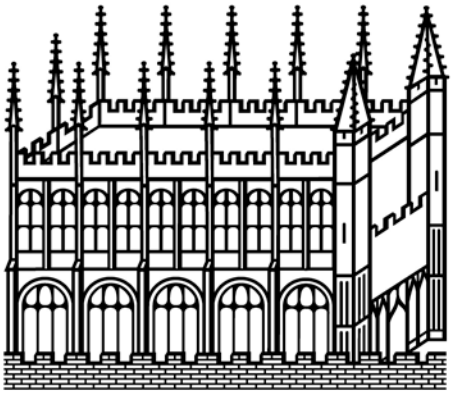

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THE NOVELS OF
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

CÉCILE

Fic. 27525 d (53) 141/[4]

"I AM COMING, HENRI"

THE NOVELS OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

CÉCILE

OR

THE WEDDING GOWN

NEWLY TRANSLATED BY

ALFRED ALLINSON

WITH THREE ILLUSTRATIONS BY D. MURRAY SMITH

METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
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1906

INTRODUCTION

THACKERAY'S remark that *The Black Tulip* is as modest as a story by Miss Edgeworth would have been made as felicitously about *Cécile*. Dumas, in fact, never chose a more simple theme than this tale of the fate of a wedding gown and its maker. He was ambitious of succeeding in every style of fiction; and if *Monte Cristo* was an attempt to surpass Eugène Sue's greatest success, and *Conscience* was intended to show that George Sand was not the only contemporary writer of pastorals in France, we may conclude that when writing *Cécile* he was not oblivious of the vogue enjoyed by August Lafontaine in Germany, or by Miss Edgeworth in England.

The introductory chapter excepted, the story is not one that could be assigned unhesitatingly to Dumas; but his power of adapting his style and treatment to his subject-matter was great, and he may have written it without a collaborator on a *motif* suggested by one of the numerous clan who carried their ideas to "the master." That the tale in its first shape lacked the introduction seems more than probable. Dumas reminds us of the expert *mécanicien* who knows the precise touch required to give his complicated works motion. He seizes upon the poignant situation of the heroine reduced by poverty to find a buyer for her own wedding gown, and with consummate art places it in the forefront of the tale, thus compelling the interest of the reader.

Cécile, although as a whole in no sense characteristic of Dumas, deserves a place among his works as an unaffected and pathetic tale in a *genre* seldom essayed by him.

It was announced under the title of *La Robe de Noces*, was published in Paris by Dumont in 1844 as *Cécile*, and was at once pounced upon by the pirate publishers of Brussels, who at that time were giving in clearly printed compact little volumes at a very moderate price what the Parisian publishers brought out in large form, "where a neat rivulet of text meanders through a meadow of margin," at a high one. The sale of the Brussels editions was, of course, prohibited in France, and equally, of course, they were much read there *sub rosâ*. Dumas complained most bitterly of this state of affairs, until he went to live for a time in Brussels, when he seems to have succeeded in entering into satisfactory relations with the leading publishers of that very commercial city, the outcome of which was that they advertised their editions as the only complete ones. This was in the days of the Censure, when Dumas pathetically observed, "They cut in Paris what I write in Brussels."

R. S. G.

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CÉCILE

INTRODUCTION.

IT was the period between the peace of Tilsit and the conference of Erfurth, —in other words at the culminating point of the Empire's splendour.

In a charming boudoir, the most secluded room of a suite of apartments on the first floor of No. 11, Rue Taitbout, on a couch covered in blue satin, lay a woman in loose, morning attire. She was dressed in a long *peignoir* of Indian muslin, trimmed with costly valenciennes, from beneath the hem of which peeped the tip of a tiny velvet slipper. Her hair was dressed in the fashion of the day, raised high on the crown of the head, while her forehead was shaded by a profusion of chestnut curls, betraying by the regularity of their silky rings the recent presence of the hairdresser.

First a few words as to the woman herself, then we will describe her boudoir, and afterwards proceed to our story.

The woman in question—at first glance *the girl* might have seemed the truer expression, for although she was nearly twenty-six she appeared to be hardly nineteen,—besides the grace of her figure, the delicacy of her feet, and the creamy whiteness of her hands, was gifted with one of those faces which in all ages have had the prerogative of turning the steadiest heads. Not that she was strictly beautiful, especially after the style which was considered beauty at that date, when David's pictures had brought almost all France back to the taste of Greece, so fortunately neglected during the two previous reigns; far from it, her peculiar beauty was rather of the fantastic and fascinating sort. It may be her eyes were too large, her nose too small, her lips too crimson, her complexion too transparent; but it was only when the bewitching face was in repose that these imperfections could be noticed. For the instant her countenance was lit up by emotion, the charming creature whose likeness we are trying to sketch, could make her face assume whatever expression she willed, from that of the most shy and shrinking virgin to that of a dishevelled bacchante. Did sadness or joy, pity or mockery, love or scorn move her, every feature of the exquisite face was in such harmony it was impossible to say which you would have wished altered, for by adding regularity to the whole, you would inevitably have robbed that whole of its piquant fascination.

She held in her hand a roll of paper on which were traced lines written in two different writings. Every now and then she raised her hand with a gesture of pretty weariness, lifted the manuscript to her eyes, read a few lines, making a charming little *moue;* then with a sigh she would drop once more the hand which seemed fain to let slip the tiresome papers altogether. These evidently bored her to extinction,—a fact she made no sort of effort to conceal.

The woman was one of the most popular actresses of the Theâtre-Français; and the roll, one of the most weariful tragedies of the day. We will introduce the former as Fernande, and keep a discreet silence as to the title of latter.

The boudoir was richly embellished, yet it bore the stamp of the degenerate taste of the period. It was a pretty, small, square room hung in blue satin, each panel being framed by two slender Corinthian columns whose gilded capitals carried a stucco freize. On this, after the style of Pompeii, was painted a crowd of cupids bearing bows and quivers, and a whole series of altars to Hymen and Fidelity, in front of which the said cupids sacrificed their victims; such was the art of the epoch. Moreover the room had

four doors, two of which only existed for the sake of symmetry, and were sham; these four doors were painted white, and each panel enriched with gilded decorations representing the thyrsus of Bacchus and the masks of Thalia and Melpomene. One of the doors was open and allowed the steam and grateful scent of a perfumed bath to steal into the room.

Covered in blue satin like the walls, the furniture had that stiff and uncomfortable shape that still astonishes people of taste and lovers of the luxurious, who not only fail to understand how it was possible to accept such counterfeits of antiquity, but how they could be of any use whatever, considering it was hardly practicable to lie on the couches, barely possible to sit in the armchairs, and quite impossible to do so on the ordinary chairs. We except from this wholesale condemnation the X-shaped stools of the period, which setting aside their odd form and Athenian ornamentation, were the only pieces of furniture which at all fulfilled their purpose.

The decorations of the mantel-shelf were of corresponding design. The clock represented a large round shield, probably that of Achilles, carried by four meagre cupids, who staggered under its weight; the candelabra consisted of four other cupids joined together in a cluster and holding aloft four torches, which made a four-branched candlestick.

Yet the whole apartment, in spite of its bad taste, showed a rich, elegant and attractive aspect, still further enhanced by the brilliancy, grace and beauty of the Siren occupying it. Why! we are actually ourselves being carried away by our subject, and falling involuntarily into the mythological style of that day.

The goddess who was worshipped in this little temple was reclining at her ease, as we said before, on a couch, ostensibly studying her part, but really thinking of nothing but of the way in which she would drape her peplum and fold her tunic in the new Tragedy she was going to play in. At this moment the door opened and the maid entered with that familiar gait betokening at once the *confidante* of Tragedy and the abigail of Comedy, Ismène and Dorine, the dispenser of advice and the receiver of secrets.

"What! here again?" cried the actress with that pretty affectation of ill-humour that in the very act of scolding seems to say, you have done right to deserve it:—"I told you distinctly I wished to be alone to study at my ease; I shall never know my part, and it will be your fault, do you hear me, Mademoiselle Cornélie?"

The maid's real name was Marie; but this she considered common and had rechristened herself on her own authority with the more euphonious and above all more distinguished name of Cornélie.

"I beg a thousand pardons, Madam," said the maid; "I am quite ready to face the author and to take all responsibility for the delay; but there is a fine-looking, handsome young man who wishes to speak to Madam, and so eager, it was just impossible to put him off."

"And what is your fine-looking young man's name, Cornélie?"

"Monsieur Eugène."

"Monsieur Eugène," answered the actress, slowly repeating the syllables that formed the word. "Monsieur Eugène. But that is no name at all."

"Indeed, Madam, but it is a name and a very pretty one too; I like the name Eugène. Yes, I do."

"Ah! and you wish me to share your likings? And can you describe me the person you are so interested in?"

"Of course I can. As I told, Madam, he is a fine-looking young man of five foot six, with black hair, black eyes, black moustache. He is dressed in plain clothes, but I wouldn't mind laying a wager he is an Officer; moreover, he carries in his buttonhole the ribbon of the Legion of Honour."

This last detail might once have served as a means of identification; nowadays it would naturally strike one as a trifle vague.

"Monsieur Eugène, a dark man, the ribbon of the Legion of Honour," repeated Fernande, ransacking her memory; then turning again towards Mademoiselle Cornélie: "And do you remember during the year you have been in my service to have ever seen *this fine-looking young man* before, Cornélie?"

"Never, Madam."

"Well, who can it be? Is it Eugène d'Harville?"

"Oh! no, Madam, not he."

"Eugène de Castellux?"

"Nor he, neither."

"Eugène de Clos-Renaud?"

"No, no!"

"Then, my dear girl, go and tell the gentleman I am not at home."

"What! Madam orders me? . . ."

"Go."

As Fernande uttered this word with all the dignity of a Queen of Tragedy, however much her maid had wished to plead the young man's cause, she was forced to turn on her heels and obey the peremptory order.

Mademoiselle Cornélie then went out, and with an expression even more absent and bored than before, Fernande cast her eyes once more on the manuscript; but she had not read four lines when the door reopened and the maid reappeared.

"Well, Cornélie, here again!" said Fernande in a tone which she endeavoured to make stern, but which nevertheless had already lost much of its harshness.

"Why! yes, Madam," answered Cornélie, "it is so indeed. Forgive me, Madam, but Monsieur Eugène won't go away."

"What! he won't go?"

"No; he says he knows Madam never goes out in the morning."

"True enough, but I only receive my friends in the morning."

"He says he *is* one of Madam's friends."

"Well! upon my word, this is an enigma,—Eugène, dark,—ribbon of the Legion of Honour,—one of my intimate friends;—it can't be Eugène de Miremont?"

"No, Madame.—This is a handsomer man altogether."

"Eugène d'Harcourt?"

"Oh! far handsomer."

"Eugène d'Argy?"

"Far, far handsomer."

"Really, Cornélie, you rouse my curiosity."

"And he added," continued the maid, handing her mistress a small case of red morocco about the size of a five-franc piece,—"give this to Fernande and she will know who I am."

"To Fernande?"

"Yes, Madam, he said to Fernande."

"Upon my word, I am utterly in the dark," said the actress, slipping the clasp and opening the case with keen curiosity.

"Why! I declare it's Madam's portrait!" cried the maid; "oh! how like you it is! and how lovely Madam looks with that veil floating about her head!"

"My portrait," murmured Fernande, obviously with a last effort trying to remember,—"My portrait! Who in the world can it be? Ah! I give it up."

Then after a moment's silence:

"Eugène?" she cried.

"Yes."

"Dark?"

"Yes."

"The Legion of Honour?"

"Yes."

"One of my friends . . . this likeness . . . but here's a monogram I had not noticed on the case,—E.B. I know, now I know. Heavens! my wretched memory! How stupid I am! Show him in. Show him in, poor Eugène. And I have kept him dancing attendance! And to think it is not a month ago the same thing happened to me with Jérôme!"

Mademoiselle Cornélie did not wait to be told twice: she was gone like an arrow, so that Fernande's self-reproaches on the score of her memory were scarcely uttered when instead of Cornélie the fine-looking young man with black hair, eyes and moustaches, stood in the doorway.

"Forgive me! dear Fernande!" exclaimed the young man laughing; "but on my honour in my absence I never imagined that you had become unapproachable."

"But then who was ever to imagine it was you, dear Prince?" said Fernande, extending her hand to the new arrival, which he kissed with a most triumphant expression; "you have yourself announced simply and solely under the name of Monsieur Eugène. Good heavens! I know so many Eugènes. . . ."

"That you confused me with all the Eugènes in the world:—you flatter me.—But my portrait of you! Kindly give it back to me."

"Then you still care for it?" said Fernande with a bewitching look.

"Always," answered the Prince, drawing a footstool near the couch.

"Cornélie," said Fernande, "as long as His Imperial Highness is with me, I am not at home to anyone."

Cornélie opened her eyes; hitherto she had seen many Princes visit her mistress, but amongst all these Princes there were few indeed who were addressed with the exalted title of Highness, and especially Imperial Highness.

So Mademoiselle Cornélie left the room without delivering herself of a syllable.

"And when did you come to Paris, my dear Eugène?—Forgive me, Monseigneur,

I always speak to you as if you were a mere Colonel of the Consular Guard."

"And rightly, my beautiful Fernande. When did I arrive? Yesterday; and my first visit was to you, ungrateful girl."

"What? You came here?"

"No. I should not have found you here, for you were acting. I went to the 'Français.'"

"In the Emperor's box? But I did not see you there."

"Not from want of looking. Flirt! I was not there, but Poniatowski was."

"Nonsense, I never saw him."

"Oh! story-teller!" cried the Prince. "No, Madam, I was incognito in the corner box."

"Alone?"

"No, I had your portrait."

"You are quite delightful! But I must own I don't believe one word of it."

"Nevertheless it is the simple truth."

"However, I am vexed you came yesterday."

"Why so? you were enchanting in Zaïre and wonderful in Roxelane."

"I was not looking my best."

"Don't let that distress you. You were ravishing."

"Not at all, I was in a bad temper."

"Did Poniatowski talk too often to his neighbour?"

"I felt sulky."

"Is Duroc dead?"

"I was sad."

"Is Murat bankrupt?"

"Oh, as to Murat, he is a Grand Duke, isn't he? and they say he is to be made a Viceroy like you, or a King like Joseph."

"I have heard something of the kind."

"Indeed! and all these royalties have good allowances, don't they?"

"Well, not bad; and if the subject is in the least amusing to you, well! we will talk of it,—instead of other things."

"But you, my dear Eugène, you are always a Prince; not like your Emperor."

"Indeed! and what has our Emperor done to you? I thought he had made you Empress."

"Ah, yes, he is pleasant enough; we will talk of him presently. Now listen, I want to leave France and go to Milan."

"Do, dear lady, do; you will be most welcome there; I have come to Paris first, to make up the numbers of my troop, then after that I am off to Erfurth and Dresden! Are you going to Dresden?"

"I know Mars, Georges, and Talma are, but no one has said a word to me yet about it."

"Do you want to go?"

"Do I want to go! My dear Prince, shall I tell you the truth? It was that put me in such a bad temper yesterday."

"Really and truly?"

"On my word of honour."

"Well, I will settle the matter with Rovigo. I think it is in his hands."

"How divine of you!"

"Now it is for you to do something for me."

"Oh! anything and everything you wish."

"Give me the list for the week, that I may see how to assort my evenings with yours. I want to see the *Templiers;* you play in it?"

"Yes, I act as a kind of mourner. I would far rather you saw me in something else."

"I want to see you in everything."

"Then you want the list?"

"Yes."

"But it is so badly arranged now. It is all an affair of canvassing, plots and intrigues. I am afraid our poor Comédie-Française is going where the café Louis Quinze went."

"Really!"

"But wherever is that list? Ah, I remember."

Fernande stretched out her hand to the bell rope that was finished off by a golden bow and quiver, and rang. Mademoiselle Cornélie appeared.

"What have you done with the theatre list I gave you yesterday?" asked Fernande.

"I put it in one of the cups in Madam's bedroom."

"Go and find it, His Imperial Highness wants it."

Mademoiselle Cornélie went out and returned a moment after holding the weekly printed paper. Fernande took it from her hands and gave it to the Prince, then she turned towards Cornélie, who had not moved from her position, and asked:

"Well, Cornélie, and what are you waiting for?"

"I beg Madam's pardon," the maid said, "but there is some one wants to speak to you."

And she accompanied these words with one of those glances that from a maid to her mistress are tantamount to:

"Never fear, I know what I am doing."

"Another of your fine-looking young men?" asked Fernande.

"Oh! no, Madam, this time it is a poor young girl; she is very sad and seems to be in great distress."

"What is her name?"

"Cécile."

"Cécile what?"

"Just Cécile."

"Good," said the Prince, "this is a day for Christian names."

"And what does she want?"

"She wishes to show you something I am quite sure you will think very beautiful. At first I told her it was useless, considering Madam is intending to economise; but the poor child begged and prayed so much, I hadn't the courage to send her away. I told her to wait and that Madam would receive her as soon as she could; then she sat herself quietly down in a corner, her cardboard box on her knees, and she is waiting till you are pleased to see her."

"Will your Imperial Highness allow me?" asked Fernande.

"Indeed I shall be very glad to see this young girl," answered the Prince, "and especially to admire what is in the box she holds so modestly on her knees."

"Show her in, then," said Fernande.

Cornélie went off at once and came back a moment after and announced Mademoiselle Cécile; who immediately followed her.

She was a beautiful young girl of about nineteen, with fair hair, pink complexion large blue eyes, and a figure as slender as a reed. She was in deep mourning, dressed entirely in black, without a single ornament on any part of her costume. Her face was pale and her eyes red; anyone could see she had suffered a great deal and had been weeping.

By the description Mademoiselle Cornélie had given of the person who wished to speak to her, Fernande had thought at first she had to do with some little work girl commissioned to go about with patterns in the town, but she saw at the first look she gave this distressed and serious-eyed damsel that she was mistaken. The Prince observed with no less astonishment the air of modest dignity reflected from the whole personality of the beautiful sad-faced girl.

Cécile had halted in the doorway, silent and motionless.

"Come forward, Mademoiselle," said Fernande, "and tell me what it is has given me the pleasure of seeing you."

"In this box, Madam," answered Cécile in trembling tones that betrayed, however, more grief than fear, "in this box is a robe I have already shown to several people, but the price always exceeds what they are willing to give. The very last lady on handing it back to me told me it is only a queen could afford to buy such a gown, and so I came to you who are a queen."

These words were spoken in a voice at the same time so thrilling and with so much melancholy and dignity that the Prince and Fernande felt conscious of yet more intense astonishment. The last sentence made the actress smile, however, and she said:

"A queen! Yes, indeed, a queen from half-past seven till ten o'clock nightly. A queen with a theatre for a Kingdom, walls of cardboard for a palace, and a roll of gilded copper for a crown. Still, you were not altogether misled in coming here, for mock queen though I am, at least you have found a real King."

Solemnly the young girl raised her beautiful blue eyes on the Prince with an expression which showed that she understood not one word of what had just been said.

Cornélie in the meantime lifted up the top of the box.

Fernande gave a little scream of delight and surprise.

"Oh! what a wonderful gown!" she cried, gloating over it with all a woman's keen interest in a consummate garment, laying it out on the long chair and passing her hand under the fabric to judge better the transparency of the muslin and the beauty of the embroidery.

As a matter of fact, not even at Nancy, the home of miraculous creations of the kind, had ever been seen anything to compare with this robe; so covered with embroidery that only here and there was the muslin visible, over which meandered the slenderest stems, the most graceful leaves, the loveliest flowers that had ever attracted the envious gaze of a daughter of Eve. Surely this was no handiwork of a woman, but the fantasy of some fairy.

The Prince, although a poor critic of this sort of masterpiece, recognised none the less that the gown must be a marvel of patience and skill.

Fernande paused a while contemplating the dainty arabesques, then turning towards Cécile she said :

"And who embroidered this robe ?"

"I, Madam," answered Cécile.

"And how many years have you spent at the work ?"

"Two and a half."

"I can quite believe it. See, Prince, it is embroidered by hand and not by loom, which makes it still more valuable. Two years and a half; then you must have worked very hard."

"Night and day, Madam."

"And you started the work with the purpose of selling it ?"

"I undertook it with another object."

"I understand how it is you have not been able to sell it, Mademoiselle, for it must be worth a king's ransom."

"Alas ! yes, and I am compelled to ask a very high price; that is the reason why in spite of my urgent need of the money, I have not yet succeeded in selling it."

"What are you asking for it, then ?" the Prince questioned smilingly.

The young girl was silent a moment as though she feared uttering the fatal words which had already made hope so often vanish; presently in a scarcely audible voice she said:

"Three thousand francs."

"What do you say ?" asked Fernande.

"Three thousand francs," repeated Cécile.

"My word !" exclaimed the actress with a simultaneous motion of eyes and mouth altogether indescribable, "my word ! it is a great price; but it is worth the money."

"And if you buy it," cried the girl, clasping her hands and almost falling on her knees, "if you buy it, Madam, I declare to you you will be doing a blessed and a noble deed."

"Gracious ! child," said Fernande, "I would gladly buy it, and I am ready to confess it makes me ill with envy—but a thousand crowns !"

"Why ! Madam, what are a thousand crowns to you ?" and the girl looked round her as though she were estimating the actress's fortune by the luxurious furniture of her boudoir.

"What are a thousand crowns to me indeed !" cried the actress—"merely my salary for three months. Apply to the Prince, Mademoiselle; he may buy this gown for some lovely lady of the Court."

"Well ! Madam is quite right. I will take the gown, child."

"You ? you, sir ! you Prince !" cried the girl; "is it really true you will buy it, and for the price I ask ?"

"Yes," answered the Prince, "and even if you need a larger sum."

"No, your Highness, no. I want three thousand francs. Three thousand francs will be enough. Besides, the robe is not worth more."

"Then pray have the goodness to give the box to my groom Jean," said the Prince, "you will find him gossiping with my coachman at the door; tell him to put it in my carriage, and give him your address, so that I may send you the money at once; you seem to require it urgently."

"Oh ! yes, yes ! I assure you, desperate need alone could part me from this gown."

As she spoke the poor child frequently pressed to her lips the fabric she was about to part with, with a mingling of joy and grief that well-nigh broke her heart. Then a last time curtseying to Fernande and the Prince, she stepped towards the door.

"Just one word more," said Fernande: "two equally strong impulses move me, Mademoiselle, the curiosity you rouse in me and the interest I take in you. Forgive me, but for whom was this robe intended ?"

"For myself."

"For you ? What kind of a gown was it meant for ?"

"It was my wedding gown."

And the girl flung herself from the room stifling her sobs.

Two hours after three thousand francs were left at her lodgings.

On the morrow the Prince had himself driven to the address she had given and asked for Mademoiselle Cécile. The girl had interested him acutely. He had told her story to the Empress, and the Empress wished to see her.

"Mademoiselle Cécile !" said the portress.

"Yes, Mademoiselle Cécile; a fair young girl with blue eyes, about eighteen or nineteen. Doesn't she live here, Rue du Coq, number 5 ?"

"Oh, I know quite well whom you mean," answered the portress; "but Mademoiselle is not here any longer. Her grandmother died three days ago;

"IS IT REALLY TRUE YOU WILL BUY IT, AND FOR THE PRICE I ASK?"

she was buried the day before yesterday: yesterday Mademoiselle was out all day, and this morning she went away."

"From Paris?"

"Probably."

"To what country?"

"I do not know."

"What was her surname?"

"We never knew it."

And although the Prince asked the same questions five or six times under different forms, he could learn nothing further.

A week later Fernande appeared in the *Philosophe sans le savoir* wearing a robe so marvellously embroidered that rumour averred it was a present that Sultan Selim had made to the charming Roxelane.

As the privilege of knowing all secrets is given us in our character of historian we will now relate who was the mysterous maiden who had only shown herself for a moment to the Prince and Fernande, and whom no one at number 5, Rue du Coq knew except as Cécile.

CHAPTER I

THE PORTE SAINT-DENIS

ON the 20th September, 1792, a light cart provided with straw, and covered with a canvas hood, driven by a peasant seated on the shaft, arrived at half-past six in the morning at the Porte Saint-Denis, following a dozen others which all advanced with the manifest intention of leaving the capital,—at this period of emigration no easy matter.

Every vehicle, as it came forward, was submitted to a rigorous examination. Besides the customs officers whose ordinary business it is to examine all carriages which enter the city, four municipal officers were stationed at the gate to verify the passports, and a picket of national volunteers held themselves ready to lend assistance if necessary.

Each of the carriages preceding the little cart presented itself in turn, and all were searched in every corner. Evidently none of them carried anything suspicious, for they all passed without hindrance, and the little cart reached the iron barrier and stopped in its turn before the gate of the guard-house.

Then the peasant, without waiting to be ordered, lifted the canvas covering of his conveyance, and exhibited his passport.

This passport given by the Mayor of Abbeville bade the authorities allow free passage to the farmer Pierre Durand, his wife Catharine Payot, and his mother Gervaise Arnoult, all three repairing to Paris. On the other side, the municipality of Paris authorised the same persons to return to the village of Nouvion, their usual place of residence.

The municipal officer thrust his head in the cart. Within it was a woman of from forty-five to fifty, another woman of perhaps twenty-five or twenty-eight and a little girl of four; all three were dressed as Normandy peasants, and with the exception of the child wore the large cap of the women of Caux.

"Which is Gervaise Arnoult?" asked the officer.

"I, sir," answered the eldest of the women.

"Which is Catharine Payot?" continued the questioner.

"I, citizen," answered the youngest.

"Why is this little girl not mentioned in the passport?"

"Oh, bother it!" replied the peasant, answering the question which was addressed to the two women, "that is our fault. My wife said to me, 'Pierre, it must be written down all the same on the paper;' but I said to her, 'Don't fuss, Catharine, a chit of a child like that cannot matter.'"

"Is it your child?" asked the officer.

The child opened her mouth to answer, but her mother put her hand on her lips.

"Gracious! and whose do you imagine she is?" said the peasant.

"Well and good," the officer retorted. "But as your wife thought, it is very necessary this child should be mentioned on the passport. Then," he continued, "here's another little mistake, it states your mother is sixty-five and your wife thirty-five, neither the one nor the other of the two women appear the given age."

"All the same I am sixty, sir," said the oldest of the two women.

"And I thirty-five," said the youngest.

"And I, sir," said the little girl, "I am four and I can read and write well."

The two women shivered, and the

peasant caught her up. "Indeed, I should hope you can read and write, for it has cost me enough money: six francs a month at the Abbeville school. It would be a pretty business if you could not read after that, I should bring an action against the schoolmistress. One is not Norman for nothing."

"That's enough," said the municipal officer. "You will come into my office, while I inspect your cart to satisfy myself there is no one else in it."

"But, sir, . . ." began the elder of the two women.

"Mother! . . ." interrupted the younger, catching hold of her arm.

"Well, well, do what the officer wishes," said the peasant, "and when he sees we have no aristocrats hidden in our straw, he will let us proceed, will you not, citizen?"

The two women obeyed and entered the guard-house: as they stepped in, the elder lifted her handkerchief to her nose. Fortunately this gesture was unobserved except by her companion, who made repeated signs to her not to indulge in an affectation of disgust so likely to attract suspicion in the case of a peasant woman.

The man stayed with his cart.

The municipal officer opened the door of his private room. The two women and the child entered, then he shut the door behind them.

There was a momentary silence during which the officer looked alternately at the two women with the closest attention. Neither of them knew what to think of this mute examination, when drawing up an armchair towards the elder, and motioning the younger to another chair, he said:

"Pray sit down, Marchioness! and take a seat, Baroness!"

The two women turned pale as death, and dropped rather than sat down in the chairs offered them.

"But you are mistaken, sir," said the elder.

"Citizen, I assure you you are wrong!" cried the younger.

"Do not keep up the pretence with me, ladies; why, you have nothing to fear."

"But who are you, and how do you know us?"

"I am the ex-Steward of the Duchesse de Lorges, who was lady-in-waiting to the Comtesse d'Artois. She quitted Paris with the Princess and left me here to save what I could of her fortune. I have seen you twenty times at my mistress's house, and I recognised you at the first glance."

"Our life is in your hands, sir," said one of the two women, whom the officer had addressed as Baroness, "for we will no longer deny we are the people you knew in the Duchesse de Lorges' house. She was one of my best friends; but you will take pity on us, will you not?"

"Do not distress yourself, ladies," replied the ex-Steward, "I will do everything in my power to help your flight."

"Oh! sir!" exclaimed the Marchioness, "believe me, we shall be eternally grateful to you, and if we can be of any service to you at any time by recommendations . . ."

"Alas, Mother," said the Baroness, "how can you suppose our recommendations can help him without compromising him now? and so far from our being able to help anyone, it is we who need protection."

"Indeed you are right, my child," answered the Marchioness, "I am always forgetting who we are and what our poor country has come to."

"Hush, Mother! for God's sake do not say such things . . ."

"Oh, you have nothing to fear, ladies," said the officer . . . "that is to say as long as you only say such things before me. . . But if I may advise you, Marchioness, it is to talk as little as possible," he added, smiling . . . "You have an aristocratic accent, unfashionable just now, and when you talk, if I may venture a second piece of advice in addition to the first, say 'thou' and 'thee,' and call everyone 'citizen.'"

"Never, sir, never!" exclaimed the Marchioness.

"For my sake, mother, and for the sake of my poor child!" said the Baroness; "she has already lost her father; what will become of her if she lose us also?"

"Well, well," said the Marchioness, "I promise you, dear, to do my best."

"And now, ladies, do you propose to continue your way with this passport?"

"What do you advise, sir?" asked the Baroness.

"I say that so far from assisting you, it will compromise you. Neither of you look the age attributed to you; and, as I pointed out, your little daughter is not included."

"What must be done, then? We have no other."

"But I can get you another."

"Will you really be kind enough to do that, sir?" cried the Baroness.

"Certainly; but you must wait here half an hour, and possibly longer."

"As long as you like, for I feel we are in safety near you."

The municipal officer went out and returned a moment after, bringing back the passport covered with mud and partly torn.

"Citizen Registrar," he said, calling to a young man girt like himself with a tricolour scarf, "kindly go to the town hall and get a signed passport for me. You will show this one and say I have let it fall under the carriage wheel. Add that the people are waiting in my office and I will insert the description myself."

The young man took the passport from the hands of the officer and went out without a word.

"And now," said the Baroness, "in our turn, may we know what to call you, so that we may remember your name and pray to God for our deliverer?"

"Ah! Madam, happily for me and perhaps for you, my name is an obscure one. As I have told you, I was Steward to the Duchesse de Lorges, who married me to an English governess she had engaged to finish her daughter's education. My wife and boy of six emigrated with her. They are now in England, in London, and if, as I presume, you are going to London . . ."

"Yes," replied the Baroness.

"I can give you the Duchess's address; and in any case you will always find her near her Royal Highness the Duchesse d'Artois."

"And she lives?" asked the Baroness.

"14, St. James's Street."

"Thank you, I will not forget it, and if you have any commission for Madam . ."

"You will tell her that I was fortunate enough to do you a slight service; that so far my patriotism has saved me from any disaster; but as I have no great confidence, I shall rejoin her as soon as I have succeeded in sending her our little fortune."

"Do believe me, I shall not forget a word you have told me. But after all, you have never mentioned your name."

"You will find it in the signature which I shall put below your passport; and I hope it will still protect you, Madam, when I shall no longer be there to stand by you."

Here the registrar returned, carrying the new passport. He had left the other deposited at the town hall.

"Sit down there and write," said the officer to the young man. He obeyed and filled in the usual form; presently when he came to the names of the persons, he raised his head, waiting for these to be dictated to him.

"What is your husband's name, woman?" asked the officer, "and what is his age?"

"Pierre Durand, and he is thirty-six."

"Good, and your mother?"

"Gervaise Arnoult, and she is forty-five."

"And you?"

"Catherine Payot, twenty-five."

"And your daughter?"

"Cécile."

"Aged?"

"Four."

"Good," said the officer. "Now what did it cost you, Joseph?"

"Forty *sous*," said the registrar.

The Marchioness drew a double *louis* from her pocket.

"Mother! mother!" said the Baroness seizing her hand. And she counted out a thirty *sous* piece and ten separate *sous* which she gave to the registrar, who bowed and went out.

During this time the officer appended his signature, and that done, he held out the precious paper to the Baroness, saying, "Now, madam, you can continue your journey, and I hope you will accomplish it without any further difficulty."

"The service you have done us, sir, can only be paid by eternal gratitude, and it shall be handed on as a precious heirloom from my mother's heart and my own to my child's, when she is old enough to know what gratitude is."

The Marchioness curtseyed with great stateliness to the municipal officer and little Cécile flung him a kiss.

Then they all three got up again into the cart. Pierre Durand took his place on the shaft. When he had satisfied himself that the two women and the child were comfortably seated in the cart, he lashed his horse with the whip, and it set off at a trot.

"By the bye, daughter," said the Marchioness after a while, "what is the good man's name?"

"Louis Duval," said the Baroness, whose first thought had been to look at the bottom of the passport for the name of the man who had saved them.

"Louis Duval," said the Marchioness, "these people are not all Jacobins and butchers, then."

At this last word tears flowed down the Baroness's face. But little Cécile wiped them away with kisses.

CHAPTER II

QUEENS HAVE WEPT TEARS BEFORE NOW LIKE OTHER WOMEN

NOW a few words as to these two women and the child who had escaped, as we have seen, a very serious danger, thanks to a good-natured officer.

The elder of the two women was the Marquise de la Roche-Bertaud. By birth she was a Chemillé, so by birth and marriage was one of the great ladies of the land.

The younger, who was her daughter, was the Baronesse de Marsilly.

The child, her grand-daughter, was called Cécile; and she is the heroine of our story.

Baron de Marsilly, her father, husband to the younger of the two women, had been an Officer in the King's Guards for the last eight years; while the Baronesse de Marsilly had been for the last five lady-in-waiting to the Queen.

Both had remained faithful to their royal master and mistress. The Baron de Marsilly might without difficulty have emigrated in '91 and '92, as many of his fellow-courtiers had done, but he had thought it was his duty to remain beside the King, and, if he died for him, to die near him. The Baroness thought nothing about it; she just stopped with her husband whom she adored and near the Queen whom she reverenced.

When the King and Queen had tried to escape, they released the Baron and Baronesse de Marsilly from duty, and the two retired to their home 6, Rue de Verneuil.

There they made ready to leave France on their own account; but hastened to rejoin their Sovereigns, directly they learnt that Their Majesties had been arrested at Varennes and were being brought back to Paris.

Instantly they repaired to take up their posts again at the Tuileries, and the two first persons the King and Queen found prepared to do them homage as they descended from the carriage were Baron and Baronesse de Marsilly.

And remember that by this time circumstances were grave enough for this token of devotion not to pass altogether unobserved. June 20th heralded August 10th, and August 10th was to herald January 21st.

Paris at this time had assumed a new and strange aspect. Wayfarers in the street seemed no longer bent on everyday business, but to be swayed by overmastering passions in all they said and did; that empty, good-natured look, that wrapt absorption in trifles, which form the special characteristic of the Parisian cockney in ordinary times, had given place to an intense preoccupation, every faculty on the stretch to escape the malignity of others, or to consummate an act of vengeance for itself. Every day some fresh outrage was the topic of conversation; now it was an unhappy attorney, who had been beaten to death in the Rue de Reuilly, under the pretence that he was Lafayette's emissary; now it was an old soldier of the bodyguard who was drowned by having his head held under water in one of the ornamental fountains of the Tuileries, and this in the presence of a hundred lookers-on who joined in this hideous spectacle with idiotic laughter; once it was a refractory priest, who was hanged on a lamp-post amidst the hooting of the mob; again it was Duval d'Epremesnil, who was cut to pieces on the Terrace of the Feuillants. And these assassinations, these murders, these butcheries passed themselves off, one and all, under the high-sounding and sacred named of "Justice of the people."

When rumours of the sort penetrated the Tuileries accompanied by this strange excuse, the Courtiers looked at each other, questioning what this new justice might be, that had thus insolently usurped the office of the King's justice.

Everything pointed to some great catastrophe; when, one day, as if celestial portents would fain swell the chorus of human menace, one of those ominous storms that seem to indicate an occult sympathy between the world above and

the world below, burst over the devoted city.

