sort of man he is. Strive to deserve his friendship and his esteem, and seek every means to make yourself agreeable to him. You should do so even if only for your own interest, but all the more from gratitude.

CONCLUSION

Richard had listened eagerly to his mother's story. Night had fallen without his noticing that it had grown dark. Deeply touched by all the kindness that had been shown to him, he was quite overcome by his feelings, and could not speak: he could only express his emotions by pressing Lady O'Berthon's hand. As his destiny was gradually unfolded, his spirit seemed to expand and his soul took unto itself wings. His good fortune did not surprise him, he contemplated it modestly, and with a fine spirit of unselfishness; indeed, he deserved it already by his moderation in prosperity, and by the use he intended to make of it.

When he got back to the Castle he found his Lordship alone, and the youth and his mother shared that nobleman's affectionate embraces, for he had conceived a true affection for Richard, and looked upon him already as his son.

Lady O'Berthon, wearing her captain's uniform, set out for Sussex on the following day. Richard, left alone at Westfield, found his Lordship occasionally a little odd and abrupt; but these little storms were only momentary, and even if he had not begun to feel a great deal of affection and respect for his uncle, his character had been so moulded and (so to say) melted in the ordeals to which the supposed Captain had subjected him, that these trifling breezes did not distress him in the least. He contrived constantly to defer to his Lordship without compromising any opinion the other might have of his good sense, without flattery and with proper dignity. The nobleman was astonished. He could only conceive of two kinds of character, strong and weak: the first he considered to be his own, and the second seemed to him low and unworthy of an Englishman. His nephew seemed to be able to combine courtesy with dignity. He did not want to spoil the young man, but he said to himself: 'That is what an Englishman ought to be like: we never know the happy mean, we always go to extremes.' In a word, his nephew gradually cured him of his misanthropy, a fault which obscured his admirable qualities, and deprived him of all pleasure in the enjoyment of his fortune.

Ten days after Lady O'Berthon's departure, Richard received a letter from her:

My Dear Son,

Mistress Brown, relying on my character, and knowing the name of Westfield, accepted my proposals at the very outset. The question was to dispose her niece in favour of marriage: this, in her view, was the most difficult part of the business. I asked her permission to speak with Miss Dorothy in private, and obtained it. I doubt whether she would have heard me out, when I spoke of marriage with a Peer of the Realm, had not the name of that Peer been Richard. This name had some mysterious power of attracting her attention. I continued with the discharge of my mission: and, to lessen her surprise and avoid upsetting her, I spoke of a certain illness at Clostern, and of a clergyman who had come to see her. She looked at me, my dear Richard, and collected her thoughts. 'What! Can it have been you, Mr. Sentry, whom my aunt brought to me thus disguised?' 'Yes, sweet Miss,' I answered; 'I came then to speak to you on Richard's behalf, and it is for the same Richard that I now come to ask your hand.' I did not meet with a refusal, my dear boy. I was asked for news of Bekit. 'Bekit!' I answered, with a mysterious air; 'let us keep that secret, dear Miss. It was—it was the sister of your friend Miss Cawsson; it was Miss Cawsson herself; it was—and at one time I was called Tom Cawsson.' Dorothy tried to interrupt with a thousand questions, but I ran away laughing into Mistress Brown's room. I told her of the success of my mission, and I gave her the letters from your uncles, his

