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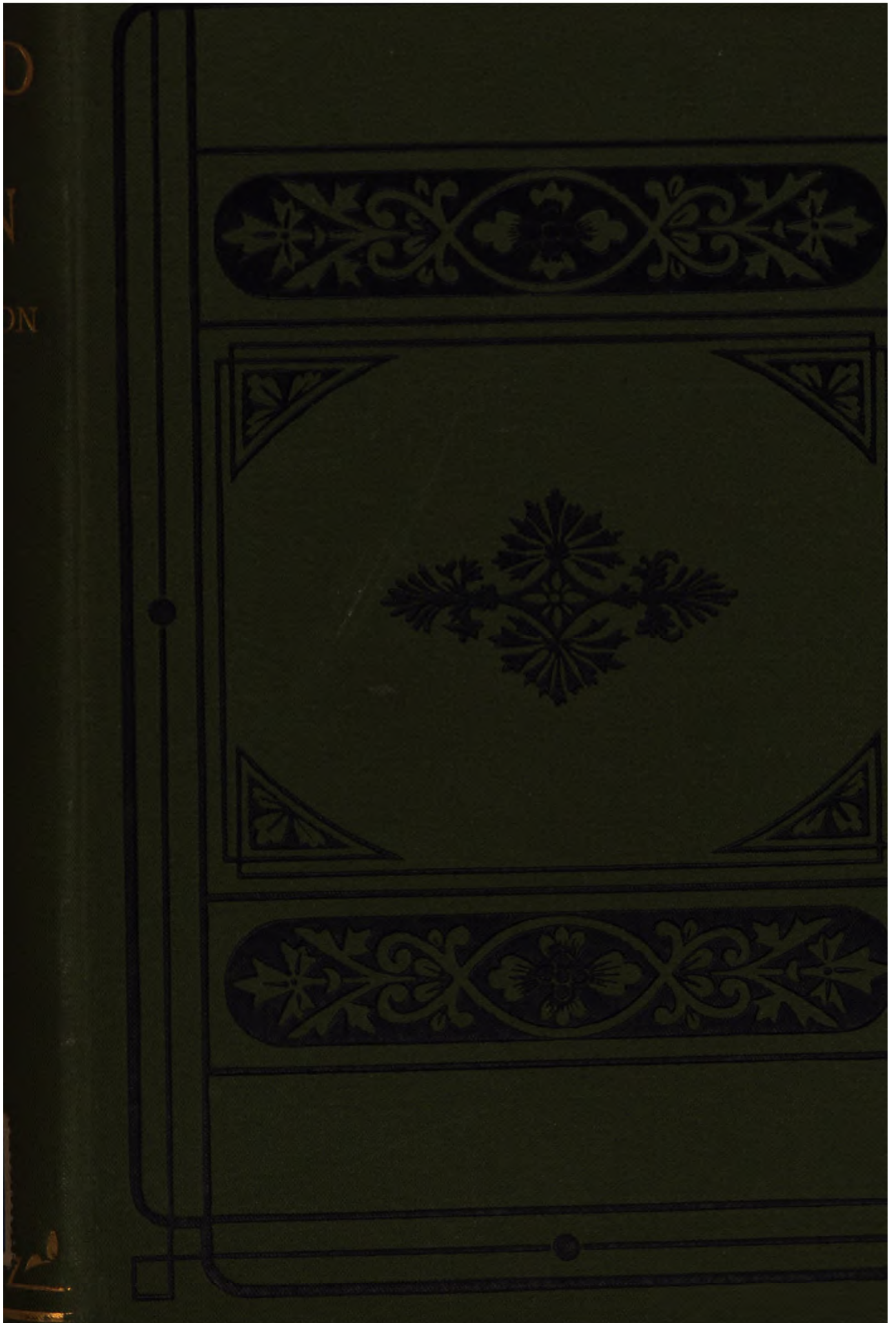
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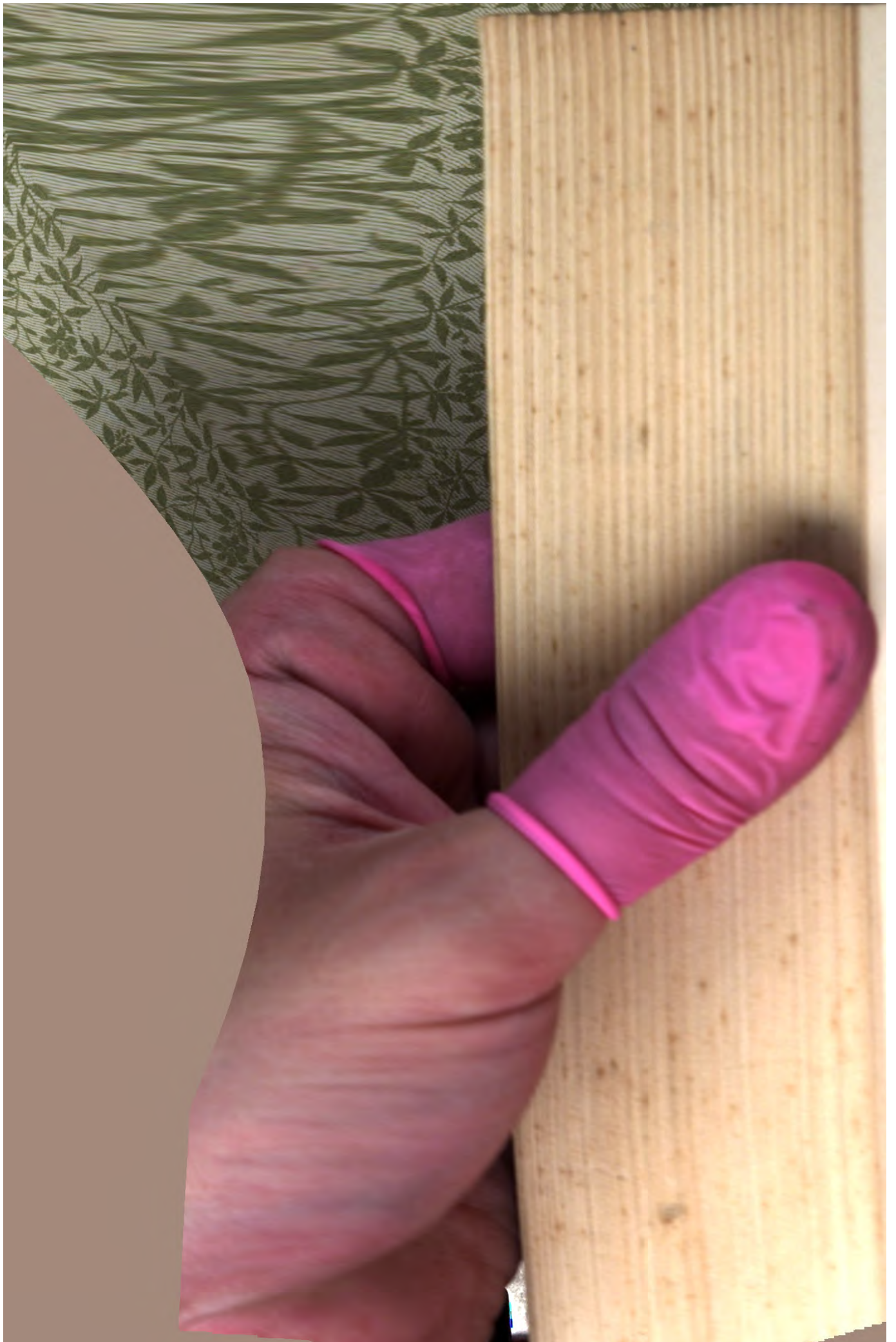
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Augustine have nothing else to do and had that be just then. It will just suit me in all respects."

"I replied St. Clare readily.

St. Clare meanwhile on my arrival at Beims acquainted you of my whereabouts.

"I was already there when you do after the Valloniere. "Papa and I the ladies the seaside for the sake of Cousin is very fond of, when we

"Why are thinking of going to

"I had many, to drink the waters

to spend the

French the gambling-tables?" asked

would not is a pleasant place, and

his love such people."

the tables," said Marie; "but

young Hungarian, one evening

eight thousand francs. He

ough, the next morning. I

that he would lose all that

to stay and to play at the

you were there one night," said St.

and singing, and the King of

"I had his staff. He was in a

in the there was a large mirror

with

Augustine St. Clare, and the knight had that he loved her more than need be, and more than anything on earth.

St. Clare dined with them again. Before he took his leave, he said to the Comtesse de Sevrey :

" You will, you say, be leaving us after to-morrow, Marquis. If so, I will regret the happiness of seeing you or the Comtesse, until we meet next spring."

" Will you be engaged to-morrow?"

" I shall. I regret it very much, but I must to spend to-morrow with my friend Pietrozzi. He is a particular friend, and I would not wish to disappoint him. I will be at his house whether I like it or not, and I do not only offending him, which I do not wish to do."

" When will you be off the island again?" asked the Marquis de Sevrey. " I wish to be made aware of the time you will be there beforehand; because I wish to spend a week or two in that fine and fertile island of yours, when you shall be at leisure, and when you have no other friends to attend to."

" I shall be at Dieppe, I expect, in the latter end of the coming month. Will that time meet your other friends?"

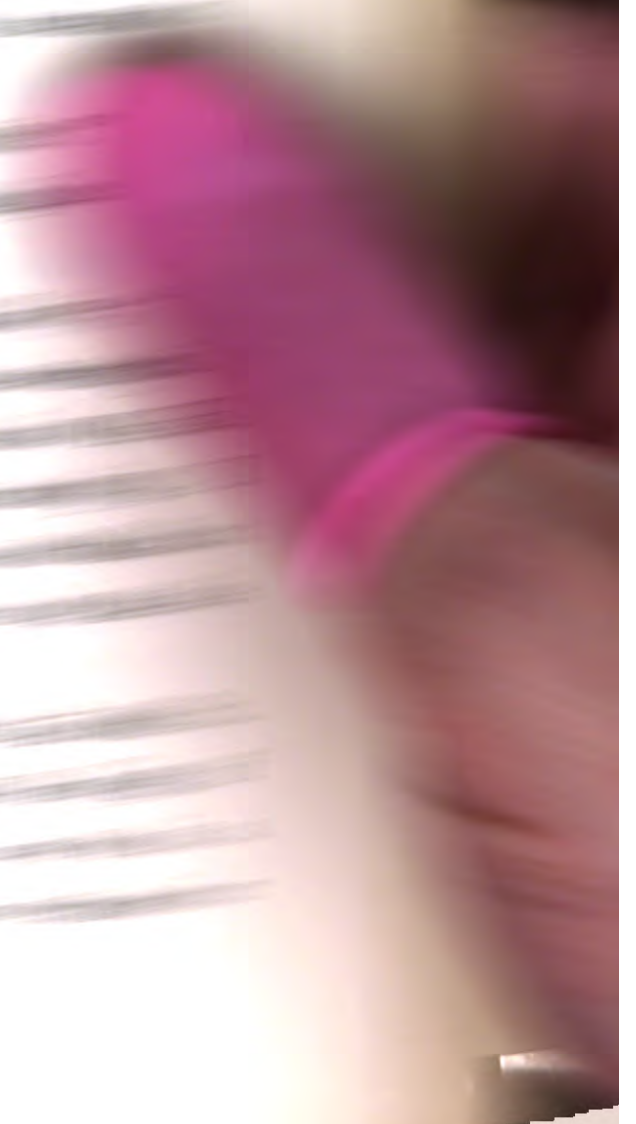
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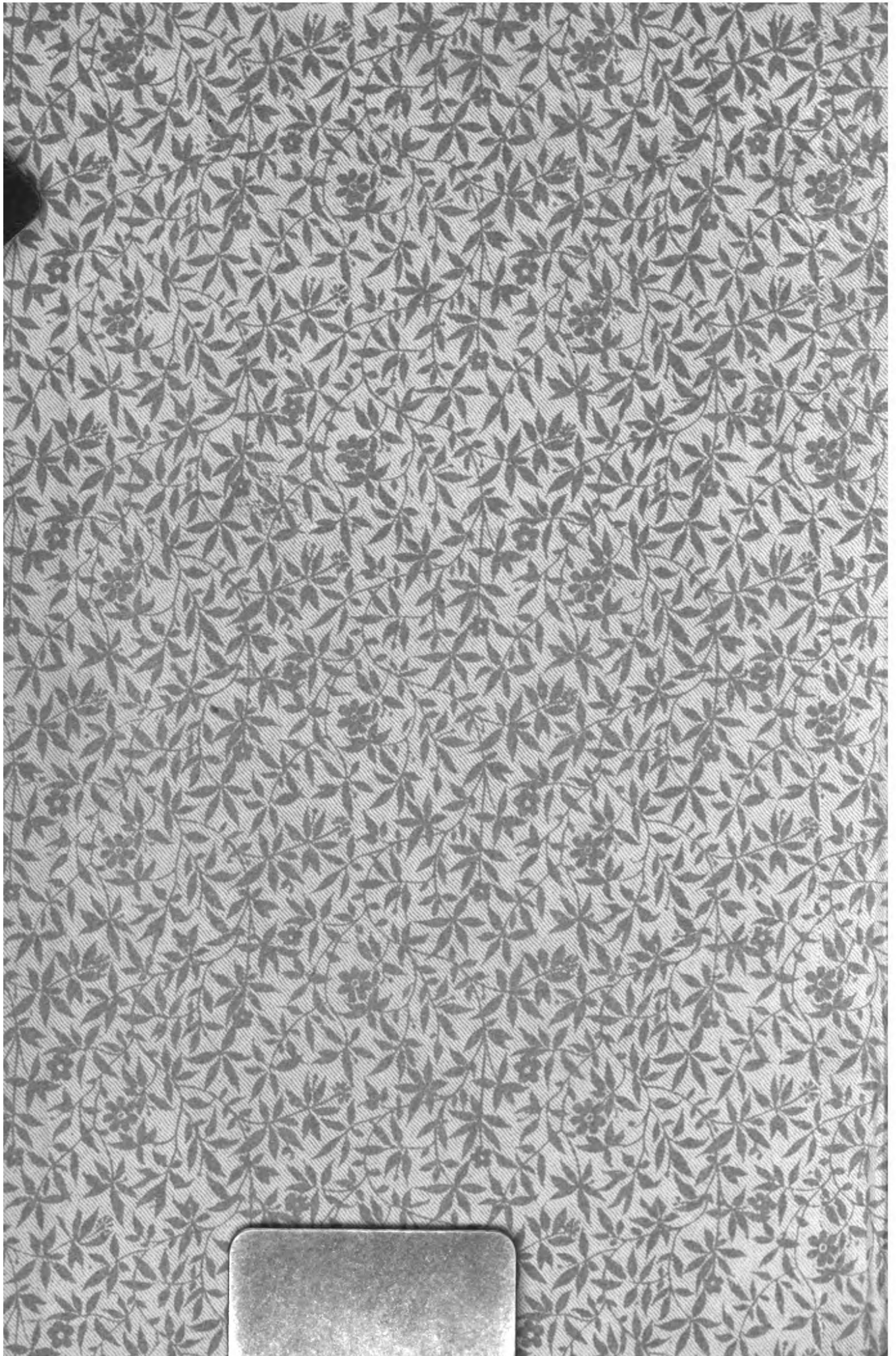
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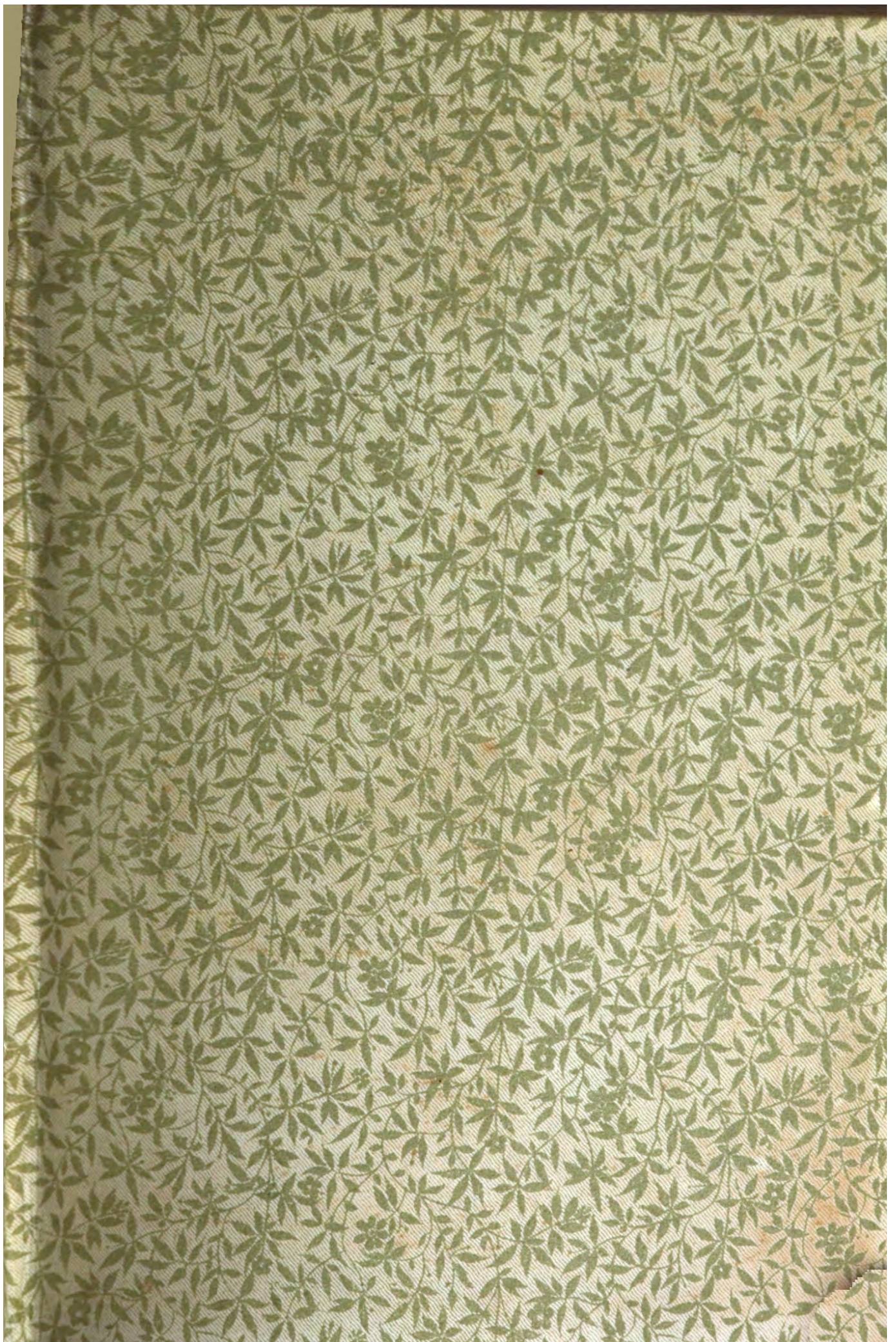
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# KILLED AT SEDAN.

A Novel.

BY

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*Of the Middle Temple,*

AUTHOR OF "NOEL D'AUVERGNE," ETC., ETC.



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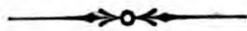
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# KILLED AT SEDAN.



## CHAPTER I.

IT was one of those delicious summer evenings when the special loveliness of Dame Nature is particularly revealed by the depth of golden sunlight lingering upon broad brown mountain, pellucid river, and varying sky, that a splendidly-equipped battery of royal artillery flashed irregularly in the departing gleams as the silent-voiced guns rumbled slowly, and the dust and travel-stained soldiers sat at their ease in the hard saddles or else upon the warlike carriages attached to those grim-looking cannons, whose angry roar in the hour of battle has aided in hushing for aye the merry gladness of many a lovely and peaceful homestead.

The procession did not loiter anywhere as the soldiers hesitated whither they should proceed, but wended along its slow and tedious journey by the

skirts of a high roadway, which was one mass of white from the accumulation of the dust, which had been allowed to gather there during several hot days, coming after one another in regular succession. The laughter of the men as they proceeded rose upwards upon the summer air, and it was mingled with happy songs and venturesome jokes, the convivial tone and merriment of which chimed in pleasing unison with the careless spirits which were possessed by those whose noble and enviable profession it is to guard jealously, come what may, through weal and through woe, the glorious and sacred honour and safety of our common and united empire.

These soldiers had not had the good fortune to have been in England for many years. And so everything they saw appeared new to them and peculiarly strange as they went along. Only one short week ago they landed in the Irish city of Cork, whither they had come from the far-off east, and the shining medals sparkling on the stalwart breasts of the brown-faced men, told with an eloquence all their own, the famous story of gallant battles fought and successfully won in distant lands, many leagues away from this, where the sound of unknown languages falls strangely on the ear of the listener, and makes the soldier exiles sigh wearily for the haunts and woodlands of ever merry

England, or else Scotland's bonny hills and heather slopes, or the pleasant green fields of Erin.

The artillery train, consisting, as it mostly does in such cases, of guns and horses, men, women, children, and the accompanying indispensable impedimenta in the familiar shape of ordinary baggage, was drawing every minute nearer and nearer to the pretty town of Clonmel, which is situated on the banks of that well-known river Suir, which the poet Spenser mentions in his "Faëry Queen," when night folded the form of nature in her sombre, star-studded drapery, and the gentle moon threw her silver shadows over wood and upland, and living busy, thriving town, and dales and murmuring streams which rolled along ceaselessly to their own pleasing music. There was just left upon the surrounding scene that sufficient light to lend an aspect of romance—what are our lives even of the most unpretending amongst us without a romance of some kind or other?—to the picturesque *cortège*, while it glided through the outskirts of Clonmel, passed, babbled at and shouted at by excited children, under the archway named the West Gate, and found itself in one of the principal streets of the town.

At length the military procession, weary enough, Heaven knew, from its long hot march, arrived at its final destination in the barracks, built where the

further end of the town of Clonmel approached its eastern termination in a line of lowly-built cottages, stretching out in a direction towards the country, and which were tenanted by an humble class of people.

Soon a most busy assemblage gathered promiscuously together in varied groups. One or two of the officers, having been all day in the saddle, seemed to show greater symptoms of fatigue than their hardier brothers-in-arms, and so they threw carelessly and languidly the frothy reins of their valuable steeds to respectful grooms, and looking for some new object to interest them, they sauntered into the messroom in order to rest their weary limbs, and to partake of some of the refreshments which were there spread out for them on several tables in enviable variety, and so as to please the most fastidious palate. The soldiers meanwhile—the officers' watchful eyes being no longer on them—commenced to engage in the several ordinary duties which were allotted to them, and began to look fondly to the wants of the horses, so as to give them good stabling, hay, and oats, and then they made them up carefully for the night in the barrack-stalls which were prepared for them; and having done so, they proceeded next, as was their usual custom after a day's march, to polish with assiduous care until it happened to obtain



again its proper degree of regulation brightness, the harness of the horses, and the rope-woven traces by which the guns, with their appendant carriages, were hauled along—a new principle, by the way, in Artillery tactics, after the manner of ship-guns—and which, travelling on the dusty roads, had dulled to-day to an unwonted degree of dirt and negligent appearance. Others, meanwhile, of the boisterous soldiers were paying the strictest of attention and military supervision, intent enough to please the most lynx-eyed of martinets, to the bores of the guns themselves, as well as the waggons or cars belonging thereto, and in which it was customary to convey the requisite ammunition—balls and powder, for service. Whilst the women of the party, being comparatively free once more from their immediate cares and responsibilities, commenced to gossip garrulously with one another—telling to each other their wrongs and troubles, and family quarrels, in which the husband always bore the chief part, whether for praise or blame—and which is ever an old, old story—or else, being tired of dilating any further upon such immediate domestic topics, they turned to scold the little children for their natural desire for play, or else made themselves useful—and indeed, Heaven blessed them for it—about their husband's necessary comforts. Some half-a-dozen invalided soldiers watched

from the interior of an ambulance waggon the excited scene going on around them with wistful helplessness, and occasionally turned their eyes full-orbed heavenward, as one might do whom suffering is whispering secrets to.

Leaning against an extensive pile of luggage, and apparently deeply interested in the business of the scene about her, which, from its comparative frequency, was more or less familiar to her, remained a young girl, whose age seemed between fifteen and sixteen. Close to her face upon an iron-bound trunk, stood a bright lantern, which betrayed but indistinctly the innocent beauty of that changeful fair countenance, whereon no story of unmerited care is written yet by the years which stamp us all in some way or other, that we heed not till time goes by. Having previously laid aside her delicate amber-coloured gloves, she folded her little white hands in her lap, and then she bent down her softly-gleaming eyes towards the ground in a musing and perplexed fashion. What can she be thinking of? Perhaps of that fairy-like India, which a few months since was her happy home, and which had been her home from early childhood. Here, too, are most of her friends, and no doubt she is also thinking of them. One must needs be pained by touches of memory sometimes, even at the age of fifteen or sixteen; and this girl was not

exempted from the half-pleasing pang. Unused to the night air of this our colder climate, she shivered slightly, and hastened to fold more closely around her slender figure the rich vivid Indian shawl, which had been the gift last year of an Indian Prince, whose dwelling was in the neighbourhood of her father's temporary home. This young lady's name was Lucie, and her father, Colonel Legrange, was in command of the soldiers who this evening arrived in Clonmel.

She still maintained her musing attitude, until, in a few moments, the well-known voice she was patiently waiting for accosted her. In an instant her demeanour underwent an animated change, displaying gladsome eagerness. "Good-night, Miss Lucie! Here I am, at last; I have come as soon as ever I could be spared, to look after your things.

"Oh, George! how glad I am you have come. I had a tedious journey by railway from Cork, and at the Limerick Junction my maid nearly lost part of my luggage."

"Well, miss, I congratulate you at all events, on your safe arrival." A tall soldier stood in front of Lucie Legrange, holding his military cap respectfully in one hand. The gleaming lantern by the girl's side lit up at times his handsome eyes, the two medals, the Victoria Cross upon his breast, and the insignia of full sergeant upon his coat. "Here we

are," he continued gaily, "landed at length in a place of rest, after our dreadfully long trip from Calcutta. It was a distant place to come from, Miss Lucie, and I am sure you are very sorry for leaving it."

"Yes," she replied; "I had true friends there. Truer, George, than I shall expect to find ever again."

"You may count upon always having true friends, wherever you go, Miss Lucie."

"I am not so certain of that, George," she replied, with serious earnestness. "Where's papa?" she asked.

"In the officer's quarters, miss. I have lately been with him taking my orders. He sent me hither to look after you, and to ascertain if you are comfortable. Standing almost motionless in this chilly night air after the climate of India, I fear won't do you much good, Miss Lucie? If you will accompany me, I shall conduct you to the place of abode Colonel Legrange has chosen for you. It is on the right there where you see those two windows. I trust you will not have reason to find fault with it, especially since it was by my advice the Colonel took possession of yonder rooms. Come this way, Miss Lucie, please."

"And why, by your advice, George?"

"Because I know this barracks of old."

"Then you have been in it before; stationed here?"

"No, not stationed here. But I have been in this barracks."

"Papa," Lucie said, "sent word to tell me where we were to live. My maid is already in the rooms preparing them for papa and myself. I was only waiting where you found me until you came, for papa said, he, as usual, would place me in your charge. That servant-maid of mine, George, is a good creature, and faithful to me, black as her face is."

"It is black enough, Miss Lucie, anyhow," he answered, smiling.

"Is it safe to leave the luggage here?" she asked. "Here are some valuable parcels, which might be stolen."

"Point them out to me, Miss Lucie."

She did so; and taking them into his arms forthwith, he gently added:

"I'll carry them." Then he called some one by name "Power!"

"Here you are!" answered the person thus addressed, and immediately a soldier approached.

"Stand by here," George said to him, "until I come back to you. These are Miss Lucie's things, so be careful. I need say no more to you."

The private made a polite military salute in

deference to his commanding-officer's daughter, and willingly obeyed.

Lucie Legrange, accompanied by Sergeant George Clayton, the latter carrying those diminutive parcels the young lady was so anxious about, arrived in three or four minutes at those apartments selected for the occupation of the colonel and his only child. Five years ago Lucie had lost the best of mothers, and Colonel Legrange the best of wives ; and the gloom of that mutual sorrow hovered over father and daughter—husband and child—even to this hour. Never again would he meet her like ; never again trust a heart as he had trusted hers ; never again look into eyes like hers, whose brightest glance was reserved for him alone. Ah ! there are some things we cannot easily forget, and above all, an angel who was the sweet presence in our house, and has been withdrawn from her dear place by our fireside, no more to return to it in this life.

As soon as Lucie and the sergeant arrived at the yet unfurnished sitting-room, the former was accosted by the dusky-hued maid, who announced to her youthful mistress that the apartments would soon, she trusted, be arranged to Miss Lucie's satisfaction. Miss Lucie shrugged her pretty shoulders, for the prospect was not very inviting nor very hopeful at present.

The three standing in a group there—the soldier

keeping somewhat aloof behind — formed a picturesque study. The Eastern woman in her native dress of bright colours, her shining dark eyes, her vivid red boots, green shawl, and strikingly purple dress, the ornament gleaming in the side of her nose, the black hair contrasting with the pale green outer garment which she wore. And Lucie Legrange, in her simple travelling-costume, looked fairer in complexion and more beautiful in feature alongside the dark, irregular-faced daughter of India. The rich shawl, of magnificent manufacture, which Lucy carried *en voyage*, as though it were no better than a travelling rug, was now thrown back from her shoulders, revealing her developing form, exquisite in its lines of beauty. Her small, well-set head was erect with an unconscious grace, and no sculptor would have found fault with the proportions of the snowy neck. Two radiant blue eyes—the shrines of truth—shone alternately upon her handmaid and the stalwart, upright soldier, who blushed once with deep thrilling joy as those clear eyes sought his own without any shadow of fear, any expression but that of guileless trustfulness.

The soldier himself was well worth a scrutiny. One should journey some distance to find a figure more perfectly framed, or features more truly expressive of manly comeliness. His rich brown

hair, although cut short, nevertheless flowed in its natural waves of gold, and no oil, no pomade, afforded that silken gloss to it, or to the cultivated moustache which drooped from his upper lip, yet not so thickly drooped as to conceal the affectionate form of his refined mouth. No beard hid the delicate shaped chin, and no whiskers took from his military appearance. Every action seemed eloquent of the soldier, and the soldier to the core. He neither looked thirty—nor was he yet thirty, although a full sergeant. He had shared much service; the bullets of Russian foes and of Indian mutineers paved the way for his rapid promotion, in addition to which, must be taken into consideration, his excellent conduct, which afforded his comrades a worthy example to follow. He was greatly liked amongst the men; for, although his honours came thick upon him, he was not ambitious of them, and the others knew it. His fellows were glad that he should get on. On his breast reposed two English medals with several clasps, a Turkish medal likewise, and last, not least, the Victoria Cross.

Sergeant Clayton had won this enviable decoration for saving the life of an officer during the Crimean campaign, in the following manner: the officer was left behind wounded in the field of battle, and no one had the courage to return for



him, until George Clayton saw where he lay. He did not then know for certain who the prostrate officer might be. But seeing him there, he thought of one particular officer, and a vision came into his mind all at once of a wife and a home away in England belonging to that officer, and caring little for his own life—caring nothing for it, he dashed forward, striking two unbidden tears from his eyes, with a resolve in his heart, that if he could help it, the wife and the home should not be made desolate. He had no wife of his own, and no home either. He had only his health and his soldier's pay, and whatever else may happen to belong to a friendless soldier. Braving the Russian muskets, he rushed across, now taking shelter here, now taking shelter there, to where the officer was lying, with his conscious eyes gazing at the unclouded sky.

The enemy shot at George Clayton right and left, striking him in both arms and in the neck, and laughing coarsely amongst themselves when the bullets hit him and made him reel like a drunken man. George did not feel the hurts very much yet, and went boldly and steadfastly on his dangerous way. He arrived without further mishap at the spot where the officer had fallen. The latter having recognised George, smiled gratefully. George Clayton then found that it was his own

superior officer, Captain Legrange; the remembrance of Mrs. Legrange and her child, Lucie, flashed across the mind of the brave soldier and pained him. George stooped down with a short sigh to lift the officer in his arms and carry him within the British lines. At that instant a bullet hit poor George in the leg, and there he lay next moment beside the officer, and like him, powerless to arise and walk away.

“It can’t be helped, sir,” he sighed drearily. “We must only endeavour to bear it together, now that we are forced to remain in each other’s company, willy nilly, as the old saying is, whether we like it or no. I do not know whether you do like it or not. I’m sure I don’t. We shall have to grin and bear it!”

Captain Legrange smiled notwithstanding his dangerous state, and replied:

“For the present, at least, that’s our best and truest philosophy. But Clayton, my poor fellow,” he added with much consideration, “I am so deucedly sorry for you. Hang it! you should have left me to my fate.”

“Ah! I couldn’t do that, sir.”

“Well, you were the only fellow amongst my men who had the courage, or might I say the thoughtfulness, to come for me. Clayton, if we ever get safely out of this scrape, I shall be of

some service to you, mark my words! But I've lost too much blood. I cannot speak more."

He relapsed into silence.

There was an unbroken pause for some minutes, when suddenly George beheld a party of Russians creeping under the shelter of a deserted earthwork, and directing their stealthy steps towards the officer and himself.

"Captain, Captain," he whispered in an inaudible voice, "the villains will be down upon us in less than forty seconds. Give me your revolver at once. Quick, sir, hand it here to me; I'm a good shot, as good as any man in your regiment."

"Fire away, my dear fellow, and blow the blackguards out of the world! I cannot give you the revolver; you must take it yourself. All my strength is departed. I wonder have I any more blood left in my body! I am too weak to lift even an arm. If the devils shoot me, I can't give one kick in self-defence. By George! has it come to this pretty pass with Lucius Legrange! Am I to be shovelled into the earth and covered up out of sight? Good heavens! what will they do at home when they hear I am killed? Oh! Marie, my darling! Oh! Lucie, my little one!"

In the meantime, whilst Captain Legrange was thus rambling on concerning his own affairs, Bombardier Clayton—he was only a bombardier in

those days — was quietly looking in a practical manner to his officer's affairs as well as his own. He was killing the two proverbial birds with one stone; that is, having possessed himself of the desired revolver, which was a six-barrelled one, he saw with extreme satisfaction that all the barrels of that deadly weapon of warfare were loaded. His own gun, moreover, lay on the ground by his side, charged and cocked in readiness for immediate use. Then, observing that everything was prepared, he lay like a dead man, without apparently moving a muscle.

The Russians, eager to plunder the wounded officer, thought George Clayton dead—a surmise on their part in which they found themselves grievously disappointed. They never heeded him for the moment where he lay prostrate close to the other, with half the lid of one observant eye open in the most watchful suspense.

The plunderers, seven in number, hastened nearer. Already they were within ten paces of their booty, when George Clayton, raising himself partly up, and resting his left hand on the ground for support, emptied the several contents of the loaded revolver in rapid succession.

Six of the advancing men fell immediately, two of whom were seriously wounded, who subsequently were taken prisoners and brought within our lines.

Another of the enemy was mortally injured, and died some hours later. Three already were stone dead. The seventh of the party, still unscathed, turned on his heel to take refuge in speedy flight ; but George had the loaded musket in his hands, and, lifting it to his shoulder, he took ready aim, and knocked him over.

The enemy close by, thinking that a large ambuscade must be hidden somewhere in the vicinity in consequence of the number of shots which were so rapidly and with such precision fired, became at once alarmed for the safety of themselves, since it chanced that their own numbers in that particular spot were comparatively few. So they proceeded hurriedly to evacuate the position which they held, leaving in their dismay their guns behind them. George's comrades, perceiving the mistake which the others had made, gave forth a round of hearty cheers, and took possession without delay of the enemy's abandoned position and war material.

Then George Clayton received a thrilling ovation, which made his young eyes dim with deep emotion. He was mentioned in a marked manner in the next despatches, passed three months in hospital, received promotion soon afterwards, and eventually was decorated with the Victoria Cross.

It was thus Sergeant George Clayton, of Her

Majesty's Royal Artillery, won his Victoria Cross. And Colonel Legrange did not forget his promise which he made on that memorable battle-field. George Clayton did not long remain a bombardier.

## CHAPTER II.

“**M**ISS LUCIE, may I ask what you think of the place?” said the sergeant, while he continued respectfully standing aloof from her. “Will these rooms suit you—they are not entirely to be despised?”

Miss Legrange glanced around the apartment she occupied but half satisfied with its appearance.

“It must do for the present, I suppose,” she answered sadly. “Ah! it is not like my pretty room. Ah! no, it is not! Don’t you agree with me, Janie?” Lucie added, appealing to the silent black servant.

“Indeed, miss, I do decidedly,” she replied; and that gaily-dressed, swarthy-faced individual looked around the bare apartment with a doleful expression.

‘A soldier must put up with many inconveniences, and ——’ said George, and stopping short, for Miss Lucie interrupted him.

“A soldier’s daughter ought not to complain, you were going to add,” she remarked, with a smile.

“Not quite in those words,” he replied politely. “But you have spoken my thoughts for me,” he continued, bowing low. “You won’t find the room looking so dreary in the morning,” he continued. “I am confident you will not be quite dissatisfied with the apartments when you get better acquainted with them. You observe those two windows?”

“I hope there is a view of the country from them,” she said.

“These windows look out upon the country, and the fresh air comes grandly in from the neighbouring hills. And, Miss Lucie, when you go out with Janie for a ramble, you can have such a walk up these hills I speak of, and when you have gone up high enough you can have a pretty view of the surrounding scenery. Then, likewise, there is a pleasant stroll to be had along the bank of the river Suir. Behind you, yonder, there”—the soldier pointed in the direction he alluded to—“stands Slievenamon, a fine tall mountain, from the summit of which you can behold the sea.”

“One would be led to think you were born here, George, you appear to know the place so well; at least you must have been here before, previous,



perhaps, to your being a soldier. Were you working here?"

"No," he replied at once, with flashing eyes.

"This is your native place, George."

When she said these words it seemed as if the life of flesh and blood within him had suddenly gone out, and the erect soldier became like a sculptor's marble statue. Only for an instant did this unaccountable blight fall upon him ere it passed off, like the shadow of a cloud from a cornfield. He flung from his mind some unpleasant thought, and the child-girl, surprised at the change which had come over him, exclaimed:

"This town is your birthplace, George."

He made no reply. She discovered instinctively that she had struck a chord slumbering within him which it would have been better to have left untouched. She added:

"I fear that at some period of your life, which is past and gone, unhappiness befel you here. Is it not true what I say?"

No reply from him to any of her questions or surmises, for it was not his desire to satisfy her curiosity on this point; he only bent upon her a hungry, wistful gaze, as if for sympathy; he sent a sharp, appealing glance into her clear blue eyes. And at once by him her fullest sympathy was entirely won. That wistful glance from him spoke

a secret to her heart. She lifted upwards her slender arms until her hands rested upon his breast, and the movement caused the glorious Indian shawl to droop gracefully around her developing figure. The poor and humble sergeant stood mute and still, looking down upon her beautiful face.

"Tell me, will you not, George? I do so like to know! Is this your native town?" she asked again, and waited for a reply.

"I did not wish it to be found out; but I cannot refuse your request," he answered gravely. "Yes, Miss Lucie, it is true that I was born here."

"Then you will go to-morrow, of course, and see all your friends. Perhaps I may get to know some of them. Won't that be so nice? I would like to meet your early friends, George."

"There are no friends of mine here," he replied bitterly. "There were such once; but not now. Oh no; not now!"

"You don't mean to say you have not a single friend in the place of your birth! Where are they gone to?"

"God knows. I don't."

"Is there not even one left? Are you alone in the world?"

"I have no friends here or anywhere else!"

"Yes, George," she said warmly, "you have

friends—and fast friends they will prove.” She put up her little hands on his broad breast again. “Wherever you may go, please to remember that I shall be your true friend.”

“And I also, George! My dear Lucie, I endorse every word you have spoken!” exclaimed a musical voice, followed straightway by the sudden appearance at the door leading into the room of a military, commanding figure, which paused for a moment in admiration of Lucie, and then stalked boldly, yet in the most gentlemanly manner, into the middle of the apartment, smoking a cigar, which next instant lay half-consumed under the adjacent fireplace, having been flung carelessly there.

It was Lucie’s father, Colonel Lucius Legrange. He was taller than George, although the sergeant was six feet high. An honest, soldierly face the Colonel’s looked, whiskerless and beardless, but adorned with a splendid white moustache which matched his long, floating white hair and fiery eye—an eye which could exquisitely soften its fierce lustre when its owner willed. But its owner did not often will it so, at least in presence of his soldiers, who stood in wholesome awe of him—of that eye in particular under which they quailed submissively.

No men in the army were in better training con-

dition than his soldiers ; none loved and respected more their superior officer than did they. If he was strict he was in some respects no prim martinet, no over-nice disciplinarian. He knew when to give his men a holiday and when a thorough drilling. As for his daughter, if any one hurt one hair of her head the whole battery would go near "lynching" the delinquent. She was the daughter of the regiment, so to say, and its special pet. God knows what her influence may have been amongst those half-homeless, fighting men. God knows it best. Many a wild soldier in the hour of his temptation thought of the colonel's daughter, and turned his back bravely on the devil, or the devil's instruments. And the roaring lion had to look elsewhere. In Lucie's cloudless presence the colonel's fiery eye was childlike in its love-expression and its reverential contemplation of this second angel by his side, so like that other angel who was lost to him for ever on earth. He kissed his daughter heartily.

"So, my pretty one, we are at home for awhile," he said. "You are very sorry, I am sure, after leaving India, Lucie?"

"Yes, papa. I am with you, however, and that makes up for my sorrow."

"You darling!" he answered quickly, and kissed his daughter again and again. "I heard your

conversation while I was coming upstairs," he continued, addressing now the sergeant, who stood by in strict silence; "and, Clayton, never again say you have no friends so long as I breathe the breath of life, or my dear Lucie there. So you are a native of Clonmel, Clayton! Are any of your people alive? Your father, for instance?"

"I cannot tell, sir, no more than yourself or Miss Lucie. I left home under a cloud, and have corresponded with none of them since."

"Ran away?"

George said some people would call it running away, and that he was not going to contradict them.

"I'll not press you, Clayton, to tell me further particulars," Colonel Legrange replied, in a lower tone. "Evidently you desire to keep family matters to yourself. It is not a bad plan to adopt, and I admire you all the more for it. Excuse my interference."

The colonel was a perfect gentleman, and Sergeant George Clayton was as well aware of that fact as any man in the battery. He changed the subject from himself to Lucie Legrange—of the two by far the most interesting to the worthy colonel.

"I shall have Miss Lucie's things brought upstairs, sir," he said. "The men must be done their

work by this time, so I shall easily secure the help of a few idle hands."

"Thanks, Clayton, both from Miss Legrange and myself. I leave the matter entirely to you. I know from past experience that I could not entrust it to safer hands than yours. There are a few valuables amongst Miss Legrange's trunks and boxes, so I need not say be extremely careful. To-morrow we shall be more respectable as regards the appearance of our apartments than we are this day. Well, Lucie, my dearest one, are you tired? But what a foolish question to ask!—of course tired you must be. Nay, I see you are by your looks."

"A little, papa. Not so very much fatigued."

"Then go to bed, child, at once, and indulge in a long refreshing sleep. There is nothing more excellent than a good sleep, my pet. I declare it is actually within five minutes of midnight!" he exclaimed, looking at his watch.

"I shall not go to bed, papa, until Sergeant Clayton comes back again. I did not bid him good-night, and it would seem so thoughtless to go off with myself to bed without thanking him for his great kindness, all the greater considering it does not put one additional halfpenny in his pocket; for he never will take money, papa, from you or from me. I think he is so very kind, so disinterested! I shall not go to bed until I say

good-night to him, were he to stay an hour away."

"Nonsense, Lucie! It does not matter in the least whether you say good-night to him or not. It does not signify. Why should it? Go to bed, my girl. He! He is only a sergeant, you sensitive little goose, and won't understand the etiquette of the thing. It will be all lost on him, my dear. He is no gentleman to be treated with such ceremony. Go to bed, child, and sleep off your fatigue. Kiss me, and say good-night."

He bent down his face until it met hers.

"But, papa," she said, reproachfully, ere she drew her face away, "he saved your life; and, be he a gentleman or common sergeant, you ought not to forget that. Does it matter nothing to have saved your life, dear?"

"It matters a great deal, my child, to you as well as to me." He patted her on the head and laid his jewelled hand lightly on her soft silken hair. "You are a good, thoughtful girl," he said, "and I have a bad memory sometimes—not very frequently, thank Heaven!"

George, returning, heard on his way up the staircase the colonel call him no gentleman and the daughter's ready defence. A fierce, scornful smile crossed his countenance and disappeared, leaving a calm behind it before he again entered the room.

Lucie bade him good-night affectionately. George provided that the luggage belonging to her and to the colonel should be stored in a secure place of shelter before he retired to his own bed. The colonel gave him some money as he was leaving the room, in order that George might distribute it amongst the men who conveyed with him the trunks and different articles upstairs. But George kept none of the silver coins for himself. If he had worked for any of the other officers he would not have refused payment, if such were offered him. It was different here. He laboured for Miss Lucie's sake, in this instance, and for the colonel, because he was Miss Lucie's father.

George Clayton was the last person upon whom the dark-faced Indian servant-maid closed the door for the night. He stood upon the stone steps leading from the hall, and, taking something in his hand which had been concealed under his coat beneath the medals and Victoria Cross, he kissed it tenderly. It was a rosebud Lucie wore on her bosom all day, which she had plucked in its morning freshness, with the dew upon it, before starting on her journey hither from Cork. Lucie had flung the flower away a while ago in the barrack square. The sergeant picked it up secretly and hid it under his medals; now he pressed it to his lips with affectionate solicitude. Next moment, recollecting him-



self and what he was, he cast the rosebud away from him contemptuously.

“What a fool I am becoming,” he muttered; “as if she would ever care for one of her father’s soldiers—as if I, a sergeant, could dare to ask for her heart and hand. Why, the colonel would first blow my brains out, and then his own, if she married a sergeant—one of his own sergeants! If I am no gentleman, colonel, I am no fool either. You may give your only daughter to the next well-got-up scoundrel you and she take a fancy to; it ought not to trouble a poor world-battered fellow like me, nor shall it! The girl has love’s young dream before her yet. It is sad to think, Lucie, you shall find it a dream after all. One woman has made a wise man of me already—by first making me a fool, though!”

Some of the years that were for ever gone came back upon his memory, and left a cloud upon his brow. He recollected the girl who glided by his side once and promised to believe in him. The world was bright in those days, and he had not to work for his bread. She did not believe in him, and others did not believe in him. Others!—what of them?—it was natural that they should not. Was it not the world all over to try and trample a fellow in the mud and dirt if he only tripped, or even appeared to trip? Others!—from others he

expected but the cruelty he had got from them. Ah!—but she—she in her loveliness, in her simplicity of trust, in her knowledge of him to do to him that which the rest did—it was a hard hit to receive that blow from her! No wonder, he said to himself now, that he then fled in his agony and obliterated his name. After that he remembered a rough life led amongst gold-diggers, and a horrid period of starvation, from which he was rescued by getting the menial situation of waiter at a big hotel in the colonies. He was a soldier now, with the education of experience which had made a man of him, though there was something of a woman's loveliness in his nature yet, which no vicissitude seemed capable of taking away.

He proceeded some paces forward, and looked up at Lucie Legrange's room, wherein a subdued light shone with a steady glow. Tears stood in his eyes as he gazed with arms folded and his figure erect, and that officer-aspect about him as if one born to command rather than to obey.

“She is at her prayers. I wonder, does she ever pray for me?” he murmured, and lifted his cap reverentially, saluting the soul of the young girl. He sighed, knowing there was no use indulging in his fancies, the realization of which might, after all, be only bitter ashes for him.

He turned his head and gave a cursory glance

towards the town of Clonmel, while numerous familiar episodes of the past came into his mind, with mournful reflections about the general vanity of things.

Arrived at his own quarters, he yawned with the fatigue of the day's work in the saddle and out of it, he hastened to rest himself upon his soldier's couch. Ere long he slept the sleep of a clear conscience: in a dream he saw Lucie on her knees, and heard her uttering his name.

"My name is not George Clayton!" he exclaimed, starting up from his couch.

"Woo-oo-oo! steady, old horse!" shouted a soldier near him, speaking also in his sleep, and driving his team over again through the silent land of troubled dreams.

The town of Clonmel lies in the south of Ireland. It is a pretty town, containing some respectable streets; on its outskirts are, in many directions, small houses, inhabited by the humbler class; in its suburbs also are several goodly mansions, the owners of which are either well-to-do people, carrying on their business or profession in the town, or else the occupants of such residences are families who have sufficient income to support them without the necessity—for many a wholesome necessity—of toiling for that staff of life which goes by the name of daily bread; and means besides, and in addition

to that God-sent article of consumption, very many other things as well which the increasing exigencies of modern civilization make more or less indispensable.

George Clayton knew Clonmel intimately, and was conversant likewise with the neighbouring counties for miles around; but he knew not the residents of this locality so intimately now. How could he, after being eleven years away from it? Strange things take place; and there is ample room for astonishing changes in eleven years or in half the time.

It is some three months to-day since George arrived here with his battery, and, as it is a sunny morning, his heart is light while he walks along the banks of his native river, Suir. Here and there he passes by a patient fisherman bent upon his darling daily occupation; and in two, at least, of these weather-beaten faces George recognises the features of an old acquaintance, who in former years, when George was a buoyant lad in his tender teens, used to bring him out—and be well paid for it—for a day's sport with the gleaming trout that swallowed the wrong fly, as so many wide-awake men and women occasionally do, and find out their mistake when it is too late.

At times George Clayton, wending leisurely onward in the direction of Two-mile Bridge, which

spans the river at some distance from the town, looks back with pardonable pride on the houses and church towers, and tapering chapel spire pointing to the sky, all reposing peacefully under a tranquil range of hills, while at the moment a prayer-bell tinkles on the ear and hints a mighty thought to his half-attentive heart, which throbs oftener responsive to the stirring bugle sounds which trumpet the clarion words of command to hundreds of hearkening men.

George, while he listens and looks involuntarily behind him, is led to think of other towns in as peaceful nooks over the earth; pretty and quiet places, wherein to linger for a space it has been his happy lot at intervals during the vicissitudes of his soldier-life, which for him, since he began it nine years back, has proved often a hazardous existence, fraught with dangers about whose reality there was something stern and uncompromising.

He had not lived such a life without being taught by it, and perhaps he was stern and uncompromising too in consequence of it. At least, such was his character amongst his comrades, although with them he was generally a favourite.

He is alone, sauntering thus by the bank of the rapid river, nor does he seem in the least to need any companionship, judging from the nature of the occupation he is indulging in.

In one hand rather negligently he carries a small volume of "Horace;" and glancing into it half a dozen times every minute, he smiles as some thought of the poet strikes him, or some exquisite line rings on his ear as he repeats it to himself—he reads aloud—like a strain of Beethoven.

Arrived at Two-mile Bridge he crosses that structure, which is by no means very modern in its aspect, and pauses for a moment to gaze around him. George Clayton then climbed lightly over an adjoining hedge, and took his seat amidst the tall grass that clustered in rich luxuriant waves beneath the shade of a spreading tree.

Ensnconced there, with his back supported against the stately trunk, the artillery sergeant's countenance displays the satisfaction of a man who foresees little interruption whilst he happens to be engaged in the pursuit of one of his favourite pastimes. He became immediately attentive to the beauties of "Horace," and failed to catch the sound of footsteps close by. He was uttering these words:

*"Multos castra juvant, et lituo tubæ  
Permistus sonitus, bellaque matribus  
Detestata."*

This was spoken in a tone of voice which attracted the attention of a gentleman and two ladies who were following the road outside the

intervening hedge, and which led directly to the bridge across the river.

“As I live,” exclaimed the gentleman alluded to, “George Clayton is reading ‘Horace’ for his own private amusement in the adjoining field. What a pursuit for a sergeant in the artillery! But there’s no accounting for things. The longer I am in the world the less surprised am I at anything I see or hear. As we grow older we learn that for certain. He made better use of his schooling—by George!—than I have. How he has contrived to learn so much, I don’t comprehend. He must have had an uncommon share of schooling before he became a soldier. Am I right? Is George there, Lucie?”

So spoke Colonel Legrange; and Lucie peeped over the hedge to ascertain if really George Clayton was there. She had a profound respect for him ever since she discovered he was a Latin scholar—a being in her eyes whom knowledge enveloped with a veil of unspoken awe, whereby was concealed some wonderful secret intelligence hidden from the profane observation of more ignorant people, such as she freely admitted to herself that she was, and so must continue, in spite of all the painstaking her masters and mistresses took to shape her into an educated young lady of the nineteenth century. But do masters or mistresses effect very much for girls or boys, unless in an indirect, unregarded

way? All along throughout the yearly continuance of the monotonous drilling and cramming of masculine or feminine teachers, does not the true education of the pupil go on independent, as it seems, of monitor and monitress? The developing of the man or woman of good will or of bad will? The preparation of the soul by its own accord for virtue or vice, saintliness or devilry, truth or error, Heaven or hell? Lucifer was the pride of Heaven once; yet all that was done for him—all that was given him, failed to make him contented there. On earth as well, alas! there are but too many Lucifers in human form indeed, and plying the same old selfish trade.

The moment Lucie, peeping over the hedge, discovered George, she tripped through a gate on her right hand, and, running towards the sergeant, made the latter shut his book with a start of surprise; for, perusing his "Horace" so assiduously, he neither overheard the Colonel's remarks about him, nor Lucie coming swiftly through the wooden gate. When George looked up at her, the girlish face was all smiles.

Colonel Legrange remained with the other lady on the pathway outside the hedge, watching Lucie's movements with a father's pardonable affection. The lady expressed to him much astonishment that he—Colonel Legrange—should permit his



daughter to approach a non-commissioned officer with such an evident and decidedly undesirable appearance of familiarity. The words of warning issued from the lady's delicate lips with an abruptness which brought an unusual flush upon the Colonel's striking countenance. He replied :

“The man is useful to me, and ever so kind.”

“I should be suspicious of his kindness,” she interrupted. “I perceive as clearly as I do the daylight, from his face, that he would lay down his life for your daughter.”

“He has laid it down for me already,” the Colonel answered testily ; and yet, although he was annoyed, because of speaking her mind so plainly, the lady's words sank into his heart, and changed his manner henceforth towards George Clayton.

“He is a fine-hearted fellow,” the Colonel added.

“The more reason for keeping him away from your Lucie,” she replied.

Colonel Legrange paused, a little puzzled.

“I never viewed it in that light before. Whew !”

He gave a low whistle.

“I know that he has been decorated with the Victoria Cross,” she said, “for you told me the story. Another reason, my dear Colonel, for preventing his communication with Lucie ; girls are apt to make very false estimates of things—of men especially.”

“ He rose rapidly from the ranks to the position he holds. As for his kindness towards me and towards my darling Lucie—above all, since the sad day on which Lucie’s poor mother died in India—why, I cannot speak one-half enough—one-fourth enough, in adequate praise of it. Well do I remember in the early morning George entering the sorrowing chamber where my wife lay dead, and his placing fresh dewy flowers between the white, powerless hands which were folded upon her breast. Officer though I was, I could have knelt in thanksgiving at his feet that morning ; for, in the presence of the dead, I felt that there at all events we were equal—nay, that he was, of the two, my superior. I have so few true friends—who has them in abundance?—I could not afford to lose one so real as George. Therefore I have allowed my Lucie to treat him with a little more familiarity—on terms more nearly approaching equality of station—than perhaps, now that I see the matter in the light in which you see it, I ought to have done. And yet I do not know if that suspicion of yours, awakened in my mind for the first time since I have met Clayton, is worth entertaining ; on the contrary, it is an injustice to him to let it rankle in one’s brain for an instant. There is not a clearer-headed soldier in the battery under my command ; there is not a more honourable fellow beneath the sun !”

“Were Lucie my daughter, I would put a stop to this at once.”

“Surely there is no harm in it!” responded Colonel Legrange, whose more generous nature revolted from any narrow thought or unjust surmise.

The lady smiled superciliously.

“Who can tell?” she said. “Not you, Colonel Legrange. Nor I. Heiresses have married their grooms before now. I never heard of a Colonel’s only child running away with one of his sergeants. Perhaps your daughter shall form the precedent. The thing”—how she emphasized that word “thing!”—“is not impossible.”

Bitter language for the loving father’s ears to drink in, and meant by the utterer of it to be indeed bitter. Already he grew pale as death with the mere feeling of alarm which her expressions excited within him. Then an unusual flush of anger spread over the Colonel’s face for the second time since this unexpected and for him unhappy conversation began. But, perplexed with doubt, he was not by any means convinced yet of the truth of what she had said to him. He considered that she had spoken to him by far more in jest than in earnest, and as much to pass the time whilst they were together as for anything else; for he could not understand why she should have any ill-will against this inoffensive man.

Those who are thus attacked by the darts of slander, even though the slanderer be a woman, have sometimes silent and eloquent defenders in the integrity of other men's hearts. The doors of the School for Scandal are always open for whoever wishes to go in there. We do not cease to believe suddenly in a great nature; we would like, if we could, to explore its depths first, and give it scope to live. So the Colonel, beginning to grow charitable, stoutly defended his favourite against this lady's treacherous attacks upon George Clayton's fair fame; and very fair it was indeed.

"My estimable Miss Le Breton," he said politely and gravely, "I cannot but gratefully appreciate the motive of sincere friendship which has undoubtedly prompted you to speak to me as you have so openly done to-day. The warning which you have thought fit to give me I will act upon. But I cannot help declaring, as the settled conviction of my heart, that Sergeant Clayton is a most excellent person every way you take him. Long ago have I found out that; and no act of his, that I am aware of, has ever led me in the least to alter my friendly sentiments towards him. No, not one act! He is worthy of respect, and, without seeking it, receives it, simply because he is so worthy of it, and for no other reason whatsoever. It always seems a matter-of-course that he should receive

and enjoy everyone's respect and admiration. Moreover, for one in his position of life, he is what I call wonderfully educated. Why, he has taught my dear Lucie German and French, and he is at present trying to make her conversant with Dante's tongue—Italian."

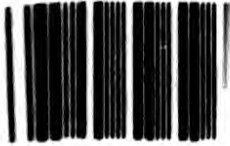
"You ought not to let him be with Lucie at all!" she exclaimed.

Her abrupt remark made the Colonel strangely impatient; but her pointed words were poisonous as well as sharp, and, cutting their keen way into his now susceptible heart, took root there.

### CHAPTER III.

GEORGE CLAYTON heard a great deal of the above conversation. He advanced towards the partly closed gate, and, opening it wider in order to let Lucie pass the more easily through, he followed, shutting the wooden gate behind him. He looked darkly at the Colonel, and made a military salute. He never deigned one inquiring glance at Miss Le Breton, and this casual circumstance nettled her. But why should it nettle her? He turned sharply on his heel, and was proceeding homeward, when she asked the Colonel to call him back. Then George faced round again, advanced haughtily towards them, and Margaret Le Breton felt at once the influence of his presence. She grew pale. While the Colonel was talking to him, as an excuse for recalling him in order to have this interview, about some matter of business connected with the routine of the barracks, she seized the opportunity of examining him coolly, if not impertinently.

George Clayton knew perfectly well that she was studying him from head to foot ; but no muscle moved, no feature in his countenance betrayed unusual emotion. Amongst the other things which experience gifted him with, was the power of hiding his emotions. Outwardly, at least, he was not disturbed, bearing thus with the affront of her unwomanly scrutiny. He was aware who this handsome, scornful-faced lady was ; long before the Colonel or Lucie made her acquaintance he had known her. But she was a gushing girl when he last stood near her thus. She was not eighteen when he spoke to her eleven years ago ; then she was a slight and a beautiful roseate angel ; now she was past eight-and-twenty, not quite so slight—that did not take from her, however, since she looked the better for not being slight—such was the thought that flashed through George's brain ; and alas, alas ! the blushing hue had lost its dewy freshness in her cheeks, and, on the whole, she was not by any means an angel in this latter day. Nevertheless, she was more beautiful than in those days which seem to George so long ago. There was a matured look about her which sympathized with and expressed her real self. Her body had, during those eleven years, developed gracefully, and her soul appeared to know much more about its strength and its weakness. She was evidently



superior officer, Captain LeStrange; the remembrance of Mrs. LeStrange and her child, Lucie, flashed across the mind of the brave soldier and urged him. George stooped down with a short cry to lift the officer in his arms and carry him within the British lines. At that instant a bullet hit poor George in the leg, and there he lay next moment beside the officer, and like him, powerless to rise and walk away.

"It can't be helped, sir," he sighed drearily. "We must only endeavour to bear it together, now that we are forced to remain in each other's company, *well, well*, as the old saying is, whether we like it or no. I do not know whether you do like it or not. I'm sure I don't. We shall have to grin and bear it."

Captain LeStrange smiled notwithstanding his dangerous state, and replied:

"For the present, at least, that's our best and truest philosophy. But Clayton, my poor fellow," he added with much consideration, "I am so deucedly sorry for you. Hang it! you should have left me to my fate."

"Ah! I couldn't do that, sir."

"Well, you were the only fellow amongst my men who had the courage, or might I say the thoughtfulness, to come for me. Clayton, if we ever get safely out of this scrape, I shall be of



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a woman who had outlived many things without outliving her beauty.

George Clayton took in all this with one or two rapid side-glances unobserved by her, and it nettled her more and more that he never, as she thought, and with good reason, condescended to notice her presence. Why should this sergeant of artillery thus be able to hurt her vanity?

Margaret Le Breton was perfectly aware—what woman of the world is not?—of her various points of attraction for the opposite sex. She had infinite blue eyes, but the depths of them were wicked as wicked could be; in fact, you could not possibly fathom their depths, even were you to try to do so, with all the amount of skill which you might happen to possess; you only distrusted them the deeper you contemplated them, and your soul shrank backwards instinctively, lest it should fall headlong into such abysses. Yet, in spite of such shrinking of the soul, there was an attraction in hovering around her like the insane temptation of standing on a precipice's edge, or a pillar's height, and throwing one's self therefrom. Facing her, you felt you were facing a queen, but not a queen of goodness. But if she was bad, she was respectable, and respectability covereth a multitude of sins. She was fair—oh! how fair!—with a glory of golden hair on which the sunlight, shining,

gathered to itself a newer radiance. But that which was the chief characteristic about Margaret Le Breton was a certain satisfied aspect in her face, expressive of intense though subdued power—power eloquent in the silence of its self-assertion, and capable of procuring for its owner, without any apparent effort, a cap-in-hand attention from social equals, and a kneeling obedience from inferiors—especially from domestic servants.

Margaret Le Breton never scolded a menial: she never took the trouble of enduring such an excitement; but if disobeyed, after a repetition of the first offence, the delinquent—John Thomas, or “Pretty Jemima,” or whoever he or she happened to be—was sent away to look for another situation, with his or her just wages paid in full, and a written character for honesty, with a sting of censure in it not quite pleasing to the unwilling possessor, who, nevertheless, would not like to part with it. No staff of servants, as was well known, were more *the thing* than were hers, and that was universally acknowledged. The spirit of the nineteenth century, emanating from the mistress, reacted upon them.

In figure, Margaret Le Breton was a splendid woman, without being too tall. She looked taller than she was, because she walked so straightly and stately, and carried her head so high. Perhaps she

looked taller too, because she had a habit of looking down on people, or rather of looking them down. To some women is not that pastime a sort of passion? To Margaret Le Breton it was more than a pastime, and much more than a mere passion or ebullition of ill-temper, if we might venture so to say. To her it was essentially a vitality; she lived on it as if it was her daily food; she lived on it even as men of fashion and society live on card-playing, or as other women, differently situated from what she was, live on the nobility of self-sacrifice.

She was not married yet, and the more than nine days' wonder was why? It was an established fact, well known beyond the slightest dispute, that she had been what is commonly termed husband-hunting for the last nine or ten years. There was an old flame flickering in her breast, said some. Had she heard of it she would have most certainly denied that imputation. What of old flames, long since died out, or transient girlish feelings! They were not eternal, though once she believed in them as such. She had outlived them. They were dead; she was alive.

It was indeed an unexplained problem to several good, quiet-going, clear-seeing, provincial folk, why Margaret Le Breton did not change her state and marry. One thing was quite evident, namely, that

she was extremely difficult to please, and this indeed was not a great matter of surprise to the good folk, though, nevertheless, they did wonder very positively, since Margaret Le Breton was worth every penny of thirty thousand pounds in the Funds, and furthermore, was mistress of a handsome mansion, situated in the centre of a handsome estate.

At length George Clayton looked at her fixedly as if he had withstood the wish long enough of regarding her, and made up for it now by an earnest examination of Miss Le Breton. Colonel Legrange thought that he had no business to be gazing at her so very hard. But George was trying to recollect every feature in her bright, fair face, and comparing it with what he had known it to be eleven years ago.

“How the man stares! Isn't he rude!” she exclaimed, superciliously turning away, and addressing herself pointedly to Colonel Legrange.

The gallant officer was at a loss what then to say or do, and an unusual flush for the third time suffused his war-like face, while Lucie stood by in extreme amazement at Miss Le Breton's most un-called-for remark.

A lightning glance shot out of George's eyes upon Miss Le Breton. It made her grow pale with fear. This man influenced her against her will.

She was very sorry instantly for saying what she did say, and almost yielded to this revulsion of feeling. She had a habit of being sorry in this way, and very sorry for saying or doing things when it was too late to remedy the evil done, or to make an apology. If she was sorry, however, at any time, it was for her own sake that she was so, and not for that of others.

“Forgive my rudeness,” the sergeant said immediately in a hurried tone. “It was quite unintentional on my part; and I am perfectly sure,” he added more slowly, looking calmly at his commanding-officer in the meantime, “that my friend and patron here, Colonel Legrange, will not, when he reflects upon it, impute the slightest intention of rudeness to me—a thing I was never guilty of in my life. God forbid I should wound the feelings of any lady of my acquaintance, much less Miss Le Breton; and that for reasons best known to herself, but which I cannot enter into any explanation of in the present company.”

With which remark he closed his volume of “Horace,” and, saluting his Colonel deferentially, he departed, taking for his return journey another road which also led into Clonmel.

Lucie looked after his erect figure with a puzzled mien, and so did Margaret Le Breton, but the latter wistfully.

There was something in this man, call it by what name you will, which touched women sorrowfully and made them sigh. Margaret had seen that lightning glance, and heard that low-toned voice before. She could not remember where. Some people have voices which play upon our frames like the fingers of genius upon a musical instrument. The voices of some people we listen to with gladness, and Sergeant Clayton was one of these people.

The Colonel also looked after George's receding figure.

"I cannot make him out sometimes," he said thoughtfully, and his brow grew dark.

"*Cave canem !*" replied Margaret, with a curl of the lip.

They returned home by a different route, and little conversation passed between them. A shower of rain came on which did not serve to restore their equanimity, and it was several days before they took a similar walk together again.

Lucie met the sergeant again a few hours after the above interview, and the moment she had an opportunity of again speaking to him in private, she said :

"George, you must not mind what Miss Le Breton said about you when we met you out walking in the earlier part of to-day."

“ I will pay no more heed to it, Miss Lucie, since it is your express wish that I should not. If the remembrance of it comes, as it is sure to, some time or other, into my mind, I will try to make an effort to banish it immediately.”

“ That is right ! Thank you. Are you aware yet, George, that the lady whom you saw with us that time, Miss Le Breton by name, is actually going to be married to my dear papa next month ?”

And Lucie, not waiting for a reply, cried some bitter tears ; for, that her papa should take it into his head to marry again seemed a strange thing to her, after being expressive of so much heartfelt sorrow for the sad loss of her own loved mother. She had yet to find out what a healer of grief, no matter how bitter it may be, time is, and what great sacrifices of all they hold near and dear God induces men and women to make.

Miss Le Breton had at last been enabled to please herself in the choice of a husband. She liked the position which Colonel Legrange held in the estimation of the world in which he moved so politely and with such consummate skill. Her liking for him, however, stopped there. There was no other inducement for displaying affection for him. There were tongues which dared to say that Margaret Le Breton was a fool to throw herself



away on such an old man, for the Colonel was sixty if he was a day.

The leap in the dark, however, we may safely suppose, will be taken to the end of the chapter. People rush at a thing as a raw fox-hunter rushes at a fence having an ugly quarry yawning on the other side and concealed from view. What matter so that he can have his jump in the air? What matter? Is it nothing to lie at the bottom of the quarry with your bones broken, or to sit by your home-fireside with your heart broken? How the latter throbs as your drunken husband tries to open the hall-door with the wrong end of the latch-key, or when the fashionable woman whom you had the misfortune to marry flounces into the room and dries up all your remaining stock of good temper, and good resolutions with regard to the future, by her dagger-armed words and most contrary ways, and her many petty and annoying differences! Other animals besides goats tug at the yoke men have tied them with.

“I have, like the rest of the soldiers, heard, Miss Lucie, of the approaching union which is about to take place between your father and Miss Le Breton,” George replied gravely. “I trust, to say the least of it, that she will become a good step-mother to you,” he added, with a fervent and ap-

pealing glance, which she did not immediately understand.

“I do not want her for my stepmother!” she exclaimed impatiently, and in a tremulous accent. “I’d much rather papa never met her at all. Would that we had never left India, George! Now, this woman will come between papa and me.”

And Lucie’s tears fell again.

“Well, it is a good match for the Colonel, at any rate,” Sergeant Clayton answered cheerfully. “Besides other things, she has thirty thousand pounds. Thirty thousand pounds don’t cross a man’s path every day in the week—aye, nor every year in his life, Miss Lucie.”

“There is a story about that money, George.”

“I am aware of it,” he said, again resuming a tone of gravity. “I have heard about Miss Le Breton; how she was worth ten thousand pounds herself, and how she lived with her guardian, a wealthy old man, once of large family, but whose children all died except one son, who was the light of the old man’s life, and the very apple of his eye. This lad’s name was Augustine St. Clare.”

“Isn’t it a pretty name, George?” Lucie put in.

“Some think it is pretty, miss.”

“I would like my husband’s name to be Augustine,” she said innocently; “that is, if ever I do marry, about which I don’t know.”

“You will be a blooming, happy bride, some fine day. A handsome young officer, with a splendid fortune, will perhaps ask papa by-and-by to give you to him.”

Lucie smiled naively, and brightened up at the idea of a prospect so brilliant.

“But,” George continued, resuming his narrative, “young St. Clare quarrelled with his father about something or another, and the quarrel was an extremely fierce one whilst it lasted, for both were equally stubborn, and neither side would submit to give in to the other. They were like two pugilists of the same merit. The father, listening too readily to the whisperings of those who seem to know a great deal about other people’s affairs, and affairs which do not concern in the least those busy, officious, malicious newsmongers, accused the son of a most horrid and inexpressible crime; and accused him, moreover, in a most uncalled-for manner, galling in a particular degree to the high and sensitive spirit of the light-hearted and pleasure-loving young St. Clare.

“The son manfully bore the burthen of the disgraceful imputation for nearly a whole year, when all at once he began to change, and before the end of the twelvemonth his brave young will gave way beneath the burthen of its accumulation of griefs, and in a passion Augustine separated—his father

died of a broken heart not long after—from his only parent, and went off to fight the battle of life to the gold diggings, they said, though they could not tell for certain whether that was really true or not.