It was the 3rd of August, 1792. The day had been intolerably oppressive; a blazing sun in a leaden sky had scorched Paris; weariness, vague terror, profound despondency seemed to brood over its inhabitants; restless neighbours gathered in groups on doorsteps, or, chatting from window to window, pointed out to each other in amazement vast coppery clouds scudding like mighty waves across the narrow streets to muster in the west in a great sea of blood. Never was the sky such a sinister colour, never had the sun left the earth with a more foreboding farewell.

Soon a hot, hissing wind arose, so weird and unexpected that without exchanging a word groups dispersed, and all returned home, shutting doors and windows; then the storm broke.

Many will remember the similar storm of July, 1830, which preceded by a few days the revolution of that year.

During an hour or two, however, men sought to fight with the elements. By the gleam of lightning, to the rattling of thunder, the alien horde called the Marseillese (not that they were from Marseilles, but because, as is the way of hurricanes, they had come from the south), thronged the thoroughfares; a tempest of human beings mingled with the storm of the Heavens; a cataract of men mingled with the torrent of fire and rain which clave the air. Finally, God's tempest conquered this show of rebellion, the yelling crowds scattered, and the deserted roads were left in possession of the lightning and thunder.

No one slept during that awful night at the Tuileries. Glancing repeatedly through a partly open shutter, the King and Queen looked down on the city; people were all equally unrecognizable; nay! God Himself, when they thus heard His angry thunder and were conscious of no offence against His laws, seemed equally estranged. Not till seven o'clock in the morning did the storm abate its fury.

Then came news of many extraordinary incidents. Thunder-bolts had fallen in more than fifty places, eighteen or twenty persons had been struck by lightning, the cross of the plain of Issy, the cross of Crosne, the cross of the cemetery of Hay, and the cross on the Bridge of Charenton had been hurled down.

Worst calamity of all, it was on this night, to the roar of the tempest, that Danton, Camile Desmoulins, Barbaroux and Panis decreed the deed of August 10th.

On the 9th, the Baron de Marsilly was on guard at the Tuileries, and according to custom the Baroness was on duty near the Queen.

At eight o'clock in the morning drums were heard beating in the different districts of Paris. It was Mandar, the Commander of the National Guard, calling the City Militia to the defence of the Tuileries, which he had learned the evening before to be threatened by the people of the Faubourgs.

Barely three or four battalions answered the summons.

One was stationed in the Court of the Princes, another in the Court of the Swiss, the rest in the lower storey of the palace.

The Court of the Princes led to the Pavillon de Flore, this is to say, to the pavilion overlooking the Quay, the Court of the Swiss to the Pavillon de Marsan, overlooking the present Rue de Rivoli.

At mid-day De Maillardor set the Swiss in the different posts they were to occupy.

At half-past twelve the Baron de Marsilly received instructions to escort the King to the chapel. The whole royal family wished to attend mass, as formerly the Knights used to communicate before the hour of combat. Though nothing was yet to be seen, some terrible event was felt to be approaching. The mass was solemn enough. It was the last but one heard by Louis XVI. The last was that on the morning of January 21st. The rest of the day was fairly quiet and passed in constructing defence-works in the palace. The Baron was ordered to cut the flooring of the Gallery of the Louvre, now the long picture gallery of the Musée.

At eleven in the evening Péthion, the Mayor of Paris—the same man who a year later, a fugitive in his turn, was to be devoured alive by wolves on the heaths of Saint-Emilion—entered the King's room, to leave it at midnight.

Directly afterwards the King appeared and opening the door of a room where a guard was stationed and recognising the Officer in command, he said:

"De Marsilly, I can promise you a more peaceful night than we expected. The Mayor of Paris assures me all is

quieting down. Pass on the good news to De Maillardor, but tell him not to be less alert for all that."

The Baron bowed and went out to give the King's orders, but on reaching the post at the great staircase, he paused listening, at first thinking he must be mistaken. The tocsin was clanging, and the rattle of drums beating to quarters plainly audible, while the sharp order, "Take post, take post!" resounded from end to end of the Tuileries, and the great gates of the Carrousel were shut.

Half an hour after, the rumour spread that the gunners of the National Guard who had been summoned to the defence of the King, and who were stationed in the court, had turned their guns against the palace.

At two o'clock in the morning Baron de Marsilly was told the King was asking for him. The Baron found the King, Queen, Madame Elisabeth and their most trusted friends assembled in the room next the King's. The Baroness was in the embrasure of a window with two other ladies-in-waiting.

The women's faces were very pale, but, taking example from their sovereigns' in this momentous hour, bore the impress of resignation.

The King had not gone to bed. When the Baron entered, he was lying on a couch. His Majesty rose; he was dressed in a violet coat and wore his sword.

Louis XVI., going up to the Baron and taking him by the button of his coat, as he was accustomed to do when talking to his most intimate friends, led him into a corner.

"Well, my dear Baron, it seems that in spite of what Péthion said to me, matters are growing worse. The mob is collecting, and at dawn they will march, so they say, on the Tuileries. What do they want? I cannot tell . . . To kill us, I suppose . . . Do you think the Tuileries capable of defence?"

"Your Majesty," answered the Baron, "you wish the truth, do you not?"

"Oh! yes! the truth, the whole truth. Had I always been told the truth, I should not be where I am now."

"If we are attacked resolutely by the whole force *en masse*, the palace cannot hold out two hours."

"What! you think my supporters will desert me?"

"No, your Majesty," replied the Baron, "but at the end of two hours they will all be dead."

"Do not speak so loud, Baron; spare the Queen. Then that is your opinion?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"It is likewise Maillardor's, whom I have just sent for. Take fifty men, Baron, from amongst those you know to be bravest and take charge of the post at the Porte de l'Horloge; it is defended by two guns. I must be able to rely on all who hold this post, the most important in the Tuileries."

"I thank your Majesty for the trust with which you honour me, and I will show myself worthy of it," answered the Baron bending low with the intention of retiring.

"You have my permission to say a few words to the Baroness," said the King, detaining him.

"May I thank your Majesty? I should not have dared to ask this favour, but your Majesty knows how to read the depths of men's hearts and divine the wishes of those who serve you."

"Because I am a father and husband like you, Baron, and I too love the Queen from the depths of my heart." Then he continued in a low voice: "Poor Marie! God keep her!"

Approaching his wife, the Baron said, "Louise, no one knows what may happen. Should the Tuileries be taken, take refuge in the closet behind Madame Elisabeth's library. If I am not dead, I will find you there."

"But if the Queen leaves Paris?"

"Then as I shall follow the King, we shall not be separated,"—and husband and wife pressed each other's hands.

"Embrace her," the King said, leaning towards the Baron's ear and placing a hand on his shoulder,—"who knows if those who part now will ever see each other again?"

"Thank your Majesty, thank you," and he folded his wife to his heart.

The Queen shed tears. The Baron, noting her sympathy, went and knelt before Marie Antoinette. And the Queen gave him her hand to kiss.

Then he rushed from the room. The soldier too felt himself on the point of crying like a child.

CHAPTER III

THE GUNNER OF THE CROIX-ROUGE

THE King and Queen and Madame Elisabeth sallied out behind the Baron de Marsilly; they all three went to pay a visit to their defenders. At each post the King tried to say a few encouraging words to those on duty. The Queen wished to imitate him, but in vain she tried to speak, sobs choked her voice. Indeed the Tuileries showed a scene of anything but confident enthusiasm. The Swiss and French Guards were at their posts ready to die for the King; but dissension was in the ranks of the National Guards. The battalions of the Petits-Pères, of the Butte-des-Moulins and of the Filles-Saint-Thomas had remained faithful and held their ground in the Court of the Swiss and the Court of the Princes; but the battalions of the Thermes-de-Julien, and the gunners of the Croix-Rouge, of the Finisterre and of the Panthéon had already pointed their cannon against the Tuileries.

The King returned broken-hearted. The Queen and Madame Elisabeth had lost all hope; no one slept in all the Palace but the Dauphin.

At six in the morning a loud noise was heard, it was the advance-guard from the Faubourgs debouching on the Place du Carrousel. At the same hour King, Queen and Dauphin were seen descending the great staircase. The Queen carried the august infant in her arms; all three were on their way to the National Assembly.

In passing, the King looked at the Baron de Marsilly who stood sword in hand under the great gate, at the head of his fifty men.

Two cannon displayed their bronze jaws at the gate; the gunners stood behind with lighted fuse.

The Dauphin waved his little hand to his defenders and cries of 'Long live the King!' were heard, uttered unanimously by this little troop.

But it was not thus when the King approached the Terrace of the Feuillants, which was thronged by the mob; he was met by an appalling roar. A sapper heaped curses on the Queen and snatched the Dauphin from her arms.

Carried in this fellow's arms, the child of kings entered the Assembly.

At that moment the cannon opened fire.

The Baroness, hearing the din, remembered what her husband had told her; she took refuge in the closet he had spoken of, and three or four of the Queen's women followed her there.

Every moment the thunder of the guns grew louder, and in the intervals was heard the crackling of musketry.

At each volley the Palace shook to its very foundations. Showers of broken glass fell into the rooms and bullets rattled against the wainscoting.

Then came shouts and screams, getting nearer and nearer; they were the cries of the National and Swiss Guards, who were being massacred on the staircase. From the Assembly they had received a dispatch in the King's hand, ordering them to cease firing and to surrender; it was too late then, the Palace had been carried by assault.

The steps of flying men echoed through the rooms; the struggle that had begun on the staircase was repeated from room to room.

With her ear pressed to the door of the closet the Baroness listened to the approaching noise, and each shout she heard she thought was her husband's death cry. Suddenly the door gave way under a violent blow. Three of the National Guards of the Butte-des-Moulins flung themselves into the closet imploring protection. They found the Baroness and her companions weeping. The Baroness asked for news of her husband, forgetful of herself in thinking of him, but none of them knew him and she could learn nothing.

Dismay seized the poor women at sight of the men, whose clothes were in shreds and soaked with blood.

The closet had a door opening into a passage that led by a secret staircase to the lower apartments. One of the women suggested that they should escape that way.

Gun-shots and the cries of the dying were heard in the room adjoining the library; so the idea was quickly seized. Men and women dashed pell-mell into the passage and almost hurled themselves down the staircase. The Baroness alone, just as she was about to follow them, stopped at the first step. Her husband had bidden her wait where she was, and at the very crisis of her terror, his words came back to her and held her motionless.

For a moment she thought her companions were saved. Leaning over the balustrade, she followed them with her eyes down the staircase and with her ears through the corridors. The sound of their steps ceased. But almost at once musket-shots were heard again, then cries, then the rush of five or six people in headlong flight. It was the rest of the party and the National Guards, who at the end of the passage had almost run into the arms of a body of Marseillese, who were now pursuing them, as they fled back for shelter into the closet where the Baroness still waited.

On the staircase one of the National Guards fell; at the last volley he had received a ball through his body, and the women were forced to step over his corpse.

Death threatened whichever way they turned. Impossible to remain in the closet; the howls of the Marseillese already re-echoed in the passage. No chance of escape by the library where assailants and defenders were engaged in mortal combat. The women fell on their knees and the men clutched chairs, at least to die defending themselves.

At this moment a man in the uniform of a gunner of the Croix-Rouge sprang through a round window overlooking a small adjoining room. He alighted in the middle of the women, who screamed with terror, and the National Guards were on the point of breaking in his head with their chairs, when suddenly the Baroness stretched her hands out over the intruder. It was the Baron.

Instantly the women recognised him and the two National Guards saw they had to do with a friend.

The Baron told them rapidly how, driven from his post, hunted from room to room, he had reached the door of the adjoining room; finding the body of a gunner of the Croix-Rouge lying there he had drawn it into the recess, had hurriedly put on the artilleryman's clothes and had rejoined his wife by the round window which he knew communicated with the library.

He had scarcely given his explanation when the Marseillese who had lost sight of the fugitives, but had tracked them by the marks of blood on the boards, began to mount the staircase.

In an instant the Baron formed a quick, unhesitating resolve, and dashed out to meet them.

"Here, friends!" he shouted, "here!"

"A gunner of the Croix-Rouge?" cried the Marseillese.

"Yes, brothers. These two brave National Guards and I would have been taken, would have been killed, had not the women hid us in this closet. I ask their lives; they have saved ours."

"Granted! but they must cry '*Vive la Nation!*'"

The poor women were ready to cry anything and everything they were required; and the Marseillese then scattered themselves through the rooms, carrying the two National Guards along with them.

"And will you leave these defenceless women who have saved our lives to the mercy of others, who may massacre them in ignorance of what we owe to them?" cried the Baron.

"No," said the Marseillese, returning, "but what would you have us do with them?"

"Requite their devotion to the people's cause by taking them safe home."

"Well, well! let them take our arms and tell us where they live."

"Where do you live, woman?" the Baron asked his wife.

"6, Rue de Verneuil."

The Baron turned to the Marseillese who seemed to possess the most good-natured face and said:

"Comrade, I give her into your charge; she did most of any of them for me, and she lives just opposite; you have only to cross the Seine."

"Never fear; she shall reach home safe and sound, the good dame shall," cried the Marseillese, "I will answer for her."

"And you, citizen!" cried the unhappy wife clinging to her husband's arm, "what will you do?"

Assuming a speech and bearing in character with the clothes he wore for the moment, the Baron answered:

"I, I will go and see what has become of the King."

The Baroness sighed, released her husband's arm and withdrew, leaning on that of her new protector.

Then the Baron, passing back by the round window of the closet, resumed the uniform he had only forsaken temporarily as a means of saving his wife's life.

In vain the Baroness waited for her husband all that day and all the next, the 10th and 11th of August.

On the evening of the 11th when the

dead were being removed from the Court of the Swiss, a porter who was helping to throw them in the carts that were taking them away recognised the Baron, had his body carried home, and went to tell Madame de Marsilly, who had arrived safe and well at her house, that her husband's body had been found amongst the dead.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARQUISE DE LA ROCHE-BERTAUD.

THE Baroness's grief was heartfelt, but as she was a brave and simple soul, she comforted herself with the knowledge that her husband had died in doing his duty.

Moreover there were her mother and her child to live for.

To live in Paris with the Marchioness was to court a thousand dangers. The Marchioness had one of those characters that are incapable of affecting a part, not from strength of mind or political conviction, but because born in a well-defined sphere, educated in a special manner, it was impossible for her to conceal for a single hour her birth and opinions, her likes and dislikes.

Moreover the times had become more and more stormy. The King and Queen were at the Temple; more or less butchery continued in the streets, awaiting the general carnage already brewing.

M. Guillotin had recently made a gift to the Legislative Assembly of the philanthropical instrument he had had the honour of inventing. It was plainly high time to be leaving the country.

But it was no easy thing at this time to leave France. For those who attempted to emigrate the severest penalties were in store. And in seeking to avoid one danger it would be folly to court a greater.

The Marchioness wished to arrange everything; she talked of a coach, of post-horses, of impossible passports that she could count on through the kind offices of ambassadors who in their Sovereigns' names, she said, would compel all these clod-hoppers to let her go —herself, her daughter and her granddaughter. The Baroness entreated to be allowed to manage the business, and by her urgent pleading she prevailed on her mother not to interfere.

She it was who directed everything. The Baron had landed property between Abbeville and Montreuil. This land was held by a small farmer whose fathers for two hundred years had been tenants of M. de Marsilly's ancestors. The Baroness thought reasonably enough she might rely on this honest man, so she sent to him an old servant who had brought up the Baron and who had been in the family for forty years. This old servant, for fear of his being searched, had no written instructions, but he had received verbal directions from the Baroness and he knew all he had to say.

The farmer's family consisted of his mother and his wife; it was agreed that he should come to Paris, and that the Marchioness and the Baroness should leave the capital with the clothes and passports of the two peasants.

In the meantime the Baroness de Marsilly made her preparations for departure.

At this period when all the current coin had been converted into paper-money, there was very little cash even in the richest houses; however, the Baroness succeeded in getting together twenty thousand francs, which added to eighty thousand francs' worth of diamonds belonging to the Marchioness guaranteed the emigrants the supply of their immediate wants. Besides, everyone thought that the state of things could not last, and this emigration even in the eyes of the pessimists must needs come to an end within less than three or four years. So the two poor women proceeded to make all necessary preparations for the journey.

Those of the Baroness were not long and were carried out with the intelligent simplicity which was the foundation of her character; but it was otherwise with the Marchioness. Her daughter on going into her room found her in the midst of chests, trunks and parcels sufficient to overload three vans.

She could not bring herself to part with one of her dresses, and was even taking away her table linen.

"You are giving yourself a great deal of needless trouble, mother," the Baroness

said to her, shaking her head sadly. "If we would avoid exciting suspicion, we must take barely anything but the clothes we shall have on us, and as to our linen—a single one of your embroidered lace handkerchiefs would be sufficient to make them recognise us and arrest us."

"But all the same, dear," said the Marchioness, "we cannot go without clothes."

"Yes, that is true, mother," the Baroness answered with unvarying gentleness, "but we can only get away if we are dressed quietly, and according to our seeming condition. Do not forget," she added, trying to smile, "that we are peasants, a peasant's mother and wife; that your name is Gervaise Arnoult and mine Catharine Payot."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" muttered the Marchioness, "if His Majesty had only repressed abuses from the first moment, had hanged M. Necker, and shot M. de Lafayette, we should not be where we now are."

"Think of the misfortunes of others, far greater even than ours, mother, and let the comparison give you patience. Think of the King and Queen prisoners in the Temple, think of the poor little Dauphin, and have pity if not for ourselves, at least for Cécile, who if she loses us, will be left an orphan."

The Marchioness could not but yield to such good reasons; still she yielded reluctantly and with a sigh. Born in luxury and accustomed to live in ease and splendour, mere superfluities had become to the Marchioness absolute necessities.

But it was far worse when the Baroness brought her her share of the linen which she had had made, and which without being exactly coarse, was yet considerably rougher than Hungarian linen, or the fine cambric she generally wore; the underwear above all exasperated her, and she vowed she would never wear anything of the kind, at the best only fit for peasants.

"Ah, mother," the Baroness answered sadly, "we shall be lucky if we can succeed for a week in making people think we belong to the class you despise so much, and which is to-day all-powerful."

"But such a state of things will not last!" cried the Marchioness, "I hope heartily it will not last!"

"And I, too, mother, indeed I do; but so it is, and to take off the first roughness, if you like, I will wear the linen that is meant for you till the day we go."

The Baroness's offer so touched the Marchioness, who was really good-hearted, that she agreed to everything, and it was arranged that to the many sacrifices she had already made, this final one should be added,—one which she declared was for her the most painful of all.

Meantime the farmer, his mother and wife arrived; the Baroness received them as those who had come to save her life, and the Marchioness as persons to whom she was prepared to do the honour of owing her own.

Besides the clothes they wore, they brought their finest Sunday clothes with them for the use of the Baroness and Marchioness.

Fortunately, except for trifling differences, their figures were the same. The very evening of their arrival the doors were barricaded, the shutters closed, and the costumes tried on.

The Baroness adapted herself wonderfully to the discomfort involved in the new garments, but the Marchioness gave vent to her grievances; the cap would not stop on her head, the shoes hurt her feet, and her pockets were not in the same place at all.

The Baroness advised her to wear the clothes till the time of their journey, so as to accustom herself to them. But the Marchioness retorted she would rather die than wear such things an hour longer than was absolutely necessary. Then they arranged to leave the next day but one.

Catharine Payot made a complete costume for little Cécile in the interval; the child looked very pretty in her new frock and was supremely delighted; for do not all children delight in change?

The evening before they set off, Pierre Durand busied himself getting their passport signed. It was a less difficult matter than might have been expected; he had entered with his mother, his wife, his cart and horse; he went out five days after with his mother, his wife, his cart and horse; there was nothing more to say about it. They had considered a good deal whether they should add a child to the written list, but feared the addition might arouse the municipal officers' suspicions, and after mature deliberation it was agreed they should not say anything about the little one.

Next morning at five o'clock the horse and cart were waiting in the courtyard. The Marchioness, who was in the habit of going to bed at two and rising at mid-day, had preferred sitting up all night; the Baroness had spent it in sewing up her gold in her corsets, and the diamonds in the folds of little Cécile's frock.

At five the Baroness went to her mother's room and found her ready; only, dressed as a peasant though she was, she had kept some diamond ear-rings in her ears and a splendid emerald ring on her finger; she looked as if she were going to a fancy-dress ball and had safeguarded herself so that there should be no mistake about its being only a disguise.

After a few words the Baroness persuaded her to remove the ear-rings and ring, but not however without many deep sighs from the Marchioness.

But the severest struggle was to come, —at the moment when they were about to mount the cart. The Marchioness had not yet seen the vehicle provided to carry her out of France, and she had supposed it was some sort of livery-coach or at the worst a hackney-carriage. At sight of the cart she was quite overcome. Still, as great occasions necessitate great resolves, the Marchioness made a desperate and final effort, and climbed into the cart.

On leaving her home where she had been so happy, her people who had served her so well, and the worthy peasants who had given her such a signal proof of their devotion, the Baroness could not but weep silently, while little Cécile did nothing but repeat:

"Where is papa, and why doesn't he go with us?"

Till they came to the Porte Saint-Denis, all went well. Here the scene occurred that we have related, which however as it turned out, so far from making matters worse as they had at first feared, resulted most fortunately for the emigrant family.

Thanks to their new passport, more strictly in accordance with the government regulations than their old one, as the municipal officer had foreseen, fewer difficulties stood in the way of the travellers; and for the sake of security they only stopped at little village inns appropriate to persons of their apparent condition. The horse was a good one, and did his thirty miles a day, so that on the night of the sixth day the fugitives reached Boulogne.

On passing through Abbeville, Pierre Durand had his passport signed again to enable him to continue his way.

We need not dilate on the Marchioness's grumblings when she had to sleep in the inn sheets and burn a tallow candle.

The Baroness endured these aristocratic affectations with seraphic gentleness.

As to little Cécile, she was in high spirits at beholding trees, flowers, and fields. Children are like birds and ask nothing more.

At night they arrived at Boulogne, and got down at the Hôtel de France in the Rue de Paris. The inn was kept by Madame Ambron, a Royalist at heart, and whose address the Baroness had taken as that of a woman on whom she could rely. The Baroness had no sooner unbosomed herself to her than the landlady undertook to do all she could for her, and promised her that as soon as to-morrow night came, if the wind held good, she should leave for England.

Then she gave the travellers simple rooms as became peasants, but so exquisitely clean that the Marchioness herself made a momentary truce with the groans she had not ceased uttering from the hour she had left her home.

Next morning Madame Ambron, who was well known to all the sailors of the coast, settled with the master of a little sloop that for a hundred *louis* he should convey the three fugitives to Dover.

All day the Baroness's eyes were fastened on a weathercock in front of her windows. The wind was contrary, and for five or six days had blown obstinately from the same quarter. But as if God deemed the poor family tried sufficiently by the loss of its head, and looked down on it in pity, towards evening the wind veered, and the landlady entered gleefully to tell the Baroness to hold herself ready to leave before the closing of the gates.

At five o'clock the Marchioness, the Baroness and little Cécile resumed their places in the cart and Pierre Durand his on the shaft. They made as if they were returning to Montreuil, and thanks to the freshly signed passport, they got off without any difficulty. But when they were half a league from the town, they took a cross-road leading to a little country house Madame Ambron had bought, situated less than a mile from the sea.

Here it was they generally brought travellers who wished to go over to England, and in virtue of the arrangement she had made, the Baroness now in her turn used the house.

Madame Ambron had wished to be present herself on this occasion, so this worthy woman received the Baroness, her mother and daughter, on their arrival. It was ten o'clock in the evening, and they were to wait till midnight.

At midnight there was a knock at the door, it was the master of the sloop himself. The Baroness paid him fifty *louis* in advance, according to the agreement, the other fifty were to be paid when they set foot on the English shore.

The two women were wrapped in their cloaks; Madame Ambron undertaking to support the Marchioness, to whom a mile's walking in the middle of the night was a matter for serious apprehension. Pierre Durand took little Cécile in his arms, and they set off.

They heard the sea breaking on the shore as they advanced, with that long sad murmur which is, as it were, the ocean's respiration. The Marchioness shivered at the thought of trusting herself in a small ship's boat, and talked of remaining hidden in the country. The Baroness from time to time gazed at little Cécile sleeping in the farmer's arms, and wiped away her tears without speaking.

They were now at the edge of the cliff, and must descend. Nothing apparently but a sheer wall was before them. The Marchioness screamed.

A path two feet broad wound down the precipice; the Baroness took her daughter from Pierre Durand's arms, and was the first to attempt it; Madame Ambron followed, holding the farmer's hand, the Marchioness, supported by the skipper, ended the procession.

Presently they reached the shingle, then the Baroness experienced another panic. As far as their eyes could reach, neither men nor boat were to be seen. But the master blew a whistle, and a black point appeared, increasing in size as it drew nearer; it was a small boat with two rowers. Madame de Marsilly turned round to thank Madame Ambron a last time, and bid a last farewell to Pierre Durand. The honest farmer stood twisting his hat between his hands, in obvious embarrassment, at the same time wishing to speak and not daring to.

"You have something to say to me, my good fellow?" the Baroness questioned.

"Forgive me, Madam," said Pierre Durand; "it is hardly for me to meddle with your affairs."

"Speak, my good Pierre, anything you say to me will be welcome."

"I only wished to say, Madam," Pierre continued, "that in leaving thus when you least expected, and for a country so dear as England to live in, without knowing how long you may remain there . . ."

"Well," said the Baroness, seeing that Pierre hesitated afresh.

"Well," the farmer continued, "Madam has perhaps not collected all the necessary ready money?"

"Pierre, my friend," the Baroness answered, shaking his hand, "I understand you."

Pierre went on: "If Madam . . . as we have still six years' lease to run, and as I hope much that your Ladyship will renew the lease; I say that if you will allow us to advance you two years' rent, besides doing us a kindness considering that robbers can easily steal the money and that it will be in greater safety in Madam's hands than in ours . . . . In short, your Ladyship will give us great pleasure in accepting these ten thousand *francs*. Here they are in a little bag and all in old *louis*. Oh! Madam can take them without suspicion, not one of them is clipped."

"Yes, my friend, yes, I accept, and we shall see each other again in happier times; and be assured, Pierre, I shall never forget your devotion."

"Come, get aboard, get aboard!" cried the skipper, "if a custom-house officer should take it into his head to make his round, we shall be ruined!"

The advice was sensible. The Baroness for a last time shook with her delicate white fingers Pierre Durand's coarse hard hand; she embraced Madam Ambron; and then sprang into the boat where the Marchioness and Cécile were waiting for her.

At this moment, they heard a voice shouting: "Who goes there?"

"Off!" said the skipper, "and row, my men, row with a will!"

And jumping into the boat, he pushed it into the surf with a sturdy shove-off.

Ten minutes later they were on board the sloop, and the next morning the three fugitives disembarked at Dover.

CHAPTER V

THE COTTAGE AT HENDON

DIRECTLY her foot touched solid ground, the Baroness wished to take a carriage straight away for London; but the Marchioness protested that since she had the happiness of having at last left France behind her, and was in a place of safety, she would not go a step further in the preposterous costume she had been obliged to make herself ridiculous in for the purpose of escape. As the matter was of no great moment, the Baroness acquiesced; indeed, foolish as the Marquise de la Roche-Bertaud's demands often were, the Baroness nearly always assented to them with that filial obedience still to be found in great families which had retained the traditions of the seventeenth century.

Accordingly, the Baroness went to the best inn in Dover, and promptly, in spite of the fatigue of her journey, before taking any rest, the Marchioness opened a trunk she had concealed in the cart, drew out her linen and ordinary wear, and after having flung from her in disgust the vulgar attire which had weighed so heavily on her spirits, she began her toilet. Nor did she consider it completed till her hair was dressed and powdered with as much care as if she were going that very evening into the Queen's circle.

As for the Baroness, all her attentions were concentrated on little Cécile, who had fortunately stood the crossing fairly well. As she was anxious, however, to reach London and to choose a house for herself, that very day she engaged all the inside places in a coach which was to leave for the capital at nine o'clock the next morning.

It is well known how comfortably English carriages are built; so the Marchioness did not make much difficulty about getting into this one, especially when she discovered that through her daughter's care she would be entirely separated from the other travellers.

The journey from Dover to London was made with the usual rapidity; the travellers went through Canterbury and Rochester almost without stopping, and arrived in London the same day.

The Baroness was too deeply absorbed in her grief to pay much attention to what was going on around her, but the Marchioness was intensely pleased; she beheld liveries, armorial bearings and powder, things never seen in France for two or three years past; so that she thought London the most beautiful town on earth, and the English the greatest people in the world.

The two women put up at an inn in Golden Square that Madame Ambron had told them of,—a place at no great distance from St. James's Street. The Baroness immediately despatched a letter to the Duchesse de Lorges announcing her arrival, and that very evening the Duchess hastened to them.

The Baroness and she had been great friends: the Duchesse de Lorges came to put herself at her friend's disposal if she felt inclined to stay in London.

But Madame de Marsilly did not contemplate doing so; she had made up her mind to live in strict seclusion during the time she remained abroad; so she asked the Duchess with unaffected simplicity if she knew of some pretty country village where she could live, so as to give herself up entirely to her daughter's education. The Duchess suggested Hendon as one of those delightful places which combine the vicinity of a town with the peacefulness of the country, and the Baroness resolved to go the next day but one and visit the little paradise her friend spoke so highly of.

On the morrow the Baroness and Marchioness returned the Duchess's visit. The Baroness's first care was to enquire for Madame Duval, to whose husband, it will be remembered, Madame de Marsilly and her mother in all probability were indebted for their arrival without interference at Boulogne. The Duchess had her sent for, and a few moments after Madame Duval entered, accompanied by her son, an attractive boy of six, who was at once set to play with little Cécile.

After telling Madame Duval how much they owed her husband, the Baroness gave her the message entrusted to her. The poor woman listened with unfeigned gratitude; for more than three months she had had no news of her husband, who not daring to risk his letters in the post, could only communicate with her by opportunities that were daily becoming rarer. It was now three months since the massacre of August 10th and September 2nd and 3rd had occurred, and the un-

happy woman, deprived of all news, did not know whether he were alive or dead.

On receiving this good news of him, she called her little son, who came forward holding Cécile by the arm.

"Henri," she said, "ask if you may kiss the Baroness's hand and thank her from the bottom of your heart, for she has just told me you still have a father."

"And my Papa," asked little Cécile, "where is he, Mamma?"

The poor Baroness burst into tears, and taking the two children in her arms, embraced them both at the same time, much to the Marchioness's horror.

That evening the Baroness received a letter from the Duchess, announcing that she could not think of her going alone to Hendon, but would drive her there next day in her carriage, so that they might visit together the little village where she was going to live.

At ten o'clock next morning therefore the Duchesse de Lorges was at the Baroness's house, where she and Cécile were ready and waiting, but the Marchioness had not finished her toilet.

Hendon is only a few miles from London, and they were there in two hours. The Baroness was more than pleased with the peaceful and unpretentious look of the little English houses. A woman of simple tastes, and delighting in her home, since the death of her husband she had longed for solitude and quiet, such as she might find in one of these pretty cottages which lined the way every few steps as they drove along. It seemed to her that in such a dwelling existence might be, if not always happy, at any rate nearly always peaceful.

At last they were at Hendon; it was indeed, as the Duchess had said, one of those delicious English villages of which only a poor counterfeit is to be found even in Holland and Belgium. The Baroness enquired if any of the pretty houses she saw were to be let; after she had stated what she required, five or six were pointed out to her that would suit her excellently.

So eager was she to possess one of these pretty cottages, she immediately started on her search, and even desired to decide on the first she looked over, quite unable to believe it was not the prettiest and best planned of all. But the Duchess, who was better acquainted with the interior arrangements of these little houses, assured her she might find many more suitable than the one she thought all that could be wished, and in deference to this assurance Madame de Marsilly resumed her search.

Among the five or six she went over they finally found one so delightful that even the Duchess was compelled to own it would not be easy to discover a better, and so terms were settled.

Madame de Marsilly was empowered to take possession the same day, if she thought good, at a rent of £80 a year.

It was a small, white, two-storied house with green shutters, and along it ran a trellis of the same colour, embellished with creepers whose large leaves at that season of the year were brilliant with the most lovely hues of red and scarlet. The front of the house was reached by a small courtyard, on each side of which were beds of flowers. Three steps led up to a door painted the same colour as the window shutters, and resplendent with a knocker of polished copper that shone like gold. On passing this door you found yourself in a hall crossing the entire house, and opening at the back into a pretty little garden of half an acre or so, with a beautiful green lawn such as is only to be seen in England, and a circular walk screened here and there by stately acacias, Judas trees and lilacs. At the further end was a rustic summer-house furnished with a table and four chairs, while, to complete the picture, a little brook tinkled musically over a rockery, to form a tiny pool, which one beam of a Southern sun would have drunk up in a day.

The inside of the house was characterised by great simplicity. Four doors opened on the corridor of the ground floor, from dining-room, drawing-room, a bedroom and a study, respectively.

The first floor was designed differently. The staircase ascending to it led to a lobby into which opened three doors; the one in front was that of a pretty reception room, on either side was a bedroom and a dressing-room forming a boudoir. The upper floor was occupied by the servants, and beside their rooms it had a linen closet.

The Marchioness thought the house too small and insignificant, and at the best only good enough for a temporary home in summer; but the Baroness told her with a laugh that they could spend

the winter in London, and bearing this promise in mind, which Madame de la Roche-Bertaud took seriously, she consented to her daughter's choice.

But the cottage was unfurnished, it was necessary to buy or hire everything. The Duchesse de Lorges and Marquise de la Roche-Bertaud, who always saw in the future France duly punished by a foreign coalition, emigrants re-entering Paris, the legitimate Princes replaced on the throne, advocated a mere tenancy. But Madame de Marsilly, who observed things from a standpoint of genuine sorrow, and so from a far clearer point of view, calculated that a three years' tenancy would be equivalent to a purchase; therefore she decided to buy all the furniture and kitchen utensils that were needed, asking her mother to choose the rooms that would suit her best, in order that they might be prepared without delay, and as much as possible after her own liking. The Marchioness fancied the whole house was none too large for her and her wardrobe; she remarked that in her château in Touraine she had closets big enough to put all the rooms of the poor little cottage in. True enough, but then they were not in Touraine, they were in England; she must make up her mind and choose. After going upstairs and downstairs twenty times, after inspecting all the nooks and corners of her future home, the Marchioness decided on the bedroom and study on the ground floor.

The choice made, they returned to London. As the Baronesse de Marsilly wished to settle in the house as soon as possible, the very next day Madame de Lorges sent her upholsterer to take the measurements. The Baroness had demurred at this aristocratic method of procedure, telling the Duchess with perfect frankness that her whole capital was now limited to a hundred thousand francs, including the Marchioness's diamonds; but the Duchess replied that with a hundred thousand francs and with care Madame de Marsilly could easily manage for five or six years. Moreover, it was clear they would not have to wait so long, for the allied troops were within a hundred and fifty miles of the capital. Moreover they had tenants, they had land, they had many resources, they could draw money from France.

All these arguments appeared so reasonable to the Duchess and Marchioness that they could not think why the Baroness did not at once agree with them; however, she made one concession, she allowed the upholsterer, but undertook to buy the furniture herself.

In a week the cottage was ready to receive its tenants; everything was of great simplicity, but neat and in unexceptionable taste.

Everything had had to be bought, linen, plate, furniture; so in spite of the economy she had practised, the settling in had cost the Baroness twenty thousand francs.

It was the fifth part of all she owned; she now had only Pierre Durand's ten thousand francs, besides the sixty or eighty thousand francs' worth of diamonds belonging to the Marchioness.

But it was quite feasible to live on this for five or six years; and putting aside fears for the future which the unhappy past had roused in Madame de Marsilly's mind, she could not help saying softly to herself, like her mother and Madame de Lorges: "Many things may happen in five or six years."

Verily these five or six years were doomed to witness the development of most serious issues. But happily, for the time being, we are concerned only with the little cottage and those who live in it.

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATION

IT will be readily understood that the Marchioness had been entirely useless in helping her daughter with the fitting up of the house; so she had passed the time with the Duchesse de Lorges, who had requested Madame Duval instead to help all she could towards the settling in of her friend.

Madame Duval was an Englishwoman of the middle-class, but highly educated, and able, thanks to her education, to adopt the profession of teaching. Thus gratitude for a thousand trifling services was added to the sympathy the Baroness felt for her in a common misfortune, and during the five or six days the two women

stayed together supervising the furnishing of the little house, a kindly understanding arose between them, Madame Duval with consummate tact never failing to recognise the great difference existing between the Baroness's rank and her own.