Lordship and the Bishop. We drew up the replies together. I made the aunt promise to use her influence with her brother and sister-in-law, which she undertook to do. Everything went as well as it could do. Master Jackmann, who had been informed of my arrival, came in, and we greeted each other warmly. 'And what of dear Bekit?' he asked. 'Bekit,' I answered, 'I am sorry, my dear friend, but she is no longer in my charge. Lord Westfield, our friend and benefactor, is now responsible for her, and is arranging a wealthy marriage for her.' 'Lord Westfield!' he repeated. 'Himself,' I replied. 'He knows your kindness to us and is greatly touched by it. He has even taken the trouble to get your preferment, and here is the portrait of your mistress.' The worthy man listened open-mouthed; he cast his eyes on the paper I had given to him: it was his nomination to the Deanery of Perthunn, by the Bishop of Lincoln. I added the details of the stipend. Ah, my dear boy, a deanery bringing in seven hundred pounds sterling annually is a very agreeable prospect! I was both touched and delighted by our friend's satisfaction. I called him Mr. Dean: he was overjoyed. I asked him to resign the benefice of Corntree in favour of Master Borton, the chaplain at Woodstock. Mistress Brown had no objection, and the matter was arranged. The news must have reached Woodstock by now.

After all I had done for you and your friends, I thought it was time to think of mine. I am leaving for Wales. I propose that Stephen shall marry Miss Bullcock; and when that is over we intend to come back for your wedding. Good-bye, Richard, try to deserve your uncle's goodwill, and the favour of Heaven.

All a mother's affection and her blessing is yours.

Richard took this letter to his uncle. His lordship had just received correspondence from his sons-in-law, from Lady Heat-Moore, and from the Bishop of Lincoln. The matter of the Peerage had been arranged, and was to be passed at the first meeting of Parliament a week later. Lady Heat-Moore had paid a visit to Lady Nettling, who expressed herself as highly honoured by the request of her daughter's hand for the heir to the house of Westfield. Sir George, as the result of Lord Halifax's representations, had been delighted, and instead of six thousand pounds sterling per annum from landed property, had generously offered eight thousand. Mistress Brown added two thousand, and promised she would make Miss Dorothy her heiress. The Earl of Westfield was even more delighted than Richard at these opulent prospects. Richard thought of nothing but the possession of Dorothy, and, in his view, so much money more or less could add nothing to his happiness. However, the two families, so happily in agreement, hastened the happy day. The place for the ceremony had already been arranged. The Bishop of Lincoln was to celebrate it in the Castle, which Lady Heat-Moore was presenting to Richard. The appointed day arrived, and every one who was to join the brilliant assemblage set out for the county of Somerset. Mistress Brown, detained by illness, was not able to accompany her niece, and Sir George Nettling had come to escort her. Lady Heat-Moore and Lady Nettling also came with her. The Bishop of Lincoln, the Earl of Westfield, Lords Mellfont and Etherge, and their wives, Lady O'Berthon, now suitably dressed, and Stephen, accompanied the bridegroom. At the moment of meeting, Sir George Nettling and Milady his wife were struck by their son-in-law's handsome appearance, and by the idea that they had already seen him somewhere. But the magnificence of the assemblage, and the proceedings generally, effectively dispelled all idea of Richard the footman, and of Miss Cawsson. The lovers alone recognized each other. They seemed ashamed and embarrassed in each other's presence: and so they might well be, even if they had never met before; but their embarrassment arose from their uneasiness at being the object of so many eyes, which prevented them expressing their mutual delight. Sir George cried, 'There goes the finest pair in England!' and the rest of the company applauded them in more restrained terms. They started in procession to the Castle chapel, and the lovers were united.

Foible and Molly were spectators of the ceremony. Foible could not help saying, 'The husband is as like as two peas to Miss Cawsson.'

'He 's much more like the Welsh girl I told you about,' said Molly. 'Everywhere I go I never see anything but those great dark blue almond eyes, enough to turn any girl's head. They haunt me.'

Richard and Dorothy were happy, and still are. Their respect and affection is shared between Lady O'Berthon and Lord Westfield. They have children, whose happy dispositions inspire the brightest hopes, and they are the benefactors of all the neighbourhood. Lady O'Berthon is their friend and counsellor: she has given up for ever her travels and her soldier's habit. Stephen has left Wales and settled in Somerset. He has forgiven Captain Sentry for hiding from him Miss Rebecca Westfield's adventures, and the bonds of their friendship are drawn closer every day.

The End of

HIS MOST UNLOOKED-FOR LORDSHIP