“There was another rumour, which was more authenticated, namely, that he had gone to sea, and was drowned in some voyage or another. One sailor from this locality, coming back here, told the old man how he had been in the same ship with his son; that young St. Clare worked his passage out as a common sailor before the mast to the gold diggings, and I believe that news, Miss Lucie, all but put the last nail in his coffin for the repentant father. The father sought for his son high and low, but with no good result; and then the old man died, leaving his property in entail to Miss Le Breton, the girl who was his ward, who had lived in the house with him and his lost son, and whose interests old St. Clare carefully watched ever since the day she came to him a little doleful orphan of five summers. Her father had been old St. Clare’s greatest friend, and in some momentous crisis of his life, Augustine Le Breton had helped him through whatever terrible difficulty beset him. However, the painful part of the story to my mind is, that the young man loved Miss Le Breton passionately, and she was said to have as sincerely loved him in return. Be that as it may, she believed him guilty

likewise. It was her firm refusal to credit in the least his assertion of his guiltlessness, which drove young St. Clare from his comfortable home, to face the cold, hard world—oh! Miss Lucie, you don't know yet, and may you never know it! how cold and hard the world is!"

"Dear me, George, how excited you are!"

"Ah! I cannot help it, Miss Lucie. Probably it is in my nature to become excited when I hear a tale of this kind; somehow my nature is susceptible, and so much the worse for myself, Miss Lucie," he added very impressively.

"Yes, George."

"I have something," he said, "to say to you. Something unpleasant for me, if not for you."

"What is it?" she asked, alarmed.

"We must discontinue our lessons in Italian after to-day," he replied to her.

"Why?" she asked, a little impetuously—her mother used to be impetuous.

"You have quite a fair knowledge to my mind both of German and French. At least, you know as much of those fashionable languages as I, with my poor abilities in that direction, could venture to teach you. Henceforth, it will be necessary for you to get some one else to finish the Italian lessons, for I cannot do it any longer;" he explained to her

somewhat sorrowfully, and turned as if about to take his departure.

“Why? Why, pray?” she asked again in the same hurried manner.

“Because — because—there are, Miss Lucie—there are reasons for—for discontinuing them—reasons—why—why I should not come here as often as I do. There are some unjust suspicions entertained against me by certain persons whom I will not name.”

“What is amiss with you, George, that you flush so? What reasons can there be! Or who could entertain any suspicions towards you?”

He hesitated to make a reply, and at length said slowly:

“I shall tell it to you out bluntly, Miss Lucie. Will you mind my telling you? Ah! no; you will not! You will be just to me when others are not. You will understand me; I can therefore speak freely to you. I respect you. I would kiss the ground you walk on—will you mind my telling you?”

“I will not, George,” she answered steadily.

“I overheard a conversation to-day about you and about me,” he said. “From that conversation I have come suddenly to find out what I ought, perhaps, to have been aware of before, that you are a young lady, a very rich young lady, whilst I

am only a plain sergeant earning my bread by the keenness of my sword. Miss Lucie," he added straightforwardly, "I do not know whether you are aware of it or not, 'the world imagines wicked realities out of the merest and most innocent trifles;' and the short and the long of it to my mind is, that the less you and I are seen together by people the better for you—Heaven bless you, Miss Lucie!—and the better for me. Do you comprehend me, or must I tell you more?"

"I do comprehend you," she said; and her face was now extremely pale.

"Give me your hand, then," he answered, "and let us resolve to part the best of friends. You will not have the opportunity of speaking frequently to me henceforth. But if ever affliction should haply come upon you unawares, and you should require me—and surely in affliction one's true friends alone are known—don't forget then that I shall be as ready to stand by you to the last as I was to stand by your father when he lay stretched helpless upon the battle-field in the Crimea!"

He let go tenderly the little hand she laid so willingly in his and went away.

She sat down in a desolate mood by one of the windows, and watched George Clayton while he walked in that soldierly manner across the barrack-square. He stayed to speak in an undertone to a

comrade, and the girl, with a thrill of pride in her heart, caught sight of his medals and Victoria Cross. Was it no more than a thrill of pride in her heart? I fear it was—much more. I fear a pang of new pain accompanied it. The sharp pain of the desire to be with him as his daily sharer of joy and of sorrow. Of joy rather than sorrow, for there could indeed be little sorrowing with him. Some natures are so full of sunshine that no night seems to come upon them ever. To Lucie, George was always as a summer day. But, ah! for that pain! That pain of the knowledge of being separated from him! That pain of standing on divided banks of a widening stream! That pain of looking back and thinking of what might have been if all things had gone on well! That pain of loving in vain!

This life, regard it as we wish, has many tragedies, but none more mournful than the wrenching asunder of two great hearts one in love and mutual trust, and mating them for life the one to a stick and the other to a stone. Love is blind, they truly say, but that fool called Human Ambition is deaf and dumb, and lame and sick, and likewise blind. But he has a good position in society, and dresses well, and laughs at little cares and big ones.

Lucie continued to watch George through the



window. How like an officer and a gentleman he looked in the barrack-square when he turned round abruptly and faced his comrade-in-arms! How like a common soldier his companion appeared by George Clayton's side! Lucie thought that George's proper place was among the officers, since he seemed in so many things just the same as one of themselves. In her opinion not one of the officers she had as yet met, except her papa and one or two others who were her special acquaintances, was equal to George in personal appearance, not to speak of an innate refinement of manner.

The girl already loved him in her own way. Her affections devoted themselves to him with an inexperienced trustfulness beautiful in its cloudless generosity. Ignorant totally of the world's ways, her heart was given up to this artillery sergeant; in her young life she had never met one more winning than George. Had he been other than he was, her instincts would not have sought him out; and were she to live for the space of a thousand years she felt with a foreknowledge, in spite of her girlishness, she would not meet many like George, perhaps not with even one who would be for her a suitor as well as a kind of divinity. Already she had seen something in her own small way of the sticks and stones called men and women, and, hungry and thirsty, she sighed for the bread of life.

Others had their silent ambitions. Lucie also had hers; but it was a noble one, and made her existence all the more beautiful. On account of it her mien was statelier, her eye brighter, her smile more gracious and condescending. On account of it, instead of looking down on the poor, she looked up to them. On account of it she pitied the wayward soldiers when they went wrong and got themselves into trouble, or into prison, or punished by her father, or some other of the superior officers who were responsible for their ordinary good behaviour. On account of it she saw loveliness in the little faces of children.

This was Lucie's silent ambition. If George, she often thought to herself, would only wait until she was of age and mistress of the fortune which had been bequeathed to her by her mother, then to offer him half of all she possessed, that he might be able to leave the army, and assume that gentlemanly position in society which nature intended him to fill, if only fortune had been more propitious.

Remember, Lucie was not quite sixteen years of age yet; so that it was rather young for her to be entertaining such notions. And if, with that half of her fortune, he would elect to take the other half, and herself along with it, how gladly she would assent to that agreement! But such an

offer must come from him alone, she knew. It never occurred to her what her proud papa would think of such a ridiculous matrimonial engagement, or arrangement, on the part of his daughter. Still less did it occur to her what the uncharitable world would say to it. She merely tried, to the best of her ability, to make herself understand beforehand what George himself would think of it. That was her principal reflection, her chief anxiety. Oh, Lucie! While my pen records the loveliness of your fair character in those happy days, I pause and wonder where are you now? Oh, Lucie! will your sweet white face be ever his own?

In less than six weeks Colonel Legrange successfully espoused Margaret Le Breton—which in this age of breaches of promise of marriage and divorce suits, and all the paraphernalia of Probate Law, is a more difficult feat of accomplishment than it used to be in the olden times when a different and less tangible state of the matrimonial market was in vogue—whilst Miss Le Breton was determined to fulfil her part of the bargain, and agreed to throw herself away upon an old man in his dotage, notwithstanding the warning voices of friends and companions.

The Colonel, as soon as the marriage ceremony was over, conveyed his second wife with all possible

speed to Paris, in order to spend the honeymoon in that city; and during their temporary and unavoidable absence from home, Miss Lucie was placed under the care and supervision of a family very intimate with the new Mrs. Legrange. These friends lived a distance of about nine Irish miles from the town of Clonmel, and within three quarters of a mile of a building known by the name of Hatherdale House.

Hatherdale House was the mansion hitherto occupied, when she was single, by Miss Margaret Le Breton. It had formerly been the property, some years ago, of James St. Clare, her late deceased guardian, and the hot-headed father of that cherished last-surviving son, Augustine, who was driven from home, and of whom there had been no tidings whatsoever since. Perhaps he had been drowned in some ship called the *Bella*, like a second Roger Tichborne!

## CHAPTER IV.

COLONEL LEGRANGE, upon his return in company with his young wife from their tour upon the Continent, sold out of the army, which for the future had become distasteful to him, and settled down as a gentleman-farmer, a magistrate, and a useful member of what is usually termed county or aristocratic society, upon the Hatherdale estates.

He was very reluctant at first about abandoning his career in the army, and betrayed some uneasiness about it for a considerable period ; in truth, he would not have thought of abandoning it at all, had it been his fate to continue a widower ; but now that he had married for the second time, and, moreover, married so advantageously, taking everything into consideration, and inasmuch as it was his wife's ardent desire that he should retire from the profession of arms, he consented to do so with some reluctance ; but he was so much in love with his young wife at this period, that every wish ex-

pressed by her upon any subject whatsoever was instantly obeyed by him. Nevertheless, he was passionately attached to the military calling, and was accustomed to look forward to a day, not distant, when he would, by the natural course of events, whether from wars or foreign service abroad in the colonies, be promoted to the higher rank of general, or perhaps, higher still, a field-marshal.

Whatever might have been his thoughts about such ambitious schemes, it was to be seen that his new wife should have her way, in spite of all his loving arguments to the contrary; and the foolish old Colonel was too much enamoured with her to refuse her yet awhile, at least, the gratification of any of her passing whims and fancies.

“I hate the idea of knocking about the world,” she remarked pettishly, after being married six months to him.

“But, my dear Margaret, it is possible, nay, a matter of positive certainty—I might safely assert, that my promotion, of course, shall take place. Sir Lucius Legrange, G.C.B., sounds very appropriate, Margaret. So does Lady Legrange, my dear.”

Mrs. Legrange glanced at her husband with hesitation visible in her countenance. The prospect was a good one; and if the Colonel persevered at the moment with his line of argument, he might

in all probability have won the day. But he was a better tactician upon the noisy plain of battle than upon the Turkey carpet of a luxurious drawing-room, and left entirely alone with a selfish, clever woman, who had already conquered his affections, even with regard to his daughter Lucie. He let his chance go by, and lost it, like many another situated as he was then. Margaret was fonder of creature comforts than of her husband's military fame or future prospects, so he yielded with a sore heart to her importunity, and in six months more was established in Hatherdale House as fixedly as if it had been his home since the day he came into the world, which was now a long time ago.

However, the Colonel, as good luck so willed it, obtained sooner than he expected, and before he finally left the Artillery, those distinctions he had spoken so pointedly and so often to his wife about. He was in a few weeks after the above conversation took place raised to the dignity of knighthood, and the world knew the Colonel and his lady henceforth as Sir Lucius and Lady Legrange.

Lady Legrange! How unforeseen events are! This strong, and clever, and dangerous woman, this cool Margaret, smiled graciously as the unusual "my lady" fell upon her ear, and secretly laughed at the smirking men and envious women, because

they had, against their will, to address her by this new title.

There was one smiled, but not graciously, and laughed, but not secretly, when first he caught the words "Lady Legrange." Ah me! he sighed, too, and looked at the V's on his soldier's coat.

How did Lucie like this great change in her mode of life — her new home, so different from the one to which she was accustomed; her new companions, with their unfamiliar and forward ways; her apology for a mother in the shape of a stepmother? She did not object to her home, nor to the companions either which it brought to her — girls of gay spirits who were of her own age and with her own gentle thoughts and unambitious dreams. But she did not like her stepmother at all. There was an antipathy existing between them which time did not lessen. They had few tastes in common, if, indeed, any at all; and the tacit agreement was eventually arrived at between them that they could never be sincere friends in any sense of the word, however reluctant at the same time they might be to give way to angry feelings or to let it be apparent that any ill-will should ever, for an instant, exist between them. They avoided each other as readily as other bodies attract one another. Let who can explain this. It is hard for the wolf and the lamb to agree.



Disliking the society of her stepmother, and compelled, nevertheless, to be in daily intercourse with her, Lucie's delicate-tinted face was growing paler in consequence, her manner was becoming depressed, and her health sickly. Medical advisers counselled change of air, and Lucie was borne away to the south of England on a visit to an uncle of hers, by the name of Atkinson Legrange, who lived some fifty miles outside London. Having gone for the purpose of spending only three months with him, she remained away from Ireland for three years, so that her many friends in the latter country completely lost all tidings of her during that space.

Two years more made up the five years which passed since Colonel Legrange's second marriage, and Lucie in the meantime became of age. During all that period she had not spoken a word to George Clayton, nor was his name ever mentioned in the precincts of Hatherdale House. It seemed as if—and there was something of ingratitude in it—he had been forgotten by Sir Lucius, and as if all his repeated acts of kindness and generosity too had gone for nought. That is ever the way. When one is over-charitable to others, in whatever walk of life they may be, at his own expense, he gets no return, unless it be the consciousness of an honesty of purpose in all his actions, and a reflection that he has done his duty. One of the greatest things on

earth is charity, and also one of the most difficult to repay. For the cost of the sacrifice is too much ; it springs so straightly from the inner nature of man. But when one gives all he has to another, he cannot do more, though he may receive no adequate reward for it here. As for Sir Lucius Legrange, he made no inquiries after the welfare of the sergeant, nor did he choose to make them ; in fact, his short-lived interest in him had died out of its own accord. He had never admired him for any other qualities than those of a soldier, which he knew him to possess in a high degree, and because he was useful to him in that position, inasmuch as he was able through him to teach their business to the other younger soldiers of his battery, and make them the more efficient at parades and at reviews, and whenever what was termed a general inspection came round—when the General commanding the district he happened to be in at the time put his men through their periodical drill and gun-practice, and saw that they were up to their work.

But although Sir Lucius had altogether lost sight of and forgotten the sergeant, Lucie had not ceased to love him, still less had she forgotten him.

She was a well-made and handsome woman now, and well she knew it. In her heart now were the hopes of a woman—the expectations which wear such a bright aspect, and for many are delightfully

realized, while for many, alas! they continue in the future year after year, until the stern truth is taught at length by wrinkled brows, and withered cheeks, and silvered hairs, and saddened and disenchanted breasts, of the nearness of the grave and of Heaven.

During two of those five years Lucie had experienced a dolorous time of it, trying to live under the same roof with her exacting stepmother. Some women have a way of inflicting pain which can be compared to nothing better than the continual drip, drip, of the drop of water over the one particular spot upon the head of the unfortunate victim. And Lady Legrange was one of those persistently cruel women who can cunningly thrust, with the tongue rather than the hand, dagger after dagger into the fellow-woman whose fate it is unfortunately to be in their power.

Of late an alteration had taken place in the system of domestic management and petty feminine tyranny such as was commonly and from day to day carried on in Hatherdale House. The imperious mistress of that well-to-do mansion must henceforth yield up her sway over Lucie, or else her stepdaughter will refuse to reside with her, and what would the scandal-loving neighbours say to that? Lady Legrange shall not bully Lucie any longer, Lucie told her father the day she became of age,

to his supreme surprise ; for although he was acquainted with the fact that his daughter and his second wife did not get on amicably together, few words of complaint to him about it had hitherto left his daughter's lips. Suppressed so long, her indignation was the more violent now. Lucie knew her true position, and that knowledge gave her confidence in the attitude of rebellion she assumed. She was not only mistress of her actions henceforth, but owner likewise of ten thousand pounds which descended to her through her mother, and the interest of which had accumulated for her benefit during the ten years since her mother's death while Lucie continued to be a minor and could not have the enjoyment of it until she should have come of age.

“Father, take my word for it, I shall straightway leave this house if Lady Legrange does not change her mode of treating me. I am not a little child.”

“Surely, dear Lucie, I never would have sanctioned Lady Margaret's acting towards you, my girl, in a manner calculated to——”

“She shall never triumph over me again !” his daughter interrupted sturdily. “Too long, father, I have suffered from her insupportable tyranny.”

“Tyranny ! Lucie, what do you mean ?”

“What do I mean, do you say ? Ah, father, more than I choose to express ! My words might be so

cruel that they would reach your heart, and make it sore indeed !”

She was thinking of her dead mother, whom this man before her loved, and wondering, wondering that he had forgotten her so. But the words of reproach which, in memory of her mother, rose like lightning to her lips, passed them not, and in silence, with mouth compressed, she let the anger of her passionate nature go by, and the current of her thoughts flowed unruffled once more.

“Lucie, why are you so changed ?” Sir Lucius said. “You seem to be my Lucie no longer. I can scarcely recognise you as my former little one.”

“Father,” she answered, “whose fault is that ? If I have changed, can it be stated that you have remained the same as you used to be with regard to me ? She—your second wife and my stepmother—she has alienated you from me. Do you remember we were inseparable, until, alas ! she came between us and spoiled our mutual affection and esteem.”

It was true, and the picture of it presented itself now to him in its real and its true light, and he had silently to admit the unpleasant fact, while a pang of self-reproach shot through him for having grown so much colder in his manner of late towards this, his only and most beloved child. In his agitation, and to hide his discomfiture, he arose

hastily and left the room in which they were conversing alone together.

Yes; it was true in very deed! Margaret Legrange had alienated the fond old man from his dear daughter, from his only child, from the pure token of his pure early love; and he was aware of it long ago, but, like an arrant coward, he tried to hide the knowledge from himself—he could not hide it from his daughter: she was too watchful of her own interests and his for such a state of things to escape her. How my lady proudly rejoiced when she at length observed this estrangement of both father and favourite child!

There are powers who hate mankind, and my lady was allied to them. Her soul—dead to God's sunshine and all that glory which He paints on land, sky, and ocean, and human faces—was alive to the mystery of evil whose freer breathings come and go when night darkens the innocent earth. And over this dotard husband my lady wielded her malignant power. She made him a miserable, slavish, satisfied puppet, whom her clever fingers dangled at will to any tune she chose. The worst of it was, that he was so satisfied with the situation. Just like any other lunatic, Sir Lucius smiled under his delusion, and was quite in earnest at the same time in everything which he said or did, or ventured to say or do, independent of her.

Ah me! dear reader, have you ever looked around you and have you seen how many lunatics there are in this world who are not yet in asylums, if indeed they ever will be? It is the funniest thing imaginable to watch them hugging their hobbies, whatever such may be, and giggling over them. Take a political constituency. What a mass of lunatics are there, all or most of them believing with the most implicit faith in that discreet individual, some far-off follower of Gladstone or of Lord Sherbrooke, some devotee of the divinity of the religion of labouring men, that is to say, of the so-called religion of humanity—the greatest step yet made, by the way, in the doctrines of modern progress—some popular member of Parliament, who would and does go into prison for his constituents, and who is supposed to be the expression of their sentiments in that Imperial Parliament of London which has, up to this, kept Home Rule, and all such local measures of advancement and of mutual advantage, successfully in the background! But if there was ever a straying lunatic at large, and as yet untied or unsecured, it is undoubtedly an old man like Sir Lucius, who marries a woman of fashion and also of my Lady Margaret's years and haughty disposition.

Sir Lucius could not free himself from the web she had woven around him so deftly, do what he would. Caught therein for ever—she will survive

him as a matter of course—he seemed to be incapacitated and quite too helpless altogether to endeavour for a second to resist her, while she fed and fanned hotly the love of herself in his breast, and extinguished, as well as she dare, all affection for his only daughter. She understood the way to wind him round with her little finger. His eyes were not yet open to her glaring littleness and less glaring wiles, and he could not withstand her influence over him. He was blindly in love with this self-calculating, domineering, beautiful woman. Her beauty had captivated him. She was not Cleopatra by any means, and certainly no one would mistake him for Mark Antony; but the woman overpowered him by the wiles of her loveliness, just as the famous Roman in a similar manner was made captive through Cleopatra's beauty. I suppose the same thing is going on every day in some quarter of the globe or other—the old story of eyeless love—the old story whose sequel opens when the last page of life is closed, and the poor tired-out body is laid for ever in the grave.

At three-and-thirty Margaret Legrange was still undoubtedly beautiful, and her charming presence caused the old Colonel to place Lucie, once the darling of his day-dreams and the pride of his life, in a very secondary place in his affections.

Margaret Legrange smiled when she thought of



the extent of her success. She was no lunatic. Perhaps it would have been better had she been; and yet what, after all, were her ways but the freaks of delusion?—only that in her there was so much reasoning and so much downright conscious wickedness.

Steadily, and with a practised hand, she had set her forces to work until this desired estrangement between father and daughter was obtained. For she hated Lucie; first, because she brought to the Colonel's mind the remembrance of his first wife. She could never forgive Lucie that. Secondly, she detested her on account of her virtues; and the woman would grind the girl's neck under her heel to powder if she thought that she could do so with any degree of safety. She depreciated in her husband's and everybody else's hearing whatever good and worthy Lucie did, and consequently the existence of the latter while an inmate of Hatherdale House was excessively wearisome and worrying. A good school for her stock of patience, no doubt, which by this time was well tried; only with her stepmother Lucie had but a small stock of patience to work on.

Margaret, as was said, hated Lucie Legrange for her virtues. Lady Margaret put more faith in the telling effect of appearances than in the special exercise of any of those estimable matters which

are inculcated in Holy Writ. To Margaret appearances were almost everything, so that they were likewise combined with good eating and a delicate share of drinking, and the other innumerable and wholesome comforts of a wealthy home like Hatherdale House. Catch her knocking about the world as a soldier's wife! Catch her, indeed!

Lucie, when her father parted with her in the drawing-room where the above-related abrupt and brief interview with him had occurred, proceeded towards the garden, in order, as was her custom at that particular hour, to attend to the culture of her flowers.

It was summer-time, and the garden looked inviting. The aspect of its variegated loveliness often tempted Lucie to go out of doors and enjoy the balmy air.

She stooped tenderly over a group of roses and said:

“George loved roses! Ah! the world—my dull world here—is wearying. George! if I could see you again, it would do me more good than the medicine those doctors, who put on such wise faces, give me! George, people say I am rich; and it is true what they say. But does my wealth satisfy me? No, no! One look into your shining eyes brings me more peace than all the gold in Australia. Dear, dear George! will you ever come back

to me? Oh, if you only knew how sick I am of my life here!"

She walked down the garden-path and entered a summer-house situated picturesquely at one of its extremities. Therein Lucie ensconced herself upon a wooden seat, and the glare of the sunshine, so oppressive in the open air outside, did not penetrate into the cool and agreeable retreat which Lucie had chosen.

She remained for two hours seated within the summer-house nursing her maiden thoughts. Such fits of brooding were not wholesome, probably, but Lucie's mode of life in the country was conducive to such solitary pensiveness; not that there was any lack of sincere friends, had she chosen to associate with them more frequently than she did. By no means! Lucie was one of those favoured beings the effect of whose bright, pure, and wholesome existence seems to be to make without seeking their friends—ay, friends who, like the Christian martyrs, would lay down life itself, were such necessary in any emergency, in order to prove their infinite love. Indeed, on the whole, Lucie was rather plagued with persons offering friendship than otherwise. For Miss Legrange did not want the society of four-fifths of her numerous acquaintances. They wanted Lucie, however—or some of them, at least, wanted her ten thousand pounds.



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Two hours flitted by, and the third was on the point of completing its first fifteen minutes when some person opened the gate on the right of the summer-house and entered the garden.

Lucie felt her young heart fluttering, for she feared that this person might be her father, and she was nervous about meeting him so soon after his abrupt departure from her presence in the drawing-room. Whoever it was, it appeared to Lucie nearly impossible to escape his observation, since he was about to pass in front of the summer-house, and ten to one he would glance towards it. Lucie started up with an exclamation of joyful surprise.

“George Clayton!” she said, in amazement.

“Miss Lucie!” he answered, equally astonished.

And George told her why he had come expressly from England.

“I was under regimental orders for Canada,” he explained. “I obtained my furlough fortunately at the right time, and so I started for Ireland at once. The thoughts of the past were too much for me. I sailed across the Channel, determined, if possible, to see you once more, if it was only your face. I was anxious to say good-bye to you and the Colonel before I was gone. I did not know but that we would never again meet—never again meet, Miss Lucie,” he ended sadly and quietly, and as if he was afraid to say anything more.

“Papa has gone out to ride, I think; for I saw his horse,” she said, “brought round from the stables more than an hour ago. Lady Legrange” (she never called her stepmother “mamma”), “however, is, I am sure, within. Do you wish, George, that I should tell her that you are really here? When, may I ask, did you arrive?”

“Four days ago; and since my arrival I have made a curious discovery, Lu——, Miss Legrange.”

Lucie led the way of her own accord up the garden-walk, and ushered the artillery-sergeant into the drawing-room without further question, pointing, as she held the door ajar, to an easy chair, which he took possession of, and sat down upon forthwith. Then he glanced nonchalantly around the room in a careless manner.

It was a novel thing indeed, at first sight, for an aristocratic young lady thus to establish a soldier in one of the softest arm-chairs of her father’s dainty drawing-room—the most luxurious of all the splendid apartments in the house, with the exception of perhaps Lady Legrange’s own particular boudoir; which, as a matter of course, no one dared to enter unless especially invited, or upon some pressing business of moment, which brooked not of delay, unless it should be some lady friend come to have a private cup of tea and a quiet gossip.

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 ...the language and her child, L  
 ...the mind of the brave soldier  
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"...sir," he sighed  
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some service: I will not say  
 just ten times more. I am not  
 He repeated the same  
 There was a moment when  
 when suddenly words were  
 crashing round the man  
 and directing the man  
 officer and soldier  
 "Captain, I am  
 voice: "The man  
 than they should  
 Quick as lightning  
 good as any that I have  
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 revolver: you know  
 strength is dependent  
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“I will now leave you here, George, for just a few minutes, if you do not mind being kept waiting, and I shall go straightway in search of my step-mother—Lady Legrange. I shall be back in a short time—in less than ten minutes, if I can. And so for the present I will say to you good-bye.”

With that Lucie kissed her hand to him and tripped lightly away.

Being left alone, George Clayton gazed once more with curiosity around at the various objects in the room, which included valuable spoils of war taken at different times in India, tiger skins, and strange ivory puzzles, and a stray elephant's tooth or two. The pictures in the room pleased him most. There was a very good one in oils of Sir Lucius Legrange himself, another similar one representing Lady Legrange, and a handsome smaller one of Lucie, which was only painted, he could observe from the freshness apparently of the colours, a short time previously. There were several photographs near by, which he went over to, and examined rather curiously, which he also did to Lucie's picture. Then he stood awhile at the window, and observed the neatness and trim perfection of the handsome lawn. It was quite evident that the hand of some skilful gardener was continually there. He remembered several of the Indian trophies which he saw scattered about the room in

such magnificent and careless profusion, and some of which he had himself helped Sir Lucius, when Colonel Legrange, to carry back home to England from India. He remarked, in a particular manner, a very long Indian spear, with which an Indian chief, in one of the battles, had slain one of our soldiers, and whom George Clayton afterwards slew and took the spear from in deadly hand-to-hand encounter.

He was examining critically the wood of this weapon, holding it between himself and the light from the window, when, after the lapse of ten minutes or more, Lady Legrange, majestically clad in the bluest silk, sailed into the drawing-room, flushed and excited by the stormy words which she had been, a moment ago, showering upon her step-daughter, concerning the unparalleled impropriety, the monstrous absurdity, as she termed it, of permitting actually a common soldier to soil her soft carpets by burying his horrid thick boots an inch deep in them. He should have been kept, she remarked, with many gestures of remonstrance, waiting outside the house altogether, or else in the kitchen, which he could have been got into by a back door used by the servants; or, at most, Lucie should have given orders to detain him in the hall, where he could be seated on a chair quite good enough for him. But to have, in very fact, conducted him herself per-

sonally, and led the way into one of the most sacred rooms of the house—who could stand such a domestic sacrilege perpetrated against the holiness of the household gods? Not Margaret Legrange decidedly: and consequently she floated into the luxurious drawing-room like an angry man-of-war, with all her sails set, and her guns out through the mouths of the portholes ready for immediate action and bitter attack, whilst bearing down upon an humbler merchantman voyaging on the high seas to her port of destination freighted with cargo.

Lady Legrange, of course, had, there is no doubt, some fair and substantial reason to be positively angry; for what housewife in the elevated social position of my lady would permit her pet shrines to be rudely desecrated in this way? Why, months of accumulated dust upon the furniture and articles of vertu would be a small evil as compared with such a mishap as this was in her eyes. But Lucie in her sweet innocence—in her cloudless ignorance of the consequences of things, or whatever else may have haply been the unknown cause, never thought of George Clayton as a common soldier; consequently, with something of her old martial spirit and eagerness, she ushered him, with an earnest smile upon her delicate intellectual face, into the apartment she considered the most natural place for him—a visitor—namely, the gorgeously furnished

reception-room for visitors of her own rank in life.

Certainly his uniform, the thought struck Lucie, did cause somewhat of an unusual contrast to the pale-blue covering of the elegant chairs and sofas, and to the richly adorned trifles and bijouterie surrounding George where he stood, having risen from the armchair. There were articles in the room rare and precious indeed, which had been presents from George Clayton to Miss Lucie Legrange and her father—the white-haired Colonel. These, and some of them were costly in truth, had been deemed worthy of a place of honour in this room; but their giver, the man who actually bestowed them, was not, it appears, deemed worthy to sit down in the same room. But to do Lady Legrange justice, it is very likely that she had forgotten all about George's presents. Yes, these presents were rich, and in this land rare. Indian spoils won by the daring actions of the soldier sitting in yonder arm-chair with those silver medals, the eloquent witnesses of his bravery, hanging from his breast—medals which bore the clasps of Alma, Balaclava, Sebastopol, and strange names in the Indian tongue. And then beside them, and greater than they, that envied Victoria Cross, to have the right to wear which upon his manly breast would have made even a royal prince of old England reasonably proud.

The manner in which he partly prepared himself to receive his Victoria Cross was by rendering assistance by an act of bravery to a naval officer on board one of her Majesty's ships, who, having obtained the information that an aide-de-camp of no less an individual than the Czar himself would disembark in the island of Wardo in charge of postal letters addressed to the Russian Commander-in-chief—he volunteered to attack and make a prisoner of this equerry with the important despatches, accompanied by an engineer on board the ship, and the above mentioned naval officer. They changed their clothes, and, running the chance of being fired upon as reconnoiterers or spies, they took up their abode upon the island, and hid themselves there for some days, living as best they could, meanwhile, upon the scantiest supply of provisions. On the night of the third day the mail was landed successfully, with the Russian aide-de-camp accompanied by four men. Imagining the coast to be now clear before them, and that there was not the least likelihood of their being molested, they proceeded to move inland under cover of military protection. The moment the party were on the move they attacked the five men conveying the mail bags and letters of importance, took three of them prisoners, and brought them off in their own boat along with the mail.

For this brave adventure the naval officer and the engineer, or stoker, both were decorated with the Victoria Cross; but George Clayton did not receive it just then, though he equally deserved it: he was only honourably mentioned in the despatches sent home to England. In fact, the exploit whereby he did really win it had previously happened, when, at the risk of his own, he had so bravely saved his superior officer's life when in jeopardy. Consequently there was no use in decorating him with that honour a second time.

George, as memories of the vanished past came back to him, was made to think again and again of these stirring battle-scenes, of which he had been so often a gallant partaker, when his eye fell upon his own actual gifts scattered neglected about this grand chamber, which looked so golden, and azure, and dainty, with all its precious contents—chiefly, it may be remarked, its exquisitely carved furniture, and pictures by living masters of the art of painting, such as Landseer, and Herring, and Rosa Bonheur.

He relapsed into a pleasing reverie, from which he was speedily aroused by the sight of the second wife of his former Colonel, as seen in a mirror opposite to him, close to where he meditatively sat pondering over both what had been and what might have been once upon a time.

My lady remained behind him like a tiger ready

to spring upon its prey; and she was determined to punish this soldier for his insolent presumption in making himself so much at home. Her eyes flashed wildly, and an expression of ill-suppressed annoyance arose to her lips, but died there, at beholding the fellow comfortably occupying one of her darling chairs, which she took such pride in as being one of the prettiest pieces amongst the articles of furniture which crowded to profuseness the various rooms of Hatherdale House.

George Clayton, when he beheld her, never moved from his reclining position. He did not rise to greet her. He sat contemplating her in the mirror, as it represented her standing angrily behind his back. Nay, he contemplated her with a curl of scorn vivid upon his frank mellow face.

“’Pon my word, sir, this is impertinence with a vengeance!” she exclaimed.

George Clayton, sergeant of artillery, neither spoke one word in reply, nor stirred one inch from his position, but rudely kept his back to her. The curl of scorn upon his face grew more expressive.

Lady Legrange moved one step forward and stood still, she then moved another step and again stood still. Her rage at his insolence appeared to get the upper hand with her. She suppressed it with a great effort at self-control; and advancing rapidly towards him, stood, at length, scowling down into his up-



turned face. That face wore an expression of so much power she quailed under its influence.

“Are you not aware, sir,” she exclaimed, recovering herself and quickly uttering her words, “that this house is the property of Sir Lucius Legrange, and that no one—no one such as you has a right to presume to indulge in this most offensive familiarity? Most offensive I call it, sir; for such it is to me, and such must it be to one like me. Pray, sir, leave that chair!” she commanded imperiously, waving her jewelled white hand, and pointing at the same time to the door. “Descend immediately to the hall, if you please: when there, I shall send for you to come to my husband’s study, if you shall so desire—and if you are anxious to see him upon any business of importance to you; or,” she added, a little more graciously, and unbending in her attitude of haughtiness, “where, if it be more suitable, I myself shall be willing to listen to what you have to say. But, sir, we cannot have any private communication here.”

He stood up somewhat slowly.

With an overbearing smile of derision and of exultation she thought to herself that he was about to obey humbly her mandate. She was greatly indeed mistaken in that.

“When a lady,” he said politely, but in rather a lecturing tone of voice—they were the first words

which he had as yet uttered in her presence, "chooses to remain standing, and at the same time to abuse a man, which she has a perfect right of course to do in her own house, and which he has invaded against her orders, Lady Legrange——" He paused, and thrust a chair over towards her ; and then added : " Shall I offer you a seat ?"

" Sir !

" You will not have one ?" he continued, surprised, and bowing low. " Then, when a lady chooses to remain standing when there is no occasion for her doing so, it is not for me to sit down. It would not be termed politeness, would it ?" and he moved a second chair over towards her.

" Such insufferable insolence from this common man !" almost shrieked Lady Legrange, now beside herself with the conflict of furious passion which from some unknown reason had risen within her.

She ran, and almost tripped across a footstool as she did so, towards the bell-rope, and clutched it in her hands violently. She pulled it towards her with such an amount of unnecessary force that the rope fell down at once and coiled itself serpentlike around her half-bare neck and shoulders, while the same instant the loud and unusual pealing of the drawing-room bell startled the stillness of the quiet house with the rushing and impetuous noise which it made through the corridors and hall,

startling the servants down below, who thought that some accident must have happened.

A florid-faced, white-headed, portly footman made his appearance in a few moments, looking excited at being so suddenly summoned by his mistress ; for he was puzzled and at a loss to know why "Missus" should have pulled so energetically at the drawing-room bell.

"Conduct that man, Thomas, downstairs, and straightway out of the house!" she said, glaring at the servant.

"Pardon me," the sergeant replied, in his mildest accents ; "I decline to go at your bidding!"

"Decline to go at my bidding! Then I shall send at once for the police ; so have a care, sir, what you say or do!" she authoritatively exclaimed, now advancing towards him in a menacing attitude.

He lifted up his hand as it were to guard himself against an imaginary blow.

"Nay, madam, take heed. There is no use, for I should not leave for them even."

There was another pause ; and they stood looking at one another in a very curious way indeed, as if they were both at bay, and neither knew exactly what to do, or what should be the next move taken by the other.

During the ensuing silence a remarkable alteration from her previous deportment occurred in the

demeanour of Lady Legrange. Her face became blanched even as the face of a dead woman; she stretched out her hand, grasping the back of a chair for support—of the chair he had offered her to be seated upon—and bending hurriedly towards the soldier before her, she gasped forth:

“Must I acknowledge you at last? Will you pursue me for ever? You are——”

“Augustine St. Clare!” he replied. “And, Margaret, I have come back to claim my own! I am no longer beardless, and perhaps that is why I am not recognisable by you or by anyone else!”

“Oh! Holy Sainth Pathrick be betune us and all harm! ’Tis Masther Gusty!” said the old footman, sinking upon his knees and turning his eyes up devotedly towards the gilded ceiling.

## CHAPTER V.

“ **A**H, you recognise me at last, Margaret,” he said to her sadly; “and you are sorry that I have ventured to come hither, where I cannot be anything else to you and your husband but an unwelcome intruder. Five years ago I saw you, and you did not appear to recognise me; and having heard that my father had left you all the funded property that he possessed, I was naturally angry with you on that account, and, need I say, very angry with him?—with you, for your bad memory; with him, for his unforgiving spirit. And at that time I chose not, for my own reasons, to reveal myself. Had I known as much five years ago relative to the real disposition of my father’s extensive property as I know to-day, I would have revealed myself, and not have remained *incognito*.”

He ended, and there was for a short while a solemn silence, during which he handed to her a fair, long lock of silken hair tied with a piece of

blue ribbon, and which he pulled out from an inner breast-pocket.

“It was wrong, no doubt, on my part, to have kept it,” he continued, with some agitation of manner that he vainly endeavoured to conceal, “after you became the wife of another.”

She received it from him noiselessly. He went on :

“I have had a lengthened interview with my late father’s family solicitor since my return from England, and during our consultation he has instructed me—— But shall I go on, Margaret? or is it wiser that I should keep these disagreeable revelations to myself? It will only pain you, who know the rest of my tidings as well as I do.”

She nodded approvingly that he was to proceed with what he had to say to her.

“As you will,” he replied carelessly; “not that it is any concern to me. The family solicitor read over for me, word for word minutely, the contents of my father’s last will and testament for my better information and future guidance. He did this more as an old friend and benefactor of mine than from any professional or mercenary motives. Though I was quite willing to give him any fee he might ask for so doing, and for the unnecessary trouble which I was putting him to. From which final testamentary document of my poor father I have learnt,

as it was explained to me by his solicitor, that he had, before his last moments, discovered, to his intense joy and satisfaction, that I was entirely innocent of the crime wherewith some enemy or enemies of mine, for I had many, charged me behind my back. Consequently, thinking that to delay would be dangerous, he sent at once for his family solicitor, and ordering the old will to be cancelled, he made a new one. In this last will he left all the bulk of his real and personal property to you, on condition only that if ever it came to pass that I should turn up again in any part of the world, no matter where, the property, both the realty and the personalty, which he died seized of, should revert instantaneously to me and my heirs. At last I turn up! So, madam, you now perceive how I happen, by such a strange course of events, to be so much at home in my own house and the house of my father!"

He sat down again in the same easy-chair, tired with the effort which it had cost him to say so much, clothed as he was in his sergent's dress, and awaited her reply.

She glided over to him, and kneeling down, clasped her hands in supplication before her, and all her anger appeared to be entirely gone.

"Augustine," she whispered, "I have injured you deeply and irremediably, without doubt, by my

superior officer, Captain Legrange; the remembrance of Mrs. Legrange and her child, Lucia, flashed across the mind of the brave soldier and pained him. George stooped down with a shout to lift the officer in his arms and carry him within the British lines. At that instant a bullet hit poor George in the leg, and there he lay motionless beside the officer, and like him, powerless to arise and walk away.

"It can't be helped, sir," he sighed drearily. "We must only endeavour to bear it together, notwithstanding that we are forced to remain in each other's company, willy nilly, as the old saying is, whether we like it or no. I do not know whether you do like it or no. I'm sure I don't. We shall have to go on and bear it."

Captain Legrange smiled notwithstanding his dangerous state, and replied:

"For the present, at least, that's our best and truest philosophy. But Clayton, my poor fellow, he added with much consideration, "I am dreadfully sorry for you. Hang it! you should have left me to my fate."

"Ah! I couldn't do that, sir."

"Well, you were the only fellow amongst men who had the courage, or might I say thoughtfulness, to come for me. Clayton, if ever get safely out of this scrape, I shall be





unhappy and unjust suspicions; but will you forgive me? Oh, please to forgive me! for God knows that I believed you to be truly and really guilty of the heinous crime you were accused of. And as you know yourself, and as everybody who ever heard of it is aware, I did not suspect you of it without that evidence of guilt which was so strong, which was so overwhelming against you upon every side. Need I tell you that?"

"I said I was innocent," he responded, lifting her up from her suppliant and entreating posture; "and when I stated so, it ought to have been enough—at all events for you."

"Yes," she answered with a heavy sigh, and apparently becoming contrite.

"My stating to you that I was then not guilty of that crime might have been sufficient apology for you as regards one whom you knew as well as you did me," he said reproachfully.

She sighed again heavily, and once more resuming a kneeling position on her humbled knees, she looked away from him longingly, with a tell-tale blush colouring her averted face. She alone knew the might of that sacrifice which it fell to her lot to bear when she gave way to her many suspicions and had judged him unheard. Weighty indeed was the load of regret which she had carried for years in secret, although before her friends she

smiled, and the world envied her prosperity. How many women there are who are exactly like her in every way, who think of their departed girlhood hopelessly and wearily, tired of everything which has been in the past, and with hardly a desire or an interest in that which is to come during the rest of their unmomentous lives. How many there are like her, who wonder often to themselves in solitude how it can really be possible that they are able to bear the chains of gold and the diamond necklets they have foolishly entangled themselves in, because by the virtue of their own innate attributes of selfishness they deceived themselves when they married rich old husbands, or did something else which destroyed the buoyancy of their spirits, and made their lives so singularly monotonous ever after?

Gazing furtively up into her former lover's face—for these two once upon a time had been in love with each other; madly deeply, most passionately, with all the energy and vigour of undisguised first love—Margaret, for the time being at least, completely forgot her right to be styled “my lady;” forgot her immense wealth, her numerous dresses of silk and rich attire, her great unbroken prosperity in life, and thought only of the wondrous and striking contrast between the personal appearance of this splendid fellow standing before her and almost over her, and that quaint and cantankerous

old military dotard whom she was bound every day to call by the fond and intimate name of husband, and whom she was supposed to love, honour, and obey every hour and moment, but whom she did neither love, honour, nor obey in her heart of hearts, or in any other mode of exhibiting an affection which could be construed into a genuine reality—such as men and women promise to maintain when they swear such with due solemnity upon the altar. She felt to-day she could kneel, it might be without ever rising up unless at his command, at the feet of a handsome man like Augustine, and be his lowly and most submissive slave, while Sir Lucius she simply despised, nay, the thought of whom made her feel sick at times.

“For others, my dear Lady Margaret,” the sergeant continued impressively, “it is true that my word of honour as a soldier—and might I add now as a gentleman as well?—might not of course have been enough; for others are not gentlemen or ladies always, unless it chance that they should have been born within that sphere. But it ought to have been quite enough for you. You are of gentle blood by birth as well as social position. Do I make myself sufficiently understood by you to comprehend my meaning?”

“It ought to have been enough for me,” she replied, “if it had been my good fortune to have been

similarly situated with others, but such was not so. I had never anyone more experienced and with a cooler head than myself to guide me in my actions. But please to spare me any more words!" she continued beseechingly, and looking up at him. "I have been cruelly punished, Augustine, for assisting your father and your enemies to drive you from home. My repentance has been accompanied by a sixteen years' penance."

She closed her thin lips with a mute expression of resolute resignation to the dispensations of Providence, and timidly awaited his reply, somewhat expecting that it would be a favourable one.

"I have suffered also, and I need not acquaint you of that here," he said coldly, while he rose hurriedly and took up his hat or shako, with the intention of going away without more ado, now that he had so fully explained the state of affairs to her, at least to his own satisfaction. "I leave it to you, Lady Legrange," he added thoughtfully, but with no further hesitation in his manner of addressing her, "to acquaint more accurately Sir Lucius as to how matters have substantially altered in regard to the occupancy of this residence of Hatherdale House. It is an unpleasant task, to be sure, for you to have entailed upon you, but I trust that you will consent to undertake it with all due and reasonable speed; for, as probably you are aware, it

superior officer, Captain Legrange; the remembrance of Mrs. Legrange and her child, Luc, flashed across the mind of the brave soldier and pained him. George stooped down with a slight sigh to lift the officer in his arms and carry him within the British lines. At that instant a bullet hit poor George in the leg, and there he lay motionless beside the officer, and like him, powerless to arise and walk away.

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"Ah! I couldn't do that, sir."

"Well, you were the only fellow amongst these men who had the courage, or might I say the thoughtfulness, to come for me. Clayton, if I ever get safely out of this scrape, I shall



must be got through some day not far distant."

She had risen at his words from her kneeling posture, and remained standing with some concern, with one hand resting upon the handsome inlaid table in the centre of the room. As she did not make any movement upon her part to approach him nearer, he bowed in a stately distant way, took a step towards her, and held out his hand to bid good-bye for the present. She did not volunteer take it; and with one rapid glance at her, without uttering another syllable, he departed unattended from the drawing-room, and left her there alone.

When he had quitted the presence of Lady Le-grange, which had been unwelcome to him, Augustine St. Clare—for we will call him George Clayton no more, since that was only an assumed name, assumed for the purposes of disguise and concealment—found his old friend, Lucy, eagerly waiting for him in the garden amongst the roses.

"I thought, from your manner," she said laughingly, "you must have had something of particular importance which you desired to communicate to my stepmother, Lady Le-grange; and I therefore very prudently, as I considered, at all events, changed my mind about returning myself within the precincts of the drawing-room, which is a room



I never care for very much, at least to remain there for any length of time. I preferred staying in the garden until you made your appearance here. Do you like the army?" she asked unexpectedly.

"It has been a hard life for me. There was rough work to be endured in it now and then. Sometimes I have murmured secretly to myself, over my manifold trials as a soldier. Yes," he repeated in a mournful tone, with a touch of regret in it, "I love the army very much."

"Would you like to leave it?"

"Now, most decidedly, at this particular juncture of my life, I would like to leave the army."

"Why don't you do so?" she inquired, looking at him curiously.

He smiled at her impetuosity.

"I have had to earn my bread; and if it was not until very late in my career that I contrived to leave the army, it is but too true I might starve," was the answer.

"You need not starve if you choose to leave it," she remarked, with something of her old childlike manner.

"No," he said, "not now. I can afford to become a civilian once more."

"I mean——" she hesitated, and, frightened at herself, commenced regarding him fixedly.

"What were you going to say to me?" he in-

quired, returning her steadfast gaze, and endeavouring to reassure her.

“This,” she answered quietly, and fastening her large eyes upon him, beaming with generosity. “I am mistress, in my own private right to do what I like with it, of over ten thousand pounds—Government Stock.”

“A good security that is,” he interrupted, laughing gaily.

She thought his features were beautiful in their sunny expression whenever he laughed, and her face reflected them. Even so does a mirror reflect faithfully a picture which has been delineated by the renowned skill of some master hand.

“I can do what I like, George, with all this accumulated money,” she said. “Since you are all the world to me, I want to make you a present of half of my vast fortune—vast at all events in my eyes—that is, more than five thousand pounds when the interest accruing thereon is likewise taken into consideration. Is not that a munificent gift from one so unimportant to others as I am, in order to set you up respectably in life—in a position which may be both suitable and becoming to the true and exquisite gentleman which by nature, if not by circumstances or education, you assuredly are!”

“Lucie!”

It was the first time in all his life, and in all the years of their close intercourse, that he had ever dared to address her so by her Christian name—it had ever been Miss Lucie, or Miss Legrange—and the familiar name, so unfamiliar on his lips, at least in her presence, fell upon her ear with that charming and exuberant freshness which belongs to the unerring voice of first love.

“Oh, Lucie!” his voice trembled with the suppressed force of his manhood’s intense emotion, “do you mean this? or am I to let such words pass by, unheeding what they convey, because they happen to be but words—idle words—and nothing more?”

“I really, and truly, and in all seriousness, mean from my heart what I have spoken, and I hope—oh! I do hope so much!—you will deign to make me happy and at rest by accepting at once, without delay, this offer of mine.”

He replied dreamily in the affirmative, as one who doubts the reality of something both beautiful and worthy which has been given to him to make his own of henceforth. It was not easy for him to understand why she should make such an offer to him, but the fact was indisputable; one would seem to have to go back to the romantic records of bygone ages for a similar act of unselfish generosity. Yet Lucie, captivating as she was,

could not be considered to be a mere poetical myth, but a "flesh and blood girl." It would be easy to fall in love with her, since her manner and mode of speaking were far more graceful, reserved, and modest and dignified, than could have been expected from her age. Her sojourn in Ireland developed those traits; for there is no doubt but that one by living in such a beautiful country gains by association, and that where one knows something of the history and of the haunts of such a place, one's own characteristics appear in a stronger light by contrast. He glanced closely into her intellectual and clever face, and said :

"And, my dear Lucie, is the poor sergeant of artillery all the world to you? Can one like you, so favoured by Heaven, hold out your hand to help one desolate and uncared-for as I am?"

"You are all the world, George—all the world to me!" she answered, in a soft and tremulous voice, her brightened eyes lighting up the soldier's handsome face.

"All the sorrows of my past life were no price to pay for a moment like this!" he said.

He regarded her with that glance which some, whose hearts are great, fix at times on their home beyond the sky, and added :

"Lucie, I accept your valuable present."

"I am so glad!" she exclaimed.

“But on one condition,” he continued.

“What is it?” Lucie asked eagerly.

“That I take you also,” he murmured gently,  
“as my wife.”

She never spoke a word, but looked down upon the roses around her. They were like herself, fresh from the hand of Him who arrays the lilies. They were monthly roses

‘That come before the swallow dares, and tint  
The winds of March with beauty.’

He waited for her answer. But she had none to give. She knew him of old; she had studied his temperament, so serene and placid; he had come into contact with many men in other climes, and she was aware that the elements of his nature were refined and improved thereby. In the words of the American poet she seemed to say in reply:

‘Come read to me some poem,  
Some simple and heartfelt lay,  
That shall soothe this restless feeling,  
And banish the thoughts of day.

‘Not from the grand old masters,  
Not from the bards sublime,  
Whose distant footsteps echo  
Through the corridors of Time.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care,  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.’

superior officer, Captain Legrange; the presence of Mrs. Legrange and her child, flashed across the mind of the brave soldier, and it pained him. George stooped down with a sigh to lift the officer in his arms and carry him within the British lines. At that instant a bullet hit poor George in the leg, and there he lay a moment beside the officer, and like him, powerless to arise and walk away.

"It can't be helped, sir," he sighed.  
"We must only endeavour to bear it together, that we are forced to remain in each other's company, willy nilly, as the old saying is, whether we like it or no. I do not know whether you will do it or not. I'm sure I don't. We shall have to stand and bear it!"

Captain Legrange smiled notwithstanding his dangerous state, and replied:

"For the present, at least, that's our truest philosophy. But Clayton, my poor fellow, has added with much consideration, "I'm deeply sorry for you. Hang it! you should have left me to my fate."

"Ah! I couldn't do that, sir."

"Well, you were the only fellow among the men who had the courage, or might I say the thoughtfulness, to come for me. Clayton never get safely out of this scrape, I shall

service to you, not my work! But I've  
too much blood. I cannot quit now."

He relaxed into silence.

There was an unbroken pause for some minutes.  
Then suddenly George beheld a party of five men  
creeping under the shelter of a lateral outwork,  
and directing their steady eyes towards the  
officer and himself.

"Captain, Captain," he whispered in a hoarse  
voice, "the villains will be down upon us in less  
than forty seconds. Give us your revolver as soon  
as you can, sir, hand it here to me. In a good shot, as  
good as any man in your regiment."

"Fire away, my dear fellow, and blow the devils  
guards out of the world! I cannot give you the  
revolver; you must take it yourself. All my  
strength is departed. I would have I say more  
blood left in my body! I am too weak to lift even  
an arm. If the devils shoot me I must give you  
a kick in self-defence. By George! he is come to  
his pretty pass with Lucie Legrange! And I shall  
be shovelled into the earth and covered up out of  
sight? Good heavens! what will they do at home  
when they hear I am killed! Oh! Mark my  
word! Oh! Lucie, my little one!"

In the meantime, whilst Captain Legrange was  
rambling on concerning his own affairs,  
Lieutenant Clayton—he was only a lieutenant in

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Her cheeks grew flushed, and she remained very still, and plucked with her fingers the petals from a rose growing by her side. As she did not break the silence, he said seriously :

“Lucie, would you blush for your husband if he wore a coat like this one upon me? Would you have the gallant nerve to bear up against the shame which fools would cast upon you for marrying a man decked with these trappings—this gaudy lace—look at it!” he continued contemptuously; “these insignia of inferiority of station? Believe me, when I tell you that to wear a coat like this is the greatest ambition of many a brave and upright man; and to have the right to wear it is no easy achievement. For what does it represent? Years of toil and daily discipline. Deeds of daring upon the battlefield, and silent acts of unobtrusive rectitude in camp and barracks, amidst temptations so strong that they wring the souls out of men, and fling them into the great cauldron of human passions. I know what it costs to win a coat like this! But enough of such talk. Lucie, oh! my darling!”

The tender words came from his half-hidden lips so sweetly; her bosom heaved as if the spring of life touched it with magic influence.

“I have loved you silently and secretly for years. When but a little child, at your mother’s side, your



eyes sought mine to read perchance the mystery of my inner self, I felt the first presence of that love for you to which years of pent-up possession in my solitary bosom gave a ripeness and a completeness which can best be displayed in acts, not words. For how in words can I frame what my heart must speak of to you in a language of its own? Lucie, will you be my wife? Will you take me as I am?"

"For better, for worse, I will go with you wherever you go. My life here has taught me that there are better things than wealth and being a fine lady. I would rather walk by your side than drive in a carriage. Yes, George, I will be your wife—a soldier's wife, if you will it so. I give up everything for you, if indeed there is aught I care for to give up. And you shall never be ashamed of me, no more than I shall be ashamed of you."

She flung her arms around him, and lifted up her little face to receive its first kiss. Pure and disinterested as the maiden novice abandoning the world for love of God, was this beautiful woman abandoning the world for sake of the soldier, who was much more to her than the scorn, contempt, and derision which she was aware would be heaped upon her in a hundred jealous households for lowering her social position. What of that! Those would pass away like the coffin to its grave, while this man she loves would lift her towards heaven above.

“You shall never be ashamed of me, Lucie,” he said. “In becoming my wife you shall have done nothing which may cause you to regret hereafter that step. Had I been but the poor sergeant of artillery you think that I am, you would never have heard my confession of love, for I would not have committed against you at any time such a dreadful social wrong as to drag you down, dearest, to my own humble level. Oh, no! You are by far too priceless for that, I assure you; and, Lucie, I would not have brought you to where you would have had soldiers’ wives for your associates; though many of them, without doubt, are very excellent persons in their way, if they are not interfered with or taken from their sphere of action. But come hither, and please to let us sit down on the pretty seat in yonder summer-house where I first saw you to-day, looking so lonely. What were you thinking of, dearest, then?”

“You. Yearning for you, George, and little dreaming how near you were to me at the instant. Dear George!”

“Lucie, would you be surprised to hear from me that my real name is not George?”

“Not George! Do you tell me so?”

“No; it is not George. And, moreover, this fair garden, so beautiful to see, and those broad lands all around you in every direction, and the thick

woods stretching for miles upon miles along yonder hills, and stately Hatherdale House, don't belong to Sir Lucius or Lady Legrange, but are my property. Don't think that I am out of my mind for telling you so!"

She gazed up at him with a bewildered face.

"I do not think that—I—I don't—quite understand you," she said beseechingly.

"Listen, darling," he added in a louder tone, for he had been speaking very low to her, "and I shall straightway tell you in a few words all about myself, and who I really am."

She did indeed listen most attentively while he told to her his story, so surpassingly strange and improbable. With many wondering glances, and often parted lips, she hearkened to every word which he spoke. Ere he had ceased recounting his unlikely tale, her small hand stole softly into his, and rested there.

"Augustine! What a pretty name for you to have! Did I not say once upon a time, George—Augustine, I mean—did I not say to you once that I would, above all things in the world, like my husband's name to be Augustine? Pray do you remember?"

"I do, indeed," he gaily replied.

"But, Augustine, do not, I implore of you, ask me to be your wife. I could not expect so very

much from you as all that name implies. Let me be a sister only. That I shall most faithfully be. I will make such a devoted sister !”

“ Why not my wife ?”

“ I am so unworthy. I thought that you were no more than a sergeant — a poor sergeant of artillery, as indeed you were pleased to style yourself. Have patience ; wait a short while, and some grand lady will fall in love with you. I am quite unworthy of you.”

“ You promised to be my wife,” he answered, “ and I shall keep you to your promise. You forget you are a grand lady.”

Sly Lucie ! As if she had the slightest intention of permitting anyone else to marry him but herself. She was sufficiently selfish not to commit quite such a disinterested act as that. She only spoke to him thus for the pleasure of hearing from his sweet lips the fond reply she knew very well beforehand was sure to come.

Oh ! the joyous consciousness of being beloved ! the sense of protection from evil which it implies ! the fearless glance it awakens at that future bright and cloudless as a sunny day ! Wander through galleries of painting and sculpture ; gaze upon some masterpiece of Ghiberti or of Michael Angelo, and examine the exploits of their wonderful genius, embodying as it does the aspirations of art and

beauty, and skill of workmanship, combined with a special ambition and idealism of their own. Let such a work of art be the richest, most highly adorned, most beautiful, and most perfect that an artist could contrive or imagine. Let him spare neither time nor labour upon it. Let him do his best in all respects to imitate nature in picturesque variety of combination and pertinent surroundings, giving each subject therein its proper relative position, and bringing all together in beautiful balance of the whole, and then we shall have indeed, without extravagances, or *tours de force*, a masterpiece of sculpture, or else of painting, to please the critical eye in every small detail, and to feed the intellect. Such may be in the abstract idealisms, chaste and poetical and harmonizing with nature, in the description of landscape or of architecture displaying in their outlines, however, a broad simplicity, and a variety of individual action and expression of sentiment.

When we see such, and appreciate these special attributes of the work which he has accomplished in his time, we cannot fail to admit the wonderful genius of such an artist, and must pronounce him singular amongst all his rivals and contemporaries.

It is always the business of an artist or sculptor "to exhibit effects produced in actual life," so far

as it is in his power or capability to do so, so as to get an appearance of natural truth and sincerity of treatment.

Or if we do not for the moment care for such intellectual pleasures as the contemplation of such productions of our fellow men present to us, let us then instead have recourse to Nature herself, and see what she can do for us in order to afford us amusement or else ordinary gratification. And what do we find? Let one stand by the dark and gloomy shore of some beautiful lake when the summer clouds flush the evening sky; or float, if so you will it, down the current of some placid river, through yellow cornfields, ripe for the sickle of the reaper, and feel the sense of plenty which the scene excites; gaze from the summit of some giant mountain down upon a wide expanse of cities and country; contemplate, in fine, any of the loveliest sights which this prolific earth of ours can comfort the eye and feed the mind with, and still the human heart, hungry as it ever was, and as it ever shall be, to the end of Time for a human love of some kind or another—divine, one might say, as well as human—rests and broods, as the mother-bird upon its warm nest, over the spectacle of two young lovers, hand in hand, heart in heart, soul in soul, gazing out upon the mysterious years which are to come, with the blissfulness and the

innocence of little children who know no fear because they are full of love !

Ere Augustine and Lucie left the summer-house, she had laid entirely aside her seeming scruples about her own unworthiness, and had consented emphatically and without the least hesitation to become his wife.

Lady Legrange, standing concealed from observation behind the crimson curtains of one of the windows of her own luxurious boudoir, noticed the pair of lovers coming slowly up the garden-path together conversing most amicably, whilst Lucie, was leaning gracefully on her betrothed's arm.

Reader, had you seen Lady Legrange at that precise moment, you would, full of pain and apprehension, have thought of the wily serpent in the garden of Eden when our first parents fell. Was Lucie only another Eve after all ?

Our story changes at this particular point to another part of the world, namely, to the ever-increasing metropolis of London, where other scenes and different vicissitudes must engage the attention of the reader for awhile, since new characters have to be introduced upon the scene.

London is, indeed, a wonderful place, with its endless variety of sights and sounds ; its miles upon miles of interminable streets, and vastly extending thoroughfares ; its magnificent cab-service

and its equally magnificent network of underground railways connecting all parts of the great city together, from Baker Street in the West-end to the Temple and Farringdon Street in the East. In a comfortable sitting-room, the carefully cleaned windows of which looked out upon Jermyn Street, breakfast things were profusely spread, for only one person, on the central table. The servant-maid was hastening busily about, giving the finishing touches to the shining furniture. More than once she paused midst her work to admire the good-looking face which nature had blessed her with, in the tall mirror over the marble mantelpiece. Apparently the study of her own picture was most satisfactory, for each time as she flourished the duster again a smile revealed the prettiest of dimples. At length she lifted herself up to her full height, cast an approving glance all around her, as if content with the result of her efforts, and stealthily slipped away when footsteps were heard of some one descending the stairs outside the sitting-room.

A well-built gentleman of two or three and thirty entered by a different door from the one through which the girl flitted out of sight. He went across and rang the bell. It was immediately responded to by the same servant-maid, whose smiling fresh cheeks shone upon him presently.



He glanced at her, and said in a voice not to be disobeyed :

“ Breakfast, please.”

She retired, and to use a very appropriate phrase, “ turned up her nose”—it had a natural inclination in that direction—as soon as the closed door permitted the indulgence of such facial pastime.

“ What a *Captain* he is, to be sure !” she said, with a pert toss of her head which caused the ribbons of her cap to flutter prettily. “ Here he is, for three whole months living with us, and I toiling like a black nigger in the house, and the sight of one of his shillings never glistened in the palm of my hand.”

She folded her arms over the top of the sweeping-brush, and continued *sotto voce* :

“ Were it not that my young man won't let me dream of it, I'd throw up this here situation, and let missus *then* see, when too late, what it is to have a good servant, as is honest and gets up early of her own accord. For if I wasn't good to the core,” she reasoned, “ my young man wouldn't think of me, and he a head-waiter in an eating-house.”

Captain Jack Audley meanwhile threw himself into the depths of an easy-chair, which was placed near the window. Whilst waiting for his breakfast he drew from one of his breast-pockets a thick betting-book, the contents of which he conned over

with that considerable degree of interest which a man always takes in the pursuit of his predominant passion.

“Let me see !” and he laid one finger on his brow thoughtfully. ‘Yes, that is it. I have it all off by heart—the whole list of the running, with the probable scratchings—the backers and starters, and the amount of odds! By Hercules, I never tightened a horse’s girths yet for a race, and never will, the longest day I live; but if Roland the Rover wins the Oaks this time against Doncaster and Bend Or I’m a made man every inch of me from top to toe for the rest of my sporting days!” he muttered moodily. ‘I’ve a good chance of profit likewise upon that horse Constantine, too. But if both these go to the wall, I’ll have to cut and run—take a moonlight flitting to monsieur’s land.”

“Are there any letters ?” he asked, when breakfast came up at length.

“The postman left seven for you, sir,” the maid replied.

“Show me the letters here. Place them on that small table. I hope the coffee you made for me is better this morning than it was yesterday and the day before, or must I always be speaking to you about it, and always in vain ?”

“Only try it, sir, if you please, this morning. I was very particular, indeed, sir.”

He looked one by one through the various letters that had reached him by this morning's post. Three of them he found were bills, which he put away from him in thorough disgust, as he was tired from getting dunned with such documents.

Then he said :

“ Ha ! I have one here, I see, which comes from my old friend and chum, Jerry Rodgers, of the 48th. I know his disgraceful handwriting. Jerry, to my mind, you were never a remarkably good scholar. One from Will Robinson of the 18th Hussars; he used to be in the 20th, but wisely exchanged when he got the chance of promotion. I would have done the same thing myself ! Well, Willie, my child, what's the matter, may I ask, with you ? Are you out of sorts ? Oh ! He wishes me to go without delay and choose a good saddle for him. That I will do for him, most decidedly, for I am a very good judge of a pigskin. I'd do more for you than that, Willie, my dear boy. What's this, in the name of goodness ? Postmark, Ireland ? Who can this slim, perfumed piece of stationery be from ? Is it for me ? If I want you again,” he said to the eagerly listening servant, “ I'll ring the bell. You may go down.”

She retired, and went down two steps of the neighbouring stairs. She paused, and stole back putting her bright eye to the keyhole.

The Captain, she observed, was reading the last letter which she saw in his hands, and on his face there was visible a very peculiar smile. Jack Audley was in pecuniary difficulties of a serious nature at the present moment—he was always in a difficulty of some kind—and this unexpected letter seemed to let in a ray of hope upon his insecure position (as regards money matters) in the London world, which was all the world to him. At a very early age it was his good or ill-fortune to succeed to a handsome property in one of the Northern counties of England. When he became of age, in two years he ran through his inheritance, and leaped headlong into the dangerous river of debt, which carried him out to sea before he well knew where he was, or how he was. But just then the war in the Crimea broke out, and the Hussar regiment in which he held the rank of cornet was ordered to the East. He distinguished himself in different engagements, and when the strife was ended, home he came again, no longer a cornet, but a captain.

He scarcely landed in England, when the news reached him that he was the successor to a second handsome property, owing to the unlooked-for decease of a childless uncle—a widower—with whom Captain Jack had been on unfriendly terms, but whom that stage-manager, Death, conveniently hurried off the boards of Life's theatre before he had

the opportunity of making a will endowing charitable institutions by the score, instead of allowing his wealth to trickle through that wasteful sieve his spendthrift nephew.

Alas! the second fortune must go, too. The ruling passion for gambling was strong in the gallant cavalry captain, just as other passions take possession of their victims. In spite of the harsh and unrelenting teachings of a past and fruitful experience, he flung this splendid property after the previous one—was forced eventually to sell out of the army, and happened to be now a gentleman at large, a gentleman on town, a dealer in horse-flesh, and a whist-player at his club, poorer much than his associates considered him to be, accustomed day by day to the intolerable annoyances of impertinent and uneducated creditors, and trusting oftenest—disappointed often in his trust—to a windfall by betting upon the turf.

At the great race-meetings in England he was known to have won enormous sums, but somehow he never seemed the richer in consequence thereof, and attached to his name there was an ugly story relative to the awful suicide of a celebrated professional of the betting-ring, whom he had ruined. Yearly his expenditure exceeded his income; he was loathe to draw in the reins and go slowly and steadily; an occasional gallop and a chronic smart

trot was the pace which he went, although a precipice might at any moment yawn alongside his road. He could not exist properly, he thought, and maintain his social equilibrium, without little pet dinners at the clubs, without his costly cigars, and without his divers pretty luxuries. All which items, added to many more, were an expenditure which his lamed income was by no means competent to bear, so that in plain truth, as he owned it in clearer moments to himself, the sundry accommodating folk who had tied him to themselves by monetary transactions had blurred and distorted the happiness of his life.

Jack was a wonderfully handsome man, as anyone could at once perceive, and likely to be a petted favourite—which he was—amongst the right sort of people in London. Wife-hunting was hardly a part of his life's game, good-looking though he was. There was a sort of rough honour about him in a few things. Many a lovely girl sighed as she studied his beautiful countenance, and would wish for the perilous task of reforming him. More than one heiress was ready to yield to his fascinations, if he only cared to exert them and make her Mrs. Jack Audley.

Captain Jack was too unpleasantly prominent in the racing world to suit the tastes of eligible women, and yet any one of them would have gladly married

him for the asking. It would seem as if there was a charm about those who are said to lead a wild life, for bad as they are, there is a contempt for human opinion about some of them which wins a pity and a pardon from a noble heart for all their shortcomings.

Jack, who was in the prime of his manhood now, was of a genial nature amongst his fellows, and at the clubs few were cross-tempered with honest Jack Audley, although he contrived to win from them those large sums at cards—he had such a pleasant, unselfish way of winning money. I do not know why he was called “honest” Jack Audley; from what several of his friends found him to be, no one could say he was not depraved, dangerously deceitful, and in many respects a thoroughly bad-principled man. And yet elegant women courted his society, and petted him like sisters around a favourite brother. He must have possessed something which they approved of, or perhaps he was not so bad as he was painted. In truth, he was bad enough.

One vein of precious gold ran through the whole of the earthly rubbish of which Jack Audley was composed; one vein of bright, veritable metal which yielded great returns to this careless gold-seeker. That was his love for his only sister, Agnes. Agnes! If he had drunk too much wine that

name would almost sober him into the better man. Agnes Audley! In many hearts that name is written in letters death alone shall destroy, and on ears that are pained by the discordant sounds of human pain it falls like the songs of genius.

She lived with him, and kept him as straight as it was in her power so to keep him, although he would reel about and go zig-zag, and fall down into some black pit of difficulties head-foremost, out of which it would take him a long time indeed to extricate himself.

She lived with her brother for three reasons: first of all, in order to take care of him, and in order to housekeep for him; secondly, because she dearly loved him, in spite of his faults; thirdly, because she had no home to go to other than his, unless she chose to set up a home and an establishment of her own, with a retinue of servants. She possessed, by the way, a thousand a year in her own right, which she had exclusively the enjoyment of, and which she could dispose of and do what she liked with in every way, and as best suited her convenience or her tastes, which were simple in the extreme, and most easily satisfied. Her parents were both dead, and two years ago she buried, at the age of eighteen, an only sister. There was much of the hopefulness of her life buried in that early grave, and sorrow chastened Agnes into com-



plete subjection to her Father's will. Sweet Agnes! Calmly she goes through the world, injuring no one in thought or deed, and ever full of peace. The influence of her quiet power clears the atmosphere around her of all noxious elements, and, as if instinctively, the waves of the world, which wreck so many human lives, withdraw from her presence and harm her not. Meek and joyous Agnes! whatever she does is always sure to be right. She is an expression of the spirit of God, and men hasten to touch their hats respectfully when this Christian is passing by.

At the period when we introduce her to the notice of the reader she was just after turning twenty-one years; her womanhood had apparently now really begun in downright earnest, although a girl's thoughts still lingered in her face, which anyone might read who had a desire so to do. That face was very round and fair, and in the large and steady grey eyes shone the light of eternal life. Her features were small and always changing; her little mouth wore often an expression at once childlike and sweet—an expression of repose and of true refinement. She was tall and queen-like. In her gallant soul royal thoughts of genuine goodness dwelt and thrived, and their certain presence swayed her bearing, so as to make her the constant delight of men who despised her truant brother

less than they loved her, who was indeed so worthy of their love. By other women she was not remarked in the same way, because they neither did nor could understand her as men did. Her simple tastes were not as costly as they might have been, considering her select position in London society. She was fit to be a duchess, so hundreds said, and added that she would not be got to marry anyone less exalted than a duke. Did not the Count de Poodle-dogzowski, the Russian ambassador, pay her a visit once a week? Did not the Marquis of Featherhead say to the Duke of Piccadilly, in the presence of a roomful of ladies, that gentle Agnes Audley was the handsomest girl in all London? Which was a positive untruth, as Lady Heirhuntress said to Madame Backbiter—an assertion of their mamma which the four Honourable Misses Heirhuntress chorussed in a ready quartette.