The two children, who as yet knew nothing of these social distinctions, now rolled together on the grass of the lawn or the drawing-room carpet, now chased each other or ran holding one another's hands round and round the circular path in the little garden.

In a week's time everything was ready. Madame Duval undertook to find a woman who could cook fairly well and at the same time look after the household for the Baroness, and returned to London.

The children's hearts were very heavy at parting with one another.

The Duchesse de Lorges arrived the next day, bringing the Marquise de la Roche-Bertaud in her carriage, and a French maid she had engaged to attend on her.

The Baroness saw with some uneasiness this unexpected increase to the household; but she knew her mother's aristocratic habits, and as the Marchioness needed to be waited upon, she thought it would be cruel to deny her this luxury, when she had already sacrificed so much to her position. Her position indeed was none of the Baroness's choosing; Madame de Marsilly, no less than her mother, was accustomed to all the refinements of an exalted and dignified rank, and, like her mother, she felt all the annoyances arising from the straitened circumstances which lay before her as compared with the affluence of her past life. But there are devoted beings who forget themselves in their solicitude for another; Madame de Marsilly was one of these beings ennobled by suffering, and her only thought was for her mother.

Cécile, for her part, knew nothing of these material considerations; sorrow and joy, grief and happiness, were vain words to her, which she uttered like an echo, without any sense of their import and without any alteration of tone as she uttered them.

She was an adorable child of three and a half, lovely and gentle as an angel, with all a woman's most charming instincts; smiling under kindly influences as a spring flower smiles in the sunlight; a happy disposition only waiting the nurture of a mother's love to combine all the virtues. The Baroness, who recognised her amiable nature, reserved to herself the sole care of its development.

This care, indeed, was cheerfully relinquished to her by the Marchioness, although she too loved her grand-daughter. Indeed to a superficial observer she seemed at first sight to love her even better than her mother did. She would call her from one end of the room to the other, summon her from the very bottom of the garden to hug her fervently; but before the child had been with her ten minutes, she was wearied and sent her away to her mother. The Marchioness at forty-five loved Cécile much as she had loved her doll when a child, simply to play the mother. Cécile was not necessary to her day and night as she was to her mother, she was only the distraction of an odd moment. In an access of generous enthusiasm the Marchioness would have given her life for her grand-daughter, but neither for her nor for anyone else in the world would the Marchioness have imposed upon herself a week's privation.

All the same, from the first day there was a serious difference between the Baroness and her mother regarding the nature of the education Cécile was to be given.

The Marchioness desired a brilliant education worthy in every way of the rank her grand-daughter would be called upon to fill in the world, when the King, revenged on his enemies and re-established on his throne, should return the Baroness the fortune she had lost, augmented yet further by his gratitude. According to her, language, drawing and dancing masters were essential for Cécile.

The Baroness differed entirely from the Marchioness on this point; a capable and wise woman, she looked at things in their true aspect. The King and Queen were prisoners in the Temple; she and her mother were exiled; the future therefore seemed very uncertain and overcast with dark clouds rather than filled with golden gleams, and for this uncertain future therefore it behoved her to educate Cécile. An education that would make of her a woman of simple tastes, without many wants and happy in little things, was the education that appeared most suitable for the time being; hereafter she was at liberty, if times changed for the better, to embellish the excellent ground-work thus

laid with the embroidery of more showy accomplishments.

Besides, a fortune they had once had had, it is true, but did not now possess, was required to give her daughter dancing, drawing and language masters. Certainly the Marchioness offered to devote some of her diamonds to this purpose; but the Baroness, who saw further than she did into the future, while thanking her from the bottom of her heart for her love for her grand-daughter, a love that impelled her to sacrifice what she most valued in the world, yet once more begged her to keep this resource for urgent need, a need that must soon make itself felt, if matters progressed in France as they seemed likely to do.

On the other hand, if she were responsible for her education, the Baroness might give Cécile some idea of all the arts and of everything a young girl should know, and at the same time, while watching her with motherly care, she might foster the engaging qualities nature had enriched her with, so avoiding those mischievous notions an alien influence might engender.

The Marchioness, who was not fond of argument, soon yielded to the Baroness's reasoning, and Madame de Marsilly with her mother's tacit consent undertook Cécile's education.

She set herself to work at once. Lofty and saintly characters find solace for their grief in the fulfilment of their duties. The Baroness's sorrow was deep, but the duty she had imposed on herself was delightful.

The Baroness laid down rules for the division of their time: she was of opinion a child might learn, even while playing, the first elements of what a woman ought one day to know. She proposed work to Cécile under the guise of pleasure; and the child allowed herself to be led all the more easily, because her tasks were appointed by her mother, and she adored her mother.

So the morning was set apart for reading, writing and drawing; the afternoon for music and walking. Three meals interrupted these various occupations of mind and body, after which the family gathered together for a space in the sitting-room on the ground floor.

After a little while the Marchioness ceased to put in an appearance at breakfast. This meal, at ten o'clock in the morning, interfered too much with the habits and customs of a life-time. For thirty years the Marchioness had risen between eleven and twelve and had never allowed herself to be seen by anyone, not even her husband, without powder and patches. It was too irksome for her to submit to such early hours; she excused herself, and her chocolate was carried to her in her bed as of old at her own house in the Rue Verneuil.

The supervision of the house and her daughter's education occupied the whole of the Baroness's time.

The Marchioness, who was neither governess nor housekeeper, spent hers shut up in her room, reading the tales of Marmontel, and the romances of Crébillon *fils*, while Mademoiselle Aspasie, for this was the French maid's name, who had nothing more to do once she had dressed her mistress, embroidered or chatted beside her; and raised to the rank of a companion, filled up by her conversation the intervals when the Marchioness was not occupied with one or other of her various books.

The Marchioness had endeavoured to bring about social relations with her country neighbours; but the Baroness, though leaving entire liberty to her mother in the matter, had declared that she preferred for herself a secluded life.

So the winter passed. The home life of the little family under the direction of the Baroness was calm and peaceful. The Marchioness alone from time to time caused some slight interruption in their occupations; but almost immediately everything resumed its customary course through the Baroness's gentle but firm determination.

Meanwhile more and more disastrous news for the emigrants arrived from France. A day more terrible than any of the days gone by, a day obliterating the horrors of the 10th of August and the 2nd of September had risen, not only for France, but for Europe—the fatal 21st of January.

The blow to the poor lonely family was terrible.

The King's death foreboded the Queen's. Moreover, the last bond between Revolution and Royalty, perhaps even between France and the Monarchy was broken. The Marchioness would not believe the bloody news. It was not so with the Baroness; she had always beheld the future on its dark side, for she had seen it through her bereavement. Misfortune

makes us used to misfortune; she believed all, and yet she only believed the truth.

Seeing her mother sob as she had seen her sobbing six months before, Cécile asked:

"Has papa written that he will not come back any more?"

The terrible events happening in France, however, in spite of the fresh tears they cost, altered nothing in the Baroness's daily life. Little Cécile grew visibly taller and stronger, and like the flowers in the garden she seemed to bloom with the spring.

The first days of spring were come round again, and everything about the little house resumed a festival aspect; the garden put on a brighter look, the rose bushes covered themselves with leaves and loaded themselves with buds, the lilacs showed their purple clusters, the acacias tossed their scented plumes in the wind, the stream which the winter frosts had imprisoned in its subterranean course appeared again, still shivering with cold; in short there was nothing even to the house itself with its flowering creepers that did not resume a lively appearance of youth and joy, of which the winter had robbed it.

It was a glad time, too, for little Cécile.

During the winter, the gloomy, cold and rainy winter of London, her mother had carefully kept her in the house, and the child, used to the life of Paris, and the restrictions of the old life in the Rue Verneuil, had not noted any marked difference between this winter and the previous one, probably already more than half forgotten. But when she saw Spring, that guest unknown in Paris, so that she could almost touch it, as it were, with her hand, when she saw all nature breaking into blossom, her joy was unbounded. Every moment she could spare from her childish studies she passed in the garden.

Her mother did not check her enjoyment. She showed her the sky gradually lifting its veil of fog, and when a ray of sunlight pierced the clouds, revealing the blue of the ether, she told Cécile this ray of sunlight was the look cast by God on the world, and that it was this Divine glance that made the earth blossom.

There was neither spring nor winter for the Marchioness. She rose daily at half-past eleven, took her chocolate in bed, dressed, and had her hair dressed, powdered herself, put on her patches, and re-read for the twentieth time the same old tales of Marmontel, and romances of Crébillon *fils*, criticising their beauties with Mademoiselle Aspasie.

The Baroness prayed for her husband and for the King, who were dead, for the Queen and the Dauphin, who were about to die.

Then from time to time news came that the Republican armies had achieved great victories, and the names of Fleurus and Valmy penetrated even to the cottage at Hendon.

CHAPTER VII

GOD IN ALL THINGS

OWING to the secluded life led by the Baroness and the eccentric existence led by the Marchioness, little Cécile was brought up under most singular conditions.

By virtue of the Baroness's system of education, no study was proposed to the child in the character of work; yet when her mind had been occupied by reading or by a music or drawing lesson, her mother thought she required distraction, and then the gate of the garden opened for the child.

This garden was Paradise to her. At first the Baroness had looked after it herself, and had filled it with the prettiest flowers she could find.

There were clusters of lilies, rose-bushes, groups of hawthorn and guelder-roses to charm the eyes and sense of smell. Little Cécile, with her bare legs, her short frock, her fair hair waving and her cheeks of velvet, was like another flower. Nor was this little garden the domain only of lilies and roses, it was a little world in itself; beautiful insects swarmed in the grass, and every now and then would cross the path like living emeralds; magnificent butterflies with pearly wings seemed to rain from heaven and fluttered in capricious flight above the brilliant beds; goldfinches and warblers hopped from branch to branch, carrying food in

their beaks to their fledgelings, which stretched long necks and gaping bills from their nests of moss and dried grass.

As the Baroness received no one, and little Cécile was completely cut off from the companionship of children of her own age, her garden became her world. Flowers, butterflies and birds were her bosom friends. When she first spoke of it to her mother, the Baroness had explained to her how everything comes from God and receives its life from God. She had shown her how the sun gives life to nature, and she made her notice how the flowers that opened in the morning closed again at night; how the butterflies that hovered around through the warm hours of the day, vanished before nightfall; that the birds which woke at dawn slept at twilight, except some nightingale whose song kept watch and vigil in prayer and hymn and melodious echo. Indeed! those warblings of morn and eve, the lively flight of those winged flowers called butterflies, the sweet scent of those stars of the earth called flowers,—all, according to the religious and poetic mind of the Baroness, represented only the prayers of nature animate and inanimate, the particular way in which birds, butterflies and plants sang the praises of the Lord.

But Cécile loved flowers more than any of her other friends. When she ran after a beautiful butterfly with wings of gold, the butterfly darted through her fingers; when she wished to take by surprise some bird warbling in a bush, the bird flew away and went to finish its song in some tree where the child could not reach it; but her flowers, her dear flowers, they would let her kiss them, caress them, and even pluck them. Once plucked, undoubtedly they lost their colour and fragrance, withered and died. So, from a rose on its stalk, the Baroness illustrated to her daughter what life was, and in a broken lily she showed her the type of death.

From that time Cécile plucked no more flowers.

This certainty of a real existence concealed beneath a seeming unconsciousness produced between the child and her friends the flowers, thanks to her young imagination, a sympathy that solved all difficulties. Hence it followed, her flowers were either ill or well, sad or joyous; she pitied these, she rejoiced with those. If they were ill, she watched them and tended them; if they were sad, she comforted them. One day when she had gone into the garden earlier than usual, and had found her lilies and hyacinths wet with dew, she returned in tears, saying her flowers were distressed and that they wept; another day, the Baroness found her trying to make a rose she had brushed against in passing eat a piece of sugar, and anxious to console the poor thing because she had shaken down some of its petals.

Amongst the drawings that the child's pencil gave birth to, amongst the fanciful creations of her needle, flowers were always her favourites; when a lily more beautiful than the rest blossomed, she made a picture of it, as she would have sketched the portrait of a friend; when a rose's colour was more startlingly brilliant, its buds more profuse than usual, she reproduced it with her needle to keep it in remembrance. Thus in spring, summer and autumn she lived with living things; in winter with their semblances.

Birds ranked next to flowers in Cécile's heart; like Jeanne d'Arc's sparrows that perched on her shoulder and would pick their food from the bosom of the Maid of Domrémy, slowly and surely the birds in her garden became familiar with Cécile. Two or three times a day she went to scatter grain at the foot of the trees where her melodious guests had built their nest, so sparing the father and mother birds too long a search, and as she never touched their nestlings, the parent birds soon ceased to be scared at her approach. Presently the young birds got over their terror, and the garden became a veritable aviary for Cécile; its inmates sang their most dulcet songs directly they saw her, following her about as hens do the farmer's wife, and fluttering round her as she prattled with her flowers or read in her arbour.

The butterflies on the other hand, in spite of their vivid tints, had soon become uninteresting to her; for when the child desired to make acquaintance with these volatile jewels of the air, they were irresponsive. Besides, twice she had tried to grasp them—once a splendid Atalanta robed in velvet; again, a fine Apollo, all gold—and each time particles of their wings were broken off in the child's hands, and when she let them go, she had seen plainly by their faltering flight that

what she had meant for endearment had only hurt them.

Such was Cécile's world: her grandmother, loving her in a capricious fashion and sometimes frightening her with the way she expressed her love; her mother, always quiet, gentle, religious and thoughtful; her flowers, whose griefs and delights she shared; her birds, whose songs she listened to; her butterflies, whose flight she followed.

Now and again the seclusion of the little family was broken in upon, either by a visit from the Duchesse de Lorges, who came chiefly out of respect for the Marchioness, or by the arrival of Madame Duval, who came to see the Baroness.

At first Madame Duval's visits had been a great pleasure to Cécile, because she always brought Edward with her. Then the two children walked, played, ran in the garden together, trampling down the grass, plants and flowers, hiding in the clumps of trees, stamping on the borders, breaking the branches of the trees they tried to climb, scaring the birds, chasing the butterflies. But slowly, as we said, Cécile had become one with the inhabitants of her paradise; so much so, that when Edward came, it was only with great misgivings she allowed him footing in her little domain. In the beginning she had tried to make her boisterous friend understand the feelings of her flowers, the singing of her birds and the capriciousness of her butterflies; but the light-hearted schoolboy had burst out laughing, asserting that flowers could not feel, and knew nothing about love or hate, joy or pain. As for the birds, Edward wished to catch them to shut them up in a cage, although Cécile maintained that the good God who had given them wings, had not given them this boon for the purpose of springing from perch to perch in the confined space of an iron cage, but to cleave the air and alight on the topmost boughs of tall poplars or the towering roofs of houses. In the end, a last incident had brought to pass Edward's final fall in his young friend's estimation. One day when she was conversing with one of her roses over a matter of so much importance that she had quite forgotten her comrade, he returned to her with a fine peacock butterfly, which writhed piteously, its body pierced by a pin, and fastened to his hat. Cécile cried out in horror; but her sobs only surprised and astonished Edward, who impressed upon the little girl the fact that he already owned more than three hundred butterflies fastened after the same manner and arranged symmetrically in boxes, where they were preserved, as if they were alive.

Cécile resolved from that day forth that Edward should never again enter her garden; on his next visit the child had, under various pretexts, kept him to the rooms, offering for his amusement every plaything she had, allowing him to smash her dolls, shops, and dolls' houses, but resolved that he should no longer mock at her flowers, or torment her birds as he had tortured her butterflies.

The Baroness de Marsilly observed her daughter's efforts to keep Edward from the garden, and when he was gone, she asked her why he was denied entrance there. Then Cécile told her mother all that had occurred during the preceding visits, and asked to know if she had acted wrongly.

"No, child," the Baroness replied, "quite the contrary; I think you were very right. It is one of the eccentricities of our pride to believe the universe was created for ourselves alone, that we have the right to destroy and exterminate everything. Far from this being the case, everything on this earth, like man himself, is the work of God; God is in the flower, the bird, the butterfly, in the ephemeral drop of water as in the limitless ocean, in the glow-worm glistening on the sward as in the sun illumining the world.

"God is all, and in all!"

CHAPTER VIII

TIME FLIES

GREAT events were taking place in Europe while the exiled family thus settled down far from all eyes in a quiet English village.

The death of the King and Queen bore its fruit; their murderers, like the fabled soldiers who sprang from the teeth of the dragon of Cadmus, had destroyed one

another. The Convention had proscribed the Girondists, the men of the Guillotine in their turn swallowed up the men of September.

Then the 9th of Thermidor came and France, exhausted by the revolutionary upheaval, lay still awhile and rested.

When the Reign of Terror began, Louis Duval, who as we have seen had remained Royalist at the bottom of his heart, had not the courage to stop in France; sacrificing such part of his fortune as he had not had time to realise, he had left for England, and one fine day, to the infinite delight of his wife, he arrived in London. But as the Duchesse de Lorges did not require a steward in London, no longer possessing an income of five hundred thousand francs to control; and as on the other hand Monsieur Duval was still too young to give up work and was not sufficiently well off to live on his income, he took a post as cashier in a banking house where the forty or fifty thousand francs he possessed served him as security. His integrity was soon so clearly recognised and his capacity so thoroughly appreciated, that the banker gave him a small interest in the business. In the meantime the Duchesse d'Artois left England, taking with her the Duchesse de Lorges; Madame Duval requested to be allowed to stay with her husband, which was the more readily agreed to because as their period of exile lengthened out, the necessity for economy was more and more forced on the emigrants. The whole family therefore remained in London; whilst the Duchesse de Lorges left for Germany.

All this time the same condition of affairs that affected the plebeian family told on the noble family equally. Contrary to the Marchioness's expectations, the Allies had been driven back over the frontier, and so far from the emigrants being able to draw supplies from France, their goods had been confiscated, and having become the property of the nation had been sold in the name of the Republic. Now the Baroness's first thought was to reimburse poor Pierre Durand for the two years' rent he had advanced her at the time she sailed; accordingly the ten thousand francs had been returned to the good farmer with a letter in which the Baroness, while thanking him, assured him that in consequence of the resources she had been able to collect from abroad, she not only needed nothing, but was actually living in luxury.

The Baroness rightly conjectured that only this certainty would persuade the worthy man to receive back the sum he had given with so much delicacy and devotion.

Then the Baroness had found herself reduced to the scanty store of diamonds belonging to herself and her mother. Thereupon she had gone to the Marchioness, whom she interrupted in the midst of her novel reading, and had set before her a concise statement of their true position. When she had finished, the Marchioness observed:

"Well, daughter?"

"Well, mother," the Baroness replied, "I propose that we put all our diamonds together and sell them once for all, so as to raise a good round sum, which once invested in the Bank of England will enable us to live on the interest."

Obviously this was a sensible proposal; but to put it into execution, it was necessary the Marchioness should part with her diamonds. Now these diamonds were all that remained to her of her former splendour. Now and again she drew them from their case, and though there was only Aspasie to admire them, this action afforded her no little consolation.

"But," the Marchioness answered, eager to evade the point, "these diamonds being heirlooms which we naturally wish to retain, would it not be wiser only to sell merely what is absolutely necessary? This will ensure our recovering, when we return to France, whatever escapes our present calamities."

"Considering how affairs are progressing, mother," answered the Baroness, "our return to France is by no means near, and in that way we shall continually be encroaching on our small capital, whereas by selling all at once, we might be able with rigid economy to live on the interest."

"But—" said the Marchioness, trying to win over her daughter by appealing to her maternal love—"I will own to you that I was keeping these diamonds to be my grand-daughter's dowry some day. Poor child!" the Marchioness continued, shaking her head and endeavouring to find in the corner of her eye a tear which was not there, "perhaps she will never have any other!"

"Pray remember, mother, that Cécile is not yet seven," the Baroness went on, smiling sadly, "that in all probability we shall not marry her for another ten years, and that ten years hence, unless you agree to my proposal, your diamonds and mine will have disappeared one after the other, in driblets and without bringing us any interest."

"But then," cried the Marchioness, growing heated, just because she recognised the truth of what her daughter was urging, "the poor child will have no dowry?"

"Her dowry, mother," answered the Baroness with the unruffled gentleness that was a part of her angelic character, "her dowry will be an untarnished name, a religious training, and if it is not wrong to add to these real advantages one so fleeting as beauty, a beauty that is daily increasing."

"Very well, dear, very well," the Marchioness said, "then I will consider it."

"Consider it, mother," answered the Baroness; and she withdrew deferentially.

In a few days the Baroness made a fresh effort; but during those few days the Marchioness, who had had time to meditate on the position, had collected together such a formidable array of specious arguments that the Baroness clearly saw it was a foregone conclusion in her mother's mind; and after that, she urged the matter no more. When all was said and done, the diamonds the Baroness asked for belonged to the Marchioness, she had the right to give or refuse them as she pleased. Still the poor woman withdrew broken-hearted, unable to close her eyes to the fact that the only rational plan of combating their misfortunes was refused her by one of those erratic perversities education had fostered in her mother's mind, though without affecting the real goodness of her heart.

That very day the Baroness wrote to Monsieur Duval inviting him, his wife and son, on the following Sunday, if they had nothing better to do, to spend the day at Hendon.

The worthy folk arrived at mid-day. Monsieur Duval, though his affairs prospered exceedingly and he was now a partner in the banking firm he had first joined as a clerk, had remained just what he was before, an unaffected and honest man who had earned the Duchesse de Lorges' confidence and the Baronesse de Marsilly's friendship.

Yet the Marchioness was distressed at seeing what she called her daughter's propensity for common people's society. She had often scolded her for her too intimate relations with the Duvals, and when the Baroness reminded her of the supreme service that had been the beginning of their acquaintance, the Marchioness, forced to own her indebtedness to the good-hearted Municipal, did her best to belittle it, declaring he had only done what any honest man in his place would have done—though of course even that was very meritorious at a time when common honesty was so rare.

Thus it happened, that forewarned in the evening of the intended visit on the morrow, when the Duval family entered the drawing-room, the Marchioness said to her daughter she must beg to be excused, as she was suffering from a headache.

As usual Cécile closed the gate of her garden to Edward, then a fine well-grown lad of nine or ten, more incapable than ever of appreciating the life of flowers, or sympathising with birds or butterflies.

On the other hand, thanks to the jealous pains Monsieur Duval had taken with Edward's education, a care if not as poetic at least as thorough as those Madame de Marsilly had taken with Cécile's, Edward was able in a second to do the most complicated multiplication sums and the most intricate divisions, not only with pen in hand, but also by sheer force of memory. The dear boy was his father's pride.

After dinner the Baroness asked Monsieur Duval to go into her room. Then she made him sit down, and taking from a drawer a jewel case containing the only diamonds that belonged to her, a pair of ear-rings and a cross, she explained to him with a dignified directness the trouble she was in, requesting him on his return to London to sell the jewels at some trustworthy jeweller's and forward her the money.

Monsieur Duval begged the Baroness to let him lend her what they were worth, so that she need not sell the diamonds, repeating what he had already said twenty times to the Duchesse de Lorges and the Marchioness—that the present state of things could not last. But while

thanking him for his goodness, so that he might not feel hurt, the Baroness refused his offer with a firmness that admitted of no protest.

Further, fearing his scrupulous kind-heartedness, she told him that—the diamonds, setting and all, having cost fifteen thousand francs—she thought they would not be worth more than eight or nine thousand. In other words, she would not be taken in, if he tried to deceive her and exaggerate their value.

There and then Monsieur Duval was compelled to relinquish all hope of giving the Baroness more than the diamonds would really fetch.

Their business finished, the Baroness and Monsieur Duval returned to the drawing-room, where the two children were playing together in charge of Madame Duval, and the conversation turned naturally on the events of the hour.

It was the time of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, and Bonaparte in leaving France seemed to have taken the statue of Victory with him. Their general being elsewhere, the French were suffering defeat in Italy and Germany, while the Directory was making many blunders in France. Defeats abroad and blunders at home were of course made the most of in foreign countries; consequently the Baroness, while carefully holding in check the hopes of the other fellow exiles, could not herself fail to have some bright hopes for the future. Indeed, with the conviction she had of a righteous cause, to doubt was almost to mistrust God's goodness.

The next day but one, the Baroness received through Madame Duval the price of the diamonds, nine thousand francs.

To forestall the Baroness's suspicions, a valuation and receipt from one of the first jewellers in London was enclosed with the money.

CHAPTER IX

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

WITH these nine thousand francs the Baroness was able to manage for two years, during which many fresh events occurred, but these events, so far from improving the position of the Royalists, had robbed them of all hope.

Bonaparte had returned from Egypt, had brought off the 18 *Brumaire*, had been named Consul and had won the victory of Marengo.

There were still left a few consistent optimists who said the young General was working for the Bourbons, and that when he had done with the Jacobins, he would "restore the sceptre to the hands of its legitimate owners, the Kings of France;" but sensible men, who watched things with unprejudiced eyes, did not believe one word of it.

In the meantime, Europe was quailing before the victor of Lodi, of the Pyramids, of Marengo.

The Baroness waited to the last possible moment before again approaching the Marchioness, who since the day the diamonds had been discussed, had never once opened her mouth on the subject, not distressing herself in the least as to how her daughter lived, and asking no questions as to her resources. Accordingly the Marchioness was much surprised when her daughter again broached the subject of her diamonds.

As before, the Marchioness exhausted all her eloquence in the defence of her precious ornaments; but by this time the need was so pressing that the Baroness insisted, but at the same time with so much respect, calmness and dignity, that the Marchioness, sighing deeply, drew from her jewel-case a necklace worth perhaps fifteen thousand francs.

Again the Baroness urged that they should sell once for all whatever was left, and invest the fifty thousand francs so as to be able to draw on the bank for it; but the Marchioness exclaimed so vehemently against the suggestion that Madame de Marsilly saw any attempt of the kind was useless.

Moreover the Marchioness asked that a thousand crowns from the sale of the necklace should be given her for her small personal expenses.

Madame de Marsilly obtained the fifteen thousand francs in the same way she had obtained the ten thousand. As on the former occasion, Monsieur Duval made every possible offer to help her; but again Madame de Marsilly refused.

Meanwhile Cécile was growing up she was now a beautiful girl of twelve

serious and gentle, quiet and religious, her face like an angel's in its freshness, her heart like her mother's in guilelessness, as it was before misfortune had blighted it.

Often from her window had her mother watched her in the midst of the roses which were her friends, companions and sisters; then she would grow pensive to think how in three years the child would almost be a woman, and wonder sorrowfully what future lay before the beautiful girl.

One thing especially disquieted Madame de Marsilly, not on her own account, but as ever for her daughter's sake. This was the fact that she felt her own health beginning to fail in the foggy English atmosphere, and under the stress of her anxiety for her mother and daughter. Madame de Marsilly had always had a delicate chest, and though she had reached thirty-two without suffering from any acute illness, she had never thoroughly overcome the organic weakness which for some time, especially in the autumn, had caused her undefined sufferings,—the terrible symptoms of a cruel disease.

Still no one but Madame de Marsilly herself perceived this hidden illness. On the contrary, to a stranger's eyes her health had never appeared better; her complexion, ordinarily pale, was tinted with a rose colour which seemed like that of a second youth; her speech, usually slow and grave through unhappiness and trouble, was sometimes bright and animated in tone, from what was really the excitement of fever, though it might have been mistaken for that of intense energy. Indeed, never had Mademoiselle de la Roche-Bertaud, even as a young girl, been so beautiful and attractive as was Madame de Marsilly.

But these symptoms of decline were plain to her own eyes; accordingly about 1802, when the gates of France were reopened to the Emigrés, she thought of returning to her own country, though the mansion in the Rue de Verneuil was sold, and though her two country seats in Normandy and her property in Touraine and Brittany, had all fallen, for a miserably inadequate price, into the hands of speculators who made a business of buying up the *national properties*, as they were called at that time. But it was a serious matter to return to France, without any certainty of funds; a change of house, a sale, a journey would work havoc with the Baroness's small resources.

The Marchioness strongly urged her daughter to cross the sea, and to return to take her title and rank in Paris, maintaining that once they were in the capital, she would find means through her old friends to make the monopolists who had illegally seized houses, lands and castles disgorge them. But the Baroness, as we can well understand, had no great faith in her mother's financial views, so she decided to wait before finally committing herself.

Thus they arrived at the year 1803. Cécile was thirteen and looked fifteen. While developing the natural feelings of a young girl, her heart had kept a child's confidence and simplicity; indeed, excepting her games with Edward, which for two or three years now had been marked by much more restraint, she had never spoken to any other man but Monsieur Duval, her mother having taken the entire superintendence of her education.

This education was rather of a high order than of a merely superior kind; she knew all those things a woman of the world should know, so to adapt them that is to say to her own use, though not for the purpose of instructing others. Flowers and landscape she sketched charmingly, but she had confined herself to water colours and had never painted in oils. She accompanied herself on the piano when she sang some touching ballad or dreamy nocturn; but it had never crossed her mind to impress anyone by the performance of a sonata or any great work. Often, indeed, she let herself glide into quaint improvisations on the instrument, wondrous reveries with unknown melodies: the spontaneous overflow, as it were, of the music in her heart. She had, further, a sound knowledge of history and geography, but she seriously thought she had never learnt them except merely to be able to give an answer if she were questioned.

As to languages she was quite unaware it was a talent to speak several, and she spoke several equally well—Italian and French, with her mother, English with the servants and tradespeople.

During this time the good Duval family, which continued to prosper, so industrious was its head, was still on a friendly footing with the Baroness. Again and again,

Monsieur Duval had invited the Marchioness, Madame de Marsilly, and Cécile to stay for a week, a fortnight or a month with them in London, but Madame de Marsilly had always refused.

She knew how impressionable is the mind of a girl of fourteen, and dreaded seeing any wish she could not gratify disturb Cécile's simple and placid existence. But every time she saw the Duval family, she reproached them for the infrequency of their visits, and whether he was conscious of this reproach or nourished some scheme which he kept to himself, Monsieur Duval began to show himself oftener in the little hermitage.

Here his appearance, as well as that of his wife and son, was always welcomed with the greatest pleasure, except by the Marchioness, who with her aristocratic ideas was time after time astonished at her daughter's affection for these plebeian folk. However, she had determined on her own course of action, and for a long time now, when the Duval family came to spend Sunday at Hendon, the Marchioness had condescended to come down to dinner. But she was always in full dress, wearing all that remained of her diamonds; a splendour that made her outshine poor Madame Duval, who was always most plainly dressed and never wore a single ornament.

All these airs tortured the Baroness; but she refrained from expressing the least annoyance to her mother.

Neither Madame nor Monsieur Duval seemed to heed these aristocratic affectations, or if they did perceive them, they appeared to consider them perfectly natural; at the same time it was easy to see that they were pleased with the Baroness for behaving differently to the Marchioness towards them.

Cécile, for her part, knew nothing of these social distinctions; she only knew Monsieur Duval had done some great kindness to her mother in former days. She smiled when he came into the room, held out her hand when he left, kissed Madame Duval almost as often as her mother, and said she would like so much to have a brother like Edward.

This genuine and frank cordiality quite affected these worthy people; and all the journey home, and very often the next day too, was devoted to conversation on the Baroness and Cécile.

A few more months slipped by, during which the Baroness's resources were becoming slowly but surely exhausted. In yielding the diamonds, the Marchioness, as we observed before, had demanded that a certain sum should be given her. The Baroness had placed it at her disposal, and she had spent this sum on trinkets and trifles.

So when it was necessary for Madame de Marsilly to make a fresh application to her mother, there was a still more painful scene than the one we have already related. The Marchioness did not understand how the money for the necklace had disappeared in so short a time, and the Baroness was obliged to recall dates and to show her how the money had been spent, before she would yield to her entreaties; finally she gave up a clasp that might possibly fetch ten thousand francs.

Madame de Marsilly wrote as usual to Monsieur Duval; as usual, Monsieur Duval hastened to her. He found the Baroness shockingly changed, though it was scarcely a week since he had seen her; her face bore evident traces of tears.

Though she had no conception of the embarrassment of the family finances, ignorant as the poor child was of business affairs, Cécile had noticed for two or three days her mother's grief,—a grief which, as it were, laid bare the physical suffering conceiled hitherto under the veil of her constant calmness.

Cécile accordingly awaited Monsieur Duval's arrival, and when he was shown in, she stopped him in the hall.

"Oh! dear Monsieur Duval!" she cried, "I was waiting for you so impatiently; my mother is very sad and distressed. I have asked her what is the matter, but she treats me like a child and will not tell me anything. Dear Monsieur Duval, if you can do anything for her, I implore you to do it."

"My dear young lady," answered the kind-hearted fellow, looking affectionately at Cécile, "more than once I have offered to do all I am able for the Baroness, but the Baroness has always refused. Alas!" he added, sighing, "you see I am not her equal; that is why she will take nothing from me."

"You are not her equal, dear Monsieur Duval? I do not quite understand you. When you come to see us, does my mother receive you otherwise than you would wish to be received?"

"Thank Heaven, no, Mademoiselle; on the contrary, the Baroness is kindness itself to me."

"Have you by chance any complaint to make against me, dear Monsieur Duval? If so, let me assure you, it must have been unconsciously I have done anything you dislike, and I sincerely beg your pardon."

"Complain of you, dear child!" cried Monsieur Duval, overcome by his affection for Cécile; "one might as well complain of an angel in heaven! Complain of you! oh! no, no!"

"Well, then, tell me what is the matter with my mother?"

"What is the matter with her? I think I know," Monsieur Duval said.

"Oh! if you know, tell me . . . and if I can do anything . . ."

"You can do much, my child."

"Oh! tell me, then."

"My dear girl, I am going to see your mother; I am going to talk seriously with her, and if she will listen to what I am going to say to her . . . well, it will be for her to ask a favour from you, on which the happiness of us all depends."

Cécile opened her eyes wide in surprise, but Monsieur Duval, without answering her, pressed her hand, and went into Madame de Marsilly's room.

CHAPER X

PLANS AND PROJECTS

MONSIEUR Duval, as we said before, found Madame de Marsilly so altered that his first word was to ask her if she was ill. Madame de Marsilly shook her head in reply, and holding out her hand to Monsieur Duval, she made him sit down beside her.

After a moment's silence, she said, "I need not tell you, dear Monsieur Duval, why I sent for you; you can guess why, can you not?"

"Alas! yes, Baroness," replied the honest banker, "and I confess that on receiving your letter I promised myself, of course if you permit it, to have an explanation with you."

"I am listening to you, sir," the Baroness replied. "Our friendship is of such standing that we can have no secrets from you; besides, I am sure you ask for this explanation from interest in us and not from curiosity."

"Baroness," replied Duval bowing, "this is the third time you have given me diamonds to sell; I do not know if you have many more left."

"Enough to fetch a sum almost double what you have already sent me."

"Well, forgive my saying this to you; but by selling all together and at the same time you would have sixty or seventy thousand francs in a lump sum; investing seventy thousand francs in the Bank of England, you would draw an income of something like a hundred and eighty pounds, and adding another one or two thousand francs a year to this income, you might quite well live on it."

"I know it, sir, and that was my own original idea also. But these diamonds do not belong to me, they belong to my mother, and when I proposed this plan to her, she expressly refused to adopt it."

"Oh! I can quite believe it of her," Monsieur Duval answered, "it was too sensible for her;" then correcting himself he said, "Oh! forgive me, Baroness, for what I said; it slipped from me by mistake."

"No matter, my good friend, my mother has her little absurdities, I know; I have often noticed that you, more than anyone, were often kind enough to seem as though you did not notice them. However, to return to my letter, dear Monsieur Duval, here is a clasp worth nearly ten thousand francs, which I beg you to convert into money for me."

"Willingly," Monsieur Duval answered, taking the clasp and turning it round and round in his hand; "at least, when I say 'willingly,'" he continued, "you understand, it is a mere form of speech; for I must own it grieves me to see you robbing yourself gradually of all that remains to you of your fortune."

"What can we do, dear Monsieur Duval?" the Baroness answered, smiling pathetically, "we must accept the trials that God sends us!"

"But by your own confession, Baroness," answered Duval, "and yet once again I beg your pardon if I insist unduly,—but by your own confession, you have already parted with half your

diamonds. You have lived six or seven years on this half; the other half will last you six or seven years more, and after that, what will become of you?"