No; Agnes was not the handsomest girl in London—there were hundreds handsomer amongst the ten thousand to which she did belong. But she possessed qualities for which matchless beauty would have been a poor substitute. Qualities of the heart and head combined, which endure when the loveliness of a woman's youth has faded like the short-lived roses. Qualities which have already moulded the features of her face into a beauty which makes men lower their eyes involuntarily in

her presence, and wish well spontaneously to this woman of many sorrows and more joys, as she marches nobly on alone, through the years that are to bring her to the gates of heaven at last. Qualities which are the characteristic redeemers in the strict sense of the appellation of our weak and tottering human nature, and which have won the Redeemer's love. The child wants its mother when its infant strength fails it and the soul its God, unless one be an atheist in reality, or only in feeling and sentiment, and humanity stands in need of its good and its fair women.

Marriage being one of the chiefest thoughts generally to be found in the hearts of ladies, and one of the first horizons of their ambition, of course, therefore, the expectation of getting a good husband made the bosom of Agnes Audley, who was a merry being in herself, heave whenever love's golden dreams filled her mind. This strong and true woman yearned for the protecting love of some brave man as great, as strong, as true as herself. The white heat of her burning heart leaped upwards towards some unknown one she yet had not seen. Her sensitive nature shrank from the rude touch of her daily experiences; no one knew, save herself, of her timid shrinking; but such instinctive delicacy would, she felt, make it rather hard, unless she was much pleased with the object of her choice,

to give away herself to anyone at all. He whom she would be able to bring herself to love with that degree of affection which might be termed a wife's love, with the love so constant and so truly affectionate, for instance, as that which any ordinary mother entertains naturally for him who is the father of her children, must have gifts of soul rich and rare as her own ; must be one who has walked with clean feet over the muddy paths of this world.

Her intentions about settling down in the married state Agnes kept to herself. Whatever future arrangements with respect thereto might be agreeable to her she remained silent upon, although her brother strove to ascertain her wishes on the subject. He was acquainted with many of her wishes, with many of her most intimate thoughts ; for about them it was her joy to speak to him. A smiling light used to glorify her face in his presence, reprobate though he was. And of all the confidence which she did repose in him, he perhaps was not on the whole unworthy, for his sister Agnes was in his eyes some sacred person who had been lent to him for awhile to take care of him until he should be able to take care of himself, and her influence was, he sincerely felt, a holy protection to him in the midst of his sins. It would be hard to define what particular or general form of religious belief

he held, but there is one thing certain, that he believed in Agnes and in her religion, though he never went to either church or chapel. He had a fashion of saying to himself in excuse for his delinquencies, 'If Agnes can look on and forgive so much, what will not God forgive? Agnes knows I love her, and God knows I love Him, bad as I am.' Often such thoughts as these came into his mind, but though they are recorded here, no comment is offered upon them one way or the other. The song says the voice of the Great Creator speaks in the wild waves, but the ship nevertheless goes down in their midst out of sight for ever. So, too, when the emotions of the human mind break loose from their bonds and storm furiously above the din of contending elements, the voice of conscience is heard, and like the frail ship guided by man's will, the soul sinks and disappears.

There is one thing to be said to Captain Audley's supreme credit, and to his supreme credit it shall be said in his praise here. In all his pecuniary troubles he never asked Agnes for a penny. He sedulously kept her in strict ignorance of his various difficulties, and if she had offered him money, as she certainly would have done with pleasure, did she know how often he was sadly in need of it, he would have refused to accept it from her and make use of it. Sink or swim himself, Agnes, the darling, he would secretly

exclaim, must always swim, somehow, if he could manage it. If he could have added at the same time "God bless her," he would certainly have added the phrase, and the prayer would have been a sincere one, for it would have come straight from his heart. The words rose to his lips at times with a silent eloquence and died unuttered. The will, however, may have done for the deed, and it is to be hoped so. It seemed out of place for Jack Audley to say a prayer.

He read the letter very attentively, and laid it down whistling "Whew—w—w—w!"

"I wonder what's in the wind?" he exclaimed. "Maggie Legrange has a project in her brain for the more perfect accomplishment of which the most humble services of Captain Jack Audley are to be put in immediate requisition. Very well, Captain Audley is ready to stand by you, Margaret. He was once the passionate adorer of—of—well of your tens of thousands, Margaret, although at the same time he would not have despised yourself. But you chose to accept the hand of the gallant Colonel instead, and turned your back on me. That was hardly kind of you. I never deceived you, and if once or so I did treat you rather cavalierly, you should have been more lenient towards me and have forgiven it. By Jove! you should have taken me with all my faults. If I had nothing else, surely I

had youth on my side, which he had not. And Maggie," he added, "has it really come to this pass with you? Are you in such a predicament that you cannot extricate yourself by your own unaided exertions, that you should come down from your dignity, that you should actually condescend to put your pen to paper to write to me an epistle on such a subject!"

He eyed the letter curiously whilst partaking of his solitary breakfast. Occasionally he glanced through the columns of the morning papers, one of which was laid on his right hand. When hunger had been sufficiently appeased he took up the letter again and read it carefully. This was the letter:

"Hatherdale House,  
"County Tipperary, Ireland,  
"June, 186—.

"MY DEAR JACK,

"I think I can do you a good service if you will co-operate with me in what I intend to do. You have heard of course—the whole world has heard of it as well as you and I—namely, that our old acquaintance Augustine has turned up again, and he is going about boasting of his position and as if, forsooth, nothing had happened in the past. We have to leave Hatherdale House—except Lucie, for whom our ex-Sergeant has proposed, and by whom he has been accepted. *She does not like him. I know*

*it.* Lucie has in her own right to dispose of, at any time, as may best please her, *more than ten thousand pounds*, which by the way is all vested in *Government Stock*, and when I write to you thus, and volunteer to afford you so much information about her private affairs, I do it simply for the purpose of forewarning you to prevent this marriage if you can ; and *you* are sufficiently a *man of the world* to be aware that when this wayward child of ours is such a simpleton, especially in money matters—for of course he will live on her money, if he marries her, as he is fully determined to do—why should you not have as good a chance of her as he if you tried, now that I give you the opportunity of doing so ? Augustine St. Clare has given the Colonel and myself six months' grace, if you please, to prepare for our final departure from beneath the roof of Hatherdale House, which has covered us so long ; meanwhile Augustine St. Clare is keeping out of the way, having gone on a yachting cruise. He is madly in love with the sea, you must know. He purchased some short time ago a magnificent yacht, fitted her out beautifully, and went with one or two gentlemen—friends of his—in the direction of the Mediterranean. It appears strange how quite satisfied Lucie seems to lose her lover thus, for I would say at least three months. In half a year from this present period they are to be married—



that is, if Augustine does not go to the bottom of the sea, or if some fine gallant does not get inside him, in the meantime, in Lucie's affections, which latter catastrophe would not surprise me greatly, considering our Lucie's unaccountable apathy about Augustine's staying away or remaining with her. Now, my dear Jack, Lucie is evidently lonely here, and if you could contrive to arrange your engagements so as to find yourself in this direction shortly, I will get Sir Lucius to ask you on a visit. If in this direction, of course, you would call on me; or better still, I intend writing to your sister Agnes by this post, begging of her to come and spend a month with me. Sir Lucius and you would get on well together; you are both well up in military matters, and knowing, as I do, your perfect manners and extensive conversational powers, you, my dear Jack, and Sir Lucius would be as thick as cream. You are a fisherman, and people come from England to fish in Ireland. There is a nice little *fish* here, and if you angle skilfully you might catch her—she weighs more than ten thousand pounds in gold. Take the hint, Jack, or don't take it. You are such a dear old friend of Margaret Legrange, that she wishes to help you when the opportunity presents itself. Bring Agnes by all means. If she hesitates, make her come; I am aware she would do much for you. Dear, loving, harmless Agnes! Are her

knees worn out from saying her prayers? She has not been with me for two years, dating from last spring—what a shame to treat her friends so! However, I could forgive Agnes much. By the way, you have never seen our Lucie, I believe, although Agnes has seen her. I had better tell you she is extremely prepossessing in appearance, and an *angel* in temper, for I try it sometimes. Now, Jack, don't be a fool, but come!

“ Always sincerely yours,

“ MARGARET FRANCES LEGRANGE.

“ P.S.—I wish to add something personal—something which concerns myself. I have been suffering latterly very much from depression of spirits, lassitude, and unaccountable weariness. I have consulted several physicians here and in Dublin, but not one of them has been able to cure me. This doctor advises one thing; that doctor advises another. I follow each in turn and am none the better for so doing. Change of air might serve me. The doctors failing to cure my ailment, as a last resource I consult you, dear Jack, hoping you may know of any remedy which will bring me back to my former state of health—to my former self. When Agnes comes to me I will place myself under her care, for I am aware from past experience she is a good nurse.

“Do write me word if you can inform me of any remedy.

“M. F. L.”

“So Lucie is extremely prepossessing in appearance and an angel in temper. You try her temper sometimes!” Captain Audley exclaimed. “I’d bet twenty to one you do try it every day, so sure as the sun rises.”

“‘Sun in the east in the morning, and sun in the west at night!’

Is it not Bret Harte who wrote that line of poetry? I’d swear, from what I well remember your handsome but wicked face to be, that you have the tongue of a shrew, my fair lady! I to marry your step-daughter, Lucie? It is not possible. But I admire your womanish jealousy.”

With which complimentary allusion the ex-Captain lit his morning cigar and went out for a quiet walk towards Kensington Gardens.

He thought much of the letter as he wended leisurely on his way, and on his return—having first spoken a few words to his sister Agnes, and obtained her willing acceptance to the invitation which was sent to her, requesting her if she had no other engagements on hand to be so good as to spend a month with the Legranges at Hatherdale House—Captain

Audley sat down and himself wrote the subjoined reply to the letter which he had received from Lady Legrange.

“ Jermyn Street, London,  
“ June 25th, 186—.

“ MY DEAR LADY LEGRANGE,

“ Having consulted with Agnes, who will write to you also by this post—at least, she informed me that she would—we find, on calculation, that our arrangements will enable us, without difficulty or much inconvenience, to run over to Ireland for a few weeks, just to see you once more and some more of our intimate friends there. Indeed, it is very kind of you to think of asking us at all, and I may state here, by the way, that I will endeavour, so far as I possibly can, to follow up the hint which you gave me in your letter. I have burned the letter, for fear lest it might chance to fall into other people’s hands, and please at your leisure to perform the same judicious office towards this hurried note of mine. I am very sorry to hear of your ill-health. I assure you that it gives me a great deal of concern. I think that if you tried it you would find that change of air would be a good thing for you; in fact, there is nothing better than that for an invalid, at all times; so the doctors as a rule advise. A friend of mine, whom I have the pleasure of

meeting very often, had occasion, the other day, to consult one of the first physicians resident in and practising his profession in London, for the very same complaint which you say you are suffering from—depression of spirits and lassitude of body—and he advised her to take a good glass of sherry, or else port-wine, now and then. I'd advise you to try that medicine also.

“ Hoping that my old acquaintance and brother-in-arms, Sir Lucius, and also Miss Legrange are quite well, and thanking you most gratefully for your kindness,

“ I am,

“ My dear Lady Legrange,

“ Yours very faithfully,

“ JACK AUDLEY.”

He then, having finished the letter, folded it in an envelope and duly directed it, went out and posted it without delay, and having done so, proceeded from the pillar-post to his club, hailing a cab for the purpose. Going through the streets at a rapid pace, he was very near rolling into a company of volunteers on the march, who were turning the corner of the Haymarket the same moment that the cab he was in came round it in the opposite direction. However, no accident happened, beyond that the officer of the company walked up to the

window of the vehicle and remonstrated with its occupant for driving so furiously. However, he got but little satisfaction, for Captain Jack, having been reared all his life in the regular service, and not being accustomed to volunteers, looked upon them more in the light of carpet-knights, or drawing-room soldiers, and so, politely bidding the young officer to "put up his sword and go to h—ll!" he ordered the cabman to drive on, and through their ranks if necessary. However, the driver of the cab was more good-humoured than his fare, and by a small concession on both sides, on the part of the quasi-military and of the cab-driver, a collision was fortunately avoided, and both parties went their different routes without more ado.

When Lady Legrange read this letter from Jack Audley, which in due time she received, her handsome face became scarlet in colour; and she thanked her stars most heartily that no one was haply present to observe her intense agitation. Sherry! Port wine! Why should he write to her and mention such articles of diet so pointedly? He was not her medical attendant, and he should not have taken it upon himself to presume to constitute himself as such. Well she knew that these were no remedies for her, and her conscience clearly told her that her lassitude and weariness and daily ill-

health were to be attributed—oh, shame to have to write it here!—to over-indulgence at each opportunity in both sherry and port wine as well, and in any other drink, in fact, that would have the same influence of an intoxicating nature over her system. The curse of alcohol was upon her, and affecting her as it generally affects womankind with similar melancholy consequences.

## CHAPTER VI.

“The brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur’s court,  
A tributary prince of Devon, one  
Of that great Order of the Table Round,  
Had married Enid, Yniol’s only child,  
And loved her, as he loved the light of heaven.  
And as the light of heaven varies, now  
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night  
With moon and trembling stars, so loved Geraint  
To make her beauty vary day by day,  
In crimsons and in purples and in gems.”

TENNYSON : *Idylls of the King.*

AUGUSTINE ST. CLARE’S beautiful schooner-yacht, with her white sails extended, sped gracefully—a bird-like craft—over the smooth and limpid waters of the sunny Mediterranean. She was well-known upon that coast, both for her racing powers and her peculiar build, and the accuracy of her water-line—a point generally observed with regard to yachts and boats of pleasure by seafaring men—so that, without the slightest doubt, she was the object of the unceasing admiration of many an



“ancient mariner,” of many an “old man of the sea,” and itinerant cabin-boy.

At every port which he touched at, Augustine wrote, as a matter of course, an affectionate letter to his affianced Lucie, intimating to her, at the same time, where would be the safest place to direct her letters. But it so happened, that when he arrived at the particular place which he had mentioned, he never even once found a letter from her awaiting him there. Nay, all the time during which he was absent from Ireland he did not receive one single line of correspondence from her. This fact truly saddened him when he was inclined to be happy, and threw an immovable shade of the deepest melancholy over days of human sunshine, which otherwise would have been as cloudless as the heavenly skies under which Augustine's yacht sailed in her own lovely way.

Lucie, on her part, was most grievously disappointed, and rendered for the time being both cold and callous towards her absent lover. Why? Because she innocently thought—even as other maidens would justly think under the circumstances—that he had indeed so much spare time to devote to his own selfish enjoyments, and yet could employ no leisure moments in writing to her, if it was only one line to say that he was well and happy, and to relieve her anxiety: for she never received one of

his almost weekly penned letters—never! Margaret Legrange took care that Lucie should not receive them. Poor Lucie!

Captain Jack Audley meanwhile presented his handsome self as a visitor at Hatherdale House, and succeeded, after a very brief effort, in winning the military admiration of Sir Lucius Legrange.

Lucie thought that she had never in her life seen so handsome a man. He was much handsomer certainly than her lover the ex-sergeant, and bad correspondent, about whose whereabouts she was now totally ignorant.

Margaret Legrange—well, *she* followed the guileless little Eve through the garden and through the house, and whispered her temptations about Jack Audley.

Agnes, be it remembered, accompanied her brother to Hatherdale House; and then there was, at least, one angel there. Oh, Agnes, your sweet presence brings health, and life, and faith!

In the beginning of the September of this same year, the summer and autumn of which had been spent by St. Clare cruising about the waters of the blue Mediterranean chiefly, the *Lucie*—St. Clare's yacht—left the vicinity of the bay of Naples, and proceeded one propitious morning on her homeward journey northward, towards Ireland; and whilst she is careering gallantly, with impatient speed, over

the playful waves, we will return to Hatherdale House.

Captain Jack certainly admired Lucie Legrange. He liked her undisguised guilelessness. She had not the art of concealing art, because she had no need of it. It was delightful to him to watch her turning her gentle eyes towards him when he spoke, and drinking in implicitly his carefully selected words. Her eyes were dimmed by no muddy light. Neither the spirit of the world, nor of the flesh, nor of the devil, reigned within her. To Captain Audley she was like his sister Agnes. Just as with dear Agnes, he observed that Lucie's greatest charm was not the attraction of feature, of voice, of figure, so much as the absence of self, the disappearance of feminine force, of self-assertion. In fact, Lucie's great charm was emptiness. Individuality was continually annihilating itself within her, and as rapidly being produced again in spite of her noble efforts to forget herself. She was always sowing the little seed of self-sacrifice, and as frequently reaping a ripe harvest, rich in substantial fruits. Such sowing brought her bread indeed.

Captain Audley was very attractive to her, and she, who never received such gallant service before from anyone—not even from Augustine!—became very grateful in return to this handsome visitor at Hatherdale. She gradually, in her loneliness,

learned to lean on the society of this cultivated Captain Jack. He was thus attentive to Lucie, not alone because he was bent on securing her, that thereby he might possess himself of her fortune, but likewise because he really found some pleasure in being with her.

She was afflicted with no element of disturbance, and Audley delighted in the peace which her presence produced within him.

“Just like Agnes!” he would say to himself over and over again.

And what of Agnes? Ah, Lucie loved her truly; never in the whole of her young life did she meet with one the same as Agnes, to be with whom was to be in paradise. To Agnes alone Lucie complained about Augustine’s inexplicable and lengthened silence. Agnes told her affectionately to quickly dry her foolish tears, and to rest assured that there must be some solid reason for her lover’s not writing to her, over which he had no control; perhaps some mistake in the postal arrangements on the part of the post-office authorities, as from what she (Lucie) had said concerning Augustine, she (Agnes) was quite confident he would be guilty of no act unworthy of him, or capable of causing pain to others, and above all others in the world to his own Lucie, who was his acknowledged and intended bride.

Such consolation, coming as it did from such a

quarter, soothed the ruffled feelings of Lucie, but still she sighed deeply. At times, too, an unhappy feeling of uneasy apprehension seized her in an unaccountable manner, as she reflected that, perhaps, he did not send her a letter because some dire misfortune had befallen him. It may have been that sickness had overtaken him, or that his yacht had been lost in some fearful storm or gale.

Then, in her desolation over the contemplation of the consequences of such a disaster, she would gladly fly from her thoughts to take refuge in the polished companionship of gay Captain Jack Audley—the brother whom Agnes loved, as Lucie saw so clearly.

She was walking one day through the grounds, leading her favourite bay horse by the bridle, and Captain Audley was walking beside her. She had been cantering about the fields all the morning, and so, just at this moment—it was eleven o'clock in the forenoon—Lucie, who had a few minutes ago met Captain Audley on the lawn, looked greatly to advantage, for exercise had heightened the colour in her face, and made her eyes sparkle brilliantly.

She dismounted when she met Captain Jack, saying to him that she wished to have a walk for the change.

“I have been an hour and a half in the saddle!” she exclaimed.

"That is not much for a young lady from the county of Tipperary," he replied.

"But don't you know that I am not from the famous county of Tipperary?" she answered playfully. "I was born in far-off India. Nevertheless, I would be only too proud, indeed, if I could claim it, of the privilege of styling myself a Tipperary girl!"

"You like the people in this part of the world, do you not?" he said.

"Why should I not, pray?" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes and distended nostrils; how exquisitely pretty and engaging she looked in the majesty of her youth and now-developed beauty! "They are people whom I love sincerely from my heart—these Tipperary people. Could you guess, with all your ingenuity, where I have been since breakfast?" she asked, turning to him her sunlit eyes.

"I am sure I could not," he replied, bowing low. "I have no particular curiosity to hunt up the whereabouts of young ladies of my acquaintance at that hour. So I neither know what you have been doing, or where you have been wandering to; but a morning ride never did or could be other than an extreme pleasure both to the rider and to the steed. Do you not agree with me?"

"Well, I shall tell you where I have been. I have been amongst my poor—visiting, as is my

invariable custom, the sick and the fatherless. We have such here, you know, as elsewhere," she said thoughtfully.

"Ah, yes!" he answered. "They are to be met with all the world over. But take care," he added.

"Of what?" she asked.

"You say that you have been exercising yourself in a work of charity; that you have been visiting the sick and the poor. May I tender to you a little advice, which is this: that you ought to be watchful at all times where you go to amongst those horrid Irish hovels. You would not be the first victim to a mistaken zeal in the cause of religion, if you took any of their sicknesses and fell ill and died. Did you ever hear of the ill effects of doing good?"

"Never," she replied emphatically.

"Then, I have, often and often," he answered, with a cold smile. "I doubt, too, whether going amongst the poor and the illiterate has not its weighty disadvantages. For one who has been delicately reared, like you, especially, one cannot mix amongst such people without becoming part of them in some way. Mind, I am giving you no advice that I do not wish you to take. I am only playing the *rôle* of the philosopher, and speaking my thoughts aloud. But if one does not profit by

the experience of others, they will never profit by their own experience."

"I, at least, listen to the philosopher," she said rather gravely.

"And the philosopher appreciates his audience."

"But I would be no disciple of yours," she replied, "so long as you preach that doctrine."

"I seek no disciples," he said humbly. "My ambition has no wings, it cannot soar. It loves the solid earth and the pleasant places thereon."

"And does it stop there? Does it love nothing more?" she asked eagerly.

"Possibly," he answered, in his quiet way, and in a measured tone. "But we are getting sentimental," he added, "and I hate sentimentality."

She smiled, and looked curiously into the Captain's stolid face. He was beyond her, she felt, and a puzzle to her. She will understand him better before long.

They were loitering now by one of the wooden gates leading into a flower garden; a groom came up, and Lucie giving him the reins, and bestowing a kiss upon the horse's glossy neck, the man led the highly-bred animal reluctantly away, for the steed seemed to enjoy the presence of his fair mistress.

Lucie gathered her long riding-habit upon her arm, and entered the flower garden with Captain Audley. They walked together down the pathway



before them; and on each side were rose-trees blooming in great luxuriance, and the scent from them was exhilarating. Captain Audley stooped and plucked ruthlessly a beautiful white rose. He handed it to her, smiling. Lucie took it and blushed.

"Mind the thorns," he said.

"Oh, yes!" she answered.

"What a pity," he remarked, "that roses have thorns."

"Do you think so?" she replied. "I like them for that: it makes one more careful."

"Quite true," he replied. "But 'twould be so pleasant not to have to look after the thorns."

"I don't know that," she said. "If a rose had not thorns it would not be perfect. That is an old saying. 'Twould take from its perfection, would it not?"

Then she stooped down and plucked a white rose identically the same as the one which he previously gave her. She offered it to him; he took it.

"How like they are," he exclaimed.

"Yes," she said; "they are both the same."

It was his turn now to look at her curiously as if he caught a hidden meaning in her words, although at first he did not quite understand the drift of her remark.

That evening, Sir Lucius being absent on business in Clonmel, Jack left the ladies after dinner, and

went into the smoking-room to consume a couple of fragrant cigars of a particular brand over the columns of the sporting paper, *Bell's Life*. Two hours subsequently, tired of being alone, he strolled out into the billiard-room, which, as there was no one there, he soon left with the intention, as it was a charming moonlight night, of having a walk along the smooth lawn outside—a walk and a talk with himself, as he termed it, murmuring the phrase half aloud.

Before reaching the hall-door, leading out upon the terrace in front of the house, it was necessary for Captain Audley to pass through a corridor which ran at right-angles to the hall. This corridor was brilliantly lit by a row of lamps on each side—an idea of Lady Legrange, which she had caught up somewhere in her travels. The effect was fantastic in the extreme; as not one of the lamps was like another, and they were all pretty.

Captain Audley succeeded in getting half-way through this corridor when he beheld the dark figure of a lady clad in a black silk dress coming towards him. But the manner in which she moved seemed to him exceedingly peculiar. She approached zigzag, swaying unsteadily now to the right, now to the left. She passed him by as if but half-conscious of his actual presence. Captain Jack raised his eyebrows and opened his languid eyes

rather a little wider than was usual with him. Beyond that he did not betray his surprise. He never looked surprise, indeed, at anything; he had been accustomed to see so many strange sights in his time, though he was staggered undoubtedly when this darkly-clad lady passed him reeling by. Who would ever for an instant dream of Lady Legrange being under the influence of intoxicating drink! Yet it was she, and no other.

When Captain Jack saw her she was evidently hastening to her bedroom to conceal herself from the observation of the servants, knowing that she had indulged too much in the consumption of wine, and at an inconvenient time of the day, whilst her guests were almost in her very presence.

Captain Audley, much amazed at what he had seen, passed out into the cool night air, and lit negligently another favourite cigar. He threw the Vesuvian away, and walked quietly on until he arrived at a small rustic bridge handsomely constructed of variegated woodwork, and spanning a tiny violent rivulet, which was wont to rush along with dangerous impetuosity betimes, when the floods, caused by the rain, poured down from the adjacent hills. He stood leaning against the wooden railing, and gazed sadly towards the silent and waning moon. Sadly, for bad as he was, he was extremely sorry for Margaret. He would have

wished to have been able to think better of her than he ever can again. There were points in her character he liked ; and he would have been glad to be, in his own way, able to esteem her, and look up to her for counsel or guidance if it should happen that ever at any time in his life he needed such. Now all that was entirely out of the question. He used to admire her prodigious expediences in working out her ends, though he used to see pityingly how her pride and her belief in herself used to frustrate her efforts.

It was a delight to him in other days, before her marriage—when he was much in her society—yes, a thorough delight to him to be allowed to watch her following up some ideal or another, not for the ideal's sake, not for any seeming or real good possessed by the ideal, but following it for the mere sake of following it, for the pleasure of the pursuit, for the triumphant exultation of conquering all the many difficulties which were thrown in her way. It was very sad, after all, even to Captain Jack Audley, to find Margaret Legrange in the deplorable state of intoxication in which he accidentally found her to-night.

“ I suppose she went at it so hard on this occasion because Sir Lucius is absent from home and won't be back again in Hatherdale until late to-night, though it is very late already. Bah ! what a bad

cigar! It is impossible to smoke some of these weeds!" and he flung the cigar from him contemptuously, just as, at the same instant, he flung from him the embittering reflection about Lady Legrange and her dissipated appearance.

Soon afterwards, as the atmosphere was getting chilly, and as he had forgotten to put on an overcoat, not thinking that he should need it, he returned indoors, and lit a candle lying on the hall-table, and going upstairs the family went to bed without disturbing any of the domestics, and not caring to wait up for the return of Sir Lucius, nor indeed wishing to meet him at all to-night.

Meanwhile Augustine St. Clare's yacht had not been many days at sea when a gale of wind arose, and the crew of the *Lucie* prepared for the possibility of experiencing foul weather. The following night the tempest had increased in force, and was so severe that all hands were called to close-reef the sails. But the storm, further increasing, tore the flying sails from their fastenings; a heavy sea washed the deck clean from stem to stern, and the small boats were carried away. The man at the wheel had his attention diverted into another direction from the roaring of the wind, and so lost his control over the helm. It was now a question of life or death. St. Clare, seizing an axe, went forward in order to cut away, with all due celerity, the fore-

mast, so that the labouring vessel might right herself. He had only given two or three blows before the yacht began to heel over; in half a minute the masts were lying upon the water. The wind roared like heavy thunder. The chopping sea dashed in wildly from all quarters. Soon as the masts touched the water, St. Clare was washed away from the foremast. He was driven against the rigging of the mainmast and caught there. He climbed successfully on to the rigging at the top of the mast by crawling and creeping through the rattlings, and there he found in a sad plight, their clothes drenched through and through with the sea-water, nearly the whole crew, holding on as fast as they could to the ropes and chains. Just as he had secured himself by means of a friendly rope, one sea swept over the yacht and buried the mast fifteen or twenty feet under water.

Augustine knew not how long he was buried therein, but he never expected to rise again. Between the crosstrees he secured himself once more. Here he found one of the crew; in a quarter of an hour later another man swam up and seized hold of the mast. One of these, abandoning his position, succeeded in getting on board the vessel. The other man was carried away by a large wave. Left alone on the mast, St. Clare found it difficult to sustain himself. In the afternoon the men on

the yacht reached him a rope, and he was drawn safely on board and out of further danger of a watery grave.

During the following thirty hours, St. Clare and his men—those who survived—kept their damp and dismal watch, hoping that aid might be afforded them.

Next day the condition of the weather and of the vessel was such that Augustine could go into the cabin in search of a biscuit and some rum, and to change his clothes.

It was most desirable that something to eat and drink should be found, if anything remained; but unfortunately nothing could be got to appease the pangs of hunger and thirst. The sufferings eventually experienced both by himself and the crew cannot be described.

At length, the morning of the following day, the first sail that had been in sight since the disaster occurred appeared some distance off—too far to be attracted to their awful position by the signs which the sufferers made. Two hours later another vessel came in sight, but the swan-like ship passed queenly on, without seeming in any manner to observe the desolate wreck. It may have been that the cruel crew were heartless; it may have been that the captain cared not for those human ties of affection which consecrate our earthly nature and prove it is

divine after all. However it be, the silent ship passed sullenly on, and the hearts of the hungry watchers sank.

Two hours later another vessel came into sight, but the barque glided onward on its westward way without attending to the wreck. They subsequently, for the first time, raised an anxious signal of distress—in the shape of what? why, an old blue coat! In the brightening afternoon a fourth welcomed vessel made its appearance four miles off to the windward, and before the twilight deepened solemnly into an impenetrable darkness, the captain of this most gallant ship, with eyes that saw, discovered the wreck, and directing his course towards it, sent, when but a hundred yards intervened, one of his idle boats alongside. This vessel proved to be bound for the city of New York. After affording to the exhausted sufferers that great assistance they so needfully required, the humane and truly charitable captain of the above vessel duly landed them upon the quays of New York city, and before making any preparations for returning to his native home, Augustine St. Clare wrote a lengthened letter to Lucie Legrange, wherein he fondly acquainted her in loving language of his insufferable sufferings, of his miraculous escape; and though last, oh! no, not least, of his intended arrival as soon as it was possible for him to come at Hatherdale House.



Many weeks, as misfortune, alas! would have it, for one reason or for twenty, for aught the writer of this chronicle knows, intervened before St. Clare's consequent arrival at the pretty and charming lodge-gates leading into the exquisite grounds spreading in their bright abundance around beautiful Hatherdale House.

And beautiful indeed that peerless residence was, with its lake in front reflecting the blue sky, and the stately white swans sailing sedately and meditatively thereon. How sweet those swans look, expressive of every refinement, and setting off to inexplicable advantage the ten tiny Italian greyhounds which loved to hover round the borders of the lake as if there was—there may have been—some secret sympathy between them and that lake's peaceful surface, and the land of classic story which Tiber laves, which Florence whispers of, which Rome in some measure expresses.

But why do we wander from our story? Ah! Italy is to blame! not we! And yet, too, we dread to speak of that dreadful shipwreck which unhappily befel Augustine St. Clare. We dread, moreover, to speak of its attendant sufferings: still more, oh! far more do we pause and hesitate, full of apprehension, speaking of that other and worse shipwreck which, alas, was too surely to come of his fondest hopes—that fearful shipwreck which was, as it were, an

almost wrenching asunder of the very springs of his young and hopeful life.

Augustine St. Clare, having at length reached Ireland, arrived in Cork, and from thence, coming to the town of Clonmel, drove therefrom to Hatherdale House. When he had left the avenue and appeared unexpectedly in front of the mansion, one of the oldest of the servants belonging to the estate came eagerly out upon the lawn in order to shake his master by the hand, as he was privileged to do.

"You got all my letters, Thomas?" St. Clare inquired eagerly.

"Yes, sir."

"Had I not a narrow escape of it?" he added, in the same eager tone.

"Begorra! An' ye had, sir!" the old man replied.

"How are they all, Thomas?"

The old man—he was a very old man in truth—scratched his scantily-haired head and grew alternately flushed and pale. Augustine St. Clare, who had alighted meanwhile from the vehicle which conveyed him thither, seized him fiercely by the arm.

"Why don't you speak to me, you old scoundrel!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There is, yes, there must be something wrong inside the house yonder," and St. Clare looked imploringly towards stately Hatherdale House.

The aged servant answered him with an intelligent nod.

"What on earth is it? tell me, Thomas," the master said, very calmly.

"Oh, musha, musha, monamayshin! How can I have the 'gumption' to tell yer honour?"

St. Clare recollected himself, glanced suspiciously at the driver, took quickly out his purse, paid the listless driver more than his fare, which helped to rouse the latter a little, and sent the aforesaid driver about his ordinary business the very moment the few articles which comprised St. Clare's luggage and baggage generally had been removed from the car.

Augustine St. Clare went directly into the house.

"Come in, please, Thomas!" he murmured to the attending servant.

Having passed up the numerous flights of stone steps and through the familiar hall, St. Clare turned abruptly to the left, and entered the deserted dining-room. He was afraid to ask about Lucie yet.

"Where is Sir Lucius?" he rapidly exclaimed, looking at the old domestic.

"Gone, sir!" the aged man feebly replied.

"Where, pray, is Lady Legrange?"

"Gone, sir!"

"Gone! And my—and Miss Lucie?" he reluctantly said.

"Gone, sir, too!"

"Where?"

"Aye, gone—gone for ever and for ever!" the servant sobbed out, shaking his white hairs in a mournful way.

"For ever! What do you mean by such language? Is it possible that—that my—my Lucie is—is dead?"

"Och, our poor hearts are broken entirely, are broken entirely!"

"Thomas, what in the name of goodness do you mean?"

"She was such a blossom, and such a purty, purty colleen, ochone, ochone!"

St. Clare's powerful hand in a moment grasped the old servant's lean and yellow throat as if he was going to throttle him.

"Speak out, man!" he exclaimed angrily, "and have for ever done with your confounded muttering—how I hate it! Where is the girl? Tell me without one instant's delay, Thomas, where is she? Oh! where is she? Thomas, why do you not speak to me and offer me some explanation of this unaccountable state of things?"

"Faix, I cannot, Master Gusty; you're choking me out and out, and preventing me from doing so, even if I wished it, which I do not!"

"Where is Miss Lucie? Where is my own

darling? Oh! if you dare to trifle with me, even one minute longer—remember that I am perfectly serious in what I say to you!—I'll be hanged by the neck by the common hangman until I'm dead, for murdering you! There, be off with you, and don't let me see you any longer."

He loosened slowly his tightening fingers, and flung pitifully the aged menial from him. It was something like in the nature of an assault. The law says even to raise the arm in an hostile attitude, or the hand, against another is a constructive assault. And there is no doubt that if the old servant could, he would have no hesitation in summoning his master on the charge the next day the nearest bench of magistrates would be sitting—for there was a court-house only a few miles off. He should like nothing better than to have him fined if he could in revenge, and with no other alternative but perhaps one month's imprisonment. As it was, St. Clare actually did strike him rudely across the chest; but in such an adroit manner, however, that the backward progress of the worthy Thomas was, fortunately for himself, speedily arrested by an easy armchair which stood in a recess behind him, and into which he fell back as if apparently he was the worse for liquor, overwhelmed with dismay, and trembling in his weak limbs from head to foot.

"May Providence help me, and you as well, your honour!" he gasped forth wildly. "For faix ye'll kill me dead for saying what I'm going to say to you."

"Thomas, excuse me for hitting you. I assure you that I did not intend it; it was all the result of an accident. True old friend of myself and of mine, forgive my foolish rudeness. You know it well that my temper at times is a bit quick, and brooks no interference on the part of anyone whatsoever."

St. Clare shook him heartily by the hand while he muttered these words, but the old servant said :

"I could summons you, sir, for this, and I have a great mind to do so. You had no right to raise your hand to me and to strike me. Neither did I deserve it."

"Don't talk about that now, Thomas. See, here is a sovereign for you. Observe, Thomas," he continued nervously, after giving the coin to the servant, "I am quiet once more. I will sit down in this chair by your side and listen patiently to whatever now, like a good fellow, you may have to tell me. Only don't hide anything from me. Don't Thomas, for my sake! Tell me all about Miss Lucie. What has become of her? where is she gone to, Thomas? why do you say that she is gone for ever? what madness has come over

you? She must be dead, I suppose, for I can account for your strange language and still stranger gestures in no other way."

"She is not dead, indeed, but oh, sir! she *is* gone from you for ever and for ever! Aye, for ever and for ever! Never let me see the sight of her again! She has disgraced herself and the whole of her sex!" The old man's face lit up with indignation, "Or of him—oh, the villain, the cunning scoundrel!—who took her away; her, the lily who had no stain before; her, who was with her bright and happy face like a ray of heaven itself in this big house! Oh, the smiling smooth-faced deceiver: to steal her away from my darling young master, who—and don't I know it well of old, Mister Gusty—would have made her as happy, aye, as the summer day is long. Oh, Mister Gusty! oh, Mister Gusty! how shall I, how can I, bring myself to tell you what an event has happened since you went away? Oh, Mister Gusty! indeed, and indeed I pity you!"

"Go on, Tom. I am prepared to listen to you."

"And, sir, you won't catch me by the throat surely, if I make so bold as to tell you? I'd like to be sure of that!" And he smiled.

"No," he answered, with the slightest smile in return—a smile half-despairing, half-hopeful, that is very sorrowful to look upon.

“Well, then,” he exclaimed curtly, “to make a long story short, she has eloped! Run away with another man!”

“When?”

“Exactly this day fortnight, and much about this hour too.”

“With whom, pray?”

“With that fellow Captain Jack Audley—they generally call him.”

“Go on, Thomas,” he said. “And tell me the rest, if you have anything more to tell, for I can hardly believe it to be possible. Such a thing could never have occurred—not with Lucie Legrange.”

“Well, then, it has, sir; and the whole affair is too unfortunately true. Sir Lucius, by the same token, and our good missus, were downright wild with rage and disappointment when they heard of it, especially the missus herself. They both left this place immediately, and started off in hot haste for England. Never a bit of me knows what part of that country they are gone to, and to tell you the plain, honest truth, Mister Gusty, I don’t care a farthing if I never hear of either of them, or set my eyes on them any more; no, not one thrawneen, and that is not much. Small comfort there ever was with him at any time since I entered into his service, for he was as cantankerous as a bee in a bottle; and as for herself, my lady, why she was



awfully cross-tempered at times, and those times came often enough, whenever, for instance, we chanced to have a wet day. Heaven be between us and all harm !”

St. Clare was not heeding the garrulous old man, who loved so well to hear the familiar sound of his own cracked and tremulous voice. He sat looking thoughtfully at the coals in the fire.

“Captain Audley ! I remember him, and he remembers me. I saved his life at the siege of Sebastopol, and that is now a long time ago !”

He laid his arms on the table beside him, and buried his face in them. No more trust in men or women. No more reliance on humanity. No more childlike affection for others, or for that one who had been nearest and dearest, who, whilst he thought her true to him, consecrated his existence to all things best and haply difficult.

Farewell now for henceforth to the honest pride of life ! Farewell, alas ! to the strength-giving hopes that were as life-buoys upon a stormy sea ! Farewell to all the lovely colouring which had brightened his future, and welcome to grim reality of disappointment and sorrow, which, it may be, for him and for many is a truer happiness than the gratification of every hope they entertain could prove ! Sorrow is wholesome, and it, with pain, shapes the heart rightly. If we knew not sorrow

in any shape, could we satisfactorily explain ourselves to ourselves, or solve the mystery of the unseen world that lies around us even from our very infancy, so that we know not what we are, or where we are, or whither we are going? Could we understand how to select the things that are worth living for, from the things that are not?

St. Clare remained motionless, with his face buried in his hands and his arms resting on the table beside him.

The aged domestic, not yet quite recovered from the sensations of the sudden blow which he had received in anger from his young master, and still not willing to look for satisfaction for such an un-called-for attack upon him, remained standing by his side for a few moments, and full of apprehension lest he should be struck again. A pause ensued, during which he tried, but all in vain, to lift up his young master's downbent head. He received no response to his reiterated remarks and frequent questions.

"Be of good cheer, dear Mister Gusty!" he anxiously exclaimed. "She wasn't worthy of you. There is as good fish in the sea as ever was caught. Mister Gusty, what's the matter with you? won't you speak a word to old Tom? Here, catch him by the throat if you like, and he'll thank you for it. Glory be to all that's good! He has fainted off!"

Old Tom, having made this important discovery, tugged at the bell-rope with all his surviving strength. In a short time, other servants having made their appearance and applied the necessary restoratives, St. Clare gradually opened his weary eyes and looked vacantly around him.

"Lucie!" he said sweetly, as if he remembered her, and her alone; for, in truth, she was the constant object of his solicitude by day and by night. Whatever he did, and wheresoever he chanced to go, he was continually recollecting her.

"Yes, your honour, I know that you want Miss Lucie!" Tom replied at once; "but as she is not here now, of course she cannot come to you. Take, if you please, a sup of this; 'twill do you good, no doubt."

He placed some sherry and lemonade to St. Clare's parched and thirsty lips. The drink seemed to revive him somewhat.

"Thomas," he asked faintly, turning his head towards him, "what's the matter? And why am I here? What has happened to me? have I fainted?"

"Wait a minute, and I'll tell you all about it; and drink more of this wine," he answered. "You got a sudden weakness, but you are quite recovered now, and your old self again."

"Where am I? I thought that I was at sea,

and that the waves were coming in over the deck of my yacht; it was only a vision, or else a dream!"

He drew his hand across his ruffled forehead in a perplexed fashion.

"You are not at sea, sir; you are not in the small cabin of your yacht. No; you are safe and sound at home again in your own house," the old servant responded, "where neither winds, nor waves, nor angry seas can either disturb you or molest you, or put you in constant danger of being drowned."

"Thomas!" he quickly exclaimed, rising to his feet.

"Yes, sir!"

"Tell Miss Lucie to please to come here," he demanded, "as I particularly want to speak to her on business of a pressing nature."

"Arrah, not now," responded the faithful old servant mournfully, who, in spite of their various petty differences upon different occasions, still had his master's interests at all times at heart. And applying the wine-glass a second time to St. Clare's dry lips, he made him partake of its contents.

Augustine drank the exhilarating and strengthening draft of wine, and suddenly, as his senses came back to him, recollected all that which had happened. Turning round with glaring eyes, he said to those who were gathered together in his presence :

“Leave the room at once — aye, all of you Thomas, I wish you to stay ; I want to speak particularly to you about a certain matter.”

When they were alone :

“Now tell me, if you please, all about this celebrated elopement which has caused so much sensation and so much noise in this part of the world. How did it happen ? and how on earth did the man you alluded to, by name Captain Audley, whom I know to be a mere tout on racecourses and in the betting-ring, succeed in inveigling this charming and accomplished girl away from her father’s guardianship ?”

Thomas did so ; he told him everything about the most unfortunate affair from beginning to last, and at the conclusion of the old man’s story, which was very long indeed, and garrulous in the extreme, St. Clare said calmly and solemnly :

“Dear, dear Lucie, you were very precious to me ! How precious, none but myself knew ! You were only a child ; and did not know the nature of what you were foolishly doing. It is bad enough to run away with another man’s heart, and to blight for life his constant affections—affections which were sincere in your regard. However, I am not angry with you. I was too fond of you. May you be happy ! But it is still worse to run away with your own fair character and good fame in the

estimation of the public, and that, moreover, irrevocably."

Ah ! it was all very well to say that, and, besides, to mean it. But the light, nevertheless, of his life was gone out. All was dark now, except the thorny path to heaven through the grave.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ Now two great entries opened from the hall,  
At one end one, that gave upon a range  
Of level pavement, where the king would pace  
At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood ;  
And down from this a lordly stairway sloped,  
Till, lost in blowing trees and tops of towers,  
And out by this main doorway past the king.”

TENNYSON : *Idylls of the King.*

TWO years have passed quietly away since the incidents took place which were recorded in our last chapter, and our story now leads us to a pretty dwelling-house situated near the well-known Champs Elysées, Paris. It is a fair and a sweet place indeed, hedged in securely from contact with the outer world, so gay and so bright just here, only by a lovely and carefully cultivated garden, wherein the very flowers seem joyous and invigorating in themselves.

It is morning, and the sun, which is ever very hot in Paris, is shining in a clear blue sky ; the birds are chirping in the surrounding trees a merry

lay, and no great distance off the noises of the city are audible.

In a tastefully-decorated room in this mansion a lady is standing at, or rather leaning out of, the open window. She has a quiet and a good face, and the sunlight plays upon it as she looks towards the blue sky, and listens, smiling, to the accurate notes of the birds flitting through the garden. She is elegantly dressed in the latest Parisian mode, and, being a Frenchwoman of the first rank, her dress of delicate blue silk became her well, and formed a fitting contrast to her pale golden hair and laughing blue eyes, and snow-white neck and pencilled brow. But no, her neck was not altogether snow-white, nor the pencilled brow without its archness of expression. The faintest bluish tint seemed to suffuse the colour of the one, and threads of gold through the other, and both appeared to betray her birth, for in her veins ran the bluest blood of France. This is the Comtesse de la Vallonière, only child of the Marquis de Seurey. Her mother is not alive, and this merry French girl, but twenty years of age, is the charming vision in her father's life, and a favourite with all around her.

To-day, waiting in the sunshine at the open window, she evidently is expecting the advent of some one she is, to say the least of it, interested in. Presently footsteps are heard in the garden, and



the Comtesse de la Vallonière bends eagerly forward.

A gentleman dressed exquisitely—that is, dressed like a gentleman—appears walking towards the house through the garden, coming from the public road outside. The cab which conveyed him hither is heard rolling away in search of another fare. As he approaches nearer to the house, he flings away a half-finished cigarette he had been smoking, and gaily kisses hands towards the Comtesse. They both knew they were great friends, though at present nothing more than friends. Yet when Marie—that was the Comtesse's name, and the name her friends loved to call her by—saw him first in the garden to-day, a big sigh escaped her which none but her angel guardian heard, and a tear started to her glad blue eyes, and a sorrowful smile, like a cloud upon a peaceful scene, darkened for a moment, and no more, her face. When he came close under the window, she was radiant again, and her heart beat fast with pleasure.

“Ah, Monsieur St. Clare!” she exclaimed; “welcome! I am glad to see you looking quite recovered after our ball last night. Was it not a pleasant one?”

“Delightful!” he answered. “And you, I need not say, look, as you always do, the very epitome of happiness.”

"Thank you," she replied; "but cease to compliment, if you please. Is it not a lovely day? I expect to have such a delightful drive this afternoon. Papa has promised to take me to Suresnes. He wishes me to visit the wife of an old friend of his. Poor thing! they say she is dying either of consumption or of a broken heart. But come upstairs, Monsieur St. Clare, and I shall tell the entire story to you as I have heard it from the lips of papa himself. It is such a pitiful tale; I wept when he told it to me. What a beautiful perfume that cigarette had, you have been smoking!"

"Will you come down and walk in the garden?" he asked. "The day is so fine, and the scenery so lovely."

The Comtesse de la Vallonière held out her hand for St. Clare to clasp.

"And what about this lady you are going to visit?" he said. "Tell me her history."

"It takes not long to tell," she replied. "Her husband having lost all his money on the turf and at the card-table, deserted her and his child. She is living with her father at Suresnes. Nay, she is not alone in her misfortune, inasmuch as her father, Sir Lucius Legrange, is separated from his wife. He and Lady Legrange, it appears, could not agree, and so they are living apart from one another. He, with his poor daughter and little grandchild, at

Suresnes; she, I know not where, but I think in Paris."

"Then it is of Mrs. Captain Audley you speak?"

St. Clare said.

"Yes. You have met her?"

"I have."

"They say she has been sadly disappointed by this unfortunate marriage with Captain Audley. She loved some one else, and either that other deceived her, or she was deceived concerning him, and betrayed into becoming the wife of this gambling Captain."

"I rather incline to the latter opinion."

"That she was betrayed by others, and induced to marry Captain Audley?"

"Decidedly. Especially as she had a fortune of her own, and he had nothing. And is all her money gone now?" he asked.

"So I am given to understand," she replied.

"This is very sad."

"More than sad, I should say," the Comtesse answered. "Mrs. Audley is such a sweet lady, I don't know how anyone could desert her. I don't, indeed!"

"Will you give me her address?" he said. "I would like to visit her—her father, whom I have known for a considerable time. I am most anxious

to see him. Will you give me his address upon a bit of paper, if you please?"

She did so, and when he read it, he wrote it down again in a pocket-book which he carried about with him. Then he sighed, and looked very grave, and bade the Comtesse good-bye, much sooner than she expected, or than he had at first intended.

"Farewell," he said, "till we meet again. I must hail a cab from the neighbouring street and be off."

The Comtesse paid Mrs. Captain Audley, in other words, poor Lucie Legrange, a visit; and when she went away to return to her own home, she wept most bitterly, for the sight which was presented to her eyes was quite too much for her.

The merry and charming Comtesse de la Valonière did not often nor easily shed tears; but she was very sad for all the rest of that summer evening and all the next day. Oh! why not? For it is very painful to visit one who had encountered such deep misfortunes, and who had been the victim of so much unmerited but stern calamity.

On the following day Augustine St. Clare, more carefully attired than usual, went out to Suresnes, and knocked at the door of the lovely little cottage in which Sir Lucius Legrange lived. There was a great silence about the place. He was admitted

by a servant, who spoke in low tones, and motioned with her hand for him to enter an adjoining room. He obeyed, and what did he behold there?

In the centre of the room an infant rolling about, crowing and playing with a toy. At the window, where the vines were clustering in, stood Agnes Audley, her pale face full of peace. On a chair by a bedside Sir Lucius Legrange, ten years older in appearance than when Augustine saw him last, his white hair tossed about, his erect figure bent and emaciated, and his sorrowful eyes fixed mournfully upon—what, ah! can it be? Yes, there she lay; a heavenly smile upon her patient young face—dead! The flower was broken early, and it was well! Sorrow has done with her; and Lucie shall no longer need the gentle presence of Agnes Audley to teach her to forgive the man who had wronged her so, and stolen her from St. Clare.

Augustine advanced, and stood by the bedside. Sir Lucius looked up, and seeing him, seemed not in the least surprised, but said:

“There’s Lucie! My beloved child!”

Poor old man, she was not there; it was only a foolish make-believe.

St. Clare knelt down by the bedside, and placed the beautiful rose, which he wore in his button-hole, in Lucie’s lifeless hand. For there was the

dead figure of Lucie stretched out at full length upon the bed.

“ Thy lips are quiet and thine eyes are still,  
Cold, colourless, and sad thy placid face,  
Thy form has only now the statue's grace ;  
My words wake not thy voice, nor can they fill  
Thine eyes with light. Before Fate's mighty will  
Our wills must bow ; yet for a little space  
I sit with thee and Death in this lone place,  
And hold thy hands that are so white and chill.  
I always loved thee, which thou didst not know,  
Though well he knew whose wedded love thou wert ;  
Now thou art dead I may raise up the fold  
That hides thy face, and, by thee bending low,  
For the first time and last before we part,  
Kiss the curv'd lips—calm, beautiful, and cold.”

When he rose from his knees, which he did after a few moments, Agnes Audley, who was close by the corpse, approached him and stood for a short time by his side.

“ I believe that you are Augustine St. Clare,” she said ; “ at least, I have been told that is your name. May I ask is it so ?”

“ Yes,” he answered.

“ Lucie died yesterday at the exact hour of three o'clock in the afternoon ; and before she uttered her last feeble farewell, and left us for ever, at least in this world, she bade me deliver a final message to you.”

Agnes paused before proceeding any further with her tale of sorrow, and St. Clare waited in patient

silence until she should resume the thread of her conversation.

“She wished me, in eloquent words, to tell you,” she continued, “that one of her last desires in this life was, to beseech of you to forgive her and—and him.” Agnes trembled slightly when she mentioned her brother.

Augustine looked upon Lucie’s face, and at Agnes, and smiled to himself.

Then Agnes knew that her brother was freely forgiven for what he had done.

The Comtesse de la Vallonière and Agnes often paid a visit afterwards to the lowly grave of the gentle Lucie, who was buried in the cemetery of Père-la-Chaise; and the former displayed her exquisite taste by the cunning skill wherewith she decorated with flowers and shrubs the handsome and graceful tomb. More than one sigh was wafted over Lucie’s still remains, and more than one prayer from sinless lips to heaven.

Our story leads us now from that sad spot to a room situated in one of the crowded thoroughfares of busy Paris. The windows look out upon the rolling traffic, and the fashionable carriages pouring continuously along the street. Over the way is situated a splendid *café*, the chairs in front of which are occupied by idle loungers, upon whom swift-footed waiters diligently attend and bring the required re-

freshments which the strangers ask for. Here and there an odd-looking American betrays the Yankee spirit within him. All good Americans, is it not said? will, if they deserve it, when they die go to Paris. Apart from the other frequenters of this distinguished *café*, and seated on a chair some distance to the right of the others, is Captain Jack Audley, now much older in personal appearance and more world-beaten than when we last saw him. He is smoking a cigar, and drinking a cup of *café-noir* with some cognac in it to give it a flavour, as is the common habit of Frenchmen, who live more out of doors and at *cafés* and restaurants than anywhere else. The French atmosphere is, as a rule, so mild and balmy that those who can do not stay in their houses, but go out and bask in the genial sunshine, and take their meals in the open air. Captain Jack Audley will not be out of the fashion prevalent in the country which he is living in now. Every moment he glances most impatiently upward at the windows of the room already alluded to, as if expecting a signal of recognition from some occupant who is at present concealed from view within the house. Anxiety is depicted on his grave countenance, and at last, after pulling out his watch over half a dozen times, he exclaims, under his breath :

“Is she fooling me? or will she ever come to me? Must I be waiting here for her all the day,



and neglect my other appointments and engagements, just for no other purpose whatsoever but merely to please her?"

The words were scarcely uttered by him when a fashionably-dressed lady appeared at one of the windows of the mansion above alluded to, and gazed listlessly, and apparently in an unconscious manner, out upon the streets below. At first her eye did not venture to seek the precincts of the opposite *café*, which was very often the object of her attention whenever its daily visitors happened, as was their custom, to be gathering there; but she seemed rather to take note of the various people who were constantly passing up and down the street. After a few doubtful moments she fixed a piercing glance upon Captain Audley, and nodded her head.

He drank off the rest of the *café-noir* in a hurry, threw away the butt of his cigar, crossed the street as rapidly as he could, knocked at the door of the house, which was a private one, which being opened for him by a page in dark livery and silver buttons, he entered, handing his visiting card at the same time. In less than another minute he was ushered into the room, and stood facing the lady who had recognised him from the window. She held out her delicate and jewelled hand to him in a friendly way.

"Glad to see you! Well, Jack," she said, in a low sad voice, very melancholy and very subdued

in its tones, "I got your letter. What can I do for you?"

"Much, Margaret," he answered. "But I do not ask much from you. You are rich; I am a ruined man. I come to you because I am sure you will not refuse me a little money."

"Money? I am not rich, as you deem me. I have no more than can satisfy my own needs. I could not afford to give anything to others!"

"Margaret, lend me twenty pounds: it is not a large sum out of your pocket, and I will faithfully repay you as soon as I can. I would not come to you thus were I not very hard up indeed just at the present moment."

"You scarcely deserve that any money should be lent you by me or by anyone else, after the disgraceful manner in which you treated poor dear Lucie. Have you seen her anywhere lately? or do you know anything whatsoever about her?"

"No, indeed," he replied moodily; for he did not like the subject.

"Have you heard of her lately?"

"No—no," he answered more moodily. "Don't speak of her—you, of all others!"

"Very well," she replied, with a bitter laugh. "Be it so. I suppose she gets on better without you?"

"Most likely," he said, "since I was not worthy

of her. Very few were, that I know of. She was so good, and I was so bad; the contrast was too great, and I could not live with her. Even our child, lifting up its blue eyes, reproached me."

He sank down upon a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

The same bitter smile remained upon the striking face of Lady Margaret Legrange—for this woman was her. Revenge is sweet, and hers had been glutted to its full upon Lucie. She had succeeded in separating Lucie from Augustine St. Clare, the man whose heart the girl had won, and who had been Margaret Legrange's first and only love, now a long time ago. For Margaret had loved but once; she had tried to fix her affections afterwards upon others, but in vain—their broken tendrils would clasp no more. It would not be untrue to write that she had actually tried to love her husband, Sir Lucius Legrange, but with what ill-success her present position bore witness, inasmuch as she was by mutual consent living separated from him.

"Come, Margaret," Captain Audley said, "let us not be trifling. It will benefit neither you nor me. I have not a five-pound note in the world. Lend me this money, and I promise to repay you."

"What if I do not lend it? What if I have not got it to lend to you?"

“Then I shall have, as an alternative, to starve, or rob, or do something desperate, or be a soldier—though I would not like to be *that* in this country. I must have money!” he said impatiently.

“If I lend you this sum, Jack,” she replied, “can I have any warrant or any security that you will restore it to me again? If I give it to you now, I shall be expecting it back from you from the time that you get up in the morning, to the time that you go to bed at night. I assure you that you are in the dark concerning this matter, and if I get this money for you, you will have to give me a written promise in return on paper that you are in my debt, and that you will pay me back within a specified time. Otherwise, I shall be driven to take law-proceedings against you to recover the amount of the loan. Please to bear that in mind. If I give you the money as a personal gift, or a simple debt of honour, I know very well where you will go to with it; you will be off in hot haste to one of your gambling-houses, and spend there every penny of it. However, for old time’s sake, and for sake of Agnes”—her countenance softened in its expression—“I will lend you this sum. But our agreement must be on paper, in writing. Pay me when you can; let us say in six months’ time from the present date.”

He assented to this arrangement very willingly,

for he was badly in want of the money, and would take it from anyone who would give it to him, and in any way that he could get it, whether by bill, or I. O. U., or circular note, or actual coin. She went then into an adjoining room, and presently returned with the twenty pounds, which she took out of a small strong money-box she carried in her hands. He accepted the notes—they were English notes; he got some paper, a pen and ink from an adjacent escritoire in the room, and wrote a short agreement or document in the shape of a promissory note, wherein he stated that he promised to pay back to Lady Margaret Legrange the above-mentioned sum of money within the specified time—that is, six months. With this settlement she appeared now to be quite satisfied, and so, of course, was he, since thereby he got the cash from her. Then he pressed her hand most gratefully and said good-bye to her, and soon afterwards took his departure.

When he left the house he crossed over the street again to the same *café* which he was in before, and sat down in the same chair. Happy Paris passed him by, and heeded him not; nor did he mind the thronging crowd.

There was a time, but that time now is haply gone by and entirely forgotten by him, when he would have eagerly looked for a smile from the

young, and likewise the beautiful ; but that day, as already stated, was departed, and was not unlikely to come again, though they say that "the child is father to the man." He ordered a small glass of brandy, just to refresh himself after his hurried but successful interview with her ladyship, when he got the loan of twenty pounds from her, and, lighting a fresh cigar, he sipped the liquor rather slowly. He glanced tremulously at his watch at times, and appeared to be expecting some friend would come to him. He had not very long, however, to wait for the person he was looking out for. He felt a hand laid lightly on his shoulder, and a cheery voice said :

"Hello, my dear Audley! Are you again in what is called a brown study, eh? Have I kept you waiting for me too long? perhaps I am late. I would have been here with you sooner, only a confounded French fellow wanted to see a horse of mine—that animal, you know, with the blemished white fore-leg which I was telling you of the last time we met—and as I thought that he might buy the horse as he was, and would not pay much heed to the blemish, I did not like losing the opportunity of pocketing a little money upon the transaction. So I effected the sale of the horse without delay and without difficulty, as, but for that blemish, he was a very fine animal indeed, and most highly-

bred. After all, there is nothing like breeding in a horse. What do you think but that he gave me a hundred and fifty for him? Will you excuse me?"

"Certainly, my dear fellow," Audley answered.

"I have all the hundred and fifty with me, so I am willing, if you have no other engagement on the books at present, to give you your revenge."

"I am ready. How much did you win from me last night?"

"Two hundred," the other answered, with a smile at the reflection how successful he had been.

He was a young, good-looking English nobleman, whom Audley had scented out in order to fleece him of his money.

Audley, having paid his score at the *café*, took his friend's arm and sauntered down the street until they arrived at a narrow lane, or unfrequented passage, which turned to the left abruptly, running at right angles to the principal street—that is, to the one which they were now in. They advanced together, gliding to the right, and immediately entered an archway which was dark and gloomy in aspect. Having passed, without being questioned by any porter or *concièrge*, through this, they speedily found themselves in the centre of a spacious courtyard, in front of a wide door, which was closed at present; it was freshly-painted of a

bright green colour, and ornamented with a bright brass knocker and a fantastic brass bell. The latter Audley rung peremptorily, and the door flew open. No one in the hall which was now revealed to view opened the door; it was opened by means of an arrangement connecting it with some upper room in the house.

The door closed apparently of its own accord as soon as ever Captain Audley and the young nobleman who accompanied him had passed into the hall. There was a mysterious air about the silent place and about their movements which caused a feeling to arise not entirely disagreeable. They descended a staircase, and five minutes later were seated alone in a small room, a table covered with green cloth between them, two decanters, several glasses, and two packs of cards thereon, and on the right hand side, both of Audley and of the nobleman, a heap of gold.

It was late at night when the poor young nobleman left the house alone suddenly, with a white face.

Captain Audley remained behind and counted up his gains.

Next morning he paid a visit to Lady Margaret Legrange, and found that lady in her boudoir in a morning costume, reading a book.

"Here is your money back again, madam," he



said in a dissatisfied tone, "I was in luck last night. I met a young scion of an ancient English stock with plenty of spare cash about him, all ready money, and I followed up my old pursuit or amusement of gambling, and I fleeced him of all he had about his person, which was a good deal, I assure you, Margaret."

"How much did you succeed in winning from this young fellow at cards?" she asked, and looking studiously into his face, which now wore an expression of comic thoughtfulness and concern.

"A thousand pounds!" he replied.

"Take care you don't lose it," was her laconic answer.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ON the evening of the morning on which Captain Jack paid his second visit to Lady Margaret Legrange, he left, unattended by any companion, his own apartments, and proceeded to a rendezvous well known to him and others. It was a house situated in one of the smaller streets of Paris, and not far from the Church of the Madeleine. When he arrived at the door he gave a peculiar knock, and was admitted at once.

“Have many arrived?” he asked the man who opened the door.

“A great many; and all of the right sort, monsieur.”

“Good!” the Captain replied in a cheery voice. “We shall reap something to-night, Jacques.”

“I hope so, monsieur. Would monsieur like to proceed at once upstairs and judge for himself who are there, whether they are worth plucking or not; or would monsieur wish as usual to see my master first and have his *vin ordinaire*?”

“ Yes, Jacques; I want to see your master without delay. So lead on, like a good fellow, and don't keep me waiting, for time is passing.”

Jacques, bowing obsequiously, did as he was ordered without any more ado; for he did not like giving offence or annoyance to such an excellent client of his master, who was the proprietor of a gambling saloon, or “hell” as they call such places in England.

“ Good evening, Monsieur Audley! Most glad indeed to see you. I did not expect you to come and pay my house a visit to-night. I was not on the look out for you, since I had just heard that you are after winning a lot of sovereigns from a young English nobleman who has but lately arrived in Paris from London.”

“ Good evening, Monsieur Maurice! I was not intending to be here with you to-night at first, but I subsequently changed my mind. So I hope that you will kindly excuse me if I am *de trop*, which is not often the case with me, for I am very small, and can fit in anywhere—into any corner or out-of-the-way place where I might remain for hours unseen and quite unnoticed. However, I got a note from you, and that is the reason that I came, thinking probably that you should chance to stand in need of me for some emergency or other. Is it so?”

“ Probably it is. Ah! I had forgotten about the *billet-doux*. Yes; I had written to you.”

The proprietor of the gambling saloon paused, and Captain Jack stood in his presence upstairs, awaiting further instructions as to what he was to do for him this evening, and how he was to arrange his tactics with the visitors who were expected.

“I would not be here this evening only you sent for me—ah! you have forgotten that you wrote me a note. I suppose press of business prevented you from at the moment remembering it, as I had an engagement elsewhere; but when you condescended to write to me, I did not like to refuse. Your interests, however, are always paramount with me.”

Monsieur Maurice smiled graciously, and began to show his row of pearly white teeth, for he liked to hear the Captain talking. Jack continued:

“I always prefer your interests, my dear sir, to everything else in the whole world. Now, pray, what do you want with me upon this occasion, or do you want me at all? Is there some new bird fresh from across the Channel whom you wish me to pluck a few feathers out of for our mutual advantage?”

“Precisely so. My brother, always, you know, Monsieur Audley, on the look out for number one and our little business of mutually benefiting each other, has made the acquaintance of a Monsieur Augustine St. Clare,” Audley started with surprise, “who hails from Ireland. He has ingratiated him-

self so far into the esteem of this Monsieur St. Clare, that the gentleman almost courts the society of my dear brother, and at length, after much caution, much patience, very much insinuation, my brother has prevailed upon him to visit my house to-night. Shall I pour out some *vin ordinaire* for us both. Let us be seated and converse."

"Thank you ; and to while away the time until he arrives, I'll tell you a couple of anecdotes about this same St. Clare, when he served in the British army as a sergeant of artillery, under the assumed name of George Clayton ; for he had to leave home when a young fellow, owing to domestic disagreements."

Audley related the following adventures :\*

"The story which Sergeant George Clayton, as Augustine St. Clare was then termed, was the hero of, was as follows: They were travelling through India at the time of the Mutiny, and had arrived at a village, or small hamlet, called Homonabad. They—that is, himself and the battery of artillery which he belonged to—happened to be short of provisions, and had not anything wherewithal either to eat or to drink. They went wandering through the bazaar in search of food ; but their search was

\* This story and the following are founded on fact. I have them from the lips of the man who was the hero of them both.

of no avail whatsoever, for the natives were so incensed against us at the time in question, and entertained, justly or unjustly, such hostile feelings towards England, that they always refused our soldiers food or provisions wherever they went on the march through the country, and whenever they asked for such. So that our army often found itself in an unpleasant predicament in consequence thereof. At all events, as a rule, our soldiers have great perseverance and much patience, especially where their stomachs have to be considered. And it is no joke to be a long day on the march and to find at the end of it that there is no meat or drink, nor provisions of any kind for love or money at the place of their destination, be it a town or a village, with only a bazaar or two therein. At all events, on this occasion it chanced to be only a village—by name, Homonabad, as already mentioned. The soldiers alighted from their steeds, and proceeded through the village, its street and its bazaar, in search of the necessary food. But they could get none of it, high or low, wander where they would in search of it.

“Sergeant Clayton separated from the rest and went off on his own hook, foraging, as the soldiers term it. He went up the street and into the bazaar, but the natives refused to give him anything; he was so hungry he did not know well, at the time, what was best to be done in this dire emergency.

At length he turned, more through curiosity than anything else, into a small cottage apart from the other houses in the village of Homonabad. There, when he entered, he found nothing but the four bare walls, and in the centre of the room there was seated an old Indian woman on a box, who, the moment she saw him, put her withered and grizzled hand to her mouth, shouting at the top of her voice, and with her utmost strength, 'Wagh! wah! wah! wah!' as is the way with the East Indians whenever they are startled, or surprised, or frightened, or meet an enemy. She started up, then, from the box she was sitting on, and rushed excitedly out of the cottage, in order to warn the villagers and to get their assistance. The moment she did so, Sergeant Clayton immediately saw that the box was filled up with rupees, which is a coin of the value, in India, of one of our florins or two-shilling pieces. Observing the money, he at once began to fill his pockets with the rupees, putting as much into them as they could carry, so that they were filled up to bursting. Meanwhile, he had scarcely finished doing so, when the old Indian woman came back again, accompanied by the rest of the villagers armed with sticks and stones for the purpose of attacking him. Seeing himself to be in immediate danger of being overpowered by the multitude of the natives, he looked around him for a mode of escape, not wishing to

lose the money. There was nothing in the room but the four bare walls, as already stated, except an aperture in the roof. Through this Clayton climbed, possessed of his treasure, and got out safely, and remained on the top of the cottage. The natives could not reach him, but maintained a threatening attitude.

“He was in danger every minute of being attacked by them, and did not know how on earth he should get down off the roof of the house and out of harm’s way, where he might not be beaten by the sticks of the natives or be stoned by them, which they threatened every moment to do. If he dropped down on to the ground he might break his leg or put himself in their power, or lose the rupees, of which he had a great lot, or otherwise injure himself or meet with an accident. It happened just at that moment, when the excitement and the danger was at its highest, that there was coming down the one street of the village, at a slow and measured pace, what is called in the country a ‘water-buffalo,’ which is a species of animal of a dun or brownish hue, not unlike a dun cow in this part of the world, only that it has two humps on its back like the hump of a camel. The water-buffalo came along unattended or driven by anyone, until it found itself under the eaves of the house on the roof of which was Sergeant Clayton, with all the money, and in



the midst of all the shouting and the excitement, and the din and yelling which, as the occasion would have it, was going on. As soon as the water-buffalo got under the eaves of the house, Sergeant Clayton, watching his opportunity, dropped down upon the animal's back and found himself straddle-legs thereon. However, he had the money safely in his possession, and he did not care! The water-buffalo, quite unused to such a load as a heavy man on its back, astride of him after the style of horse-back riding, began immediately to show his temper, and to toss down his head and rear up his hind-legs. Sergeant Clayton held on, however, in spite of all the animal's jumping and galloping about; at length the latter, infuriated, dashed his way through the crowd of natives, in the midst of sticks and stones and sundry missiles, and ran gambolling at a mad pace through the street it came up, the sergeant sticking on between the two humps on the back of the water-buffalo, by holding on with all his might both to the mane of the animal and to the tail at the same time.

“The water-buffalo, with this extra load upon his back, made for the open country without delay, and went along the road to where a deep chasm, or gorge, or precipice, yawned gloomily in the front. He made at once for this at a galloping pace, the rupees all the time flying out of the sergeant's coat-

pockets with the bumping caused by the rearing and continuous hoisting of the infuriated water-buffalo. Seeing the mighty precipice yawning before him, and the immediate danger of a certain and a violent death, he did not know how he should throw himself off without breaking a rib or his skull, though he made several ineffectual attempts to alight from the animal. Meanwhile the ground all along the road he had travelled on the animal's back was white and strewn with the rupees or florins which jumped every instant out of Clayton's pocket.

“It was just when the water-buffalo was quite close to the precipice, that the sergeant, observing the instant probability of his being killed outright, managed to throw one leg adroitly over the maddened and excited animal, and after remaining in a kind of sitting posture for a minute, he threw himself to the ground, and got on his legs unhurt, then, when only about the distance of a yard from the precipice. The water-buffalo, however, still continued his mad career until he got to the edge of the deep gorge, and falling violently over the precipice, he fell to the bottom, a descent of several hundred feet, and was never heard of again, being no doubt dashed to pieces, and all his bones broken by the force of the fall.

“Sergeant Clayton blessed his stars for his very

narrow escape! He lost all the coins, however, with the exception of about sixteen of the rupees, which he pocketed, and bringing back with him, he re-entered the village unmolested by the natives, and buying some rice and curry with the money, he made a cake of it, which he baked with his own hands, and subsequently devoured for his supper—very glad to get anything at all—even that much—to eat and to appease his intense hunger therewith. He often told the story of this adventure afterwards to his comrades. When he finished his supper, he went back to the camp, which was pitched alongside the road outside the village of Homonabad, and reported himself. Then he had a good sound sleep until morning, being inexpressively fatigued after all he had gone through, and with his unexpected ride on the back of the water-buffalo.

“Upon another occasion,” Captain Jack Audley continued, helping himself again to the vin-ordinaire, “he and his company, this time again during the period of the Mutiny, were journeying along the high-road searching by the way for food, for they had nothing to eat but the wild fruit which grew along the hedges and ditches. Some of the soldiers, not knowing what they were or their effects, eat the castor-oil nuts, which tasted very sweet, but they were nearly playing the deuce with them subsequently—at least with the young soldiers.

They got at length to a garden attached to some private residence, and they wandered through it on the look-out for fruit or food of some kind or other. They could get none. Sergeant Clayton was at the head of the party who thus went out foraging from the camp. He espied a small house at the bottom of the garden, which contained the idols which the owner of the house was wont to worship when he was inclined to be religious. It may be mentioned the inhabitants of India never use knives and forks; they devour their food in primitive fashion, with their fingers.

“The sergeant went down by himself towards this small summer-house, and just then a native servant came around from the back of it, carrying a dish of rice mixed with curry. The sergeant, who was terribly hungry, made a tremendous jump at the black man, running up a distance of at least a hundred yards. He caught a hold of the man's arms and of the dish. They both held it simultaneously. The garden was an orchard, by the way. He tried to hold the black man down by the force of his superior weight, and to take the dish from him, that he might have the contents of it for his own dinner. Not succeeding in his efforts, he had recourse to a stratagem. He thought he would ruin the caste of the black man, which the Indians hold very sacred. He turned half-way round and

spat twice contemptuously into the dish. The other shouted: 'Wagh! wah! wah! wah! wah!' and to put his hand to his mouth he had to drop the dish; having done so, he ran away terrified. The rest of Sergeant Clayton's comrades coming up, seized upon the dish of rice and curry which was after being cooked by the native with his fingers; but they eat it with such rapidity that Sergeant George Clayton got little or none of it."\*

When he had concluded the relation of the above anecdotes, Monsieur Maurice complimented him warmly upon the manner in which he had recounted them, and further stated that he was very much entertained by the recital of those adventures, adding:

"It is now your time, according to our mutual agreement, for you to step in and hit the nail on the head, as is your invariable custom whenever you have a crow to pluck. Have I made myself correctly understood by you? You know what I mean, and what it is that I also want," he added, in a business-like manner, at the same time sipping his favourite beverage, the wine of the country—*vin ordinaire*—which he was accustomed, like most Frenchmen, to imbibe in very large quantities

\* Both of the above incidents actually happened, to the writer's personal knowledge.

three times a day—at breakfast, at dinner, and at supper.

“Of course you have made yourself perfectly understood!” answered the other, impatiently and half contemptuously, for he despised the craven fellow whom his poverty obliged him to serve and to submit to. “What hour do you expect that this Monsieur St. Clare will make his appearance?”

“My brother said he would bring him here at nine o'clock, and it is half-past eight now, or thereabouts.”

“Very well,” the other answered, contentedly. “I shall go upstairs and re-arrange my toilet, in order to be ready for him. Will that do?”

“Decidedly. I have directed the best card-table which I have to be placed conveniently in the small room you are so familiar with on the left.”

“Thanks. But I assure you 'tis all the same,” the other answered carelessly. “Any table will do for my purpose, provided it is a wooden one. Even a deal table, for that matter. Farewell! I trust that I shall have the good fortune to have the most excellent news possible for you when next we shall meet alone, and have another *tête-à-tête*. In public we make it a *sine qua non*, never to know each other. Is it not so? Ha, ha, ha!”

“He, he, he!” croaked Monsieur Maurice, equally

facetious, and closed the door himself after Captain Jack, as the other ascended the flight of stairs.

Audley had not far to go when he reached Monsieur Maurice's bedroom, and entering, he went over to the looking-glass and re-arranged his toilette; this ceremony did not occupy him many minutes, and leaving the room again, he proceeded down a long and narrow corridor, at the far end of which a red baize hall door, with a knocker attached to it, and with two glass eyes for windows, was glaring vacantly at him, as if inviting him in. Through one of these glass panes he peeped cautiously before entering the saloon. He saw there were about forty men already assembled, and busy at the game of *rouge-et-noir*.

"We shall have a good business night of it," he said to himself, and cautiously opened the door with the knocker on it.

His appearance was the occasion of a general rising; whilst he was at once hailed gladly by half a dozen old acquaintances, and room was made for him immediately amongst the numerous players. He took his place, smiling and bowing to all around him, and began to play.

Every minute he glanced eagerly at the red baize door with the two glass eyes. Each moment it was opened his eager face turned towards it, and an expression of disappointment passed over it when

he discovered the two persons he was waiting for had not arrived.

The saloon began to fill until it was unusually crowded, and Monsieur Maurice, who had also meanwhile entered, walked up and down, rubbing his hands with undisguised satisfaction, as he beheld more and more people elbowing their way into the chamber. He, too, kept an anxious look-out for his brother, for the advent of a new-comer was always a source of keen pleasure, since it meant pounds, shillings, and pence to him. There had been horse-races a short distance outside Paris to-day, and that fact accounted for the great number of visitors to-night to his saloon.

Nine o'clock struck, and still the two who were expected came not. Half-past nine, ten o'clock went by, but yet there was no sign of their appearance or of their probable approach.

Champagne and brandy flowed freely, and the players, according as they lost and won, became excited, influenced by the wine and the fiery insidious liquor. A great quarrel amongst one group arose, and after some difficulty was quelled. Here a shout of exultation over a heap of newly-acquired gold was heard, and there a murmur of disappointment at its disappearance. The game went gaily on, and Dame Fortune, petting some and crushing others, laughed at her victims.



Captain Jack Audley, long accustomed to such scenes, and long above their minor influences for evil, heeded few of the occurrences taking place all around him, where he sat and played steadily on, winning large sums. He was in wonderful luck to-night, and never in all his years did his goddess Fortune befriend him so amply before. In his gratitude he almost raised his eyes to heaven. He did not do so, however, but turned them instead to the red baize door, which he observed opening. Two men quietly entered. They were the brother of Monsieur Maurice and Augustine St. Clare.

Captain Jack Audley did not recognise the latter, for it was years since last they met; and then, St. Clare was only the soldier, Sergeant George Clayton. But Audley knew that it must, of course, be St. Clare and no other; and rising quickly from his seat, excusing himself for a few moments' unavoidable absence, he went over across the room and shook hands cordially with the brother of Monsieur Maurice.

A mutual expression of recognition passed between them, and, after a short interval of conversation, Augustine St. Clare was introduced to Captain Jack Audley.

Augustine maintained his self-control, and pretended not to remember his rival. But he remembered him well, though he had not spoken to him

all the time since they were together in the Crimea during the war.

“You hail from Ireland?” Audley said. “I know a good deal about that country, although I am not an Irishman by birth. May I ask were you at the races outside Paris to-day?”

“Yes. I thought them very good.”

“So did I, although I did not stay for the finish. Do you mean to play here to-night? If so, as you are a stranger here, you ought to take a seat beside me, and I shall inoculate you into the mysteries of play as it goes on amongst us. I will introduce you presently, to some of those fellows. Queer fellows some of them—are they not? But you do not know them yet by name. I must tell you that I am in splendid luck to-night. Winning everything before me, and never losing not even one *sou*.”

“I am glad to hear it, and I must congratulate you upon your unmistakable success at play. How can you manage to be so fortunate? I know that I never am. But then, I do not play as others do, for the gratification of the mere passion of playing. I take the cards into my hands only to shuffle them, and for my own amusement by the way, but never to win. I would leave off playing of my own desire, if I were winning too much at cards, for fear that I should turn myself into a gambler—a social position and a notoriety I do not at all

envy, believe me, either for myself or for others. Stay a moment and give me the cards, if you will be so good as to do so. You shall see for yourself how well I can play as an amateur, not as a professional, when I wish it, or when the mood seizes me, which it does not do often. Only very seldom, indeed. I will sit alongside of you, if you will allow me?"

He took his seat by Audley's side and began to play. It very soon became evident that he was an old hand at *rouge-et-noir*; and as he quickly won hundred after hundred of francs, others of the gamblers ceased playing, and gathered around him, eager with interest in the chances of the play. He played on far into the night, and never stopped until he broke the bank by his superior skill.

Then he rose to take politely his leave. Monsieur Maurice, with a ghastly face and limbs trembling, went up to him and said:

"Of course monsieur will return to us another night?"

"I do not promise you that I shall be able to do that," he answered sturdily. "I shall be leaving Paris soon and going back to England."

"Not return another night? Not give to us our revenge?" exclaimed twenty voices together. "That would not be fair!"

"He shall not leave until he gives us our revenge

to-night!" said one man, with a hard, determined and revolting face. "There are at least a dozen present here who will not submit for a moment to this treatment! Our feelings must be consulted, and we must be allowed to win back our money! The fellow will be off to London by the first train in the morning with all his gains, and he will be leaving us here in the lurch!"

"Not if I can help it!" responded another, whose countenance was inflamed with the excessive drink which he had taken during the night; and the click of a pistol was heard.

There was a sudden silence in the room, as if something momentous was surely going to happen—something very serious and quite unexpected, as though they were intending to take his life.

Augustine St. Clare, gathering up all the old instincts latent in him from his career as a soldier, said not a word, apprehending the imminent danger presenting itself at the instant; but throwing out one leg resolutely behind, he continued backing towards the red baize door, which he had particularly remarked from its peculiar appearance upon entering, and keeping his face coolly and boldly directed to the following crowd, whom he began to suspect now, and with some good reason, were all blacklegs and professional gamblers.

"If you move another step, with the intention of

leaving this room!" exclaimed the same gruff voice whose tones he had overheard before, "I will shoot you down like a dog at bay!" And the man, who wore a thick, dark, short beard upon his chin, presented a loaded and cocked revolver at the broad breast of St. Clare.

The dead silence which had prevailed for some time in the room continued without intermission. St. Clare, whose manly courage never for a second failed him in any danger or difficulty, heeded not, but contemptuously despised the threat upon his life; he did not know the man, nor was he aware why he should offer thus to shoot him. But, facing bravely his angry and drunken opponent, he moved steadily backward again without turning around. He had not taken much drink during the night, so that his senses were quite cool and collected. He had stood fire before, often and often, and was not unnerved now by the strangeness and the extreme danger of the singular situation which, as it so happened, he found himself in. A second click of the revolver was heard as the man presented it at him, aiming from the shoulder—the revolver was evidently on full cock; next instant three shots followed one another in succession. None of them, however, had the least effect. The man was too drunk to take sufficient aim or to be able to hit his mark.

St. Clare was uninjured, and without a wound! His escape from certain death was most miraculous, in fact, nothing less than a miracle! When he heard the second ominous click he had dropped on one knee and stooped low, which he did from habit, to avoid the shot. The man who was firing at him with the revolver, blinded by drink and by rage, and vexatious disappointment at his losses at play, had not observed this strategic movement on the part of St. Clare, but fired straight towards him at random. The bullets scattered about like shot, and lodged in the red baize cloth of the door. They pierced it through and through with holes. St. Clare, astonished at the shot, rose to his feet and stood erect, believing his life to be in danger, and prepared to make a spring upon his assailant to wrench the revolver from him, and have him arrested by the police.

There was a noise outside the door: it opened, and immediately four or five *gendarmes*, or city police, made their appearance in the passage, having been sent for by Monsieur Maurice. They arrested the man and brought him off to the watch-house, telling St. Clare that he should have to appear in the police-court in the morning to prosecute the prisoner for assaulting him and threatening his life. The latter promised to be there; and the police took their departure with the guilty offender in their

midst. They appeared to look upon the whole affair only as a drunken row.

There was a friend by St. Clare's side now. Captain Jack Audley, linking one arm in his, with the other presented a revolver at the crowd of his companions; but it would be hard to tell whether it was in jest or in earnest. For the sudden arrival, and as sudden departure of the police, taking off the delinquent with them, appeared to have sobered him somewhat. He kept his revolver cocked at them.

"Cowards and murderers!" he exclaimed. "If one of you attempt to oppose this gentleman's departure I will soon settle him. I will send for the police, and have him locked up. Make way there, Monsieur Maurice, if you please!—make way there, Jacques!—make way there, Jules Maurice! This gentleman came here under your special protection, and is this the manner in which you allow him to be rudely treated, and his life actually threatened? Why, that fellow who has been taken up will either be hanged, or will get the guillotine for this attempt! And serve him right, I say. What reason had he to attack a harmless and most inoffensive gentleman, who came here only to amuse himself, and to win a little money if he could? Now that he has done both the one and the other, and has broken the bank, I think we ought to let him go, and he will come again maybe and give you

all your revenge. If not it cannot be helped; for no person should be fired at with a revolver, and his life placed in great danger and peril—at least here. It cannot be done, at all events, with my permission, for I cannot sanction or counsel such conduct. Shame upon you all! Come with me, Mr. St. Clare; I will bring you out of this dangerous place.'

"In a moment!" St. Clare answered. "Gentlemen," he added distinctly, in French, "I will not give you your revenge, but I hand you back your pitiful pelf!"

He emptied upon the table a leather bag containing all his winnings, to the amount of six thousand pounds.

"Why on earth have you done such a foolish thing?" Audley asked when they had reached the open air.

"Because such money defiled my pockets. I intended from the very beginning, when I saw how the play was going, to hand it over into the secure custody of our mutual friend Monsieur Maurice. I did not go to his gambling-saloon simply to play. I went there for a private purpose which I had in view; and that purpose is at length, after weeks of the most fruitless endeavour, finally accomplished to my entire satisfaction. I have been for some time in anxious search of a particular person whom I heard was now in Paris, and whom I was most



desirous to discover if I could. By accident from Monsieur Jules Maurice—the brother of Monsieur Maurice—I learned that the person whom I was so patiently seeking frequented occasionally the gambling-house which we have just got so providentially clear of—at the risk, too, of our lives. It is not probable that I shall ever venture to put my foot within its unhallowed precincts a second time, should the opportunity indeed be offered to me. I had the good fortune, though at the risk or danger of possibly losing my poor life, or of else being seriously wounded, of meeting there, and having an interview with, the person whom I have been so desirous to see. You are that person, or individual, Captain Audley.”

“ I ! ”

“ Yes. Do you know who I am ? ”

Captain Jack hesitated and smiled.

“ I think that you do know me, Captain Audley ; although you pretend not to do so. Do you ever recollect our having met before anywhere ? ”

“ Yes,” he replied, in a low and trembling tone of voice. “ I do know you ; and I do recollect you well. But I was afraid to recognise you where we were, and considering the bad and dangerous company we were in at the time. That place we have just left is a gambling-hell. Years ago you saved my life in the Crimea. I have had the oppor-

tunity to-night of making some return by saving yours."

"I thank you. Henceforth we must be friends!"

"Be it so," Audley answered.

St. Clare did not forget that this man, walking through the streets by his side, had robbed him of his Lucie; but if he did not, because he could not, forget that recollection, he only remembered it in order to forgive. Sorrow can make us forget our enemies, even though they have been the very cause of our sorrow. Or, if our sorrow cannot do this great thing for us, a higher influence can, and our sorrow and our hatred are lost simultaneously in a joy which has few tendrils clinging to this earth.

"What reason can you have had, may I ask you, for seeking me out?" Audley demanded of him inquisitively.

"Your sister requested me previously to do so, and gave me a message for you."

"You are then acquainted with Agnes? How exceedingly strange! What did she say?"

"She said that she wished to know where were your exact whereabouts, as she had, from length of time, completely lost sight of you, and did not feel certain whether you were in the land of the living or not. I told her to make her mind easy, as I would not rest until I found you. I have found you, and now I will proceed to deliver my message.

It is simply an earnest request on her part that you will be so kind as to come to her without delay. She is in Paris—or rather at Suresnes—staying for the present with Sir Lucius Legrange, and—and the little——”

“Does she mean to try to make it up between Lucie and me? If so, she is greatly mistaken, and might have let it alone. There is no use in it! I could not go back again to Lucie—my wife—after deserting her so shamefully. I dare not meet her face to face any more!”

“She does not want you to go back to Lucie. She never mentioned such a proposal. Nor do I believe either that she desired that you should do so.”

“You are quite sure of that?”

“Yes. Upon my word; quite sure of it,” Augustine said sadly.

“Then I shall summon up the necessary fortitude, and I will go and pay a visit to Agnes—my sister, and always my truest friend—at noon to-morrow at the village of Suresnes. But the meeting, promise me, must take place in a private fashion, and without my encountering either Lucie or Sir Lucius. Unless you solemnly promise me now that I shall not meet either of them, I will not go to Agnes to-morrow.”

“I shall be there before you in order to prevent

that, and to make matters smooth for you. I shall undertake that you shall not meet either of them upon this occasion, since your mind seems to be made up not to do so. I will make it my business to go out by train early in the morning, and I will see Miss Audley myself, and tell her beforehand that you intend coming. Will that suit you ?”

“It will, without the least doubt ; and, moreover, it will relieve my mind of a heavy load of care, which at present weighs it down to an unaccountable degree of depression and foreboding. And now I will tender you my most sincere thanks for your many acts of kindness, none of which did I in the least feel myself to be deserving of. But it is ever the fact that as we go through life we chance to meet with genuine friends and benefactors, at the moment, too, when we least expect it, and when our waning fortunes are at their lowest ebb. It is so true, that which the poet Shakespeare says, that ‘there is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the ebb, leads on to fortune.’ I do believe that most truly, and though he was a great poet, he was none the less a true observer of human nature ; and the two things do not always agree. But I will now shake hands with you, and must bid you good-bye for the present, as I am in a hurry, and cannot stay to converse with you any longer. You will please hold me excused. I turn

up this adjacent street in order to reach my hotel. Farewell!"

"Farewell!" St. Clare said.

They held each other's hands for the moment in a close grasp and parted. In a moment Captain Jack returned and overtook St. Clare, who had gone rapidly away in the opposite direction after having parted with him.

"Tell Agnes," he whispered in a tremulous voice, "that though I would rather not meet Lucie herself, yet if—if our—our little Lucie—our child—if she would let me see her again, I would——"

The strong man, who was hardened in the world's way, burst suddenly into tears, and cried like a child.

"I will tell Miss Audley," St. Clare replied, "to bring the little Lucie with her in order to meet you. What more natural, since you are the father of the child? Your sister is sure to do so! Particularly when she knows that to see the child once more will be a gratification to you."

Captain Audley remained silent, and pressed St. Clare's hand again warmly, and glided away in the darkness.

The next morning Augustine St. Clare rose at an early hour and proceeded out to the little village, or hamlet, of Suresnes, which is handsomely situated some short distance outside Paris, and can be easily

reached at any hour of the day from the city by train, or else by omnibus, or the more modern tram-car. As soon as he had arrived at his destination—he went out there by train—he found Agnes and Sir Lucius together at their breakfast.

Agnes knew, by the unusual hour at which he made his welcome appearance at their unpretending cottage-door, that he had at last found her brother. She rose hastily from the breakfast-table, attired in her simple morning-costume, and running gaily and lightly out into the hall where St. Clare stood waiting, she greeted him most cordially.

“Welcome,” she said, “to pleasant Suresnes. I feel that you have good tidings for me about my brother!”

“Yes,” he answered hesitatingly; “I found your brother last night. He promised me that he would come here to-day at noon; but you must get Sir Lucius out of the way. Poor fellow! he does not know yet that Lucie is dead! He said that he would come here only on condition that I would guarantee the absence of both Sir Lucius and Lucie. It is very easy to guarantee the absence of the latter! He also expressed a wish to see his child. Will you grant it? You will provide about that?”

“I will. How can I ever sufficiently prove the depth of my gratitude to you for so much uncalled-

for kindness! If you could only realize to your own mind for one short moment how anxious I am to see my brother, who is so dear to me, then you might in some degree imagine how really grateful I am to you. Have you breakfasted yet?"

"No."

"You must be hungry! Come in to Sir Lucius. Sir Lucius, here is Mr. St. Clare."

"I am glad to see you," the old man replied. "Is she not pretty, and quite like Lucie already?"

Sir Lucius was holding the little child—Lucie's child (as he fondly said)—in his feeble arms: they were very feeble nowadays.

"She has beautiful eyes—just like your daughter's, sir," said St. Clare. "I am certain that you must feel very happy in her possession!"

"Yes," he answered wearily; "now that Lucie has gone we must do the best we possibly can under our altered circumstances. We must, of course, above all things else, be particularly careful about rearing up the little girl properly, and giving her a liberal education," he remarked quite seriously.

"Miss Audley will see to that," St. Clare replied, smiling, and glancing meaningly at the same time towards Agnes where she was standing.

"Ah yes! Ah yes!" the old man responded a little testily. "Agnes will take good care of her,

no doubt—no doubt. But I mean to superintend her higher education myself—myself, do you perceive?—and to make her at the same time, if I possibly can, the very first lady in all the land—just as Lucie was!”

The old soldier passed his hand unsteadily across his brow, and stroked down his long white hair. He was picturing to himself both the Lucie of the past and the Lucie of the future, and trying to forget—as if he could!—the former in the remembrance of the latter.

Augustine partook of breakfast; and Agnes, carrying away with her little Lucie, stole to her own room in order to prepare both the child and herself for the coming of her brother Jack.

St. Clare remained for some time in the company of Sir Lucius, and went back to Paris after bidding Agnes Audley good-bye. She prayed for him when he had gone. Ah, Agnes! your heart is caught at last!

“My pretty one!” she exclaimed, addressing the child with much fervour, “papa is coming to see you to-day; and you are not aware, dear, what a pleasure that is to me! Mamma too, perhaps, in heaven, is glad because papa will kiss you by-and-by! May your life, love, never know the sorrows your mother’s knew!”

She robed the child in its gayest clothes—the



best and costliest that Paris could provide. Agnes herself, in honour of the occasion, wore a dress of *la couleur Bismarck*—that rich, warm brown for which French ladies have some time ago shown so decided a partiality. Agnes was beautifully dressed. It is said any woman who desires to be well dressed must make any sacrifice to attain that object. If necessary she must dress herself seven or eight times a day. So the pretty Comtesse de la Vallonière remarked one day to Agnes, when talking about dress.

“You wonder, my dear Agnes,” she exclaimed, “why I change my costume so often! Well,” she shrugged her graceful shoulders, “what am I to do? It is a necessity of my social position, as it is with some poor people to live on potatoes and salt. In the morning I throw around me a *robe de chambre du matin*; if I ride on horseback I must attire myself in a *toilette de cheval*; a *negligé élégant* will be requisite for luncheon; and a *toilette de ville* if I go out afterwards for a walk, or a *toilette de visite* if for a drive. Later in the afternoon, should I happen to wish to take a turn in the Bois de Boulogne, I will need a *toilette de promenade*; a *toilette de diner* will be necessary, together with a *toilette de soirée* if I go to a reception or to the theatre. But you Englishwomen hardly

care to undergo the fatigue of being dressed seven or eight times a day."

"I would not care, certainly," answered Agnes. Of course, to you who can afford it, all this sumptuous outlay is no hardship in the world; but I think it very wrong that so many women should be as extravagant in dress as they frequently prove themselves to be, in a painful way, both to their husbands if they are married, and to their brothers if they are single.'

"Yet," replied the Comtesse seriously, "where a woman's object is solely to beautify herself, who shall condemn her for dressing her very best and in the most costly style? Certainly not I. Provided always that she does not, by so doing, exceed the proper limits which her income, be it large or small, allows her to go to. When a woman is extravagant there is no keeping her in."

"Would you not say with me, Marie, that many exceed that limit by spending their spare cash, and, in fact, their pin-money, upon trifling objects which they do not require?"

"I know not which—it never cost me a thought; that is, if I may so explain myself, it has not come within my own knowledge, Agnes. It is quite true, I suppose, that women whose husbands have only limited incomes, with the view of hiding this fact from the outside and too inquisitive world,

which always wishes to be informed of other people's affairs, pursue each new fashion a trifle too earnestly for their own subsequent advantage, not because it suits them better than the older and safer one, but simply because it is known to involve an unnecessary expense which they cannot afford, nor their husbands either, upon whom all the responsibilities rest. In their defence, so far as my own individual experience goes, which is not very large, I have nothing to say. I have always had my own way in everything; and, moreover, I have always taken care to exercise it, and never to be put down by anyone. I have ever upheld my own position and the rights of my own sex in that regard."

"I am very glad indeed to find, Marie, that you have not anything to say in defence of such a class of women who are so extravagant as to waste all their means upon dress and the latest fashions. Believe me, if ladies dressed more unpretendingly, and more to suit their husbands' pockets, they would be much more admired and much more sought after both by the intellectual and the refined portion of humanity."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the merry-hearted Marie, all whose lines in this world were laid in pleasant places. "You are too staid, Agnes, *mon amie*, and too prudent, and do not see every side

of the question. Have you no good word to put in for the refining influence of dress both upon the mind and upon the body; for the wholesome effect," she added thoughtfully, "which good, virtuous women beautifully and tastefully robed cause? I have invariably felt it. I think I know its beneficent power!"

"Then why do men," asked Agnes curiously, "exclaim, as they always do, against the extravagant expenditure in which women nowadays indulge in order to dress themselves in accordance with the prevailing fashion of the hour, however fantastic or ridiculous it may happen to be? But they never can think of that for one single instant, can they?"

"Ah, my dear! These creatures who exclaim so, are what you call 'public mortals.' They have little or no money of their own, I suspect, and want, forsooth, to lay down laws for those who have money, whom they don't understand. Not having been brought up to the way of rightly doing so, I call such railers at us defenceless women ignorant men, *mon amie*. Had they money themselves they would be silent enough. They plead, they say, whenever you talk to them, for the 'public good!' Now what is that for, might I ask? I am sure that they do not know themselves, although they may have some vague, indefinite idea about it.

Ah—bah! I hate that expression ‘public good!’ I am only a woman just out of my teens, I may say: yet my instinct warns me to avoid those who show their teeth at others for the sake of the so-called ‘public good!’ ”

“How lovely you look, Marie, when you are excited; and the red roses rise in your bit of a face, telling their own story of your charming amiability and imperturbable good temper.”

“Thank you, my dear Agnes, for your kind remarks about me. I do like to be admired! Why not? Such a thing is quite natural, and no one knows that better than yourself, who are somewhat, so far as I have observed you, a keen student of the ways of human-kind, and not liable to be mistaken in the opinions which you may form, nor to be blindfolded by taking a false estimate of things! But to return to the subject of our discourse, such as it is! When men call upon their sisters and wives not to dress as extravagantly—if you will have that word—as they do, let them renounce at the same time, on their part, their fancy cigars, their clubs, their hunters, their shooting-boxes, their heavy losses at racing, at the whist-table, and in the billiard-room; not forgetting their luxurious little dinners, where the wines are of such a costly nature, and the *menu* so select. Men who are epicures, more than anything else that I am aware

of, love their establishments to be kept up in the best style possible ; and yet in their selfishness they would entail a kind of rigid economy—in dress, I mean—upon her, the wife, the sister, or indeed the mother, who ought to be the life and centre, and one of the chief attractions, of their usually splendid establishments.”

“ I have nothing whatsoever to say in reply, in the presence of such a pleader—as in very truth you are, Marie!—concerning such matters!” was all that Agnes said, as she stood regarding her admiringly.

The charming Comtesse certainly did leave the effect of her striking example upon the disposition of Agnes Audley. Always neat and refined, and a thorough lady in manners, Agnes, since the death of her younger sister, some years ago, had lived privately, and in a way less attentive than of old to the ever-changing and fickle modes of fashion than might have been imagined from the exclusiveness of her social position in life. She had never, it is quite true, made herself what might be called ridiculous, by appearing in public in some fantastic costume which society, having grown tired of, had laid aside ; but Agnes, who was of a singularity of mind, took no deep interest of her own, as did so many of her lady friends, in the exquisite and elaborate designs which the taste, the imagination,

the invention, the caprice, and above all the consummate skill of Parisian *modistes*, succeed in giving to the fashionable world month by month and year by year.

It is said that of all known forms of despotism which can on any occasion be exercised, perhaps the most complete is that which is exercised by imperious fashion, whose iron rule over the entire civilized world extends not merely to frivolous and evanescent things, but to matters likewise of the most serious import, and weighted even with the affairs of state and of politics. There is many a statesman who owes his rise in Parliament to the fact of his wife being a leader of fashion. Arts, language, science even, are obedient to her. She is as old as remote antiquity, and advances side by side with civilization. In Athens and in Rome she had her home, as in Paris in these latter days.

The Comtesse de la Vallonière, who had travelled much in her time, especially in America, whither she had gone more than once, was a great votary of fashion in all its various shapes and forms. She had been in the most distant portions of Western Massachusetts, in that part of the territory which borders upon Miller's River—a wild, diminutive straggling stream which flows amidst jagged rocks and narrow fissures, and forms itself into dark and still deep pools, where the vegetation, always so

luxuriant in America, grows more dense and tangled than usual. It is a stream whose troubled waters quietly flow into the river Connecticut by jumping in a violent leap down a ladder-like precipice made of broken rocks, until it finds itself and loses itself in the broad lake of that splendid river.

When she was living on the banks of Miller's River, she had learned many things which she had never been taught in the old country, more particularly concerning religion, or rather its prototype, superstition; mankind's vices were revealed in their national character, and her womanly instincts were somewhat counteracted by too close a contact with the demoralizing atmosphere around her. She met there with much infatuity and incredulity, and what the inhabitants betrayed in their dispositions, they likewise seemed equally to betray in their dress. So that when she came back to Paris, and reassumed her social position in the fashionable quarters of that city of pleasure and of constant gaiety and dissipation, she seemed to be somewhat Americanised, as she carried the idiosyncrasies of the American ladies with her in her singular cut and style of dress and costume. And from the time that she, the happy and the light-hearted Comtesse de la Vallonière, and the English girl Agnes began to exchange simple terms of acquaintanceship for the greater and the deeper intimacy of a most



sincere and lasting friendship, the Comtesse twitted Agnes continually upon what she was pleased to call her "want of commonsense" in dress.

She positively refused to drive with Agnes one day in the Marquis's carriage, because the bonnet which Agnes wore did not please the Comtesse. She stated that she could never encounter her several friends again, did they meet her in company with a person who wore such a hideous bonnet. The Comtesse, at the same time energetic and likewise elegant, conceived this indifference to fashion to be a defect in Agnes's character, and she went to her task perseveringly, with the firm resolve to try and eradicate it if she could.

She so far succeeded that Agnes was always now as well-dressed as was the fair Comtesse herself. Marie was only too glad, at length, that she should accompany her in her carriage. Her sweet face and her attractive figure set off the Comtesse to greater advantage, and made the Marquis's carriage and prancing bays assume a more graceful and more complete aspect, both of elegance and of correctness.

Marie had written a perfumed note to Agnes, intimating she would call for her upon this afternoon to bring her out to drive around the suburbs of Paris, as she was frequently in the habit of doing, both to breathe the fresher air, and to show off to the unsophisticated bourgeoisie her elegant

and careful toilette; so, consequently, it was quite natural that therefore Agnes had a double object in view in dressing herself with such particular care to-day.

She longed, with all the sincerity of a loving sister's undisguised affection, to throw her arms around her brother Jack's neck, and to tell him at the same time how entirely and how devotedly she fondly loved him, notwithstanding all that had been done by him in order to destroy her love.

So true is it that from the perversity of our human nature, we slight and treat as naught those who really betray for us any substantial signs of friendship, and we even regard but lightly the gifts they bestow upon us. It is only when we are left without friends, or the necessary assistance which we stand in need of, that we miss keenly their kindly acts of genuine affection and generosity of spirit.

How true it was that Agnes loved her wayward brother, in spite of very many obstacles, mostly arising from his own obstinate disposition and want of deference to others! But Agnes Audley had a great heart which had a passion for forgiving those who wronged her in thought and deed. She never cared to recall to mind the wrongs which her brother Jack had wrought on others; she thought most, and with the greatest solicitude, of the wrongs

he had done himself, and they were many. She never met him in a personal interview since the memorable day upon which he went guiltily away from Lucie and his child, denying to both of them whatever protection it might have been his to have afforded them, for they were very helpless; and she believed, to the best of her recollection, she had not seen him since because he was hiding his head, so full was he both of shame, and of sorrow, and of love, the lingering flames of which still smouldered within his breast for Lucie and for his child, and for her, his only surviving sister, thoughtful and patient Agnes.

How eagerly Agnes desired his presence with her once more, all stained and utterly despised as he was! With all his insurmountable load of iniquities and sins, he was still her dear brother Jack, who had the secret power of stirring her heart with throbs of love. How angry she was with him, too, for his iniquities and for his sins! but her anger he would not see, for she could hide it from him. No missionary ever went forth with greater eagerness and newly-born zeal to a foreign and distant land, in order to tell to those who never before heard it his story of infinite love, than did she, in imagination, at least, to the haven of this strange, untutored heart within her brother's breast, which was her home, at all events, all parched, and seared,

and dried-up as that proud heart was, and needing so much of the rain from heaven.

She wished to fling herself aside, and, with all the fervour of her noble spirit, to sacrifice herself unreservedly to whatsoever might appear to be for her brother's future welfare and good. She was always hoping the best for him; but often with a sinking feeling as if of despair. He was totally unworthy of so much attention from anyone; but not so in her eyes. She had, however, an able ally in the little child. The blue eyes of Lucie's Lucie can change water into wine.

Twelve o'clock came round. The last stroke of noon struck when the hand of Jack Audley touched the latch of the wooden gate which led into the flower-garden surrounding the cottage occupied by Sir Lucius Legrange.

Agnes, from her place in the parlour-window, heard the gate opening, and lifting up her eyes involuntarily, she was astonished as she suddenly beheld her brother. The colour instantly rose in her face and as instantly died away. Taking his little child in her arms hurriedly, she rose and went out at once to the hall-door, with the intention of greeting him.

Jack unexpectedly saw her walking towards him, and straightway he turned aside his head, bowed down with shame, as if he could not summon up

sufficient courage to meet her face to face boldly after what had happened to mar their domestic peace and the innocent pleasure which they were used to take in the enjoyment of each other's society.

She went down the garden-walk, forgetful entirely of the past, in order to meet him, and as soon as she came up to him she fondly kissed him. Then she held up the little child appealingly, in order that he might kiss it. He did so; and Agnes perceived that he was weeping. It was so seldom to see a man weep. How was she to tell him about Lucie, though?

"Agnes, my sister, I did not expect to see you again in this world; I believed that the inevitable was come, and that we were parted for ever," he said. "Outcast as I am, and all through my own fault, you, at least, have had mercy upon me. Oh! how great is your charity, dear Agnes!" and he took her hand in his own and held it there for some moments.

"Jack, my brother, I have been seeking for you in many parts for a long time, but without avail," she answered slowly, and looking up inquiringly into his face. "Why do you persist thus in keeping away from me? Surely I would do you no harm. Nay, I would safely and securely shield you from your enemies, if it be true, as I have heard, that you

have such. You know—at least, I think you ought—how thoroughly devoted I am, and have always been, to you, through good and evil report. Ah, Jack! there is nothing to be compared to a sister's love that I know of; and you should not have mistrusted me as you have lately done!"

"I did not mistrust you, Agnes; certainly not intentionally. That would be against my nature. I was all along aware that I could rely upon you, and that you were good as gold. But for you I might have been in the Seine long ago—an unrecognised corpse. I hope," he added, with some concern, "that Sir Lucius is not at present here? I assure you that I do not want to meet him. I came chiefly to see you, and you alone, upon this occasion. I can meet him hereafter."

"Sir Lucius," Agnes replied, "has gone out alone for his customary morning walk, and will not be back for another hour, or by the time that luncheon will be ready—a meal which he is very fond of."

There was a pause in the conversation for about a minute; and as Agnes did not break it, he asked her in a quivering voice:

"Where is Lucie, that I do not see her?"

Agnes turned her face away to one side and grew extremely pale. She knows that she dare not conceal the dread truth from him any longer, and that awful as it was it must be told.

“Why do you not answer me, Agnes? Where is Lucie?”

Agnes raised her eyes, with a radiant light in them, to heaven above, and then fixed them calmly on her impatient brother.

“Lucie is gone away from us to that land where no sorrow that we can inflict upon her here can hurt her anymore,” she said.

“What!” he exclaimed. “Is she? but it is impossible! I should have heard of it before!”

“Yes, she is dead!” was Agnes’s slow and quiet reply.

“Oh, Agnes!” he answered confusedly, “this is a hard blow. How shall I ever get over it? Not for years and years!” and he put his hands up to his face to conceal his emotion.

She led him, stunned by the unexpectedness of this intelligence, into the cottage.

He sat down as he was bid, and listened absently, but as well as he could under the circumstances, to his sister’s long and detailed account of his wife’s last illness and painful death. He never had for a moment dreamt in his own mind of the bare possibility of her dying, and the bitter reflection that, if not the immediate cause of her death by his callous and cruel conduct and neglect, certainly he was somehow or another the remote cause thereof, and that he had been instrumental in hastening

that melancholy event, made him bow his head with remorse.

Agnes gradually left off speaking upon so sorrowful a theme; for it was without doubt most deeply sorrowful, although the man who listened to it actually had deserted his wife. But he had deserted her more through shame at squandering her fortune, and reducing her to a state of abject dependence upon her father for the most common means of daily support, than from any other motive—except one. There *had* been another reason for his abandoning her and flying to the associates who would drag him down lower and lower still, low as he undoubtedly had sunk already in the social scale in consequence of his misdeeds. For it had come to pass with him, that before a twelvemonth of his married life was over he found that Lucie had ceased to love him; and it was death to him to sit alone with her for any length of time, and to have to watch her vain and fruitless efforts to derive pleasure from being in his society. None of their tastes were mutual; and where there is a dissimilarity of temperament between two people, it is absolutely impossible that they can agree. His presence—too plainly indeed he observed it—used to chill her existence and frighten her out of her wits. Now, he really was fondly attached to her, and seeing her thus like a terrified bird alone in his home almost



drove him to the verge of despair. Without doubt it drove him finally to drink, and to the consolation of the gambling-table. At least, it drove him from her for ever, after scattering her fortune to the winds. Money, indeed, seemed, in Jack Audley's possession, to be like a fire, which burned his fingers and pockets, and wherever else he kept it about him, so that he got rid of it as fast as he could—just as one shakes off the sparks from a fire.

Never had there been a more ill-assorted marriage than was that of Jack Audley and Lucie Legrange. Few of their tastes had been in common. Lucie loved quiet retirement in some peaceful country home, where the country people would salute her daily as the fair guardian of their interests and their faithful and constant friend and benefactor. Jack, on the other hand, cared most for a life in the midst of the great metropolis of England—London—amongst his sporting brethren at the various clubs in the West-end; he would like to find himself at the head of a splendid town establishment—if it happened that his means might afford it—wherein Lucie would be at once the ornament and life. But Lucie, good and beautiful and accomplished, and so fair to the eye, would never show off to advantage a man of the world like Captain Jack Audley. She was too earnest in her ways, too simple-minded, and too outwardly real to make use of

appearances in order to work her ends. The flash of life, as seen in London, and in Paris, and in society generally, was too bright and dazzling for her to bask in its splendour. In a word, she was not fast, and Jack was. She was inclined to be of a religious turn of mind, and Jack was not. She was faithful to the true principles both of love and of marriage. Jack can hardly be said to have been so likewise. In temper and in intellect they were as wide apart as the two poles. Lucie could never be to Jack what is called a *bon camarade*. She could never be his companion in any adventure. Were he to drive a four-in-hand—and he knew how to do so well—Lucie would not be happy sitting admiringly by his side, nor would he had she been with him as he went tooling along. Her presence would put him out of his reckoning, and coming round some sharp corner there would certainly be an upset or a breakdown of some sort.

Often, ere the first year of their married life was completed, he would return home to their house in London of an evening and find her with a novel resting idle on her knee, her arms folded, and a lingering look of regret in her face, which, since he really loved her dearly, used to drive him mad. At length, owing to his gambling habits, her fortune, and with it likewise their visible means of existence, altogether disappeared; and the consequence was

that she had to go home to her father, and that her husband left her for ever. Poor Lucie! it was after all a happy thing for her that she should have died! Few scenes are at once so beautiful and so sad as the untimely death of one like her, in her young days and in her loveliness.

Jack sat with his sister Agnes in the parlour of the cottage, and listened patiently while she began to speak to him of other things. Patiently, because his heart was full of Lucie, and he would have liked Agnes to have gone on speaking only of her.

“What do you mean to do with yourself now, Jack?” she said, speaking about his future prospects.

“First of all, this evening, I shall visit Lucie’s grave in the cemetery of Père-la-Chaise, and ascertain that it is properly taken care of.”

“I have seen to that,” Agnes answered. “We often pay it a visit—the Comtesse de la Vallonière and I.”

“Was she a friend of Lucie’s?” he asked.

“A great friend.”

“As to what I shall do in the future, Agnes, I have not yet made up my mind quite. I must see my way more clearly than I do. I can’t go on much longer with the uncertain life I am leading. To be candid with you, years ago it thoroughly disgusted me. But what am I to do?—I am so helpless

and so much the creature of others! And yet I must live!"

"You can have money from me, Jack, as I frequently told you before—whenever you want it. You need have no hesitation in asking me for it. It is always at your disposal."

"Agnes, listen to me for one instant, and bear with me. In all my past career, I think that there is only one recollection which affords me any source of satisfaction, and that is, that I never borrowed a shilling from you. Would you deprive me now of the gratification which that one happy remembrance is able to afford me?"

"I would not deprive you of anything, dear Jack. I would rather add to your pleasures and amusements if I could."

"Were I starving I would not take money from you, Agnes. For did I once yield to the temptation of borrowing from you, I would not know where or when to stop. However, just at present I have plenty of money—at least enough for my immediate wants. How long it will continue to remain with me I am afraid to conjecture. Fearing that I might lose some, if not all of it, I have brought with me this morning five hundred pounds, which I wish to hand over to you in order to keep it as a portion for my child."

He took with trembling hands from a pocket-

book, which he carried about his person, the five hundred pounds in bank-notes, and handed them to her, although somewhat reluctantly.

"Where did you get all this money, Jack?" she demanded.

"I made it."

"How?"

"By my superior skill at the game of *rouge-et-noir*."

"Oh, Jack, my dear brother! I cannot take this money. It would do your child no good."

"Nonsense, Agnes. Don't be foolish. You must take this money, and spend it on my child."

"No, Jack. Not a penny of it! It is unlucky money. The possession of it would injure her. I cannot receive it."

"You are a strange girl, Agnes. Well, it is all the same. I shall put this money in a bank when I go back to Paris, and Lucie shall have it to support her when she comes of age. Do you understand me? She shall have it before then if she requires it. I will put up more than that for her, the darling!"

"I cannot control you, Jack; I never did yet. But I cannot receive the money. I wish you would put up no money acquired by such irregular means for Lucie. I would wish it very much! Be sure Lucie shall never want; not as long as I

live. She, on the contrary, will be rich and prosperous by-and-by. All that I have in the world will eventually go to her——”

“Unless you marry, Agnes!” he said doubtfully.

“Ah! well. I did not think of that. Even if I do, little Lucie will be adequately provided for. Not only on my part, but I heard her grandfather, Sir Lucius, say she should be his heiress. And he is not poor.”

“I have heard that he made an immense lot of money out in India,” Jack replied.

“Sir Lucius lives frugally, nevertheless,” said Agnes.

“Who is talking about Sir Lucius? Why—why, Agnes, who is this? What brings you here, sir? How dare you come here, sir? How dare you put your foot inside my house?”

The old man was standing in the doorway leading into the parlour, and both Agnes and her brother started with surprise, for they never perceived his approach and entrance into the cottage. The face of the old soldier was inflamed with suppressed rage, and he spoke in a voice of thunder:

“Ruffian! Murderer of my daughter, for you are the cause of her death as sure as there is a God above! Out of my house this instant, you villain! Oh! Agnes Audley, what induced you to let that man come here? His presence will contaminate

Lucie's child. Take the child away this instant, Agnes, or he will ruin its happiness, just as he ruined the happiness of my daughter. Begone, sir! Away with you, or—by George!—I'll shoot you like a dog! Agnes!"

There arose a piercing cry as of one in some great agony. Old Sir Lucius, long failing in health, and indebted to Agnes Audley for the preservation of the flickering and enfeebled life within him, overwhelmed with rage and bitterness at the sight of the man whom he implicitly believed was the sole cause of his daughter's early death, sank down speechless upon the floor. Jack Audley ran to his assistance.

"Get some water, Agnes," he said.

She laid the little child upon the carpet where it loved to be, and where it daily played with its toys, and hastening to an adjoining room, came back immediately to her brother with some water. After some time Sir Lucius slowly recovered consciousness, and asked for Jack Audley. At a sign from Agnes, her brother softly retired to where Sir Lucius could not observe him.

"I thought your brother was here, Agnes," Sir Lucius feebly murmured. "I suppose I was dreaming, Agnes?"

"Yes, Sir Lucius."

"I hope your brother will not come here. It would be too much for me, Agnes."

"Yes, Sir Lucius."

"If anything could reconcile me to your brother, it would be your kindness and attention to me. May every blessing attend you in this wearying and disappointing world, my dear child! Agnes!"

"Yes, sir."

"I feel very ill! Send at once for a doctor!"

Agnes Audley ran over to a table whereon were writing materials. She wrote hastily on a slip of paper the address of the physician who was in the habit of attending upon Sir Lucius Legrange since the time, now six months ago, when he began to show evident symptoms of serious ill-health. She stole out into the garden, beckoning her brother to follow her quickly. He did so.

"This is the address, Jack," she whispered, "of Doctor Leturier. Go to him at once, and tell him the state which Sir Lucius unfortunately is in. When you come back again, be sure to keep judiciously out of the way."

"I may not see my child again to-day, Agnes," he answered. "Bring her out here to me, and let me kiss her before I leave."

Agnes, with a bright and happy smile rising suddenly in her face, looked up gaily at her brother, and said wistfully:



“Certainly, Jack. I won’t be a second!”

She darted into the cottage, and returned with little Lucie in her arms. When the child saw Jack her eyes glistened, and a smile shone on her innocent countenance. The child evidently saw no enemy in Jack Audley.

He bent down and gently touched little Lucie’s lips.

Next instant Agnes was standing alone with the child and gazing peacefully after her brother’s retreating figure. He kissed hands to her when he had gone fifty yards. She did the same, and then ran back into the cottage, as she heard the feeble cry, “Agnes!” from Sir Lucius.

## CHAPTER IX.

LADY LEGRANGE occupied handsome apartments in one of the most populous and pleasant cool streets of Paris. When she came into her sitting-room in the morning to breakfast, the scene in the gay streets below was, even at that comparatively early hour, one to excite in the bosom of the desponding—and my lady was desponding occasionally—feelings of liveliness and hope and good-humour with the world in general, and the human race in particular. Her ladyship, as a matter of course, paid a handsome rent for the occupation of such superior apartments, situated, as they were, in a locality where house-property was expensive and at a premium.

But she could afford to live in such a place and keep up a befitting style. Sir Lucius was liberal towards her, allowing her five hundred a year out of his private income, although he well knew that she had fifteen hundred a year of her own to live upon. Thus, her income was worth to her two

thousand a year. She had no other expense to cope with beyond the maintenance of her own establishment. Verily, she might with safety any day lend to an old friend like Captain Jack Audley the small sum of a paltry twenty pounds or so. However, it was a great compliment, his being lent that money by her, as Lady Legrange made it an inflexible rule never to lend money to anyone. To her practical and selfish mind, to lend money was one of those foolish and thankless things which one should never do.

Lady Legrange, notwithstanding her being separated as she was from Sir Lucius, saw a good deal of the best society. She was a pleasant companion at many times, had a continuous flow of lively conversation, gave people good wine to drink whenever they came to her residence, kept a carriage and a pair of thoroughbred horses, had plenty of money, and was *Lady Legrange*. Rich Parisian folk who had made their money in business followed her about and doffed the hat to her because she enjoyed the honour of being styled "my lady."

She had such a fund of vanity in her that she actually countenanced these wily idolators of acknowledged rank, these clumsy but cute devotees who kneel outside the pale of the sanctuary which guards the blue blood of the human race from contact with the rest of mankind. She set apart

special evenings when she received these people, and almost these alone, and sat like a queen among them, acknowledging complacently their sickly homage. Upon such occasions, in order to throw a sop to Cerberus, she would be sure to have three or four private friends on whose assistance she might rely, and who would understand her—men and women either of the best society in Paris, or with titles to enjoy, or who had gained distinction in the world either with the brush, or with the pen, or with the chisel—these my lady would sprinkle like preserving salt amongst the lower ten thousand, who were full of adulation and apparent gratitude in Lady Legrange's presence, because she received them at her residence and entertained them so delightfully. It was a grand thing to have to talk of afterwards.

“Oh, Madame Avocat, whom do you think we met last night at Lady Legrange's?—the dear lady!”

“I do not know, Madame Bonbon!”

“Why, Monsieur Gustave Doré, the great and the gigantic painter of modern pictures, the fantastic delineator of Don Quixote and the faithful imitator of Milton with the pencil and the crayon. He came to Lady Legrange's for an hour, and then he went away; but no sooner had he gone, than who should arrive to fill his vacant place in the social circle but Messieurs Erckmann-Chatrain, who are as in-

separable as the famous Siamese twins! They are great hands at writing books; they compose their works together, and then they publish them under their combined names. The genius of the one shows off to supreme advantage the great literary ability of the other, and thus they astonish mankind by their brilliant joint authorship, and feed the intellect of the age. Was it not delightful to be in the same room with such distinguished people?"

Madame Bonbon was either the victim of the delusion that she had seen these above-mentioned gentlemen at Lady Legrange's the night previous, or else some malicious acquaintance, who was not strictly addicted to telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, at all times, had whispered enviously the falsehood last evening into Madame Bonbon's listening ear — news which Madame Avocat received with the same ingenuous simplicity of belief as the stately and haughty Madame Bonbon herself, whose husband had made his money in the bakery trade by the way, that the gentleman leaning against the mantelpiece was Gustave Doré, the eminent painter of "Christ leaving the Prætorium;" and that those other remarkable gentlemen, the one talking smilingly to Lady Legrange, and the other seated comfortably upon a sofa conversing with a very stout lady, were MM. Erckmann-Chatrain, the celebrated novelists;

the fact being that none of these distinguished individuals were acquainted with Lady Legrange.

It must not be forgotten that the separation of her ladyship from Sir Lucius was seized upon and given a romantic colouring. The rumour emanated from Lady Legrange herself originally, as she was anxious in the eyes of the world to act the part of the ill-used and much injured but patient wife. The story went abroad, coming first from her own lips, that Sir Lucius was a tyrant, with whom to reside was a living suicide. That his temper was fearful; so horrible that he frequently attempted to beat her ladyship, and once succeeded in so doing. That he drove his only daughter into an ill-assorted marriage against her will. That at length, owing to his savage disposition, her ladyship was compelled to live separated from him; that most luckily she was in a position to do this, inasmuch as she was blessed with an ample fortune of her own.

Whereas, the truth was that in all Europe there could not be found a kinder, a more patient, or a more loving husband than Sir Lucius Legrange. The man, take him as he was, appeared to be the very epitome of gentleness itself. But the malice within her ladyship's breast could not do him complete justice. As for poor dead Lucie, need it be said that but for Lady Legrange's manœuvrings her unhappy marriage in connection with Captain Jack

Audley would never have taken place? Need it be said that but for Lady Legrange Lucie would now, in all likelihood, be alive, and the happy wife of Augustine St. Clare? As it was, she got spliced, as the saying is, to this sporting Captain.

“To-morrow is the merriest day of the glad new year,” writes Tennyson somewhere; and such it always was for this ex-officer, if that morrow happened to be the Derby-day, which, for him, was the maddest, most exciting, and merriest carnival celebrated during the entire year. The great Epsom race held a deeper place in his affections, as it did in that of the people in general, than anything else. That all-important event, which is the subject of conversation alike in the mansion of the aristocrat and in the humble dwellings of the working mechanics and labouring men — the Captain could discuss its probabilities with equal flippancy, if not with equal knowledge, both in the exclusive club of which he was a member, and at the bar of the neighbouring public-house round the corner, in the nearest by-street, to which he turned in to have his pint of ale and his talk with the cabbies and the omnibus-drivers as naturally as he ordered his bottle of champagne, his claret, or his morning brandy and soda from the waiter in the dining-room of his London club. But he had always such an excellent opinion about horses, that

he was cordially received and listened to wherever he might go, be it amongst the high or the low, for he could tell with exactitude when the wagering upon the Derby or any other race was correct ; and whether a certain jockey would ride a certain horse ; and whether a certain bet of twenty to twenty, which was laid, that the popular jockey rode the winner ; or he could confirm the rumour of said jockey having the leg up on Mr. So-and-So's colt, and whether that individual alluded to would have the handling of him on the day the Derby was to be run. In a word, he knew how to put the favourite jockey upon the favourite horse ; and by his foreknowledge of these things in racing matters he gave to betting men an excellent chance of securing large sums on the Derby and on other races.

And this was the man, who spent all his time in racing and in horsy speculations, whom Lucie preferred to be married to instead of to St. Clare. It might not have been so. It might have been that for all that she would have died ! It cannot have been fate out and out. But at least, if she was to have gone to God early, she would have departed with her hand clasped in St. Clare's, with her heart not bruised nor broken, with her big, brave trust in the power and the beauty of love unchanged.



Lady Legrange had other assemblies at her house, when elegant people grouped themselves in her suite of rooms, and listened to music which might make Orpheus envious. At such times her ladyship was truly at home, inhaling an atmosphere to which she was most accustomed, and wherein she breathed more freely. No awkwardness arising from ill-breeding on such occasions disturbed the harmony of the agreeable scene. No Madame Bonbons or Madame Avocats thrust their vulgar individualities into the foreground. All sharp edges seemed for the time being to be rubbed off, and everything went on serenely and delightfully at those charming social gatherings which made for themselves a rendezvous at Lady Legrange's.

Amongst the guests might often be seen the merry Comtesse de la Vallonière, leaning on the arm of her father, the noble-looking Marquis de Sevrey. Nay, even the quiet figure of Agnes Audley might be met with, gliding here and there, her face betraying that she was a Christian. More than once, too, Augustine St. Clare came at the express and pressing invitation of Lady Legrange. If Lady Legrange could be said to love anyone, there were two persons on earth whom she did love—the one was Agnes Audley, the other was Augustine St. Clare. In Agnes there was no harm and no guile, and ever upon Lady Legrange she had exerted a beneficent and healing

influence, the presence of which Lady Legrange was honest enough and admiring enough to acknowledge at once. Had all people had the same wholesome effect upon her, she might have been less hard of heart and less bent upon her own selfish purposes. But all people are not Agnes Audleys. She—that is, Lady Legrange—knowing she was a married woman, and therefore bound by the obligations belonging to that position, was honourable in the affection which she retained for St. Clare. The love with which her heart burned for him in her early days was quenched, and its death softened and hallowed by exquisite touches of memory. Memory, half unfaithful in its recollections, would conjure up now a woodland scene in summer-time by some rapid, garrulous streamlet's side, and two lovers—Margaret Le Breton and young Augustine St. Clare—silently walking together with a song of love in both their hearts, or else a winter night's scene by the fire-side in his father's, her faithful guardian's, home, when the curtains were closed and the wind howled in the dark outside, and the lamp upon the central table glowed beneath its covering, and shadows thrown from the restless fire danced upon the wall and vanished.

Margaret Le Breton! she can almost look upon herself in those departed days as a different being; for who could believe that Margaret Le Breton

would have developed into Lady Legrange? She loves not Augustine now. Her heart is pure enough to crush all such affection. She regards St. Clare simply as a dear, dear friend, for she is aware of his priceless worth, and were she free to-morrow, she would not for a moment think of trying to catch him for a husband. She would have blushed at the idea of it. For to her, at least, whatever he might have been to others, he was too clear-hearted to be circumvented by reason of any underhand means which might be resorted to. Yet she came between him and Lucie Legrange! Because, in her hatred of Lucie, she forgot the interests and the happiness of St. Clare altogether; or else her dislike for Lucie outweighed them and cast them aside.

It may appear to be a strange thing indeed that Agnes Audley should be seen at Lady Legrange's, living as she was at this present time with Sir Lucius at Suresnes. Agnes would never have gone, only of late, within the last few months, when, for the first time since their coming to Paris, invitations from Lady Legrange reached her, she having shown them according as they arrived to Sir Lucius, the old soldier begged of her to accept them. He loved his second wife, and Agnes, going to her thus, could bring him back tidings how she looked and how she was faring. It was not his fault that she was residing apart from him; she did

so entirely of her own free-will, and to please herself solely ; for he would not attempt to interfere with her ; but what could he do ? Margaret would have it so ! He could not, let him try it ever so perseveringly, please or content her. What could he do but permit her to have her own way, and to live separated from him, affording thus to every curious neighbour a ripe and convenient topic for scandal ? He had fled to Paris in order that he might escape observation, and that he might enjoy the privacy of the little cottage which he had hired at the village of Suresnes, and wherein Lucie died. Ah ! ever afterwards that cottage must be sacred to him, he used to murmur to himself. He had fled to Paris for another reason, although he acknowledged it to no one. Lady Legrange was living in Paris, and he went to that city, or near it, that he might hear of her more frequently, and perhaps catch a glimpse of her sometimes. It was cruel of her to leave him, convinced as she was how intensely he loved her !

Lady Legrange, after luncheon one day, ordered her carriage, and went out to drive. She wished to pay a visit to one of her more intimate friends who lived some distance outside Paris. To reach her destination it was necessary to pass by Sir Lucius's cottage at Suresnes. She glanced at it very curiously as she drove by. There was a young nursery-maid walking up and down in the

garden with Lucie's child. She saw them, and concluded that the child must be Lucie's. Agnes was at one of the windows sewing. She did not raise her head from her work as the carriage rolled by, but Lady Legrange saw Agnes Audley, and she smiled to herself. My lady believed in goodness, although she was a bad hand at practising it. She paid her visit of ceremony, and passed the cottage by again. On this occasion there was no one in the garden or at the window. She had not proceeded a hundred yards further on her homeward journey, when she met Agnes walking with her brother Jack. Lady Legrange immediately stopped the carriage.

"How are you, Agnes?" she exclaimed. "Why, Jack, I little thought of meeting you and Agnes walking together!"

"It is the most natural thing in the world!" was his good-humoured reply.

"Certainly," she said, "under ordinary circumstances. But then, Jack, you are not like other people!"

"I am quite sure of that," he replied. "But don't be wondering, Margaret; to betray surprise is a weakness which does not become you——"

"Agnes, do you hear him?"

"Nor should you be inquisitive," he went on. "I am here on business; and serious business, too."

If you are not inquisitive I will tell you all about it."

"Oh! I'm not inquisitive at all! I am glad to see you, Jack, and glad to see Agnes, and very glad to see you with her. Dear Agnes, will you come to me to-morrow?"

Agnes, who had been silent up to this, said:

"I fear that I cannot, Margaret. I shall be busy about other affairs to-morrow."

"Well, shall we say, for convenience' sake, the next day, if that would suit you?"

"I shall be busy the next day, too. So we must put it off."

Agnes went closer up to the side of Lady Le-grange's carriage, and took her outstretched hand familiarly into her own.

"Margaret," she asked softly, "will you do me a favour, if I beg such from you now? I never have asked one from you yet, that I can remember."

"I would do anything that lay in my power for you, my own dearest Agnes! What is it that you want me to do for you? I am at your service."

"This, Margaret. Instead of my going to see you to-morrow, I wish you to come to see me—to the cottage yonder."

"To the cottage? Where Sir Lucius is? Impossible! Agnes, you must not ask me to do this! If you hope that thereby, through our casual meet-

ing with one another, you may, by your skill and ingenuity, be able to effect an understanding between Sir Lucius and me, that we are no longer to live apart, but together as man and wife, believe me that all your good intentions are completely thrown away, as I for one, at all events, and the principal person affected in the matter, will never become a consenting party to such a course of proceedings. You may be very charitably disposed, but your charity must have some limits put to it, especially in regard to the state of my feelings at present towards my husband, Sir Lucius Le-grange."

"Ah no, Margaret!" Agnes said very sadly. "I have no such motive in view—or rather," she added hurriedly, "I have some such motive."

"Of course I knew that you had, and I tell you that there is no use in it. I will not be guided by you, nor by anyone else. I will not be dictated to. Am I not my own mistress?"

"I know that you are, Margaret; but allow me to tell you that Sir Lucius is unfortunately very ill. He has ordinarily two doctors attending him, and he is not yet pronounced out of danger by either of them."

"Very ill! Has to have two doctors attending him!"

Lady Legrange almost started out of the carriage with dismay.

"Yes," Agnes replied. "I have not had a night's rest for ever so long in consequence of his illness. He has been so ill that the first physicians in Paris have given him up. I believe he would have been dead before this, only we brought in an Irish doctor to prescribe for him, who is spending his summer months for vacation in Paris. They say, all the doctors do, that in at most a week or two longer, the end must inevitably come, and that there is not the slightest chance of his recovery, as the sickness from which he is suffering is fatal."

"This is a great and a terrible surprise to me, Agnes!" responded her ladyship. "Has he been ailing as long as that?"

"Oh yes!" she answered, with a greater vivacity of manner; "for months and months he has been failing in health. In fact, I might venture with perfect safety to say that he has never rallied really since Lucie died."

"And why was it, Agnes, that you did not tell me before that Sir Lucius was ill? Perhaps I might have relented if you had written to me about it; and perhaps, under the circumstances, I might have gone to pay him a visit, to see whether or not my presence in the sick-room would have had any



beneficial effect upon his health or his drooping spirits. You often, surely, had the opportunity of informing me, if you cared to do so. I am angry with you for this, Agnes."

"Forgive me, I beseech you, since I considered that, by holding my tongue, I was acting for the best. Nor did I know how Lucius would take it; I feared I should be offending him, did I send for you to come here. Though on more than one occasion I was thinking of doing so, when he was very bad, and not expected to recover from his debility. What use was there in troubling your mind, Margaret, when neither I nor the doctors, although we had a very clever Irish one amongst them prescribing for our poor patient, thought that it would turn out so extremely serious for Sir Lucius after all? Will you not come to him to-morrow, Margaret? or perhaps you will alight from your carriage and come in to see him now?"

Lady Legrange seemed to hesitate as to what it might be best for her to do—whether she should go, as she was in duty bound, to visit her ailing husband now, or else wait until to-morrow; and she looked at Jack, who had been silent all the time she was speaking to Agnes.

"What advice do you give me?" she exclaimed.

"If I were you I'd get out of the carriage," he said, "and go in to see him in the cottage."

“Why should I visit him now?” she asked, somewhat bitterly, and beginning to weep. “When I divided myself from him during life, am I to perform the *rôle* of the loving wife now that he is dying? No; I will not attempt to go near the cottage to-day, Agnes, for I dread the very sight of it.”

“Then you refuse me the very first favour I ever asked of you, Margaret?” Agnes replied sorrowfully. “What am I to say to her, Jack?—for I cannot convince her against her will!”

“I think that I would cut the acquaintance,” said Jack, “if I were you.”

Lady Legrange was smiling by this time at Agnes. Agnes looked up in return, and said, in her own sweet way—the power and the sweetness of which Agnes herself was entirely unconscious of:

“Every day at least half a dozen times does Sir Lucius inquire for you, Margaret. To-day he wanted to know from me when you said you would come to see him; and when he asked me that question, I made up my mind to go into Paris this evening, and beg of you to come to Sir Lucius before he dies. I should have gone into Paris had I not providentially met you here.”

Lady Legrange was weeping still, and Jack Audley gazed at the flowing tears as he might gaze

on any other curiosity. He did not think that Margaret Legrange could cry, and it was quite a relief to him to find that she could.

“One ought never to be surprised at anything!” said Jack to himself a couple of hours afterwards, when he was alone, smoking a soothing cigar in his snug quarters in Paris. “I wonder will the old fellow leave all he has to my little Lucie?” Jack also murmured to himself, amidst the silence and the solitude of his rooms. “I hope he will! And I think he will! Poor little Lucie! may you make no unhappy marriage, as my lost darling did!”

Captain Jack Audley wiped an unbidden tear out of his eyes. Even Captain Jack, it seems, could weep! One should never be surprised at anything! Yes; Captain Jack spoke truly.

Agnes, still standing by the carriage and holding Lady Legrange’s hand fast in her own, awaited her reply, looking steadfastly up into her now smiling face.

“Am I to expect you, Margaret; or shall I be disappointed?” she asked.

Lady Legrange stooped down and kissed her passionately.

“Yes,” she said; “I will make it my business to come to you to-morrow, early.”

She held out her hand to Jack Audley, and then

the carriage drove away in the direction of the city.

When Lady Legrange arrived home, her maid asked her what dress she would wear that night, as she was going out to the house of a friend, where a pleasant little circle of intimate companions were in the habit of assembling once a week. The maid was greatly surprised when her mistress announced to her that she did not intend to be present there, as Lady Legrange never, unless for some most urgent reason, missed putting in an appearance every Wednesday evening at this particular friend's house.

Lady Legrange, having eaten a solitary dinner, retired to her room early, and did not leave it again for the remainder of that day. She sat over the fire, thinking of her past life, and mostly of her great mistake in allying herself with such a person as Sir Lucius. And a wild hope arose suddenly in her breast, so fierce and so strong in its exultation that she had not the strength to put it down and to stifle it.

Sir Lucius would die in the course of events, and she would be once more free! How she longed for that hour to come! She would be free to descend again into the world's field of battle, and fight her way as she fought it before; only this time, taught by experience, she would make no second

grand mistake! Wealth, and title, and position were hers, and troops of friends! Oh, how often had her strong and eager nature writhed in pain under its fetters, and fain would burst out of life in its strivings for freedom. Now the fetters were going to be removed!

Sir Lucius was dying. Margaret Legrange should be Margaret le Breton once more in all but the name.

The next morning she ordered her breakfast early, with the intention of starting immediately afterwards for the village of Suresnes. She was pouring out her second cup of coffee, when the door of the room was opened, and Agnes Audley entered.

“Why, child! what in the name of goodness brings you here at this early hour?” Lady Legrange exclaimed.

“I came,” Agnes answered, “lest you might change your mind, and not, after all, come out to Sir Lucius. The poor old man asked for you ever so many times since I saw you last evening. I thought it best therefore, Margaret, to secure your coming to us by hastening into Paris and rushing in upon you at eight o’clock in the morning.”

“I was fully determined upon going out to see Sir Lucius this morning, and that is why I happened to be breakfasting at an hour earlier than is my

custom. Of course you have not breakfasted yet, dear? Sit down and try this coffee of my own making. I always make my own coffee."

"I had a cup, thank you, before I left Suresnes. But, to tell you the plain and honest truth, I am rather hungry," said Agnes.

"No wonder at all about that!" laughed lightly Lady Legrange. "Sit down, Agnes; and take off your bonnet at once. What a pretty bonnet! Who made it, pray?"

"Marie de la Vallonière's milliner," replied Agnes.

"Ah, Marie always dresses well!" sighed Lady Legrange.

Agnes breakfasted, and in less than an hour she and Lady Legrange were on their way in the latter's carriage to Suresnes. When they arrived, Lady Legrange told the coachman she would not return to Paris that day, and that he was not to come for her until she should send him word that she would want him again.

Then Agnes brought Lady Legrange into her own dainty bedroom, where Lady Margaret took off her bonnet and mantle, and arranged her abundant hair before meeting Sir Lucius. Agnes went first alone into the room where Sir Lucius Legrange, feeble and emaciated, reclined in an armchair. For, though fated soon to take his departure from this

world, he was able to remain dressed and up for a few hours every day.

“Sir Lucius,” Agnes whispered, bending over him.

“Yes, Agnes.”

“She has come at last !”

“What !” exclaimed the old man, starting up from his chair and sinking back again into it immediately. “Is Margaret here ?”

He glanced as it were instinctively towards the door, and there she was, standing like a queen in the doorway, and looking at the feeble invalid with an expression of pity. Sir Lucius folded his hands, and resting his chin on them, gazed up at her with streaming eyes. There she was before him, the woman he loved still, and always loved ; no matter how she treated him, he loved her.

She went over to him and held out her hand.

“How do you do, Sir Lucius ?” she said.

“But poorly—poorly, Margaret,” he answered, retaining her hand in his. Your coming here already has done me good ; I wanted so much to see you once more before I die. It was so kind of you to come here, Margaret,” he added ; “it was very condescending indeed upon your part, after all the disputes and quarrels we have had.”

“Do not call it condescension, Sir Lucius,” she replied.

“Margaret, will you grant me one favour,” he said.

“What is it, Sir Lucius?”

“Will you forgive my having failed to make you happy? You know not how I have loved you! Alas! I had not the gift of making you love me.”

“That cannot be helped now,” she said. “Let us talk of something else—of something more congenial to your spirits and to the hour. Let us talk of something which will not hurt your wounded feelings.”

“One of my deepest regrets is that you were married to a man who, instead of your being able to love, honour, and obey him, was, on the contrary, a continual source of annoyance to you—so much so, that there was nothing for it but to separate and to live apart. Believe me, Margaret,” he added sadly, “I do not blame you. I do not blame anyone but myself.”

He ceased and glanced up at her. The sight of the old man on the verge of the grave pleading thus to her, who of the two had been most in the wrong, softened her heart. She bent down and kissed Sir Lucius on the forehead.

“There!” she said; “let bygones be bygones. I have come to stay with you for the future, and will not leave you any more!”

He laid his thin hand fondly on her head and stroked her hair.



“ You are welcome, Margaret,” he replied. “ Henceforth I will not be thinking of my poor dead Lucie so much !”

Lady Legrange was faithful to her word, and never left her husband again. Daily she spent hours in his company, and seemed by her attentions now to be making up for the past. Agnes buoyed her up during this time of trial—for it was a time of trial to her.

Sir Lucius rallied under her care, and brightened into something like his former self; but the stern approach of death was only stayed awhile in its progress—nearer and nearer the unknown which lies beyond the gate of death was advancing.

At last, one day when Sir Lucius had been in higher spirits than usual, Lady Legrange and Agnes left him by himself for an hour or two and went out to have a walk together. On their return they found Sir Lucius in the arm-chair with his chin resting on his breast. They thought he was asleep. But no—he was dead !

They buried him in the same grave with his daughter Lucie, in the cemetery of Père-la-Chaise, and the lovely flowers which careful hands tend for her bloom likewise for him, and the same wind sighs for both !

When Sir Lucius’s will was opened it was found that he had accumulated a vast amount of wealth.

He proved his love for Lady Legrange by leaving her ten thousand pounds absolutely for her own use and benefit, and also a further life-interest in ten thousand pounds more. To Agnes Audley was left a life-interest in ten thousand pounds. To his grand-daughter, the little Lucie, Sir Lucius bequeathed a fine estate he had purchased in Ireland, together with a hundred thousand pounds, and ten thousand pounds on the death or demise of Lady Legrange—an event which was likely to be far off,—and ten thousand pounds on the death of Agnes Audley.

What an heiress little Lucie will be by-and-by! But should Lucie die before coming of age, the estate in Ireland was to be sold by her personal representatives and the executors appointed under the will, and the proceeds which should be realized by such sale were to be distributed amongst the next of kin of Sir Lucius equally with certain charities which were mentioned specially in the clauses of the will. All the other large sums of money in personal property which he had accumulated from time to time, and which he had invested in bank-stock and other securities, were, should Lucie his grandchild die in her minority, to be expended solely upon the charities named by Sir Lucius Legrange in his last will and testament.