"What God wills, Monsieur Duval."

"And you have no settled plan?"

"None."

"No hope in the future?"

"I hope King Louis XVIII. will return to France, and that our property which has been confiscated will be given back to us."

"Alas! Baroness, you know as well as I do, that is a hope which grows daily fainter. From Commander-in-Chief, Bonaparte made himself Consul, then he made himself First Consul, it is said that he will make himself Emperor next. You are not one of those who think he intends giving back the throne to the Bourbons?"

The Baroness shook her head to show she did not believe it.

"Well, I say again, when five or six years have gone by, what will you do?"

The Baroness sighed and answered nothing.

"Mademoiselle Cécile is fourteen years old," ventured Monsieur Duval.

The Baroness wiped away a tear.

"In two or three years you will be thinking of settling her."

"Oh! do not talk of that, dear Monsieur Duval!" cried Madame de Marsilly; "when I think of the fate before the dear child, I begin to doubt God's goodness."

"You are wrong, Baroness, you must hope God does not send His angels on the earth to forsake them there; she will inspire love in some noble young man, who will make her rich, happy and honoured."

"Alas! dear Monsieur Duval, Cécile is poor, and such devotion is rare; besides, who will come to seek her here? During the ten years we have lived here, you and Edward are the only men who have entered our house. By-the-bye, forgive me, Monsieur Duval, that I forgot to ask after your wife and son. How is dear Madame Duval? And how is Edward?"

"Both well, thank heaven; and thank you for asking, Baroness, and indeed I am very pleased with the boy. He is a good fellow, Baroness, and I would answer for him as for myself, and I am sure he will make a woman happy."

"He will have his father's example before his eyes," said the Baroness, smiling. "And he will follow it, I hope. Yes, you are right, she will be a happy woman who marries Edward."

"Do you really think so?" asked Duval quickly.

"Certainly, what reason can I have for not saying what I think?"

"Oh! I thought you answered that just as people do answer such questions, or merely to please me."

"No, I answered you as I think."

"I am glad you have given me this assurance, Baroness; for it emboldens me to confess I came here with the express intention of speaking to you about a certain idea of mine. When I was in London, nothing seemed simpler to me than this idea; but the nearer I approached Hendon, the more daring I felt the project to be,—the more audacious, I may almost say, the more ridiculous."

"I do not understand you, Monsieur Duval."

"A proof that my plan is a senseless one."

"Stop," answered the Baroness; "I, think, do you know . . . "

"You smile, that reassures me; I have told you Mademoiselle Cécile will make a man very happy; you have told me Edward would make a woman very happy."

"Monsieur Duval . . . "

"Pray forgive me, Baroness, I know it is a great piece of audacity, and do not think for a moment I forget the distance between us; but really when I think of the chance which has drawn together two existences so widely separated as ours were, I begin to hope that it is Providence has willed to honour and bless my family. Then, Baroness, think how this will smooth all difficulties! I do not speak of our little fortune, I have offered it you, you have refused it; but in England, you know, commerce is honourable, well, my son will be a banker . . . Indeed, I know well that to be called plain Madame Edward Duval is insignificance itself for the Baroness de Marsilly's daughter and the grand-daughter of the Marquise de la Roche-Bertaud. But were Edward a duke, it would be the same thing, and would God that he were, and that he had millions to lay at Mademoiselle Cécile's feet; he would lay them there as he lays the three or four hundred thousand francs that we possess. You understand? Ah! now you are crying?"

"Yes, I am crying, dear Monsieur Duval, because of your offer, and the way in which you have made it specially touches my heart; if it were only I to be consulted in the matter, I would offer you my hand and say to you, such an offer coming from a heart like yours does not surprise me and I accept. But you quite understand that I must consult Cécile, and that I must consult my mother."

"Oh! as to Mademoiselle Cécile," Duval replied, "it is quite possible she may be willing; for a year now, ever since the first notion of this plan came into my mind, I have watched her when Edward is with her. Undoubtedly she does not love him; I quite know that a young girl of good family like Mademoiselle Cécile would never dream she could love a man of no rank like my son; but after all she has been friendly with him for a long time, she does not hate him, and when she knows the matter pleases you, she will make up her mind. But as to the Marquise de la Roche-Bertaud, I own to you, that so far as she is concerned, I consider myself defeated beforehand."

"Leave me to manage everything, dear Monsieur Duval," the Baroness said, "I give you my word I will do my best."

"Now, Baroness," ventured Duval, turning the diamond clasp round and round in his hands, "it seems to me that as matters now stand between us, it is needless . . ."

"Dear sir," interrupted the Baroness, "nothing is decided yet. You know this, and it is as I have told you; but were everything decided, Cécile is only fourteen and not for another two years yet can we seriously talk of this project. Meanwhile, I pray you, do me the service for which I asked you to come and see me."

Monsieur Duval saw clearly he could by no means anticipate the time fixed by the Baroness; so he rose and prepared to leave. The Baroness vainly pressed him to stop and dine with them. Monsieur Duval was eager to report to his wife the hopes that had sprung up in him. As he left he urged afresh Edward's interests on Madame de Marsilly.

Alone once more, the Baroness's first thought was to thank Heaven. No doubt anyone else in her place would have considered it a slight favour, but ten years of misfortune had taught the Baroness to consider things under their true aspect. Exiled from France, without hope of returning there; ruined without any possibility of retrieving her fortune; attacked by a relentless disease, there was nothing in her power to wish better for Cécile than what now offered.

To what were her misfortunes, her exile, her ruin due? to her high station. Nobility is the ivy that clings to Royalty, Royalty had involved it in its own fall; and so nobility, from a fragment of the mighty edifice now gone to ruin, had disappeared in the solitude of misfortune, in the night of exile. It was unlikely a man of her own rank would have discovered Cécile in her retreat. Besides, especially at this time, the young men of the Nobility, having spent their all in the struggle, if they were to continue their devotion, needed to marry rich heiresses. Cécile was poor, Cécile brought nothing but an honoured name; but the wife's name, we know, is lost in the husband's. So it was not for her name a man would seek Cécile; and the poor child possessed nothing but her name.

None the less, it must not be supposed the Baroness made up her mind without conflicting emotions; she was obliged to call up before her one by one all the advantages of this union before she could bring herself to it without certain regrets. Indeed so far the Baroness had only entered into an informal engagement with Monsieur Duval, its ratification having to be submitted to the double consent of her daughter and mother.

It happened just as Madame de Marsilly had expected; Cécile listened in mingled surprise and anxiety to all the Baroness had to say to her in regard to her plans for the future. Then, when she had finished, she asked:

"Shall I leave you, mother?"

"No, child," answered the Baroness, "and in fact perhaps it is the only way in which we can stay together."

"Then do what you will with me," said Cécile; "whatever you do will be well done."

As the Baroness had foreseen, her daughter had only a sisterly affection for Edward; but the poor child was very possibly mistaken. Never having met another man except him and his father, she knew nothing of love.

So she consented without any difficulty, especially when her mother had told her

it was the surest way of never being separated from her.

But it was far otherwise with the Marquise de la Roche-Bertaud; at the first words the Baroness let fall in her presence about the project, she declared it was an outrageous, a preposterous marriage,—a marriage to which she would never consent.

CHAPTER XI

MAN PROPOSES

THE following Sunday, according to custom, the Duval family visited the Baroness, who received them alone, the Marchioness having one of her headaches.

Not a word passed between the two families as to the future marriage; only Madame Duval and the Baronesse de Marsilly embraced each other. Edward kissed Cécile's hand, at which Cécile blushed.

Evidently everybody knew of the scheme on foot; it was also plain that this scheme delighted the hearts of Monsieur Duval, his wife and son; they were all three overflowing with cheerfulness and satisfaction. Still the Baroness was not altogether free from a secret melancholy; for the first time perhaps in three hundred years the family was forfeiting its rank. And though she was sure this contravention of those aristocratic laws which had governed her noble ancestors could only result in her daughter's happiness, she was nevertheless unable to control certain misgivings.

Cécile was watching her mother. During the last few days she had begun to notice the marked change in her health. To-day especially, no doubt as an effect of her emotions, the Baroness's face alternated from the most brilliant colouring to a deathly paleness; then from time to time a hacking cough tore at her chest. While they were sitting at dessert the Baroness left the room. Cécile felt uneasy, and got up and followed her; she found her mother leaning against the wall in the hall, holding a handkerchief to her mouth. Seeing her daughter, the Baroness quickly removed her handkerchief, but not so quickly as to prevent Cécile's noticing traces of blood. The girl gave a startled exclamation, but the Baroness smothered her cry with a kiss, and presently they returned together to the drawing-room.

There was an inevitable feeling of constraint on both sides. With an interest that left no room for a suspicion of mere idle curiosity, Madame Duval enquired what had made the Baroness and Cécile leave the room one after the other. The Baroness answered she had felt suddenly unwell, and Cécile furtively wiped away a tear.

As they were saying good-bye to their guests, Cécile implored Monsieur Duval to send to Hendon next day under any pretext he could invent the best London doctor, and Monsieur Duval promised.

As soon as Cécile and her mother were alone, all the poor child's pent-up grief burst forth; she wished to hide her anxiety from the Baroness, but she had not yet learnt how to dissemble, especially in her sorrow. Till now Cécile had known no real grief.

The Baroness had not the heart to conceal her own uneasiness from her daughter. Her alarm too excused this plan of a marriage between the plebeian family of the Duvals and the aristocratic family of the Marsillys: and it was Cécile's turn to try and reassure the Baroness.

There is an age to which nothing seems so impossible as death, and this was Cécile's age; at fourteen everything in nature seems immortal, because a child then feels its own heart immortal.

Next day a friend of Monsieur Duval visited the Baroness; he said he was commissioned by the worthy banker to hand her ten thousand francs, which he held to her credit; Monsieur Duval had brought this sum the evening before in his pocket-book, but when Cécile had begged him to send a doctor under some pretence, he had kept his bank-notes, thinking they would serve to make the introduction of the doctor an easy matter, and divert suspicion.

In the course of conversation the doctor observed carelessly that, as he was going to Hendon to see a patient, his friend Monsieur Duval had entrusted him with the commission to the Baroness which gave him the honour of seeing her.

On hearing these words, Cécile seized the opportunity to explain to the physician her anxieties on account of her mother's health. The Baroness smiled sadly; with an invalid's intuition, she had not been for one moment the dupe of this little comedy. Accordingly she stated to the doctor—one of the leading men of the Metropolis in his profession—all the symptoms causing her to believe her health was seriously impaired.

The Doctor did not apparently share Madame de Marsilly's anxiety, but he none the less gave the most strict medical directions; then he added by way of conversation, and as a man who is diffident as to whether his advice can be followed, that the Baroness would probably feel perceptibly better if she passed seven or eight months at Hyères, or Nice, or Pisa.

To Cécile nothing seemed easier to carry out than this last part of the doctor's orders; she was therefore greatly astonished when, on urging her mother to follow to the letter the doctor's advice, her mother answered that she would be led by it in everything, always excepting the journey. But when, on pressing her mother not to neglect such a vital suggestion, the latter, overcome by her persistence, informed her they were too poor to be able to afford it, Cécile was still further astonished.

She did not know what wealth and poverty meant. Her flowers sprang up, flourished, died without any distinction between them; all had an equal share in the water that refreshed their stems and the sun that opened their buds. She had supposed it was the same with men as with plants, and that all had an equal share in the good things of the earth and the gifts of heaven.

Then, for the first time, the Baroness told her daughter that they had once been rich, but were so no longer; that they had had houses, lands, castles; but that all had been sold, that nothing remained for them under the sun except the little cottage in which they lived. Nor indeed was this little cottage theirs; her mother and she only enjoyed the use of it by paying a certain sum every year; with the result that if they omitted paying this sum for a single year, they would be turned out of their house without knowing where to go.

Then Cécile asked her mother where the money came from with which they had lived hitherto, and the Baroness did not disguise from her that the source, which would soon be exhausted, was her grandmother's diamonds. The poor child asked if she could contribute nothing to the well-being of the family, and since everyone was bound to live either on an inherited fortune or by an income derived from a personal source, if she could not help her family in some way or another. Then she learnt that a woman receives her fate in this world and does not make it, and that her fate nearly always depends on her husband. Cécile then thought of what her mother told her about the contemplated union with the Duval family, and throwing herself into the Baroness's arms, she said:

"Mother, I swear to you I shall be perfectly happy in marrying Edward."

Madame de Marsilly realised all the self-devotion of Cécile's outburst; and that from her at least she need fear no opposition to her plans.

The days went by without bringing any change in the unfortunate family's situation, unless it were that the Baroness grew weaker and weaker. However, the political news became a trifle better for the Royalists; the rumour that Bonaparte purposed giving back the throne to the Bourbons gained strength. A complete rupture with the Jacobins on the part of the First Consul was spoken of, while some asserted that the King Louis XVIII. had written to him on this subject, and that he had received from the young Conqueror two letters by no means depriving him of hope.

Meantime there arrived a letter from the Duchesse de Lorges; the Duchess had returned to London the day before, and said she intended visiting Madame de Marsilly on the morrow.

This news gave great delight to the Baroness and Cécile: but above all it made the Marchioness radiant with joy. She would find herself once more in her own sphere, see someone with whom she could talk on an equality, and, as she said, brush off the dust of the Duvals.

Then she took Cécile up into her own room, a thing which only happened on great occasions, and charged her not to say a word to the Duchesse de Lorges of the mad projects for her marriage, of which her mother had spoken to her in a moment of injudicious confidence. The same advice was given to the Baroness, who guessing beforehand all the objections

her noble friend would make to the marriage, had no reluctance in promising the Marchioness all she wished.

Next day, at two o'clock in the afternoon when the Baroness, the Marchioness and Cécile were gathered together in the drawing-room, a carriage stopped before the little cottage; the knocker resounded under an aristocratic hand, and a few seconds after the maid announced the Duchesse de Lorges and the Chevalier Henri de Sennones.

The Baroness and the Duchess had not seen each other for seven or eight years, and they now fell into each other's arms like two old friends whose affection neither time nor separation has been able to chill. But in this embrace the Duchess could not conceal a painful impression made upon her by the marked change which had taken place in the Baroness's features. Noticing this, the latter whispered:

"You find me much changed, do you not? But do not speak of it, I beg you, you would distress poor Cécile. We will go down to the garden directly and have a talk."

The Duchess pressed her hand.

"Always the same," said she.

Then turning to the Marchioness, who was in full dress, the Duchess paid her many compliments on her health. At last she addressed Cécile, saying:

"My beautiful Cécile, you have proved to be all that you gave promise of. Let me congratulate you, for I have already heard from the Duvals who came to pay me their respects yesterday what an accomplished young lady you are."

Cécile went up to her and the Duchess kissed her on the forehead. Then addressing Madame de Marsilly, she said:

"My dear Baroness, and you, my dear Marchioness, let me introduce to you my nephew, Henri de Sennones, who I must tell you is a very charming young man."

The Chevalier bowed in spite of this broad compliment with infinite grace and ease, saying:

"You know, ladies, the Duchess has been a second mother to me; so do not be astonished at her exaggerated praises."

The Baroness and the Marchioness bowed; then as Henri turned towards Cécile, Cécile curtseyed.

In spite of the Chevalier's modest denial, it was impossible not to confess that Madame de Lorges had not said a word too much. Henri was just twenty. He was a fine young man, with the strikingly graceful manners of those children who, having been brought up by a tutor and never having left their homes, have kept the polish of good style that is generally lost in the course of a school and university education. Henri, like most of the *emigrés*, had no fortune. He had lost his mother shortly after his birth; his father had been guillotined, and the only hope left him of a possible fortune was from an uncle who had gone to Guadeloupe and there had increased his patrimony tenfold in large commercial speculations.

But owing to some strange idiosyncrasy this uncle had declared his nephew must expect nothing from him, unless he likewise went into commerce.

It will be understood how the rest of the family had protested indignantly at such a condition, and indeed Henri de Sennones had been educated with an entirely different view to that of making him a sugar or coffee merchant. All these details were discussed with that freedom of conversation customary amongst people of good birth, and it is easy to imagine with what contempt Madame de Lorges and her nephew handled the commercial world, the Marchioness improving upon the others. Conscious that some of these epigrams touched the good family with whom they frequently associated, the Baroness and Cécile joined but little in the conversation, which shortly took such a sarcastic turn that to change it the Baroness, possessing herself of the Duchess's arm, went down with her into the garden, as she had suggested at their first greeting.

The Marchioness, Cécile and Henri remained alone. The Marchioness had barely set eyes on Henri ere, now as always in opposition to the Baroness's plans, she said to herself that here was the right husband for her little Cécile, not a plebeian like Edward Duval.

So, directly the Baroness and Duchess had left the room, the Marchioness gave herself up to her desire of showing off her dear child, and, under the pretence of amusing the Chevalier, she made her bring out one after the other her tapestry and albums. Let us hasten to say in his praise that, though Henri was no mean critic of masterpieces of needlework, having seen many done in his aunt's house during the long evenings in Eng-

land and Germany, he was infinitely more impressed by the albums.

These albums contained sketches of the most beautiful flowers that had bloomed in Cécile's garden, and everyone of these flowers had its name written under it.

Henri particularly noted with surprise that each of these flowers had its own peculiar physiognomy, as it were, harmonising with the name given it. He asked Cécile for an explanation of this singularity, and Cécile simply and artlessly gave it him, telling him how she had been brought up in the midst of these flowers, of her intimacy with these friends as fresh and fragrant as herself, how by the force of sympathy she had come to know the griefs and joys of her lilies and roses, and finally how she had given them a name in keeping with their characters or adventures.

Henri listened to this explanation as if he were listening to a charming fairy tale. Only the tale was a history, and the fairy was before him. Any other girl who had told him such things would have seemed to him silly or affected; but Cécile was neither. It was evident the innocent child was relating her life, her feelings, her joys, her sorrows. True she perhaps attributed corresponding feelings to her flowers, but in perfectly good faith, and she told Henri, amongst other things, the story of a rose which had been so unhappy that it almost brought tears to his eyes.

The Marchioness listened to it all and tried to change the conversation. All these adventures and catastrophes of the flowers seemed to her to the last degree dull and insipid; but Henri, who was not of her opinion, continually brought the conversation back to the same subject, so vividly and agreeably did it strike him he was in presence of no mere human creature, but of some imaginative creation of Ossian or Goethe.

However, as the Marchioness spoke of music and opened the piano, Henri, who was himself a skilled musician, asked Cécile to sing.

Cécile had no idea of waiting to be begged to play; she did not even know if she had talent or not, perhaps she did not even know what talent was.

Cécile's playing, like her painting, was full of feeling; so when she had sung one or two ballads and as many nocturns with infinite grace and charm, Henri asked her with perfect naturalness if she would not let him hear something of her own composition.

Then Cécile, without making him ask her twice, and without any attempt to excuse herself, let her hands fall on the piano and began one of those weird reveries she now and then performed on the instrument. A tender measure, with the soft pedal down, suggested night; one by one all sounds of earth fell asleep; silence almost unbroken save for the murmuring of a brook followed; then amidst the sublime peace of darkness rose the song of a bird, a bird musical, mysterious, which was neither linnet nor nightingale, a bird that singing in Cécile's heart like an echo of angelic harmonies chanted hope, prayer, love.

Henri, listening to this strange symphony, leant his forehead on his hands, and when he lifted it again, without thinking of wiping away a tear trembling on his eyelashes, he saw Cécile, her head thrown back, gazing heavenwards, her eyes wet with tears. Henri was about to fling himself at her knees and worship her as though she were a Madonna, but at this moment the Baroness and Duchess re-entered the room.

CHAPTER XII

GOD DISPOSES

WHEN Madame de Lorges and Henri de Sennones were gone, when the Marchioness had retired to her room and the Baroness to hers, when Cécile was at last left alone, she felt that a great change had come over her life.

Yet no search could reveal what this change precisely was; and if questioned, she could have given no definite answer.

Alas! the first glow of love had entered the poor child's heart, and, like the first ray of sunlight, it revealed to her eyes a multitude of things hitherto hidden in the night of her indifference.

At first she felt she must have air; she went down into the garden. The weather threatened to be stormy; her flowers

drooped on their stems as if the air were too heavy for them.

Yesterday Cécile would have consoled them; to-day Cécile in her turn drooped her head on her breast, doubtless from a foreboding of some storm coming to her.

Twice she walked round her little world; then she went and sat beneath her arbour and tried to follow the song of a linnet warbling in a clump of lilac; but between her mind and the objects around her there was a sort of veil. She could no longer control her thoughts; an unknown something within her would think in spite of her; her pulse began suddenly to beat so fast that she shook as though she had a fever. A few big drops of rain fell and a peal of thunder was heard; but Cécile was deaf to the thunder and unconscious of the rain. Her mother summoned her indoors in alarm, but it was not until the second call that she recognised her mother's voice.

As she went through the drawing-room she saw her album on the table and her piano was still open. She looked at her flowers, lingering over the same pages she had lingered over with Henri, retracing in memory all she had said to the young man and all he had answered her.

Then she went and sat down before her piano; her fingers fell on the same notes, and the strange melody rose once more, only profounder, more melancholy than before. At the last vibration of her voice, the last note of the instrument, Cécile felt a hand rest on her shoulder — her mother's.

The Baroness was even paler than usual and smiled more sadly than Cécile had ever seen her smile. Cécile trembled; she thought her mother was going to speak to her of Henri.

Of Henri! This emotion of alarm for the first time brought the young man's name vividly home to her mind; hitherto everything that surrounded her recalled him indefinitely, — immaterially as a vapour, intangibly as a fragrance.

She thought her mother was going to speak of Henri. But she was mistaken; the Baroness only talked of what the Duchess had told her,—that she knew positively there was no chance of King Louis XVIII. returning to France. Day by day Bonaparte's power grew, and every day it became more unlikely he would sacrifice its advantages to another. Deeply attached as she was to the household of the Comtesse d'Artois, the Duchess had resolved to stop abroad; and the same course was the only one open to the Baroness.

During all this conversation not one word was said about Henri; yet it seemed to Cécile that everything her mother uttered referred to him. The truth was, every word she said referred to Edward.

In fact, to tell Cécile that political events continued to force her mother and grandmother to remain in exile, what was this but to tell her the project of a marriage with the Duval family was more of a necessity than ever, since Cécile knew the pecuniary position of the Baroness and Marchioness?

Then Madame de Marsilly added a few words as to her own health, and Cécile turned to her mother, and, looking in her dear face, forgot all else.

Whether indeed it was the result of her cruel anxiety, whether the disease had reached the period when its advance is more rapid, the Baroness was terribly changed; she noticed what an effect the sight produced on her daughter and smiled sadly.

Cécile leant her head on her mother's shoulder and sobbed, while her heart murmured words which her lips were powerless to speak:

"Oh! yes, yes, be content, mother, I will marry Edward."

The child had put a great strain upon herself, for the comparison her mind had made almost unconsciously to herself between Madame de Lorge's nephew and Monsieur Duval's son, was not to the advantage of the latter. Both were of the same age, it is true; both had received a first-rate education; both even were handsome; nevertheless, what a difference between the two! At twenty, Edward was still a schoolboy, timid and almost awkward, while Henri was a fashionable and polished young man of the world. Though both had been highly educated, Edward had only retained, so to speak, the most material part of his education; he only knew what he had learnt, but his own personality, his individuality had added nothing to his acquired knowledge. On the other side, what Henri knew, and Cécile had seen after only a few words that he knew much, appeared as if he had always known it, and everything re-examined and corrected by his indivi-

duality, had received a fresh value from the happy temperament which utilised it. Edward was handsome with the expressionless good looks that go so well with commonplace features, while Henri was handsome with a distinction and refinement which race alone gives and physical education develops. To put it in two words, the one had the manners of a vulgarian, the other of a gentleman.

But it was the following Sunday when Edward came with his parents that Cécile was specially conscious of the difference,—the more acutely conscious because on this occasion, contrary to her usual habit, the Marchioness came down and, either by accident or of set purpose, availed herself of the time when Monsieur Duval was walking in the village and when Madame Duval and the Baroness were strolling in the garden, to try and reconstruct, as it were, the scene that had taken place with Henri. Cécile had always hidden her talents from Edward instinctively; but this time there was no help for it but to take the album from the desk at the invitation of the Marchioness and show the beautiful flowers it contained. But Edward, though paying Cécile the compliments her artistic performance deserved, in spite of the names written at the foot of each page, did not grasp the idea which had made these flowers blossom.

Cécile, for her part, understanding that any explanation of the kind would be useless, did not even try to make the young man note the hidden and intimate meaning of which she had tried to speak to him when he was a child, and over which he had laughed so much. All these flowers that passed one after the other under Edward's eyes were accordingly just a succession of pictures more or less well painted; it was not so Henri looked at them.

The Marchioness, who had not taken her eyes from the young people, observed the impression Edward's prosiness produced on her grand-daughter. Although she did not herself understand much of all the poetic delicacy Cécile regretted at failing to find in the young man destined for her, she saw that this dulness injured his cause; she resolved therefore to let it show itself to the end, and when the album was shut, she asked Cécile to play.

For the first time Cécile resisted; she had never sung before Edward, and though Edward had seen the piano at each visit and on the piano piles of music, he had never once asked the girl a single question about it.

However, on the Marchioness making the proposal, he supported her gallantly enough, so much so that Cécile could only yield to the double entreaty.

It was the same with the music as with the painting; Edward applauded and praised Cécile warmly, but he applauded and praised as a man who had not understood.

Consequently his injudicious praise and inappropriate applause did him more harm in Cécile's estimation than if he had held his tongue altogether.

So when the Marchioness asked her grand-daughter to play the symphony she had played three or four days before, or at least another piece of the same sort, Cécile this time obstinately refused. For a moment Edward for politeness' sake seconded the Marchioness, but as his love of music was of the mildest, he did not persist indiscreetly; though it must be added that, even had he persisted, Cécile would have kept to her refusal; it would have seemed like profanation to her to sing before Edward what she had sung to Henri.

Thus she felt real gratitude to her mother when, entering the room again with Madame Duval, the Baroness by her presence put an end to the entreaties, which for the first time and without her being able to divine the reason, her grandmother wearied her with.

The remainder of the day passed as usual except that, make what effort Cécile might, it was impossible to hide the wandering of her thoughts. Not that anyone had noticed this condition except the Baroness and Marchioness.

The Baroness was tired out and retired to her room as soon as the Duvals were gone. Cécile accompanied her to her room and perceived that her mother was looking at her from time to time with anxiety. Why this singular look? Cécile wanted to ask her mother the reason, but two or three times her lips opened to ask the question and closed again without having framed the words.

The Baroness herself kept silent; only she pressed her more closely in her arms at parting than she generally did, and as she kissed her on the forehead, she suppressed a deep sigh.

Cécile sadly and slowly left her mother's room to go to her own, but she found Mademoiselle Aspasie in the passage, who gave her a message from her mistress asking her to go to her room.

The Marchioness was in bed reading; in former days she was used to the coquettish custom, peculiar to the eighteenth century, of receiving in bed, and she had retained this custom though she was sixty years of age, and no longer saw any visitors. All her aristocratic associations of other times came so natural to the Marchioness, that somehow they did not make her seem ridiculous.

As soon as she saw Cécile, she pushed the book she was reading under her pillow, and motioned her grand-daughter to come and sit near her. The girl obeyed.

"You asked for me, Grandmamma?" Cécile said, as she kissed a hand that was still soft and plump, and to which old age had left some of its beauty, thanks to the extraordinary care the Marchioness took of it.

"I was afraid for a moment that you were not well; but you look so perfectly well I feel reassured."

"Well, you are mistaken, dear child; I am horribly ill. I cannot see the Duvals without the mere sight of them giving me a headache, and all the more when I hear them."

"All the same, Monsieur Duval is a very good man, dear Grandmother; I have heard you say so yourself."

"Yes, that's true, he has been a long time in Madame de Lorges's service, and I have always heard the Duchess praise his honesty."

"Madame Duval is a very charming and most distinguished woman."

"Oh! yes, these Englishwomen, with their pale complexions, their slight figures and their long hair, they always look distinguished; but in spite of this appearance you know, dear child, Madame Duval, like her husband, was in the Duchess's service."

"As governess, Grandmamma, and we must not confuse a teacher's profession with domestic service."

"That's true, I own they are not exactly the same thing, though very like each other. But if I speak to you of Monsieur and Madame Duval, what have you to say of their son?"

"Of Edward?" asked the girl timidly.

"Yes, of Edward."

"Grandmamma," Cécile answered in no little confusion, "I should say that Edward is a good and honest young fellow, hard-working, upright, educated . . ."

"Educated suitably to his condition, child; for it would be ridiculous of his parents to wish to raise him above his position, and to try and give him such an education as the Chevalier de Sennones has received, for instance."

Cécile trembled, lowered her eyes, and a bright crimson flushed her brow. None of these signs escaped the Marchioness.

"Well! you do not answer me?" she said.

"What would you have me answer you, Grandmamma?" asked Cécile.

"You might tell me what you think of this young man."

"Is it correct, Grandmamma, for young girls to express their opinion of young men?"

"You told me clearly your opinion of Edward."

"Oh! of Edward, that's quite different," replied the young girl.

"Yes, I understand," the Marchioness answered; "you do not love Edward, and . . ."

"Grandmamma!" cried Cécile, as though imploring her grandmother to be silent.

"And you love Henri," pitilessly continued the Marchioness.

"Oh!" murmured Cécile, hiding her head in Madame de la Roche-Bertaud's pillow.

"But why?" said the Marchioness, "why this shame? It would be of loving Edward you should be ashamed, if you did love him; and not of loving Henri, who is a fine fellow in every respect, and a very handsome gentleman, on my word, and altogether like poor Baron d'Ambrée, who was killed at the siege of Mahon."

The Marchioness sighed.

"But, Grandmamma," cried Cécile, "do you forget my mother's intentions with regard to Edward? Do you forget . . .?"

"My dear little Cécile, your mother never had a very strong head; misfortune has made her foolish; we must learn to face circumstances and not yield to them. Your mother has told you you are to marry Edward; and I, child, I tell you you shall marry Henri."

Cécile lifted her fair head, and looked at her grandmother, her hands clasped

and her eyes fixed ardently on the other's face, as she might have gazed at a Madonna promising to perform a miracle she deemed impossible. But at this moment the Baroness's bell rang violently, and Cécile sprang up in terror, and quickly leaving the Marchioness's room rushed to her mother's.

She found that Madame de Marsilly had fainted, a severe spitting of blood being the cause of her weakness.

Instantly Cécile forgot Henri and Edward both,—forgot everything to think only of her mother.

Fortunately the salts Cécile held to her nostrils, and the drops of cold water the maid sprinkled on her forehead, quickly revived her. Her first impulse was to hide from her daughter the handkerchief soaked with blood which she had dropped as she fainted. But it was the first thing that met the girl's eyes, and she still held it in her hand.

"Poor child!" cried the Baroness.

"Dear mother!" murmured Cécile, "it's all right now, it's all right now; you are yourself again."

Here Mademoiselle Aspasie came from the Marchioness to ask how the Baroness was.

"Better! much better!" the sick woman answered; "tell my mother it is merely a momentary attack, and that she is not to worry herself about it."

Cécile pressed her mother's hand, which she kissed sobbing.

As the Baroness had said, the crisis was over, but every one of these attacks enfeebled her terribly; so in spite of her mother's pressing, Cécile would not go back to her own room; the maid prepared a folding bed close to the Baroness's, and she passed the night beside her.

Then only Cécile discovered how restless her mother's nights had become, nights during which brief moments of feverish sleep could not repair her strength, which was shattered by a ceaseless cough.

Each time the Baroness stirred, Cécile was beside her bed, for genuine and deep distress now filled the young girl's heart. At the same time the Baroness, by trying to control herself, only increased her suffering.

Towards the morning, however, from sheer exhaustion, the Baroness slept; Cécile still watched for a while over her slumber, then nature asserted itself over her, and she too fell asleep.

Cécile was then able to understand how dreams are independent of our will, for she had hardly closed her eyes when she forgot all that had happened and found herself transported into a splendid garden full of flowers and birds; but now by some strange mystery, the result of which her mind accepted as a matter of course without asking for any explanation, the perfume of the flowers was a language, and the song of the birds a tongue she perfectly understood, not by any effort of mind as she had done on the earth, but by a higher perfection of being, for a vague feeling told Cécile she was in heaven; that birds and flowers were praising God.

Then suddenly, without her having seen or heard his approach, Cécile was leaning on Henri's arm. Only she felt neither arms nor body; and Henri was very pale. He looked at her with infinite tenderness, and Cécile perceived she could see herself reflected in the eyes of the man she loved.

She put her hand to her heart, her heart was not beating; then a voice whispered in her ear that they were both dead.

It seemed indeed to Cécile that she had no longer anything of the earth about her. Her sight passed beyond the things around her; she saw right through clumps of trees, solid walls appeared built of clouds, everything was transparent; it seemed the garden where she was walking held only immaterial souls, but preserving their terrestrial forms in all respects except that they were no longer opaque.

Suddenly, she thought she saw a veiled woman coming towards her who walked like her mother. As this woman drew nearer, Cécile felt more and more sure it was she: only the figure did not walk, it glided; then too, she was clothed, not in a gown, but in a voluminous shroud. Then Cécile looked again at herself and Henri, and saw they were all three robed in the garments of the grave. Slowly her mother came nearer. And Cécile recognised through the folds of the veil swathing her the features of her face.

"Oh, mother!" she cried, and made as though she would embrace the shadow, "I believe we are all very happy, for we are all three dead."

At these words uttered in her dream, a sob so real and so heart-rending made itself heard that Cécile opened her eyes.

The Baroness, pale as a spectre,

swathed like the dead and almost as transparent as a ghost, was standing beside her bed.

The poor mother had awakened the first, she had watched over her daughter's sleep as her daughter had watched over hers; then, seeing that some sad dream was distressing her, she had risen to come and awake her, and she had heard the words Cécile had just spoken aloud.

For a moment Cécile thought it was the continuation of her dream, but her mother's embrace quickly brought her back to reality.

"Poor child, you are unhappy, then?" the Baroness asked, "since you think it bliss to be dead with me."

"No! no! mother," exclaimed Cécile; "what else could I need to make me happy if only you were restored to health? It was just a silly dream, that is all. Do, do forgive me."

"Alas! child," the Baroness said, "is it not rather for me to ask you to forgive me? Yet, God knows, I have done all I could to accustom you to a humble and simple life. Why has God given you a temperament more in harmony with your birth than with your circumstances? Tell me, child, have I, all unknowingly, educated you in the prejudices of race, the pride of rank?"

"Oh! mother, mother, you have tried to make me a good woman like yourself, and it is no fault of yours if you have only produced a proud, fastidious girl."

"You love him then?" . . . the Baroness asked, sighing.

"Alas! mother, I do not know; but in my dream it seemed to me that I was happier to die with him than to live with another."

"God's will be done, then, and not mine!" the Baroness exclaimed, clasping her hands and raising her eyes heavenward with an expression of ineffable resignation.

CHAPTER XIII

A SAINT'S DEATHBED

THAT the Baroness's resignation was difficult and therefore meritorious there can be no doubt. For ten years her main pre-occupation had been to separate Cécile from the rest of the world, so as to keep her simple-minded and innocent of evil. Since the day when Monsieur Duval had proposed it to her, she had set her heart on this project of a marriage with Edward, a project which, she felt convinced, while sheltering her daughter from the political risks which at this period affected too exalted names, assured her of a tranquil, if inglorious, happiness. She had foreseen the Marchioness's opposition and had resolved beforehand to resist it. But she had never dreamt that the accomplishment of this scheme might become a grievous sacrifice for Cécile; in fact, till the moment when the girl had seen Henri, she had exhibited no sort of repugnance to Edward; so far from that, happy to obey her mother's wishes, two or three times, to please her, she had of her own accord brought the conversation round to the subject. But chance, or rather fate, had led Henri to Hendon. Always hostile to the unsuitable marriage her grand-daughter was contemplating, the Marchioness had noticed the sympathy between the two young people. The conversation she had had with her grand-daughter had enlightened the girl as to her own feelings, —feelings that remained on the alert even in her sleep. And her mother leaning over her bed had surprised her heart's secret in the unguarded confessions of a dream.