What a proud man Captain Jack Audley was in

these days, knowing, and making it known to the whole world, that his daughter was such a great heiress. He had almost forgotten his own follies in the exultation of this wonderful and pleasing discovery. After Sir Lucius's death Jack came out and lived a peaceful life for months together in the pretty cottage at Suresnes, where he watched with jealous care over his child's least wants, and made his sister Agnes supremely happy by the change for the better in his wayward life. He never handled a card now, his only dissipation being a game of billiards at the house of a friend who happened to live in the neighbourhood.

As Jack followed the child about from one room to another, in and out of the garden, under trees and round rose-bushes, and watched with awakened interest its playful and endearing movements, a new phase of existence revealed itself to half-inattentive Captain Jack, wherein things which hurt not, nor defile, alone have sway. Agnes by her daily life proved to him this already; but the unconscious arguments of the little child, so innocent and guileless, and so winning in its ways and in its pliant disposition, who had all his heart, came more directly and more effectually home.

Jack was already turning over a new leaf and beginning to be good. How late, indeed, it was for him in life to be commencing his reformation of

character ! But in very truth so it was. He was like the labourers in the vineyard who came in at the eleventh hour.

He used to take an afternoon walk every day along with Agnes, and occasionally at such times Marie de la Vallonière, coming out to pay them a visit, would meet them on the road, and bring them then to have a drive with her. Jack bore with her light and garrulous talk stoically, for the sake of Agnes, whom he knew that the carriage-drive would benefit, since her health was not particularly good nowadays, and required renovating, and much brotherly attention upon his part. But Jack's one dream of life now was the spiritual and temporal welfare of Miss Lucie Audley, his lovely little daughter—*at*at three years and four months. He was unshakenly resolved that the first teachers money could supply. should make her a queen amongst women by-and-by.

## CHAPTER X.

**M**ARIE DE LA VALLONNIÈRE was remaining at home one day shortly after the death of Sir Lucius Legrange, in order to receive visitors, and amongst those for whom she entertained the greatest desire to indulge in a pleasant chat was Augustine St. Clare. He came to see her to-day, wearing, as was his habit, a beautiful flower in his button-hole.

“ You always have a flower in your coat !” Marie exclaimed when he entered the drawing-room where she sat in a sort of regal state. “ There is one man whom it is my misfortune to have made the acquaintance of, and morning, noon, and night, whenever I see him, he has a flower, or rather a bouquet, in his coat. I verily believe that when he is saying his prayers he places a bunch of flowers before him. Now, the peculiarity about this man is that, although he exhibits flowers on his person with such daily punctuality, he has not at the same time a particle of romance in his

entire composition. In fact, the only poetic thing about him is the flower in his button-hole! Now, with you it is not so. I believe that there is something romantic about you. Did you ever read the 'Imitation of Christ,' by Thomas-à-Kempis?"

"Not in French. I have read it in English."

"Do you think it artificial?"

"I consider that in it there is much reality and many elegant sentences; much wisdom, and one may obtain from it much practical notoriety. I deem it to be one of the lights of the world, so far as literature and learning go. But one should drink deep from such a source or touch it not at all. Did you ever hear the story of Richard the Third of England, who was defeated, overthrown and killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field. It is an old, old tale! 'For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost, being overthrown and slain in battle!' And it is so ever with those who would go to heaven before their time. But if ever there was a royal road to heaven, it was that which was shown by Thomas-à-Kempis!"

"And do you wear thus always a bunch of flowers in your button-hole for some romantic reason? Do you know that I often think them to be made of wax, and not real!" she said.

"Not so," he replied. "I never entertain

romantic reasons, and I never wear anything artificial. I pride myself, and have ever done so, upon being eminently practical."

"So you are!" she answered, with an unusual vehemence of manner, which it was not her intention to betray, and which she was totally unconscious of. "But you are also most impressionable. Have I not observed you, when good music was played, how quickly your face betrays you? Have I not seen you at the theatre when some first-rate play was being performed by first-rate actors and actresses? Have I not observed your look of dismay when some pert young miss thumps all the beauty out of Beethoven on the piano? Ah yes, my practical hero! I know what you really are!"

And she laughed up into his puzzled and handsome face.

"I was not aware that you studied people so closely as all that. You should not have told me so much, because, from this day forward, I shall be sure to be on the *qui vive* in your presence."

"There's no use in your minding your *p*'s and *q*'s," she said, "for you're not in the least artful enough, nor can you discern, the same as a woman would, things which might turn out of advantage to you. But I have a bit of news for you which you will like to hear of," she added.

"I am all eagerness to be told of it," he replied.

"Could you guess it?" she asked.

"Not I!"

"Well, it is nothing more or less—although in its way, alas! a very great deal—than that I am engaged to be married!"

"What!" St. Clare exclaimed. "Going to be married?"

"Yes," she answered. "Is it not the most natural thing in the world, at my age, and in my particular position of life? I am an only child, without brother or sister, and the sooner—at least, so my father says—that I secure a careful protector in the shape of a husband, the better for myself! Ah me! the only thing that troubles me is the loss of my present life! I so like my present easy mode of existence, with nothing to trouble me—nothing to do, with no cares or responsibilities, and only to please myself. I shall have ere long to settle down as the charitable and large-minded mistress of some lofty *château* in the country, far away from my beloved Paris! Or else, if it suits my future husband to reside in Paris, I shall be no longer the admired and wealthy Marie de la Vallonnière, but the patient wife of, perhaps, a stupid man of business who cannot appreciate me, and who will stow me away upon some dusty shelf, where I can look from a proper distance on that



‘society’ I am so devotedly attached to from my youngest years.”

“But you forget that you love this man, and that his presence in your home will be a sufficient happiness for you,” said St. Clare.

“Love him!” she exclaimed. “Why, the marriage is all my father’s doing and his! I have nothing to say to it, except to give my consent. It appears that this alliance will be a most excellent thing for our family and that of my future lord and master. So, for my father’s sake, I have consented. Love him! Oh no! What is love?” she asked bitterly and jestingly.

“I am not one to define what love is,” St. Clare answered; “but this much I will venture to say, I would not marry him unless I loved him, if I were you!”

“Did I not say there was more romance in you than the pretty flower decking your buttonhole?” she said archly. “I really am inclined to think that you believe in love in a cottage!” she added half mockingly. “But I must tell you, as you like to hear a bit of news, I know——”

“You seem to know everything about me!” he interrupted.

She smiled, and went on:

“I will tell you the story of my engagement. First of all, my future husband is, as a matter of

course, a nobleman of ancient French lineage. His name is Henri, Marquis de Ruchault. One of his ancestors went across to England with William the Conqueror, and in the Holy Land lie the bones of more than one Crusader who wore, in life, the armour of the De Ruchaults. Henri, the present Marquis, is owner of a magnificent *château* in Normandy, and the style wherewith he keeps up his establishment in Paris is simply superb. But I need not tell you about it. You have seen it for yourself?"

"Yes," St. Clare responded, "I am acquainted with the Marquis de Ruchault. I met him several times."

"You recollect," Marie de la Vallonière continued, "a short time ago papa and I were staying at Dieppe?"

"I remember," he answered. "But I was away myself at the time, having gone over to Ireland to look after my affairs."

"Dear Ireland!" the Comtesse replied. "How I should like to go there! But, to come to my story. One fair evening whilst we were at Dieppe, papa having gone out yachting, I, being quite alone, went out, accompanied by my favourite big dog, named Bourbon, for a ramble along the seashore. On that particular evening—it was a quiet and lovely evening—my heart was strangely at peace, as it is

sometimes, notwithstanding the rollicking gay life I lead. Having rambled about for half an hour, and having completely satisfied Bourbon's love of the sea by sending him into the water at least a dozen times after a stick, which I carried with me for that purpose, I, at length slightly fatigued, and in order to rest myself, sat down not far from the seashore, my darling protector Bourbon, settling himself straightway, as he is accustomed to do, to sleep, or rather to watch, at my feet. The waves were very calm this evening, and the sailing-ships scarcely made any way, for there was insufficient breeze up to enable them to proceed. The scene, however, all around me was beautiful, and I was extremely happy. I know not why I should be so happy at times as I am. I do not deserve it, I am so awfully and irrevocably 'worldly.' And yet, somehow, the happiness and the peace come to me. Well, I was resting myself on the beach there, and papa suddenly appeared. He had been out yachting, and had just returned. When he met me, he was on his way home to where we resided. He stopped, and took his seat beside me. He was unusually gentle and considerate towards me; indeed, he always is that, considering that I am not alone an only daughter, but also an only child. Well, he sat down beside me, and took my hand in his.

“ ‘ Marie,’ he said solemnly, ‘ I have something of

great importance to speak to you about, and please to listen to me.'

" 'Something of great importance, papa?' I exclaimed; and my heart began to beat with wonder at what he could possibly mean. For I was quite ignorant of it.

" 'Yes, dearest,' he answered. 'I am anxious to secure for you a protector—one of the right sort, my love—who will jealously guard your best interests through life, and prevent you from going astray in any direction whatsoever, if such a thing could at all be probable, which, of course, I doubt. Still, I am bound to fulfil my duties towards you as a parent, lest that anything might happen to me which at present I cannot foresee. We can never tell what is in the future; that is always a mystery, and therefore we should ever be prepared for contingencies. Do I make myself understood? You are young, you know, and I am now—alas!—growing old. Neither am I as strong as I used to be. I would guard you as long as I may, but I cannot expect to last for ever, and, moreover, I could hardly cherish you as——' he stopped, and I said:

" 'As what, papa?'

" 'As a husband would, my dearest Marie,' he replied.

" Now I knew for certain what he was going to

say ; but although my heart beat faster and faster, I maintained a calm countenance, and waited patiently, apparently unconcernedly, for papa to proceed.

“ ‘ You are aware, my child,’ he said graciously, ‘ that in what they are pleased to call the matrimonial market you are a great prize—in fact, one of the highest prizes !’

“ ‘ I suppose I am, papa,’ I remarked, ‘ but what of that ?’

“ ‘ Most undoubtedly,’ he answered, ‘ you speak right when you ask what of that ! For I know quite well you will not give yourself away to any man recklessly, because you happen to be so much sought after.’

“ ‘ Indeed, I would not, papa !’ I replied, my heart galloping pit-a-pat all the time, for I suspected what he was immediately coming to.

“ ‘ Now, Marie,’ he went on, ‘ it is most desirable you should become the wife of a man in every way suitable, by birth, by age, by fortune, by accomplishments—in a word, your own equal. Such a desirable person has, I am happy to say, been found, and he has made an offer of marriage to me for you. He is, like ourselves, of noble and ancient birth ; his estates in Normandy are close to mine——’

“ I could not tell who on earth he could possibly

be alluding to, so turning tremulously to papa, I recollect exclaiming, for I was very much surprised :

“ ‘ And what may be his name ? Am I acquainted with him ? ’

“ ‘ You have met him, Marie,’ he replied, ‘ but you have not been together frequently. He is the young Marquis Henri de Ruchault. He was at our *château* last spring, if you remember ? ’

“ ‘ Yes, I remember,’ I said, and sighed. ‘ And when am I to see him again, papa ? I should wish to meet him, and have another interview.’

“ ‘ He will be here next week,’ papa answered.

“ Well, Mr. St. Clare, the Marquis arrived at the expected time ; and, by the sea-shore at Dieppe, we idled away together two or three weeks, during which we got to know each other tolerably well. In fine, the long and the short of it is that we were at length engaged, and that is my love-story ! ”

Marie de la Vallonière sighed, and looked at St. Clare.

“ When are you to be married ? ” he asked.

“ In a few months. I begged for some time before giving up my delightful freedom, and Henri at once acceded to my request.”

“ You ought not to be sorry for giving up your freedom,” St. Clare said. “ What are half the

people we see bent on but the old pursuit of marrying, and giving in marriage!"

"Is there nothing else in life but that selfish seeking of a comfortable place?" Marie exclaimed with vehemence. "I detest those hypocrites I perceive hunting for husbands and wives. Is there no other happiness in life but that of getting what is called one's self suitably settled? Thank God! I have met with souls in whom a spirit of joy, arising from unworldliness and unselfishness, is to be found, and who derive from existence a keener pleasure than can be obtained from the mere pursuit of one's private and personal ends! Now you, Mr. St. Clare," she added quite seriously, "are one whom I really like; because you never, in my eyes, seem to be bent upon following your own interests. You always seem to be thinking of everybody but yourself. Nay, I should not have made use of that word 'seem,' for it is quite evident to me that you are thoroughly unselfish. And to be unselfish, really and truly and unmistakably, without self-seeking of any kind, is indeed a beautiful trait."

"Certainly I feel flattered!" Mr. St. Clare replied. "But you must not accuse me of unselfishness; because, if you knew me better, you would exclaim that I was exceedingly selfish."

"Well, we will not dispute the matter here. I

have my opinion, which I will maintain, and that against all odds ; and you have yours, and are perfectly entitled to have it, of course. What do you think, but that now I am going to marry, the thought has occurred to me, why don't you marry, Mr. St. Clare ? Do you mean to remain a bachelor all your days ?”

“I do not marry, because I am not in love ; and that is the best of reasons,” he answered.

“And why don't you fall in love with some one ?” she asked.

“Ah ! that is not so easy a task !” he said.

“I think that you ought to marry,” she added.

“And give up my freedom ?” he answered with a smile.

“See how I am giving it up,” she said. “Follow my example !”

“I will wait to see how happy you are sure to be in your new state first,” he replied.

“Were you ever what they call attached to a person ?” she asked.

“I have been,” he answered.

“Why did you not marry her, then ?”

“Because she preferred another to me,” he said simply, “and married him.”

“Is she alive now ?” Marie questioned.

“No. She is dead !” he replied ; and rising, walked towards the window.



He stood there a moment looking out, his eyes fixed upon the ground outside. He seemed to have forgotten entirely the stately presence of the lady of the house, Marie, Comtesse de la Vallonière. No wonder! What was she to him, alongside of the recollection of that solemn scene when he saw his Lucie—the Lucie who had been his!—lifeless upon her snowy bed—lifeless, with a smile of life nevertheless yet lingering on her pallid face!

Thinking of Lucie, thinking of Lucie, ever thinking of her, Marie de la Vallonière knew not how sore a blow she inflicted unconsciously upon St. Clare by touching thus painfully one of the strings of memory. Oh, how strong had been his silent love for the little girl whom he had seen grow up into a beautiful womanhood in India!

For years the humble, unassuming non-commissioned officer loved on, not daring by the least betrayal to reveal his love, but feeding it daily with new nourishment at the shrine of her adorable presence. Then, when the hour came to discover to her his true position—ah! but had she not nobly declared her willingness to take her chance with him as a soldier's wife before he told her who he really was? The exquisite pleasure of explaining that in marrying him she was making no sacrifice, but marrying an equal! What happy moments

had been allotted to St. Clare, in spite of his sorrows! He is able to look back upon sorrow and upon joy alike now, with countenance unchanged, for time has softened all harsh edges, and blended together colours grave and gay.

As he looks back upon Lucie, and upon those years of his past life which are chiefly associated with her, he is grateful that her presence had been near him during that period to guard him from evil and help him to walk straightly. He says to himself now often, in his maturer years, Lucie was placed in his way for that purpose, to be a guardian angel to him, and nothing else, and in the rough weavings of his disappointed dream of love he sees the golden threads.

St. Clare left the window at which he had been for a considerable time standing in meditation, and slowly returned to his vacant seat.

"What a fine garden you have out there," he said, changing the subject.

"Yes," she answered. "Mr. St. Clare," she added, "will you pardon me for asking you the question I did awhile ago? It was all on account of my wayward thoughtlessness. I am so thoughtless at times, and yet I cannot help it! I never dreamed that by asking you such a question I should have pained you as much as I did! But now that I am aware of it, I wish to repent, if

only you will let me do so. Will you please to excuse me?"

"Let us talk no more about it at present; let us change the subject," was his short reply.

The subject was forthwith changed; but the conversation which had been so brilliant, and so happy, and so well carried on between the gay Comtesse and the good-humoured Irishman, became uninteresting, and almost commonplace, and before long Augustine rose and took his leave.

Marie de la Vallonière sat in a thoughtful mood after his departure, and there was a look of sorrow in her face—of sorrow for the sorrow of Augustine St. Clare. She was fond of him, and she wished him well, and this sudden revealing of the skeleton in his cupboard filled her with real pain. What knew she of what he had seen in the world before he met her—what knew she of what he had been made to suffer? Her world had been a cloudless sphere, composed of all things bright and stainless, sinless, right and worthy living for and by. That other world, dark and of shortened hopes, wherein ignorance shut out the light from heaven, and sin lurked and did its work, to her was unknown except by name. From childhood to her womanhood no outward influence warped the straight, true growth of her inner nature—of herself; but ever daily and yearly, with deeper, infinite desire, her

soul arose, until at length it grasped and possessed what it would never lose.

Marie had been growing serious of late; in the midst of her gaiety of spirits, her profusion of merriment would subside like the sudden ceasing of some bird's flow of song. Why not be more serious now, since, in her heart, as was natural, had dawned that future life of hopes and duties which women dream of, but do not always realize? The flower-garden of her youth she had left behind her in order to go and work in the corn-fields. The great realities of existence were beginning to exert themselves through the transparent veil which was thrown over them by the frivolities of her pleasure-seeking position in life.

Riches were hers in magnificent abundance; but, ah! no, they did not generously present her with all that which she felt she wanted; with all her great heart in its little house almost madly sought for in its daily passion for the complete possession of something, of much more, a million times, than her position in the world, than her noble lineage, than her splendid Parisian mansion, than her Norman *château*, than her carriages and prancing horses—the admiration, by-the-way, of all fashionable Paris—than her theatre-goings and exquisitely-toned “receptions,” so surely and so harmoniously procured for her.

What was it which her kindly and soft woman's heart had not, and which it fain would have, even at the sacrifice of so many things people who love this world so much would much rather prefer? Others envied her because of all the good things which she enjoyed; but knew they her as she knew herself, they would think twice in the long run about her particular portion of what was called happiness. What was it which Marie thus wanted, and so bitterly missed, but that which such a vast multitude of us daily want, and oh! so bitterly miss? What was it, in a word, but the absence of some one to love?—some one to cherish more than we cherish ourselves, and our close affection for whom sanctifies and elevates our existence on earth; some one to be our dearest companion, the intimate participator in both our sorrows and our joys, whose smile would be as gold to the miser, whose tears would be but as the droppings from a cloud that hath a silver lining, dark although its appearance may seem to be to us groundlings, looking up doubtfully at it from our fleeting station here below.

Her whole gay life of pastime seemed, after all, to be but a mockery to Marie, but a stern revelation of the follies of her existence, but a proof of the inexorable realities which sooner or later must, by their own force, assert themselves. Deep in the

recesses of her heart reposed the often-inculcated truth and maxim, "Vanity of vanities:" of that saying she had been taught the explanation from time to time; and in her merriest moments—and she had often very merry ones, indeed, she was so light-hearted, like all Frenchwomen—its plaintive murmurings wailed sorrowfully in her ears, and drew a little sigh from her bosom, she knew not wherefore.

She was sad in spirit betimes, as if the fact of living were a thorn in her side, and ever the sublime music of human suffering had a sweeter sound for her than those mirth-exciting melodies which genius wakens up at intervals in order to please the taste of a capricious world. A sorrow silvered her golden life, as it were, although people were not aware of it—a sorrow because of a true love she yet had never experience of, and which, on account of its not hitherto coming to her, she was well-nigh inclined not to believe in at all.

Did her future husband, the noble Marquis, look like one who might promise to teach her what the delicious meaning of true love was? A smile of scorn and of the most supreme contempt passed over her face, so pretty and so captivating, as she for a brief moment thought of this. No! it was not by any means in the least likely that true love was personified in her future husband. The most

noble Marquis Henri de Ruchault knew what a thoroughbred horse meant, but Marie doubted much whether he knew very many things more.

Could anyone give her to really understand what it was to love in earnest? Yes, there was one; only one. The familiar name of Augustine St. Clare rose to her lips; but she turned away with an effort from thinking of him. He never looked like love in her presence; but why did the memory of him come so readily to her when she wondered about the possibility of really loving anyone? Why did she brighten up whenever he made his appearance before her? Why did she sigh when he went away? He was going back to Ireland tomorrow, and she was extremely sorry indeed. She might not meet him ever again; for such is life, like two strange ships meeting at sea, and parting to come across one another no more; or if she did meet him, it was likely that she would be no longer the well-known Marie de la Vallonière.

In her heart of hearts she asked silently a blessing from Heaven upon his journey, and along with that a blessing upon every action of his life.

Her reverie was interrupted by the sound of approaching carriage-wheels, and she quickly hastened to one of the windows, in order to observe who the fresh arrival might be. She saw the Marquis de Ruchault step quietly out of his elegant brougham.

In a minute came a knock at the drawing-room door, and she heard the servant announce, in solemn accents :

“The Marquis de Ruchault !”

Marie de la Vallonière arose at once from her seat, and crossing the room to meet the Marquis half way, held out her hand in a gracious manner. He kissed it reverently and fondly, and seated himself in an arm-chair which Marie had pointed out.

“I am delighted,” he said, “to find you look so charming, Marie ; the more so as your father, my friend the Marquis, complained that you had not been quite so well as usual. Is that so ?”

“Just a passing cold,” she answered, “and nothing more, I assure you. I caught it at the ball given last week by his Excellency the Russian Ambassador. My dear father is too anxious about me. I am an only child, and that must be the reason. I cannot explain it in any other way that I am aware of.”

“What a pet you must really be, Marie ! In fact, I know for certain that you are a great favourite,” he said gallantly, “not alone with the Marquis your father, but also with very many others as well !” And with a polite inclination of the head he laid his hand on his heart.

Marie smiled her earnest thanks, and a blush, just the faintest, slightly tinged her beaming counte-



nance. Mentally, as she gazed upon the Marquis de Ruchault, and answered his questions rather than took a leading part in the conversation herself, she began comparing him with the man who a short time ago left her presence.

St. Clare was very handsome; Marie had come to a decided conclusion about that long ago. The Marquis also was good looking. But there was this difference between them, the expression of their faces was totally unlike. St. Clare's was open candid, simple, and sincere; no lurking malice, expressed or undefined, dwelt in his countenance; his clear eyes looked at you unsuspectingly, and in his presence you were possessed with a pleasurable sense both of confidence and security, the cause of which you could not tell, only that you were compelled to like him thereby and to trust him, and always to be sorry if he should go away. Now, you do not feel this with others; what a relief you instantly experience when they take their departure and vanish; it seems as if a pestilence were gone, and the bosom heaves more freely.

The face of the Marquis de Ruchault was exquisitely refined and handsome, but the expression was so sinister when its owner was off his guard, that instinctively you turned away from it filled with momentary dread. Not all the wealth, or titles, or magnificence of the world, could make

some people like that man, whilst there were many who loved to have him at their tables and in their country houses, not so much because he was a Marquis as because they believed him to be one of their own—one of a bad lot, if only they could be seen as they are.

The Marquis was younger than St. Clare by several years; but whether from drink, or from the nature of his physique, he looked ten years older than Augustine. He wore a dark brown moustache and beard, neither of which was sufficiently heavy to conceal the beauty of his mouth or the perfect shape of his chin. But there was an aged, settled, careworn air of fatigue about his countenance that hardly became a face which yet had not counted six-and-twenty years. It was a queer look, cynical, scorning, experienced, sceptical; but yet there were times when the grand old noble Crusader blood in his veins would flash up into his face and set it on fire with great thoughts from which generous deeds would spring.

Reared with consummate care by a fond mother, and seldom if ever brought into direct contact with the middle-classes of society, there had been preserved about him, even after going through the ordeal of a young manhood spent in Paris, an uncontamination which made him precious, and most of all to his watchful mother, who lived for him

more than for others, and far more than for herself; for Henri de Ruchault was, like his betrothed, Marie de la Vallonière, an only child. Henri's character was set in the mould of goodness, and had his mother's influence more fully, or the influence of sisters, or of a good wife, been permitted to shape it, much might be hoped from him of a future career, not on the turf or at the gambling-tables, but on his ancestral estate and in the Senate of his native land, where his noble and good qualities would have a favourable sphere for their development, and the volatile French nation at large, it may be, would be materially and permanently benefited thereby, owing to his political and patriotic exertions on its behalf.

But if it so happened that the Marquis de Ruchault was thus blessed with good inclinations, which needed only direction into the proper channels in order to enable them to bear abundantly the fruit that was expected from them, why did people involuntarily turn away, as it were, from the sinister expression so often visible in his face? Why was that bad expression there if he was not bad? There was a time when that expression was not there; when Henri's face was as open and as mild as St. Clare's; when Henri used to kneel by his mother's knee, and when, an older lad, he wandered on foot, or on his pony, through the Norman woods at

home, and shot the wild fowl in the marshes, and fished the noisy trout streams in search of perch, or roach, or a salmon peal. But Paris undid him utterly when he came to that bright city, to spend with companions of his own age and the same genial pursuits his young and developing manhood. Not that he was led into vice; for that would be impossible, from the nature of his reliant disposition; no: vice for him had no attractions, for he hated her vehemently and with all his strength; not that he flung his money to the four winds of Heaven, for he was naturally prudent; not that, in fine, he followed in the usual way the shallow stream of callous young men who are going headlong to that unsacred place which is paved with good intentions. It was simply that he went astray after the more refined and higher allurements of the intellect, and lost himself in philosophical speculations, until at last he became an atheist, and wrote a book against the Saviour of the world, which he published anonymously.

Wrote a book against the Saviour of the world! Of all men who tread this earth and glory in the pride of life and of intellect, he had the least right to produce such a book. He, who from his mother learned the story of the Cross daily, hourly, momentarily; for she was like Her who stood on Calvary, true to Her Lord and Master, faithful in

all storms, believing and following at times and in places when to believe and to follow was thought to be the height of foolishness. To her heart there was dear one mighty wish, which seemed to absorb into itself her patient yet joyous life, namely, that her son should be, aye, even as Saint John, amongst the nearest and dearest to Him to whom all men are specially dear. And oh! how it racked and tore her tender bosom to watch her beloved Henri drifting away out to sea—out into the region of tempests, without a compass to guide him in his bewilderment, without food to support him, and without shelter of any kind whatsoever!

Standing herself upon the secure shore where her firm faith brought sunshine and peace, in spite of terrible trials with which it had to contend, with what straining and tearful eyes she watched her wavering son, and wondered whether he would come back again. Ah! how sadly she feared he would not return, unless some stern blow of misfortune should bring him home to his mother's heart once more, and to that God whom he had forgotten. There was one keen anguish at least spared her; she knew not Henri was the author of that blasphemous book, which had created such a sensation amongst the literary public and well-known deep thinkers. May she never know it! for the sword of sorrow piercing her bosom might be her death-blow then.

It cannot be said that the young Marquis de Ruchault made himself supremely happy and satisfied by writing that book. In fact, although the book, from its nature, had a most extensive circulation, and was translated into German and into English, Henri hardly felt proud of it after the first flush of pleasure at its success with the publishers had subsided. He doubted the book himself from first to last, and was half inclined to despise it, although it was his own fertile brain which had woven it so adroitly together. Yet, although it caused him some pangs of uneasiness and terror for the time being, nevertheless it did not make him the less an atheist in every sense and meaning of the name; on his knees before the civilization of the wonderful nineteenth century, he glanced with mockery and with all the sarcasm of a born Frenchman both at churches and chapels, and at all who wore the black coat of religion outwardly. There were moments when the exulting cry, "There is no God!" rising from the depths of his heart, sent its own dreary echo back within him, and made his rebellious spirit shrink with an undefined fear. Then he would believe for awhile in a God, but not in Christianity, until the pride of intellect waxed robust within him once more and gave him courage to scoff and to sneer.

Of late his peculiar disposition of mind brought

him a great deal of secret trouble and annoyance, because of his engagement with the pretty Comtesse de la Vallonière. How was he to reveal to her his disbelief? how was he to go through the ceremony of marriage without revealing it to her? He was afraid that in the long run their betrothal must come to an end, for either he must change and become a Christian, or else act the hypocrite and go through the important ceremony of marriage with a lie on his lips. The latter he could not do. The blood of the De Ruchaults flowing in his veins recoiled from the idea of committing a falsehood, or of acting the dissembler for any motive whatsoever, were it even a matter of life or death. Would Marie marry him when he told her what he really was? Certainly not. How could she? he reasoned truly to himself.

To-day, however, conversing so pleasantly with Marie, the sweet-faced Comtesse had not a shadow of a suspicion of that which was so persistently troubling the Marquis's mind. He was calm and apparently happy in her presence, and all attention to every little word which escaped from her ruby lips.

"I have had a special reason for coming to-day in order to see you, Marie," he said.

"You have a special reason? What may it be, Henri?"

"I have at last procured the horse which you expressed a wish to have, Marie."

She clasped her hands with childlike delight. "How kind of you, Henri!" she exclaimed. "Where is the horse? When shall I see him? I should like so much to see him! I do love horses so! The dear creatures!"

"Yes, Marie—on one point you and I are sure to agree—we are both so fond of horses and dogs."

"Henri, when may I see the horse?" she questioned eagerly.

"Come out," he answered, "down through the garden to the gate, where my brougham is waiting for me, and I will show him to you; or if you prefer it, Marie, I will go down and have him brought round by the groom to the hall-door."

"No, Henri. I would rather go with you. Wait a moment!"

She tripped out of the room, and returned in a short time with a dainty hat of the newest shape and pattern, which was perched sideways on her head, and a rich red shawl which was flung with a careless, and yet a studied grace, around her well-developed shoulders.

The Marquis, as he gazed at her, could not disguise his extreme admiration for her; he appeared to idolize her; and her dark and sparkling eyes brightened with satisfaction, and a most beautiful



crimson for an instant suffused her face, when she observed secretly how thoroughly pleased he was with her. He offered his arm politely, and they left the house together, proceeding down the garden and towards the gate, which was partly open, so that they could pass out if they pleased and join the highroad, where foot wayfarers were continually travelling to and fro. This garden lay immediately in front of and around the house, and was carefully cultivated, for Marie's father spared no pains whatsoever, or money, in having both it and everything else belonging to his town mansion such as would reflect credit upon himself, and be a source perhaps, too, of constant pleasure to his numerous guests and distinguished visitors.

At one extremity of the garden, a place which was right opposite to the chief hall-door, there was an iron gate, lofty, stately, and strong, the filigree work with which it was adorned being so very closely interwoven as to shut out completely from the view the entire of the interior, where stood in a kind of lonely grandeur of its own the house, surrounded on every side by the well-cultivated garden. All around the garden itself, and upon both sides of this tall gate as well, there was an extremely high wall, against which were trained, in luxuriant abundance, rare fruit-trees of various kinds from warmer climates—sunny Italy, and the

North of Africa—amongst which were conspicuous the familiar clusterings of the native vine, already weighed down with heavy bunches of both green and purple grapes, that seemed, by their luscious beauty, to invite one to come and pluck them, and partake of their voluptuous flavour. On each side of the house there grew a mulberry-tree, and around the porch, leading into the hall, there was a luxurious swarm of the handsomest white roses, which appeared to laugh in the redolent sunshine that loved to play upon them in alternate intervals.

It was indeed a pretty spot to spend the spring and the summer of each succeeding year in ; there was such a vast and careless profusion of nature's best gifts around the place, that one who happened to be dwelling for any time in their midst must needs think of the Paradise which our first parents lost by their sinful fall, and sigh as he remembers how terribly full to-day, and every day, this world—this earth of ours—is of desolate places.

Outside the iron gate on one side, and away from the public road, there was a fine grassy lawn, which likewise surrounded the house for about three quarters of the way, but not more extensively than that, and this was securely protected by the erection of another high wall, so that the town mansion of the Most Noble the Marquis de Sevrey was doubly

protected both from wind and weather and from public observation—a thing, by the way, the Marquis himself always shunned; he was accustomed to get so much of it, and to be, as it were, the cynosure for every eye.

Marie, meanwhile, leaning on her lover's arm, and chatting to him in her gayest mood, for she was rendered very radiant and happy about the horse, proceeded down the garden and towards the gate. Henri intended to give to her an agreeable surprise; and, for that purpose, when they had passed the gate, and reached his carriage, which was waiting there for them for some time, she only beheld the usual thoroughbred animal which drew the brougham belonging to her intended; but there was no sign whatsoever of the animal which she had come out expressly to see. Her countenance betrayed her disappointment, and the Marquis smiled.

“I do not see the horse,” she said. “Where is he, Henri? Surely it is not that animal there! That is not a lady's horse!”

The Marquis called out “Guillaume!” Next instant a groom, dressed in dark green livery, came round the corner of the garden-wall, leading by the head an exquisitely shaped horse, black as ebony, which gleamed at turns, and in every movement displayed the most perfect grace and symmetry of

limb. As he walked he put his foot down timidly on the ground, and then planted it firmly as if fully conscious of his power and fleetness. He was worthy the brush of Rosa Bonheur! Marie, when she beheld him, almost cried for very joy.

“Is it possible that this magnificent horse is a present for me?” she exclaimed.

“Of course, Marie. He was obtained for you—and for you alone, dear,” the Marquis replied.

She caught hold of both his hands in her gratitude.

“Oh, Henri!” she murmured. “How can I ever sufficiently thank you for this? I never can thank you as adequately as I ought! But I would if I could.”

“To see you so well pleased, Marie,” he said in reply, “is quite thanks enough for me at any time, I can assure you.”

“But where on earth, Henri, did you succeed in procuring for me this beautiful animal? Oh! what a sensation,” she added with joy, “he will cause everywhere in Paris when I go out riding!”

“Yes; I should think so,” the Marquis said, at the same time lifting his hat to her; he was always polite and complimentary. “But it is you, Marie, who will cause the sensation in reality, and not the horse yonder. There are plenty of horses, the

property of friends of mine here in Paris, quite as handsome as he is."

She gazed at him archly, for she liked to be spoken to thus.

"You have not yet told me, Henri, where you got the horse. I suppose that you purchased him somewhere? Was it in Paris?"

"No."

"Was it in Normandy?"

"No."

"Was it in France?"

"Not in France."

"In England?"

"You have not guessed rightly yet, Marie; try again," he said with a smile.

"Oh! you got him in Russia, or in Ireland?"

"No."

"Then where?" she asked, wondering whence the horse came from.

"I sent expressly to the East for him, when I heard you say you would like so much to have a real Arab horse fresh from the East, and trained in the East. So I gave one of my most trustworthy servants, who is a first-rate judge of horses, *carte-blanche* to go to the East, and procure the best Arab which he could find, or that money could purchase. I think, for my own part, he performed his business remarkably well! At least, I have

been perfectly satisfied, and I hope you, too, will be also, Marie."

"Satisfied, Henri!" she exclaimed. "Why, I feel that I am in the seventh heaven about it, or, at least, I shall be so when I get up on the horse's back, which I am very anxious to do without delay!"

"You may do so whenever it suits you. At all events, if he has any defects, and I can see none, although I have a very critical eye to a horse's blemishes, he has at all events one supreme and invaluable quality at least to recommend him to any lady; he is a genuine Arab, one of the highest breeding in the East, where I sent my servant for him, as I have told you."

"How kind of you to procure me this precious horse, Henri!" she said enthusiastically.

Familiar as she was with gifts both rich and rare, the possession of this splendid steed almost turned her head—only it would be very hard to do that, for she belonged to that station in life, and that peculiar sphere of society, where it is almost impossible for anyone to be surprised at anything—where one is taught from childhood to take everything with *sang froid*.

"Let me show you how well trained he is," the Marquis said. "Guillaume," he added, addressing the groom, "give me the reins, if you please."

The servant did exactly as he was desired, and the Marquis said to the horse :

“Charlie, lie down !”

The horse prostrated himself on the greensward of the lawn, whither his master had previously led him in from off the high road, and the noble steed, as he lay at full length, allowed Marie de la Vallonière to kiss him on the forehead and neck. She was mute with wonder and joy.

“When may I bring him out, Henri ?” she asked. “I want all Paris to see and admire my lovely treasure.”

“Charlie is all your own,” the Marquis answered ; “you must take care of him henceforth. Bring him out when and where you like.”

“Ah ! I would like you to be with me, that I may tell all my friends about your princely present, and show him to them. Will you come out to ride to-morrow ?”

“Certainly,” he replied. “At what hour will you be ready, Marie ?”

“We will say half-past three o’clock, if that hour will suit you. Or an hour later, if you prefer it, as I shall be idle then.”

“Half-past three o’clock is a very good hour ; I shall be disengaged too. It will exactly suit me.”

“Oh ! how I do hope that it will be fine enough for a ride,” she further exclaimed after a pause,

looking up at the same time rather uneasily at the sky, which happened to be lowering and dark, as if it was going to rain.

“You need have no fears of that,” he said; “about the weather I am a bit of a prophet; at least, I flatter myself as such. I am sure that it will be fine. But wet or fine, I will come.”

She looked into his face gratefully. The Marquis, promising to be with Marie at the appointed hour on the morrow, soon after took his departure, carrying away with him the sincere and overwhelming thanks of his charming betrothed. He was happy, and supremely repaid whatever trouble he had incurred in procuring the horse by the unaffected joy which was displayed by the Comtesse de la Vallonière. He did not wish to disturb that joy any longer that day. Let her be in sympathy with the bright sunshine—he would wish her ever to be so. Though the clouds were upon his path, upon hers he would not have them frown.

Like the little child dependent so entirely upon its mother, Marie—he knew it well—was, like his own mother, strong and implicit in her faith. Oh that like them he could be as a little child in that regard! But that, alas, with him was now entirely impossible; he had gone by far too far the other way to dare or to care to turn back and to retrace, so to speak, his erring steps. How happy he would



feel within himself, if he thought that it might be so. No more to doubt, or to be torn by misgivings. No more to be without a trusty one on the right hand to guide him and to reassure him when he faltered. Where was he? What was he? The Marquis de Ruchault, you say in the next breath. Fling the bauble of a title aside! What right has it to protrude its false assumption of superiority in the mighty presence of his manhood? He is what he is! A being, and what else? Ah! that he could say that he was something more, that he has a soul! But he cannot. With a sigh, he envies Marie the possession of her innocent happiness in caressing and possessing Arab "Charlie," and leaving her to all her unrestrained joy and gratitude, he steps into his brougham, and drives rapidly into the crowded thoroughfares of sparkling and effervescent Paris.

## CHAPTER XI.

MARIE spent the rest of the day alone, except for an hour or two which she devoted partly to her favourite milliner, and partly to the society of a particular friend whom she went immediately to inform about the gift which she had just received of the beautiful Arab horse. She found the day pass slowly, and thought that the morrow would never come quick enough.

One great source of trouble perplexed her; of all her riding-habits she could not decide upon which to wear on this occasion. There was a dark grey one—well, she at once rejected that—it was too solemn in appearance for such an event; there was also a dark blue habit, and another blue not quite so dark. These, too, were cast aside. There were several shades of brown; at another time she would have liked these well enough, but to-day, glancing at them, she shrugged her shoulders disapprovingly, and passed them by.

At length she chose, after much consideration,

a riding-habit which perfectly pleased her. It was of an exquisite claret colour, with a depth of richness in its hue upon which the eye might rest with pleasure. She wore a hat of the same luxurious colour, from one side of which sprang provokingly a pretty snow-white feather. Her gloves were of a delicate creamy tint, which contrasted well with the little gold-headed riding-whip which Marie carried in her hand. That riding-whip was remarkable. From the centre of its golden head sparkled a diamond, whose rays gleamed in the sunshine with a sudden brilliant radiance which caught the eye. That riding-whip was an expression of Marie herself. Like it, she was brilliant and rare, unique and excellent in her way; remarkable amongst others for something which they had not, and which she had, and which placed her far beyond them.

Marie, like her diamond, could shine, and she loved to shine; to do so was health to her. At the same time she wished to be, and no one could deny but that she was right, in every way a Comtesse, it is true; but much more the woman than the Comtesse—the woman of pure aspirations and of generous thoughts, to whom existence was nothing if it was not free from everything which could contaminate its precious life-blood. Keen-eyed as the eagle, and gentle as the dove, Marie de la Vallonière,

for all her gaiety, her cheerfulness, and nonchalance, and (to the world) worldliness, was humble, and holy, and vigilant, steering her course successfully, and in part unaided—for no mother was at her right hand in the hour of trouble and need—along the narrow path through, and apart from, the highways and byeways which, like a net-work, cover this world and bewilder the honest-minded traveller journeying home. Almost from her cradle to her present age the invisible world was the one thought reigning in the bosom of Marie, although she appeared to enjoy the world here so enthusiastically, and which, in very truth, she did enjoy with a delight of her own many would envy her the possession of. Hers was never a sombre life, and hardly ever could be such, no matter what trials and troubles she might hereafter be compelled to endure. Even at its brightest, behind the glow of full light shining down upon her there lay still another sunshine—the result of her gentleness, of her purity, of her truth—a sunshine without wind or baneful surroundings—a sunshine all calm, all sublime peace, all sweet loveliness, wherein Marie basked, yielding up the whole current of her existence to its influence, nourishing her life in its warmth and light, and therein learning to wait for everything that was to come, and be every day patient. Marie was too prudent to have one serious

wish of her own. She was more than prudent—*macula non est in te* was written in her face. It would be no wonder if objects in the world looked more beautiful in her eyes than in another's.

The system of order given by God to this earth is beautiful, and Marie was at one with that system. All things that were not one with it to her gaze had no permanent attraction. Her instincts, her experience, her knowledge of right and wrong, of truth and of error, the gift of understanding that was within her, enabled her to reject all spurious imitations of the good and excellent things in life. Her loveliness of countenance and of form she knew could not last; but looking half-mockingly at herself in the glass, she would come to a determined resolution to make the most of her personal beauty while it lasted—not from vanity, but from sheer delight—from a luxurious revelling in the joy of making herself a pleasing object to others, and of contributing, as far as lay in her power, by word, by look, by gesture, by personal appearance, to the happiness, present and future, of those amongst whom her lot was thrown. Had she been but a peasant girl, instead of a Comtesse, it would have been all the same; she would have gone on trying, without looking for the least return from them, to afford pleasure to those whom she knew and associated with.

The nobly-born Marie, who was the central figure of attraction by universal consent in the *salons* of the most illustrious in the land, would have been just as much the object of adoration were she but the belle of the village at some country dance. Because Marie was essentially a diffuser of peace and goodwill, and given to please everybody. She used to think sometimes, what would she do when she would be no longer handsome?—would people appreciate her as they did to-day? The thought did not trouble her much; for she was firm in the belief that when, in years to come, her beauty passed away, there yet would remain what time could not destroy, but surely would increase—what depended not on the breath of public favour, or the capricious appreciation of friends, namely, her supreme happiness as a good and right-minded woman. Let wearying sickness blight her form, let a load of years whiten her glorious hair, in spite of sickness, and in spite of years, and in spite of all clouds, her hope in an exaltation eternal was even now in her path ascending like the sure rising of the morning sun; therefore was Marie gay, shedding her brightness of soul on everyone; therefore was she strong and well, and fit to live.

Beautiful and accomplished as she was, it was not for that reason people loved her as they did. It

was that Marie possessed the secret of making people happy, of causing them to feel delightfully at home, and of at the same time unconsciously reminding them that this earth was not their home, and could not be. In her riding-habit to-day, Marie looked exquisite and uncommon without being too remarkable. There was a subdued tone in her appearance which set off rather than concealed the richness and simple excellence of her style of dress. The claret-coloured hue of her hat and riding-habit became her clear complexion and blue eyes—eyes whose eloquent lights and shadows were ever changing as thought flashed after thought, as sunshine and cloud varied the light of the day. The feather of snowy whiteness she wore had likewise its own peculiar attraction, and marked more definitely the deep rich hue of the riding-habit.

“Does he not look pretty, Henri?” she asked, turning her eyes full of gratitude towards him.

She was stroking down the horse’s mane meanwhile, and admiring the beautiful lines of symmetry which the animal betrayed.

“Yes, he has a pretty appearance,” he answered, smiling with undisguised pleasure.

“How brilliant his appearance is as you call it!” she exclaimed. “How beautiful he steps, as if keeping time to some music of his own! See his skin, how glossy and sleek it is! His mane flows

down over his arched neck like a perpetual stream of water. Do you admire my simile? I don't think the comparison is a very good illustration; but no matter. Henri, I don't believe there is an animal in the world more lovely or more endearing than a highly-bred horse. I went out to see him in his stable last evening after you left, and brought some bread with me. He eat it so willingly that I threw my arms round his neck and gave him a kiss."

"You do not know his new name yet," the Marquis said. "I forgot to tell you last night that he is to be called for the future Talisman. And I think it a very pleasing name."

"A name that suits him well," she replied.

The Marquis de Ruchault went over to Talisman, and, first fondling him, held the stirrup with one hand, and with the other assisted Marie to mount. She glided lightly into the saddle and settled herself gracefully therein; the diamond sparkling brilliantly in the sunlight all the while.

The birds sang merrily in the neighbouring trees; the flowers in the garden bowed their variegated forms in salutation to the friendly breeze. Bourbon, the big dog—Marie's favourite—reclining on the doorstep, gazed contentedly at his mistress; the sky was blue and cloudless; and as if far away and separated from Marie, the hum of industry and busy



life of pleasure and pain in Paris fell softly on the ear. The day was like a Sunday, peaceful and quiet and unworldly.

Marie rode down towards the gate and waited laughingly there for her lover, Henri. Ah! how happy she tough to have been, and was! The Marquis mounted his own splendid steed and followed Marie. The groom, with Bourbon at his heels, hastened to open the gate for them. Then they rode away, as handsome a couple as Paris could boast of, and the groom and Bourbon stared after them approvingly, for indeed they were a very great object of admiration, especially the horses, which he had brushed down and groomed with unusual care before bringing them out to be exercised by his master and the lady, who was in a short time, as he had heard, to be his future young mistress, the Marquise de Ruchault.

“Bless her heart, the sweet young lady; how well she sits upon a horse!” said the groom, who was a shrewd observer; “she is a thousand times too good any day for that sporting and gambling chap, the Marquis! Though I ought not to say that, seeing that he is my master and pays me well. But come along, Bourbon,” he added, addressing the dog, “we have something else to do besides looking after them.”

The groom with his canine friend disappeared

from view, and went back to the stables. As for the other two, the Marquis and his fair equestrian, they rode slowly in the direction of the Champs Elysées; and having arrived therein, proceeded on towards the Arc de Triomphe. Little they reckoned, as they passed chatting and smiling under it, that before very long the conquering warriors of Prussia would gaze up at it and dishonour it by their victorious presence. Many a light-hearted soldier of France and swarthy Zouave, who looked after Marie and thanked Heaven that she was so beautiful, are now slumbering in their unknown graves upon some battle-field—at Metz, at Strasbourg, at Woerth, at Sedan, at Gravelotte. Well for them their gallant hearts have given up beating, and that they did not live to see the Germans thronging the streets of their beloved Paris; or, worse still, their Archbishop in prison and the gentlemen of the Commune supreme.

Marie and the Marquis de Ruchault had scarcely emerged from beneath the Arc de Triomphe, when, coming up towards them from the Avenue de l'Imperatrice appeared a stately carriage drawn by four horses. Therein sat Napoleon the Third and his august spouse, the Empress Eugénie. It was a charming vision to come so suddenly before the eye! The magnificent equipage, the four splendid black horses, the gaudy livery of the attendants,

the beloved and, at that time, most popular Empress, and by her side the sphinx-like and imperturbable ruler of all France! People were, as was their wont, touching their hats in all directions as the carriage glided along. The Empress recognised at once Marie de la Vallonière and smiled graciously. Marie's bosom heaved and her face flushed with the excitement of the moment, and the Marquis, for some unknown reason, felt proud of his future bride. As for Marie, she felt proud of her Arab.

They proceeded down the Avenue de l'Impératrice, meeting every minute the familiar face of a friend. Behind them arose in its grandeur that Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile. How soon its manifold glories were to be stained by the flash of Prussian lances and sabres in the sunlight!

Marie enjoyed her ride immensely. Everyone was admiring both herself and also her handsome horse. Here a count and there a duke spoke to a friend in praise of her beauty and in praise likewise of the beauty of her steed, and exclaimed involuntarily, "What a lucky fellow the Marquis de Ruchault is, to be going to be married to such an excellent girl!" Again, some celebrated painter or novelist or keen critic beheld her and smiled with the satisfaction felt by the man of Art and of Letters, skilled in the lines of beauty, in the study

of character, in the detection and the delineation of qualities of greatness, of genius, of nobility of soul. Marie, by her appearance to-day, did justice to the distinguished race from which she sprang, and made the bosoms heave with delight of those who hold fast patiently to the old traditions of the France of St. Louis.

They proceeded on their way, and in about half an hour met Agnes and Jack Audley driving in a hired vehicle. Marie bowed and smiled as she only did to her intimate friends. They did not stop to speak; and, as they were going different ways, in a short time Agnes and her brother were completely hidden from view. Marie's companion looked after them curiously.

"That is Jack Audley, an English friend of mine—an English Captain, by the way," said the Marquis. "I know him well by reputation, and likewise personally, having had the honour of being introduced to him by a mutual acquaintance, also an Englishman. I know him, indeed, very well. I met this Captain, or officer, or whatever he is in the English army, often in Paris, and I have made some long bets with him at various horse-races. He is a great frequenter of the saloons of Paris. He can ride a race with any man in Paris, too! But who is the lady with him?"

"His sister," Marie replied; "and a great friend of mine."

"I like her face," answered the Marquis. "It is a very good face."

"It betrays what she really is, Henri," the Comtesse said, seriously and affectionately, for she loved Agnes from her heart. "You have no idea of her winning ways, and of what a fund of goodness lies hidden beneath her quiet demeanour. She is unobtrusive as any girl need be, and as merry as yonder children on one of their *fête* days."

Marie gave an involuntary sigh as she observed how happy the countenances of those children were. It needed not the possession of an Arab steed to make them happy, nor the society of a Marquis, nor the prospect of being one day either a Marquis or a Marquise. No worldly strain marred as yet the peace of their little innocent souls.

On their subsequent return homewards, Marie declared that she never had had the opportunity of being so happy; that she never derived so much enjoyment from any of her equestrian expeditions before, and the Marquis was thoroughly in earnest when he replied :

"I, dear Marie, cannot soon forget to-day. It shall always be to me one of the brightest of my existence. And I have had many of them."

Henri stayed for dinner; there was no one present but Marie's father, the Marquis de Sevrey, Henri, and Marie herself. It was a quiet homely dinner; for Henri was now almost considered to be one of the family, and a chair was placed at the table for him daily, whether he came or no. After dinner Marie's lover lit a cigarette, which he had previously made by means of a small machine or instrument, which he carried in his pocket for rolling up cigarettes, and having first enjoyed a few whiffs at it in the dining-room, he accompanied her at her own request into the adjoining garden.

It was one of those placid evenings in the mid-summer-time when the lingering daylight stretches itself so long and quietly and unobserved into those late hours which, at other times, belong almost entirely to the night. A spirit of peaceful rest brooded in the air and in the breasts of Marie and Henri, and it communicated, as it were, its influence to them.

Henri was, he felt, at peace, because he was by her sheltering side, and because she was so good, and so true, and so affectionate towards him. At times, when thus with her, a pang of regret would pain him that he should have written that book which it was so wrong to write. But what was the use of repenting of that now, or of confessing

it either? He felt ashamed of it in her presence—just as he used to feel abashed whenever he thought of the great evil which he might have effected upon young minds, and upon the rising generation above all, by the production of such a book. But he wished to be a great man amongst the publishers, and a favourite with the ladies; and he thought that he could win both fame and notoriety in that way, and he certainly did to the full of his heart's content. He was a regular lion and hero in the saloons of Paris and Berlin, and more than a nine-days' wonder. He was sought for at the gambling-tables of Homburg, and later on at Monaco, when the gambling-tables were removed there. He was the object of admiration to savants, and also to literary men of all creeds and classes. And his betrothed did not approve of him the less for all that. For both she and his mother as well had heard of his literary fame; and, being women, they thought it to be a very good thing for him, indeed, in many respects, as, of course, it was, and a great advantage to them in many ways, as they both moved through society, and courted friendships and acquaintances, and because the honour that was conferred upon him at Universities and other places was in a secondary degree likewise reflected upon them. In truth, Marie was very fond of her hard-working author,

Henri, and very proud of him; and she did not think the less of him for going into such work because he was a real Marquis, born and bred.

“Do you know where I was the other night, Marie?” he said, as he was walking with her in the garden. “I was at the Odéon Theatre, and they have made a singular discovery there. From time to time hammering used to be heard apparently arising from the roof of the theatre. The other night the new manager was annoyed by the noise during the performance of the play called ‘Britannicus’ which I went to see. The manager went to see what was the matter.

“The scene-shifter of whom he asked this question came up to him and said :

“‘It is the cobbler.’

“The manager, with whom was the stage-manager, looked quite surprised. ‘What cobbler do you speak of?’ they both asked in one breath.

“The door-keeper of the theatre was immediately sent for to solve the mystery, and he answered, ‘Yes, messieurs, it is the cobbler.’

“‘What cobbler do you mean?’ But the stupid *concierge* could not inform them any more upon the subject. The noise of the hammering still continuing, the manager, guided thereby, ascended to a small room or garret, wherein there was a skylight leading out on to the roof of the theatre. In this store-



room, or whatever it was, there was, indeed, a cobbler, working merrily, and singing all the time to himself.

“‘ Who may you be, pray sir ?’ demanded the manager of the theatre in an angry voice, and in a threatening attitude.

“‘ I am the cobbler.’

“‘ Again !’

“ The cobbler was invited to get out of the room as quick as he could, and not to be disturbing the theatre and theatre-goers any more. The question was, how he got to be in that room for so long a time and not to be disturbed ever by any one whatsoever. For everybody knew him by sight ; his appearance in his working-dress was well known to everyone in the theatre, and even also to the little boys running about in the street outside, who used to hoot him and to annoy him and to deride him as young urchins will do. At length, one of the oldest actors in the theatre traced the eccentric-looking cobbler back so far as the days of George Sand’s piece, ‘ Les Beaux Messieurs du Bois-doré.’ A great number of extra boots were required for the fulfilment of the various parts in this popular piece. At the dress rehearsal which previously took place amongst the actors themselves, most of the boots which were supplied to the actors were found to be too narrow and too small. The stage-manager, on

whom the duty devolved, gave directions that the nearest cobbler should be straightway sent for without delay, which was done, and, in order to stop the noise of his hammering, which was interrupting the dress rehearsal, he had been sent upstairs away to this small room, in order to enlarge the boot there at his leisure, and in a less demonstrative manner. He had remained there for twenty years, like a second Simon Stylites on the top of the pillar. The people in the theatre had been used to observe him with his leather apron; but as he interfered with nobody, nobody interrupted him or sought to remove him from the residence which he took up there in the garret of the Odéon Theatre. Is not that a singular anecdote, Marie?" he said. "How very curious the cobbler never was found out."

"Very," she replied.

" ' O Sun (not this strong fool whom thou, Sir Knave,  
Hast overthrown through mere unhappiness),  
O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or pain,  
O Moon, that layest all to sleep again,  
Shine sweetly : twice my love hath smiled on me.' "

So thought to-night Henri, with the poet, as the moon was shining on him and on his future bride as they walked side by side and arm-in-arm down the garden, amongst the flowers and trees and shrubbery. He did not feel abashed when Marie was smiling into his face, although because of that

atheistical book he wrote he used to feel abashed on account of it when his darling mother was smiling into his face, ignorant of his authorship, until she happened to find it out for herself and awoke one morning to find her son famous. With Marie he felt somehow secure ; apart from her once more, he was without an anchor, drifting he knew not where. As the Marquis was afraid Marie would catch cold they did not sit down, as usual, upon one of the garden-seats, but walked leisurely amongst the flowers. Peaceful and happy though Marie was this evening, there was something in the Marquis which filled her with an apprehension which she tried to shake off, but which could not be shaken off. He distressed her ; though he was so elegant, so nice, so exquisite in every possible way, and above all so extremely desirable for her to have and to be proud of, and to lean upon as her future husband, supporter, and lawful protector.

They would make a very happy couple together, as everyone thought, and as they likewise believed themselves. And if she was sometimes distressed in his society, and if she could not account for it, she knew that she must only put up with it as well as she could, and not be down-hearted nor give way to false feelings of dejection or disappointment ; for she had been taught otherwise from her earliest years, and knew as well as others did how to profit

by her experiences. Slight the torture was, yet she felt it perpetually when he was by, or when she was thinking of him, which was very often. To-day she was very happy with him indeed, and the joyousness of riding a beautiful horse and encountering the charming gaze of troops of friends made her partly forget this strange feeling of fear which Henri had occasioned. She fain would cast it away from her as nothing but a foolish delusion. They walked round the garden several times, and then, when night had finally set in, for it was only the twilight before that, they returned to the drawing-room, where Marie seating herself at the piano, played for her lover some exquisite music. She was a good musician, had been taught by the best masters of that instrument, and she was one who had been accustomed, from her high social position in Parisian circles, to hear nothing but excellent music—the music of Flotow, of Gounod and of Wagner. The Marquis, too, possessed a cultivated taste and greatly appreciated Marie's playing.

When the time at length arrived for the Marquis de Ruchault to take his departure, he was downright sorry, and said he never felt the moments fly so quickly before. But Marie was glad when he was gone. That night, alone in her room, she began to weep at the idea of losing the happy life she led as Marie de la Vallonière. She would not have shed

such tears had she really loved Henri de Ruchault. She loved him not, but then it was most important that she should marry him ; at least her father said so, and she supposed, of course, that he was right, for had he not experience of what was real and what was unreal in the world ? And out of her tears came prayers from her large heart. Prayers for herself, for her father, for Henri, for Agnes, aye, even for Jack Audley, whom she had seen with Agnes to-day, and, though last mentioned here, still first above others in her estimation at all times, for him, who never unpleasantly pained her or caused her fear, for him who had given her most joy in her short but pleasant life—for Augustine St. Clare !

And is it then true that he is first above all others in her thoughts ? Oh ! why did she ever meet him, that he should disturb her peace and yet give her so much peace ? What was there about him, in him, belonging to him, which aroused her sympathies in his regard so readily and so delightfully ? Even the very recollection of him gave her a new lease of life, and dispelled all feelings of anxiety. Not that Marie was often unnecessarily anxious. Oh no ! this lily of the field had no self-created cares ; but there were times when the thorn of having to live wounded her acutely, when her exiled spirit in this vale of tears moaned for its absent country. She could have few causes of

anxiety, for to her this world was no battle-field. It dared not be! She had trampled it under her feet long ago. There was nothing of the world in her now. Had there been, she could not be the gay and joyous and wholesome being that she was: an object worthy of veneration and of love for her own dear sake, and not because she happened to have been born a Comtesse.

Marie stood at the hall-door the following morning conversing with the Marquis de Ruchault. They went out to ride again to-day. She lifted the hand which carried the riding-whip to her hat to shade her eyes the better from the sun, in order to watch the magnificent Arab, which just at that moment appeared in sight, led by her groom round from where the stables of the Marquis de Sevrey were situated. The act of lifting her gloved hand thus caused the diamond set in the riding-whip to gleam and dazzle with a singular sparkle in the sunlight.

Never had the Marquis, her lover, beheld anyone more lovely; never before, he thought, had Marie appeared so beautiful as she did to-day. The clear, fresh colour in her transparent face; the noble glance of her eyes; the beseeching smile of her small, sweet mouth; the expression of goodness and of love and of true enjoyment emanating from her oval countenance; the stately and independent bearing of her

form; the laughter-loving, yet thoughtful spirit which possessed her—all gave her a charm of deportment which made the Marquis silent with pleasurable surprise, as, secretly touching his hat with reverence for this child of God, he watched her standing on tiptoe, full of joyful expectation, saluting her gentle Arab with expressions of the strongest endearment and solicitude.

It was always to him the most delightful sight in the world to see her thus, and he would do anything for her to please her, to win her affection, or to make her more attached to him than at present she appeared to be. He hoped to succeed in so doing in course of time; it might take him months, and it might take him years, but he believed that he would accomplish his purpose at last in some way or another. So, consequently, he unceasingly paid her as much attention as lay in his power. And if it was nothing else, she was highly flattered thereby, as it was only natural and becoming that she should be. She was like all women in that respect.

The course they proceeded along to-day was somewhat the same as the one which they pursued yesterday on horseback, and the people whom they met were somewhat the same class of people: the *bourgeoisie* and personal friends of their own; that is, people who moved in the same walk of society as

they did. It was late in the afternoon when they came back, and the Marquis, at the request of Marie, and just to keep her company, sat down and partook of an afternoon cup of tea with her, which served them instead of the ordinary luncheon. Subsequently Marie went over to the grand piano in a corner of the drawing-room and played some exciting German airs for his amusement. He felt somewhat small alongside of her, and the words of the song, which she sung at the same moment, had a chilling effect upon him. Frenchmen, as a rule, do not like German music. She nevertheless continued to play on, she knew not quite what the air was, till it proved at length to be the old Volkslied, "Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath," which Marie, as the Marquis stood behind her at the piano, sang bravely to the end.

The man-servant, who had been waiting grimly in the rear with the tea-tray and its contents, only half-drunk, now gave the Marquis unmistakably to understand that he must be gone; so he bade Marie adieu, gave her hand a final crushing squeeze, and taking a precious rose from its perilous position on her bosom, he made away with it gaily before she knew that it was stolen from her, and, leaving her alone in the drawing-room, he followed the man-servant downstairs until he reached the hall-door, and then he went out along the path till he reached



the broken-down part of the fence which separated her father's property from the high-road.

He turned round on his heel and glanced up at the balcony of the house, where he saw Marie standing in the evening sunlight looking very radiant, and crying out to him to return and give her back her stolen rose. As he did not seem to mind her, she kissed her hand to him affectionately, and then disappeared through the window.

To the left, the Marquis could just catch a glimpse of Paris gleaming white through the trees, and he idly wondered whether or no its very wily owner and Emperor—Louis Napoleon—would still be alive in ten years to come, and if not, what change would come over Paris in the meantime; for the Marquis had never a high opinion of Louis Napoleon, from the time he was a prisoner in the fortress of Ham, and got out of it by pretending to be a labouring man, and assuming that garb with a plank on his shoulder.

The Marquis always thought that the Emperor broke his parole at that time, and made use of the susceptibility and innocence of his gaolers; and so did many others think the same thing of the Emperor. When the Marquis had gone away, Marie de la Vallonière began to think fondly of Augustine St. Clare again and again.

She thought of him even when the evening sun

had sunk slowly down westwards in the glowing sky, and the twilight had disappeared into the night. The longer she thought of Augustine St. Clare to-night, the oftener she sighed. Why should he make her sigh? She knew well that if she could only feel certain he loved her, she would fling to the winds the Marquis de Ruchault, her father's prudential counsels, the increased prosperity of her family arising from an alliance with Henri—in fine, all material and mundane considerations—and take her chance for better or worse with Augustine. She was not aware of his past history, for she had never made any inquiries relative thereto. She heard he was rich; he mixed in the best society of Paris; she saw he was a gentleman, and so much was sufficient for her. She sought to ascertain nothing further concerning him. As a rule she was not curious about people. She had the gift of measuring men and women at a glance; and after that she needed to ask no questions about them. If they were not up to her mark, she merely directed her energies to steer clear of them as best she might, and did not trouble herself by paying any further attention to them. To have attracted then, to say the least of it, the affectionate esteem of one so fastidious and so highly cultivated as Marie de la Vallonière—of one so keen and clever in her perception of people—was a triumph Augustine St.

Clare might well be proud of, proof as it was of his genuine worth.

He could not but perceive that Marie took a deep interest in him, and he drew therefrom his own conclusions. If Marie was anything to him more than a friend, he made no sign. He dare not betray himself, for titled Marie was too high a prize; and, of course, now that she was about to be married he laid his dreams aside. He could do so without much effort, for he had learned the way. The task of self-sacrifice was over, yet she was not indifferent to him. Since Lucie passed away from his affections Marie was creeping into them, and his heart stirred at the sound of her name. Would that she had been plain Marie de la Vallonière, then he would have wooed and won her; but she was too far away from him—there was a barrier between them which he could not step across. From his home in Ireland, where he was at present staying, he often looked across in the direction of France, remembering Marie de la Vallonière and the happy hours they spent in each other's society; and from her unpretending but neat cottage at Suresnes, it may have been at the very same moment of time Agnes Audley, her little niece Lucie playing at her feet, would glance towards where she thought the valley was, through which the river Suir winds its crystal way to the sea, and Agnes would pause and

wonder was Augustine well, and what he was doing, and would he soon come back again to beloved France !

Marie, before she retired to rest to-night, gazed at herself for a long time in a mirror, studying the outlines of her face. The meditation thereupon satisfied her, for she turned away from the glass with a smile ; only it was a sad, wise smile, full of deep meaning—a mocking smile, as if she was no real believer in her own charms.

The room she occupied was elegantly furnished—adequately provided with the delightful ornaments and little luxuries befitting the boudoir of a lady of her high rank in life. A few rare pictures, by living masters, hung from the tapestried and gilded walls ; the tall windows—there were four of them—opened to view the loveliest portion of the flower-garden ; the floor was covered with the richest of carpets, into which the feet seemed to sink, and in their tread to make no noise ; mirrors faced you in every direction, and so perfect were they, that the reflection of one's own person in them startled the observer, so vivid and striking was it, and so wonderfully life-like. Upon the toilette table, which was fringed with Limerick lace, stood a magnificent scent-bottle, the golden lid of which being raised, it gave forth, and filled the room with, the perfume of otto of roses. No lamp glared in the chamber, but

stately wax-candles artistically grouped in different directions illumined the apartment with a steady radiance which reminded one of the light of day.

This exquisite boudoir was Marie's cell, wherein she prayed, and thought, and gave herself up to girlish reveries, and on wet days read her favourite books, and gave audiences to her few favourite friends. Herein, too, took place those important and mysterious interviews with her milliner once a week regularly, and oftener when necessary. No one in Paris knew how to dress better than Marie de la Vallonière; that was an admitted fact. Marie seated herself in an easy chair, and opened a drawer close to her jewelled hand. She took therefrom a small morocco leather box, which closed with a golden clasp; she opened this, and what did she behold?—a faded red rose, and nothing more! But it was very much to her! It was one which St. Clare had worn in his button-hole, as was customary. He had dropped it one day in the garden without being aware of it; Marie picked it up when his back was turned, and cherished it as a relic of him. She would take it out at times from this morocco box and gaze at it, all dried and withered as it was, and holding it in her hand, she would end by resolving never to become the wife of Henri de Ruchault.

## CHAPTER XII.

**I**T was the year of the Exhibition in Paris—of the great Exhibition of 1867. Whoever was at that splendid gathering of nations and their rulers will not soon forget it. It was a magnificent peace-offering to science, civilization, and humanity; but, alas for the permanency of kindness and goodwill! the very spot which had been the centre of attraction to the whole world so short a time ago is to-day the angry theatre of revolution and bloodshed!

Where now are those light hearts whose possessors wandered through the halls of the Exhibition, and lounged at the cafés, laughing and sipping coffee or drinking wine, and idly smoking cigarettes? Some have gone back to the Far West from whence they came; some are in their counting-houses in England, at the old trade of making money and storing their granaries by the banks of the Thames; some are slumbering peacefully, waiting the last call on the

day of General Judgment, and amongst those how many have fallen in battle!

This being the year of the Exhibition, Paris is alive with activity. Amongst the varied objects of excitement and interest not the least are the races. Crowds assemble; rank and fashion smile and glitter before the Imperial view, for the Emperor Napoleon the Third has lent the prestige of his presence to the scene.

The Marquis de Ruchault having entered a horse for one of the principal races of the day, Marie, taking a personal interest in the affair, is here conspicuous amongst the number of gaily-attired ladies. The Marquis' horse was not the favourite; very few believed in his chance of winning; yet he was a fast horse by all accounts, though looking at him from a professional point of view one would not be inclined to admire him, or to have confidence in him as to his chance of success in the coming contest of speed and durability; in fact, as he took his stand amongst the other horses he was hardly heeded at all either by betting men or connoisseurs.

But there was one to ride him on this occasion whom the Marquis implicitly trusted as to his honesty of purpose and recognised ability in keeping his seat in the saddle, whether it be a flat race and the ground is slippery and therefore dangerous for the horse's hoofs, or whether it be a steeplechase

and the fences are high, such as we have in England and in Ireland, with ugly stone walls impossible for a horse to get over without an extra effort on his rider's part, and wide ditches or a deep rivulet. They never have much of these things in France; indeed, they manage these things in France as they do everything else, that is, much better than we do. Whenever they get up a steeplechase the fences are hardly a foot high, and never more than two; so that an English rider going over them on a French horse can hardly keep his seat from laughing; the horse makes such a great stride to leap over a small jump! As it is stated, the Marquis had a clever jockey to lead his horse to victory, if such were possible upon this occasion; one who had come in first many a time in France as in England, and in other places on the Continent. Nay, in India he had ridden and won races. He was one of the few who believed in the powers of the horse he was going to ride, and he, moreover, was firmly determined to win. There he is, dressed—in a light-blue jacket, and a white cap—and ready at a minute's notice, booted and spurred and weighed, to leap into the light saddle, as cool and quiet as if he were going out only for a morning's canter; as cool as a cucumber, in fact! Stroking with one hand his floating and big moustache, he remains in the background, and glancing sharply but good-humouredly



about him, he commences talking to a couple of friends who are near him ; Jack Audley, for it is he, the same as ever, waits for the moment of starting, and glances up at Marie de la Vallonière, who is seated alongside of some other ladies, who, with his sister Agnes, have taken prominent places upon the grand stand, where they have been for some time awaiting impatiently the commencement of the race. As he looks rather nervously at Agnes, he thinks of his little Lucie, and a tremor runs through his frame, and then, as if summoning up renewed courage, the handsome manly face beams with pleasure. The very thought of his little darling gives him fresh nerve to win the race.

The Marquis de Ruchault did not mistake his man when he chose Jack Audley to ride his horse. Should he win, the Marquis would net about a thousand pounds, and Captain Jack Audley had arranged his little calculations so as to make a clear five hundred should he come in first. There were fifteen horses entered—what a pretty sight they presented as they proceeded to the place from whence they were to start, gaily and gracefully, in the contest for the reward of victory. It was a sight to cause the expectant pulse to quickly throb, and to bring a flush of eager excitement into the intent faces of the gazing crowd. Jack bore the moment with his wonted stoicism ; he was accus-

tomed to such thrilling periods in his chequered existence, and from their frequency they had lost their pristine effect upon him. He had no thought now, as once in his bright boyish racing days he had, of the prettiness of his azure jacket, his white cap, his calm handsome face, his soldierly firm light seat in the well-fitting saddle. He was thinking chiefly of the five hundred solid pounds he was going to win—if he could. It would not be his fault if he did not pocket them.

Of all the gentlemen riders amongst those fifteen, not one of them became his critical position more fitly than Jack Audley, about whom there was a high-bred air, and a sense of superiority gained by a long experience of the Turf, which there was no mistaking. Ladies sighed when he passed by the stand-house, and the pure dreams of their girlhood gathered around him. More than one prayer was wafted voicelessly towards him; more than one meek and gentle heart wished silently for his success. As for Agnes, she only saw her brother, and her bosom heaved with impetuous emotion.

The fifteen horses are at the starting-point, and lo! at a sudden signal they break away! With straining eyes the throng watch their agile movements, and draw different comments upon the capabilities of the various competitors for the prize. It seems but a moment ago since all these horses

were grouped here, and now behold where they are! Agnes' heart sinks, for she observes her darling brother the very last of the fifteen! Marie whispers to her, 'What a pity! It is all the fault,' she says, 'of the wretched horse.' The Marquis de Sevrey shakes his head wisely, and expresses openly his disappointment. He is not thinking of Jack Audley, but of Henri's horse. Henri being his future son-in-law, his honour, his interests, his success, are identified with his own.

"Why did you not get some one else to ride the race for you?" he exclaimed, somewhat angrily. "That stupid fellow does not know how to get along! See how far back he is, Henri!"

"Do not condemn him yet," the young Marquis de Ruchault hastily replied, and said no more.

All his attention was anxiously directed to the vicissitudes of the race. No wonder, for the winning of a thousand pounds is something even to a Marquis, not to speak of the satisfaction and *éclat* of being owner of a successful horse. How the feelings of Agnes were wounded by the taunting and excited expressions of the Marquis de Sevrey! He, too, had a large sum at stake on the race, and Jack's lagging behind caused him unutterable irritation. Agnes pitied and already sympathized with her brother in his evident misfortune; she regretted that he should have figured in this unlucky

race. Had he taken her often inculcated advice, he would have given up riding races years ago. But Jack was incorrigible in some things.

The race was a long one, and calculated to try to the utmost test the racing powers of the swift-footed steeds. Jack was an old hand at these four-mile struggles, and knew well what he was about; but to the eyes of the uninitiated public he was out of the race altogether. The Marquis de Ruchault gave him up, and Marie's father said something hurtful about Jack in Agnes' hearing, so angry was he at the turn affairs had taken.

There was one splendid animal, ridden by an Austrian Count—a nobleman, by the way, who wore a magenta-hued jacket, and straw-coloured cap—this animal we speak of was second from the starting-point all through the race, and coming towards the close he shot far ahead of all the rest; it was plain to the judgment of every looker-on that he must of a certainty win the race. Already the exulting Austrian was glancing superciliously behind at the vain efforts of his beaten competitors.

They came on together towards the winning-post like a big tidal wave which the ceaseless power of the ocean behind it drives on some hostile shore. As each rise and fall of the tide causes a slight vibration, so every movement of the horses con-

tributed to their velocity, and their speed increased enormously as the distance diminished from the goal they were striving to reach; they came on just as the ceaseless toil of ocean breaks against the solid rock, and reduces the broken pieces to sand on the sea-shore. If you give a swing a gentle tap, and permit it to swing forward and come back, and as it is on the point of making a second swing, give it another push — in this manner, calculating our taps to equalize its motion, we shall in a brief time have it in strong and rapid movement to and fro. So it was with the horses in this race, as they came on madly together, and touching one another — every instant that they knocked against each other they seemed to communicate a simultaneous force to the entire body or group — so it was impossible to foretell who would win, or perhaps who would be turned over and get a fall, or whether one horse, more cunning than the rest, would, aided by his jockey and his own instincts in this way, take advantage of his companions and come in first. With what a rush the racers came tearing along, their foaming mouths dashing the froth against their quivering sides, and with what river-like velocity would they give way to each other, and then, with destructive force, rush forward in the direction of the grand stand, where the winning-post was!

In racing, as in everything else, science takes from nature half of its poetry by reducing everything to the hard and fast rule of an inexorable law; but if it does so it is only to substitute therein in its stead a still higher and grander ideal of poetry of its own, produced by the scene around one, and the enthusiasm thereby aroused in one's bosom.

Jack Audley, sitting at that supreme moment on the back of a horse going at full speed, would contemplate through the long vista of the race-course he was galloping over, and of which he was the principal figure, the silent faces of his brother jockeys, and thinking of the danger he was running every moment of being killed as well as they, he would, without well knowing it, become for the nonce religiously disposed; and, rising from his saddle, he would exclaim in English, "How manifold and great are Thy works, O God! In wisdom hast Thou made them all."

Meanwhile the race was proceeding rapidly to a close; and as Jack was not yet in the foreground, but rather in the background, and, in fact, nowhere, the Marquis de Sevrey, anxious for the character of his future son-in-law's horse, actually fumed with suppressed passion.

Henri, in his turn, grew paler and paler, and at last gave up all lingering hopes that he had enter-

tained concerning Jack's chances of success. He was at length sorry that he had procured him to ride this race for him, and to pay him, moreover, for Jack was not above taking payment for such a task. The Marquis had secured his services not without difficulty, for Jack Audley, in racing matters, was always at a premium, and very hard to be got for either love or money, unless one was first in the field with a good round reward in the shape of a *douceur*. His fame as a rider was spread far and wide.

Marie was silent with disappointment—it was a keen grief her Henri should not win—and poor Agnes trembled visibly, and almost wept for her brother's sake.

The Austrian Count had but another two hundred yards to go—the horse which was next to him was five-and-twenty yards behind—as for Jack Audley, he was second last in the extreme rear. Of course, the Count, being so far ahead of all the rest of the jockeys, must of necessity win the race. Not so! Now is Jack's moment of exquisite triumph; now is the proof of his calculating skill, his magnificent discrimination, his most perfect judgment of the extent of the horse's powers of endurance and of speed. Swift as an unerring arrow, to the extreme astonishment of the various lookers-on, Jack, striking his spurs fiercely and un-

mercifully into the horse's panting sides, passes rapidly beyond the others, overtakes the too sanguine magenta-clad Austrian Count, next moment leaves him safely in the rear, and comes in himself a dozen yards ahead of him, and is acknowledged to be the undisputed winner of the great race of the season !

Oh ! what a loud cheer of triumph arose then on the summer air ! and Agnes, for she could not help it, wept at last. It was too much for her—far too much ! Marie burst out laughing through sheer merriment. The Marquis de Sevrey, feeling very much surprised indeed, looked meaningly at Henri de Ruchault, and that eloquent glance of his spoke volumes of apology and approval of Jack. The Marquis de Ruchault merely said :

“I knew my man ! And so did you, sir !”

And then he descended with airy steps from the place which he had occupied whilst watching the race, upon the grand stand near the Emperor and all the ladies, in order to inspect what damage had been done to his lucky horse by his efforts in the race, and also in order to congratulate and to thank Jack Audley for his trouble and his ultimate success, which he did most heartily. Then they went off together to a neighbouring refreshment-stall, and had a brandy and soda over it, whilst the horse also got refreshments in the shape of a bottle



of lemonade which the groom, before brushing him down, poured down his throat as well as he was able.

Jack cared for no congratulation whatsoever: he was quite indifferent about praise of any sort; he had won his five hundred pounds, though, and that was something to be thankful for. He then went and mounted the horse again, in order to show him off to the admiring spectators, who were anxious to examine his points of merit; and as he drew near to the grand stand he gave one look up at Agnes where she was standing, and waving her handkerchief to him when on his smoking steed, he passed her slowly by, and in her face, at least to his thoughtful mind, he found his sweetest praise. Ah! that Agnes, or else some one like her, was always with him! No one would wish that more sincerely than himself. Jack's great want in life was some one nearer than Agnes to love him and guide him. His heart was in the right place, but he was a bad helmsman. The cool calm skill which enabled him thus to win a critical race might, if properly directed, enable him to come in first also in the great race of life. Only he had no ambition whatsoever in that way, and never had; he would like to win therein if he could, and be a brilliant star amongst his fellow men, either in politics, the law, literature, or commercial

speculations. But that was the race which he was always stumbling and coming to grief in. He had made many trials in order to go over that ground as well as he could, and likewise honourably, if such were possible; but the fences were considerably too high for him in that race, at all events, and he was perpetually bolting them, or at least the horse Chance, which he was supposed to ride, did so for him.

After he had gone round the crowd, showing off the horse, he went to the weighing tent and got himself weighed, according to the rules of the race; but ere he did so the Marquis de Ruchault went gaily up to him, before he had time to alight from the still heavily breathing horse.

"You came in splendidly at the finish," he said, clasping his hand in the most friendly manner. "You have permanently established the animal's future reputation for me, and I am eternally obliged to you; please to accept my warmest thanks and my best congratulations."

Jack smiled graciously, and quickly answered:

"He is a good horse indeed, De Ruchault! Don't part with him, if you please, easily. Where on earth did you get him? He does not appear to me to be a French horse out and out; is that so?"

"It is. I got him from another country—from Augustine St. Clare. He sent him over to me from

a place which he called in his letter the county of Tipperary, in Ireland. I know there is a place there which they call Cahirmee, but I never heard of Tipperary unless through him. That is a good horse certainly — he has none but Irish blood in his veins. But you rode him well!"

"The devil thank me for it!" was his answer carelessly.

### CHAPTER XIII.

**J**ACK AUDLEY got out of the saddle at last, slowly and negligently, and got himself duly weighed in the weighing tent; and the Emperor Napoleon touched his hat to him as he passed by where the great ruler of France stood gazing down upon the stirring, mingling to and fro of horses and men and people bent upon a day's undivided pleasure and amusement. There is nothing like recreation to bring people round when they are jaded and tired with too much business; and the fact of there being an Exhibition in Paris had made the good people of that busy city very fatigued of late, and had given them a great deal of extra work to do, so they were all very glad to be amusing themselves at the races, and their Emperor along with them, not to speak of the Empress and the Prince Imperial.

As soon as his Imperial Majesty took this extraordinary notice of Jack Audley, and saluted him so openly before the assembled multitude of brilliant

sightseers and amusement-seekers, Jack started, and with an unexpected blush mantling his cheeks, he bowed low, and acknowledged the compliment which was implied by such graceful condescension on the part of the Emperor. Then he proceeded slowly, the object of general admiration and popularity, to the conspicuous place where Agnes, with unconcealed tears in her sunny eyes, impatiently waited for him, in order to congratulate him too. She could not speak to him, however, when he came up to her, but had to turn away her head with averted gaze.

“You silly girl,” he said, in a voice that trembled ever so slightly, “what nonsense is this? Why do you not talk to me and compliment me on my success in the late race? No one ought to be prouder of me than you ought to be; but perhaps I have offended you in some way? Nay, that is quite impossible.”

Her face, full of sisterly love, gleamed upon him for an instant and again turned away. That look of hers brought tears into his own eyes; and to dispel his own emotion he began to chat lightly about the capabilities and qualities of Henri's horse to Marie de la Vallonière; and although he listened attentively to her, with his lips assenting in a low tone to her remarks in reply to his, yet his heart, as it were, was stirred with his love for Agnes, and he

seemed to himself to be listening and speaking to her alone. He always loved his only surviving sister with a brother's ardent affection ; but now that she was rearing up into girlhood his charming little daughter, Lucie, he felt that he scarcely could live without Agnes, and that nothing would pain him more than to have offended her in any way. He knew that he was careless betimes, but he never intentionally treated her with indifference.

Ah ! what a heart was hers—so full of life, and so full of unselfish love ; and that all for him ! Was that heart, so rich in the gifts which it possessed, to waste its wealth of sweetness in sighs for dreams that may not be realized ? Must she expend her magnificent power of affection on little Lucie alone and for her brother's sake ? Even were it so it would not be given in vain. There was no fear of that ! For what more lovely or fitter part can woman play on earth than to train an innocent young soul for Heaven ? Is not such a duty better for her than studying or writing lengthy theoretical treatises upon the principles of medicine, like a second Doctor Mary Walker ? or else lecturing like some of our own ladies at home on the widely-extending subject of politics ? We have plenty of good women who give an example of charity for others to follow ; but as to politics, let the men do the business of the latter—there are enough of

them, goodness knows! in the world for the accomplishment of such work. We cannot afford to do without our Lord Sherbrookes. We have not so many of them, though we have plenty of lesser luminaries.

Jack Audley left the ladies, after a short time which he spent in animated conversation in their society, and descended amongst the horses and their owners in the paddock below the grand stand. When his soldierly form was lost to sight in the assembled and noisy crowd, and Agnes could gaze upon him wistfully no longer, Marie said to her suddenly:

“How fond you are of him, Agnes!”

“Yes,” she replied, tears starting immediately into her bright eyes—how bright they always were, especially whenever her brother was in her thoughts! —“I love him in spite of his defects; and he has defects which none but a sister can see.”

“Defects!” Marie answered. “Perhaps you are only joking with me, as you are so fond of doing. Ah, Agnes, you are much too exacting with him! That is not just or fair upon your part. You must not expect too much from him; for he is not like the rest of his kind. He has had vicissitudes and disappointments which it has not been given to others in a similar state of life to endure. If he was a Frenchman I could understand him better,

and volunteer to give you some advice about him. But, considering that he is an Englishman born, I cannot make him out. At least I cannot observe his faults, if he has any. Whatever they may be they are skilfully hidden from my scrutiny. Remember, my dear friend and *confidante*, that he is only a *man*!" she added cynically, emphasizing the last word with that low voice peculiar to a native of France.

Agnes knew well that he fully deserved that title and that appellation from the lips of Marie de la Vallonière or from anyone else, she did not care who it might be. It was something to be told that her brother was a *man*, after all; in this voluptuous and effeminate age it was a term very deserving for her brother to earn for himself. She had not forgotten it; it was something to know that he was a *man*, and she was very proud of it. For a man can think for himself and work for himself, and win his own livelihood if he so desires it, and not have recourse meanly, and in an unmanly fashion, to women for protection and support—aye, even for their daily bread—as so many men do at the present day.

Agnes had not, indeed, forgotten that her poor wayward brother was a man in every sense of the word; and therefore was it that she made so many allowances for his many little foibles and



drawbacks ; aye, far more than even Marie dreamed of, or believed her capable of doing.

The races were over, and Jack Audley, returning to the city, dined that evening on invitation with the Marquis de Ruchault. The latter was in high spirits, owing to the fact of his gallant horse winning the principal race of the day, and so he received Jack with more than his usual cordiality and recognised hospitality.

There were three or four friends present at the table besides Jack Audley ; the dinner, which was a very select one, was given in the Marquis' town residence. The Marquis de Sevrey was of course one of the group ; also an English Duke of great racing renown, and said to be worth a thousand a day or thereabouts ; a famous man of letters, who was editor of a celebrated French review, scattered the bright flashes of his keen wit and cutting bits of sarcasm across the dinner-cloth at whatever butt happened at the moment to come across the shafts of his unerring satire ; there were two others amongst the guests, the very presence of whom in that assemblage was an indubitable guarantee of the high social position which it was known that the Marquis de Ruchault held, even amongst those whose status in society belonged exclusively to what was called in common parlance the upper ten hundred. They were men who were justly celebrated

for their great conversational powers; for their exquisite and rare social qualifications; for the atmosphere of refinement, of high civilization, which they spread around them, and which pervaded the company that had the good-fortune to be honoured by their presence; men of genius, of tact, of true moral character, personating in themselves the real spirit of civilization, who by their nature were rendered so fastidious and careful about the selection of their acquaintances, that to find them guests in any house of rank was sufficient proof to all the world of the social position, or else moral, which the owner of that house held.

Jack met these, not for the first time, and treated them quietly and adroitly, as well he knew how. Indeed, he thoroughly enjoyed himself at the Marquis's select dinner, for the reflection of his having safely won his clear five hundred pounds made him quite happy and content. It is so true what Shakespeare says, that "He is well paid that is well satisfied."

The Marquis' dinner was certainly a grand affair, but probably Jack, who on the whole was of a philosophical turn of mind, derived more thorough enjoyment from the lonely pipe of strong tobacco he subsequently mused over, when he was comfortably ensconced there once more, in his retired Paris lodgings about two o'clock in the following morning

before going to rest. The next day, having an appointment to keep, he rose comparatively early, that is, about ten o'clock, and, having breakfasted, he proceeded to the gorgeous establishment of a celebrated jeweller, where, after some considerable deliberation, he selected from amongst a host of ornaments a diamond cross with Gothic folding doors opening in its centre, for which Jack had paid a round sum in French money, equal to a hundred English guineas. Having satisfactorily completed his purchase, he carried it away with him to the most distinguished photographer's in Paris, where, with the same unmoved countenance as if he was standing the fire of the Russian guns once more in the Crimea, he submitted to have his likeness taken, with the intention of placing it within those tiny folding Gothic doors, which added so much to the beauty of the diamond locket which he had that morning purchased.

"What time will you have the likeness ready?" he asked the obsequious attendant.

"In three days, or four at the latest, monsieur," the latter replied. "I would have it ready for you sooner, only that I have to get it coloured in a certain way by one of the young ladies of our establishment whom we have employed for that purpose, and we are very busy at the present time, having several other engagements on hand. Look here at this photograph! it is one of Marshal MacMahon,

which he got taken yesterday, and we have to colour it for him. The sun of France is a splendid photographer, if I might draw the simile. Is not that a very good likeness of the brave Field Marshal, the hero of Magenta, the chief officer of arms in the French Empire, and the right hand of Napoleon the Third? They say that one day he will be President of the French Republic; that is when the Empire is done away with, and we are beginning to get tired of that *régime* now. We want a change. We want to fight somebody, no matter who, and to prove that we are Frenchmen born, and not carpet knights."

"That is a good likeness of the Marshal. Are you a Frenchman, may I ask?" he said to the photographer, for he had some doubts about it.

"I was reared in Picardy, where the wine comes from," the other answered; "but I know 'the rocky road to Dublin,' as the song says, for I was born on the outskirts of that city, at a place they commonly call Sandymount, though I am always mistaking it for Sandycove, outside Kingstown, which is another place altogether."

And the photographer began to scratch his head.

"I heard that Marshal MacMahon was of Irish descent," said Jack. "Is that true? The name is undoubtedly Irish."

"Faith, he is an Irishman in everything but his

instincts," answered the photographer, "and they are wholly French ; bad cess to them, I say."

"Why, is not the General popular with the army and the people?"

"Popular enough, only he is always telling them that his name is not MacMahon at all, but originally Murphy, and that the English for that is 'that the pigs are in Drogheda!' But he might as well be talking to the wall as talking to them about the meaning of Irish names and places, for they could never find out that for themselves, not if they were to live to the age of Methusaleh. Tell me, did you ever come across a play in your lifetime, which was written a very long time ago, in the days of Queen Elizabeth of England, by one they call Will Shakespeare? It was termed 'Pyramus and Thisbe,' and it was the funniest play ever written by that poet or any other."

"I think I have read it," answered Jack; "it is only a kind of a bye-play in one of Shakespeare's dramas; but why do you mention it here?"

"Because he foretold photography in it, and you may believe me or not, as you like," answered the other.

"I think you are dreaming," said Jack. "However, I am in a hurry now, and will call for my likeness in four days' time, if that will suit you. I do not care to wait to hear you punning on Shakes-

peare's plays and telling me that he foretold photography in them. That I do not believe. He knew a great deal about the sun, but not about photography."

"As you like. Every man to his trade, and God for us all!" replied the other, as he bowed him out through the shop door.

Jack at the appointed time returned to the photographer's, and received back from him the diamond cross, having an excellent likeness of himself set therein. The following day after that one was little Lucie's birthday, and when Jack came down to breakfast and received her dutiful morning kiss,

"I have a birthday-present for Lucie," he said to Agnes.

He opened a velvet case he carried and displayed the diamond cross. The sun's rays caught the jewels and made them gleam in the sudden and brilliant light which was thereby produced. He opened the small Gothic doors of the locket smilingly, and Agnes beheld his photograph.

"It is very well done!" she exclaimed. "Lucie will treasure this present for many a day. That cross is expensive, and Jack," she said, shaking her head wisely, "I am very much afraid indeed, no matter how successful you may happen to be at horse-races and at other places, on the whole you

don't have plenty of loose money about you to spare—as I have.”

“I am not poor,” he quietly answered. “Besides, when Lucie grows up, as she is sure to do one day, and that not far distant, I hope,” he continued, taking the latter in his arms, “she will not let papa go to the poorhouse. She will not let papa want for money. You dear darling! See, I hang thus the cross round your neck in graceful fashion, my pretty saint and maid, with this gold chain which is attached to it. There now! does she not look lovely, Agnes, with that chaste ornament upon her?” He sang a verse of the song, or rather the hymn, called by the Sicilians and other inhabitants of the Mediterranean—where he first heard it, and was captivated by its weirdlike and holy melody—“Santa Lucia,” and stepped backwards a foot or two in order the better to admire his child. She looked in truth a veritable little saint with the costly cross sparkling upon her breast.

“This shall be a gala-day for us three, Agnes,” he said, sitting down at the same time to breakfast. “Where shall we go in order to celebrate Lucie's birthday?”

“We shall have a drive, Jack, and a cold dinner by ourselves in the woods of the Bois de Boulogne—would you like that?” Agnes answered, putting the question to him.

“Very much indeed,” he replied. “That would be the very thing which I would most desire.”

So he, who, a few days before, won one of the first races in the vicinity of Paris, and who dined with two of the most noted and most sought-after men in the Empire of France, to-day, like any contented, matter-of-fact, humble bourgeois, first helped his sister in packing the viands, settled little Lucie’s hair, which had got slightly disarranged, with a father’s fond care, looking fondly meanwhile into little Lucie’s blue eyes, he put on for her the blue sun-bonnet which she was in the habit of wearing whenever she went out, and also her blue cloak, and blue shoes, and blue gloves; because Agnes was so busy over other matters that she could not attend to the child then as she was in the habit of doing, and subsequently, when all was prepared and they were ready to start, the three of them, brother, sister, and brother’s child, drove away in a pony basket-carriage which Jack had lately purchased, to spend the summer’s day in the woods, where the birds were, and the wild flowers, and the cool shade of leafy trees.

Jack lolled back idly in the carriage and enjoyed himself in the company of little Lucie, whilst Agnes drove the pony. They first proceeded to Versailles, and putting up the pony there to have a feed, they paid a visit to the gardens, taking a cup of coffee in



a neighbouring restaurant by way of refreshment. Afterwards they drove to the Bois de Boulogne, and ere long they found themselves within the leafy darkness of the trees. Agnes, from a previous visit to this locality, was aware of a delightful spot which she said would exactly suit to eat a cold dinner in. Leaving the pony and carriage in charge of a servant who accompanied them, they went in search of the place which Agnes had previously spoken in praise of to her brother Jack. She was not long before at a pic-nic here, but Jack was not then amongst the company.

They soon arrived at the locality mentioned, but great was Agnes's sense of disappointment to find it already occupied by a lady and gentleman and another little girl, who were strangers to her ; whilst a spotless white table-cloth covered the green sward, whereon were spread in ample abundance eatables of various kinds, such as might satisfy the most fastidious palate ; a servant in the meanwhile, who was dressed in quiet and sombre livery, waited attentively upon the party. Agnes, not wishing to be seen, did not stay in order to perceive who they were, but whispered in a low voice to her brother Jack to come away quickly out of the place, as she did not wish to intrude. Jack, as was usual with him, was lazily obeying his sister's injunctions, when the gentleman raised his head from the contempla-

tion of the viands, which he was hungrily discussing, or rather devouring, voraciously, and exclaimed in French :

“Hallo, Jack Audley ! is it there you are ? Did you alight out of Phœbe’s car from the heavens ? And Agnes with you ! What on earth brings you here ? Come and join us ! We are out on a pic-nic, my wife and I, and our little Geneviève. It is Geneviève’s tenth birthday, and we are celebrating it, as you may observe, in a quiet sort of way. We keep very much to ourselves, as you are by this time aware.”

“It is a coincidence,” said Jack, “that we—Agnes, I, and my little Lucie—have come hither bent upon a precisely similar errand ! It is my child’s birthday, and we, like you, Count, are celebrating it in an unobtrusive fashion.”

The individual he addressed was a tall and stately gentleman, about forty-five years of age. He was the Count Beauville, a representative of an old family, but he was comparatively poor, and lived very quietly in a cottage adjacent to that occupied by Agnes and her brother at Suresnes. From their being such close neighbours an intimate acquaintance had sprung up between both families, but until to-day neither knew the children, Lucie and Geneviève, who were now walking together hand-in-hand, were born on the same day of the

same year. The incident added to the enjoyment of the hour, and Jack, hastening back to the pony-carriage, had the cold dinner brought hither, and the double pic-nic passed off as pleasantly as could be desired. The Count Beauville hated the Empire, and that was one predominating cause of his remaining for years so quiet in his cottage at Suresnes. There he passed his days, educating his little girl and seeing few visitors, save those of his own rank and position in life, and whose political opinions were of the same bent as his own. He appeared to be, like others of his caste, ignoring superciliously the present reign of things, and waiting patiently and silently for the coming of that Government he loved so dearly that to-morrow, were it necessary, he would lay down his life to give it existence.

Peace to his ashes! He has gone since to his rest, and with him has died the last of his race. Where his grave is, not even his sorrowing widow can find out, in order to go there and weep and pray. When his darling France was in danger, he took up arms and died fighting as a common foot soldier on some battle-field. Here was a hero *sans peur et sans reproche!* But those coming events had not cast their shadows before them yet, and he was in high spirits to-day. Phiz! he opens a bottle of superb champagne, and gaily fills each tumbler.

“We must drink to the health of the little ones!” the Count exclaimed, with deep emotion. “Let us, in one toast, join the names of Lucie and Geneviève; for Providence has brought them together to-day!”

They did so. When dinner was over, the children gathering wildflowers, Agnes and the Comtesse Beauville meanwhile chatting under the shade of a spreading tree, the Count and Jack reclined at their feet, sending up into the windless air lazy curls of perfumed smoke from fragrant cigars.

“Where shall I celebrate Geneviève’s next birthday?” the Count said musingly; “for it must not be in dear old France!”

“Why not?” asked Jack; “are you leaving Suresnes?”

“We abandon France next month for some time; perhaps for years.”

“Where do you intend to go?” inquired Agnes.

“For the present to Brighton—in your England—it is not far from here, and the sea-air in that place will make Geneviève strong.”

The Count gazed fondly at his child. She was a pretty little maiden, with long yellow hair and a blushing face.

“She needs to be much stronger than she is,” he added. “You are curious, doubtless, to know why we are leaving our dear place near you in Suresnes?”

Well, I will tell you ; and I would advise you, Audley, to leave it too !”

Jack lifted his eyebrows, and Agnes uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“Leave Suresnes !” she said in astonishment. “Oh ! I would not like to do that at all ! I am so infinitely happy there !”

“So are we !” steadily answered the Count ; “but yet, Agnes, *ma chère*, we go when we get the hint to do so from the proper quarter, and there are many others situated as we are. Sooner or later, take my word for it, you will have to follow likewise ; and the sooner the better.”

He bent towards her, and added, half in a whisper, so that the servants, who were by, should not overhear what he was about to say :

“I have received important information from abroad, which may be thoroughly relied on as being perfectly authentic in every way,” he exclaimed in angry and petulant accents, “that serious troubles are impending over this country, and likely to bring us into a frightful war with Germany at any moment. The Germans have been insulted in some way by our Emperor, which no one can understand, and they assert in reply that they will invade us, and have their revenge. So let them ; we are prepared for them at any moment which they may choose to come in upon us. I know that every

man in Germany is naturally a soldier. It is not so with us; at least, not quite in the same way, because we have what is called the 'Conscription' here, and we are bound to serve a certain term of years as soldiers, and then we are free; and may forget our musket and our sabre if we wish! Bad work is, I fear, looming in the distance. Lawlessness and bloodshed, plunder and revolution, will, like other dogs, have their day in this poor France of ours. I have received—thank God!—timely warning from headquarters of the terrible dangers which unfortunately threaten us; and I now give you that same warning, just as it has been kindly offered to me. Believe in it, or do not believe in it, just as you think fit. I do not want to coerce you into doing anything against your inclination. But I believe in it as a reality with too true a faith—alas!"

Jack and Agnes Audley did not believe in him, at all events, at that time. They knew how deeply he hated the present order of things, and how gladly he would see it altogether changed. They did not take his advice, although it was offered to them in a very friendly spirit; for they thought him, in this matter of the Government, to be somewhat of an enthusiast.

The Count and his family, nevertheless, left France for good before another month was well-

nigh over; and subsequent events have but too plainly proved how true was the information which he had received, and how painfully accurate in every harrowing detail were all his gloomy forebodings about the disasters from war and pillage which were about to fall upon his unhappy country.

The Audleys and the Beauvilles returned to Suresnes together, and took tea in the pleasantest of moods in Agnes's retired and unpretending small cottage. After tea little Lucie, being sleepy, was brought away upstairs and put to bed by Agnes; for the many excitements of the day completely overcame her waking powers.

Geneviève, however, being much stronger, and apparently older, did not give in so easily; and it was past midnight when the Count and Comtesse Beauville, each holding her confiding hand in theirs, conveyed their angel child safely home to their own residence, which was not far off. When she was securely asleep in her diminutive cot, the Count, accompanied by his wife, stole into their daughter's room in order to rest their loving eyes once more upon her placid face ere they themselves withdrew to rest. The Count, who carried a candle with him, held it up close to the forehead of little Geneviève, and studied the features closely, with a father's admiration. They wore a smile of

the deepest peace, as if she was dreaming of some happy incident which had occurred to her during the day which had just passed by. With pride the Count, looking again and again into her calm face, saw therein distinctly visible the singular beauty and unmistakable characteristics which ever marked a scion of the ancient house of Beauville; but the tender mother, moved even with greater solicitude, watching also intently her offspring as she stood by her husband's side, observed with truer instincts in the lovely countenance of her slumbering child those tokens of innocence and of hereditary saintliness so dear to her holy and devotional heart, which alone to her were precious above all things else, for they were pledges of the higher and royal lineage of her child. The stately line of Beauville was old indeed; but the mother knew that goodness was older still, and that her child was good.

Jack, too, that night had a stolen peep at his little Lucie, under the guidance of Agnes, who, lest he should waken her, made him first take off his boots, which he was not inclined to do. Little Lucie was changing Jack's nature completely. She had already taken the sceptical disposition out of him, which he was so prone to indulge in, owing to the rather solitary life which he led when he was not at home with her and Agnes.



## CHAPTER XIV.

THE following morning Agnes found Jack sitting in the garden, and reading a letter attentively. He did not observe her approach, and he started and rose to his feet when she approached him.

“Who is the letter from, Jack?” she asked. “You seem so much engaged with it that my curiosity naturally is aroused.”

“From my friend St. Clare the letter comes. I wrote to Augustine on the day after the races congratulating him upon the success of the horse, and mentioning, in particular, the good points which I discovered in the animal. I also wrote that if he could find out, or if he possessed, any more horses of the same kind, to be careful to procure them, or not to part with them, for anything less than their real value, as, that if I did not purchase them myself, I would be sure to find purchasers for them here amongst my many Parisian acquaintances. This is his reply to my hurried letter. I will show it to you in a moment, when you can read it from

beginning to end for yourself at your leisure. He tells me that he also has received a most satisfactory letter, by the same post, from the Marquis de Rùchault. St. Clare, by-the-bye, is a d——d lucky fellow. Whatever he has a hand in is sure to turn out well!"

"Yes," said Agnes softly, and murmuring her words almost to herself *sotto voce*. "And why not?" she added; "does he not fully deserve it? When ever did he do anything reprehensible—anything which deserves comment or censure, or that is unworthy of a man? Never that I have heard, at all events!"

Her sweet mouth parted for an instant, and then her lips closed, serenely expressive—her innocent face was upturned towards heaven—her beautiful eyes were one with the cloudless morning sky overhead; a smile gave forth its light, as it were, from her, so beaming and bright it was, as her face turned towards her brother; and then she fell into a seeming reverie, and her thoughts, whatever they were, appeared to have travelled far away elsewhere. So they had—they were in Ireland. She was thinking now of that green and pleasant land where she had passed many and many a happy day, and earnestly hoped to do so again, sometime in the coming future.

Jack looked up inquiringly at his sister, and gave

a short sigh of relief. He knew secretly his sister loved Augustine St. Clare; he was afraid her love would be in vain. He handed her the letter, and she read it with avidity. She read it twice over. Every line of it was so pleasant in her eyes—every word of it so musical to her mental ear.

“So he is coming back to France in a month’s time,” she said cheerfully to her brother. “Will not that be delightful for you, my dear brother?”

“Yes, of course it will, Agnes. He likes this country, and especially Paris. He pays a visit to this city as often as he can—that is about once a year.”

“He often told me how much he delighted in being here. But that his domestic affairs require him to reside a portion of each year in Ireland he would live in Paris altogether.”

“Are you tired of France yet?” her brother asked.

“Oh no!” Agnes responded. “I should be content to spend all my days in this beloved Suresnes. Do you mean to say, Jack, that you are wishing to be back in England? Because, if so, I will pack up to-morrow and be off with you.”

“I do not want to return to England, my child”—he was fond of calling Agnes “my child”—“I only asked you the question through curiosity. Wherever you and my little Lucie are, there alone

do I care to be! You both are my best hope now. I need not tell that to my own Agnes; it is no news to her."

"No, dearest," she replied, stroking his brown hair. "We have often been parted; but the many separations which we have undergone have only made us—made me, at least—feel from the bottom of my heart how sad it was to be divided—how sad for me."

"For me too, Agnes," her brother replied. "In India I used to remember you, and that recollection always did me a fair amount of good. I really think that I should have got a sunstroke more than once there, were you not my guardian spirit. Then, in all my troubles—and I had many of them, perhaps as many as any man of my age has had—over in England, what a friend, what a good angel you were to your poor erring brother Jack, who has been always so fond of you. Another would have disowned me, had they been put to the test as often as you have been for my sake; but you are not callous and unkind, like others whom I might mention; you have a noble heart—as noble a one as ever beat in woman's bosom."

"Hush, Jack; for goodness' sake don't be talking foolishly! I only did for you what my disinterested love made me do for you, and nothing more than that. Don't be fondly, and, like an old dotard,

endowing me with what you are pleased to term, with what truth I cannot tell, 'a noble heart.' You talk nonsense when you talk in that outlandish way!"

She blushed as if she was quite ashamed of hearing her own praise sounded in her ears—as if it was entirely too much for her innate modesty.

"Nonsense!" Jack reiterated. "Perhaps you are right, Agnes; it may be but nonsense to talk of your noble heart. I am a hater of praise expressed by words: words don't cost much to the speaker of them, but your noble heart exists, although I never spoke of it even as I do. And next to my gratitude to Providence for having blessed me with little Lucie to cheer my life, and give me a purpose worth living for, I thank Heaven, in her mother's absence, you are the guardian and teacher of my darling child. Come, give me some notepaper, and I shall write to St. Clare."

"I have not got any about me now. You must do without it, or wait until you go into town."

"It must be so; but I must write to him by this evening's post—I can't delay."

"As for Lucie, so far as she is concerned," said Agnes solemnly, "I will leave nothing undone on my part to make her both a good and an accomplished woman. I think that she promises to be everything in that way. I might venture to pre-

dict as much. Speaking of Lucie reminds me, Jack, that you will have to go over to England shortly in order to consult our London solicitor about some of Lucie's property and money, if you remember anything about it; the solicitor wrote to you about it, a short letter, not long ago. When do you propose proceeding there?"

"In a fortnight; I will be only a week away on that business. What an heiress my pretty Lucie is! There she is, Agnes."

At this moment the child appeared like a vision in the trellised doorway of the vine-covered cottage, and seeing her father, she ran towards him involuntarily, and nestled in his outstretched arms.

"What have you been doing with yourself all the morning?" he asked. "Eh, my little lady?"

"Picking wildflowers by the roadside and playing, when I was tired of that amusement, with a skip-rope which my aunt Agnes made me a present of."

"And had you all the fun of that enjoyment to yourself?" he said.

"No," she replied seriously; "I hardly ever play by myself; it is not considered a good thing to be too much alone. There's Aunt Agnes, she always plays with me when I ask her; but not to-day, and I was so sorry."

"Were you?" Jack said, as much interested in the conversation as if he was only her own age.

"Very sorry," she answered. "My aunt Agnes said that she was much too busy, after the picnic which we were at yesterday, to find time as usual to play with me to-day. However, I had Geneviève Beauville to keep me company, and a very excellent playmate she is. She can skip splendidly, almost as well as I can myself, and I am a great proficient at that pastime."

"Show me how you can skip," said Jack; "I want to judge for myself."

She got out of his arms in an instant, and flew swiftly round the garden walks, twirling her skipping-rope so quickly under her small and well-shaped feet and then over her head, that even the rope itself could with the greatest difficulty be observed moving through the air.

When she came back to him, Jack said seriously and thoroughly in earnest:

"Geneviève Beauville may be able to spin her rope and to skip with it splendidly, just like the generality of girls of her size, but believe me, my dear Lucie, I'll engage that whatever way she may manage it, with all her ingenuity, she cannot do it a bit better than you."

"No, she can't," Lucie answered proudly. "Here,

papa, you try it instead, for I am heartily tired and quite done up after all my exertions."

Agnes called out from the open window for Jack to take care, but Lucie clung to her papa all the more fondly, for she liked to hear him called Jack, though she never ventured to term him by any other name but papa herself, as some children are often in the habit of doing when they like to take a liberty with their parents, or to work upon their good-nature or surplus of affection.

"Will you take the skipping-rope?" she asked, still clinging to his coat and gazing up into his laughing features confidingly.

"Well, then, child, to please you I shall try with it. I can do nothing but get a fall with it, if it does trip me up. At all events, if I come down anywhere, it shall be on the soft, smooth grass of the lawn, and not on the gravel walk. So there is no fear that I shall hurt myself in my endeavours. You must give me my first lesson, Lucie, in the art of jumping with a rope. But I suspect that I shall injure those flower-garlands growing so gracefully in their earthen beds there! How carefully you and Agnes daily cultivate them, and make them bloom so and rear them to maturity. I wish I had a taste for gardening the same as you have. I should be exceedingly proud of it indeed, and would endeavour to win a prize for my flowers in



the next horticultural show. By the way, did you ever see the chrysanthemums growing in the Middle Temple, in London? They are one of the greatest shows of the year, and all connoisseurs and gardeners go to see them; but they only flower in the month of November. Here, Lucie," he said, starting up suddenly from a garden-seat on which he had just sat down, "give me the skipping-rope. Here goes! Out of the way!"

The result was unfortunate; he tripped his foot with the rope and fell disgracefully on the smooth grass. Little Lucie burst out into a merry laugh, the clear ringing of which was music indeed to Jack's ear. Before he could regain his feet she was up to him, had clutched his head between her small arms and covered his face with a shower of kisses.

"Oh, you bad skipper!" she exclaimed. "I fear that I shall have to teach you how to get along."

"I wish that you would," said Jack; but his words meant more than the child sufficiently understood at the time.

"So she shall," murmured his sister with a smile.

"Aided by you, my dear Agnes," he said naively.

He was reclining on the grass, whilst little Lucie, sitting near him, had already forgotten the episode of the skipping-rope, and was at the moment intent upon ornamenting Jack's low round hat, commonly

called a billycock hat, with some of the wildflowers which she had gathered outside.

Agnes stood in silence contemplating both of them; and on that summer day, the group of three, so united and so affectionately disposed towards one another, presented a pretty picture for the pencil of the artist or the pen of a *littérateur*. So thought the Lady Legrange as her carriage rapidly drove up to the garden gates and stopped abruptly in front of the cottage, and she saw Agnes and Jack and the child, with her cheeks red and blooming after her exercise with the skipping-rope, all of them looking so peaceful and so happy, with a true gaiety of spirit which, it was very easy indeed to see, was true in every sense of the word. As she beheld them whilst alighting from her carriage for the purpose of paying them a visit of ceremony, a pang of regret, because of her own mistaken life, smote her imperceptibly with a feeling of much pain. It might have been, had she but acted wisely in her day, she, too, would thus have formed one of such a group.

It was all over now; her fairest hopes in life were completely undone. She was rich; but she was entirely alone, and without the intimacies she cared for. And who had any solicitude for her, or took any interest in her doings? And what was there belonging to her that one could care for,

except it were her large amount of wealth? By many bitter sufferings which were endured in deep silence, and in that solitude where no one was by who might have sympathized with her; she was learning in those days her lesson, although late; and that lesson which is common to all, which strikes so directly home to the unbelieving heart until it makes it believe what must be taught to one—of the vanity of human riches, of social position, of high-sounding titles and honours, no matter how plentiful and profuse they may happen to be, whilst at the same time is inculcated the axiom of the reality of virtue and of truth. She could have a passionate fondness, resolving itself into a daily and hourly self-sacrifice, for those whom she loved; but she had denied herself the power of loving one who would be near and dear, by her blind devotion to the world, proved through her marrying Sir Lucius Legrange. How unkind she had been to him! how kind he had ever tried to be in everything to her! What use was his kindness? It was a relief when he was gone and she was once more free. She had cherished her freedom since; if she gloried in anything, it was in her complete emancipation from the control and too frequent companionship of others; her nature could not brook it.

It was so satisfactory to go out when one wished

it, sure of no questions being unnecessarily asked on returning home; to be able to give a ball, and not to hear anyone murmuring about the expenses which were thereby incurred; to roll in an elegant carriage through the streets of a city, and that city Paris; to have a magnificent supply of costly dresses; to be the owner of rich jewelry, the value of which in itself was a large fortune; to witness people in the streets pointing her out to friends and acquaintances as the wealthy Lady Legrange; to mix in the highest society in Paris; to do, in fine, whatsoever she liked, never wanting money, never inconvenienced by those ordinary mundane obstacles and petty pecuniary considerations which so sensibly affect people not so favoured by fortune as she was herself; all this to think of, and to boast of, was hers; and how came she to have all these decided advantages?

Once upon a time, and that was not so long ago, she was a gay little girl living in Ireland—an orphan, it is true; but, nevertheless, well cared for by St. Clare's father, who had been her loving and attentive and most prudent guardian—then she had had quite sufficient for all her wants for all her lifetime, not alone in money and in lands and vested personal property, but oh! what was a million times of more value to her at that time, and again now, when she had lived through her youth-

ful dreams, and found them evanescent and empty, namely, in the true love of a man who, to the core, was faithful to her and honourable, of her young lover, Augustine St. Clare, whose first dawn of manhood she refused to cheer and brighten by placing an implicit belief in him when he was accused of having strayed from the path of honour and integrity; whom, on the contrary, because of her unrestrained bent in the direction of giving credence to the existence of evil in others, she believed to be bad; who, as much through her instrumentality as through that of anyone else, was driven from home. When he was gone, and she was bereft of him, simplicity and contentment of mind departed from her wholly; ambition to be a leader in social circles rose and swayed her conduct, making her totally unlike what she had been formerly. By its help she had attained to her present position in Paris and in the world. By its help she was well-known, and so much sought after by everyone and everywhere.

“Riches, titles, honours, social success, and enjoyment, all these I will gladly give to you,” one, as it were, said to her in secret, “if only you bow down and adore me!”

She did bow down and humbly adore; and he who promised—the evil one—was true to his promise and to his word. But—but it was too

much to purchase even all these great things at what was the inevitable sacrifice of her peace of mind—to feel a perpetual want within her bosom and not to be able to satisfy it—to find that the blight of a disappointed career—disappointed in spite of its social successes—was already leaving the lines of heavy care upon her features, was telling upon the complexion of her face and the graceful roundness of her form; worse than all, to behold before her in the future no gleam of transient hope she would care to place confidence in—no freedom from the slavery of her inward sorrow—no consolation or sympathy from some heart responding to her own. The possession of affection, pure and disinterested, on the part of another, was not amongst the substantial benefits money had brought to her.

## CHAPTER XV.

FROM the windows of her fashionable apartments in Paris, Lady Legrange could see all along down the principal streets and thoroughfares, where unceasing traffic was continually going on. She was, whenever she was idle, which was very often, accustomed to sit at one of the casements, watching the passers by in the street immediately before her. Every morning and every evening she noticed a girl walking along with her lover by her side in the highest of spirits and gaily conversing with his young companion. He would sometimes carry her bundle for her, and when he did not do so he would light in cavalier fashion a short clay pipe and smoke away vigorously. She noticed them very frequently. She would observe them in the morning coming in to their business in Paris, and in the evening she would see them again returning to the suburbs where they both lived. Probably my lady could spend without feeling any inconvenience therefrom in a short week what they could earn in

a year ; yet how supremely happy they both appeared to be, at all events in Lady Legrange's eyes, as if rejoicing in the fact of their battle with poverty, and actually deriving a hidden strength from the contest. They were struggling in the world, evidently, and beginning to earn their livelihood very humbly, but leaning upon their own oars, so to say, all the while, and pulling successfully, though perhaps not without an effort, against the stream.

Lady Legrange watched them, and mused and wondered to herself, whilst in her heart she envied them their happiness.

Lady Legrange's carriage, having stopped, as recorded in the last chapter, in front of the gate leading up to Agnes Audley's cottage, and her ladyship having alighted therefrom, she was proceeding to enter the garden, when Agnes, knowing that it was her, hastened out at once to greet her cordially.

"How do you do, my dearest Margaret?" she said. "I am so glad to see you."

And they shook hands and kissed one another on the cheek in French fashion.

"I am quite a stranger to you nowadays, Agnes ; but you will please forgive me when I tell you that I have been absent from Paris for some time—at the sea-side, bracing up my languid constitution after the dissipations of the seasons here, by imbibing the fresh air upon the coast."



“Indeed!” Agnes replied interestedly. “I had not heard of your being out of town for any time. You were not ill, I hope, that you found yourself obliged to take the benefit of the sea air? I hate to be an invalid!”

Agnes looked very pretty indeed as she said this; she was costumed in a long white morning dress, and she wore round her throat a gold necklace, from which there hung a small locket with a miniature of her brother, which he had made her a present of.

The portrait given here of her—but at best a poor one—is the labour fond and patient of days spent in the study of her fair feminine character. One might draw her lineaments in a dim, mechanical way, but the mind can imagine them better still, with more regard to truth. A delicate, modest maiden, in a handsome light dress, toying with the leaves of a moss-rose, which she had just plucked on her way out through the garden, while she glances up at Lady Legrange with blue, innocent eyes; that is the best drawing one can make of her at this moment, nor could even perhaps the intellect or the pen depict their description of her more adequately either. The woman who first realizes our faint conceptions of what loveliness ought to be, gives reality to the spiritual part of our being, which we were not aware of till she came across

our path. As with sorrow, so, too, there is an affection which lies too deep for words, especially when it is surrounded by charms of another description, which are beyond the reach of the senses and the resources of language.

Women shroud their beauty in a sort of mystery, wherein they envelop it, just as Turkish women wear veils whenever they go out into the streets, and men must find it out for themselves by claiming a kindred for it with the greater mystery in their own souls. Then it has passed beyond the region of all earthy light and grace, into that other light, 'which was never yet on sea or land,' and which can never be described, in this world, by the brush of the artist, or the pen-writer or journalist, no matter how faithfully or how assiduously either the one or the other may fruitlessly try to realize it.

"Well, I was not an invalid on this occasion," said Lady Legrange, resuming the thread of the conversation, which had been interrupted by both ladies remaining silent for some time, during which they were contemplating the scene around them, which was very charming at all seasons of the year in this particular quarter of the suburbs of Paris. "No fear of that; 'twas only ennui which was the matter with me—that constant plague of my otherwise happy and contented life! Do you ever suffer from it? If you do, I can sincerely sympathize

with you. Do you ever feel it, Agnes?" asked Lady Legrange.

"Not I!" she answered. "I have too much to do to be annoyed by it; too many things to attend to in this little cottage here. I am never, you must know, a minute idle. Not only have I Jack now to look after, but little Lucie also."

"Jack, you lazy fellow," said Lady Legrange, "how contented you are there, lying upon the grass! Have you forgotten your good manners, sir, that when a lady calls to pay you a visit you do not rise to receive her as you ought to do? I am positively shocked, and quite ashamed of you!"

"My dear Margaret, I am most delighted indeed to see you here, and all that sort of thing. You will excuse, however, my not rising to greet you."

Jack did not make any attempt to stir from the place where he was lounging, but lay there languidly, and smiling good-humouredly up at Lady Legrange. She was more familiarly disposed than he was upon this occasion, and she knelt down by his side in a very friendly mood, and then, as if to oblige her, he slowly held out his hand to take hers.

"I suppose that you must be forgiven, Jack, for old times' sake, and still more for having won that race so gallantly the other day. I never saw you ride a horse so well as you did during that contest. Are you aware, or am I to be the first to tell the

news to you, that all Paris is delighted with you, and has been talking of nothing since but your skill in horsemanship?"

"I am not," he answered derisively. "See what fortunate beings some people are, and what fame is, Margaret, nevertheless, to me! I regard it very lightly, and as a matter of small importance. I absolutely heard nothing of my own established notoriety. What I had done would, I knew, of course, be universally spoken of, at all events in this city. I presume that the same thing occurs when one does what is acknowledged to be wrong. Perhaps you could set me right upon that point. Ten times more people know all about our shortcomings and slight mistakes than would be imagined by anyone. What a queer world this is which we live in, Margaret, is it not?"

"Yes," she said quietly.

"I do not think it queer at all," remarked Agnes.

"No," answered her brother seriously; "for you are as straight as a reed and as sound as a rock. For you all things go rightly; but, Agnes, some of us are very odd, you must admit that."

"I suppose that I must," she thoughtfully replied, "because it is true. Is it not true, Margaret? But, dear me! where's the child?"

"Lucie? Is she not here?" exclaimed Jack, starting to his feet.

"No," said Agnes hurriedly. "Where can she be?"

"She was here two moments ago," responded Lady Margaret, "for I saw her running away by herself by way of amusement. She ran out of the garden like wildfire! Some new attraction has caught the child's busy fancy. Never mind her; she will be back amongst us again before long!"

"She has left her skipping-rope behind her, too!" said Agnes, picking it up.

"Lucie!" exclaimed Jack.

There was no reply.

"Lucie!" exclaimed Agnes.

Yet no reply.

A presentiment seemed to creep over Jack Audley, as if there was something wrong, which for the moment he could not divine, whatever it might be.

"She must have gone into the house," said Lady Legrange. "Shall I go in and see if she is there?"

"Or over to Geneviève Beauville," remarked Agnes.

"Lucie! Lucie!" cried Jack.

But no Lucie responded to their repeated exclamations. She used, whenever Jack called her, to answer him in a clear, ringing voice, and that without delay. Where could she be, then, upon this occasion? Jack got anxious; he tried to stifle the

feeling of fear which came over him. What if she were stolen! He had heard of such thefts; they never struck home so forcibly as they did at the present moment.

“Lucie!” he cried again. “This is inexplicable! The cottage is small; Beauville’s is within ear-shot; she ought to hear me calling! Lucie!”

He paused, and glanced beseechingly into Agnes’ face, mutely appealing to his sister to go and find his child and bring his darling to him. Agnes said:

“Walk across to Beauville’s and ascertain if she is there, Jack. I will go into the cottage meanwhile, and see if she happens to be within.”

Jack went down the garden and over to his friend, Count Beauville’s, in quest of Lucie. Agnes hastened into the cottage and searched through all the rooms. Lady Margaret Legrange remained, however, behind in the garden. On the grass at her feet she observed an open letter lying. She stooped and picked it up. She smiled a little sadly. It was Augustine St. Clare’s letter to Jack, which Agnes, hurrying off, all anxious about the whereabouts of the child, inadvertently dropped. Lady Margaret did not read it; but she held it affectionately in her hand as some precious thing, and a rush of thoughts came crowding into her mind. Margaret! ah, Margaret! how gladly you

would recall the past in order that you might live it over again ! But, oh ! how differently !

Presently Agnes came back with a white face. Lady Legrange handed her St. Clare's letter.

"Thank you, Margaret," she said. "I must have dropped it. Just think, I cannot find the child !"

"She must be at Beauville's," said Lady Legrange.

"No," answered Agnes ; "for here's Jack back without her. It is very strange !"

"So she is not in the cottage, Agnes ?" he asked, quite wildly.

"No," Agnes replied.

"You must be mistaken, Agnes. Come, let the three of us go together and make a careful search through the cottage. She may have been taken suddenly ill," he added, his manner betraying the greatest degree of anxiety.

The thought was uppermost in his mind that either she must be taken suddenly ill, or else that she was stolen, and gone away with gipsies, some of whom he had observed prowling about the cottage precincts of late, and telling fortunes to the neighbours and domestics.

Lady Legrange consented, after some demurring, to join the others in the search. They first examined the garden itself ; then the kitchen ; next the drawing-room, and dining-room, and Agnes' own

pretty boudoir; they proceeded through the upper rooms; all in vain; no Lucie was to be found there. At length they arrived at Agnes' bedroom, in which apartment the child always slept; her cot was in the centre, and its snowy curtains were of a charming whiteness. The sun was shining on them when Lady Legrange entered the room. She was the first to enter; the instant that she did so a piercing scream startled the air, and a voice from behind the curtains of Lucie's cot was heard to say:

"Go away! Go away! What brings you here? Oh! how I hate you! You are not like Aunt Agnes! Go away at once, I say!"

Lady Legrange was spell-bound. Jack rushed over and flung the curtains of the cot roughly aside. There was little Lucie curled up beneath the bed-clothes; nothing visible but two large blue eyes, staring spitefully and defiantly at Lady Margaret.

"Go away!" she screamed.

"Lucie," her father said, "what is the matter with you?"

"Bid her go away!" she screamed again. "I do not like her!"

Jack took the child in his arms and tried in vain to soothe her agitated feelings.

"Lucie," he said, "that lady will do you no harm. She is a friend."

"Let her go away! papa, dear papa, dear, dear



papa, surely you won't allow her to hurt me? Will you not protect me from her fierce looks?" sobbed the child.

"She will not hurt you. That is Lady Legrange; do you not know her? or have you forgotten your good manners and proper deportment, Lucie? She has no such intention at all as that of injuring you. Lucie, my love, I never saw you disturbed in this way before. What on earth can be the matter with you?"

The child refused to be pacified: no amount of blandishments were of any avail. The moment she had seen Lady Legrange descending from her carriage and entering the garden she had rushed away as if she was bewitched, and hid herself from observation in her little cot in Agnes' room. She heard her father calling and inquiring for her, but she would not stir from where she was concealed, nor make the least reply. She hid there determinedly until the unexpected apparition in the doorway of the object of her great dislike set her almost beside herself with infant rage. She entertained a most intense dread of Lady Legrange. So long as the latter was present the child kept trembling all over from head to foot. The matter finally ended by Lady Margaret having to drive away back to Paris much earlier than she had intended; the child would not endure her presence in the cottage.

This little episode, small as it was, left its disagreeable impressions behind it; but Jack did not mind it on his part, he was so glad to have discovered once more his child, as he thought that she had been stolen from him, or that she had gone astray somewhere. Not so with Agnes; she was likely to remember it for a long time; it was such an unusual circumstance, in every way that she regarded it.

Jack soon afterwards took his departure for London on business which was connected with the safe investment in the Stocks of some of Lucie's thousands. And Agnes remained at Suresnes, winning daily the love of the innocent child by the secret power of her own beautiful character. Agnes must have had a rare and noble spirit to have won admittance into the extremely small circle of Marie de la Vallonière's intimate friends. To be Marie's friend meant to be possessed of fine and most excellent traits of character.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Augustine St. Clare read the Marquis de Ruchault's letter announcing the victory which was won by the Irish horse at the last races, he felt a great satisfaction; for he had actually bred the animal himself, and, moreover, had at this moment in his stables a fine specimen of the equine species, and own brother to the successful horse.

"The animal is a good one to have gained that difficult race," St. Clare said to himself; "but then 'twas Jack Audley who rode him, and I believe that he would come in first on a mule if he so willed it."

Then he read Jack Audley's letter, and immediately sat down and wrote carefully in reply the letter which had so much excited Agnes' curiosity in the garden. He remained for a month longer in Ireland, and subsequently went down to Queens-town, where a handsome and valuable schooner yacht of his was moored, and waiting his orders or his arrival before proceeding to sea, according to custom, on a cruise. In her, as soon as he got

securely on board, he set sail, with two friends whom he had invited to join him in the voyage, for a couple of months' wandering in the Mediterranean, about Cyprus, Malta, and the Two Sicilies, as well as the North coast of Africa, when the wind was favourable in that direction; on the way thither they put in for provisions and repairs at Cherbourg, and St. Clare meanwhile visited Paris and saw some of his acquaintances there.

His object in going to Paris upon this occasion was chiefly to sell the horse—the brother to the animal that had won the race—which St. Clare had previously sent on by rail and steamboat to Paris from Ireland in the charge of a confidential groom. The horse was bought at once as soon as he arrived, and fetched a large sum of money. St. Clare lodged it with the bankers who generally cashed his cheques and circular notes, and then he returned very well satisfied to Cherbourg, to his trimly-built and fast-sailing yacht.

He had seen Agnes and Jack Audley whilst he was sojourning in Paris, which was only for a very short time; but he failed to meet Marie de la Vallonière, whom he was more desirous to renew acquaintance with than with anyone else. He called as a matter of duty on the Marquis de Sevrey; but both father and daughter, and also her lover, Henri, were away in the country, at the

*château* of the former, which was situated in Normandy, some distance beyond Rouen.

Augustine would have liked to look once more into Marie's well-remembered face. She was connected with his brightest thoughts and, whenever she came into his mind, gave him a great deal of pleasurable reflection. The schooling of his lifetime had made him strong and calm, and also wise, and able to appreciate the good qualities and rare attainments which existed in Marie de la Vallonière. He dismissed her from his mind, however, upon the present occasion, as he had other things to occupy his attention now, and so, getting his things ready, and seeing that everything was all right and taut on board his yacht, he gave orders to the captain and crew to set sail and proceed southward, and so he went to sea in his little vessel. They did not land again until they reached the Rock of Gibraltar, where, putting in for provisions, they stayed for a short time, and landed some contraband tobacco which they had brought with them from France, and which had escaped the keen scrutiny of the Custom House officers.

They went to sea again when all was ready, and passed their days cruising about the Mediterranean, and at length they found themselves remaining stationary for a few short weeks at the Bay of Naples. Augustine left his yacht and took up his

quarters in the city; he was sitting alone one morning in one of the principal hotels in Naples, reading an English newspaper which had reached him by the last post. He heard the rustle of a dress on the stairs, and a voice cried in French :

“Are you coming, Henri? Papa is waiting for us.”

“I am hastening, Marie; and I beg a million pardons for delaying you so long.”

Augustine St. Clare, when he heard the voice, started at once to his feet; he flung the newspaper upon the table which was nearest to him, and moved quickly to the half-open door of the coffee-room. He had recognised the familiar voice of no less a personage than the Comtesse Marie de la Vaulouière. He stood hesitatingly in the doorway, and smiling at her. She did not appear to observe him at first—it was only after a little time that she saw him clearly. She felt a shadow darkening the brilliant sunlight, and she turned round sharply, in order to see who was there, not sure but that it might have been Henri de Rucault, whom she was seeking, as he was going to accompany her father and herself in a promenade.

“Augustine!” she exclaimed, when she observed him; and she uttered a low soft cry as her heart sank within her.

She grew pale as a white rose, tottered towards

the banisters of the staircase, and tried to grasp them for support. It was so sudden to see him here! She would have fallen to the floor, had he not rushed towards her, and, with his strong right arm, supported her. Her eyes were closed. They opened now upon him as they had never opened upon another. In that glance he read her secret, and at the same moment she read his. Henceforth both were different towards each other, and yet the same. Henceforth, for the one and for the other, life was all blue sky with heaven beyond. It was an easy victory, after all, to have won her thus; but do not great blessings come when unlooked for? To wait patiently the course of events is wisdom of a high order, provided only we be in our right mind.

“ Marie!” he said.

“ Hush!” she whispered. “ I hear footsteps. It is Henri! He is coming in this direction.”

She darted from St. Clare's side, and stood for a second a few paces' distance from him, trembling all the while like a pleased but frightened fawn. Such a beautiful smile was on her face, illumined with her new happiness!

It required St. Clare's utmost self-control to receive, with his usual placidity of temper, the Marquis de Ruchault, who was descending the stairs alone, and framing within himself, as he came

along, apologies which he was about to offer to Marie for the delay which he was causing her. Little she wanted his superfluous apologies now!

"Henri!" she exclaimed gaily, "just imagine who is here! Is not this a *rencontre*?"

"Why, what on earth brings you to this part of the globe, St. Clare?" he cried. "I am so glad to see you, my dear fellow. Welcome, welcome! Is the Marquis de Sevrey aware of your arrival? We are stopping at this hotel."

"Oh no," Augustine answered. "He is not aware of my arrival. I have as yet met but the Comtesse."

"Have you been long in Naples?" he asked. "You cannot have been: else we would have come across each other before this."

"I have not been long here; I, with some friends, have been cruising about the Mediterranean; landing here and there, and likewise amusing ourselves. We sailed from Ireland, and put in at the harbour of Cherbourg, as I wanted to go on business of my own to Paris, whither I had previously sent a valuable horse which I wished to dispose of to some of the buyers there, or else to some friend or acquaintance of my own who might happen to want him either for racing or for hunting. He was purchased at once, as he was brother of that animal of yours which Jack Audley brought in



first amongst all competitors at the late races in Paris."

"I regret that I did not know you had such a splendid horse for sale. I would have most willingly bought him, if I had only got the chance of doing so. I am downright sorry that I should have lost him!"

"So am I. He was sold to some nobleman in Italy. I have forgotten his name—although he wrote both his name and address upon a visiting-card for me when I was negotiating the sale of the horse with him in Paris."

"Will you make a lengthened stay in Naples now, or are you going away soon again, Monsieur Augustine?" inquired Marie de la Vallonière.

"I cannot say that as yet," he answered, remarking that her bonnet was somewhat tossed, and her hair disbevelled, from the fact of her so near falling to the ground and fainting with surprise at seeing St. Clare so unexpectedly awhile since. "It altogether depends upon circumstances whether I shall remain or not. My yacht, which is moored, as you see, out there in the bay, is a large and commodious one; and my time, moreover, is altogether at my own disposal to do whatever I like with. I know not yet how long I may linger here, or whither I shall go afterwards."

"I would like to see your yacht, if you would

kindly take us on board for that purpose," said Marie.

"So you shall," he replied. "Whenever you like, and whenever you are at leisure. I shall have a boat ready for you, and row you across to it in the morning if you will promise to come then; and everything shall be prepared for your reception."

At this moment her father, the Marquis de Sevrey, surprised that the young couple should have delayed such an unusual length of time, entered the hotel in a slightly impatient mood. He was astonished when he beheld Augustine St. Clare, whom he thought was many a long mile away. He expressed much pleasure at seeing him, and invited him to spend the day with them by joining in the excursion which they were, when they came in from their walk, to take into the adjacent country.

St. Clare, however, was on this occasion obliged, against his will, to refuse the invitation, for he had made a previous appointment with his yachting companions, and he was obliged, he said, to keep it.

Marie was secretly glad that he was unable to come with them, because she feared, she knew not why, that in an unguarded moment she might be led into betraying herself and the altered state of her feelings with regard to Henri de Ruchault; and she did not know yet whether thereby she would be giving offence to her father or not, did he find

that there was a possibility of the match, which he had arranged for her with the Marquis, being broken off, and rendered null and void by her own want of judgment and proper foresight.

As for Augustine, the Marquis de Sevrey did not pay much heed to him. He asked him to come to dinner, and Augustine said that he would if he thought he could get away from his friends in time. He at length promised to dine with them that evening upon their return from the country. He saw them into their carriage subsequently, when they did start after their walk through the principal streets, and he wished them, smilingly, a pleasant day all to themselves as they drove merrily off.

Marie blushed and held her peace. Never was she so joyous and so talkative as she was to-day. Her father became, if possible, more proud, so to speak, of his popular daughter: Henri folded his arms, and felt himself a happy man as the carriage rolled onwards, and he sat opposite to her, gazing in admiration on Marie.

Marie, although always lovely in personal appearance, looked really exquisite to-day. The mere thought of being beloved by one whom she truly and passionately loved, and that for a considerable time now—one, whom she believed, that she would willingly die for if she was compelled to do so—

made her wear an expression of the most beautiful contentment and perfect rest.

The day went slowly on. She thought that they never would turn back to their hotel; she wondered would the coolness of the evening ever come round again? She says to herself, that she will do her best to-night to captivate St. Clare, and that she shall be charmingly dressed when she appears in the richest of her silks in the drawing-room before dinner is announced. She shall seek out and wear her prettiest and most befitting costume, for his sake, that perhaps it might afford him some pleasure. But as for Henri de Ruchault, betrothed to him although she was, she ignored his presence altogether.

## CHAPTER XVII.

AUGUSTINE ST. CLARE was also peculiarly neat and careful in his own appearance upon this particular evening, when he came, by invitation, to dinner with the Marquis de Sevrey. There was, to be sure, the everlasting flower in his button-hole, which he was always in the habit of wearing upon every occasion. When he entered the room the Marquis de Ruchault alone was there.

"We had a charming drive," he said to St Clare; "Marie, for one, enjoyed it greatly. We only returned from the country one short hour ago, and we were all rather tired and glad to get back."

"You must have travelled over a good many miles," he answered.

"About thirty, I should say," the Marquis replied. "What a pity," he added, "I missed that horse of yours; I would have bought him if you had offered him to me. Have you any more like him for sale at present?"

"No, not one; they are all sold and off my

hands. I generally keep a stud of horses, but my friends never leave them with me for any length of time ; they always buy them up at once, so then I have to go in search of other horses."

"That must have been a fine horse—that last one, which you sold, as you say, to the Italian nobleman whose address you have forgot. You should have told me, though, you had him for sale ; I would have given you any price you asked for him, so anxious was I to purchase a horse like that."

"It never occurred to me to offer him to you for sale when I was last in Paris."

"When you have a good horse again to dispose of, and one that will be value for his money, mind that you give me the hint about him."

"I shall not fail to do so, I promise you. Next year, if all goes well, I may be so fortunate as to possess a good one—at least, I expect so ; you shall have him then with all my heart, and make what you can out of him."

"Thanks. You tell me, then, that you were in our gay and blithesome Paris lately. How did you find my friend Jack Audley getting on ? Prospering as usual, let us hope."

"Oh yes ! He was there, and looking well : ruralizing, in fact, with his sister and child in that pretty little cottage at Suresnes."

"He is getting quite tame and domestic ! He

will begin to grow fat soon!" said the Marquis, and he laughed at the idea.

"What a nice and well-educated girl his sister is!" responded St. Clare, in a low tone of voice. "She is always so agreeable to speak to; do you not think so?"

"Yes," he answered; "she is a credit to the human race, as it is at present organized, according to my opinion. Agnes Audley has as noble a mind as ever a woman possessed; and he would be a happy man indeed who should succeed in winning her as his wife. She is as unselfish as she is refined, and as disinterested as she is considerate towards the foibles of others."

"I don't think that there is a better woman under the sun; and her brother, to whom she is very deeply attached, idolizes the ground she walks on. She devotes herself in the most generous manner to the task of rearing his poor motherless child."

"Who would be an orphan in very truth," added the Marquis good-naturedly, "if she had only Jack Audley to take care of her."

"I don't know that," Augustine St. Clare said. "Jack is exceedingly shrewd in some things; and I would lay a bet he is just the very fellow to take proper and thoughtful care of his little Lucie!"

"If love would do it—yes. For he idolizes the

child. He told me that he never is so happy as when she is by, and sharing his society. Do you wonder at that—in *him* ?”

“I do not. I believe that he has a nature, or disposition, somewhat approaching that of his sister, only circumstances, the vicissitudes of the world, the hard teachings of his reckless life, both in the army, and also since he has left the army, have not permitted or given time to his better qualities to develop their powers for good. Had they been allowed a fairer field for their exercise, and even no favour, Jack Audley to-day would be high up in the English military service instead of being what he is.”

“Is he not well enough off as he is ?”

“Ah ! yes,” St. Clare replied ; “that is quite true. He is very well off—uncommonly well off, in my opinion. But then he can never lose sight of the regret of having cut short his military career by his own acts. The thought of it must be, of course, a most bitter one ; notwithstanding all the good things which may come, and actually have come, in his way from time to time.”

“With you, St. Clare, it might be so ; and, perhaps, likewise with me. For I am not without my feelings of sensitiveness. But as for Jack’s regretting anything, once it is past and gone, I have my own most serious doubts about the



possibility of it. He may have been sorry in his heart for things which are past and irrevocable; but once his act of contrition is over, I don't think that they give him a great deal of trouble, no matter how numerous his sins of omission may be. Jack Audley seems to me like a ship sailing over the sea—battling with storms, and basking in calms—but never leaving a track behind to show the way she has come. Did you ever remark his face? There is not a streak of care on it.”

“Not one,” he answered; “not a line left there either by thought or sorrow; he sometimes does not look older than four-and-twenty.”

It was a lovely summer evening, and the glorious rays of the declining sun lit up the window near which the Marquis and Augustine St. Clare stood conversing. They could behold the Bay of Naples from where they were.

Marie saw them as she descended the staircase, dressed with that exquisite carelessness which she was so thoroughly skilled in the art of displaying whenever the occasion suited her. In her hair she wore a simple red rose, which became her maidenly blushes. Before she entered the room she paused in the doorway, where she remained studying the two men. It was only for a moment; and then, with a glance upward full of gratitude, she glided smiling gaily into the room, and going

straightway up to Augustine St. Clare, held out her hand.

It was a difficult task for both of them to meet thus in the presence of others, and to appear as if they were nothing at all to one another, only friends, face to face to-day, and to-morrow to be parted again. They both felt how hard it was; they both were equal to the difficulty.

“Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May;  
Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!  
Blow thro' the living world—' Let the King reign.'”

“Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?  
Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,  
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.”

“Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard  
That God hath told the King a secret word.  
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.”

“Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.  
Blow trumpet! live the strength and die the lust!  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.”

“Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,  
The King is king, and ever wills the highest.  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.”

“Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!  
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.”

“The King will follow Christ, and we the King  
In whom High God hath breathed a secret thing!  
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.”

Henri de Ruchault, unsuspecting, smiled, and fixed his gaze as lovingly as he could on Marie de

la Vallonière; for it must not be imagined that he was altogether in love with her. They manage these things better in France; they were aware that their marriage, when it did take place, was only to be a *mariage de convenance*. They both knew, although they were lovers in a kind of way, that their contemplated union was to be one merely of mutual utility—one which should be conducive to the prosperity of their family greatness.

She did not at any time ever anticipate much happiness from a marriage which recommended itself simply by means of such prudential reasons as those which are alleged to have existed. Bah! at times in her solitude she loathed the very idea of it, so repugnant was it to all her better feelings. But she was a wise girl, and loved and revered her dear father—who was both mother and father to her combined—and for his sake, and because she believed so much in his experience, his prudence, and, most of all, in his constant and foreseeing love for her—his only child!—she had consented to the proposal which her father in the first place had made to her that she should marry the Marquis de Ruchault.

So she heroically laid aside her girlish dreams of love—if, indeed, she ever entertained them with regard to that nobleman—and she said, when her

father asked her to do so, that she was ready to marry him.

When she met Henri, she knew there would be no love lost between them; but, nevertheless, she would be a good wife to him. It was God's will, she supposed; and so, having abandoned all her young dreams of human love, she waited for the fulfilment of what she expected to be the will of Providence.

There was bitterness in giving up the idea of Augustine St. Clare; she did give him up wholly and entirely, and cast him out of her heart. And yet, after all, when her bird called her, she answered and came to him for ever. Let her father fume, let Henri swear—if he does swear—she will come to her true lover only; but she must bide her time, and so must he. That advice to him is already in her face. He has seen it there. He is surprised at the expression of her face.

She was the first to speak:

“We had such a charming day,” she said to St. Clare. “I hope you had likewise?”