Henri too had been greatly stirred at sight of Cécile, and his astonishment was intense at meeting in a country village a girl who, with no other schooling but what she had received from her mother, had attained so much distinction as to surpass all the women he had hitherto met in the world. The impression he had experienced was profound, and during their journey home he did nothing but talk to his aunt of Cécile. Madame de Lorges had then told him Madame de Marsilly's dramatic history, how her husband had been killed on the 10th of August, and how the Baroness, her mother and little Cécile, escorted by a peasant, had escaped in a cart, and, thanks to Monsieur Duval's permit, arrived safe and sound in England. This picturesque narrative, as may be imagined, had only increased the halo of poetry in Henri's eyes already surrounding Cécile; so much so that after his return to London the young man had but

one wish—to go back to Hendon, but one pre-occupation—to find a plausible pretext for a second visit.

Unfortunately this pretext was not long in coming; the emotion Madame de Marsilly had experienced in learning of her daughter's growing love for another than the betrothed she had destined her for, had occasioned a fresh crisis. That same day therefore the Baroness returned to her bed in great suffering, and naturally enough the Marchioness, without referring to the reasons which had made her worse, had written to Madame de Lorges, informing her of her daughter's condition.

Cécile, for her part, had written to Monsieur Duval to send the doctor, and did not hide from the banker the serious alarm she felt on account of her mother's weakness.

So it happened that next day, almost at the same moment, two carriages stopped at the door of the little cottage; one brought the Duchesse de Lorges and her nephew, the other Madame Duval and her son.

If Henri and his aunt had come alone, Cécile might possibly have shut herself up in her room and so avoided seeing him, but the double visit made her presence indispensable; the two young men not being able to go into the room of the Baroness, who was in bed, were received by the Marchioness, who told her granddaughter to come and keep her company.

Cécile on first seeing through the window the Duchesse de Lorges's carriage, had sketched out for herself a little plan of retreat, but she was now obliged to go down in spite of the resolution she had taken, a resolution it must be confessed that would have cost her dear to abide by.

She found the two young men with her grandmother; Henri and Edward knew one another, but only in the way Madame de Lorges's nephew and Monsieur Duval's son could know one another, that is to say without intimacy. Henri had too much good taste to show in any way the superiority his birth and position in the world gave him over Edward; but Edward had been too well brought up by his family to attempt to overstep the distance dividing him from Henri. In short, Edward in Henri's presence was always and inevitably, not the son of Duval the banker, richer and above all more independent now than his former mistress, but the son of Madame de Lorges's former steward.

It will readily be understood that Cécile did not fail to note these distinctions, which the Marchioness with her keenness for detail and her wish to raise her favourite still higher in the girl's estimation yet further emphasised.

And it must be said Henri's superiority over Edward did not lie only in the accident of birth and privilege of education; it showed itself in everything, in the sound of his voice, in his grace of gesture, in his easy carriage. Edward might one day become a person of conquence, Henri was somebody already.

Edward, also, whether from shyness or ignorance, scarcely opened his mouth; it is true they spoke of much the poor boy knew nothing about, that is of foreign Courts. During the last three years Henri had been travelling, his name and his aunt's, the family's loyalty in misfortune, the former favour shown him by the august house to which he was devoted, had opened to him the palaces of the Kings of the earth. Therefore he knew, as well as a man of his age could know them, all the distinguised personages of Italy, Germany and England. Whilst poor Edward knew, among eminent people, only the banker in whose house his father, after having been cashier, had secured the small interest that had turned out so successful.

Without being exactly malicious, still the Marchioness had in her character certain fixed purposes, namely those affecting the keeping up of her social position.

She overwhelmed Edward then with such disdain, and this more by absence of any attention than by the actual bitterness of her words, that she missed the effect she intended, filling Cécile with a feeling of pity instead of contempt for her young friend. Finally, distressed by this too obvious preference, Cécile rose and left the room with the excuse that she must find out how her mother was going on.

The girl really went straight to the invalid's room; but there another comparison awaited her. The Duchesse de Lorges was seated by the pillow of the Baroness's bed and Madame Duval at the foot. The Duchess had taken the first arm-chair to hand, Madame Duval had chosen an ordinary chair. Madame de Marsilly spoke with equal affection and graciousness to the Duchesse de

Lorges and Madame Duval, but Madame Duval only spoke to the Duchess in the third person,—an old habit she had never lost, indeed had not cared to lose, from a sense of her own dignity, which did not allow her to be elated over the fortune she owed to business.

Thus Cécile once more met with the same inferiority in the mother she had found in the son. Only, a disastrous difference for Edward, the mother's was a simple social inferiority, Edward's an inferiority of the whole man.

This visit gave the finishing stroke to Edward in Cécile's estimation. Without uttering a single word expressing the least idea of all he felt for her, Henri had talked to Cécile with that language of the eyes young hearts never misunderstand, and several times over Cécile discerned by Edward's embarrassment and blushes that the young man thoroughly grasped the situation in which he found himself.

Yet further, when taking farewell of Madame Duval and Edward, Cécile as usual lent her face to the mother and her hand to the son, Madame Duval alone responded to this twofold friendly demonstration in kissing the girl's brow. Edward merely bowed.

In the midst of this double visit, the doctor had arrived; but he was content with prescribing a soothing drink and the continuation of the same diet. Cécile wished much to pass the night in her mother's room; but still blushing at what had occurred the other night, she gave way to Madame de Marsilly's entreaties and retired to her own.

Alone with herself, she mused on the incidents of the day, and the double remembrance of Edward and Henri came into her mind; but it is easy to imagine how, considering the position of the two young men, Edward soon lost his place and gradually vanished from her memory, which ere long was quite absorbed with his rival.

Probably in any other circumstances Henri's advance in the simple, ingenuous heart of the young girl would have been even swifter; but just now she was the prey of an anguish that possessed her whole being. Madame de Marsilly's true condition, which passed unobserved by the Marchioness's heedlessness and frivolity, was obvious to Cécile's tender solicitude. She realised that her mother was stricken with mortal sickness, and when alone with herself, she considered it almost a crime to have a single thought save for her mother.

Henceforth, Cécile lavished on her mother all that the most devoted filial love could devise in the way of intelligent and unwearied attentions. It is when we are leaving those we love that we feel the supreme value of the few moments still left us beside them, and bitterly reproach ourselves for those hours of indifference during which we have been absent from their sight.

Cécile lived now entirely in the Baroness's room, staying scarce a moment at her meals. The Marchioness came from time to time to pay her daughter a visit, but she said she loved her so much she could not endure for any length of time the sight of the only too visible havoc her illness had wrought.

Daily almost Henri came for news of Madame de Marsilly, sometimes accompanying the Duchesse de Lorges in her carriage, sometimes alone on horseback. In either case, Cécile was seldom present to receive the young man; but though she told herself it was profane to let another feeling intrude on the grief her mother's condition caused her, she could not resist looking at Henri through the closed venetians, when he arrived and when he went away.

Edward, detained at his office, could only come every Sunday. Since the day the question of a marriage between the two young people had first been mooted, and Madame de Marsilly, on learning Monsieur Duval's wishes, had left the conduct of the matter to his sagacity, not a single word on the scheme had been exchanged between the two families; and so the Baroness found it difficult to hide a sense of real embarrassment when her old friends came to visit her. Hence a feeling of insincerity and constraint, so that by degrees Monsieur Duval and Edward discontinued their little journeys to Hendon, and Madame Duval came alone.

Meanwhile, the Baroness grew weaker day by day. She passed the summer in the alternate periods of improvement and relapse which characterise affections of the lungs; but when autumn came, and with autumn the dank mists that rise from the ground, the disease grew so much worse there could be no more doubt the dreaded end was near.

Cécile, as we said before, never left the Baroness, and such is the strength of a

deep and genuine sorrow, that she had really come tc forget all else in thinking only of her mother. Henri was always there. Even though she was conscious of blissful sensations every time she saw him, the girl fancied her feeling towards him had changed its nature; in the present tension of her mind every plan for the future was in abeyance, and weighed down by the stress of imminent danger, she had no strength for anything except to struggle against this danger. Madame de Marsilly, accustomed to read her daughter's heart as in a book always open before her eyes, lost none of the emotions Cécile experienced, and convinced that from this time there was more peril in her child's marrying a man she did not love than in trusting Providence with the care of her future, she said nothing more to her about the projected marriage. Cécile on her side often pondered on what her mother had one day said to her; often she surprised the dying woman's look fastened on her with anxiety; then a great yearning seized her to throw herself in the Baroness's arms, and repeat what she had said before, that she would be very happy to marry Edward. Yet, however great her filial respect for her mother's wishes might be, though determined if they were expressed to abide by them, she could not bring herself to anticipate them.

But every day took away a little more from the Baroness's strength, every night brought a feverish excitement which made her weaker; sleep, nature's great restorer, was for her so full of fearful dreams as to become a sort of vampire sucking her life-blood. Amid all this she preserved a wonderful clearness of mind, and the physical disease which was carrying her off seemed, as far as her mind was concerned, simply to heighten her imagination and add poetry to her thoughts. Observing this excess, if one may say so, of vitality in her mother's eyes, Cécile could not believe that the Baroness was so soon to leave them. She, for her part, happy in her daughter's ignorance, was careful not to tell her how near the moment of parting really was. The Marchioness suspected that her daughter was seriously ill, but even less than Cécile did she realise the extent and gravity of the disease.

Madame de Marsilly had always had definite religious ideas. Her deep conviction of heavenly justice and of the rewards awaiting the soul in another world supported her in calmness and contentment amid the misfortunes which overwhelmed her in this world. No sooner, then, did she understand the danger of her state than she applied to a Catholic priest of Irish birth who lived in the village of Edgware, hardly two miles from Hendon, and this priest had been in the habit of coming to see the Baroness every other day since the beginning of her illness. One morning, a few minutes before the time when the priest usually came, Madame de Marsilly took Cécile, who was sitting near her bed, by the hand, and drawing her near to embrace her, as she used to do a score of times a day, said to her:

"Child, do not be distressed at what is going to happen. I am growing weaker, as you see, every day; at any moment God may call me to Him, and I have to make ready to appear before His throne free from all stains of our mortal nature. And so yesterday I told the priest to return to-day bringing with him Our Blessed Lord. To-day, child, I communicate, and you must not leave me during the sacred rite! you must kneel at my bedside and pray along with me, so that if my voice fail, you may continue the prayer we have begun."

"Mother! mother!" said Cécile, "indeed I will never leave you again for an hour, a minute or a second, and may God prolong your life, so that I may spend it wholly with you! And is it really so urgent to send for a priest, and can you spare no longer time to prepare yourself for this melancholy service?"

The Baroness smiled, and pressing Cècile again to her breast, she said, "I have acted on my doctor's advice."

Cécile shuddered; these words would have taken away all hope from her, if any still remained.

Just then the sacristan's little bell was heard, raising a mournful echo deep down in the child's heart; then the doors opened as if of themselves, two choir boys entered bearing a lighted taper; the priest came behind them carrying the host; the Marchioness, pale and supported by her maid, appeared in the corridor; the anteroom filled with several poor Catholics to whom the Baroness was accustomed, poor though she was herself, to give alms. Then at the sound of the bell the Baroness raised her clasped hands; the by-

standers knelt, and the solemn service began.

One must have taken part in a similar scene, have heard the prayers for the dead murmured over a beloved head, to understand all that is passing in a child's heart, who keeps her mother's body on the earth while angels' wings are all ready to bear her soul to heaven.

The Baroness heard the priests' prayers with her customary calmness and tranquility, herself praying and uttering the responses; but twice she fainted during the ceremony, passing from the hectic flush of consumption to so deadly a pallor that twice over she might have been taken for dead, if the beating of her pulse had not proved that she still lived and that the fire of the fever had not yet dried up that spring of life which God had hidden in the depth of our being.

The Baroness then received the *viaticum*. The priest withdrew as he had come, followed by the people present, and the tinkling of the bell which had so deeply impressed the girl grew fainter and fainter in the distance. Henceforth the Baroness seemed more at ease, and indeed a marked improvement was discernible in her condition.

Cécile, whose eyes never left her mother, clutched at this ray of hope, and yielding to her mother's entreaties, agreed to let the English maid take her place for the night. But only on condition that she should be roused at once if any crisis occurred. The Marchioness begged several times that she might stay beside her daughter, but now as always the Baroness besought her mother not to incur an exertion too severe for her age.

The first part of the night passed quietly, but early in the morning Cécile shuddered in her sleep; she heard herself called, and springing from her bed, threw a dressing-gown round her and hastened to her mother's room. The Baroness had again been spitting blood in such quantities that the servant had not dared leave the invalid to fetch her daughter; finally Madame de Marsilly had fainted in her arms, and she had been obliged to call for help. This was the cry of alarm which the girl had heard. The first expression of the Baroness's face when she recovered consciousness was a smile. The attack had been so sharp that she had thought she would die without seeing Cécile again, and now God allowed her to behold her daughter yet once more.

Cécile knelt by her mother's bedside, holding the dying woman's hand, praying and weeping both together. She remained in this posture although the Baroness had recovered from her swoon, and with her eyes upturned to Heaven and the other hand resting on the girl's head was mentally committing to God's care this fair innocent being from whom she had to part. But Cécile, in spite of the more tranquil condition of the Baroness, could not be induced to go back to her room; she fancied that if she left her mother for a single instant, God would choose that instant to take her away. It was indeed clear that the Baroness was only just alive, and that at any moment breath might fail her. Day dawned, and with the first rays that penetrated through the curtains the invalid asked to have the window opened, as though she feared that this sun might be her last and did not wish to lose one ray of it.

Happily it was one of those beautiful autumn days that are more like spring; a tree raised its branches as high as the roof and was still covered with green leaves, leaves some already yellow, some already brown and dead; at every breath of air some of these broke off and fell whirling round and round to the earth. Pensively the Baroness watched them, smiling sadly at the falling shower, reflecting how soon the breath of the destroying angel would gather her soul, as the wind gathered these poor leaves. Cécile, seeing where the Baroness's eyes were directed, followed her soft, regretful gaze and divined the thought moving in her mother's mind. She wished to shut the window, but the Baroness stopped her.

"Let me watch," she said, "how easily the leaves separate themselves from the tree; I hope it will be so, dear child, with my soul, and that it will free itself from my body without causing me overmuch suffering."

"You feel worse, then, mother?" Cécile asked in anguish.

"No, on the contrary, I feel better; for the first time for a long while I have no sense of pain. If the absence of pain meant life, I think I might still live."

"Oh! mother, what blessed words!' Cécile exclaimed, clutching at the least ray of hope; "God perhaps is moved

by my prayers, perhaps God in His compassion will give you back to me."

And Cécile fell on her knees, her hands clasped, and prayed so fervently that her mother, who only shook her head sadly, could not restrain her tears.

"Why do you shake your head in doubt, mother? Has God never done greater miracles than this I ask of Him? And God knows, mother," Cécile added lifting her two hands to heaven in ecstatic faith, "that a miracle was never asked of Him by a heart more importunate than mine, even when the Magdalene prayed for her brother, or when Jaïrus prayed for his daughter."

And Cécile began to pray in a low voice, whilst her mother continued to shake her head mournfully.

The Marchioness arrived at mid-day to ask after her daughter.

Notwithstanding her customary light-hearted manner, she saw the fearful and vital change, and understood for the first time what even the sacred ceremony of the day before had not made her comprehend,—that death was in the house.

During the day, the Baroness had the fainting fits she was subject to, only now they were without pain; she closed her eyes, blanched, and that was all. On the first two occasions the Marchioness was present, and screamed out that all was over and that her daughter was dead. So Cécile and the Baroness besought her to spare herself the painful scene and to stay in her own room, and the Marchioness did not need much pressing to make her consent.

Cécile's soft tender heart was so completely in harmony with her mother's that they blended together like the perfume of two flowers inhaled at the same time.

Towards evening the Baroness felt still weaker; she asked to have the window open, which had been closed through the day; this window looked towards the west, where the sun was just disappearing.

Cécile moved to obey her mother; but the latter clasping her hand with a strength the poor dying woman had seemed incapable of, said:

"Do not leave me."

Cécile looked at her mother; the fever had ceased, the Baroness was pale, her hand was cold.

She called the maid, who opened the window.

The Baroness with an effort turned to face the setting sun.

At that moment a nightingale began to sing in the garden. It was one of those evening songs, melodious, rhythmic, shrill and sweet, such as these kings of harmony may sometimes be heard to sing.

"Listen," said the Baroness, drawing Cécile towards her.

Cécile leant her brow against the Baroness's breast and listened, and she heard the slow and irregular throbbing of her heart.

Then by degrees she ceased to hear the bird's song, as she followed these last symptoms of life beating in her mother's bosom.

From time to time the pulsations seemed to pause; but she still listened eagerly.

The nightingale had flown off and was continuing his sweet song about a hundred steps away.

Then after some minutes the bird again took wing, and alighted so far off that only the most piercing notes of his song reached the ear of the dying woman.

Then the song ceased altogether.

At the same instant the pulsations ceased.

Cécile trembled; a strange fancy seized her that the nightingale just fallen silent was her mother's soul rising to heaven.

She raised her head; the Baroness was white and still, her lips slightly separated, her eyes partly open. Cécile bent over her; then the Baroness murmured, so that it could only just be heard, the one word, 'farewell.'

Cécile felt a warm, caressing breath pass over her face; the dying woman's eyes shut, her lips closed, a slight shudder thrilled her body, her hand trembled gently as if to press her daughter's hand; then all was over.

The breath Cécile had felt on her face was the Baroness's soul ascending to God; the slight shudder was the mother's last good-bye to her daughter.

The Baroness was dead.

Cécile did not cry out or sob aloud, but down her cheeks rolled great tears.

Then she went down into the garden, plucked a beautiful fresh and scented lily, returned upstairs and put the long stem in her mother's hands.

Seen thus, the Baroness's body seemed an effigy in wax of some beautiful Saint in Paradise. Cécile, after sending a mes-

sage to the Marchioness to come and pray for the soul of her daughter, while she was praying for her mother's, knelt down at the bedside.

CHAPTER XIV

FAREWELLS

WE will not dwell further on these scenes of death, or on the melancholy ceremonies following it; no sooner had the Duchesse de Lorges and Monsieur Duval learnt of the Baroness's death than each started for Hendon.

But from feelings of delicacy that will be readily appreciated, the Duchess did not take Henri, nor did Monsieur Duval take Edward. Thanks to the friendship of the one and the intervention of the other, Cécile found both the affectionate consolations she needed and the assistance of a business man, so requisite in such circumstances.

The Baroness was buried in the village churchyard. Some time before she had chosen the spot where she wished to be laid, and had had it blessed by a priest.

The Marchioness's grief was acute. She loved her daughter so far as she was capable of love. But her character was not one of those which sorrow impresses deeply; she belonged to a century when genuine feeling was the exception.

Monsieur Duval before returning to London offered to do all he could for Cécile, but without saying a word of the old plans that had been arranged between him and the Baroness. Cécile replied in tones of unmistakable gratitude that if there were anything she wished to have done, she would certainly apply to him rather than to anyone else. The Marchioness and the Duchess had a long consultation together. The Marchioness revealed to the Duchess her firm determination to return to France. Only the Baroness's strong will had been able to prevent her mother carrying out this scheme, which she had long contemplated. She had never really understood what the confiscation of property meant, although she had suffered from its results, and she believed her solicitor would find some means to recover something for her from the national sales, which she considered to be purely illegal.

She therefore sent for Cécile to her room, two days after the funeral of the Baroness, and told her she must be prepared to leave for France. Cécile was profoundly astonished by the news. The idea had never crossed her mind that a day would come when she would leave the village that had become a home to her, the cottage where she had been brought up, the garden where she had passed her childhood in the midst of her anemones, her lilies and her roses, the room where her mother, angel of gentleness, patience and purity, had breathed her last sigh, and the little churchyard where she slept her last sleep. So she made the Marchioness repeat twice over that she was to get ready to leave, and when she was convinced that she was not mistaken, she withdrew to her own little room to prepare for the revolution that was to take place in her life; for in this quiet, transparent and peaceful life any change signified a revolution.

At first Cécile supposed that what she was so grieved to leave was only the village, the cottage, her garden, her room, her mother's grave, but analysing her sensations more deeply, she found that Henri was associated in her mind with everything she regretted.

Then misery at leaving England began to take complete possession of her.

First she went into her garden. It was now the last beautiful days of autumn, the last smile of the dying year; every flower, as it bent forward, seemed to hail Cécile; every leaf in falling seemed to bid her farewell. What was left of the soft spring mornings and the warm summer evenings had lost all mystery. The eye penetrated everywhere through the foliage. The bird that sang was no longer invisible, hidden among the leaves, but was to be seen hopping restlessly on the leafless branches, as though seeking to find shelter against the winter snows. Now for the first time it occurred to Cécile that she was like a bird. For her, too, winter was coming, and in leaving the cottage she would lose her maternal home, her familiar shelter, without knowing what roof of thatch or slate was destined for her in the future.

And when she was gone, into whose hands would her beautiful garden fall; these trees, these plants, these flowers whose life she had studied, whose language she understood, whose first thought she divined, what would become of them when she should be no longer there, as a living centre, attracting everything into the circle of her own life? Perhaps the garden would be given over to naughty, mischievous children, who would break and destroy for the mere pleasure of breaking, or to some ignorant tenant who would not even know the names of the friends whose innermost soul she was familiar with. Of course she would find other flowers, other trees in France; but not the trees which had seen her grow up beneath their shadow, not the plants which she had watered with her hands, not the flowers which in their generations had recompensed her motherly solicitude, so to say, with their fragrant scents. No, they would be strangers, and poor Cécile would be like those girls who are taken out of a Convent where they have been educated, torn from their most affectionate companions' arms to be thrown into a society where they know no one and are themselves unknown. In this little garden there was a whole world of thoughts for Cécile.

She left it then, but it was to go up into her mother's room, which held for her another world of fond remembrances.

The room had been kept just as in the Baroness's lifetime. Everything was in its place; Cécile, who had thought she would pass all her life at Hendon, had tried to delude herself; and indeed, once shut into this room, where life was bound up with its recollections and where death had left no trace, Cécile could still believe her mother was only gone out for a while and might return at any moment.

So it happened that Cécile had more than once since her mother's death shut herself up in this room. God has given man whom He created for sorrow a true relief for sorrow,—tears; but let human sorrow be what it may, there are moments when tears dry up like exhausted springs. Then the breast is oppressed, the heart swells, we ask for tears and the spent tears will not come; but let a forgotten memory recur to the mind, let a sound recalling a favourite accent of the lost one break in on our ears, let our eyes fall on something belonging to the departed, that very moment the drought of the heart vanishes, tears gush forth more abundantly than ever, stifling sobs break loose, and grief, by its very excess, relieves itself.

Cécile found this resource of tears at every step in her mother's room.

Right in front, facing the door, was the bed where she had died; at the foot of the bed, the crucifix she had kissed on receiving the last sacraments; between the two windows, in a porcelain vase, the lily she held in her hand when she was dead, shrivelled and dying like her; on the mantel-shelf, the little net purse, enclosing several pieces of silver and one gold coin; in the cups on either side, one or two rings; between the cups, the clock which had told the hour till the moment when, forgotten amidst prevailing distress, it had stopped like a heart that ceases to beat; then above and beyond all these, in the drawers and wardrobes the Baroness's own linen, clothes, dresses, all were there.

And every one of these things held a memory for Cécile. Each object recalled her mother in some special circumstance or familiar attitude. So when her power of weeping was exhausted, it was into this room she came to seek fresh tears.

And now she must leave this room, as she must leave her garden,—this room where her mother still lived in the memory which everything retained of her. In leaving this room she was parting a second time from her mother. After the body was dead, the memory was, in a sense, to die too.

Still, there was no possibility of going counter to the Marchioness's orders; the Marchioness had succeeded to the Baroness's maternal authority. The Marchioness must now direct Cécile's life towards the hidden goal the future had traced out for her.

Cécile went to find her album. Then, as if in distrust of herself, she longed to give material shape to her sorrow, and she sketched the bed, the fireplace, all the principal pieces of furniture in the room. Then she drew the room itself. Then later in the day, she asked the Marchioness's permission to bid farewell to her mother's grave.

It was one of those Protestant cemeteries, without crosses, without tombstones, a common field, a universal asylum, an enclosure where dust returned to dust, without a single inscription indicating the

individuality of the dead or the piety of the living.

Such is the Protestant cult, a reasoned cult, an algebraic system which has tried to prove everything, and the first result of which has been to destroy the foundation of all poetic religion—faith.

Only her mother's grave was distinct from the other graves, which were merely little mounds more or less grassy, as it had a small black cross on it bearing in white letters the Baroness's name.

But this grave and cross were in a corner of the graveyard under beautiful evergreen trees,—a more picturesque spot than any other part of the melancholy burial ground.

Cécile knelt before the freshly turned earth and kissed it tenderly. Too poor as she was to raise a monument to her mother, she had already in imagination transplanted the most beautiful roses and lilies from her garden to this tomb; next spring she would come to breathe, as it were, something of her mother's soul in the scent of the flowers. Yet another consolation she must forego. Garden, room and grave, she must bid farewell to all. Cécile sat down to draw a picture of her mother's grave.

As she proceeded with her drawing, without her knowing how or why, Henri's image, which during the past few days had dimly haunted the background of her memory, became clearer, more pronounced, more really present with her.

It was as if, exiled a few hours from her life by distressing events, he returned to it as a more intimate, more necessary companion than before; her imagination was like a lake troubled by a storm, retaining for a while its ruffled surface, but, as the storm subsides, recovering its clearness and again placidly reflecting all it had reflected before.

And as she went on with her sketching, it seemed to Cécile that Henri not only lived in her memory, but actually that he was there in substance and in person.

At that very moment she heard a slight noise behind her; she turned and saw Henri.

He was so present to her thought, she was in no way astonished to see him.

Has it never happened to you, to me, to everybody, to feel by a magnetic instinct, to see with the eyes of the soul, if one may say so, a beloved being approaching us, and without looking that way, to know that he is there and to hold out the hand to him.

Henri, who had not been able to come three days before with his aunt, had now come alone, not to visit the Marchioness, but to see this little corner of the earth which he felt sure Cécile must have so often visited.

Chance brought it to pass that he actually met Cécile there.

Why had the thought of this pious pilgrimage not occurred to Edward's mind?

Cécile, who as a rule scarcely ventured to look at Henri, now held out her hand to him as if to a brother.

Henri took it, and pressing it, said:

"Oh! I have wept much for you, for I have been unable to weep with you!"

"Monsieur Henri," Cécile said, "I am very glad to see you."

Henri bowed.

"Yes," continued Cécile, "because I have thought of you; I want you to do me a great service."

"Thank Heaven! And what use can I be to you, Mademoiselle?" Henri cried. "Command me, I beg you."

"Monsieur Henri, we are going away; we are leaving England perhaps for a long time, perhaps for ever."

Cécile's voice quivered, and great tears rolled down her cheeks; but she controlled herself and went on:

"Monsieur Henri, I commend my mother's grave to your care."

"Mademoiselle," Henri said, "God is my witness that this grave is as dear to me as it is to yourself; but I, too, am leaving England, perhaps for a long time, perhaps for ever."

"You too?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"But where are you going, then?"

"I am going . . . I am going to France," Henri replied blushing.

"To France!" murmured Cécile, looking at the young man; then as she felt she was blushing too, she let her head fall on her hand, murmuring:

"To France!"

These words changed Cécile's destiny altogether; these words brightened all her future.

Henri was coming to France! Henceforth she understood how it might be possible to live in France,—a thing she had not understood before.

She reflected that France was her native

land, whilst England was only her country by adoption.

She reflected that her mother-tongue was only spoken in France,—her own language, her mother's language, Henri's language.

She reflected that her stay in England, however pleasant, was still only exile. She reflected that her mother before dying had said to her: "And yet I would so fain have died in France."

Wondrous the power of a word, which uplifts the curtain that hid a whole horizon from us.

Cécile asked nothing else of Henri, and as her maid remarked to her that it was late and night was closing in, she bowed to Henri and went away.

Just as she was leaving the cemetery, she cast a glance behind her, and saw Henri seated in the same spot where she had been sitting.

A servant mounted on a horse, and holding another horse by the bridle, was at the gate.

Henri had come there expressly, as he had said, to visit the Baroness's grave, and he would return after his mission was accomplished.

CHAPTER XV

DEPARTURE

ON her return home, Cécile found Monsieur Duval with the Marchioness, and although the banker and her grandmother did not discuss business before her, it was plain to the girl that Monsieur Duval had come to bring money to Madame de la Roche-Bertaud.

On leaving the cottage, Monsieur Duval placed his house at the Marchioness's disposal for her journey through London; but the Marchioness thanked him saying that if she stayed anywhere at all, it would be with the Duchesse de Lorges, who had nvited her; but as she only expected to be a day or two in town in all probability, she and her daughter would put up at an inn.

Cécile noticed that in bidding her and her grandmother good-bye, Monsieur Duval was very sad, but that this sadness seemed rather a feeling of compassionate sympathy than of personal distress.

The Marchioness had settled to leave in two days' time. So she begged Cécile to choose such of her things as were most necessary or that she especially valued, Monsieur Duval having been instructed to sell all that remained.

At the word "sale" Cécile's heart was oppressed with melancholy: to sell the things that had belonged to her mother seemed to her horrible sacrilege. She spoke of it to her grandmother, who replied that it was impossible to take their little stock of furniture to France, slight as it was, considering the carriage of it would exceed twice its value.

The answer was obviously so true that it could only be combated by reasons of sentiment. Sacred as such arguments are, they may yet be quite unreasonable. Cécile was therefore obliged to yield, but she made a stand about her mother's personal belongings, such as her linen and her dresses, for instance, remarking that these could all be packed in two trunks, and that it would give her great comfort in her grief to wear her mother's things.

The Marchioness answered that Cécile might do what she liked; only it was right she should point out it was formerly the custom in great families to burn all the clothing which had belonged to people who had died of lung-disease, since as this disease was considered contagious, the person who wore the clothes was liable to contract the same disease and die the same death. Cécile smiled sadly, and, thanking her grandmother for the permission she gave her, left the room. She had already gone some steps down the corridor when the Marchioness recalled her.

It was to tell her she must take care that nothing which had been in the Baroness's use slipped among her things.

The Marchioness at sixty feared death more than her granddaughter did at sixteen.

Cécile had the trunks she needed taken to her mother's room, then she solemnly shut herself in, not wishing that even her maid should help her in the sacred duty she had to perform.

This night, which Cécile passed entirely in her mother's room and with all that reminded her of her mother, gave her both happiness and pain.

At two o'clock in the morning, unaccustomed to a sleepless night, she felt heavy with sleep in spite of herself, and dressed as she was, she threw herself on the bed. But first she knelt before the crucifix, and as everything surrounding her had raised her filial love to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, she prayed God, if it were true as she had sometimes heard that the dead still visited the living, to grant that her mother might come to bid her a last farewell in this same room where she had so often pressed her to her heart.

And Cécile slept with outstretched arms, but God did not grant that the laws of death should relax their force for her, and if she again saw her mother, it was only in a dream.

The next day was spent in preparations for their departure. Cécile went from her mother's room to her own; for now came the turn of all those associations of her childhood, amongst which her albums held a foremost place. By evening everything was ready.

The day was come when Cécile and her grandmother were to leave the home they had lived in for twelve years. As soon as it was morning, Cécile rose to go down a last time into her garden; the rain was falling in torrents.

Cécile stood at the window, the garden looked melancholy and deserted, the last leaves had fallen from the trees, the last flowers bowed their bent heads in the muddy pools of the borders. Cécile wept; she thought if she had left her friends during a beautiful spring day, she would have regretted them less, in contemplating the summer still awaiting them, but in leaving them now she was leaving them on the point of death and verging to that grave of nature we call winter.

All day Cécile waited for the clearing up of the weather to go to the cemetery; but all day it poured continuously; so it was impossible for her to go out.

At three o'clock Madame de Lorges' carriage and coachman arrived; the trunks were placed in it, the last moment had come.

The Marchioness was radiant with pleasure at leaving; during the twelve years she had spent in this delightful cottage she had made no ties she regretted, either with human beings or anything else.

Cécile was like a mad creature, she passed her hands over the furniture, embraced it, wept over it; it was as if a part of herself would be left at Hendon.

As she was preparing to mount the carriage, she nearly fainted, and had almost to be lifted in.

By her own wish she took charge of the key of the little house which they were to hand over to Monsieur Duval, as they passed through London. She placed this key next her heart. It was the key of her past; God held the key of her future.

She asked the coachman to drive round and stop before the gate of the churchyard. The rain was falling so heavily, it was quite impossible for her to leave the carriage; but gazing through the iron bars of the gate she could still see the grave, the little cross and the great trees overshading it.

But the Marchioness begged her not to keep her too long in such a place; as the neighbourhood of graveyards gave her the most disagreeable sensations.

Cécile cried a last time, "Adieu, mother! adieu, mother!" and fell back into the carriage.

Then she drew her black veil over her face, and did not open her eyes till the carriage stopped.

They were at the door of the Royal George Inn.

Another carriage with horses harnessed stood ready in the courtyard. Madame de Lorges was waiting for the Marchioness in the room prepared for her. Her nephew Henri, whom she had sent to Dover to enquire about packets bound for France, had written to her that a vessel was on the point of leaving and would set sail the next morning.

If they wished to avail themselves of this boat, they must only rest a few moments before setting off.

Cécile asked to be allowed to go and see Madame Duval; but she lived in the City, and it would take an hour to go and see her and return. Consequently the Marchioness was against this visit, bidding her granddaughter write to her instead. The poor child felt it was not by a letter she should bid good-bye to her mother's old friends. But what else could she do in the face of the Marchioness's wishes? She was bound to obey her. So she wrote.

Cécile's letter contained everything a letter could of affectionate excuses and

sincere regrets. There were good-byes in it for everybody, for Monsieur Duval, Madame Duval, and even for Edward. She sent Monsieur Duval the key of the cottage, telling him that if she were rich, though parting with it, though leaving England for ever, she would keep this little house as the sanctuary of her youth; but she was poor, and in the Marchioness's name she again asked him to sell the furniture that was in it, and to send the proceeds to her grandmother.

They gave this letter and the key of the house into Madame de Lorges's care, who undertook to send them on the morrow to her old steward.

Before leaving her friend, Madame de Lorges offered a sum of money to the Marchioness, the acceptance of which is not among gentlefolk considered an obligation; but owing to the sale of the remainder of her diamonds, the Marchioness had, at least so she thought, more than was necessary for her needs, while waiting the restitution of her property.

It was time to get into the carriage. Cécile would have given everything in the world to be able to embrace Monsieur and Madame Duval and to clasp Edward's hand. At the bottom of her heart she was conscious such behaviour was almost ingratitude; but she was not in a position to follow her affectionate impulses. She knelt and asked forgiveness of her mother, and when they came to tell her the carriage was waiting, she merely answered she was ready.

Again it was distressing to Cécile to leave London on a rainy night without any other farewell than that of the Duchess, whom she scarcely knew.

They crossed London, which Cécile had never seen, without the girl's so much as looking out of the coach window; then she was aware by the fresher atmosphere and the change in the roadway that they were leaving the town. As the carriage travelled post and they only stopped to change horses, the journey was rapidly accomplished. At five o'clock in the morning they reached Dover.

The carriage drew up in the courtyard of an inn; the light of two or three torches flared in Cécile's face; still deafened with the rattling of the carriage, still confused with the sleepiness caused by the journey, she opened her eyes and her first look encountered Henri.

He was there awaiting their arrival.

Cécile felt herself blushing so intensely she drew her veil down over her face.

Henri gave his hand to the Marchioness to help her from the carriage, and afterwards to Cécile; and the young man felt hers tremble so in his that he did not even dare to clasp it.

Rooms had been prepared in the inn, and only awaited the arrival of the travellers; evidently everything had been ordered beforehand with thoughtful intelligence. As the packet was not leaving till ten o'clock in the morning, the two travellers would have a few hours at least for rest.

Henri begged them not to be anxious about anything except to be ready at the appointed time, for his manservant would make it his business to see all the luggage on board,—the more easily done, since the carriage being already loaded, he would only have to transfer the trunks from the carriage to the boat.

After asking if they had any orders to give him, Henri bowed to the Marchioness and Cécile and withdrew.

Cécile shut herself into her room; but tired though she was, her efforts to sleep were unsuccessful; Henri's unexpected appearance had disturbed her mind too much for sleep to come near her.

Now one last doubt remained, for she had not dared to ask Henri any question on the subject. He had told her that he too was going to France; was he going in the same boat with her? The thought of this, as may well be understood, was enough to prevent Cécile sleeping.