“Yes,” he answered; “we spent most of our time since noon in the country—I and my two friends. We hired a vehicle, and drove a few miles off; there we remained, sketching and sauntering about. The place we went to is a villa belonging to a Neapolitan, whom during our rambles we met

at Constantinople, and who, learning we should be in Naples about this time, invited us to spend a few days with him. My two friends, who, by the way, are both of them Irish, and whom I must introduce to you, have remained after me to-day with this gentleman. I would also have stayed with them, but for my dining with you this evening. To-night I shall return and join my kind host."

"Then you are going away for some time?" asked Marie.

"For a few days."

"When shall we meet you again, then?" she asked. "We leave this the day after to-morrow, for Florence. Do we not, Henri?"

"I believe so," he answered. "At least, so I understood from the Marquis, your father."

Marie sighed. Augustine knew the meaning of that sigh.

At this instant the Marquis de Sevrey entered the sitting-room, and greeted Augustine St. Clare most cordially. He was inclined to be very friendly to him, for he knew it was from Augustine that the Marquis de Ruchault purchased that lucky horse which had succeeded in winning the race in Paris, in the presence of the Emperor Napoleon and of the Imperial Court.

"Excuse my being late, St. Clare," he said; "and

so you are on a yachting cruise? How I envy you!"

"I believe you, too, are fond of the sea, Marquis?" St. Clare answered.

"Passionately," he replied. "I keep a yacht myself."

"So I have heard."

"We go on a cruise for a month every year," Marie said; "and I do find it so pleasant!"

"If you will only accompany me I will give you a day's sailing to-morrow, Marquis. I trust Henri and the Comtesse will not refuse?"

"How good of you, St. Clare!" the Marquis de Sevrey replied. "I am only too glad to accept your kind offer. We can put off our contemplated journey to Florence for a day or two, Marie. Our time is entirely our own. What say you, Henri?"

"I shall be delighted to have a day on the waves," the latter replied. "That is, if no wind arises, and the sea is not too rough."

"But," interrupted Marie gently—oh! so gently, her musical language sent a thrill of delight through St. Clare's breast, "shall we not be interfering with Mr. St. Clare's previous arrangements by accepting his very kind invitation? You forget he is staying on a visit with a friend some distance from Naples."

"Oh, that need be no obstacle!" St. Clare said. "I can very easily arrange with Signor Pietrozzi—"

that is his name. I will write a note to him after dinner explaining my absence. He has my two friends along with him, remember, and they are good substitutes for me at all times. I will go on board the yacht to-night and order my men to have everything prepared for the morning. I shall expect you not later than ten o'clock, so that we may have a good day's sail. Will you be ready at that hour?" he asked Marie.

"Yes," she answered.

At this moment the dinner was announced by the waiters. They proceeded, Marie leaning upon her father's arm, to the room below stairs, wherein that substantial repast was duly laid. The dinner did credit to the master of the hotel, and the wines to his cellar. More than one bottle of Medoc which had not seen the light of day for years was conjured up from the vaults beneath the hotel to sparkle amidst the gold and silver plate which was laid upon the table loaded with viands. Candelabra shed their serene and steady light upon the vivid scene; the Italian moon which Horace saw and Cicero and Virgil praised, sent its poetic stream of classic rays through the panes of stained-glass window, in upon a darkened recess—some distance apart from where the dinner-table was temporarily placed to suit the convenience of the assembled guests, who were already exceedingly hungry—and

in this recess grapes wrapped up in their own vine-leaves, with fruit of luxuriant kinds mingled with them, and rivalling them in display, and dainty trifles in the shape of sweetmeats and bon-bons and other confectionery, formed the sumptuous and fitting dessert. The moonbeams amongst all these played at intervals, and made a fairy picture worthy the pencil of the artist.

Marie sat between Henri and St. Clare, having the latter on her right—next to him, the latter could observe that she wore a very beautiful red rose, and a natural one, too, in her abundant and gracefully arranged hair. One large diamond, attached by a pendant to her delicately-formed throat, shot every instant a dazzling gleam about; so much so that those who were present remarked its splendour; but its rare degree of radiance and beauty was absolutely dull beneath the wondrous light of Marie de la Vallonière's eyes to-night—a light which is a mystery, and I know not if it be the same which Wordsworth speaks of as “the consecration and the poet's dream.”

After dinner was over Marie proceeded to a piano which was in the room, and awakened its slumbering chords into a language which so many of us love when she sat down and played. Her fingers deftly touched the notes, and memories of Meyerbeer, of Mozart, of Beethoven, of Weber, of



dead Rossini, arose in the minds of the men, who, sitting over their wine, were silenced in their conversation by the piano, which Marie handled with the most exquisite skill imaginable. To listen to good music is pastime indeed; for then the thoughts, the cares, and the apprehensions of this strange, half-sorrowful, half-joyful, and difficult life are hushed in the flow of melody, in the stirring and the plaintive accents which fall upon the ear so agreeably, and the murmurings which the souls endowed with the great gift of genius have preserved in the arcana of harmony to calm and fill us with a heavenly delight upon our earthly path. How stony and rugged that path sometimes is, who is there does not wisely though sadly feel? Our existence in itself has its own sublime songs which chime in unison with the songs of the poets of sound—the mighty masters of Handel's art.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“**H**OW sweetly you sang ‘Ah, che la morte!’ It must be one of your favourites,” said St. Clare to Marie, when she had finished playing and singing.

He had taken his seat behind her. There were no music-leaves to turn over, for the gay Marie had been playing from memory.

“Do you think so?” she answered aloud; and immediately she continued, in a lower voice: “Yes; it is one of my favourites. To-night I liked singing it very much indeed, for I thought that perhaps it would please you.”

“It is so convenient and so pleasant to have a predilection for something—no matter what it may be,” he replied.

“Or to have a predilection for some one,” she added, in a modest manner, gazing up at him.

“Yes; or to have a predilection for some one, as you truly remark,” he said, in a thoughtful way, which imparted to him a peculiar charm—the per-

fect beauty and *naïveté* of which he was entirely unconscious of himself. "But sometimes, Comtesse," he continued rather sadly, and regarding her fixedly, "our predilections in the latter case are not verified as satisfactorily as we foolishly believed they would be. Do not our idols prove themselves to be formed of clay—they are of clay, you know—if I might make use of such a simile?"

"Of clay?" she murmured and repeated the expression. "Of clay?" Turning round on the music-stool, and facing him fully, she added: "Oh no! Not so easily. I know an idol which is not of clay."

"Do you worship it?"

"I have spoken figuratively to you. My idol is not in reality an idol, if I convey to you properly my meaning; but I am talking to you at random, and rather confusedly, so I hope you will pardon me."

"Then, what is it that you do wish to convey? I fail to rightly comprehend your meaning."

She glanced at him very quickly, and, as she did so, she laid her hand very gently upon his arm, which was leaning over the back of his chair.

"Augustine St. Clare," she said, "do you not see that papa is actually looking at us? Do you know that I could never find out whether you belonged to any profession, although I always thought you to

be, of course, a man of means and of property. But still, there was that about you that made me believe that you had seen hard work somewhere or another at some period of your life. Just imagine, I often thought that you were a barrister, or what we French people term an *avocat*. If not, you should have been one."

"Why?"

"Because you ask such foolish questions; and our *avocats* always do that, I find, whenever I meet them, as I often do, in Paris, at evening parties. But pray be so good as to excuse my wandering remarks, and please to let me continue my playing on the piano, or else we shall be inopportunately surprised and discovered by our friends who are drinking their wine so freely over the way, and then I shall lose your pleasant company, for which I shall be extremely sorry indeed!"

She turned round again on her music-stool, and wakened the notes of the instrument until they broke forth, as it were, into an Irish air, which filled the room with variegated music, if we might be allowed to use that term here.

"Oft in the stilly night,  
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,  
Fond memory brings the light  
Of other days around me."

"Is my company, or my society rather, so very

pleasant to you, Comtesse?" he asked laughingly, whilst she played on, and the music of the grand piano hid their voices.

It was hardly necessary to seek to hide their blinding words; the two Marquises over at the other side of the room were not listening to one note of the music, or to one sentence spoken by the others, both being busily employed in discussing partly the merits of a good bottle of claret, and partly the merits of a horse which the Marquis de Ruchault was about entering for a race to be shortly run in England.

"Your company or your society pleasant?" she reiterated, repeating the words mechanically after Augustine St. Clare. "Is the oasis, you may as well ask me, agreeable to the desert traveller when he meets with it unexpectedly in the midst of his weary travels, and when his heart is sinking within him, and he has nothing left but hope to sustain him? Is the harbour a pleasant refuge to the sea-wearied crew of a ship that has for months battled with the adverse billows and the angry storms? You are my oasis; you are my harbour! I speak to you in the language of poetry, but I trust that I make myself understood."

"I shall shelter you whenever you need my protection—if I might dare to offer you such!" was his low reply, full of the deepest emotion.

In a short time subsequently, the servants brought in tea and coffee, and, as soon as the guests had partaken of either of those grateful beverages, so refreshing at times, the Marquis de Ruchault proposed that, as it was a fine moonlight night, they should all go together for a walk in the large garden which was attached to the hotel they were stopping in. Marie assented to this proposal with an exclamation of joy; so did Augustine St. Clare agree to it. The Marquis de Sevrey alone declined to leave the house.

"I am not like you young folk," he said. "I dare not let the night air have its chance of injuring me. The days are come upon me—have overtaken me, I should say—when I must be more than unusually careful about myself. But you can go out for awhile, Marie, my dear. Muffle yourself up well in some warm cloak or jacket, lest you should catch cold, and then I might lose my only daughter."

"Yes," she replied. "I want to go upstairs, I shall be back in a moment." She left the room and returned warmly clad in a white ermine shawl. "Now to the night air, be it ever so sharp, I fling down the glove of defiance."

"Very good;" her father answered; "but don't, if you please, stay long absent from the hotel, Marie. Bring her back soon, Henri."

"I shall not fail to do so," the latter replied;

“that is, if she will consent to come back with me. I am afraid that the exquisite beauty of the night, with all those brilliant stars shining vividly in the sky and the moon so bright, will overcome all my entreaties to Marie to return in good time before the night air gets too cold.”

“I have not sworn to obey you yet,” she said, putting on her gloves with a mocking smile. “When we are man and wife I shall be your most obedient servitor, but not before then, Marquis.”

The Marquis de Ruchault shrugged his shoulders, like all honest Frenchmen when they are puzzled or in a difficulty, and made no reply, considering discretion to be the better part of valour—upon this occasion, at least—seeing that the bottle of claret of ancient vintage had got some way or other into his head and confused his recollection. He went, however, and opened the door of the dining-room for the Comtesse de la Vallonière. Marie passed out without thanking him for this act of courtesy, and tripped down the stairs lightly.

“How very lovely the still night is!” she exclaimed, standing in the open air at the entrance to the hotel, and glancing first around her and then upwards towards the heavens, where the glowing moon hung like a solitary lamp in the sky, and making the stars appear so small in comparison. No unfriendly breeze stirred the leaves of the trees

in the garden adjacent to the hotel; they were growing on the right and on the left of Marie. Motionless their branches hung, laden with foliage; the very flowers beneath them slept, beautiful in their own way as slumbering children. As Marie stood there contemplating the scene, a splendid dog came slowly towards her, wagging his tail and seeking to be caressed by her as he recognised her. It was no other than Bourbon, who always accompanied Marie in her rambles from home. She would miss the big dog very sadly indeed if he was not with her; he was so faithful, so affectionate, so trained, and so nobly born, to judge from his physique, that one must needs love the animal. Bourbon was a bit of a hero in his way. One stormy morning, in Dieppe, a year ago, it happened that a little child fell into the sea by accident, and would have been inevitably drowned, only that Marie de la Vallonière, along with her dog Bourbon, was passing the spot at the particular time, and at once, at Marie's hasty bidding, Bourbon leapt into the big waves and rescued the child.

When he came to her to-night, Marie laid her hand upon the dog's head, and stooping down, looked into his mild and affectionate eyes. There was a wistful expression of friendship for her in them which pleased her exceedingly, and she patted



him on the back good-humouredly and encouragingly. Bourbon's long and bushy tail went wagging to and fro, indicative of his extreme satisfaction at her attention towards him. To be loved by his mistress Marie was evidently a very great delight to him ; others—that is men and women—followed her about and attended to her less successfully than did this highly-bred animal, and like him, they would be gratified if only they got a look of thanks in return ; but then, if they could not ingratiate themselves with her as naturally as he did, it was because they did not know the proper way to do so. It was, they thought, an easy and a pleasant thing to fawn upon and to flatter Marie, since she was an individual of social position and great wealth, and an only daughter ; but then there was no one knew it better than she herself did, that she was sought after by them on account of those worldly advantages which she fortunately was the possessor of, as much, if not a great deal more, than she was sought after for herself alone ; whereas poor honest energetic Bourbon knew nothing about, and moreover cared nothing at all about, Marie's title and worldly greatness ; for it was herself he followed, because the dog's instincts taught him to be fond of her. Whenever, accordingly, she went away to foreign lands, Bourbon, the big dog, as a matter of course, went there too, along with his

mistress, to keep her company; and he got on very well abroad, although he was not up in languages.

"I see that you have brought Bourbon with you," said St. Clare, when, coming into the garden, he observed the dog with Marie. "He must be a great friend of yours, and a faithful follower, to find him thus in Naples, so far from home, I having last seen him when I was in Paris."

"It is without doubt rather a long way off," she answered, laughing at the same time; "and you wonder that I should bring my dog all around the world with me thus. Papa, however, is, if possible, even fonder of Bourbon than I am myself."

"You should have brought Talisman with you, Marie," said Henri de Ruchault, now joining St. Clare in the conversation; "it would be delightful, I am sure, to have him here, for instance."

"I wish he were," she answered sadly; "unfortunately, Henri, he is not as portable as our brave Bourbon. So I had to leave the horse behind. But I do not wonder at your making the remark; because it does seem such a foolish thing to have brought my dog Bourbon all the way from Paris with me; but I did so to have him as a sort of protector whenever I go out for lonely walks by myself, when papa is not able to accompany me or my maid happens to be busy. Do you

not think, however, that I could have very well done without Bourbon, Mr. St. Clare ?”

“I am not prepared to say that I do believe you could do without the dog as a companion or guardian, when you have no one else to attend upon you,” he replied. “I have often heard very singular stories about dogs, and particularly with respect to their extraordinary fidelity to human beings. I once heard of a lady who died young, and the chief mourner at her funeral was her favourite dog, who followed the coffin to the grave as if it was a work of duty. Does not that spouting fountain yonder look extremely pretty ?” he added, pointing to one in the centre of the garden, and right opposite to them, which threw its spray upwards and derived a new symmetry of form from the mysteriousness of the hour at which it was now seen.

In its solid basin the clear moonlight rested softly upon the placid surface of the water ; behind it, at some short distance removed, were visible the gas-lights in the city of Naples, which shone like stars upon the earth ; and the sea, so calm and limpid and peaceful to-night, seemed as if it slept to the silent observer.

“I would almost like to live here, in the midst of this charming scene, all my life long,” Marie murmured, influenced by the poetry of her surroundings, and drawing her shawl more closely to her

figure, as the night-air was somewhat chilly, notwithstanding the southern climate.

"Yes," St. Clare said; "it would be romantic to dream away one's existence here, and after a spell of perfect peace upon earth to awaken some day in Heaven, where one shall be for ever happy. Is that what you would wish for finally, Marie?"

"I would not like to dream away my life," she answered; "but I would desire to live it well, not looking perhaps for perfect peace upon earth, for I don't think that it is to be had. Do you recall to mind the words of the American poet, Longfellow? I have often read his poems in their native English dress:

"Tell me, not in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream,  
For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem.

"Life is real, life is earnest.  
And the grave is not its goal,  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.'

But I do not remember any more of the lines. Excuse my not being a very good English scholar!"

"If you did look for perfect peace upon earth, I fear you would be sadly disappointed," remarked the Marquis de Ruchault, and his voice as he spoke these words grated harshly upon Marie's ear.

"I shall not look for it, Henri, at all times," she

replied quietly. "But there will be moments and places when I shall expect it, and when I know it, or something akin to it, will come without fail to me. I cannot explain this subject any further to you. We are not, however, orphans in this world, though we are exiles."

Just the least sigh escaped her as she ceased speaking.

"I feel something very much akin to perfect peace now," said St. Clare to Marie, in a voice too low for the Marquis de Ruchault to overhear what was uttered.

Augustine did not observe Marie's blushes, which were her only reply.

In a few minutes they reached a terrace which bounded the garden on that side, and here the three lingered, chatting in a happy mood—two, at least, of them, for Henri was not too often happy—and glancing at the scene around them.

The night was so still and motionless they could hear their quiet words with vivid distinctness, especially Marie's, who, as she kept up the conversation, broke forth occasionally into a merry laugh. She could not but break forth thus for very joy at all her happiness. It was so new, so fresh, so unexpected!

Whilst they were thus conversing, a group of young men and maidens approached them, walking

along the public road outside. Some of them were singing to the accompaniment of a couple of flutes, and one or two other musical instruments. They were evidently young Neapolitans who were out for a joyous evening ramble after the work in which they had been engaged during the day was over. What they sang was an air from the opera of "Il Trovatore;" and their different voices blended with much combined skill. As they passed Marie and her two companions a silence ensued. There seemed to be a void left behind when the fairy-like music had finally passed away in the stillness and the darkness of the night. What a pity, thought the three attentive listeners, that it should have lasted so short a time! Just then a single voice—a girlish one, by the way, and a very fine treble—gave forth, like the notes coming from the "nightingale that, from the blooming spray, warbles at eve when all the woods are still," an exquisite air from the well-known masterpiece of Flotow—the opera of "Martha."

St. Clare, when he heard it, brushed a tear aside. Little he thought to have heard here, at this hour of the night, that familiar melody, and so far away from home, too. It was no other than the national song, which was adapted from Moore's "Irish Melodies" of "The Last Rose of Summer!" How beautiful and plaintive it was, coming in that

girlish voice, midst the moonlit loveliness of this Italian scene!—and with one likewise by the side of Augustine St. Clare whom he was beginning to love so fondly and so madly, namely, Marie de la Vallonière! Hour to be remembered when his native home arose in his mind, the sad associations connected with which, now softened by the lapse of time, lost all their remaining bitterness in the strong affection which had arisen within him for his Marie. Truly the future was all blue sky, with heaven beyond; passing clouds might arise therein—he cared not, knowing that they were, at best, but mere passing clouds.

“That is the famous Irish air in the opera of ‘Martha,’ by Flotow; I have often heard it,” said Marie joyously. “It is so pretty; and it is always so acceptable to hear at any time.”

“It took me by the greatest surprise,” answered Augustine St. Clare, “to hear ‘The Last Rose of Summer’ such a distance from where I heard it last. Hark! Some one is calling you!”

“Marie!” exclaimed a voice from a window of the hotel.

“Oh, it is papa!” she exclaimed. “He is anxious about me, lest I should catch cold. Let us go in!”

“Marie!”

“Coming!” she cried, tripping back to the hotel.

The Marquis and Augustine arose from the garden-seat where they were reclining, and walked rapidly after her and overtook her. For she paused when she had gone half way to wait for them to join her. Henri de Ruchault first entered the hotel. Marie and Augustine St. Clare soon followed.

“I plucked this flower,” she said softly, “as I came along. It was growing by the garden-walk, and I was tempted to pull it; though I do not know whether I shall displease the *maître-d’hôtel* by so doing.” She handed him coquettishly a red rose which, in appearance, was not unlike the one which she wore all the evening as an ornament in her hair. “But please don’t let it be seen,” she innocently added.

He remained for an hour longer in her society, writing meanwhile, when he was at leisure, a short note to his friend, Signor Pietrozzi, apologizing for, and explaining the reason of, his unexpected absence on the morrow from the Signor’s hospitable roof. Then he took his departure in order to pass the night on board his yacht, which was moored at a neighbouring anchorage in the bay, and in order to have everything ready for the following day’s sail, as previously decided upon. He was glad at heart as he walked blithely along by the light of the moon. The visionary and romantic expecta-



tions of his younger years, before experience had ripened him, and battling with the unpoetic realities of the world shut them out from view, came back to him to-night again. A rosy horizon in imagination once more met his eye, stretching out into a golden future. The love which, before the death of Lucie Legrange, died, had its resurrection at last, and his wounded faith in the honesty of purpose of others was healed. He had been in a wilderness of desolation longer than he cared to remember; but only long enough, perhaps, to bring to something like perfection qualities of the human heart, which, when developed by suffering and disappointment, go so much to make a man true, and worthy, and reliable. If they are dearly bought—they are so much in themselves—the price which is paid for them is not too high. Money can purchase a great many things; but souls, unselfish and generous, tried in the fire of affliction, and not found wanting, are not always at the command of the purse of the millionaire.

Marie de la Vallonière has reason to be proud of the conquest which her goodness, even more than her personal beauty, has won.

Augustine proceeded down to the jetty, where a boat, with one man from the yacht in it, was waiting in order to convey him to the tiny vessel, riding at anchor some three hundred yards off from th

shore. Augustine took a flask from his pocket, out of which he emptied some Irish whisky, which he gave to the man after he had taken a long pull at it himself.

“Here!” he said; “try this, James. It is some of John Jameson’s five-year-old, and as mild as can be!”

The sailor took the flask from him, and did his master’s bidding with the greatest alacrity.

“Thank your worship!” he said, when he had drunk all the whisky in the flask, and had returned it to St. Clare. “Let us put off now, sir, if you please. I’m nearly tired, waiting so long for you; and the tide is coming in, so I shall have a hard tug of it to row you out to the yacht. How are all the Neapolitans?”

“Faith, as fond of macaroni as ever!” was St. Clare’s answer, as he took hold of the rudder-ropes, and seated himself in the coxswain’s seat.

They reached his yacht in safety, after a little hard pulling against the tide and the wind, which was now on the point of rising, much to James’ chagrin; and St. Clare, before retiring to his late rest on board—it was two o’clock before he turned into his berth—gave the necessary orders to the captain and the crew for the contemplated excursion out to sea to-morrow, should wind and weather permit.

## CHAPTER XIX.

AUGUSTINE rose early, and coming again on shore, went back to the hotel, where the first whom he met happened to be De Ruchault, who was alone in the garden, smoking his morning cigar, and perusing his *Galignani*.

“We breakfasted half an hour ago,” he said; “and are ready to start. I expect to see Marie and the Marquis de Sevrey on the hall-steps every moment. What a fine morning, St. Clare! Do you think the day will hold out?”

“Decidedly yes. You might put to sea in a cockle-shell to day, provided you could get a boat of such a description and of sufficient size; the boats one generally sees here are not large enough to venture far from the land in them.”

“I had much rather go for a sail in your yacht, thank you, than in one of those smaller vessels. There’s Marie,” he replied, and a smile was visible upon the countenance of Henri de Ruchault.

She came towards them slowly from where she had

been standing under the portico leading into the hotel, and where from a distance she had been watching Augustine St. Clare—studying him, as it were, very thoughtfully, because in truth he was so much to her now. He took off his hat politely when he had recognised her, and then he advanced eagerly towards her :

“ We shall have an agreeable sail out in the bay yonder,” he said, “ and the weather, which was threatening early this forenoon, promises now to be most propitious. I am so glad that the day is fine ; it would be such a disappointment, indeed, did the rain come down to mar our pleasure. You must have offered up a prayer, Marie,” he added, in a lower voice, “ to have a cloudless sky to-day.”

“ So I did,” she answered in the same tone, and fixing her eyes earnestly upon his sunburnt face. “ Whenever I want anything I pray for it.”

“ And get it,” he said.

“ Not always—sometimes,” she replied. “ I prayed for you,” she added archly, “ and my prayer was heard.”

Augustine blushed, which was, perhaps, a boyish thing for him to do. But it made him look very handsome in Marie’s eyes.

Both their faces were wont to blush at times, and each of them had the gift—if we might so say—of changing the expression of the countenance, which

now would convey a meaning altogether different from that which it wore a couple of moments before.

“Do you see that man,” he said to Marie de la Vallonière, “leaning carelessly against the sun-dial yonder?”

“Yes,” she answered; “how curiously he stands there in that idle fashion, and how brown his cheeks are—from the heat of the sun, I suppose. Who may he be, pray, might I ask the question?”

“That fellow is no less a personage than the captain of my yacht. He is my factotum, so to speak. He has been with me all round the nautical world ever so many times. He stands at all times in that peculiar manner, as if he had, as it were, what are called his sea-legs on, and as if he was always endeavouring, at least in imagination, to cross the ship’s deck in a sudden squall or else a gale of wind. He is a trustworthy sailor, however, and knows his business well—at all events, as much of it as is necessary for my purposes; for my knowledge of the sea never extends beyond yachting. When I was coming on shore to meet you, I brought him along with me and up to the hotel, thinking that he might be of service to me, as I have been getting various things on board, and the man knows the language of the country, which I don’t; he speaks Italian like a native. How do you do, Marquis?”

At this moment Marie's father made his appearance.

"Good morning, St. Clare," he replied. "So you are about giving us a pleasant day? The weather seems determined to be kind."

"I think we shall have no rain to-day," Augustine St. Clare said; "nor will it be too warm. There is just breeze enough to keep the air refreshingly cool. When you take the next turn on that road before you, my yacht can be seen riding at anchor in the offing, with her blue-peter flying, which is indicative that she is preparing to go to sea."

"I wonder," remarked Marie de la Vallonière to her father, "could that have been the handsome vessel we were admiring so much the evening we arrived in Naples?"

"What evening was that?" asked St. Clare.

"Last Thursday evening," she answered.

"Ah, yes, I was at Naples then. It may have been my boat. I carry a red flag."

"So did this vessel," said the Marquis de Sevrey, joining in the conversation. "I congratulate you on the size and shape of your splendid craft. I, being a yachting man myself, profess to know something about these matters. I may say with perfect safety, seldom, St. Clare, have I seen a finer boat than yours. I only wish I could have a cruise in her."

"So you can. She is at your service from the moment I land my two friends back in Ireland."

"Oh, thank you. Possibly later in the year, should you be about the North coast of France, I may be able to avail myself of your extreme kindness."

"It is probable I shall be off the North coast of France later in the year," he answered.

Marie's face grew brighter still when she heard him say so. How interesting henceforth to her all his movements must be!

"Perhaps I, too, may get a sail in your yacht!" she put in supplicatingly. "I would like it so much, papa. I have such a love for the sea."

"Shall we soon be ready to start upon our present trip, seeing that it is only for a few hours?" asked Henri de Ruchault. "Time is passing, and time and tide tarry for no man!"

"I am waiting for the carriage which is to convey us to the sea-shore," said Marie's father, in reply.

"Here it is!" exclaimed Marie; "now we shall be off to the sea-shore in no time! I hear the rumbling of the wheels!"

The carriage arrived; they proceeded towards where it was drawn up, and, waiting a short time, they entered it. St. Clare's "captain" got upon

the box-seat next the coachman ; then they drove in the direction of the sea.

“He plays the violin as well as any man I ever heard handling a musical instrument,” remarked St. Clare, alluding to the captain of his yacht. “I will get him to play some tunes when we are on board. He will astonish you by his skill.”

When they reached the sea-shore, a boat was moored there and in readiness to convey them to the yacht, which was anchored some distance off, and bowing as if in graceful recognition of the breeze—both its old friend and foe. Marie, on alighting from the carriage, found, to her dismay and annoyance, that the company consisted of one more than was originally intended. Bourbon, when the carriage left the hotel, took it into his shaggy head to follow his mistress. Here he was, and what was to be done with him ?

“You bold dog !” exclaimed Marie, really vexed ; “how dare you ! Did I not give you repeated orders never to follow me unless you have my express permission ? I am ashamed of you ! Now what am I to do with you ? Shall I leave you to the mercies of strangers, and let you run the risk of being stolen ? I am angry with you, Bourbon !”

Bourbon seemed to feel the rebuke ; never-



theless, he wagged his tail as if he relished even being abused by his beloved mistress.

"What is to be done with him?" asked Marie, "now that he is come, papa? We cannot take him on board the yacht!"

"Why not?" said St. Clare.

"Oh no!" she answered.

"I will tell you what had best be done," said the Marquis de Ruchault; "let him be sent back to the hotel in the carriage. The coachman will take care of him."

It was so arranged; Bourbon was placed in the driver's charge, and vanished in a short space with him and the horses. The rest embarked in the boat in readiness for them, and were rowed towards the yacht. They had gone about half way, when Marie exclaimed:

"Did you ever see such a dog? Just look at Bourbon! He has escaped from that most stupid driver, and has actually jumped into the waves. Look! he has discovered our boat, and is following us. What are we to do with him?"

"We cannot let him into the boat!" said the Marquis de Sevrey.

"He will do no harm," answered St. Clare. "We will put him in the bows."

"I hope he won't take it into his head to shake himself and wet us all," remarked Marie.

"He is sure to do so," replied Henri de Ruchault.

"Then he must keep on swimming until we reach the yacht," she said. "It would never do to get a shower-bath from Bourbon."

Their boat had reached the yacht before the dog overtook them, and he was allowed to come on board, where he submitted to a scolding from Marie de la Vallonière. He did not seem to be much the worse for the latter; and going forward to where he was told to do so—that is, to the bows of the vessel—he stayed quietly there until he should have got into the good graces of his mistress once more. After all, he was a faithful dog, who loved Marie de la Vallonière too well to be parted from her even for one short moment if he could.

In a few minutes of time the beautiful craft, her anchor having been hauled up and placed on deck, got under weigh, and the white sails filled with the breeze. To some the sea is the high road to adventure of every kind, and the region of continual romance. To Augustine St. Clare it had ever been so from his earliest youth upward to his manhood's prime. The cares and the vicissitudes of a rugged and wandering life upon the waves would have suited him well. As it was, fortune gave him the means of keeping a splendid yacht; and he spent generally about four months of the

year on board of her, going from one harbour to another for his own amusement.

They had a charming cruise of five or six hours' duration upon this occasion; and St. Clare gave them a champagne-luncheon to lessen the *ennui* of being so long at sea. His "captain" added, of course, very much to the pleasure of the day by performing, at St. Clare's request, with a great deal of skill and practice, upon a good Cremona violin, which he had bought a week before in a small music-shop in one of the by-streets of the city of Naples. He had gone in there on chance, and observing the violin hanging up, he saw it was an old and a valuable instrument, so he purchased it at once, giving the one he possessed before at the same time in exchange for it. So he informed Marie, at intervals, whilst he kept playing the fiddle with consummate ingenuity.

The melody that was thus awakened by the sailor, the sleepy sea rising and subsiding all around them, the feeling of repose which the lovely scenery suggested, with Mount Vesuvius towering in the distance, from the mouth of which there issued a diminutive volume of smoke curling upwards, and mingling with the few clouds overhead, all together went to make Marie de la Vallonière experience an exquisite delight in the pleasures of this day. Above all, the secret of her joy was the presence of

Augustine St. Clare, and the knowledge which she had that he loved her more than his own life, if need be, and more than anything else upon this earth.

St. Clare dined with them again this evening. Before he took his leave, he said to the Marquis de Sevrey :

“ You will, you say, be leaving Naples on the day after to-morrow, Marquis. If so, I shall not have the happiness of seeing you or your daughter, the Comtesse, until we meet next spring in France.”

“ Will you be engaged to-morrow ?”

“ I shall. I regret it very much ; but I have to spend to-morrow with my friend the Signor Pietrozzi. He is a particular friend of mine, and I would not wish to disappoint him. I must go to his house whether I like it or not ; else I should be only offending him, which I do not want to do.”

“ When will you be off the coast of France again ?” asked the Marquis de Sevrey. “ I would wish to be made aware of the time of your arrival there beforehand ; because I want a cruise for a week or two in that fine and fast-sailing yacht of yours, when you shall be at leisure to oblige me, and when you have no other friends to attend to.”

“ I shall be at Dieppe, I expect, if all goes well, in the latter end of the coming month of August. Will that time meet your other engagements ?”

"Precisely. I shall have nothing else to do and nowhere else to go to just then. It will just suit me," said the Marquis.

"Very well, Marquis," replied St. Clare readily. "I shall write to you meanwhile on my arrival at Dieppe, in order to acquaint you of my whereabouts."

"Perhaps we may be already there when you do come," said Marie de la Vallonière. "Papa and I are going somewhere to the seaside for the sake of the bathing, which he is very fond of, when we leave Naples. But we are thinking of going to Homburg first, in Germany, to drink the waters there."

"And to play at the gambling-tables?" asked St. Clare. "Homburg is a pleasant place, and much frequented by French people."

"I do not play at the tables," said Marie; "but papa does. I saw a young Hungarian, one evening that I was there, win eight thousand francs. He decamped with it, though, the next morning. I suppose he was afraid that he would lose all that money if he ventured to stay and to play at the tables once more."

"I was at the theatre there one night," said St. Clare, "listening to Patti singing, and the King of Prussia was present with his staff. He was in a private box alone, and there was a large mirror

in it. When he saw me he recognised that I was an Englishman. He stood up and went over to the glass and began to admire himself in it. Then he resumed his seat, and a woman immediately came up to me, one of the female porters of the theatre, and told me that I must leave. I thought it very curious, inasmuch as I had paid for my seat. But I obeyed her and left. They say that the King of Prussia is very suspicious. He must have taken me for a detective, or else have thought that I had some design upon his life."

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," said Marie. "And did you like the waters of Homburg?"

"Very much; from the Elizabethenbrünnen up to the most select spring that the place possesses. In the season an English colony invariably migrates there and takes up its quarters there. All the English newspapers are to be had there by the earliest mail. I never played much at the tables but when I did I was seldom unlucky."

"Is the King of Prussia fond of going there?" asked Marie.

"They say he is, and he brings his horses and carriage with him by train; even no matter how short a time he may be staying there."

"Homburg is very well situated, being so close to Frankfort-on-the-Maine, with its Palmen-Garten

and its Cathedral. Why must you leave Naples so soon as the day after to-morrow ?”

“I am compelled to do so, owing to other engagements, and I must convey my two friends back again to Ireland,” he replied.

Marie was growing very sad, although she sought as best she could under the circumstances to conceal the state of her feelings from him now that he was going away from her, and she was going to lose him for awhile. “It is only a possibility that we shall meet you at Dieppe,” she said, “because I am not sure whether papa will go there or to Boulogne or Trouville. At all events, there is a possibility of our meeting,” and she pressed his hand in token of farewell.

“I hope so most sincerely,” he replied, “and, therefore, till we do meet in August, I must say for the present, however reluctantly, good-bye.”

“Good-bye, dear,” she said in a trembling voice, too low for anyone to overhear except him to whom it was thus so tenderly addressed. He said nothing more in return, because when she addressed him thus he thought that a judicious silence on his part was the best policy which he could adopt, and so it was, as the sequel ultimately proved. It is such a very true saying and an old one, that “marriages are made in heaven.”

## CHAPTER XX.

WHEN he was gone away there presently came for a moment, at least, a great void in her life, which the memory of him, however, quickly filled up. Her soul, so noble and so beautiful in itself, had its secret now to contemplate and to enjoy. It looked forth no longer wistfully, as was its wont, happy though it used to be. It possessed what it wanted to the fullest extent, and what could it desire more? Henri de Ruchault no longer perplexed it, and he used to cause it a great many difficulties for a long time. Her father's worldly and matured wisdom, much as she appreciated it, she cast aside from her for good, even whilst they were still staying at Naples. It was very excellent and very appreciative in its own way, there was not the slightest doubt; but still, it was very unsatisfactory for her to have it always presented before her eyes, and held up for her imitation. It deadened, on the contrary, her spirit, and dulled the buoyancy of her hopes. It benumbed the



spring of life within her, and made her wofully weary of her existence. It shaped her career for her too much in the fashion of a well-furnished and respectable establishment suggestive of material comforts, a good balance at the bankers—and nothing more.

Health, beauty, glory, honour, power, dignity, riches, and arts belonged to her father's wisdom, and he would have her enjoy them to her heart's content; and for her father's sake she had been trying to enjoy them, and she did so indeed in a certain sort of way, but not—not to her heart's content. When it came to that they failed to satisfy her, although all these things were so advantageous. The poetry of real love was absent from the epic of her life. But to-night it was not absent, and she endeavoured hard to hide from her father, and from Henri de Ruchault also, the joy that was within her. They suspected nothing, and they attributed her high spirits to the healthy influences and the associations of the day's delightful sail in the yacht of Augustine St. Clare.

They were not far wrong in their surmises. To-day had been amongst what might have been so termed the white one's of Marie's life. Not in all her beauty and in all her fashion, rolling in her carriage and pair through the gay and crowded streets of Paris, that most beautiful of all the many

ness of the world, had she been so happy and so light-hearted as she had been to-day, whilst in the society of Augustine St. Clare, sailing out to sea in his faultless and graceful yacht; not in all the dazzling splendour of blazing diamonds and emerald and ruby gems, whether it happened to be in costly opera box or exclusive ball-room, did she feel so merry and so entirely free from that dark care which, in the words of Euripides, "sits up behind on the back of every man's steed." Her father, who was very naturally proud of her, whilst secretly glorying in the unmistakable loveliness and simplicity of her laughing-dimpled face, bestowed upon her his good-will more than his usual affection, and secretly in his own mind thanked his stars—if any of those constellations presided over his future issue and good fortune—that indeed his only daughter and the heiress to all his great wealth and possessions was such an undoubted credit and honour to the long and ancient house of De Sevrey—their name the highest in France, and identified with the name of Orleans, whose head and moving spirit was the Duke de Chambord, better known amongst his own intimate acquaintances and followers as the Duke de France, the imperial ruler of the French empire.

As for Count de Rochault, he was of the same name as Marie's father, but he did not mix

himself much up in these things, caring more for horse-racing and the pleasures of life; but whenever he reflected upon the beauty of his affianced Marie de la Vallonière and her very many good qualities of mind and of heart, he would grow thoughtful to an unusual degree, and then he stroked his moustache in cavalier fashion, and felt proud of Marie in his own quiet way. He did not care for her more than he might have cared for any other woman, did he only take the trouble of allowing himself to fall in love with one, but his regard for Marie was chiefly founded upon the fact that in all probability, if everything went on well and to their mutual satisfaction, she would one day, and that not very distant, be his future gracious wife; the head of his town and country establishments; for he possessed both the one and the other. Marie fled from them gladly to her room, and to her God. The poor child had need of Him between them both.

When she arose the next morning, it was with a sense of sorrow which, however, the brightness of the day dispelled. From the open window of her bedroom, a fine view of the blue sea stretched out before her, and she beheld St. Clare's yacht floating gaily on the gently heaving waves. She was surprised to see it there; for it had changed its position during the night, and had come in much closer to the adjoining shore.

It was a very beautiful vessel to gaze at, in very truth. As handsome as any of the others in the harbour; but there were not many of them there at present—however, there were some. A graceful and splendid yacht is a beautiful vision to strike wherewithal the eye of the observer. There she lies, her owner's castle, and an Englishman's house, at all events; wherever he may go, no matter what foreign and strange land it may be, enabling him all the same to make his temporary home amongst the pleasant watering-places of England or Ireland, or else in some harbour of a southerly clime, where darker faces turn their glances upon him, and the hallowed memories of Italy or Greece bring back his school-boy days, when ancient Rome and Athens were as much to him in imagination, if in nothing else, as modern London and Paris are now to the tourist or the country bumpkin who has come to see their sights for the first time in his life.

Marie opened the window wider — it was a latticed one—and, leaning her head upon her arm, she contemplated the lovely craft which was owned by Augustine St. Clare. She knew a little about yachts, as a matter of course, for she had cruised about in them from her early girlhood, and she had inherited her father's innate love for the sea. He himself had been in the French navy when he was

a young man, and had passed his lieutenant's examination for that service ; and he had once actually taken part in a small sea-fight against some African dhows, whom they had chased as they were conveying away slaves which they had captured, and were on their way to Persia to be sold in the market there, as was the custom. He was wounded at that time in the right leg, and, in fact, was ever afterwards slightly lame in consequence. He was invalided home from the African station, and shortly afterwards, falling in for his hereditary title of Marquis de Sevrey, owing to the death of his father, he left the French naval service, but he never lost his natural love for the sea, its dangers, and its sense of freedom.

The yacht rode at her new anchorage in graceful fashion as Marie de la Vallonière continued to regard it from her station at the latticed window. Not a rope of the intricate cordage of the little vessel was astray, not a spar was out of place in the attractive schooner moored out there ; she could see the men and boys with their red caps and their blue jackets scattered and lying about lazily upon the spotless deck ; one of them was sitting in the stern, and she knew, by the motion of his hand to and fro, that it must be the captain of the crew playing upon his Cremona violin. Another of them had a book open, the contents of

which he was most attentively perusing; and another was mending a fishing-net that had got broken during the night; for the crew had been out fishing during the night in the offing, and when they came back, they anchored closer to the land, where Marie saw them now, and that was the reason that at present she could thus observe them so very distinctly, and see what they were doing, and how they were amusing themselves on deck. She thought that she might chance to see St. Clare amongst them; but he was not there just then, having spent the night in Naples, whilst his crew went out with the yacht to sea on their own account—fishing. Marie exclaimed aloud:

“How beautiful his yacht looks! Whatever he has is good; whatever he does is well done. It is only like what you are, Augustine,” she added enthusiastically; “you seek the best things, and, moreover, you always do succeed in getting them, however it is that you manage to do so!”

“How do you do, Marie; what are you soliloquizing about up there? Is it not a fine morning? Come down and walk in the garden. I have been here this hour past, and am not yet tired of being here.”

She started and grew pale.

“Oh! Henri. Is that really you? I did not know that you were down there already. How

comes it that you are such an early riser to-day?"

"It is not my habit indeed, my dear Marie, to emulate the lark. But this morning I was awake sooner than usual; so I thought that as I was awake there was no use in lying any longer in bed, and that I might as well go out and enjoy the full benefit of a Neapolitan morning as not do so. Shall I pluck a flower and fling it up to you where you are sitting there?"

She held out both her hands and assented to it smilingly. Next moment she was inhaling the fragrance of a rose whose leaves and petals still sparkled with the brightness of the morning dew which was upon them. Then Marie de la Vallonière retired from the window and went in search both of her hat and of her shawl. Having found them, she put them on, and then she joined Henri de Ruchault in the garden below. Her father, the proud and haughty Marquis de Sevrey, saw them both in the garden, from his own room, at some distance from him. A smile gradually lit up his face, and he paused in the midst of his toilette in order to indulge in a vision of the future which an alliance with the distinguished family of the De Ruchaults would inevitably secure for Marie and for himself. The blushing freshness and the undisguised happiness of Marie's face he attributed

entirely to the welcome presence of Henri. How much he was mistaken the reader too well knows by this time. That future so full of visions of family greatness to the sanguine mind and disposition of the aged Marquis de Sevrey, was after all a sealed book, which it would take the utmost of his ingenuity to endeavour to open, and yet he would not be able to interpret it. Whatever qualities of intellect he might possess, he was not gifted with the divination of things of the future.

Having completed, with additional care, his morning toilette, he went out and joined his daughter and her acknowledged suitor in the garden of the hotel.

“There is a kiss for you, papa, dear,” his daughter said, standing on tip-toe and offering up her face to him in loving fashion to be kissed. “That kiss I give you is my first present to you, and here is my second one—a simple flower; do you like them both equally?”

“Thank you very much, indeed, my dearest Marie; let me assure you that they are both equally acceptable to me, but your kiss still more than the flower which you so considerately and so filially offer to me at the same time—the former, that is your kiss, enhances the further pleasure which I have derived from the latter—I mean this pretty flower



which you have given me. How did you sleep last night after our cruise in St. Clare's yacht ?”

“Never woke till seven this morning, when a flock of little birds set up such a din just outside my window ; I suppose that birds have their little differences like ourselves. I had such pleasant dreams though.”

“What were they about ?” her father asked.

“I thought in my dreams that I was floating over a placid blue lake, and that I was seated, ever so happy in mind, upon the stainless deck of the most carefully rigged and graceful vessel that I ever saw——”

“That perhaps was St. Clare's yacht which you were thus dreaming of,” said Henri de Ruchault. “I shall not forget her in a hurry, for I was slightly sea-sick when I first went on board of her yesterday, and did not recover my equanimity for some considerable time ; not till we got a song from its captain and a tune from his fiddle.”

“Perhaps it might have been no other than St. Clare's yacht which I saw again in my dreams last night ; if so, I know I thought that I could, as we were sailing along, behold the shores upon every side shining as if diamonds and rubies were studded and embedded in the rocks. Green foliage with the freshness of the spring-time and the luxuriance of the summer-time upon the innumerable leaves

crowned as it were those tall and stately cliffs that passed before my vision, and appeared to run back and to be stretching for miles into the country, which, so far as the eye could reach, was broken and parted at many intervals into bright and unusual patches of yellow corn and grassy fields, and artistic flower-gardens. That was not all. Far away on the distant horizon towards which our boat was floating with the stream—for the lake was narrow and long—arose, almost fading from view, it was so distant from my fixed gaze in that direction, a magnificent and gorgeous city, whose towers and splendid buildings seemed blending with, and coloured by, the richest roseate sky I have ever beheld. I started up with joyful surprise when I saw the dazzling spectacle which was thus presented to me in such a singular manner, and I exclaimed as it were in my sleep: ‘Is that mighty city yonder our final destination, or must we weary pilgrims and anxious wayfarers be for ever travelling onward to some as yet unattained goal? Oh! what a beautiful city! Shall I really go there?’

“‘Yes, dearest,’ some one whispered immediately in my attentive ear. ‘We shall go there one day; but that day is as yet a long way off. We are sailing thither, you and I, over life’s stormy sea; we are coming to the harbour which has been appointed by fate for us two to arrive at together,

and we are proceeding thither as rapidly as time and tide will permit us, and they are both in our favour. So be of good cheer and don't lose heart, but keep to the right and never turn back.'

"I moved round in order to ascertain if I could see who the speaker could be that addressed me thus. He was elegantly clad in a dark velvet suit of clothes, and his figure was of a very handsome build, but his face I could not recognise, because it was effectually concealed from me so that I was unable to see it at the moment."

Marie ceased speaking, and her father said to her :

"It was a most peculiar dream for you to have had, without doubt, my dear child. I wish I could explain it, but I never was a good interpreter of dreams. It was Henri de Ruchault's figure, of course, which you saw."

"I don't think that it was," she answered ; "for his voice was quite different from Henri's. I took courage, and I addressed this mysterious person, and I asked him : 'What may be the name of the city which is yonder, monsieur ?' For my natural curiosity was greatly aroused, not alone by the unusual position which I found myself in, but also by the disguise which was thus so cleverly and so successfully maintained by the stranger.

"'It is called,' he replied, 'the everlasting home,

both of the good and of the happy. None else deserve to get there, and none else ever do get there.'

"'Ah me!' I answered laughingly and mockingly; 'I am always wishing, in my own humble way, to arrive at, and to get settled in, some such a desirable and permanent place of abode as that is which you so kindly represent to me!'

"When I ceased speaking, strains of the most exquisite and heavenly music I ever heard from a violin fell upon my ear. I looked around about me suddenly in order to see who the player might possibly be that could discourse such excellent and exhilarating music, when all at once, to my amazement, I awoke from my dream, and heard the swarm of birds chirruping outside my bedroom-window. What do you say to that strange dream, papa?"

"It is a curious one," he answered, looking steadily in the meanwhile at Henri de Ruchault; "and in some sense, I suppose, that it is equally true."

"Yes, I think so," she said; "but there! our breakfast is announced, and our eggs and muffins will get cold if we do not go in immediately and eat them. Let us go in, for I am getting dreadfully hungry."

They spent two days longer at Naples, and from

thence they proceeded upon their contemplated journey to Florence and Homburg in Germany. The chief object which the Marquis de Sevrey had in view in visiting Florence was, that in that city there resided latterly a sister of his, to whom he was desirous to present his daughter, and who, when some years ago she had been staying on a visit with the Marquis, her brother, at his *château* in Normandy, took then and there a great and lively interest in Marie de la Vallonière—at that time but a little girl growing up under the care and supervision of her father, for she lost her mother at a very early age.

## CHAPTER XXI.

**M**ARIE DE LA VALLONNIÈRE fulfilled in this lady's eyes the promise which she thus youthfully gave of being everything in after life which she then promised to be; the beautiful rose-bud had developed with years, and had become, as it were, a still more beautiful rose. How charming it must be, and what food for the mind it is, to those who watch such things, and who have lived themselves long enough to experience the effects of some two score years of life, to discover, whilst that period of time has been passing unobservedly and imperceptibly over them, some one who, as a little child, was the constant object of their love and admiration, has successfully reached the goal of manhood or of womanhood, and that without a dishonourable stain of the world's breath either upon his or upon her smooth brow! No one could better tell, than could this good and sedate old maiden lady herself, what an amount of pleasure Marie de la Vallonnière was the daily means of

affording her whilst they stayed with her as guests at Florence.

Parting—a word carved keenly deep into the history of all human lives—had, however, in one short week to be said ; and the Marquis de Sevrey, with his daughter, and accompanied by Henri de Ruchault, proceeded to Greece, from whence, after spending some time in Athens, they were to go, according to pre-arrangement, to Homburg in Germany, where the Marquis and Henri desired to have some play at the gaming-tables, and where Marie desired to drink its far-famed mineral waters, in order to renovate her system, which was now rather low, after the fatigues and the excitement of constant travelling, and in order to prepare her for the balls and parties which would take place during the ensuing winter in Paris. She hoped meanwhile later on to sojourn for a short time at the sea-side somewhere on the north coast of France, and her papa promised to bring her there as soon as he and Henri had grown tired of the sights, the varieties, and the pleasures of Homburg-des-Bains.

Meanwhile it happened that Agnes Audley was living through her quiet days in that peaceful cottage situated at Suresnes, and which she never left now. Happy she was with her lot in her own serene way, and so content likewise! She was

almost a Frenchwoman now, so little did she really know of England and of her many friends there. She knew more of Ireland, as it came to pass, for somehow she would find herself seeking out the news of interest of that country. Frequently she received from her friend, Marie, letters which were overflowing with lively descriptions of her extended tour in the South of Europe, and the incidents thereof. These Agnes Audley always read with interest. Marie de la Vallonière, having no one to speak to except her father and Henri de Ruchault, needed of course some person more like herself to communicate her intimate sentiments to; and who was more truly worthy of such well-placed confidence than her dear friend, Agnes Audley?—by far her dearest and her truest friend. There are special occasions upon which women need the sympathy of women. Tenderly Marie de la Vallonière loved her father, and great was her childlike confidence in him, but although she looked up to him and respected him, yet she could not bring herself to tell him her mind, and enjoy an interchange of ideas with the same fulness with him as she could with her friend, Agnes Audley. The latter had been to Marie de la Vallonière what many a sister is not, because the ordinary affection existing between sisters is so frequently wanting; to her stronger nature Marie had clung, twining her loving



and weaker tendrils of feeling around this intrepid, large heart, making it the repository of her little griefs—for Marie had them in abundance, like all people who are petted and favoured by others—and it indeed seemed well worth her while having them in order to tell them to Agnes. Agnes was always one to confide in, because she was so safe in the advice she gave, and so reliable in moments of perplexity, and so Marie made her the confidante of her pretty contrivances and feminine secrets. She did not in so doing find her innocent trust at all misplaced. Amidst the excuses, pretences and insincerities of many of the people whose society it was Marie's lot to have to endure, she turned in a womanly manner to take shelter and to find protection with Agnes, who was ever so simple and so true. Coming to Agnes was to Marie something like returning once more to the peace, the contentment, and the quiet of her lovely country home in Normandy, after a season spent amongst the daily varieties of Paris.

There was one letter which Marie wrote to her which was dated from Naples, and this letter possessed unusually pleasant news for Agnes. She had not heard of St. Clare for some considerable time now; she discovered from the epistle that Marie had sent her, that the latter had met him whilst at Naples, where he had put in with his

vessel to visit the place, during a lengthened yachting cruise down the Mediterranean. She eagerly read every line of the letter relating to him, and kissed his name whenever she saw it in the letter.

For all the rest of that long summer day she was very light-hearted and merry. How often she caught her own heart in the act of beating for him, so to speak, and fondly loving him; how often she laid his image aside, being almost ashamed of herself for thinking of him so frequently as she did. She knew well that if need be she could stand alone; that she required him not in reality for the completion of her happiness; that she was able to live without him—to rely upon the innate strength of her own noble character without the help of any meretricious aid from any living being in the world. Still—still, the dream, much too bright to last, would succeed in inflicting its quota of pain, trying to the very utmost her fearless and independent soul. She sat in the cottage doorway, her neglected needlework lying in a bundle at her feet, holding Marie's cherished letter idly and listlessly in her hand, whilst her soft eyes were fixed upon the ground as if her earnest thoughts were far away indeed—and a wistful look lingered sadly upon her gentle face. Some fruitless dream, made up of hope, and of love, and of fairest visionary

things, was smiling, as if eternally, in her breast. Some good wish, sprinkled over with undying dews, grew like a flower out of her heart—to use an allegory. Some thought that lay too deep for words brought to her unspeakable joy. She rose hastily and went to seek little Lucie, as she always did when she felt very happy.

“Oh, Agnes, just see what Jack is at—I mean my papa!” the child said apoloisingly, and tripping towards her.

“What is he doing now, my dear Lucie?”

“Setting up a fountain of water just outside the summer-house yonder. But doesn't he do it remarkably well though? ‘Dear papa,’ said I to him, ‘you don't know how to put a fountain in order—all you can do is to sit in the sunshine, lazy and idle!’”

“That's not true, Lucie,” said Agnes gently. “Papa keeps our garden in beautiful order, and does many things therein which you and I could not do, even though we tried. What would you do, may I ask, for your lovely flower-garden, but for him? How would your rabbits, and your white mice, and your carrier-pigeons thrive, if papa did not rear them for you as carefully as he does?”

“I know all that perfectly well,” answered Lucie Audley. “I said what I did say to him only for fun's sake, and ‘to take a rise’ out of him, as he

says himself, when he wishes to be more than usually facetious and unbending. To tease his Royal Highness, and nothing more, is the simple reason why I talk in that way. I know that you for one take it in good part. And very well he is aware of it too! He says nothing meanwhile, but maintains a judicious silence; for he knows from experience that he could get no good of me if he did remonstrate. But nevertheless, if he says nothing, he on the other hand does something."

"What does he do?"

"Kisses me, and makes me so fond of him I cannot leave his side the whole live-long day," said little Lucie naïvely, and gliding up in a childlike fashion to her aunt's side.

"I fear that you want to be a spoiled pet; is it so, my darling?"

"I wish to be a good daughter to my papa," she replied. "But come," she continued impatiently, "and see, if you please, Aunt Agnes, my father engaged at his garden-work."

Lucie Audley then led her aunt to where Jack Audley had just completed, in a satisfactory manner, the setting-up of a fountain of water quite close to where the summer-house stood. It was indeed very prettily contrived, and it sent its jets of water high into the air. Agnes expressed herself well pleased with its structure, and said that the fountain

was a great addition to the various attractions of the garden. Jack meanwhile had displayed much elaborate taste about this particular summer-house, a part of which he had set aside as a kind of boudoir for the sole and exclusive use of his sister Agnes. The interior of this he had lined with coloured shells of different shapes and hues, and also around its one solitary window he had entwined the tender tendrils of the vine. Even upon wet and disagreeable days, many of which were to be had in France as well as in other countries, Agnes Audley could work away within the precincts of this cool and pleasant summer-house at her own sweet will, and when she was tired of sewing or of painting, here she could take up a book and read. She was once not very well, and she could not tell on earth what was the matter with her, and the doctor who attended her, and who was a very skilful one by the way, told her that she ought to take up a book and to read it, for it was nothing but intellectual food she required to put her to rights. She simply obeyed his wise prescription, and now, whenever she found a lassitude or a weariness coming upon her, she quietly took up a book and read it thoughtfully, bringing it to this summer-house in the garden with her. It might be a book of Shakespeare's inimitable plays, wherein she might dilate upon the

beauties of Hamlet, the rudeness of Macbeth, the weirdness of Lear, the murder of Othello, or the quaint mysteriousness of Cymbeline. Or it might be a volume of Pope, or the works of Laurence Sterne, of whom she was very fond, knowing that he was an Irishman. However, the doctor's advice was an extremely efficient one, and she always got quite well again whenever she took up a book and read it for her own pleasure and benefit, more especially in this handsome and neat little summer-house in the garden outside the cottage at Suresnes.

On the soft, dry, warm summer days, it was exceedingly pleasant to fly here for shelter from the extra heat of the burning sun. A door communicated between this small room and the rest of the summer-house. The interior of the latter was curious. Mirrors, embedded in the wood-work, faced each other in various different directions; grotesque figures writhed within each other's grasp upon the ceiling overhead. A bust in plaster of Paris of the Empress Eugènie, who by the way was a great favourite with Captain Jack Audley, stood conspicuously in one corner by itself; a figure of Eclipse, the famous race-horse of England in the last century before the days of railroad traffic, ornamented another corner; whilst in the third corner there appeared a bust in marble of Sir Lucius Legrange, and in the fourth—likewise of

marble—there was one of poor dead Lucie—both the latter having been taken after their deaths, and sculptured in the purest marble.

Through this portion of the summer-house rippled a rivulet of the freshest spring water. At one end of the summer-house this stream assumed the form and dimensions of a very small round pond or lake, wherein several golden fish had a fine time of it; out of this pond the water careered over small rocks, which were decked with green ferns, and dropped in an unceasing waterfall upon some stones which were placed beneath, where it presently formed itself rapidly into an impatient stream, and then ran towards the wheel of a picturesque toy mill, which it turned. Alongside of this diminutive mill there was another pond, wherein a barge was moored filled with little bags of sand.

Jack, who was of a mechanical turn, had so contrived that this barge, moored alongside of the mill, would receive by means of a crane set up for the purpose a certain number of bags from the mill, and so soon as its cargo was completed would start off on its journey, having first got itself free from its moorings, and making a circuit for a short distance outside in the garden, would return by another branch of the stream to the opposite part of the mill and there discharge its cargo, to be loaded therewith again in due time, when the barge should

have veered round to its original moorings. Now this stream also communicated with the graceful fountain Jack had just erected, and worked it for him.

In such happy amusements Jack Audley was passing his days and never feeling their departure as they glided imperceptibly by. He had separated himself from his former life and experienced no wish for its return. His former self was dead, as it were, and that which was alive of him was part of Lucie and of Agnes. He identified himself with them—chiefly with his child. Their hopes and their happiness were his almost much more than their own; so solicitous was he about them. He let the great world run its hurried race for wealth and power, unheeded by him at last, and from behind the shelter of two loving hearts, who idolized him, he gazed out with a peaceful and a healthy soul upon the vain, ambitious and stormy passions of men. It seems as if the long wish of his whole anxious life heretofore for rest and contentment had come to be realized at length, in some comparative degree. They were very happy, those unmolested days in that cottage at the suburban village of Suresnes. The loving and continual conversations upon every subject of paramount interest at the moment, the little projects of innocent and healthful amusement, the reading aloud from some



popular work of the day in the long still evenings, the sense of perfect security and immunity from disturbance of any kind whatsoever, and the absence of all fear for the present and for the future! How many people of wealth are there not upon the earth who would most gladly give away the half of what they possess in substantial and material goods were they only sure of being equally happy and equally free from molestation?

We will not intrude longer on the inmates of that unobtrusive cottage at Suresnes. It almost does seem somewhat unkind to raise even for an instant through curiosity the domestic veil which covered and concealed from public view things as they existed there, and let others see displayed rudely and unnecessarily the sanctity of its inner life, a sanctity which never under any pretence whatsoever should be invaded. There is nothing more disagreeable at any time than to have to go to confession; that is, to let people see who you are and what you are and what you are doing. There was an English writer once who wrote very forcibly upon that subject—De Quincey. In his "Confessions of an English Opium-eater" he remarks: "Guilt and misery shrink, by a natural instinct, from public notice: they court privacy and solitude, and, even in their choice of a grave, will sometimes sequester themselves from the general population

of the churchyard, as if declining to claim fellowship with the great family of man, and wishing (in the affecting language of Mr. Wordsworth):

“ ——— humbly to express  
A penitential loneliness.’ ”

## CHAPTER XXII.

MARIE DE LA VALLONNIÈRE sometime afterwards returned along with her father and Henri de Ruchault to France, as soon as, after leaving Florence and Athens, they had spent a few pleasant weeks at the baths and gambling tables of Homburg, at the latter of which both the Marquis de Sevrey and Henri had played high, and as it so happened with a fair amount of success.

The gaming-tables have been, since the Franco-Prussian War, closed and removed to Monaco in Italy, by order of the German authorities; but the waters at the springs of Homburg are as clear and as fresh as ever, and as much frequented by notables as they have ever been.

Marie, upon returning to France, remained for a short period of time at the old family *château* in Normandy; and about the end of August she accompanied her father, much to her own satisfaction, to Dieppe, where St. Clare's yacht was lying at her moorings and already waiting for them.

Had the Marquis de Sevrey entertained a suspicion of how matters really were between his daughter and St. Clare, he would have hesitated before accepting a cruise in the latter's yacht. But he had not the faintest shadow of a suspicion whatsoever about that; he was by far too simple-minded to see it himself, and she, of course, did not tell him anything about it; although, in truth, there was one thing which he did very shrewdly suspect at all events, and it gave him a good deal of uneasiness, namely, that Marie did not at all appear to relish the society of her future husband, Henri de Ruchault.

The Marquis de Sevrey had been perfectly aware, from the very beginning, that his pretty daughter did not entertain what is commonly known as love for her accepted and affianced suitor; however, he felt certain that Marie really possessed enough of ordinary common sense to lay all useless and nonsensical romance for ever aside, and avail herself, now that the favourable opportunity was offered to her, of so desirable a chance of carrying off what is called a first-rate prize from the matrimonial market, in the person of the most noble Henri, Marquis de Ruchault. But during this late tour in the south of Europe her father, always anxious about her, had noticed, with some keen feelings of disappointment and apprehension, more

than once differences which he could not account for to have arisen between his child Marie and her lover Henri.

He had never seen his daughter really angry with anyone except the Marquis de Ruchault, who appeared to be unable to please Marie de la Vallonière in anything whatsoever. Her father had observed this with feelings of the most undisguised fear; but as yet he had never spoken a word to Marie upon the subject. There was something radically wrong he felt, but he could not, although he endeavoured to do so, solve the difficulty unless on the assumption of the non-existence of any real affection subsisting between his child Marie and Henri de Ruchault.

Real affection! He did not appreciate it in this particular instance. He did not understand what on earth such a thing could mean. His own regard for his beautiful daughter had not the consecration of true affection upon it. It sprang not from his heart, like the love which makes one being die if it be necessary for the sake of another. It was only a part of his insuperable pride of race after all—the pride he took, as all men of high lineage take, in his ancient name, his princely *châteaux*, his well-bred horses, his old paintings by the great masters, his broad and rich acres of waving corn and meadows, his gorgeous family plate of silver and of

gold. Even as he gloried in them—tokens of his honour and of his pride of birth—so he gloried, as being part and parcel of them, in his only and dearest child, Marie, and he was quite ready to sacrifice her on the morrow, if so it need be, to that very pride of race and of family!

Sweet dove, like to some bird that had come from the far-off East, flung thus upon such very mournful and arid waters of despair, you must have found it indeed most difficult and hard to discover for your weary and travel-stained feet a resting-place. But this dove, this carrier-bird, so tender and so meek and white in plumage, could soar aloft of her own accord, and could remain for a very long time upon the outstretched wing. She feared not, having chosen her true lover, a father's anger or the cold world's smile so selfishly wise. She dreaded not the comments and the judgments of those social police who indeed take it upon themselves to sit coolly in criticism over the doings of their neighbours.

Marie de la Vallonière lived up to a much higher principle than that, and she did so more as a guide directing her daily actions, than as a recourse to that baneful practice of considering what others might say with regard to what she did or what she left undone. Ignorance, gossiping, lying, detraction, vulgarity, envy—ah! she knew them well—these

all belonged, without doubt, to that crowd who fawned so humbly at her dainty feet, when she was presiding with all grace and ladylike reserve in her father's gilded salons, but who would cavil at her and betray her to-morrow if they by any the least possibility could do so. Education, position, affluence, opportunities, experience, all combined to put her upon her guard against her enemies, whoever they might be, if she had any such. Less fortunate in her generation than the fearless maiden who, with wand and bright golden ring, walked scatheless through the green land of Erin so long ago, Marie, wearing like her—only so far apart is the analogy—gems both rich and rare, had to be clad, if one might say so here, in triple armour whenever she went to shield her from the different classes of society which she met with.

There was no conceit of any kind existing in the guileless disposition of Marie; no overweening notions either of moral or of intellectual superiority; none of that profound deference to wealth and position. The grace, refinement, and likewise knowledge of many useful things with which she was luckily endowed, preserved her effectually from those petty or more serious faults of character which hinder one materially from discovering the false from the true, and which spoil so inevitably by their consequences the accomplishment of

human happiness. She saw most clearly, at least, so far as she could, or as she was permitted by her surroundings to see, and she always had, and exercised, the womanly discernment to choose the true and the valuable in the objects which were presented to her choice.

From the memorable time of her unexpected interview with Augustine St. Clare when they were all together at charming Naples, a complete change came over her disposition. At most times, sunny, careless, innocently reckless in her bright and buoyant nature, she seemed, to the riveted gaze of others, at least, to glide on her way without a serious thought for the day or for the morrow down life's busy and rapid and winding stream. Latterly, however, she was much quieter apparently in her ways and moods—like unto one upon whom some sacred and inviolate responsibility had fallen.

Were Henri de Ruchault to have been, by the will of fate, her future husband, she would have been able, as it were, to have laughed away her future existence by his manly side as being to her view and comprehension the best means known to her of bearing with the dreadful and oppressive burthens of her lot—that is, supposing herself to be his bride! She could not now endure the bare idea of it. Perhaps she had fallen in love with St.



Clare, because he was an Englishman ; be that as it may be, nevertheless, the fact was there that she had fallen deeply and irrevocably in love with him, and had turned her back upon all Frenchmen, of whatever type or stamp they might be.

Pledged to St. Clare, the joy of her existence was, she felt, by far too great indeed to be laughed, so to speak, lightly and carelessly away, but rather that joy must now be treasured and cherished by her, and laid to heart as she was fully determined that it would. Burthens, if she should one day marry St. Clare, as she hoped to do, of course, would come even with him, which she would be obliged to bear ; only with this supreme difference, that he would share them along with her, and by his presence and his inspiring example he would let her ascertain for herself how to make them light and supportable.

Trying thus to imagine for herself the unknown future, she was much less talkative than was usual with her in the railway-train, which was rapidly conveying her father and herself from Paris to Dieppe. When they arrived at the latter place, St. Clare was before them at the terminus, anxiously on the look-out for them, because the Marquis had sent him a letter beforehand, intimating that he was coming with his daughter in the evening, and so Augustine went up from his hotel to the

station to meet them at the hour that the Paris train was due. There were a great many passengers by that train, as it was the mail service which brought travellers who were on their way to England; and already the steamer was letting off steam in the harbour, waiting for its freight of passengers who were about to brave the perils of the Channel, and were crossing to Newhaven.

The arrival of a train at a terminus of any extent and importance is always an exciting and a varied scene; but in this particular instance it was more than usually crowded. Representatives of all the nationalities of the world, one might say, were to be observed there mingling together, and conversing in unknown tongues, and trying, often ineffectually, to make themselves understood in broken French by the railway-porters and the drivers of hired vehicles, who, upon this occasion, were more than customarily stupid and deaf. Maltese and German, Spanish, American and Persian, Italian and Dutch, all were gabbling away like so many geese; and in one corner of the station, lying lazily on their large cotton bundles, which was all they had in the world, were a small colony from the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, who had just alighted with their wives and children from a third-class carriage, which they had all to themselves during their journey from Paris, and who

were going to Liverpool to take passage as emigrants to Australia in one of the large line of steamers which depart from thence for that far-off destination. The men of the party were handsome, fine fellows, with flowing beards and wide moustaches, and few of them were beyond five-and-thirty or forty years of age. And their wives and children were equally distinguished-looking in appearance.

St. Clare took note of them; and while Marie and her father, with their servants, had gone in search of their luggage in order to have it safely conveyed to the adjacent hotel where they purposed stopping, Augustine went up to one of these Alsatian emigrants, who was stretched at full length upon his linen bundle, and asked him, in his native tongue, where he was going to, and why he was emigrating:

“We fear the Germans, monsieur,” he responded politely. “We anticipate that there will be a fierce and bitter war between France and Germany soon, and that if the latter should happen to get the upperhand of us in the approaching contest, that then our beloved Alsace and Lorraine would be taken from us and annexed to the German power; and that then we should be henceforth the base subjects of the latter, and no longer Frenchmen either in religion or nationality.”

"And is that the reason you are going to Australia?" he asked.

"Yes, monsieur," the other answered. "We foresee that Germany is arming daily in order to attack us, and rather than be killed in battle or else be defeated and made slaves of, we are preferring, all of us that you see here, to take our departure in time for a new world altogether."

"You will be late for the boat, so good-bye," St. Clare answered. "I have not heard of any probability of an approaching fight, so you surprise me. I thought France and Germany were on good terms. But I am not a Frenchman myself, and cannot know as much of your internal affairs as you do."

"A great many of us expect a big war to take place soon against the Germans. We may be mistaken," he said, "but our own part of the country of late has become intolerable to us; therefore we have to emigrate."

"Safe journey to you," St. Clare responded as he moved away.

"Thanks, monsieur," the other replied coolly, and lit his short wooden pipe in silence.

When the Marquis de Sevrey and his daughter were ready they entered a carriage accompanied by Augustine and drove off to the hotel. Very cordial were the mutual greetings between St. Clare, Marie,

and the aged Marquis. The former spent the entire of the evening with them at their hotel, and there they arranged together the route which was to be taken by them during the contemplated cruise on board St. Clare's yacht which was moored close to the quays opposite to the hotel, and was in readiness for them.

They went on deck early the next morning and set sail for the chalky coasts of England. It was a beautiful day, with a freshening breeze in their favour, and before night they sighted the English shore. They did not land anywhere, but continued to sail westward, keeping all through well in sight of the long white cliffs of England. Marie felt delighted with the trip; so much so, that she almost imagined she was in paradise. The sea-air revived her to an unwonted degree, as in that particular locality it is very fresh and invigorating. The varied scenes besides which met her view in every direction—the big ships homeward-bound from both India and America, meeting, as if nothing happened, in mid-channel now and then a stately man-of-war; the smaller coasting vessels rocking to and fro, and moving silently over the waves; the graceful yachts, from which came, making the breeze musical at the same time, the merry laughter of girls and young men, sparkling in appearance with the excitement of the moment, and gay at heart with the enjoy-

ment of youth and spirits ; in the indistinct distance the comfortable homesteads and the highly-cultivated fields and meadows of wealthy and most industrious England—oh ! it was a continually changing panorama of pictures never to be forgotten by the human eye.

In the very midst of all her extreme happiness, Marie all at once in an unaccountable manner recollected her remarkable dream, which she had whilst she was sojourning at Naples some time ago, and she immediately described it in a low voice to St. Clare as they were both seated in the cabin of the yacht after luncheon the first day of their cruise. He said when she had finished her tale that it was very curious indeed, and that he often had dreams himself, but that he did not mind them, as he was not by any means superstitious ; that it was not in an Englishman's nature or an Irishman's to be such.

“ I thought that some of the Irish were rather superstitious,” she said. “ Their religion is calculated to make them feel that way.”

“ It is said to do so,” St. Clare replied. “ But those who are educated never allow themselves to be led astray by such childish feelings.”

“ I would not care to be a believer in dreams if I could,” she answered. “ Yet often I think, in spite of my common sense, that there is a great deal of reality in dreams.”

“That is your imagination,” he responded. “I, for my part, have too much philosophy to attach any importance to the dreams which come to us in our sleep. Any one who has received a liberal education would not entertain such empty ideas for one single moment.”

She only sighed, and she allowed the conversation to drop. The Marquis, her father, soon afterwards came down the companion-ladder, and joined them in the cabin, as since the sea was beginning to roll, and the waves were beginning to beat over the deck of the little vessel in furious but yet playful fashion, he did not want to get an unnecessary drenching by staying there much longer, as he good-humouredly remarked to Augustine St. Clare as soon as he came below.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

ON the evening of the third day they left England behind them, and about four o'clock in the afternoon of the following Sunday, the dark green coast of Ireland rose slowly and majestically above the dim horizon. Nearer and nearer they glided towards the dear old Emerald Isle, and Marie, as she beheld it more distinctly, gazed upon it with deep feelings of genuine emotion, for between France and Ireland there is a tie of sympathy. Nay, still more, is not this lovely land which is now rising up before her vision Augustine's native home—the spot where he had first seen the light of day? the place where he had first breathed the breath of life.

She was standing upon the deck, looking upon this country which was so new to her in many respects, when the chords of the captain of the yacht's violin fell melodiously upon her ear, and in a musical voice of a rich baritone he sang, in order to please her and, as if by way of an introduction to the country she was going to, that famous melody



of Moore, which has been rendered immortal as much by the beauty of the Scotch air itself to which it is set, as by the refined poetry of the verse :

“ Oft in the stilly night,  
Ere Slumber’s chain has bound me,  
Fond Memory brings the light  
Of other days around me ;  
The smiles, the tears,  
Of boyhood’s years,  
The words of love then spoken ;  
The eyes that shone,  
Now dimm’d and gone,  
The cheerful hearts now broken !  
Thus, in the stilly night,  
Ere Slumber’s chain hath bound me,  
Sad Memory brings the light  
Of other days around me.

“ When I remember all  
The friends so link’d together,  
I’ve seen around me fall,  
Like leaves in wintry weather ;  
I feel like one  
Who treads alone  
Some banquet-hall deserted,  
Whose lights are fled,  
Whose garlands dead,  
And all but he departed !  
Thus, in the stilly night,  
Ere Slumber’s chain has bound me,  
Sad Memory brings the light  
Of other days around me.”

Marie listened, and thought, and listened again, and the moments went by without her taking any note whatsoever of them. The sounds which

vibrated upon her ear at that particular minute had more force and effect upon her bodily frame than they would have had at another; music, when well sung and popular, impresses the mind at certain times in a way which, were the circumstances surrounding one different, they might not and could not have done.

Just then Augustine came up to her side, and, stretching out his arm, pointed silently in the direction of Ireland, which was drawing nearer to them gradually, according as the wind freshened and filled their sails.

During the brief conversation which subsequently passed between them, he paved the way for even a closer intercourse to soon spring up between them both. His words, at any time, never treated exclusively either of morality or of religion; they were not altogether imaginative, nor were they either illustrative, argumentative, or devout. Whenever he spoke to Marie it was with an unlimited drift, but a limited effect—to convince her, as his dear friend, of the truth of his love for her, not by testimony alone, not by opinions merely, but by every application to reason—every weapon from analogy which education could afford, and which the cleverness of his intelligence could wield. And there was no doubt at all but that he was successful with her; and that she relied upon him

implicitly, and looked up to him already with the greatest faith in his goodness, and in his affection for her.

Marie had never been in Ireland before ; so it was with much pleasure that she found herself in a short time in Queenstown. They remained there for a few days whilst the yacht was being provisioned. In the interim they visited Killarney, with the magnificent scenery of which favoured place both the Marquis and Marie were delighted and surprised.

On their return to Cork they found the yacht again ready for them ; but at St. Clare's earnest request they accompanied him to his own beautiful seat, where he showed them everything of interest, and where he entertained them as a prince would.

They came back to France by the Channel Islands, visiting on their way both Guernsey and Jersey, and stopping for a few days at each of these places. What happy hours these were ! Reading, singing, conversation, the violin, the piano, the guitar, the cornopeon—all contributed to make the time quite a pastime for them indeed ! In the evenings after dinner, while the Marquis de Sevrey was either reading or smoking, Marie, who had a well-trained and naturally gifted voice, would warble forth some favourite song, to which St. Clare would sing a cultivated second or tenor,

and the captain, perched in the bows of the yacht, would play upon his beloved violin an exquisite and appropriate accompaniment, low, soft, harmonious, and complete. Then there were likewise long and charming conversations kept up privately between Marie and Augustine, when the rich hidden stores of their minds were opened and displayed by a secret touch from the magical wand of love.

Marie discovered more about Augustine St. Clare in that short cruise of three weeks than she would have known concerning Henri de Ruchault from a life-time spent in his company. Ah! what a pleasant time it was whilst they were on board that splendid yacht! How sorry Marie was when the cruise was all over at last! and with what a sad and a heavy heart she landed with her father once more at Dieppe! and with tears of gratitude bade St. Clare good-bye! She must lose him for some months, and so her heart is overladen with both love and regret. He promised faithfully to see them again if he could in Paris; but not, he said, until after Christmas, as business and engagements would detain him elsewhere.

When they were gone, he sent his yacht home to Ireland, under the musical captain's care, with orders to have her put by in dock for the winter months. He went meanwhile to London himself,

and from thence he proceeded to the north of England. This was in the year 1869. When he came back to Paris, in the following year, it was at a later period than he had intended ; but the delay upon his part was unavoidable, as he satisfactorily explained subsequently to Marie when they met.

On his arrival in Paris the city was all commotion. War had just been declared between France and Germany ; and in the first flush of excitement, the cry of "*A Berlin !*" rushed triumphantly from the lips of Frenchmen.

Yes ! they hurried thither, poor fellows, but the tide of victory met them on their way, and ruthlessly drove them back again, hurling them sternly beneath itself, and annihilating them in its inevitable and successful advance. Alas for war !—and alas for the thousands upon thousands whom it has entirely destroyed in so short a time !—or rather, alas for the many thousands of people whom it has permitted to survive, but in mourning and desolation !

The young and old, the fair-haired and the grey-headed, have felt alike its most withering effects ; and sometimes it is very hard to say whether indeed the widow, who has lost her husband, or the maiden who has lost her lover, suffers the most. Where is the gallant young officer, who was the pride of his mother's heart, and perhaps her sole

support? He was the life and the soul of his regiment but one short year ago, and to-day they have another officer in his place, just as gay and just as companionable as he was.

“Here to-day, and away to-morrow,” is the motto of war.

St. Clare found, upon his return to the city of Paris, that many of his former acquaintances, who were commissioned in the army, had joined, by superior orders from head-quarters, their several regiments, and that they had already departed for the seat of war. Amongst the rest who had gone was Henri de Ruchault, who held a commission in a noted cavalry regiment. They were cuirasseurs—the same who made the charge at Reichshofen.

Paris accordingly presented quite a desolate and deserted appearance to Augustine when he arrived there.

St. Clare partook of the enthusiasm that generally pervaded in every direction. The old soldier-spirit in him arose once more, and he almost longed to grasp the sword—he who had handled it so often and so well in the service of his Queen! Though he could not fight upon this occasion, he joined the campaign, however, namely, by attending voluntarily upon the fighters, and charitably nursing their severe and desperate wounds. As he was considered to be very skilful at manipulations

of that kind, having often cured the wounded and the fallen when he was himself a soldier on active service, he had himself, without delay, enrolled in an Ambulance Corps, and hastened to where the theatre of war had already displayed its opening scenes. He was actually present when the young heir to the Imperial throne of France, the Prince Imperial, received his "baptism of fire;" and with a thrill which he could not describe that he heard once more in many places the roar of angry cannon. He was sorry to leave the Paris of Napoleon the Third, not knowing if he would ever see it again, or that if he did, that it would be the same Paris which he once knew. He went to a ball the night before he started for the seat of war, and met Marie de la Vallonière there, and danced with her :—

“There was a sound of revelry by night,  
And Belgium’s capital had gathered then  
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright  
The lamps shone o’er fair women and brave men ;  
A thousand hearts beat happily ; and when  
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,  
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spokę again,  
And all went merry as a marriage bell.  
But hush ! hark ! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell !”

## CHAPTER XXIV.

IT was at the battle of Sedan an event memorable in these chapters occurred. St. Clare, accompanied by another member of the Ambulance Corps, went, carrying a litter or a stretcher between them, in search of the wounded. The battle of Sedan was fought close to the town, almost all around it on every side. Sedan is the birth-place of the great *Turenne*, by the way. It is situated in the Department of Ardennes; the "*Arduenna Sylva*" of Julius Cæsar, and the "Ardennes" of Shakespeare's play of "As You Like It." The valleys here are handsome, and the mountains high, and the river Meuse flows close at hand; the scenery is quite country-like and sylvan, made up of rocky glens and forest glades of primeval beauty, and such as at once would arrest the eye of the wayfarer, no matter what a hurry he might be in to leave by train in these days of quick travelling. In the woodlands here, Shakespeare's Orlando sang love-sonnets to his fair Rosalind, and Touchstone felt



his breadbasket growing beautifully less and smaller by degrees, and drew but scanty consolation from the loveliness of nature here in exchange for the pangs of hunger which he had to endure; the forests and vales wherein the melancholy Jacques had leisure to go on a retreat of his own making, and reflect on the shortcomings of the race of mankind; those fields and glades wherein our Duke who was banished "Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything."

There was never much known of the town of Sedan until September, 1870, when circumstances gave it an everlasting historical interest. Augustine was not, of course, in the *mélée*, but he watched the fight from some high level not far from the river Meuse. It was at daybreak on Thursday, 1st September, 1870, that the battle of Sedan commenced. It may not be of much use to recount the events of that great battle here, but still, a short description of it would be of some slight interest, especially as it bears an important relation to this story. The plan of the battle was somewhat in this manner. The Crown Prince of Saxony was stationed to the north, and his duty was to attack the French front, to make their extreme left veer round, and then, having accomplished this, to send a force round to the rear. The Crown Prince of

Germany was to advance and unite his men to those of the Crown Prince of Saxony as soon as he had driven in the right centre of MacMahon, which was planted at Bazeilles and Balan, and, if feasible, to overwhelm the French right arm. At these two places MacMahon had posted his choicest troops, because the road to a spot called Carignan was unprotected, and as it was a strategic point necessary to be seized upon, all the hardest battling came on with the enemy in the vicinity of Bazeilles. Belgium and Luxembourg adjoined the French territory and formed it into a small angle, whilst they were neutral soil.

The previous day, the 31st August, the Germans planned to entrap the whole of the French army into this angle by compelling them first to go into Sedan. The Germans had 240,000 men for this purpose, with 600 guns; the French had 110,000 men and over 400 guns. MacMahon was well situated to succeed, if he had been a better General than he was. The tip or point of the French line was at Balan and Bazeilles, and then it continued in the shape of a salient angle back to behind Sedan. At the two former places was the French right centre, and its left was at Givonne and the woods in the neighbourhood. General Wimpffen had to take the supreme command as soon as MacMahon was wounded, which he was by a ball

striking him in the hip. The slaughter which ensued between the opposing forces was fearful, and the dead bodies were so numerous that they had to be flung ruthlessly into the Meuse. The union of the two Crown Princes was effected about one o'clock in the day, something in the same manner as Blucher came up to our Wellington's aid at Waterloo.

The French, who were now in full retreat, were hemmed in. The King of Prussia ordered Sedan to be bombarded at half-past five in the evening, finding that the French, who were caught in a body there, would not lay down their arms and acknowledge themselves defeated. So the inhabitants became victims to the shower of bombs which soon came down over their heads from the German side, as well as the poor French soldiers, who were running about in frenzy, here and there and everywhere, in the streets. Sedan rapidly became one mass of flames, and the general conflagration spread equally to the neighbouring towns and villages. When the French were thus sufficiently frightened to make their surrender certain, the bombardment ceased, and the King sent a German Colonel to the Governor of Sedan, demanding the town to be immediately given up to him.

Louis Napoleon, who was in Sedan—and the King of Prussia did not know it till then—sent the

latter a characteristic epistle, in which he wrote that, as he was unprepared to die at the head of his forces, he was willing to give up his sword to the King of Prussia, which he subsequently did. He acted with great personal bravery throughout the day whilst the battle was raging; he fought as a private soldier, and courted death from the shot and shell which everywhere fell round about him.

Dr. Russell, of the English *Times*, describes thus the interview which subsequently took place between the King of Prussia and the French Emperor, at the Château Belle Vue :

“ The King spoke first: God, he said, had given the victory to his arms in the war which had been declared against him.

“ The Emperor replied that the war had not been sought by him; he had not desired or wished for it, but he had been obliged to declare war in obedience to the public opinion of France.

“ The King made answer, that he was aware it was not the Emperor’s doing; he was quite sure of it.

“ ‘ Your Majesty made war to meet public opinion; but it was your Ministers who created that public opinion which forced on the war.’ His Majesty, after a pause, remarked that the French army had fought with great bravery.

“ ‘ Yes,’ said the Emperor; ‘ but, sire, your

Majesty's troops possessed a discipline in which my army has been wanting lately.'

"The King remarked that for some years the Prussian army had been availing itself of all new ideas, and watching the experiments of other nations, before 1866 and subsequently.

"Your artillery, sire, won the battle. The Prussian artillery is the finest in the world!"

"The King bowed, and repeated that they had been anxious to avail themselves of the experience of other nations.

"'Prince Frederick Charles decided the fate of the day,' remarked the Emperor. 'It was his army which carried our position.'

"'Prince Frederick Charles! I do not understand your Majesty. It was my son's army which fought at Sedan.'

"'And where, then, is Prince Frederick Charles?'

"'He is with the seven army corps before Metz.'

"At these words the Emperor started, and recoiled as if he had been struck; but he soon recovered his self-possession, and the conversation was continued. The King inquired if his Majesty had any conditions to make or to propose.

"'None. I have no power; I am a prisoner.'

"'And may I ask, then, where is the Government in France with which I can treat?'

"'In Paris. The Empress and the Ministers

KILLED AT SEDAN.

I am powerless; I can make no conditions.' "

with the King, the Emperor  
with Prince (then Count)  
a gross plot where two chairs  
in front of an unassuming  
a spot named Doncherry.

when they met, and stood  
The Emperor told him to put on his  
'tis for the  
in actual words, at least in  
was very obsequious  
perhaps, very likely he  
misfortunes, and respected

to give a transla-  
the Emperor sent to the  
the Prince Imperial  
which was real

in baptism of fire. He  
in no way affected. A  
has taken the heights  
of Saarbrück.  
We were  
and cannon-balls  
a bullet which fell

quite close to him. Some of the soldiers shed tears on seeing him so calm. We lost only one officer and ten men killed.

“NAPOLEON.”

Meanwhile, to come back to the battle of Sedan, St. Clare and his companion, the other member of the Ambulance Corps, had not gone far: no further than about a mile from the town, and amongst the Bavarians of Von der Tan's corps, which had suffered severely, as the firing was kept up from the windows of the houses, where they were fighting at Bazeilles; they were moving along, burthened with the litter which they were carrying between them, when they came upon a large heap of dead and dying, both French and Prussian, which, from the vast numbers which were strewn about, proved that the close and hand-to-hand fighting in which even the inhabitants of the town at this precise juncture had shared, flying at each other's throats as they wildly contested each particular spot of debated ground, must have been sharp and decisive, and terribly hard. The town had been burnt by the Bavarians, and the fire there was raging very fiercely just at present.

Augustine St. Clare, who was well used from his early life to the harrowing scenes which are so common upon all battle-fields, gazed sorrowfully

about him at so sad a picture, which was made up thus of death, misery, and despair. Suddenly he started with surprise. He heard, or he thought that he heard, a voice uttering feebly his name :

“ St. Clare !”



## CHAPTER XXV.

“To whom thus Raphael answered heavenly meek :  
Nor are thy lips ungraceful, sire of men,  
Nor tongue ineloquent ; for God on thee  
Abundantly his gifts hath also poured,  
Inward and outward both, his image fair :  
Speaking, or mute, all comeliness and grace  
Attends thee, and each word, each motion, forms.”

*Paradise Lost, Book viii.*

AS soon as Augustine St. Clare had heard his own name mentioned thus audibly, he turned his head around quite suddenly in the direction from whence the voice came, and, in his surprise, he dropped the stretcher for the wounded which he was carrying with the other man, and became so nervous and timid that he was actually going to take to his heels as quick as he could and run away. For he heard the angry firing once more commencing on the part of the enemy, and the cannon balls and musket shots were passing over the head of his companion as well as over his own, and he wisely feared that if he remained much longer where he was,

CHAPTER I

A TALL & SLIM... LAST NIGHT THE ENEMY'S  
THEY SAID THE BATTLE WAS A DISASTROUS ONE.  
... I WAS... WHEN THEY WERE  
... WOUNDED... BUT STILL  
... THEIR OWN LIVES  
... "SOME OF THEM"  
... ST. JOHN, AS HE GLANCED  
... END OF THE  
... HIS COMPANION STILL  
... AND AS HE  
... ST. JOHN WAS STILL CARRYING  
... SAW A SHOT FLYING OVER  
... HE WOULD KNOW WHERE  
... AND BURSTING,  
... KNOCKING IT OFF  
... AUGUSTINE TOOK  
... HE HAD GONE A  
... OVER THE BODY OF  
... THE FRENCH CAVALRY, WHO WAS  
... OF THE SADDLE OF HIS  
... UNDER HIM IN THE  
... WHICH THE FRENCH HAD  
... PART OF THE  
... TO THE STIRRUP-  
... COLT'S SIX-CHAM-  
... WHEN HE FELL, TAKEN  
... UPON EACH SIDE OF THE  
... HE MADLY DEFENDED HIMSELF

when the enemy was on him and he was down. He shot three of them, and they were lying close by. But the horses of the enemy's cavalry, coming on wildly, had trampled on him and nearly crushed him to death with their hoofs, whilst one of them with his hind legs gave his own horse a kick in the forehead which killed him, just as a butcher would kill an ox with the blow of a mallet.

St. Clare, when he stumbled over the prostrate officer, looked hurriedly at him, and saw that he was still alive, although very badly hit in the right arm between the elbow and the shoulder-blade. The bullet had gone right through the bone. He stooped over him, and exclaimed in a voice of terror :

“ Henri de Ruchault ! ”

At the moment he thought it was an enemy who was on him, and raising his revolver in his left hand, which was freer than the other, he fired at St. Clare and shot him in the breast. His mind must have been wandering from the loss of blood and from the nature of his wounds, for he turned his face upwards towards high heaven, and there was a smile upon it as he recognised St. Clare. He placed the mouth of the revolver which he held in his right hand against the region of his own heart. It had been only on half-cock ; he placed it on full-cock, and pulling the trigger, shot himself dead !

His heart now was motionless in his breast, for he had himself stilled its beatings for ever. Why he should have done so will for ever remain a mystery. It might have been jealousy; it might have been madness; but at all events he did the double deed—whether wilfully or otherwise must always be untold. With him died the last of his noble and chivalric race—a race so high and so haughty that they would never stay at anything wild, or wicked, or desperate. It was a pity that he should have died thus, and, moreover, by no other than his own right hand. He must have been delirious when he committed that most terrible double deed of darkness and of crime, and in his case, at least, fatal! For his was the violent and impetuous blood of the Crusaders. His forefathers had fought under the banner of Richard I. of England in Palestine.

Augustine St. Clare, now rendered totally weak and helpless and insensible by the wound from the bullet, sank upon Henri's breast; it was not an unworthy pillow, after all, for perhaps he had been shot by mistake. His companion lay quite dead a short distance away.

Two more members of the Ambulance Corps just at this moment came upon the scene with a second litter, or stretcher, which they carried between them. One of them hastened over and felt the

pulses of De Ruchault and of St. Clare. He examined both of them as they lay there together, most minutely and scrutinizingly, from head to foot, bending himself upon one knee for the purpose; and then, when his newly-awakened curiosity was sufficiently satisfied, he raised himself up slowly from his kneeling posture, and pointing to them carelessly, muttered, as he addressed the comrade who was by his side, and said with a short sigh:

“They are both dead, and one of them a member of our Ambulance Corps. The other is an officer of French Cuirassiers. This is too bad! We must make a grave somewhere for both of them, and bury them decently together. As they fell together in the discharge of their duty, in death they shall not be separated—so help my God!” And he muttered an oath under his breath.

The crack of a rifle at this instant, and the sharp and rapid whiz of a bullet, warned him that he was in a position which was certainly fraught with much imminent danger to himself, and so, leaving the litter or stretcher—which was one of those which had been supplied from England by the charity of some well-disposed well-wishers of France who were residing in that country—the most charitable country in the world at all times, especially towards the sick and the wounded—leaving the stretcher on the ground close to St.

Clare, De Ruchault, and the latter's dead charger, he fled—by this time thoroughly terrified, for he was not used to the horrors of war—from the place as fast as he could, hearing close to him the sudden whirr, like the approach of a pheasant whom the sportsman is searching for with his gun, of a second and of a third Schneider bullet as he went along back towards where the French were posted in greater security and immunity from danger. His companion, braver than he was, crouched under the dead horse until the sudden shower of bullets had passed by. The other then returned, and having secured the stretcher, leaving the two bodies behind them, they went away—as they did not come out in order to inter the dead, but only to succour the wounded and assist the dying.

It must be remembered that the battle of Sedan was fiercely raging, with all its dreadful onslaughts and deeds of daring on the part of the French, as well as of the Germans, during all this time. But the French had got by far the worst of it by this period, and had been skilfully, and with what might be termed mathematical precision, cooped in the small angle of territory where Luxembourg and Belgium touched France; and though the French army was numerous, the soldiers were forced to remain idle after the defeat of the Emperor, who was taken prisoner in spite of the bravery he dis-

played personally, on several occasions, whilst the battle was raging. As his army was idle, it had to retire before the victorious German power, which drove it into the Belgian and Luxembourg territory close by; as it had no other means of avoiding breaking the established rules of war, except it were to lay down its arms and capitulate without delay. No other course at the moment seemed to be open to the defeated French.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE shades of evening were falling as a party of soldiers, accompanied by two officers in command, approached the spot where the bodies of St. Clare and De Ruchault lay. The men carried pick-axes and shovels, and their apparent duty upon this sad occasion was to bury the dead in whatever rude graves they could make for them, and, moreover, as quickly as they could, for they were afraid that the enemy would certainly be on them, should they delay. One of the officers bent down upon both knees over the body of Augustine St. Clare.

“*He bien !* Look here, Alphonse, my dear friend,” he said.

“Why, it is De Ruchault !” the other exclaimed, bending over the dead body of Henri.

“Yes,” his brother officer replied ; “and this other one here is that of an Englishman with whom I was formerly very well acquainted. We were great chums in Paris and in London, when I was there a couple of years ago, and he was one of the



best and most scientific billiard-players I ever had the good fortune to meet with. His name is Monsieur St. Clare, and he has an estate of large dimensions in Ireland. I knew him well. He was one of the most pleasant men I ever met with, full both of humour and anecdote. Last year I met him whilst he was yachting off the coast of Italy. Poor fellow! He has given his young life very nobly indeed for the great cause of charity and to succour the wounded. He must have evidently volunteered as a member of the Ambulance Corps which was organized at the beginning of the war."

"And he has given his life also heroically for our dear France! He was an Irishman," Alphonse murmured, and walked hastily away.

The other silently waited for his return. He came back in a few moments, brushing the tears from his eyes. "We shall bury them in one grave, Hippolyte," he said. He stooped down: "Is there no sign of life?" he added.

"Ah, no," Hippolyte replied, "they are both gone home!"

"Here is a gold cross, Hippolyte," said he who was called Alphonse by the other French officer; "we must take possession of this and restore it, when we both go back to Paris, to his mother, who is alive and residing there—that is, I must add, if

either of us shall happily be spared to do so. Stay; here is some important writing in pencil—it is his own handwriting too.—and is attached to the gold cross. Let us read.

“Should I fail in the present war, I wish this gold cross and these lines which are appended to it to be religiously preserved and sent to my poor, darling mother, in order to assure her that I died fighting for my country and as she would have wished me to die.”

“(Signed),

HENRI,

“Marquis de Buchanin of the French Empire.”

“Yes; Henri, my poor old schoolfellow, your mother shall receive this, I hope. Heaven help her to bear adequately her great sorrow! Come on, my men,” he added, addressing the surrounding soldiers, who stood mute and respectful, the mournful spectators of the solemn and touching scene which they were obliged to witness; “set to work, for the nightfall will be on us soon! Let the one common grave for both of them be dug, a wide and a deep one, under yonder tree!”

Next minute, ere he had ceased speaking almost, so willing were they to perform the task, the men were busy at their mournful labour of interment, and they hurried on their performance all the more rapidly as night was closing in, and unless they got

lanterns or lights they could not well continue working then, for they were apprehensive lest the enemy might be on them, and being soldiers and not members of the Ambulance Corps, they might have to defend themselves from a night attack, even whilst at the task of simply burying the dead, or else be taken prisoners and surrender, as their Emperor did in an earlier part of the day.

Not very long afterwards Agnes Audley, who was staying on a visit with the Comtesse de la Vallonière, came noiselessly into Marie's boudoir, carrying in one hand a number of that morning's daily newspapers, and, sitting down hastily on a chair near a centre table, she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

Marie, feeling secretly that something of more than usual importance must have happened, ran over to where her bosom friend was seated, and folded her arms fondly about her neck :

"Agnes, my dearest confidant," she exclaimed wildly, "what on earth is now the matter with you that you weep such bitter and abundant tears? What new sorrow has come over you? Is it anything of such a nature that I can by my willing assistance and proffered sympathy alleviate? If so, be assured that I am ready at once to do whatever is in my power for you. In this most sorrowful crisis in our country's history I would not be at all

astonished, whatsoever extraordinary event might occur. Why do you not speak to me?" she added, bending over her. "What is it that is the matter with you? What is the fearful news that you have read in the *Figaro*? for that is the newspaper which I perceive that you have with you this morning, and the paper, too, that papa is particularly interested in. What has happened abroad? anything at the seat of war? Any of our friends or of our numerous acquaintances in danger, or it may be shot? Why don't you tell me? Let me see the newspaper, if you please, for myself, and then I can appease the anxiety of my mind."

"Oh! no, no, no, no! You must not read that! It is too fearful—give me back the newspaper again, Marie!" Agnes Audley exclaimed excitedly, whilst starting up from her chair and vainly endeavouring to take the number of the *Figaro* which she had just sent for to one of the neighbouring kiosks, not far from the Rue de la Pepinière, in which street they now lived together, having taken apartments therein for further safety at the commencement of the war, having heard that it was a quarter and a locality very much favoured and frequented by the Imperialists, or followers of Napoleon the Third.

"Ah, but I will, though, have the newspaper!" Marie answered; "for I am most impatient to read the account of the proceedings which are taking

place at the seat of war, especially as Henri and St. Clare have gone to Sedan and the frontiers of Belgium. I will peruse the news and know the worst!"

That instant she caught sight of the long black mourning lines which marked off the columns of the newspaper, and her keen eye flashed upon the enormous list therein printed of the killed and wounded at the memorable battle of Sedan on the side of the French alone, not to speak of the Germans—the enemy. The two first names which she saw were these staring at her in the blackest of type:

*"Killed at Sedan.—Henri, Marquis de Ruchault, of the French Empire, cavalry officer.*

*"Augustine St. Clare, Englishman, Member of the Ambulance Corps of the Army of the North."*

The room which they were in swam around her, she thought, and in a moment or two she became quite unconscious. Agnes arose hurriedly from the chair wherein she had again seated herself, and hastened to her aid without delay. Bells were rung wildly all over the house, so that the servants thought that their foe, the hated Germans, were already upon them, and actually on the point of entering their beloved Paris, which indeed was done so successfully some time later on. A glass of

sherry was brought on a tray to Marie de la Vallonière, and as soon as she opened her eyes again and was recovering from her swoon they made her drink it, even although she was not inclined to do so. The Marquis de Sevrey, having been annoyed by the unusual commotion and disturbance, and not being able to account for it in a satisfactory manner, rushed into the room and saw his daughter just recovering consciousness. He volunteered to render her all the assistance that he could, and ordered a doctor to be sent for at once, giving directions that his own private brougham should be instantly prepared for that purpose. Agnes answered his inquiring look as to what was the matter with Marie by pointing mutely to the list of the dead and wounded in the daily newspaper. He took it up to satisfy his curiosity, which was now deeply stirred, and when he read the many familiar names mentioned therein, and amongst them, as killed, those of Henri de Ruchault and Augustine St. Clare, he gave forth between his closed teeth an angry exclamation of "Sac-r-r-re Dieu!" and crushed up the paper between his thin and nervous fingers.

Such an utter annihilation of Marie's hopes and anticipations completely broke down her health when she heard thus of the untimely fate of those two whom more than all else in the world she was

concerned about. She lay quite listlessly, and powerless to move either hand or foot for several days, gazing in a stupefied state on the many loving and anxious faces which were watching around her pillow, and asking no questions—for indeed she was not able to ask them, even if she cared to do so—nor seeming to heed even in a casual way those who sat around her bedside by turns. Even for Agnes Audley, who never left her either night or day, she had only her old sweet patient and engaging smile of welcome and of friendship true and sincere. She did not know now whether or not that she would ever marry, seeing that Henri, who was supposed to have been affianced to her, was dead. As for Augustine St. Clare, she never mentioned his name at all, either in public or in private.

The first physicians in Paris, who had been called in immediately to attend her the moment her illness was bruited abroad, saw no remedy for her constantly-increasing malady save in change of air and scene. They gave imperative orders to her father, the Marquis, to bring her away somewhere out of the atmosphere and influences of Paris—in fact, across the sea to another country altogether. But to Marie's own mind, however, there appeared to be little advantage in leaving, even at the doctor's bidding, the old country, her old associa-

tions, and her old pursuits, for Marie felt that the heart within her was shattered completely; that there was no mending its broken fragments; not in this world, at least. Her father, upon the physicians' recommendation, and half distracted himself at the state of her health, and the terrible ravages which, as he thought, the news of Henri de Ruchault's untimely death had made in her physical strength and appearance, had her conveyed to the Isle of Wight. Thither, likewise, at Marie's most earnest request, Agnes Audley followed her in due time, as soon as she was able to leave for good that dear, in so many respects, and peaceful cottage at Suresnes, wherein she and her brother, Jack Audley, and his daughter, little Lucie Audley, had passed such numbers of happy days together.

Agnes, when she arrived there, nursed Marie with the greatest care and feminine solicitude, and sought to the best of her power, not always unsuccessfully, to rally and strengthen her drooping spirits. In Marie's intense sorrow, Agnes Audley was a great comforter—a companion to be hourly relied upon, and a true friend who knew most thoroughly how to sympathize with her in all her grief, and pain, and desolation.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

“ Creation and the six days’ acts they sung :  
Great are thy works, Jehovah ! infinite  
Thy power ! what thought can measure Thee, or tongue  
Relate Thee ? Greater now in Thy return  
Than from the giant angels. Thee that day  
Thy thunders magnified ; but to create  
Is greater than, created, to destroy.”

*Paradise Lost, Book vii.*

THE bombardment of Strasbourg during the Franco-Prussian War was a very dreadful affair ; four or five hundred of the houses in the city alone were completely destroyed, and upwards of four thousand of its inhabitants were rendered destitute, without a bit to eat, or a stitch of clothes to put on their backs ; they had to live in the cellars, or else anywhere in the open air, and many of them were killed by the burning houses falling upon them whilst they were hiding from the Germans in the cellars, and burying them alive.

General Ubrich said to the Swiss deputation who were allowed to come to him in the city, that, although he had fought with the English in the Crimean War, he never witnessed such frightful carnage as he now everywhere observed around him, and that there was nothing for them to do now but either to die or to surrender.

Strasbourg was originally the capital of Alsace, but now, since the termination of the war, it has been ceded to Germany. It is chiefly remarkable for its citadel, a place of great force and strength, which was designed and built by the celebrated Vauban, two hundred years ago. A hundred years or so before that, the Protestant religion was founded there, and to this day it is a very Protestant place, as well as the province in which it is situated.

The siege lasted seven weeks, and the Germans, to shorten it, used shrapnell bombs, which they threw into the city at the rate of twenty a minute; they were so heavy that each shrapnell contained one hundred iron balls, each ball as large as the balls which are used by players upon a bagatelle-table. The Germans also impeded the traffic both of pedestrians and of horses, waggons and cars going through the streets, by covering, by an ingenuity of their own invention, all the public squares and thoroughfare with "devil's feet," or

*diable au pied*, a diabolical clustering of pointed spikes grouped promiscuously together, which, being constructed with a bottom or foundation both broad and flat, spread out on each side, and stopped wayfarers from moving to and fro, so as to create a deadlock in the city's movements.

There is a peculiar astronomical clock in Strasbourg, which, strange to say, escaped the bombardment. The Germans are said to be very much addicted to clocks, and, perhaps, they spared it from shot and shell much the same way as their Emperor gave directions to spare the champagne country, lest the wine which he loved so well should be injured or diminished by the ravages of his ruthless and impetuous soldiers. The globe of this clock shows the stars' course, and conceals from view an almanac of eternity; Christian chronology is exhibited mechanically, and the sun and moon in opposition and conjunction are shown geocentrically; the time which intervenes is determined by a dial, above and beyond that again the moon's course is revealed. An angel poses on the first gallery or landing, holding in his hand a bell, upon which he strikes the quarters; this is called by the initiated, mysteriously, "painting the bell;" a step more elevated, a skeleton stands for old Father Time, and strikes twelve o'clock; the quarters are struck by figures which pass it by, and they denote Shakspeare's

seven ages of man through boyhood, youth, manhood, down to "the lean and slippered pantaloon." The first quarter is struck by the boy, the second by the youth, the man the third, and the hour is struck by Time himself. On the first landing is a niche containing the deity symbolical of every day of the week, who advances forth from it in order to proclaim it; for instance, on a Monday Diana comes forth, and on a Sunday Apollo. Where the loftiest recess is stationed, our Saviour's figure is conspicuous, around which walk the twelve Apostles, each of whom bows to Him solemnly as they pass Him by.

On the left side of the clock there is another tower, with a weather-cock in the shape of a real cock, which stretches its neck, ruffling the feathers thereof apparently, and flapping its wings as it crows loudly—so loudly as to drown in the interim every other noise.

When Jack Audley was last in Strasbourg, which was shortly before the Prussian War, he had been to visit this very wonderful and extraordinary clock along with little Lucie and his sister Agnes. In fact, they had gone there especially for the purpose of having it described to them.

The Germans, during the siege, used to fire over it, and often went very near hitting it with their balls; but it is understood that they refrained from

destroying it intentionally, as they wished to spare it. Perhaps they foresaw that they would get possession of it altogether, as they did subsequently when Strasbourg was ceded to them, and made over to them as a portion henceforth of German territory and possessions.

Strasbourg, as is well known, is remarkable for its culinary treat, designated by the name of *patés de foie gras*, consisting of the livers of geese fattened up for that purpose. They are fed until their livers grow of an enormous size, and then they are killed, and made into Strasbourg pies or *patés de foie gras*. Little Lucie Audley admired them very much when she had the pleasure of eating them, but there was very little of them to be had during the siege.

General Urich conducted the siege with much regularity and astuteness, not to speak of personal bravery; but as he had lost a favourite son, in whom all his hopes were centred, at the previous battle of Worth, he grew disheartened, and lost all energy or desire to carry on the war on his part. This battle was fought for nine hours by MacMahon with forty thousand men against one hundred and forty thousand Prussians, after the death of General Abel Douay at the battle of Geisberg. The numbers, however, were too great against him, and he had to beat a retreat with his tired forces. It

was a well-fought battle; MacMahon had placed his forces in a semicircular line, and only that the Bavarians came up with reinforcements, he might have won it; as it was, the Germans lost as many men in it as did the French themselves. At this battle and after it, Marshal MacMahon spent sixteen hours in the saddle, and he lost almost all his staff, they having been shot down by his side. The hottest part of this battle was in and round the village of Wörth, when the inhabitants themselves fought, seizing the enemy, like wolves, by the throat, and driving them at the point of the bayonet into stables and into farmyards. But superior numbers and greater discipline were too much for the Marshal, and he had to skedaddle! A short time afterwards there was a terrible hand-to-hand fight at the railway-station of Frœschweiler, which began by two hundred Turcos coming into the town for the purpose of buying tobacco, etc., which they were very badly in want of; as they did so, there were thirty Bavarians, who descended from the heights which were adjacent, and as they met all of a sudden the swarthy Turcos, the latter fell upon them and destroyed them. Three or four got off and came back with some of their friends, and in their turn murdered almost every one of the Turcos.

The station-master was killed in the *mêlée*,

and about forty of the brave Turcos are buried close by.

Of the many memorable events of that terrible war there is not much use of making mention here, beyond that there had been a rumour which Marie de la Vallonière had heard, and also along with her Agnes Audley, that Augustine St. Clare had been seen with the Ambulance Corps both at Strasbourg, at Wörth, and at the railway-station at Frœschweiler; but she conceived that such intelligence must be untrue, because more than one account had already reached her, both in Paris and in England, that he had been killed at Sedan, in company with the Marquis Henri de Ruchault. And she hardly expected that it could possibly be true that he was really alive.

There was a young officer who had come home invalided from the war, who had arrived in the Isle of Wight, and said that he had seen Augustine St. Clare upon the staff of Marshal MacMahon, both at Wörth and when he issued his famous proclamation to his soldiers at Saverne, wherein, with God's help, he promised the First Corps a brilliant revenge after the retreat in confusion from Frœschweiler, and after contending thirty-five thousand strong against a hundred and forty thousand Prussians at Wörth.

Agnes Audley, who was now, whilst the war was

daily raging in France, in company with Marie de la Vallonière in the Isle of Wight, suffered, too, in her own way; for was not St. Clare dear to her—aye, even as her own beloved brother Jack? dearer than whom it was so possible that he might have been, but for Marie de la Vallonière!

Marie told her every little and minute detail of the long story of her love for him, and Agnes, as soon as she heard it, was not in the least surprised. Why should she be? She had no reason that she knew of for being so. She expected the very state of things to actually happen which Marie had so graphically described; because Agnes' own keen observations had, sharpened by the intensity of her interest in St. Clare and all his doings, led her to surmise it to be just as Marie mentioned.

In the Isle of Wight the spring was passed—that memorable spring which was so sorrowful and so disastrous to the whole of France. Under the soothing care of Agnes Audley, Marie de la Vallonière rallied somewhat, and grew gradually better and better in general health, whilst her bruised spirit became more and more patiently resigned to its present lot. Only that the well-known gaiety of soul with which she was endowed seemed entirely gone, and gone, alas! for ever; and it was considered by all to be such a great pity, especially as there



was no remedying the damage that had been done to her future happiness.

They all lived in the same house, for Marie de la Vallonière could not dispense with Agnes' constant attention and attendance. Jack Audley and the old Marquis de Sevrey amused themselves in a half-hearted fashion as best they could under the circumstances, running up occasionally to the big city of London, by train, in order to spend some hours at the billiard-tables and in the reading or smoking-rooms of the various clubs of which Jack Audley was either an ordinary or else an honorary member, and where he introduced the aged Marquis to some agreeable male London society; or when they got tired of that, and preferred to remain at home by the sea-side, they went about boating to nearly every nook and corner and crevice of the Isle of Wight, where at present there was a large flock of visitors.

The Marquis de Sevrey never read a newspaper now, for the misfortunes of his unhappy country were so dreadful in their nature and their consequences, both to him and to others, that he could not bear to read even an account of them. Besides that, his eyesight was failing him, and he could not tell why; it must be that he was getting rather old. They did not—that is, he and Jack Audley—leave the girls much time to themselves, but they

brought them about continually, and endeavoured to amuse them by every means and source of recreation which was within their reach. Great attention was of necessity bestowed by both of them upon Marie, and she was permitted to be alone as little as possible.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ Or save the sun his labour, and that swift  
Nocturnal and diurnal rhomb supposed,  
Invisible else above all stars, the wheel  
Of day and night ; which needs not thy belief,  
If earth, industrious of herself, fetch day  
Travelling east, and with her part averse  
From the sun’s beam meet night, her other part  
Still luminous by his ray.”

*Paradise Lost, Book viii.*

IN those days, whilst this great war was going on between France and Germany, England did not interfere ; and it was perhaps justly thought by many people that she ought to have done so, and to have saved the French by her influence and prestige from the degradations they had constantly to suffer upon all sides from their defeat. But England had had for several years an old grudge against France — when Louis Napoleon first came into notoriety, France and England were not upon the best of terms—there was no *entente cordiale* existing between them. Indeed, since the days of Trafalgar they had been enemies, and the coolness and

estrangement between them was not removed until the Crimean War, when they were allies with the Turks against the Russian power. Since then we have been better friends; but not sufficiently so to aid each other unselfishly in the pressing hour of need.

Louis Napoleon made himself at one time conspicuous in London—the time when he was a sort of adventurer—by getting himself enrolled in the Metropolitan Police as a special constable, when some civil disturbances, mostly of a political cast, were arising amongst us; but he never had been sufficiently popular, or else powerful, amongst us English as to be *fêted* and lionized in London as a second Apollo, alighting upon some heaven-kissing hill, or that his life, his prospects, or his personal advantage were of such importance to us that we should undertake a war against France upon his account; for that was what he was seeking, and what he primarily came to London for, now a good many years ago. Nay, his advent amongst us seemed to make the two nations rather hostile than otherwise; and there were some Irishmen in France at that time who coquetted with French politicians, such as the late M. Thiers, and who actually offered their swords and their services to France if she would engage in a military expedition into Ireland in aid of Smith O'Brien, O'Donoghoe, and the other '48 insurgents. The Orleanists, at the same

time, issued a pamphlet upon the new construction of the French naval power, in which it was asserted that the French could throw a landing force into Ireland, in aid of the Young Irelanders, if they so desired.

All these things England did not forget; and all the troubles and the several political and military annoyances and obstacles which she had from time to time to endure in Ireland and elsewhere she laid, in the first degree, at the door of Louis Napoleon, whom she believed, all through, to be an upstart who aped the ambition without the greatness of his uncle, the first Napoleon. Not only so, but, furthermore, she had more respect for the monarchical forms of Government than for Imperialism; and her secret instructions went entirely in favour of the Comte de Chambord's pretensions to the throne as being the legitimate defender of constitutional principles, such as she herself professed, and endeavoured to inculcate upon others. Even as it is at this present day, her sympathies are akin to that line of rule, though it may be severe; for she dreads Republicanism in any shape or form, as being but the outcome of Americanism in thought and politics. And we all know that the American nation are extremely fond of teaching us at the present day—especially the weather prospects!

There is hardly a newspaper or a telegram comes from America but it informs us there is a storm brewing westward, as if we had no astronomers and no weather prophets in our own country, quite as good in every way, when you judge them, as they themselves have. It was always an old plan with the Americans, whenever they wanted to make a fool of some one belonging to another nationality, especially if he happened to be an Englishman born, to send him to look for the *sun*; for they only boast of the stars and stripes themselves. In like manner the French would give us a lesson or two in good government, and in the true greatness of kingdoms and estates, in the words of Lord Bacon, if we would be willing children enough to receive such an instruction from them; but we never saw our way yet to helping Louis Napoleon to the sceptre and bauble of Imperialism in France; nay, we always looked upon that *régime* there as the most rotten in the world, and the hotbed of effeminateness. Even the King of Prussia has been caught by the web of Imperialism, when he allowed his vanity to get the better of his common sense, and had himself crowned Emperor at Versailles after the war.

However, to return to *nos moutons*. If England did not choose to interfere during the war, she acted from motives of self-defence, and she did not

permit her charity to lie dormant, but sent plenty of money and of supplies, as well as nurses and ambulance men, to assist and succour the wounded. And whenever any refugees came to England from France, they were hospitably entertained; many a time a band of terrified Communists might be seen roving about some seaport town in the south of England, who had just made their escape from the meshes of the law in France, and who looked now more like wild wolves than human beings—they were so hungry—and with hardly any clothes to their backs except a torn blue blouse for a shirt.

Plenty of them were to be seen in the south of England whilst the war was raging, and the Marquis de Sevrey often met them, and assisted them as best he could with both money and clothes, which they were very badly in want of.

Marie de la Vallonière, his daughter, was by this time greatly changed: indeed, so changed that one would hardly know her. So changed was she that her father shed tears over her in secret, for he could not make out what was the cause of her repining, and her lassitude of spirits, which he had thought that the invigorating air and climate of the Isle of Wight would improve. He would not tell her, though, how it pained him to see her thus so changed from what she was. And, indeed, how

much it really did pain him to see her thus altered it would be quite impossible to explain. One never knows what a father's feelings are, especially when the subject of them happens to be a favourite and an only daughter, who has been, whilst she was growing up, the solace and the comfort of the best years of his life, and the image, moreover, of her dead mother.

He had spent a large amount upon her education ; had sent her to the best school in France, and had the most skilful music and drawing-masters which Paris could afford, to give the finishing touches to her varied accomplishments ; and now was all this to go for nothing, and was he to receive no adequate return for all his solicitude, his trouble, and his care ? So it seemed ; and bitter, in truth, was this reflection to him.

He was thinking so much of the illness of his daughter, that he forgot to think of the calamity which had overtaken his dear France, the wreck of his own fortunes, and the loss of his beautiful Normandy *château* outside Rouen, into which, his steward wrote him word, the German soldiers had broken, and were carousing amongst his costly furniture and drinking his champagne, which they had stolen from the vaults which were beneath the castle. At another time that would have enraged him more than anything else, for he was a fastidious



connoisseur of rich wines, and kept only the rarest brands. But with his only daughter so ill upon his hands, now he hardly waited to think of his other misfortunes, especially as he could not find out the cause of her sickness; it appeared to be mental as much as physical. He never told her outwardly what he felt regarding her. He went by whatever her physicians told him, and hoped that time and the change of scenery, added to their prescriptions, would be able to mend all, and make her what she used to be when she was well. Alas! it was because, like Ophelia, "she never told her love." Before her he was always smiling, however inwardly pained he might be, being her father; and by her grateful look of intelligence she thanked him for it. He was suffering, she was aware, on account of her; yet what could she do? One cannot say to a mountain, "Depart, and vanish out of sight!" for that would be impossible; if the mountain won't go to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain. One cannot remove a heavy load of sorrow by the use of a little word, although those whom we love be pained by its presence.

The grace of womanhood, rendered once so radiant in Marie de la Vallonière by the ingenuous laugh, the light-hearted playfulness, the lovable good nature which made her so popular amongst her friends, was changed into the reserve and quiet

manner so suitable to her new condition of life, and which in its appearance possessed a fresh beauty of its own, appreciated most by those whose happiness it was to be daily with her, daily under the influence of that fair young face, which even in its sorrow wore the sweetest smile mortal had ever received. And that smile a blush would still accompany, like the tint of a delicate sea-shell.

Marie's presence immediately produced an impression wherever she went. The frequenters and residents of the Isle of Wight began to watch her movements and draw their conclusions as to who she might be. She was one of those who are an object of interest and of pleasure to others where-soever they may go, and who, when they leave us, cause a pang of regret and perhaps a tear.

Marie was not long a resident in the Isle of Wight before she confessed to her father the true reason of her suffering. When he heard the story of her love—which he did with some unconcealed surprise—for Augustine St. Clare, he marvelled greatly. At first he was rather inclined to be angry with the latter, but the grave solemnly forbade the appearance of animosity of any sort. Marie told the Marquis, too, she never would have of her own free will, and were she mistress of her own actions, married Henri de Ruchault, even had she not had the happiness to have met Augustine.

“I had been trying hard to love him—I mean Henri—for your sake, papa, because you approved of him as being a suitable husband for me, your only daughter and heiress,” she said, in as pleasant a tone as she could assume; “but I could not do it. Not being able to love him, it was not equally in my power to marry him against my inclination. Sooner or later I assuredly would have told you so, for I would have felt it my duty to do so; and then all would have for ever been over between us. I think poor Henri himself knew that it must be so.”

“You never told him, Marie, that you did not love him?” her father said inquiringly; “and when I asked you the question more than once you replied that you did.”

“No, I never told him so plump and plain. But then he was always so stupid. From his disappointed manner I often guessed as much, that he knew he could never get me to regard him fondly, and I inferred the same thing from some significant words he uttered more than once, which I remember well.”

“What were they?”

“That he feared we were hardly suited for each other, and I always answered we were not.”

“He is gone now,” murmured her father solemnly. “They are both gone,” he added, folding his arms and bending his eyes upon the ground.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

SHE burst into a flood of tears when she heard those last words. Her father did not seek to stay her weeping or to console her. He thought it best that she should have a good cry over it; relief, even though tardy, might come to her with those bitter tears.

The last five or six months had also wrought an alteration in him, and had taught him much that he was indifferent to before. So many of his old friends and of his former associates torn thus suddenly from him and launched into eternity—it was an awful reflection, and made him shudder. It did more. It brought him to his senses regarding many things about which he had held wrong notions. There was one thing especially which it strengthened him in his adherence and his allegiance to. It made him truer than ever he had been before to Authority and the Party of Order, and the Divine Right of Kings to reign and govern. It changed him chiefly in this above all else. It lowered his

pride of being, and made him regard his daughter's happiness more than he valued that feeling of pride. He was prepared now, where his daughter loved, not to thwart her hopes by any selfish interference; for he knew he could trust to her loving no one who would not be equal to her race and name. He would never again seek a ready-made husband to order, and bid his child marry him. As his pride diminished his love for Marie grew stronger. He was so near losing her the other day only, that the positive danger of such a loss to him stirred the latent fire which was smouldering in his heart into a keen and vivid, and, as it were, a species of new-born and lately-discovered affection for this, his darling child.

When her tears had somewhat subsided and the engaging smile had come back again, Marie asked, looking up into his furrowed and noble face:

"Papa, answer me one question, if you please, and I shall be very much obliged to you."

"Well, Marie? I am prepared to satisfy your curiosity, if I am able."

"Would you, being my father, have let me marry Augustine St. Clare had he lived, had he not been killed at Sedan?"

"A year ago, Marie," he replied, "I might not have sanctioned it. To-day I would, because events have happened since which have totally changed

the aspect of affairs and your future prospects; not to speak of your failing health and shattered nerves."

She arose with some of her departed gaiety, threw her arms about his neck, although he did not want her caresses, and kissed him on both cheeks.

"Thank you, papa; I am better now," she murmured, laying her head upon his shoulder peacefully; "I can think of him in heaven now as all my own."

Her father stroked her hair with one hand, parting the straying curls and putting them ever so gently away from her troubled face with its puzzled look, for a sighing breeze like the hum of a straggling bee had come in through the opened window, playing with her hair and causing it to fly about untutoredly.

"You must not speak so, my dear Marie; at least to me, for I will not listen to such language," he said. "When this grief of mind from which you are at present suffering shall have subsided, be assured that we shall make it our business to get you a husband, and a good one, who shall take care of you."

"Never," she answered solemnly. "I shall not marry anyone."

"We shall see about that in due time," he re-

plied, in as cheerful a voice as he could assume, and exclaimed suddenly, glancing out of the window: "Marie, there is Jack Audley in the white boat with the gilded edges, and little Lucie steering! She is sending her father in on the rocks—the incorrigible pet! She is bad beyond amendment! But he is too strong for her, and with the oars turns the boat towards us. Now Lucie is getting good and penitent, and is steering properly. He is beckoning to us! He sees me in the window. Come, Marie, my darling, get your things ready and let us have a sail in Jack's yacht!"

"It must be two o'clock, papa," she said. "Jack stated he would be below with the white boat at that hour. How the time passes! I must go at once, dear, in search of Agnes. We will meet you at the door."

She tripped away to find her friend, but her father missed the old light step and brightness of manner.

"Poor Marie!" the Marquis whispered, looking after her. He dried his eyes—they had filled with tears—and went downstairs to the door.

What of Margaret le Breton, or rather, of Lady Legrange, during all this time? Although frequently advised after the war broke out to leave, if only for awhile, not merely Paris, but France, Lady Legrange incredulously laughed at what she believed

the vain fears of those whose advice she persistently refused to take. At last the Prussian siege grasped the city in its iron claws, and it was too late to fly from unfortunate Paris. In the beginning Margaret did not pay much attention to the strange turn affairs had assumed, since she possessed plenty of money and attendants, and could purchase whatever she desired in the shape of food and raiment. But the moment arrived when she felt what it was to be a sharer in the miseries of that siege. Her servants, who had remained by her side for money, not for affection, one by one deserted her, and at length she was left alone to attend upon herself. It was a sad change from her former state of comfort. Her ready money, too, was failing her; she could not find an opportunity of communicating with her bankers. She parted with her magnificent jewels at one-fourth of their value, only too well pleased to get even that much for them. Still the tiresome and disastrous siege dragged its tedious and horrible length along. The day came round when Margaret Legrange felt the pangs of hunger. She had never felt them in reality before.

Another and another day passed away; another and another; and on the fifth day a stiff and emaciated corpse lay on a sofa in the drawing-room of Lady Legrange's apartments in Paris, and Lady Legrange—the once beautiful Margaret le Breton—



the first love of Augustine St. Clare—was never heard of again, having been eaten by rats.

*Sic transit gloria mundi!*

And now our task is nearly done. The light is burning low and the pen running dry; and some brief words more will bring us to a close, so that the curtain may fall down upon this drama of life, the characters having been all played out.

It seems so sad an ending to a story that pallid Death should fling his cold shadow across the bright, warm path of Life; but what can we do? Torrents of events leap like the strong young river from crag into precipice, and hide themselves when their running is over in the forgetting sea. The earth knows them no more; they have had their little flash in the sunshine, and are forced to make way for others to come after them. We record a part of the history of a few lives, but we may not recall those who are gone into oblivion, even at the gracious bidding of those who, like fair Marie de la Vallonière and gentle Agnes Audley, have, it seems, but to ask in order to receive.

The weeds and the ripe corn yield alike to the sickle of Death; the unworthy and the worthy; the young and the old; the plain and the beautiful; the rich and the poor—they are all the same to him. In the stern performance of his appointed

task, Death spares not the beauty of the blooming youth, nor the silver hairs of the old man who has seen so much in his day.

We have written of events which may appear mournful, but even Death, when he strikes the best and the brightest amongst us, may be in reality performing a work of love.

Jack Audley, his sister Agnes, and little Lucie, are still residing in the Isle of Wight, near Alum Bay. Jack is taking incessant care of his precious child, who will be such a rich heiress by-and-by. He has grown most domestic, and seeks little society beyond that of his sister and child. He keeps a yacht—not a large one—and resides in a pleasant house bordering the sea, in sight of Alum Bay.

The people about the place, especially the poor and the boatmen, like him, and touch their hats to him. With the boatmen, above all others, he is a chief favourite. It ought to be a good sign of a man's character to be loved thus by the poor. The boatmen have already found a pet name for little Lucie. They call her "The Forget-me-not." Being dressed in blue, she reminds them of that flower. Nor is the child one likely to be forgotten. She is of those who impress themselves pleasantly on the memory.

Her young friend, Geneviève Beauville — an

orphan now—also resides in the Isle of Wight with her widowed mother.

The brave Count fell in the war between France and Prussia; but where his soldier's grave lies, no one has yet been able to ascertain. Wherever it be, an angel knows it. The slumberer beneath had as noble a heart as ever beat in human breast. Those who remember that pleasant companion will sigh that France should lose so true a son.

The children, Lucie and Geneviève, are continually together, and wherever they go there is sure to be sunshine, even on wet days.

Dear little motherless Lucie! How she reminds us of that other Lucie, who years ago waited beside her luggage for Sergeant George Clayton, in the barrack-square of Clonmel! Many changes have taken place since then, and the world, like Tennyson's stream, goes on for ever.

We have but to relate something that occurred in the early part of May, and then this history shall draw to a close.

It was a charming day, when the sea and sky were blue and peaceful, and the earth radiant with May loveliness. It was a day to spend under the shade of rocks beside some murmuring beach, reading, or painting, or conversing with one we love most. It so happened that on this particular day the Marquis de Sevrey, Agnes Audley, and Marie

de la Vallonière, were going, after luncheon, to read and sketch amongst the rocks away from the burning heat of the sun. It was a very hot day. Little Lucie was with them, but the impetuous child had run on impatiently before—being much too eager in her spirits to linger against her will staidly with the others, who continued to walk slowly on.

“I hope that child won’t fall and hurt herself amongst the rocks,” said the Marquis.

“Oh, there is not the least fear of that!” answered Agnes. “She is so sure-footed she can hardly slip; and even if she does she won’t hurt herself.”

“I trust not,” he replied anxiously; for he was exceedingly fond of the child, and would not have a hair of her head injured if he could prevent it.

“I think she has a genius for waltzing over rocks,” said Marie gaily—whilst a smile illumined her face, as open and natural as childhood itself. “Lucie glides over them as I would over a grassy lawn.”

They reached the brow of the cliff, and beheld the sea stretching out delightfully before them. Underneath where they stood, visitors were sitting in dots and groups.

## CHAPTER XXX.

“ Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,  
Enid, my early and my only love,  
Enid, the loss of whom hath turned me wild—  
What chance is this? how is it I see you here?  
Ye are in my power at last, are in my power,  
Yet fear me not: I call my own self wild,  
But keep a touch of sweet civility  
Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.”

TENNYSON: *Idylls of the King.*

MANY of these had come down all the way from London by that morning's express train for a day's outing, and to enjoy themselves by bathing in the sea, and inhaling the fresh briny atmosphere, so bracing and so different altogether from the fog and soot of the City chimneys, and the damp arising even in summer from the banks of the Thames—into which all the sewerage of London flows. There were express trains plying between the metropolis and the sea-coast, whereby tourists on pleasure bent could go down to the latter and spend almost the entire day there, very cheaply, returning to town in the evening. And many were in the habit of avail-

ing themselves of the opportunity, especially those who submitted to travel third class, for whose accommodation and comfort special arrangements were made by the railway company. Many of these cockney Londoners were to be seen now any day in the Isle of Wight, carrying their luncheons or their dinners in travelling bags, slung across their shoulders, or else, if it should happen to be the female members of the party, they conveyed their eatables in substantial baskets, and with the latest novels under their arms, they lay down resting and half-asleep amongst the sheltering rocks ; some chatting to one another ; some idly gazing at the retiring and advancing sea ; some fishing with all their spare attention fully concentrated upon the mysterious sport ; whilst here and there a group of children, who did not come down from London that day, but were at the seaside with their fathers and mothers and nurses for a month or two for the benefit of the sea air, searched with well-wrought nets, which had been bought for them along with their sand shovels at some neighbouring toy-shop, for diminutive shrimps, and the other small fish, the crabs and lobsters, which haunt the sea-pools left by the receding tide.

In one place there was a bearded artist who had also come from London, and who, with his easel opened out and set before him, was sketching in

water-colours; whilst at the same time a fisherman's lad, with his smaller sister, having ceased from their healthy play and pastime, were ingeniously criticising the scientific strokes of the busy artist, which he made every minute with his camel-hair brush. In another place there stood a mathematical-looking geologist or surveyor, who had his sharp and decisive hammer in his hand, and was chipping off therewith the various edges of rocks and stones, and examining them as to their veins and geological properties through the medium of his blue spectacles.

"Where did you get those spectacles?" asked a brother tourist.

"I bought them at a Monsieur du Chaillu's, in the Rue de l'Ecu, in Boulogne," he said shortly. "I wear them to keep off the heat of the sun from me, not that my eyesight is bad. Would you like to look at them?—they are French glass."

"Oh, I don't require to examine them; but I thought it must be difficult to examine stones with dark glasses."

"Not if you break them well with a hammer, and have bright glasses; either spectacles of smoked glass, or blue in hue. The French are the best spectacle-makers in the world."

"I believe that is conceded to them on every side," the other answered.

Girls, by other parts of the vividly-pictured seashore, wandered about, no doubt in search of husbands, if the truth were really told, dressed gaily meanwhile in the very latest and most grotesque seaside fashions, and their youthful presence threw the charming liveliness of many-coloured costumes on the dark nooks and cave-like openings wherein they clustered, making thereby the clear and changing scene still more agreeable to the observer's gaze. Some of these young ladies, of course, were steadily reading novels, or at least pretending to do so; and some of them were surrounded likewise by talkative little brothers and sisters; and some others of them were sewing, or appearing to take an intense interest in the needle, bent attentively over which they worked.

"Where's Lucie?" asked Agnes Audley, when they had left the brow of the cliff and were descending a zigzag path, long and narrow.

"There she is!" exclaimed Marie de la Vallonière joyously. "See! over there! How affectionate and good the child is! There! Do you not observe that she is down there?"

"I can't make her out," said the Marquis de Sevrey rather thoughtfully, levelling an opera-glass which he was carrying in his hand at the various groups assembled below.

"I can see her quite plainly," said Agnes, smiling.



“She has her arms entwined around somebody’s neck, and it is that of a man!” replied the Marquis, still looking through his opera-glasses, and sweeping the horizon with them as he was speaking. “Whoever it is, he is sitting upon the rocks, and Lucie is clinging to him with both her arms, and hanging most unmercifully to him! Every moment, too, she lifts up her small face to his, in order to be kissed.”

“It is Jack!” said Agnes, surprised. “I thought he was out yachting these three hours. There’s his yacht sailing away yonder.”

They continued their downward path towards the adjacent rocks, and advanced nearer little Lucie. She did not perceive their approach until they were almost behind her.

“Oh my!” she exclaimed. “What a start you people gave me! See who I have here!”

He whom the child alluded to arose hastily and looked around him. His eyes fell on Marie’s face. She gave a low soft cry of pleasure, tottered towards him, and fainted in his arms.

It was Augustine St. Clare!

He was not killed at Sedan after all! Here he was both alive and well, and just like his own dear old self! The same kind smile, the same honest eye, the same handsome face, healthy and blushing as if he was only eighteen.

To describe Marie's feelings at so unexpectedly recovering him, would not be possible; full and ample justice could not be done to her here.

He escaped death by something like a miracle. He told them of his strange and unlooked-for meeting with Henri de Ruchault on the bloody battlefield of Sedan, where the French in the late war met with their first grave defeat at the hands of the victorious Germans. The bullet that went through Augustine's breast only rendered him for the time insensible; but he never told them or anyone else that it was Henri de Ruchault who fired it at him with one of his loaded revolvers. He only told them that he was shot through the breast: that was all! Nor did he divulge the secret that poor De Ruchault had actually put an end to his own life by committing suicide on the field of battle. That was very likely owing to his labouring under temporary insanity at the time, brought on and accelerated by the state and magnitude of his wounds. As to his (Henri's) reasons for shooting Augustine St. Clare, the latter attributed it to a pang of jealousy, because Marie had slighted the former and favoured St. Clare. He did not consider that it was a fair thing to take that sudden advantage of him, and try to put thus an end to his life, but he kept his ideas about it to himself for more reasons than one. He was con-

sidered, after receiving that very dangerous wound in the breast, to be dead! Why, he could not explain. He was carried to a grave that had been dug expressly for him and Henri de Ruchault, under a neighbouring tree, and was on the point of being deposited therein, when a doctor rode by as the party of soldiers were preparing the grave, and on seeing St. Clare he exclaimed:

“He is not dead!”

“Nor was I,” said St. Clare good-humouredly. “They conveyed me to an hospital, where for weeks I hovered between life and death. Every attention was paid me by the kind and good nurses there; and owing to their assiduous care, together with the rallying powers of my own constitution, which is a comparatively strong one, I conquered death at last, and steadily began to recover. When sufficiently well to undertake the journey, I was removed to Brussels, where I have been ever since, as it was necessary for me to have quiet and repose. I did not know what had become of you, Marquis, or of the Comtesse de la Vallonière.”

“Do not call me Comtesse; call me Marie!” she exclaimed.

St. Clare looked first at her, and then at the Marquis, and blushed when he saw the assenting smile upon the latter's face. Marie, he surmised, must have told all then to her father of the rela-

tions which had subsisted for some time between them. Augustine, after this little interruption, went on with his tale :

“ But I heard indirectly that Jack Audley and his sister, Miss Agnes here, were now living permanently in the Isle of Wight ; so, accordingly, I came over here without the least delay in anxious search of them. I did not write beforehand, my dear Agnes, as I wished, by my sudden visit, to give you and your brother Jack, my old friend, a surprise, so as to make you imagine that I had risen from the grave ; and, indeed, it looks extremely like it, does it not ? I only arrived at Cowes this morning, having travelled thither by the first train from London, which I reached yesterday, having journeyed from Brussels as rapidly as I could, *viâ* Rotterdam and Harwich. And as I had nothing else to do except read the newspaper, I saw your names in it, and your place of residence, and then I sauntered forth to look at the bathers, and went to loiter upon the rocks awhile before I paid my visit from the other world to Jack Audley and you, Agnes. However, I was not allowed to rest unknown there long and concealed from view. For my old romping playmate, little Miss Lucie, yonder, stole unexpectedly behind me, as I was buried in the contents of the

newspaper, and put both her diminutive hands over my eyes.'

"'Who's that?' I asked, dropping the newspaper; for I am still weak and nervous, not having fully recovered from the shock of the wound.

"'Guess!' she said.

"'Lucie, by heaven!' I answered, with a deep sigh of relief; for I had been so long amongst strangers and foreigners, I was glad to meet with a friend or an acquaintance; and I knew the sound of her voice, moreover, for it was always so like her poor dead mother's. And I was perfectly right. It was little Lucie Legrange, full of life and activity."

At that moment he looked at the child and started. She was leaning gracefully against a projecting rock, and gazing at him—the very image of her dead mother. Agnes Audley immediately noticed the great resemblance, too; indeed, she was quite accustomed to it, for she saw it every day of her existence. Such, in fine, was Augustine St. Clare's—the quondam sergeant of Royal Artillery in Her Majesty's service—wonderful and true account of his return to this life, and of his having, as it were, really risen from the dead.

Jack Audley, when he came home from his yachting excursion, was almost beside himself for joy when he found Augustine standing at the

hall-door with Agnes, Marie, little Lucie, and the Marquis, waiting to greet him on his return.

"We buried you ages ago, Augustine," he said, "and between us wept as many tears for you as would float my yacht!"

Jack, so cool and collected generally, was unnerved on this occasion. He trembled with pleasure as, laying his hand on St. Clare's shoulder, he said:

"Well, Augustine, we never know a friend's worth until we lose him."

"I declare," archly exclaimed Marie, who had just come in at that instant, with all her old joyous manner and frequent smiles restored, "he has got that everlasting flower in his button-hole!"

"Yes; I love roses," said Augustine.

Agnes Audley cherished in solitude and silence the new source of happiness which had found its way into that large heart of hers, wherein was room for other hearts to find a golden repose in nestling closely there. She was glad and grateful for the coming back to them of the lost St. Clare, and Agnes Audley found peace unspeakable in Marie's source of happiness and marital good fortune.

The rest of the sweet month of May was made more delightful by mutual joys, in which all in some part shared. The month of June was given up completely to the altar of Hymen, inasmuch as two

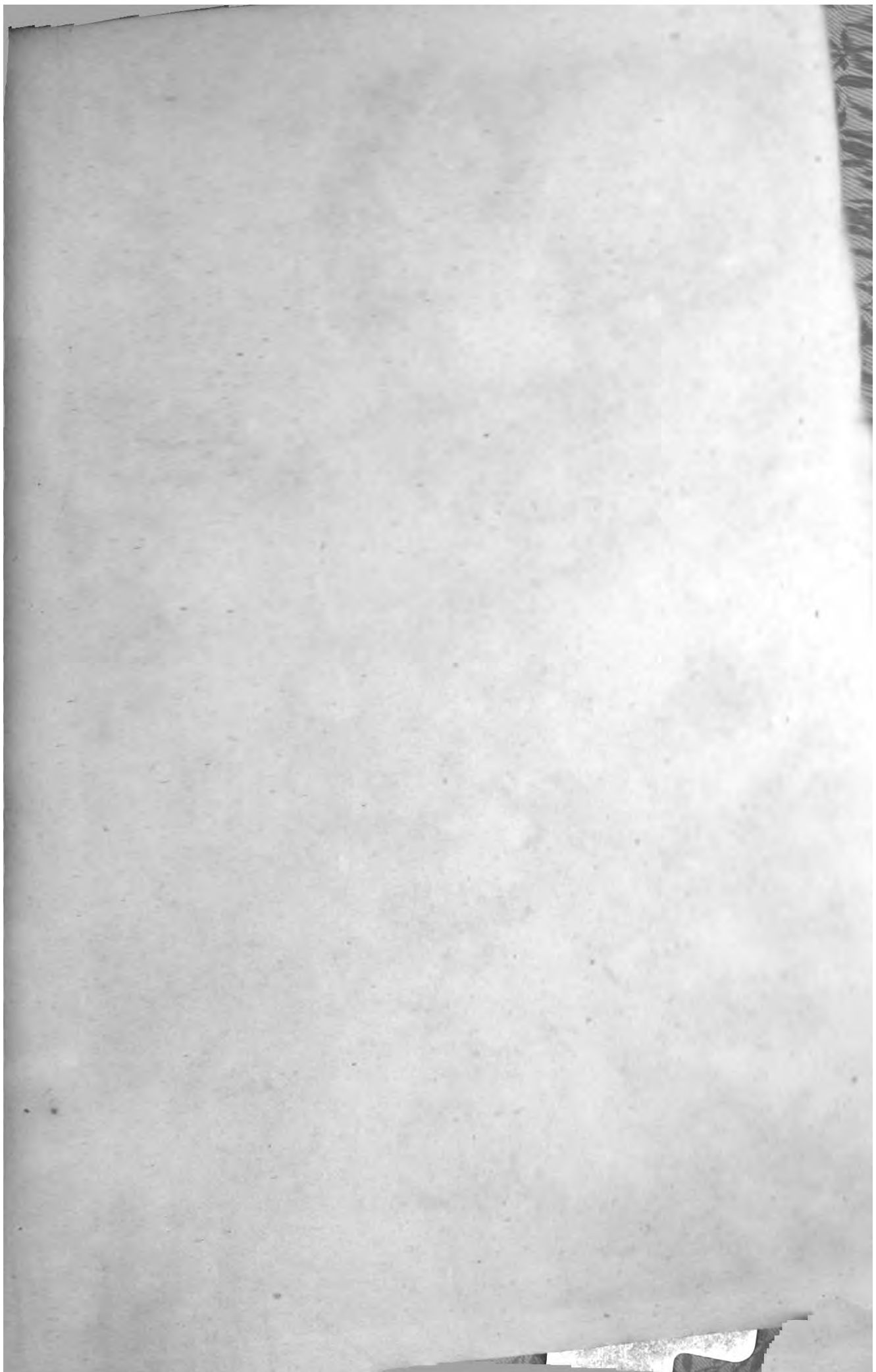
other hearts were now seeking to be united in the bonds of matrimony; namely, those of Agnes Audley and of the Marquis de Sevrey, for he proposed to her that she should change her state and marry him.

Six such summer weeks of unclouded sunshine as those were which succeeded this promise of marriage were not long passing away, and one Saturday in the month of August the merry wedding bells at Cowes rang out in loud peals the double marriage-songs of the Marquis de Sevrey and of gentle Agnes Audley, and of Marie de la Vallonière and Augustine St. Clare.

THE END.

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