But this sleeplessness was not without compensations; for the first time since her mother's death, Cécile felt that someone was watching over her.

These servants expecting their arrival, these rooms all ready to receive her, the conveyance of her luggage to the boat without any need for her to trouble herself; all was the work of a friendly influence surrounding her with care and forethought.

This something watching over her, this friendly influence forestalling her wants, was Henri's love.

Henri then loved her really, sincerely, deeply? How delightful it was to feel, to know, herself loved!

And so sweet was the thought that the girl struggled against sleep, fearing sleep would take from her the consciousness

of this protection which made her so happy.

She saw day dawn; she counted the hours; she rose without needing anyone to waken her; she was up when they came to knock at her door.

She went to her grandmother's room and found her taking her chocolate as usual in bed: she wanted to ask her very much if Henri was leaving at the same time as herself. Two or three times she opened her mouth to ask the question; but each time her lips closed again without her being able to say a word.

Meanwhile time was flying. Cécile returned to her room to leave the Marchioness free to dress herself. The Marchioness had clung to her old habits; every morning she rouged herself and Mademoiselle Aspasie always helped her at her toilet, which in her opinion would not have been a toilet without this aristocratic final touch.

Cécile's window looked over the road; at the end of the road could be seen the harbour; then above the houses, the topmast pennons of the ships floating in the wind. Cécile went to her window.

A number of carriages were passing in the street, but in the midst of all these Cécile especially noted one coming from the harbour, and followed it with her eyes. The carriage stopped before the gate; her heart beat; the gate opened; Henri sprang out of the carriage; her heart beat faster still. Quickly she drew back from the window.

But not so quickly but that Henri lifting his head suddenly, had caught sight of her.

Cécile blushing and confused remained standing where she was, one of her hands pressed against her heart, trying to still its beating, the other clinging to the fastening of the window.

She heard Henri's steps entering the sitting-room separating her room from the Marchioness's; but there his steps stopped. Henri could not enter Cécile's room, Cécile was afraid to go into the sitting-room. This lasted for ten minutes.

After ten minutes Henri rang; a maid answered the bell.

"Please tell the ladies," Henri said, "to be kind enough to be as quick as they can; the boat sails in half-an-hour."

"I am ready," Cécile said, emerging, and forgetting her answer showed she had heard the question,—"I am ready and I will tell grandmamma that you are waiting."

Bowing to Henri, she quickly crossed the room and entered the Marchioness's chamber.

The latter was nearly ready. Five minutes after she came out followed by her granddaughter. Henri offered his arm to the Marchioness, Cécile went down behind them, accompanied by Mademoiselle Aspasie, from whom the Marchioness had been unwilling to part.

One single thought held possession of Cécile's mind—Was Henri only going to escort them to the boat, or was he sailing with them?

During the whole way she did not dare to question Henri, and he said not a word in connection with the subject. Only his eyes repeatedly met the girl's; each was evidently questioning the other by looks.

Henri wore a becoming costume, which might be suitable either for country or travelling, and which afforded no enlightenment.

They reached the harbour. They alighted from the carriage; a small boat was ready; the three women got into it, Henri followed them, and the rowers made for the sailing vessel.

Henri gave the Marchioness his hand to ascend to the deck, then to Cécile. However much her hand trembled this time, Henri could not refrain from gently pressing it. A cloud passed over Cécile's eyes; she feared she would faint. It was the first time Henri had told her in any other way than by a look that he loved her.

But was this pressure perhaps a farewell?

Putting her foot on the deck, Cécile faltered so that she leant for support on a pyramid of trunks and cases piled at the foot of the mizzenmast, which the sailors, fearing bad weather, were about to cover with tarpaulin.

But swift and uncertain though Cécile's glance had been, she yet saw a name that instantly held it spell-bound.

The name was written on a trunk; it was an address. The address told Cécile all she wanted to know, for it was this:

"Monsieur le Vicomte Henri de Sennones. Left luggage office. Paris, France."

Cécile drew a long breath, lifting her eyes to heaven. As she raised her eyes, they met those of the young man. It would seem that every emotion of the

girl's heart was visibly traced on her face, for Henri looked at her with an expression of reproach; then after a moment's silence, he said, shaking his head:

"Oh! Cécile, how could you think for a moment that I could possibly leave you?"

CHAPTER XVI

ACROSS THE CHANNEL

OWING to the frequent variations of the atmosphere on the sea-shore, the weather had completely changed, and the rain of the previous day had given place to a fine clear sky, very rare at this season of the year. This enabled the passengers to remain on deck, a mercy for which Henri heartily thanked Heaven, since it gave him the opportunity of staying near Cécile, whom he would have been obliged to leave, had rough weather compelled the travellers to shut themselves up in the ladies' cabin.

Everything was new and interesting to Cécile. She remembered well, as in a dream, how in her childhood she had gone down the cliff borne in her mother's arms; then, after crossing a great sheet of water, still pictured in her mind as a vast mirror, how she had presently seen a harbour with boats rocking like trees that bend before the wind; but she was three and a half when she had seen these things, and her recollections of them were misty, indefinite, confused and fugitive. A new sight for Cécile, then, this of sea and shore and ships! The poor child had been held down, as it were, like a plant to the ground, trained along the ground, in the Hendon cottage, where she had lived for twelve years, and during all those years had had no wider horizon than what was visible from her own windows or her mother's.

For the first time since her mother's death the sight of external things was able to distract her mind a moment from the loss she had suffered, and as Henri was beside her, she questioned him with curiosity about everything around her. Henri answered all her questions like a man who is familiar with each detail, and Cécile continued to question him, less from curiosity than for the pleasure of hearing his voice. It seemed to her that she was entering on a new life, and it was Henri who had introduced her to this unknown existence. The good ship bearing her to another land, her native land, was separating her from the past and sailing with her into the future.

They were fortunate in their crossing. The sky was as beautiful as an English autumn sky can be, so that two hours after leaving Dover harbour they saw the French coast looking like a mist, while that of England was still clearly to be seen. But gradually England in its turn became blended with the clouds of the horizon and the land of France more and more distinct. Cécile's eyes gazed alternately from one to the other; which of the two would be the happier home for her or perhaps the more fatal?

About seven o'clock in the evening they landed at Boulogne. The night had long since closed in. The Marchioness remembered the inn where they had stopped before, though she had forgotten her old landlady's name. Only the street where this hotel was situated and which was formerly called the Rue de Paris, after being called the Rue du Club des Jacobins, was now called Rue de la Nation.

The Marchioness was exceedingly tired, though the sea had been calm, so Henri escorted her and Cécile to the inn, and then returned to look after the landing of their luggage.

Cécile had again and again heard her mother narrate the events of that stormy night of their emigration. Again and again she had heard the Baroness mention worthy Madame Ambron, who had accompanied them with such devotion as far as the sea, and, less forgetful than her grandmother, the girl recalled her name.

Accordingly, no sooner was Cécile in her room than she summoned the present landlady, and perceiving by her age that she could not be the same person she had so constantly heard her mother speak of, she asked if she had known Madame Ambron who owned the inn in 1792 and if Madame Ambron still lived in Boulogne.

The new landlady was also called Madame Ambron, but she was the daughter-in-law of the other; she had married her eldest son, and her step-

mother had retired, giving up the inn to them.

Madame Ambron lived in the adjoining house and still came to spend the greater part of her time in her old residence.

Cécile asked if she could not speak to her, and the reply was that nothing could be easier, and they would tell her the travellers were asking for her.

In the meantime Henri returned. They were unable to disembark the luggage till the following morning at mid-day on account of the custom-house formalities; he had come to tell the Marchioness and Cécile of this delay, as they had expressed a wish at first to leave that morning. It was therefore agreed that they should not start till the morning after.

The question of their going had been the subject of a great discussion between the Marchioness and her grand-daughter. At first the Marchioness had wished to travel post. But to travel post it would be necessary to hire or buy a chaise, and Cécile, who knew from her mother of the present limited resources of the Marchioness, remarked to her grandmother how much more economical it would be if they went by coach. The Innkeeper, who was at the same time the manager of the public carriages, had come to her aid and had explained to the Marchioness that by reserving the front part of the coach for herself, her grand-daughter and her maid, she would have it as much to herself as if she were in another carriage or a private coach, and that she would travel almost as quickly as by post.

In the end, but still to her deep regret, the Marchioness allowed herself to be over-persuaded by this good advice; and the three names of the Marquise de la Roche-Bertaud, Cécile de Marsilly and Mademoiselle Aspasie were put down for the *coupé*.

Hearing of this arrangement, Henri also engaged a place inside the diligence.

At this point Madame Ambron entered the room, ready, with her habitual alacrity, to do what was wanted of her.

So soon as she set eyes on this good woman who had done so much for her grandmother, her mother and herself, when they were poor fugitives, Cécile opened her arms to throw them about her neck, but she was checked by a sign from the Marchioness.

"What can I do for you, ladies?" asked Madame Ambron.

"My good woman," the Marchioness replied, "I am Madame de la Roche-Bertaud and this is Mademoiselle Cécile de Marsilly, my grand-daughter."

Madame Ambron bowed; it was obvious, however, the two names the Marchioness had just pronounced were absolutely unfamiliar to her. The Marchioness noticed this.

"You do not remember, then," she said, "that we have stopped before at your inn?"

"Madam has doubtless done me this honour," Madame Ambron answered; "but I am ashamed to say I do not remember either the time or the occasion."

"Dear Madame Ambron," said Cécile, "I am quite sure you will remember us. Can you call to mind two hapless exiles who arrived at your house one evening in September, 1792, disguised as peasants, in a little cart, attended by one of their farmers by name Pierre?"

"Yes, certainly, yes," exclaimed Madame Ambron, "indeed I remember them; the younger of the two ladies also had a little girl from three to four years old, a little cherub, a little angel . . ."

"Stop, stop, dear Madame Ambron," Cécile answered smiling, "for if you say more, I shall be afraid to tell you this little girl, this little cherub, this little angel is . . ."

"Is?"

"Well! is myself."

"What! you, my poor child?" cried the kind-hearted hostess.

"Well, well!" murmured the Marchioness, nettled by this familiarity.

"Oh! pardon me," Madame Ambron said, correcting herself, and without having even heard the Marchioness's interruption, "pardon me, Mademoiselle, you were such a mite when I saw you first."

Cécile held out her hand to her.

"But there were three of you?" questioned Madame Ambron, looking round her as if seeking the Baroness.

"Alas!" Cécile murmured.

"Yes, yes," continued Madame Ambron, perfectly understanding all the girl's sad exclamation conveyed; "yes, emigration is a cruel thing; I have witnessed the departure of many whose return I shall never see. You must comfort yourself, my dear young lady, that God has His reasons for trying us, and you know He only chastens those whom He has chosen."

"Do not speak of such things, my good woman, I am very sensitive and these memories make me quite ill."

"Pray forgive me, madam," the good hostess replied; "it was only to prove to Mademoiselle that I thoroughly recalled your brief visit to my inn. If Madame the Marchioness will now tell me why she sent for me?"

"It was not I, my dear Madame Ambron, who sent for you, it was my grand-daughter, Mademoiselle de Marsilly; you must ask her."

"If so, will Mademoiselle be kind enough . . ."

"I sent for you, most worthy Madame Ambron, first of all to thank you in heart-felt words, for indeed the service you did us is one of those which can only be repaid by undying gratitude; and afterwards to ask you if you could not get some one to guide me to-morrow morning to the sea-shore, to the same place where, almost twelve years ago now, we embarked; that is if grandmamma will allow me to do this," Cécile said, turning towards the Marchioness.

"Certainly," replied Madame de la Roche-Bertaud, "that is if Madame Ambron gives you a discreet and sensible person to accompany you. I would at once offer you Aspasie; but you know that, especially in the morning, I really could not do without her."

"I will go myself, Marchioness, I will go myself," cried Madame Ambron; "I shall be only too happy to escort Mademoiselle, and as I was there when you embarked, ladies, if Mademoiselle wants to know any particulars, I shall be able to give them her better than any one else."

"And I, Marchioness," Henri said, having taken the greatest interest in this scene, at which he had been present, "will you not allow me to accompany Mademoiselle?"

"I have no objection to that, Henri," the Marchioness answered, "and as you are fond of picturesque reminiscences, go, children, go by all means."

Then as if to ease her conscience, the Marchioness made a gesture to her old hostess as much as to say:

"Madame Ambron, I give them into your charge, take care of them."

Madame Ambron replied with a sign of assent, and having arranged the walk for the next day, they each retired to their rooms.

Both Henri and Cécile passed an excellent and pleasant night; they had left each other at eleven o'clock in the evening, they would meet again at eight o'clock in the morning. What a change for them, who in England had scarcely seen each other once a week, and that in the presence of other people! They would see each other every day, and if they did not see each other alone, at least they would walk together arm in arm; there would be difficult places where Henri would give his hand to Cécile, others more difficult still where he would hold her up. In short, especially to the young man, this walk would be one prolonged delight.

So at six o'clock in the morning he was ready, unable to understand the tardiness of the time, and accusing all the French clocks of being terribly behind the English timekeepers. He even accused his own watch, hitherto most regular in its movements, of having been upset by the crossing.

Cécile had likewise been up very early, but she, for her part, had not dared to question the clocks.

She thought it was still very early.

Two or three times she had gone from her bed to her window to reassure herself, and once, peeping through her venetian blinds, she had seen Henri ready to start, and looking up wonderingly at her window, the mystery of which he could not however penetrate, to know if she was getting ready. Cécile ventured then to ring and ask the time; it was half-past six o'clock.

She begged the maid to let her know directly Madame Ambron arrived.

But Madame Ambron, not having the same motives that impelled Henri and Cécile to anticipate the stated time, did not come till the hour agreed upon.

As soon as Cécile went down, she found Henri in the waiting-room. The two young people asked each other the customary polite questions, and both declared the night passed in this humble inn was one of the best and most delightful they had ever spent.

As Cécile had said particularly she wanted to see the spot from which they had gone on board, Madame Ambron thought it needless to make the young pair go by the same road that had been taken that hazardous night, when to divert suspicion Pierre had been forced to take the Montreuil road; they satisfied

FOR AN HOUR THEY STOOD LOST IN MEDITATION WITHOUT UTTERING A WORD

themselves by walking up the Rue de la Nation, then, on reaching the barrier, they turned to the left, and struck into a cross-country path leading to the cliffs.

For anyone but Cécile an excursion of the kind, setting aside its object, would have been but a slight and trifling matter; but to the cottage girl who had never seen anything, whose walks had been hemmed in on the one side by the wall of the little garden, and on the other by the church door, everything was new, everything was wonderful. She was like a bird just released from an aviary, which suddenly finds itself, to its own bewilderment, in absolute and perfect freedom; the world seemed to her immense; presently, as the bird tries its wings, she longed to try her feet in running across an open space, in seeking some unknown goal, which she was aware existed, but which all the same she had never yet seen or understood. Such excitement occasioned swift blushes, sudden tremblings that passed from her arm to Henri's, on which she was leaning, and he replied by that gentle pressure which had so much agitated Cécile when she embarked at Dover on the boat that was to bring her to France.

At last they reached the edge of the cliffs, where the sea lay before their eyes in all its expanse and majesty. The Ocean displays a sombre grandeur the Mediterranean even in a hurricane never possesses. A lake, an azure mirror, the home of the fair, capricious Amphitrité, such is the Mediterranean; the Ocean is old Neptune who rocks a world in either arm.

Cécile paused a moment, filled with awe and surprise; as she stood facing Immensity, the thought of death, the thought of God, the thought of the Infinite, seized her and her emotion drew tears to her eyes.

Then she saw at her feet the little path she had descended in her mother's arms that stormy night.

Cécile herself took the little path without Madame Ambron telling her that this was it.

Henri followed her, ready to seize her from behind if her foot slipped, for in this narrow place there was no room for two people abreast.

They came to the shingle; it was the very spot where the fugitives had waited for the little craft that had come to fetch them. Cécile recalled all these details, as through a cloud; what had affected her, child as she was, more than anything else was the ceaseless noise of the waves breaking into foam on the shingle—as it were, the mighty breath of the Ocean.

The waves were breaking there still, and she recognised the sound in the background of her memory.

A second she stood motionless, wrapt in her own thoughts; then looking for Henri, who was beside her, as though she needed in face of such a scene to be sustained and comforted, she leant on his arm, only able to murmur:

"How beautiful! how grand! how sublime!"

Henri did not answer; bareheaded, he held his hat in his hand as if he were in church. God is everywhere, but these two young people felt Him to be there in some special sense.

For an hour they stood lost in meditation, without uttering a word, but leaning against each other for mutual support. Perhaps what they both realised most completely was their own weakness, their nothingness, in comparison with such might, such grandeur.

It was before a similar scene that Paul and Virginia swore to love for always and never to part again.

Poor halcyons of a summer's day!

Madame Ambron reminded Cécile and Henri that it was time to return to the inn. The lovers would have stayed there all day without once considering the time.

They wended their way back again by the little path, but not without stopping every ten steps or so, not without casting behind them long regretful looks of farewell, and not without having collected some beautiful pebbles of brilliant colours, curiously veined and streaked. These glistened so from the sea water they might have been taken for precious stones; but like other glittering things of the world, two hours after they are only ordinary flints.

On returning to the inn they found the Marchioness dressed and already in consultation with an *avocat* whom she had sent for to take advice as to the rights she believed she possessed of recovering her property confiscated by the Convention.

The lawyer had thereupon explained to the Marchioness much she was totally ignorant of: that the Consulship was becoming a Monarchy, that before three months Bonaparte would be Emperor, and, as the double support of the past and

the future was indispensable to the new throne, all the old families who attached themselves to the new dynasty would assuredly be well received by it.

As to the confiscated property, it was useless to think of it; but the Empire had money, pensions, places and entailed estates to give to those who were willing to accept such compensation in exchange.

This conversation had given the Marchioness much ground for thought. As for Cécile, what influence political affairs could have on her future was a mystery to her!

One other thing supremely amazed the Marchioness; this was the tameness with which France succumbed to the rule of a Corsican, an insignificant artillery officer, who had won a few battles and contrived the 18th *Brumaire*, but, that was all! The conversation between her and Henri centred on this subject for a long time. Henri was attached heart and soul to the fallen dynasty to which all his family had remained faithful, but Henri was young, he had dreamed of a brilliant career, he had received a military education, he said to himself, perhaps to deafen the secret voice of conscience, that to serve in France was to serve France. This man who was at the head of the government had made France powerful and illustrious, did not that compensate for his lack of hereditary right? Bonaparte was a usurper, but at least he had all the dazzling qualities which make usurpation intelligible.

In conversations of this character the day passed; Henri kept Cécile and the Marchioness company as long as good taste allowed, and the Marchioness herself lengthened out his visit by inviting him to dine with her and her granddaughter.

In the evening Cécile asked if she might go and look at the sea once more, and entreated her grandmother to come and take a walk on the pier. The Marchioness urged that it was too far and that such a walk, as she had quite lost the habit of walking, would certainly tire her, but Cécile led her to the window, pointed out the harbour to her but two steps away, and teased Madame de la Roche-Bertaud so much that at last she complied.

Henri gave his arm to the Marchioness, and Cécile walked on before, accompanied by Mademoiselle Aspasie.

At every step Madame de la Roche-Bertaud complained of the roughness of the pavement; when they had reached the harbour she complained of the smell of the ships, and on eventually arriving at the end of the pier she complained of the sea breeze.

The Marchioness was one of those women who, having done something for others, feel bound to make them feel incessantly the greatness of her sacrifice.

Cécile more than ever realized the vast difference between the Marchioness and her mother. They returned to the inn. The Marchioness was terribly tired and wanted to go at once to her own room. So the young pair perforce had to separate; but it was to meet again the next morning; at six o'clock the next morning the diligence started.

Moreover the day had been so full of pleasant memories as to give each a charming night.

The next morning the Marchioness resumed her groanings: was any one ever seen to start at six o'clock in the morning? She bitterly regretted not having stuck to her first idea of taking a post-chaise, which would have admitted of her going when she felt inclined, at eleven o'clock or at twelve, for instance, after having taken her chocolate.

Coach-conductors of that period, however, were as inexorable as now. At five minutes past six the heavy, lumbering conveyance started for Paris.

As arranged, the Marchioness, Cécile and Mademoiselle Aspasie were in the *coupé*, and Henri in the inside, but at every stage he got down to enquire after the ladies. At the first and second stage he found the Marchioness very sulky; but though she complained grievously of the miserable night before her, at the third she was fast asleep.

Not that this prevented her, when they stopped in the morning to take breakfast at Abbeville, from declaring she had not closed her eyes all night.

It was the young lovers who had not closed their eyes; but they carefully refrained from saying so, and above all they did not complain.

Immediately after the meal they started again, and only stopped to dine at Beauvais. Henri had the coach-door open before the guard had descended from the perch. The Marchioness was more and more delighted with the young man.

At table, Henri thought of nothing but the two ladies, and waited on them assiduously; on returning to the coach the Marchioness thanked him by a pressure of the hand, and Cécile with a smile.

At seven o'clock the same evening they saw in the distance the lights of Paris. Cécile knew they would enter by the Saint-Denis barrier, and that the coach invariably stopped at the custom-house. She also knew that it was in this custom-house the Marchioness, the Baroness and she had been so nearly recognised. Child though she was, their stay in the little office had made an impression on her, and when the coach stopped she asked her grandmother's permission to look at the thrilling spot again where the Baroness and Marchioness had undergone so much terror and suspense.

The Marchioness gave her leave, at the same time wondering how any one could amuse themselves by dwelling on such gloomy reminiscences.

So Henri went to ask permission of the Superintendent for a young lady to cross the guard-house and to enter for a moment the room beyond.

As may well be supposed, this was granted immediately.

The Marchioness had no desire to alight, and Cécile alone got down with Henri.

She went straight to the office and recognised it: everything was unaltered, the same old wooden table, the same old straw-bottomed chairs.

On one of these chairs, and before this table, she had seen kind Monsieur Duval for the first time.

This recollection brought back a hundred memories; the thought of Monsieur Duval brought back that of his wife and of Edward,—Edward whom her mother had intended for her, and whom she had not even seen to say good-bye to, when she was leaving.

Then something akin to remorse stirred in her, and with it likewise the memory of her mother, and her eyes filled with tears.

Excepting Henri, those who were with Cécile were unable to imagine what there could be so affecting in this old wooden table and these old rough chairs.

But for Cécile all her past life was there.

The guard called Cécile and Henri; both got into the coach again, which started afresh and passed the barrier.

After twelve years Cécile was returning to Paris by that same Porte Saint-Denis which had witnessed her departure.

As a child she had wept when leaving it; as a girl she wept again on returning to it.

Alas! yet another time, poor child, she was destined to leave Paris by the same Gate.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DUC D'ENGHIEN

THE Marchioness and Cécile alighted at the Hôtel de Paris, and Henri took a room in the same inn.

The first days were spent in obtaining intelligence of what was happening; and the Marchioness sent for her *Procureur*.

Not only was he dead, she found, but that there were no longer any *Procureurs* in existence. She was obliged to be content with an *avocat*, who repeated to her word for word what the barrister she had sent for at Boulogne had already told her.

Then in these twelve years the Marchioness had been abroad, Paris had assumed quite a new aspect, so that she no longer recognised the people she had left. Bearing, fashion, language, everything was changed.

Madame de la Roche-Bertaud had expected to find the capital still dull and gloomy, from all the terrible doings she had partly seen herself and partly had heard related by others.

Nothing of the kind; Paris the careless, Paris the forgetful, had recovered its ordinary mien, and had moreover such an air of pomp and pageantry that the Marchioness did not know it. Paris was instinctively conscious it was about to become the capital of a France greater than it had ever been, and of a crowd of other kingdoms besides, which were slowly being drawn under her suzerainty. In short, to use an expression of the Marchioness's own, Paris was giving itself all the airs of a *parvenu*.

Thus it is with exiles, they seem to take away with them a certain amount of personal atmosphere which they breathe

abroad, and in which the events they have seen and which interest them continue to move. The country they have left remains always for them at the point where they left it.

Enthusiastic souls, they believe things are as the things they dream of; time passes without their having advanced one step. Then the hour of their return arrives; for, thank God, there is to-day no such thing as perpetual exile. And they find themselves left behind by just that very time they have passed out of their country; they come into collision with other events, other men, other ideas which they do not care to recognise, and which for their part, recognise them no more.

The Republic, as Madame de la Roche-Bertaud had been informed, was becoming a Monarchy, and the First Consul was soon to be an Emperor. Everything was preparing for this great event, which such of the Republicans as had survived the action and re-action of parties were submitting to, and the Royalists abroad were protesting against.

Moreover, every Royalist consenting to take service under the Consular flag, every noble lady resolving to join the household of the future Empress, was certain of being well received and was welcomed with favours such as the oldest and most faithful servants had no right to claim. The explanation was simple. There was no positive need to reward old friends. This was ingratitude, no doubt; but to neglect being reconciled with enemies was a blunder.

It must be admitted, therefore, the situation was very tempting on the one side for an old woman who had not so many more days to live, and, on the other, for a young man who had a whole future before him. Every day Henri met young men of his own age who were already Captains. Every day Madame de la Roche-Bertaud saw pass by, in carriages on which armorial bearings were again beginning to show themselves, old friends who had recovered from the Empire more than they had lost in the Revolution. Gradually Henri made acquaintance with young men; and the Marchioness renewed intimacies with some of her old acquaintances. Advances were made to Henri, overtures to the Marchioness.

For him the seductions of ambition, for her the attraction of comfort, tended to undermine the political faith so young in his case, so old in hers. But they feared to tell one another mutually how they stood. The heart of the one was still too pure, that of the other too *blasé*, for them both not to understand that their rally to Bonaparte's government was an act of apostacy. On the other hand both were prepared with a pretext they considered plausible, and their pretext, serving at the same time to excuse Henri's ambition and the Marchioness's selfishness, was their love for Cécile.

In truth what was to become of Cécile, set, poor child, between a lover without a future, and a grandmother without an income?

Of course, too, Henri and the Marchioness had both of them been glad to welcome the various pretexts, good, bad and indifferent, that a wavering loyalty always knows how to call to its aid.

For instance, they had discovered that Bonaparte was *not*, as someone had said, a Corsican of no birth, an upstart soldier, an adventurer. Bonaparte belonged to one of the oldest Italian families; one of his ancestors had been a Florentine magistrate in 1330; the name had been written in the gold book of Genoa for the last 400 years, and his grandfather, the Marquis de Buonaparté, as genuine Royalists admitted, had written an account of the siege of Rome by the Connétable de Bourbon.

There was a still better reason to give than all these: to wit, that Napoleon was a man of genius, and that every man of genius deserves the rank a nation allows him to take; it remains for the nation, when he is dead, to give back or not this place to those from whom he usurped it.

Again they said, what at the time was still true, that Bonaparte, innocent of all the revolutionary excesses, had never steeped his hands in the blood of a Bourbon.

No plans for the future had ever been discussed between Cécile and Henri; still on account of the sympathetic attraction which had possessed them both at first sight and which had continued to grow during the six months they had seen each other, in England every week and in France every day, the two lovers had understood that they belonged to each other; what need, then, to make plans and exchange promises! Like Romeo and Juliet, they had at first sight pledged their

love to each other with an oath death alone could annul.

When they spoke of the future, they each said *we* instead of *I;* that was the only difference.

But this future, we must repeat, only existed on condition that Henri and the Marchioness allied themselves with the government. Henri had no other fortune to expect except the one made in business by his uncle—an uncle who, just because this plebeian profession had made his family quarrel with him, had declared he would only leave his fortune to that one of his nephews who, daring to be anathematised in his turn, should become a trader like himself. Henri, no doubt, had had a fine and liberal education; but there were at this period only two careers open to an earnest ambition, the career of arms, the career of diplomacy; and these were both equally dependent on the government.

So far as Cécile was concerned, her repudiation of her parents' principles was of less importance.

A woman receives her position from events and from men. But her lovable nature helped her to understand that if her faith remained loyal and irreproachable she would become a living reproach to Henri.

When her grandmother spoke to her of the proposals she had received for her to enter the household of the future Empress, she was content to answer that, seeing she was too young and too ignorant in political affairs to have a will of her own, she was prepared to obey her grandmother.

Knowing therefore the contest Henri had waged with himself for some time, glad to make a sacrifice even of her conscience to her lover, that same day she hastened to tell him both her grandmother's request and her own reply. Henri had waited but for this before accepting; he went at once to give in his full and absolute adherence to the friend who had been commissioned with the negotiation, and that same evening for the first time every one spoke openly before the Marchioness of the doubly brilliant future before the betrothed pair,—Henri following the Emperor in the field, Cécile in attendance on the Empress at the Tuileries.

When Henri had left them, and Cécile went as usual to bid good-night to her grandmother in bed, the latter took her by the hand, and said, looking at her with a smile:

"Well! what do you think of this future compared with the one your poor mother prepared for you?"

"Ah!" answered Cécile, "if only Edward had been Henri."

And weeping she retired to her room, for her mother's name had been uttered with a reproach, and no one had a right, she considered, to blame her mother.

And, indeed, who could answer for this future? Brilliant a military career, no doubt; but always perilous, and at this time doubly perilous; fame and fortune were rapidly won, but that was because death mowed down right and left to clear the way for ambition. War was an affair of masses, and every field of battle devoured thousands of men. Cécile knew Henri, he was brave, fiery, ambitious; determined to attain a goal, to reach a result; for him there would be no obstacle in the way of his design. If Henri were killed, what would become of her? She was not far wrong, then, in thinking that obscurity with Henri, obscurity in a little house like the cottage at Hendon, would have been truer happiness. If only, as she had said to the Marchioness, Edward had been Henri!

Two days after, Henri appeared in a charming uniform, that of a brigadier in the Guides, which conferred on him a lieutenant's rank in every other branch of the service. In fact, Henri had obtained a great favour by way of a beginning.

Cécile had been presented to Madame Louis Bonaparte, and the girl had related all the misfortunes of her family. This gracious woman's generosity is well-known, and as Queen Hortense her memory is still cherished in France. She promised the girl her protection, and it was arranged that as soon as the Empress's household was formed, a post should be found in it for Mademoiselle de Marsilly.

All seemed prospering then for the two lovers, and they were only waiting for the carrying out of the promise made by Josephine's daughter, when one morning appalling tidings spread through the streets of Paris.

The Duc d'Enghien had been shot in the trenches of Vincennes.

That same day Henri de Sennones sent in the resignation of his commission, and

Cécile wrote to Madame Louis Bonaparte to say that she could no longer accept her promised favour, and they might give her post to some other claimant.

Both these young creatures acted thus without consulting one another, and when they both hesitatingly told one another in the evening what they had each done, their love was but the greater for the conviction they were more than ever worthy of each other.

A few days after this event the Marchioness received a letter from Monsieur Duval; he had sold the Baroness's few pieces of furniture according to her instructions, and he forwarded Cécile and the Marchioness the sum cleared by the sale, 6,000 francs in all; only 500 francs or so less than the furniture had cost when new. Unjust as she was to Monsieur Duval, the Marchioness was obliged to recognise, at least, that as a steward he was a man of wonderful integrity.

CHAPTER XVIII

A MOMENTOUS DECISION

THIS untoward circumstance compelled them to prepare another future in place of that which had failed them, and they exhausted one after the other all schemes the imagination of the lovers and the Marchioness could offer. Then when they had discussed everything, criticised everything, recognised everything to be impossible, they returned to the first idea which had occurred to them and which they had discarded, perhaps because it was the only rational one; they reconsidered the advisability of submitting to the conditions imposed by the Guadeloupe uncle, and Henri made up his mind to become a merchant.

We all know that there are two kinds of commerce in the world; the common and petty business of the shopkeeper, who under the shadow of his sign-board waits for the customer from whom after an hour's bargaining he will wring a crown, and the romantic and magnificent commerce of the mariner who binds one world to another by his ship's wake, who instead of a cunning contest with the buyer, wars with the might of the hurricane, whose every fresh voyage is a new struggle he engages in with sea and sky, and who returns into harbour as a conqueror, sheltering his boat with his flag as a king his tent.

Such commerce is that of the Tyrians in antiquity, of the Pisans, the Genoese and the Venetians of the Middle Ages, and of all the great nations of the nineteenth century. Such commerce is compatible with nobility; the profit being always subject to risk of life or death, and every enterprise involving supreme danger, it heightens rather than degrades the dignity of man.

So Henri communed with himself to strengthen his resolution, poor Cécile said the same to herself and trembled in saying it. Here was the reason they had put from them at first this unhappy scheme of a voyage to the Antilles, but lacking better plans they were forced to return to it. By collecting a small stock, however commonplace, Henri was sure on arriving at Guadeloupe to be received with open arms by his uncle, who would double, aye treble the stock. And as this uncle was a millionaire, the least he could do for his nephew was to offer him the possibilities of an eventual profit of from a hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand francs; this profit realised, Henri would either risk a fresh voyage, or, satisfied with this moderate wealth, would marry Cécile, retire with her and the Marchioness to some little corner of the world where he need do nothing but be happy while waiting some turn of events, some alteration in the political world, which would allow him once more to aim at a brilliant and renowned future. Then if no such change occurred, Henri, looking at Cécile and probing his heart, felt assured he had sufficient love to enjoy a peaceful, happy existence far from the strife and turmoil of ambition.

This resolution once taken, they postponed till the month of November the date of his departure; so the young pair secured these three months for themselves before their separation, and three months at Cécile's and Henri's age are equal to three centuries.

Both had suffered bitterly in making

up their minds, but the putting off of his departure had consoled them as if the interval would never pass, as if these three months were a man's lifetime.

Yet the hour of parting, laggard in its approach during the first month, so soon as the second was entered upon, began to hasten its advance, and seemed to have wings when they were come to the third.

In proportion as they saw the hour of separation drawing nearer, the lovers relapsed into their former melancholy; all the future which by force of will they had beheld glorious and secure, became once more fluctuating as the waves, and overcast as the storms on which it depended. Some happy scheme for his return would now and then steal successfully from the midst of their sighs and tears, yet almost diffidently, as if they feared God would only punish them for their temerity.

Meanwhile the Marchioness's cheerfulness did not desert her; her life, divided between her bed, her toilet and her reading, passed as peacefully as though it were settled on the safest foundations.

Ardent and pure was the love of the young pair at her side, but their innocence was intrinsic, and in no way due to her maternal eye. Happily Henri loved Cécile too much and happily, both were too sure of their mutual constancy, to need being watched by any other than their own guardian angel.

The last days of the third month were at hand, Henri had arranged to embark at Plymouth; he had spent in Paris the little money he could call his own, and it was only in England he had calculated on being able by the help of his family and friends to raise the amount necessary for the purchase of his stock-in-trade.

There is nothing in the world sadder for refined and intelligent minds than to see the possibilities of their destiny depend on some petty sum of money, more or less. The tenth part of the old income formerly enjoyed by the families of the young pair would to-day have sufficed to make them perfectly happy. Any day, if they looked about them in the streets, they saw some poor fool or some adventurer softly reclining on the cushions of a luxurious carriage, and they said to themselves that they, people of birth and refinement and culture, would be fortunate if they had for income as much as this man yearly expended on this carriage in which his foolish and impertinent self was driven about. Their whole destiny depended on this wretched sum which they did not possess, and which he lavished without a thought of regretting it. Poor loving and lacerated hearts, they must be divided for six months, perhaps for a year, from each other, in order to gain this sum; they who for the last four months had not conceived it possible to live one day without each other.

Constantly, then, when they observed that since the event which had destroyed their plans everything went on as before; when they saw that everything prospered with this man of fate, who seemed to hold the world in the leash of his powerful will; when they recalled how, except for a few loyal and religious hearts like their own, every being seemed to have forgotten the Royal victim to whom they had sacrificed their happiness like a funeral holocaust—they wondered whether it would not have been better after all to shut their eyes and bow their heads like so many others. But then the voice of their conscience cried louder than their selfishness, and, weak in their misfortune, they became strong again in the certainty of having done their duty.

Again they questioned themselves if the resolution they had taken was indeed the only one before them; if there were not artistic resources for each of them in the education they had received. But no branch of this education had really been pushed in either the one or the other to such a point of perfection that it could be utilised to earn a living. Henri was willing enough to stoop to everything, but he preferred that Cécile personally should remain sheltered from the influences of destiny.

There are moments in life when a man feels himself caught and imprisoned by fate in a network of steel. Vainly he seeks a way out, he must go by the only one it opens to him, whether leading to destruction or salvation.

So the poor children always returned to this terrible voyage to Guadeloupe, which they tried unceasingly to thrust from them like Sisyphus with his rock, and which ever fell back on them.

The day Henri had fixed for his departure was come. But as nothing but his own will compelled them to part that day, though he had joined Cécile as soon as it was morning and had passed the whole time with her, evening was there before

the lovers had uttered a single word as to the cruel separation.

At last, when he was about to go, smiling sadly, they looked at one another, understanding each other's emotions by their own.

"When are you leaving, Henri?" asked Cécile.

"Never," Henri answered; "never, I am sure, unless a stronger power than my own will compels me to."

"You will stay then always: for suppose I am the power stronger than your will, I shall never have courage to exact that you shall leave me."

"What is to be done, then?" asked Henri.

Cécile took him by the hand and led him before the little crucifix which she had removed from her mother's closet and had brought with her. Henri divined her intention.

"I swear," he said, "by her who died with her eyes fixed on this crucifix, to leave this very day week, and to have no other thought during the whole of my voyage but to return as soon as possible for the sake of her child's happiness."

"And I," said Cécile, "I swear to wait for Henri without any other hope than that of his return; and if he does not return . . ."

Henri placed his hand over Cécile's mouth and interrupted the rest of her intended speech. Then, facing the crucifix, they sealed their oaths with a kiss as between brother and sister.

The next day Cécile and Henri went into the Marchioness's room. The young pair had made up their minds no longer to conceal from themselves the state of their finances. Henri had asked to know how much Cécile still had, in order that the two women might arrange accordingly during his absence.

The Marchioness, who loathed distressing herself about business, was at first inclined to avoid Henri and Cécile's request, but they both insisted in such a manner that she took a middle course to free herself from the annoyance. Handing Cécile the key of the desk, she told her to go through the accounts for herself.

There were 8,500 francs in the desk, and this was all that remained from the fortune of the Marchioness and Baroness.

Enough to live upon with economy for a year and a half, and Henri's voyage should only last six months. The young people could therefore set their hearts at rest on that account.

Henri, however, prompted by sense and love, counselled one thing. And this was that instead of stopping at the inn where they had been since their arrival, Cécile and the Marchioness should take a small furnished lodging, which would cost them infinitely less. Then by taking this precaution beforehand, which they would infallibly have to adopt sooner or later, and while Henri was still in Paris, he would at least know the room Cécile lived in, and during his long absence could follow her about her room in thought every hour of the day and night.

A paltry enough reason in the Marchioness's eyes, who knew nothing of all these little poetical fancies of love; but they urged the supreme necessity for economy, and she consented.

As soon as it was morning, Henri started in search and found what seemed suitable at No. 5, Rue du Coq Saint Honoré. The day was spent in their removal; and on settling their account at the inn, which amounted to rather more than 500 francs, Cécile's capital was reduced to a little less than 8,000 francs.

Henri then saw Cécile established in her new rooms; together, they placed each piece of furniture where it was to stay, and he nailed the crucifix in its recess, and laid the albums on the tables, and it was settled everything should remain as it was.

All these details appeared very trivial to the Marchioness, though to the lovers they were of the first importance.

The last remaining days passed by. Henri had often asked Cécile what her favourite occupation would be in his absence, and Cécile had replied with a smile,

"I shall embroider myself a wedding gown."

The day before his departure Henri bought Cécile a magnificent piece of Indian muslin. It was to be her bridal dress.

In his presence she began the first flower; she would embroider the last on his return.

The lovers did not part till three o'clock in the morning. It was the last night they would spend together, and they could not bring themselves to separate.

At eight o'clock they were together again. There was something almost

sacred about the day to them. Henri, after the oath he had taken, did not for a moment dream of staying any longer. Hence he had engaged his place in the Boulogne mail that left at five o'clock that evening.

We cannot undertake to describe the details of this last day. The story we relate is one of emotions and not of events; our aim above everything is to be simple and truthful, and by reason of this aim we dare not pry into the mysteries of these two pure and grief-stricken young hearts.

Tears, promises, vows, long and tender kisses, such is the story of this last day, one of the saddest in Cécile's life, after that in which she had lost her mother.

And, in spite of all, the hour approached, swift, unrelenting, pitiless; each instant the two children turned their eyes from each other to the clock and back from the clock to each other. They would have given years of the life before them to be allowed one more day, and when the moment of parting came, to be allowed but one more hour.

At last the clock marked a quarter to five, ten minutes to five, then five. They went to kneel a last time before the crucifix. When they rose again, there was but time to exchange a last kiss.

Henri flung himself out of the room, but Cécile thereupon gave such a cry of grief that he returned. A last word, a last vow, a last tear, a last kiss; then Henri tore himself from her and fled.

Cécile leant over the baluster and followed him with her eyes, then she ran to the window to see him get into the carriage; Henri saw her at the window and waved his hat to her.

The carriage was vanishing by the Rue Saint Honoré, a block in the traffic delayed it a moment. Henri leant bodily out of the carriage and waved his handkerchief to Cécile.

He saw in the darkness a shadow and a handkerchief at a window answering him.

The carriage moved on, but Henri remained still leaning out and waving till he had turned the corner of the road, then he fell back in his seat, sobbing.

Already he was as much separated from Cécile as if the Atlantic were rolling between them.

CHAPTER XIX

CORRESPONDENCE

WHEN she had seen the carriage that bore Henri disappear round the corner of the Rue Saint Honoré, Cécile, nearly fainting, fell into a chair.

Ten minutes after there was a knock at the door; it was a commissionaire with a letter. Cécile glanced at the address and recognised Henri's writing; she gave a little scream of delight, put what change she had in her purse in the man's hands, and trembling all over at this unexpected happiness, she ran into her room. Happiness, yes, for to one who loves with a first love, which fixes in the depths of the soul those roots of flame that no other love can ever tear out, intermediate feelings disappear and all is happiness or despair.

The girl, trembling all over, then opened the note she had just received, and half crying, half smiling, read these few following lines:—

"DEAR CÉCILE,

"I have arrived in the coach-yard just as the mail is on the point of starting; I tear a page from my pocket-book and with one foot on the carriage step I write you these few words.

"I love you, Cécile, as never mortal heart loved before. You are everything to me, my wife here on earth, my angel in heaven, my delight and happiness everywhere. I love you! I love you!

"The coach is starting, once more good-bye."

It was the first letter Cécile had received from Henri. She read it and re-read it ten times over, then, as if to thank God for being so loved, she knelt before the crucifix and prayed.

That same evening Cécile began the design of her gown, indulging the fancy that the more she hastened her work, the more she would at the same time hasten Henri's return. The design was taken from the most beautiful flowers she had preserved in her album; they were her friends, her companions, whom she was thus inviting to share her future happiness. Cécile interrupted herself from time to time to read her letter over again.

The design was finished that same night. Cécile went to bed with Henri's little note in her hand and her hand on her heart.

On awakening, it was some little time

before Cécile could collect her thoughts; she believed she had dreamed that Henri was gone, then the reality dawned on her and she was reduced as on the day before to her only consolation—her letter.

Slowly and sadly the day passed. It was the first time for five months that Cécile had spent a day without seeing Henri. With a map of France in her hand she followed him on his way, trying to guess where he was at the very hour she was thinking of him.

The Marchioness for her part was what she had always been, that is to say frivolous and selfish. As Henri had been more taken up with Cécile than with her, she did not regret him, though we must own she generally did him justice, and loved him as much as she could ever love a stranger.

It followed that Cécile had no one in the world to whom she could confide a fraction of the burden of his absence, not a creature to answer her lamentations by one word of consolation, not a soul to whom to pour out her heart. She kept her own secret as she had always done; then when her anguish was greater than she could bear, she thought of her mother and wept, or she thought of God and prayed.

The next day at nine in the morning the postman knocked at the door, it was a second letter from Henri. Cécile recognised the writing, and took it from his hands with such alacrity the worthy man smiled at the girl's eagerness.

The second letter was as follows:—

"We are stopping a moment, so I write to you. I am at Abbeville, in the same room where we breakfasted together on our way to Paris. I have seated myself where you sat, dear Cécile, perhaps on the same chair, and while the other travellers are complaining, as they eat it, of a bad dinner, I am writing to you.

"Since I left you, I have not ceased thinking of you for an instant. Indeed I am going over the same way I went with you, so everything is full of memories for me. I recognised each stage where the coach stopped, and where I got down to ask you how you were getting on. Alas! I have no longer anyone near me who interests me; I am with two fellow travellers whom I have not even looked at and with whom I have not exchanged a single word.

"The whole way, indeed, I talk with you, Cécile, your voice is in my heart, and when I speak to you, you answer me; it is as if I had carried away with me an echo of you. And I too, have I left you nothing of the kind, and as you are in me, is there never so little of me in you?

"You will have this letter to-morrow at nine o'clock in the morning, they promise me. Cécile, at nine o'clock in the morning think of me, shut your eyes, conjure up before you the shore of Boulogne; I shall be on the beach at the foot of the cliff, listening to that sublime and mighty sea, whose roaring affected us so deeply when we heard it together. I will not tell you that I think of you, I repeat to you, you are in me, forming part of my very existence, I live to love you, my every heart-beat syllables your name.

"Adieu, Cécile, absence alone can measure love.

"I will write to you from Boulogne, where I shall stop a few hours; the farther I hasten away from you, the nearer draws my return. YOUR HENRI."

This letter gave exquisite joy to Cécile, to begin with, she had not expected it then, it contained those eternal verities of love which the heart wishes to hear repeated again and again; then, to crown all, it proved to Cécile that Henri was thinking unceasingly of her, as she was thinking unceasingly of him.

The poor child counted the hours of that day and the minutes of the next, it was as if her very life hung on this letter from Boulogne.

Then she began embroidering her beautiful gown, but she discovered with horror that it would take at least seven or eight months to work what she had designed. Now the sternest calculations the young pair had made did not reckon more than six months before his return. Cécile then would be behindhand.

Contemplating the Marchioness, you would have said that for her there was neither space, ocean nor tempest, she spoke of the future with all the confidence of old people who make their calculations as if for years, though they have hardly days before them.

The next day but one, Cécile, who was awake at five o'clock in the morning, Cécile who hurried on the hands of the clock with her eyes, Cécile who quivered at the faintest noise, at nine o'clock received the following letter:—

"I am at Boulogne, dear Cécile. I have taken the little room that you occupied; so I am still with you.

"I summoned Madame Ambron and I talked of you. We are still bound to each other by invisible, but none the less actual bonds. As I look again at the places where I have seen you, the more you seem to me to be my wife; when I shall have left England for America, when I leave France for England, you will no longer be near me except as an angel.

"Here you are still before my eyes; there you will only be visible to my heart; but wherever I may be, I shall look at Heaven, satisfied that Heaven was your home before and will be your home to come.

"They have just come to tell me that in two hours a small vessel sails for England; I have only time then to hasten to the shore which will be a threefold memory for my heart; this shore which you saw without me, which we shall have seen together, and which I shall have seen without you.

"I only part from you, then, with my hand, dear Cécile, and on my return I will resume my letter. Beheld by a passionate heart, how sublime and beautiful is the sea! How it harmonises with all lofty thoughts! how it lifts one from earth to Heaven! how it makes one understand the pettiness of men and the majesty of God!

"I think I could have stayed for ever on this shore where we have wandered together, and where it seems to me by careful search I might even yet find the traces of your footstep. My heart swells with the scene before me. I no longer love you with the love of men, I love you as at the return of spring the flowers love the sun; as during the beautiful summer nights the sea loves the firmament; as from all time the earth loves God.

"Oh! Cécile, God forgive me if it is impious pride, but in this hour I defy Fate itself to separate us, even by death. When everything mingles and blends in nature, perfumes with perfumes, clouds with clouds, life with life, why should death too not mingle with death? and since everything that mingles fructifies, why should death,—one of the conditions of nature, one of the links of eternity, one of the landmarks of the Infinite,—why should death alone be sterile? God would not have created death, if it were to be only an engine of destruction for Him, and if in severing bodies, it were not bound to unite souls.

"Therefore, Cécile, therefore death itself shall not be able to separate us; for scripture says Christ has vanquished death.

"Therefore *au revoir*, Cécile, and no more *adieu*,—*au revoir* possibly in this world, and certainly in that other.

"Why do these thoughts come to me to-day? I do not know. Is it remembrance? is it presentiment?

"*Au revoir*; they come to fetch me; the ship is ready. I am giving this to Madame Ambron, who will herself put it in the post. YOUR HENRI."

Eight days passed, when there came a fresh letter. We have headed this chapter "correspondence"; we hope our readers will allow us to justify this title in placing before them this fourth communication.

"You watch over me, Cécile; your breath urges me on; your star lightens me.

"Listen, and you will see how everything prospers for us; it frightens me, I would prefer difficulties. I wish I had some enemy to fight, some obstacle to overcome. Ah God! wilt Thou tire of granting so many favours, before I reach my journey's end?

"I knew that on arriving in London I should no longer find either Madame de Lorges or any other member of my family. True enough, everyone had gone; but as I had not counted on my relations, who are too poor themselves to help me, their absence did not occasion me any other disappointment than that of not seeing them.

"I had relied on an honest and excellent man, an old servant, I should have said a friend, of our family, one whom you know and love Cécile, on good Monsieur Duval.

"You know, Cécile, how I, like you, have no fortune; therefore I could only reckon on getting a loan, my honour being my guarantee. Now there was but one man to whom I cared to apply to do me such a service. That man was Monsieur Duval.

"Not for a second did I hesitate about applying to him, and I left Paris with that intention. Nor could I doubt his kind-heartedness; I knew him.

"But, Cécile, you know, or rather you do not know, but you can imagine how

there are a thousand ways of doing anyone a service, from a favour that is wrung out of an unwilling heart to a favour that is freely and frankly offered you.

"Dear Monsieur Duval! hardly had I spoken to him, for I concealed nothing from him, neither my love for you nor our position, nor our hopes which rested entirely on him—hardly had I spoken to him, when his wife turning towards him, exclaimed: 'There now! didn't I say twenty times that they loved each other?' You see, Cécile, these estimable people thought of us, concerned themselves about us, and when we did not dare to own our love to ourselves, our love was no secret to them.

"Then Monsieur Duval came forward to me with tears in his eyes; yes, this good man was really restraining tears. 'Love her well, Monsieur Henri,' he said, 'love her very tenderly, for she is a noble and brave girl; and if people like ourselves had ever dared to lift our eyes to her, she is the wife I should have wished for Edward.' Then holding out his hand to me, which he has never dared to do before, since he knew me first, and vigorously shaking mine, he said:

"'Yet once more, make her happy.'

"'And now,' he continued, wiping his eyes and leading me to his study, 'let us talk business.'

"The matter was quickly settled, and without so much as the opening of a purse. It must be admitted a commercial business, understood in a certain sense, is a fine thing. I had always heard that to finger a few thousand francs, stamped paper, writing, notaries, offices of registration, and a crowd of other things were necessary.

"Monsieur Duval took a slip of paper and wrote: 'I have the honour of instructing Messrs. Smith and Thurston that I credit Monsieur the Vicomte Henri de Sennones with a sum of fifty thousand francs.'

"Then he signed and handed me the paper and everything was done.

"I presented myself that same day to these gentlemen. I explained to them my intention of going to Guadeloupe with a mixed cargo. As it happened, they had a ship laden ready to sail for the Antilles, they asked me what goods I wished to speculate in. I answered them that being perfectly unfamiliar with business, I begged them to come to an arrangement with Monsieur Duval in the matter; they promised to attend to it for me the next day.

"I returned to Monsieur Duval. There was something I wished to tell you about at length, dear Cécile, and for this purpose I wished to visit your little house at Hendon.

"I enquired of Monsieur Duval who was its new owner. On this point you will appreciate this wonderful man's kindness. The owner is himself. Do you understand, Cécile? His veneration for your mother and for you prompted him to buy the house and its furniture, so that it might always remain as a memorial of the earthly pilgrimage of his saint and his angel. For so he calls your mother, and so he calls you.

"He wanted to go with me, but Madame Duval prevented him.

"'Monsieur would prefer to go alone to Hendon,' she said to him, 'do you stay here; your presence would drive away all his memories.'

"Intuition which the most refined of men is incapable of will guide a woman infallibly in matters of the heart.'

"Monsieur Duval then gave me the key of the cottage. No one goes there, not even themselves; your old English maid alone, who is now in Madame Duval's service, is instructed to look after your paradise.

"On the morrow, as soon as it was daylight, I set off; in two hours I was at Hendon.

"I recalled the first time I went, escorting Madame de Lorges, the indifference, I might say the contempt, with which I approached the charming cottage; forgive me, Cécile, I had never seen you, I did not know you. From the moment I saw you, from the moment I knew you, the little house was a temple, and you became its divinity and your room was the sanctuary.

"I declare to you, Cécile, I never felt an emotion like that I experienced in approaching this house. I longed to kneel before the door and kiss the threshold.

"On pushing the key into the lock my hand trembled, yet I entered, but my legs bent under me, when after flinging back the door I found myself in the corridor.

"First I visited the garden; no more flowers, no more leaves, no more shade; everything was melancholy and desolate as when you left it ten months ago.

"I sat down on the seat in the arbour. Your friends the birds were hopping about the leafless branches as they sang. You had seen those very birds, Cécile, had heard the very songs they sang.

"I stayed listening to them, my eyes fastened on your closed window, expecting any moment to see you appear behind the panes, for, as I have told you, everything is just as you left it.

"Then I ascended the little winding staircase, I entered your mother's room. I knelt before the spot where the crucifix used to be, and I prayed for you. Then I half opened the door of your room. Do not distress yourself, dear Cécile, I did not even enter; it was sacred to me.

"At last I tore myself from this little house, where I left so precious a part of my past life, to visit a yet holier spot than all the others. You will understand, Cécile, I mean your mother's grave.

"As in your garden, as in your room, as everywhere indeed, it might well be seen that a friendly hand had been there; in the spring it must have been covered with flowers, and by their withered stalks and their dried-up leaves I recognised the same flowers as those in your garden. I gathered some leaves from a rose-bush and a spray of heliotrope. These were the two plants which had survived the attack of winter best. You will find them in this letter. I scarcely dare tell you that, confident you would carry them to your lips, I kissed them both.

"I had to leave. In this sacred pilgrimage, five or six hours had fled by. In the evening I had an engagement to meet Messrs. Smith and Thurston at Monsieur Duval's house. I was back at eight o'clock. These gentlemen arrived with stern, commercial punctuality; they were well acquainted with my uncle, who, it appears, is immensely rich, and, according to what they say, is a capital man of business, excepting for a few eccentricities.

"We arranged everything in the evening; a beautiful brig lay ready freighted in the harbour; the owner is a friend of these gentlemen; he gave me fifty thousand francs' interest in his cargo; and note, dear Cécile, as I told you, what extraordinary fortune follows me, this ship actually sails to-morrow.

"Ah! I forgot to tell you . . . my ship is called the *Annabel;* almost as pretty a name as Cécile. I leave you then till to-morrow when at the moment of setting off, I will have this letter put in the post."

"11 a.m.

"DEAR CÉCILE,

"The whole morning has been taken up with preparations for leaving; happily everything in this voyage relates to you, and so nothing distracts me from thinking of you a moment. Incredibly beautiful is the weather for an autumn day. Monsieur Duval and Edward are here; Madame Duval sent me good wishes for my happiness by her husband and son; both will accompany me on board.

"By all accounts some great news reached the good family yesterday; I think I gathered that Edward was betrothed in some way to a woman for whom he only felt a brother's affection, while, on the other hand, he was in love with another. But Monsieur and Madame Duval, the slaves of their pledged word, would not hear of this marriage, before they were freed from their first promise. As I have told you the news that they were free came to them yesterday or the day before; so that in all probability poor Edward will marry some time or other the girl he loves. He is very happy!"

"12 o'clock, on board the *Annabel.*

"As you see, dear Cécile, I was obliged to leave you. I really could not leave Edward and his father alone and went to keep them company. You understand they had both left their business to come with me. They could not have done more for King George.

"The little brig is all her name promised: a kind of packet-boat built both for passengers and cargo, in which—what is not often met with—human beings are almost as well cared for as the cargo. The Captain is an Irishman called John Dickins. He has given me an excellent cabin, number 5. The same number, you will observe, as that of the house you live in.

"Alas, I cannot write to you any more now, the boat is beginning to get under sail, and rolling so heavily, as they are lifting the anchor, that it is impossible for me to go on. *Au revoir* then, dear Cécile, or rather *adieu*, for to me the word *adieu* is of deeper import than that generally attached to it; I would commit you to the care of God. *Adieu*, then, I leave you in the hands of God.

"Our start is most auspicious, for everybody predicts a prosperious voyage. Cécile, Cécile, with all my heart I want to be brave, I want to give you something of my courage, but to affect stoicism in your presence is beyond me. Cécile, it is anguish to leave you: at Boulogne I was only leaving France; sailing from London, I am leaving Europe.

"*Adieu*, Cécile; *adieu*, my darling; *adieu*, my good angel; pray for me, my only reliance is on your prayers; I have written to you up to the very last moment, but now they are ordering Monsieur Duval and his son into the ship's boat. I only am detaining them. One last word and I close my letter; I love you; *adieu*, Cécile; Cécile, *adieu*. *Adieu*.

"YOUR HENRI."

CHAPTER XX

GUADELOUPE

CÉCILE received this letter four days after it had been written; it was two days since Henri had lost sight of the French and English coasts.

You may imagine the twofold impression the letter produced on the poor child. Henri's pilgrimage to the cottage and the grave brought back to her all her past joys and sorrows. Henri's departure, a departure postponed as long as ever he could postpone it, with its final grief which her lover's pen had described to her, recalled all her apprehensions and all her hopes for the future.

Even now Henri was sailing between sky and sea. As she finished reading his letter, she fell on her knees and remained a long while absorbed in prayer to God for him.

Then she thought of the other parts of his letter; of the excellent Duval family whom Henri had asked for help, unaware that the woman for whom he had declared his love was to have been Edward's wife; of Edward who, though loving someone else, yet bound by his parents' engagement would have held to it with all the fidelity of a merchant pledged to meet a bill, however miserable this engagement might make him.

Then Cécile hastened to her desk and on the impulse of the moment wrote Madame Duval a long letter, opening out all her heart to her and calling her mother. Cécile's generous nature was always ready to recognise nobility and greatness in others.

Then she returned to her absorbing work, her chief distraction, her only happiness—the wedding-gown. The Marchioness continued to live her accustomed life, passing all her mornings in bed, reading romances or having them read to her. Cécile literally never saw her except at meal times. There was a great gulf between the two women: the one was all spirit, the other all material; the one judged everything by the heart, the other's point of view was that of the reason.

Mademoiselle Aspasie Cécile felt a certain hidden repulsion to; and to avoid using her services which the person in question would perhaps have refused, she had come to an arrangement with a woman called Madame Dubois, who lived in the attic floor of the same house. This woman came down every morning and did the poor child's modest housekeeping.

The Marchioness had kept up intercourse with her old friends, as we related before. These friends occasionally came to see her in her humble lodgings, inviting her in return to go and see them or to use their carriage; but the Marchioness was as proud as she was poor. Besides, her inertness for thirty years had inclined her to obesity. She was very stout and the least movement tired her.

So she passed her life in her room and Cécile in hers.

Either in thought or on the map the poor child followed the adventurous ship that was sailing to another world, and in this manner the day would glide by. She had thoroughly understood that at least three months must pass before she could receive another letter from Henri. She was not therefore on the look out for any,—not that this prevented her trembling every time she heard a knock at the door. For a second her needle would shake between her fingers, then the person who had knocked would appear, and as this person had nothing whatever to do with Henri, Cécile would sigh and take up her work again.

What a miracle of patience, of exquisite

finish and taste it was, this work of hers. It was not mere embroidery, it was a raised design. Living and animated were the flowers, though pale as those used to crown maidens who are led to the altar or borne to the tomb. Each one brought back a memory of her childhood to Cécile, and as she embroidered it, it spoke to her of the time when, short-lived child of the short-lived London sun, it had flourished its brief moment in her garden.

One morning when Cécile was working as usual, there was a ring at the door, but this time she trembled more violently than was her wont, for she recognised the postman's manner of pulling the bell. She ran to open the door herself, it was he; he held out a letter to her. She gave a cry of delight. The address of the letter was in Henri's writing. She looked at the postmark; it bore that of Havre. She almost fainted. What had happened? After barely six week's absence, how came she to receive a letter from Henri from Havre? Had he returned to France?

She held the letter in her hand, and shaking all over she was afraid to open it.

It dawned upon her that the postman was still waiting; she paid him and ran into her room. How delightful the man's smiling face was! She opened the letter; it bore the heading: *At sea*. Henri had found an opportunity of writing to her, that was all! She read as follows:

"Dear Cécile!

"See how your prayers really do bring me good luck; contrary to all expectation, this opportunity occurs of telling you I love you.

"This morning the man on the look out signalled a sail. As we are always on the watch on account of the war, Captain and passengers immediately came up on deck. But after an interval of a few minutes we recognised that the vessel in sight was a merchantman; more than that, the ship, now exhibiting signals of distress, was making towards us.

"Do not expect any great catastrophe or dramatic climax. Dear Cécile, no, God has not willed that your kind heart should be saddened by the fate of those to whom you owe this letter. The ship, which was a French vessel from Havre, some days after sailing from New York had been becalmed three weeks, and was afraid of running short of water before reaching France. Our Captain had a dozen casks conveyed to the vessel, and I started writing to tell you once more, Cécile, that I love you, that I think of you every hour of the day and night, and that you are always near me, around me, within me.

"Do you know of what I am thinking, Cécile, as I see these two ships, the one sailing towards Pointe-à-Pître and the other towards Havre, hove to a hundred paces from each other? Supposing I stepped into one of the ship's boats passing from one to the other, I should be in Havre in a fortnight and the evening after at your feet!

"And to attain this, I have but to will it. I should see you again, Cécile. Do you know what that means? But it would be what men call madness, and would ruin all our chances.

"Good God! why have we not discovered some scheme for the future which need not sever me from you! I cannot but believe that, encouraged by a word, by a look from you, I must have succeeded in anything I undertook. You observe, Cécile, that under your protection I succeed even far from you.

"Again I must repeat, this extraordinary luck frightens me; I am afraid, Cécile, that we have left the earth and that we are already both on the road to Heaven.

"Forgive this melancholy foreboding; but man is so seldom born to happiness in this world that there is a misgiving in every joy which hinders that joy from being perfect felicity.

"Do you know how I pass my days, Cécile? In writing to you. I will bring you home a long journal where you will find recorded, hour by hour, all my thoughts and longings. Thus you will see my mind has never been drawn away a single moment from you.

"Then when night comes, as it is forbidden to burn lights in the ship, I go on deck, I watch closely the marvellous sight of the sun setting in the sea; I follow one after the other all the stars illumining the heavens, and the acknowledgment and adoration of God, strange to say, fills me with sadness, for I wonder whether God who has all these worlds to keep in motion, absorbed as He must be in contemplating this infinite universe, can have a thought for each human creature who raises his hands to Him? Can it be God is the God of Creation, yet blind chance the God of the creature?

"And what can the details of our wretched life matter to the Almighty and Supreme Majesty of God? What difference can the happy or unhappy accidents of our existence make to that Great Whole? What can it matter to this rich Harvester that a few ears of corn from one of His millions of fields, each called a world, should be broken by the hail or uprooted by the hurricane?

"My God! my God! if Thou didst not hear me when I speak to Thee, if Thou didst not listen to me when I supplicate Thee to bring me back to Cécile,—my Cécile, who awaits me!

"Dear Cécile, in what wild thoughts am I losing myself, when everyone of my letters ought to give you strength? Yet they can only be disheartening to you. Forgive me! forgive me!

"I have made a friend on board, the pilot. Poor fellow! he, too, has left at Gravesend a woman he loves. By his way of sighing as he looked at the sky, I recognised a brother in misfortune. Gradually I have become acquainted with him; he has spoken to me of his dear Jenny. And I, Cécile, forgive me, I spoke to him of you.

"So I have someone to whom I can say your name; someone to whom I can repeat that I love you, a heart that understands mine!

"Bah! the heart of a common sailor! Well! anyone who says that, is only deserving of contempt.

"The fine young fellow I talk with about you every night is called Samuel. I want you to know his name too.

"Remember him in your prayers, that he may see his Jenny again. I have promised him you shall.

"*Adieu*, Cécile, *adieu*, my own love! The ship's boat of the French vessel is going back. I shall give this letter to the mate, who promises on his honour to post it himself on arriving at Havre. *Adieu* once more, my dearly-loved Cécile; in twenty or twenty-five days, if the weather continues favourable, I shall be at Guadeloupe.

"For the thousandth time, *adieu*. I love you.

"YOUR HENRI.

"P.S.—Remember Samuel and Jenny in your prayers."

It is impossible to convey to our readers any sense of the deep impression this letter made on Cécile; this impression was all the greater from the letter having been quite unexpected. Cécile fell on her knees, her eyes filled with tears of gratitude. It was not only one prayer she said, there were names she murmured, and amongst them, as Henri had asked her, were those of Samuel and Jenny.

Then she set to work again at her wedding-gown, more courageous and confident than ever.

The days slipped by, following one another with monotonous regularity, without anything new happening. This unexpected letter, this blessed letter, had given Cécile hope of some happy chance like the first bringing her tidings of her lover; but as Henri had said, this occurrence was one of those incidents brought about by the merest luck, and there was no real likelihood of its being repeated.

Great events the while were happening in France. The Republic had been made an Empire, Bonaparte had become Napoleon; dismayed Europe had watched this amazing scene without raising a word of protest. Everything seemed to promise a long life to the infant dynasty; those who surrounded the newly elected were rich, brilliant, happy. When Cécile sometimes saw these dazzling cavaliers and imposing nobility, half of whom were reinstated, half freshly created, passing by under her windows, she often said with a sigh: 'That is just what Henri would be, that is just what I should be now, if we had let things follow their natural course.' But then she remembered the blood of the murdered Prince still wet in the trenches of Vincennes, and she answered herself with another sigh: 'Conscience is no deceiver, we have done right.'

Another month sped by. Then Cécile began to wait with more impatience; then a week, then four days passed, each day slower than the last; at last on the morning of the fifth the bell so long waited for and so well known rang. Cécile rushed to the door; it was a letter from Henri. We lay this letter before the reader.

"DEAR CÉCILE,

"First and foremost, our fortune has not forsaken us. I arrived at Guadeloupe after rather a long voyage, but only lengthened by want of wind and not by storms. I found my uncle, the most admirable and worthy of men, so glad to see me a recruit to what he calls his regiment

that he at once announced to me I might consider myself his heir.

"Now, by the way, let me tell you, dear Cécile, my uncle is enormously rich.

"Nevertheless as all good things have a bad side, the good fellow vowed he was so taken with me when he saw me that he would not let me leave him under any pretext whatever for two months. At first I felt inclined to declare that at such a price I would relinquish my claim to being his heir. But I reflected, dearest, that those two months were after all almost necessary for the sale of my little stock. Then the captain of the *Annabel* assured me that he required at least this interval to take a fresh cargo on board; so fate compelled me to submit. Picture me, then, kept at Pointe-à-Pître for at least two months. Happily a ship weighs anchor to-morrow morning and will bring you news of your poor exile, who loves you, Cécile, more than human words can tell, more than any finite thought can express.

"I have told everything to my uncle; at first he pulled a wry face when I acquainted him with the fact that you are not of a commercial family; but afterwards, when he realised how perfect you are, when I asserted you would love him a little because of your love for me, he consoled himself with the fact of your being beautiful, good and of the old aristocracy. I must inform you, Cécile, that this dear uncle, with all his mania for being a commercial man, is aristocracy personified; that the 'particule' escapes from his lips in spite of himself, and though he defrauds people of their title who have it, he gives the *de* to people who have no sort of right to it.

"What glorious and wonderful scenery, dear Cécile, and how delightful it would be if only I could admire it with you! how our imagination would lose itself in the expanse of this boundless sea! how our eyes would pierce this pure and transparent sky, dreaming they might thus attain to the discerning of God Himself.

"Unfortunately all this country is unknown to you, Cécile. You do not know these plants, flowers or fruits, and they do not know you. The other day I positively leapt with joy on discovering a full-blown rose; it brought back to me England, Hendon, your cottage, your garden and our grave.

"Memory, fearful and precious gift of Heaven! In an instant I had crossed 1,800 leagues of ocean and found myself sitting beside you in your garden-arbour, taking in every detail, from your lovely companions, the roses, lilies, tulips, anemones and violets, to your modest green lawn, on which hopped lively chaffinches, bright goldfinches and impudent sparrows, merrily hunting for the corn you scattered for them every day.

"Dear Cécile, what inspires me I do not know, but to-day my heart is exhilarated and hopeful; everything is so beautiful here, everything so vigorous,—both man and vegetation—that my ever haunting apprehensions are beginning to leave me, and my heart, so long oppressed, to glow and breathe freely.

"I have written many lines without telling you I love you, Cécile, but I fear to repeat it too often; if only I were saying it by word of mouth, the expression of my eyes and tone of my voice would plead so well for these perpetual repetitions that you would forgive me.

"My uncle is now come in and insists on taking me to see his plantations. I refuse. But he tells me they will one day be yours, and his argument persuades me to leave you for an hour or two. *Au revoir*, Cécile!

"If you ever come to live in Guadeloupe, do you know what we will do, Cécile? We will take a plan of the little cottage and garden, we will bring seeds of all your flowers; then in the middle of my uncle's settlement we will again create the little Paradise of Hendon.

"I spend my life in schemes, building castles in the air; then I pray God not to dispel my dreams, and to give them time to become realities.

"Luckily, I am nearly always alone, that is to say with you, Cécile; you walk beside me, I chat with you, I talk to you, I smile on you; sometimes the illusion is so great that I stretch out my hand to take yours; then you disappear like a mist, you vanish like a shadow. Once the ship that bears you this letter is gone, I shall most likely have no opportunity to write to you again for a month or six weeks; ships rarely sail from here at this season; then in two months it will be my turn to leave. Cécile, Cécile, can you imagine what it will be to me when I see the French coast, when I see Paris, when I see the Rue du Coq, when I ascend those five stories. when I ring at your door,

when I fall at your knees? How shall I bear such happiness without going mad?

"*Adieu*, Cécile, I would fain write to you for ever in this way, and why? To tell you and tell you again a hundred times the same things. *Adieu*, Cécile, I do not tell you to think of me: it is impossible I should be alone in loving as I love. *Adieu*, Cécile, pray, pray for my return, for it is on account of your prayers, I am certain, that I have had up till now such a constantly happy combination of events that--I must repeat to you for the hundredth time—I am terrified at so much happiness.

"*Adieu*, Cécile; I commission a beautiful golden cloud that floats yonder, dazzlingly splendid like an angel's chariot, to bear you my remembrances. It sails gently towards France across this translucent sky—skies which in our climates we have no conception of; and see, there it is widening out and taking the form of an eagle with outstretched wings that it may go the faster; thanks, beautiful cloud, thanks; greet her in passing, and tell her I love her.

"*Adieu*. I should never leave off writing to you, if I were to consult my own feelings. But what a terrible chance I should be running,—of making you dread in future the arrival of my interminable letters as much as on my side I long for a line, a word, a syllable from you.

"*Adieu* yet once more, and once more yet, I love you; *adieu*, *adieu*.

"Your Henri."

Long as this letter was, it seemed very short to Cécile; all day she read it over and over again, till at last she knew it by heart. Then, as she sat working at her beautiful wedding gown, the poor child would repeat in a low tone to herself her lover's sentences; then every now and again, as if these sentences were not enough in themselves, she would take out the letter again to brace herself more thoroughly by contact with the actual paper and the sight of his very handwriting.

All this time the robe was progressing; a wonderful garland of embroidery encircled it, and ran up the front of the skirt to the waist, where it divided into branches, some adorning the bodice and twining round the wrists, whilst others fancifully decorated the sleeves; the rest of the gown was plain.

It was already more than half finished, and as in all probability it would still be three or four months before Henri returned, the gown seemed likely to be entirely completed in good time.

Occasionally, the Marchioness asked for news of the traveller, but in the same tone as she would have enquired after a stranger.

The Marchioness had all along contemplated this marriage not from friendship for Henri, but from antipathy for Edward. She did not want to see her granddaughter the wife of a bank clerk, that was all.

Day after day went by. Cécile knew no vessel would leave Guadeloupe before six weeks; she remembered Henri had told her so. Thus she waited the given time patiently enough, but presently when the two months had passed, she began to be anxious. At last, one morning she received yet another letter, with the same excitement as in the case of its predecessors.

"I am coming, dear Cécile, I am coming. The ship that is taking this letter starts only eight days before me, and possibly, perhaps, as the *Annabel* has the reputation of being a fast sailer, I may arrive at the same time as my letter, or even before it.

"Do you understand, Cécile? I am coming; and I come rich. I have made a hundred per cent. on my modest stock; I am repaying Monsieur Duval the 50,000 francs, as I write. I shall still have 50,000 left, and my uncle has given me a consignment possibly worth 100,000 crowns. More than that, he has handed me 100,000 francs as a wedding present.

"My own darling Cécile, can you conceive how intoxicated I am with joy? I am perpetually asking the Captain, if it is really true his departure is fixed for the 8th of March; for it is the 8th of March we sail. He tells me 'yes,' and that his departure is most certainly fixed for that date, unless the winds become contrary. They are blowing now with absolute steadiness; so nothing, I hope, should delay us.

"It is really and indeed true then that I shall soon see my own beloved Cécile, my adored angel! It is true then that all my fears were unfounded! It is true then that God's goodness never tires, and that the good fortune which has accompanied me so far was only the presage of good

fortune which should accompany me home to France itself.

"God, Thou art good, Thou art great, Thou art merciful; and I thank Thee.

"But my Cécile's prayers and watchings, her patience and goodness, do not they avail for something too?

"Cécile, I have a companion in my gladness and pleasure; Samuel, poor Samuel, the helmsman, you remember, I spoke of; poor fellow, he needed a few hundred francs, as we needed a few thousand to be happy. Well, with a thousand crowns I have made the man happy? I gave him these thousand crowns in your name, Cécile. On his return, he will marry Jenny, and if his first child is a boy, he will call him Henry; if it is a girl, he will call her Cécile. In these circumstances, poor Samuel is now as wild as I am to get off.

"Eight days! what a dreadful time, eight days! eight days to wait without coming any nearer to you. At least, in a ship or carriage, whether carried onwards by the wings of the wind or drawn by a good team of horses, you feel you are moving, you are progressing, you are drawing nearer; there is comfort in the mere fact of movement. Our mother lulls us when we are small little children, hope performs the same office when we are grown up. Really I think that I would rather be a fortnight longer at sea, if I could start this very moment.

"Cécile, I almost hesitate to send you this letter. If you love me as I love you, which I fear is impossible, and our ship through a contrary wind or by any accident is delayed a week, a fortnight, a month, what torture will your life become, kept thus in continual suspense! Oh! that I should have to wait for you, Cécile; to know that you are going to meet me, and that I cannot hasten to meet you, or shorten the distance dividing us by any effort of my own. To learn you were on your way to join me, and to be incapable of hastening the day of our meeting, would be horrible, atrocious!—worse far than having no news of you at all. Yet I cannot prevent myself crying out: 'I am coming Cécile, I am coming, expect me!'

"Yes, expect me, adored Cécile; I come, I hasten; expect me, for see here I am, beside you, at your feet. Tell me you love me, Cécile, I love you so much!

"Again *adieu*, Cécile; we sail in eight days. *Au revoir*, Cécile, *au revoir*. Expect me at any moment. Once more, Cécile, I am coming, coming!

"YOUR HENRI.'

CHAPTER XXI

THE WEDDING GOWN

THE effect of such a letter on Cécile may be imagined. She fell on her knees before the crucifix; then her prayer finished, her thanksgiving said, she ran with the good news to the Marchioness. But the Marchioness was engaged in reading a new romance, the fictitious loves of which interested her far more than the real love affair of her granddaughter; none the less, as she kissed her forehead, she sincerely complimented Cécile.

"Well, child," she said to her, "you quite see now that your poor mother had no common sense when she contemplated an alliance with the Duvals, and that I, and I only, was right. Therefore, my child, never forget it is to me you owe your happiness."

Cécile went back to her room with an aching heart. This reproach directed against her mother at a moment when she was so happy jarred her to the depths of her soul. She had fallen on her knees at first to thank God; she knelt a second time to ask her mother's forgiveness.

Then she read and re-read his letter ten times over; this done, she set herself again to her wedding gown.

One might have thought the poor child had calculated the embroidery to time exactly with his return, and that she would simultaneously finish the gown and see Henri again; for there remained just about eight days' work to do. Nearly nine months would have elapsed between the first and the last flower of this wonderful design.

But with how much heartfelt delight and glad happiness she worked now! How the flowers seemed to live under her fingers! How as children of love they seemed to be rivals of the children of

spring! This embroidery, which had at first shared her sorrow, was now, as it neared completion, the confidant of her happiness.

Oh! yes, Henri had truly said the hours would seem long to poor Cécile, but all the same they passed; evening came, then night, but Cécile could scarcely sleep.

Every carriage that drove past made her start. Had not Henri written that the *Annabel* was a fast sailer and that he might, perhaps, arrive at the same time as his letter? But perhaps this was to expect too much. A delay might occur as Henri had foreseen. She must wait a week at least; it was unreasonable to hope too much. Cécile told herself over and over again that it was madness to hope, still she did hope. At every sound in the house she ran to the stairs; at every sound in the street she darted to the window.

The next day passed in much the same way, then the third, then the following days; but the eighth day, which she had fixed in her own mind as the limit, was a veritable day of torture. From two o'clock till night Cécile stayed at her window, her eyes fastened on the corner of the Rue Saint-Honoré, thinking every moment to see the carriage that was bringing Henri back to her appear, as she had seen the carriage that took him away disappear.

Then by one of those hidden mysteries which prove that time has no existence, and is only a futile word, all the interval she had passed waiting for Henri disappeared and was not; it seemed to her that it was only the day before that he had left her, and that during the night she had dreamed this long voyage.

Night came, the darkness deepened. As it was fine, however, Cécile spent the night at her window. At the first rays of morning, worn to death with fatigue, her heart aching, ready to burst into tears, she threw herself on her bed.

Her sleep was short and disturbed, every moment she woke with a start thinking she heard the sound of a bell. That day passed in the same anxiety as the day before.

Then she endeavoured to reason with her affection, to persuade herself that the two ships could not follow each other with such methodical regularity; the *Annabel* might have been delayed at the moment of its departure for several days, perhaps for a week; one of those calms so frequent in the tropics might have prevented her sailing. She set herself three more days during which she was not to expect him; but what should she do during those three days?

Poor Cécile took up her wedding gown again and began to work a fresh bouquet in each corner of the embroidery.

The three days crept by, then four more, then a week; the four bouquets were finished.

Henri's probable return was a fortnight overdue; Cécile was no longer merely impatient, she was alarmed.

Then she was a prey to all the imaginings a troubled mind conjures up; the mighty ocean whose low mutterings had so affected her at Boulogne, the roaring ocean with its changes and chances, its tempests, its hurricanes,—what had it done with the *Annabel* and Henri?

Cécile's days were now torture to her, from anxiety and hope deferred, but her nights had become still more terrible than her days. The one thought that was constantly with her, but which, waking, her reason combated, at night assumed the proportions of a spectre, and, no longer restrained by her will, haunted her sleep with ghastly persistency. She was hardly asleep before her mother and presently Henri appeared before her; then began a whole mad drama of unheard-of sufferings which ended in a panic-stricken waking amid sobs and tears.

Henri was more than a month late.

To distract her thoughts, Cécile turned to her wedding-gown; she resolved to powder the rest of the frock with bouquets like those she had embroidered at the four corners.

And now another idea which dawned on her mind gave her further torment. The Marchioness lived as ever with reckless selfishness. One day Cécile opened the desk where all the money her grandmother and she possessed was kept; there only remained 1,500 francs.

She hastened to the Marchioness and told her with all possible precaution the cause of her trouble.

"Well," the Marchioness said to her, "by the time these 1,500 francs are spent, that is to say in three or four months, will not Henri have come back?

Cécile opened her lips to answer:

"Yes, but if he has not . . . ?"

The words died on her lips; who was she to doubt thus the goodness of God? if she doubted, it seemed to her she deserved her fate. She returned to her room somewhat reassured by her grandmother's positiveness.

Indeed why should Henri not return? The delay was quite insufficient so far to justify despair. Henri was a few weeks late, that was all. What he had feared might have happened, no doubt the *Annabel* had not set sail on the appointed day. Henri was on the way, perhaps he was reaching England, perhaps he was entering France. Henri would arrive before this new work she had undertaken could be finished, and Cécile, full of momentary courage and of short-lived hope, set herself once more to her work, and the new embroideries sprang up under her needle as if under a fairy's fingers.

Three months passed thus. All the bouquets were finished; the dress was astonishingly beautiful. Those who saw it said that it was too beautiful for mortal woman to wear, and was worthy of being offered to Our Lady of Liesse, of Loretto or of Mount Carmel.

Cécile began to cover it with flowers in between the larger bouquets.

One morning, Mademoiselle Aspasie came into the girl's room, which was quite an extraordinary event.

"What do you want, Aspasie?" exclaimed Cécile. "Has anything happened to grandmamma?"

"No, thank Heaven, Mademoiselle; but there is no more money in the desk, and I came to ask Mademoiselle where we must go to get some?"

A cold perspiration broke out on Cécile's forehead. The hour she had dreaded was come.

"Very well," she said, "I will speak about it to the Marchioness."

Cécile entered her grandmother's room.

"Grandmamma," she said, "what I foresaw has happened."

"What, darling?" asked the Marchioness.

"Our little fortune is spent, and Henri has not returned."

"Oh! he will come back, child; he will come back."

"But while we are waiting for him, Grandmamma, what is to be done?"

The Marchioness looked at her hand. She had an oval medallion set with diamonds on her little finger.

"Ah!" she sighed, "it grieves me to part with this ring; but after all, since it must be so . . ."

"Grandmamma," said Cécile, "you need only part with the diamonds, which you can replace with a rim of gold; you can still keep the ring."

The Marchioness sighed a second time, showing that at least she valued the diamonds as much as the medallion, and gave the ring to Cécile.

The girl would not trust anyone with the selling of the jewel the Marchioness had given her. It was to publish her approaching beggary to whomever she trusted, and it was a secret she cared least of all to impart to Mademoiselle Aspasie. So Cécile herself went to a jeweller and brought back 800 francs, the price at which the mounting was valued by the dealer. He was ordered at the same time to replace the circlet of diamonds by a circlet of gold.

Henceforth Cécile was aware that, besides the sorrow of not seeing Henri's return, another calamity threatened; so, powerless against the former, she wished to provide beforehand against the latter. On the third day, when she went to fetch the Marchioness's ring, she took her designs of embroidery, and as the jeweller had won her confidence by his honest face, she showed him her sketches, asking him if he did not know some designer in embroidery with whom she could turn her talent to advantage. The jeweller called his wife, who greatly admired the designs and promised to speak for her to a dealer. Three days after, Cécile had found a means of livelihood; she could make from six to eight francs a day.

After this the poor girl, so far relieved in her mind, let her thoughts revert wholly to Henri. The days followed one another relentlessly, and still no news came of Henri; he was nearly four months overdue. Cécile did not smile any more, nor did she weep any more, she seemed to be growing more and more cold and impassive; her grief was all concentrated and gathered up about her heart. She still trembled sometimes if there came a ring at the hour the postman had been used to call; but by the sound of the bell she recognised it was not he, and fell back in the chair from which she had half risen. Her perpetual occupation, an occupation that had become almost mechanical, was the dress; the material was entirely

covered with embroidery. Cécile daily filled up another empty space, daily another flower sprang up under her wonderful needle; yet three more months passed and no news came to cause joy or tears to the poor child.

During these three months the money raised by the sale of the Marchioness's ring was exhausted, but thanks to the means Cécile had provided, no one had noticed the fact. Every week the girl took her designs to the dealer and every week he handed her over from forty to fifty francs. This sum sufficed for their simple housekeeping with extreme carefulness, and Cécile's new work still left her time for the embroidery. Two or three hours every day she continued to work at her robe, for it seemed to her that as long as she could work at it, she still allied herself by something to the past, and that all hope of seeing Henri again was not absolutely lost.

The hour at last had come when any further adornment of the gown was impossible; the tiniest spaces were filled up: Cécile's wedding gown was finished.

One morning she was holding it across her knees, sadly shaking her head and looking in vain for a place where she could work in some tiny flower, some dainty foliage, when suddenly the bell rang. Cécile sprang from her chair, she had recognised the postman's ring.

She hurried to the door and found she was right. The man held a letter in his hand, but it was not in Henri's handwriting; it was a great square letter with a government seal. Trembling, Cécile took the letter.

"What is it?" she asked in an almost suffocated voice.

"I do not know, Mademoiselle," answered the postman; "I only know that they called us together to question us on behalf of the Prefect of Police, if we knew a young lady called Cécile de Marsilly. I replied that some time ago I had taken several letters to a person of that name who lived at No. 5 Rue du Coq-Saint-Honoré. They made a note of what I said, and this morning my chief gave me this letter, bidding me take it to you; it comes from the Ministry of Marine."

"Oh God! God!" murmured Cécile, "what is the meaning of it?"

"I hope it may be good news, Mademoiselle," said the postman, turning to go.

"Alas!" said Cécile shaking her head, "I only expect good news in one handwriting, and this is different."

The postman opened the door to leave.

"Wait for me to pay you," said Cécile.

"No, thank you, Mademoiselle," answered the postman; "the letter is franked."

And he went away. Cécile returned to her room.

She held the letter in her hand, she was afraid to open it. At last she broke the seal and read as follows:—

"On board the merchant-brig *Annabel*, commanded by Captain John Dickins.

"To-day, March 28, 1805, at three o'clock in the afternoon when off the Azores in 32° latitude and 42° longitude.

"The undersigned Edward Thomson, mate of the brig *Annabel*, being on watch on board the said vessel, was informed by the helmsman, Samuel, that Viscount Charles Henri de Sennones, entered in the register of passengers as Number 9, had just died.

"We proceeded to cabin number 5, accompanied by the beforenamed Samuel and Mr. William Smith, medical student, where we found a corpse we identified without the smallest hesitation as that of Viscount Henri de Sennones.

"The witness Samuel then stated that at five minutes to three, Viscount Charles Henri de Sennones had expired in his arms; that to satisfy himself of his death he had then passed a mirror over the mouth; but seeing the glass remained clear and respiration had evidently ceased, he had no doubt as to the death, and had come to inform us of the occurrence.

"An autopsy was made by Mr. William Smith, medical student, a passenger on board, who had attended the sick man."

He stated as follows:—

"We solemnly declare that Viscount Charles Henri de Sennones died of yellow fever, having doubtless contracted the disease before leaving Guadeloupe; that three days ago the first symptoms showed themselves, and that the disease made such terrible progress that in spite of all medical aid he died to-day at five minutes to three.

"In attestation of which we have drawn up this certificate, which, after being duly read, has been signed by us, by the doctor in attendance on the defunct, and by the witness above mentioned.

"On board ship, at sea, the day, month and year as above.

"Signed, John Dickins, master; Edward Thomson, mate; William Smith, medical student; the helmsman, Samuel, being unable to write, made his mark, thus X."

Cécile read the letter to the end, then uttered a wild scream and fainted.

CHAPTER XXII

MISFORTUNES NEVER COME SINGLY

WHEN Cécile came to herself, she found Mademoiselle Aspasie by her side, doing what she could to revive her. The poor child's scream had been heard in the Marchioness's room, who had sent her maid to enquire what had happened.

A moment later, seeing that Mademoiselle Aspasie did not return, the Marchioness had followed in person.

In spite of the little sympathy between the two women, Cécile flung herself into her grandmother's arms, showing her the awful certificate, the mere reading of which at one stroke annihilated all her illusions, all her hopes.

This certificate was the apparition of death itself; death, icy, passionless, implacable; of death bereft of all the loving care God's mercy or friends' solicitude usually surrounds it with.

Cécile could only repeat to herself again and again: "Dead! dead! dead!"

The Marchioness was utterly crushed; then and there she was confronted by the appalling future before her and her granddaughter involved in this catastrophe.

All her expectations of a quiet life, of comfort and luxury, rested on Henri de Sennones. The Marchioness had based her calculations on the letter he had written a week before leaving Guadeloupe, in which he gave his fiancée an account of his little fortune. Now it was all over; Henri was dead, the diamonds sold, the resources of the unhappy family exhausted, and nothing remained, absolutely nothing,—more especially in the Marchioness's opinion, for she was ignorant of the fact that for three or four months already they had all lived on Cécile's labour.

Mademoiselle Aspasie alone had observed it, for two or three times already she had notified to the Marchioness her wish to retire to the country, on the ground that her health was impaired and necessitated rest.

The Marchioness's distress was therefore far greater than Cécile had foreseen, for she could not fathom all her grandmother's reasons for her extreme anxiety.

In a way it was beneficial for the poor child, for seeing her grandmother stagger, she pulled herself together to help her. The Marchioness had come from her bed in a dressing-gown; they led her back to her room, and she again got into bed.

Cécile could not be satisfied, however, with the bare announcement of her lover's death; she wanted details, she wanted to know how this letter had come to hand. In short, the poor child, like all suddenly and grievously stricken people, still felt in doubt, and wished to verify her misfortune.

The letter bore the seal of the Ministry of Marine. Naturally enough, it occurred to her to apply to the office in question for the intelligence she desired.

She confided her grandmother to the care of Mademoiselle Aspasie, put a veil on her hat, took the fatal letter and placed it again in its envelope; she then went downstairs and, getting into a cab, bade the man drive her to the office of the Ministry of Marine.

On arriving at the door, she showed her letter to the porter and enquired from what department it came. When he told her it came from the secretarial office, she proceeded thither, and requested to speak to the clerk who had written it.

He had not yet come; so she waited for him.

At last he came. Strange to say, since she had recovered consciousness, Cécile had not shed a tear.

The clerk explained to her that the certificate had come from Plymouth, where on her return from Guadeloupe the *Annabel* had put in, and that it was accompanied merely by the following statement:—

"Whereas the Viscount Charles Henri

de Sennones died on board the *Annabel* on the 28th March, 1805, having no known relations in England at this present time, we hereby request the French Government to notify his death to Mademoiselle Cécile de Marsilly, of whom he had often spoken to the helmsman Samuel as his future wife. The said Cécile de Marsilly is probably resident in France.

"Herewith the certificate of his death."

Cécile listened to these particulars with dry eyes but with a broken heart; it seemed as if the source of her tears was dried up, or rather as if her tears flowed inwardly.

She only asked if they could tell her where the body had been taken.

The clerk replied that when a passenger or sailor died on board ship, it was not customary to bring the body home, but to bury it at sea, by casting it overboard.

Whereupon Cécile saw again as by a flash of lightning the great storm-tost, roaring Ocean which had bathed her feet the day she walked leaning on Henri's arm at Boulogne.

She thanked the clerk for his information and went out.

Everything was now clear to Cécile, the long time which had elapsed since Henri's death, and which she had spent in waiting for him, had been lost in finding out where she lived; moreover these enquiries had been carried out in the perfunctory way governments generally do carry out enquiries they are uninterested in. They had published the fact in the papers, but Cécile never read the papers; at last they had one day bethought them of calling together the postmen and consulting them. Then it had occurred to one of these worthy functionaries that eighteen months previously he had carried letters to a young lady called Cécile de Marsilly living at No. 5, Rue du Coq.

Cécile went home, ascended the five stories, and was going to ring, but she saw the door was open, and, supposing Mademoiselle Aspasie had gone to visit some neighbour, she left it as she had found it.

Her first thought was to see after the Marchioness, whom she found in bed and asleep, her head supported by her two pillows.

Cécile went into her own room, and straight to the desk which held her treasures—Henri's letters.

Amongst these letters she looked for the one he had written from Boulogne, and she again read these lines:—

"Beheld by a passionate heart, how sublime and beautiful is the sea! How it harmonises with all lofty thoughts! how it lifts one from earth to heaven! how it makes one understand the pettiness of man and the majesty of God!

"I think I could have stayed for ever on this shore where we have wandered together, and where it seems to me by careful search I might even yet find the traces of your footsteps. My heart swells with the scene before me. I no longer love you with the love of men, I love you as at the return of Spring the flowers love the sun; as during the beautiful summer nights the sea loves the firmament; as from all time the earth loves God.

"Oh! Cécile, God forgive me if it is impious pride, but in this hour I defy Fate itself to separate us, even by death. When everything mingles and blends in nature; perfumes with perfumes, clouds with clouds, life with life, why should death too not mingle with death, and since everything that mingles fructifies, why should death—one of the conditions of nature, one of the links of eternity, one of the landmarks of the Infinite — why should death alone be sterile? God would not have created death, if it were to be only an engine of destruction for Him, and if, in severing bodies, it were not bound to unite souls.

"Therefore, Cécile, therefore death itself shall not be able to separate us; for scripture says Christ has vanquished death.

"Therefore *au revoir*, Cécile, and no more *adieu*, *au revoir* possibly in this world, and certainly in that other."

"Yes, yes, poor Henri," murmured Cécile, "yes, you were right; yes, it is surely *au revoir!*"

Just then Cécile heard a scream in the Marchioness's room.

She ran and knocked against Mademoiselle Aspasie in the corridor, who white and speechless was running to her.

"What is it? what has happened?" cried Cécile.

As the other did not answer, she rushed to her grandmother's room.

The Marchioness's head had slipped from the pillows and fallen on the bolster, whilst her arm was hanging out of bed.

"Grandmamma!" cried Cécile, seizing her hand. . . "Grandmamma!"

The Marchioness's hand was cold.

Cécile took her grandmother's head in her arms and laid it gently on the pillow, she embraced her several times and implored her to answer her; but it was in vain, the Marchioness was as silent as she was cold; the Marchioness was dead.

While Mademoiselle Aspasie had been out for a moment, she had been stricken with instantaneously fatal apoplexy.

It was all over when Cécile had come in and seen her.

Cécile had thought she was asleep; she was really dead.

But dead without pain or struggle, without concerning herself a whit more about death than she had concerned herself about life; dead at the moment when for the first time life was likely to become difficult and perhaps very bitter.

It is strange how when two great sorrows strike a person simultaneously, one protects the heart against the other. One of these two griefs alone would have crushed Cécile; she showed a bold front against the two combined.

Perhaps Henri's death had fired her with a fatal idea of which her grandmother's death hastened the fulfilment.

At sight of the dead Marchioness, Mademoiselle Aspasie declared that her grief was so great she could not stay a moment longer in the house.

Cécile rose up from the foot of her grandmother's bed, where she was praying, made out what was owing to Mademoiselle Aspasie and paid her, at the same time thanking her for what no money could repay, that is the care she had taken of the Marchioness.

Then the young girl called the worthy woman who looked after her housekeeping, and begged her in conjunction with the landlady to take all necessary steps with regard to the funeral. As Cécile was much loved in the house, where however she never spoke to anyone, but where she was considered a model of filial love and goodness, everyone was eager to do anything they could for her.

Then Cécile went back to her room and opened a drawer, from which she drew out her wedding-dress.

At sight of it her tears, so long restrained, poured forth—and none too soon, for else her heart would have burst.

When she had sobbed a long while over the beautiful gown on her knees, when she had kissed each bouquet, each flower, each bit of ornamental foliage, when looking heavenwards she had raised it in her arms and cried: "Henri, Henri," she again threw a veil over her head and went out.

Mademoiselle Aspasie's claim had quite exhausted Cécile's last resources. To bury her grandmother and carry out the idea she had conceived, nothing remained to her but to sell her wedding-gown.

She ran to the embroidery-seller who had bought her designs and opened out before him her miracle of labour, taste and patience, over which she had stooped for nearly three years; but at the first glance the dealer had said he could not afford to give her what it was worth. All he could do was to furnish her with some addresses.

That very day Cécile set out and hunted here and there to find a purchaser, but she was unsuccessful.

The next day was devoted to the burial of the Marchioness. The landlady advanced money for the expenses of the service and the interment. For it was generally believed that, without being rich, the Marchioness had means.

The day after, Cécile renewed her search. We know already how, after meeting with many fresh refusals, the poor child had called finally at Fernande's, and how the Prince, moved by the poor girl's tears and anxious to gratify Fernande's whims, had bought the wonderful gown and sent her the price that very day.

The instant she received the three thousand francs, Cécile had summoned the landlady, repaid her the money she had advanced, and settled her account, telling her she was leaving the following day.

But in spite of every urgency, she firmly declined to tell her where she was going.

On the morrow, the poor girl did in fact leave the house, taking her secret with her.

For a while those who had known Cécile were concerned at her disappearance and often talked of her. But little by little her name came up less frequently; and, at last, as she never returned, she was forgotten altogether.

CONCLUSION

THREE months after the events we have related, a well-found merchant-brig was making for the Antilles, trying to catch the trade-winds which blow with such regularity in the tropics.

This brig was none other than our old friend the *Annabel*.

It was fourteen days since she had left London, where she had taken in a cargo for Guadeloupe, when towards five o'clock in the afternoon, the look-out hailed the deck with a cry of "Land ho!" —an announcement which always stirs both passengers and crew with a thrill of excitement.

As the cry echoed to the remotest corners of the ship, the passengers one and all came up on deck.

Amongst them was a girl of nineteen or twenty.

She approached the helmsman, who on seeing her politely touched his cap.

"Did I not hear the cry of 'Land ho!' Samuel?" she asked him.

"Yes, Mademoiselle Cécile," he replied.

"What land is it?"

"The Azores!"

"At last!" said the girl. . . . And a melancholy smile flitted over her lips; then bringing back her gaze which had wandered for a moment into the distance to the man's face, she continued: "You promised to point me out the spot where Monsieur Henri's body was cast into the sea."

"Yes, Mademoiselle, and when the time comes, I will keep my word."

"Are we still very far away from the place?"

"About forty miles."

"Then we shall pass it in four hours?"

"The very spot, Mademoiselle, you might think the ship knew her way and would not wander ten paces from it."

"You are positive you cannot be mistaken?"

"Oh! no, Mademoiselle; I noticed the exact angle the first island made with the second, and as the night is fine and clear, you may be perfectly satisfied I cannot fail to know the place."

"Very well, Samuel: you will call me half an hour before we get there?"

"Yes! I promise you I will," answered the sailor.

The girl, bending her head in acknowledgment, went down the companion-way, entered her cabin, which was No. 5, and shut herself in.

An hour after she had left the deck the dinner-bell rang; all the passengers went down in turns to the saloon, but Cécile did not show herself. And as she rarely came to table, nobody noticed her absence; the captain, however, sent to ask her if she would like her dinner taken to her cabin, and her answer was she did not want anything to eat.

The vessel pursued her course with the wind astern, slipping along at nearly ten knots an hour, so that she rapidly drew up to the Azores. The passengers had come on deck again and were enjoying the freshness of the evening, their eyes fastened on the archipelago of the islands still four or five leagues away athwart the bow. The captain, John Dickins, and the mate, Thomson, were chatting together, and the helmsman, Samuel, stood lost in thought. The two officers looked at him from time to time; presently, as they talked, they came forward and stopped in front of him.

"Samuel," said the captain, "it is she, is it not?"

"The lady whom Monsieur Henri was always speaking of?"

"Yes, and whom he called Cécile."

"It is, Captain."

"You hear, Thomson?" said the Captain, "it is she, as I guessed."

"And what is she going to do at Guadeloupe?"

"Why!" said Samuel, "Monsieur Henri had an uncle there, a millionaire; she is probably going to him."

And the two officers walked off together, continuing the conversation they had interrupted to question Samuel.

Night was closing in; tea was brought on deck, and Cécile was asked if she would come up; but she refused, as she had done at dinner-time, saying she did not require anything.

Night came with the suddenness usual in these latitudes; at eight o'clock it was quite dark; at nine everyone went below, leaving no one on deck except the steersman and the mate. The brig was going before the wind under full sail.

At half-past nine the moon rose behind the Azores, lighting up the night as lightly as the sun lightens one of our foggy northern days; the islands stood out clear against the horizon.

They were nearing the place where Henri's body had been thrown into the sea. Faithful to his word, Samuel summoned Cécile.

She came up at once; she had changed her gown, and was dressed in white and wore a veil like a bride's.

She took a deck chair and came and sat down beside the helmsman. Samuel looked at her wonderingly; the white frock, the needlessly elaborate toilette, on which however it was plain the girl had lavished every care, struck the worthy man as something strange and out of the common.

"We are getting near, Samuel?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle, and in half-an-hour we shall be there."

"And you will know the exact place?"

"Oh! I can answer for that; I took the position with the Captain's instruments."

"I have never asked you for any particulars about his last moments, Samuel; but now, this evening, I want to know how he died."

"Why always talk about things that hurt you, Mademoiselle Cécile? By-and-bye you will hate me."

"If Jenny were dead, Samuel, and dead far away from you, would you not want to know the particulars of her death, and wouldn't you be very grateful to anyone who gave them you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, Mademoiselle; yes, indeed, I think it would be a great consolation to me."

"You understand, then, Samuel, that it would be cruel of you not to do what I ask."

"And I do not refuse, Mademoiselle; I did love poor Monsieur Henri so much! And it was only right I should, for not only was he a kind friend and a fine fellow, but on leaving Guadeloupe he gave me 3,000 francs which I needed to marry Jenny; so if I am happy now, it is to him I owe it."

"Poor Henri," murmured Cécile, "he was so good and generous."

"So when Mr. Smith, the medical student, came to tell me he was ill, I put a sailor in my place and went down at once to see the poor fellow! During the day he had only felt a little out of sorts, at night he was in a fever, and when I went down he was already delirious; but he knew me in the midst of his delirium, and his one thought, the constant idea running through all his ravings, was you, Mademoiselle, you alone."

"My God! my God!" murmured Cécile, tears coming to her relief.

"Yes, and then he talked of a little house in England, of flowers in a garden, of Boulogne, of a wedding-gown, then of a shroud that you were embroidering to wrap you both in."

"Alas!" said Cécile, "it was only too true."

"At once I saw he was lost; I have seen so many pass away of the same disease . . . Yellow fever never forgives. No one would look after him, for fear of infection; you would have thought he had the plague, poor fellow! 'Well, well,' I said to myself, 'Samuel, my boy, it is in times of danger a man discovers his friends; you must make this your business.' I went and found the Captain and said to him: 'Captain, you must put someone in my place at the helm; my post just now is at Monsieur Henri's bedside; and I shall stay there till he dies, poor boy!'"

"You good, kind Samuel!" cried Cécile, taking in hers one of the sailor's huge hands, while the other still clung to the helm.

"The Captain made a few difficulties, because you know the yellow fever is contagious, and he was afraid on my account. He had confidence in me as a helmsman; but I said to him: 'Bah! Captain, we have passed the tropics, a child with its eyes blindfolded could guide you now to Plymouth; only if I catch the thing and die in my turn, you will find in my bag 3,000 francs, which Monsieur Henri gave me: you will give half to my old mother, and the other half to Jenny.'—'Very well, my lad,' he said, 'go; you think you are doing what is right; be sure there is a good God over us all.'"

Cécile sighed as she looked at the sky.

"I had not left him half-an-hour, and yet the disease had made terrible progress. This time he hardly knew me; he was in a high fever! every second he said: 'I breathe fire; why do they give me fire to breathe?' and then asked for something to drink. Then he talked of you, always of you, Mademoiselle. It was Cécile here, Cécile there. He said they wanted to separate you from each other, but that you were his wife, and would manage to rejoin him wherever he might be."

"He was right, Samuel," murmured Cécile.

"So the night passed in this way, he burning with fever, I for ever talking to him of you to console him; for I distinctly saw that though he did not know me, every time I uttered your name he trembled. Then he asked for pen, ink, paper; he wanted to write to you no doubt. To please him, I gave him a pencil, but all he could do was to write the first three letters of your name. Then he pushed away pencil and paper, crying out: 'Fire! fire! you have given me fire.'"

"He suffered very much, then?" asked Cécile.

"Oh, one never knows," answered Samuel; "there are those who say, when reason is no longer there, a man ceases to suffer, that pain is only felt when judgment is there to appreciate it; but I don't believe it myself. If it were so, dumb animals which have no judgment would never suffer. However, be this as it may, the whole night passed as I have described. The doctor came every hour; he bled him, he applied mustard plasters, but shook his head at everything he did; it was plain he was doing his professional duty to satisfy his conscience, but that he expected nothing from it. On the third day, indeed, I began to despair; the fever was going, but the life with it. When he had the fever, I had the greatest difficulty in preventing him from rising to go and meet you; when the fever was over, I could have kept him in his bed with a touch of my little finger. Oh! you understand, Mademoiselle Cécile, it was not that he was so weak, it was not that I was strong, it was that death was there."

"My God! my God! forgive me," said Cécile.

Samuel thought he had not heard rightly and went on:

"The weakness only increased. He still had two or three rallies, so that I almost thought life was coming back to him, but, far from it, the soul was bidding farewell to the body and at five minutes to three o'clock, Mademoiselle—I see him still as I see you—he rose up, looked round him with staring eyes, pronounced your name and fell back on his bed. He was dead."

"Then, and then, Samuel?"

"Why! then, you know, Mademoiselle, there is not much standing on ceremony aboard ship,—particularly when the death has been from a contagious disease. I passed a mirror over the mouth of the poor boy; it was good-bye, he had ceased to breathe. Then I went to tell the captain: 'It is all over, he is dead!'"

"My God! my God!" Cécile murmured a second time, "Thou wilt forgive me, Thou wilt surely forgive me?"

"'Well!' the Captain said to me, 'as he's dead, Samuel, my lad, you must come with me now to draw up the certificate, after which you can go back to your post?' 'By your leave, Captain,' I replied, "but I have not done yet. Poor Monsieur Henri! And who is going to sew him up in his hammock? We must not throw him into the sea like a dog, because he is only a passenger; that wouldn't be fair.' 'You are right,' said the Captain, 'but make haste.' I answered with a nod, and set to work, for everybody on board was anxious to get rid of the poor corpse. It was a short and simple business; and before long I went to tell the Captain Monsieur Henri was wrapped in his shroud. 'Have you put a shot at his feet?' asked the Captain. 'Two, Captain, two,' I replied; 'we mustn't be stingy with our friends.' 'Aye, aye!' said the Captain, 'then tell them to bring the body on deck.' I took him in my arms, I carried him, he was placed on a plank. The Captain, who is an Irishman, and so a Catholic, repeated a few prayers, then they tilted the plank, the corpse slid down it, plunged into the sea,—and all was over."

"Thank you, my good Samuel, thank you," said Cécile; "but we must be approaching the place where you threw him into the sea?"

"Indeed, Mademoiselle, we are close to it; in five minutes, when we see the great palm tree on the island nearest us in a line with the bowsprit, we shall be there."

"And where did they throw his body from, Samuel?"

"From the port side. Stay," he added, "you cannot see the place from there,—the main-sail hides it from us,—between the companion-ladder and the mizzen-shrouds."

"Very well," said Cécile.

And the girl went forward to the place he had pointed out and disappeared behind the main-sail.

"Poor Mademoiselle Cécile!" murmured Samuel.

"When we are exactly at the spot, Samuel, mind you tell me."

"Surely, Mademoiselle."

Samuel stooped to look under the edge of the sail, and saw Cécile on her knees, praying.

Five minutes passed, during which the helmsman kept his eyes steadily fixed on the great palm. When the tree was exactly in a line with the bowsprit, he cried:

"This is the spot."

"I am coming, Henri," a voice answered.

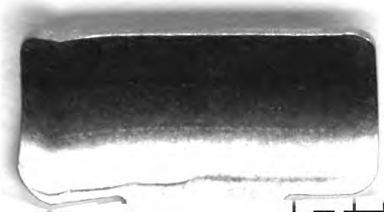
The splash of a heavy body falling in the water was heard.

"Overboard! man overboard!" bawled the mate, who was taking the watch.

Samuel made one bound from the helm to the ship's side. He saw something white swirling round and round in the vessel's wake; then the faintly discerned patch on the water grew more and more dim and cloudlike, till it finally sank and disappeared.

"Ah! and so that was why she prayed God to forgive her!" Samuel said to himself, as he went back to the helm.

The *Annabel* forged ahead again, and in eighteen days arrived safely at Pointe-à-Pitre.

THE END

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