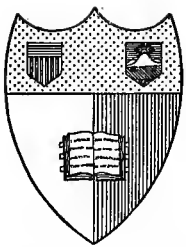
LA VEUVE

FEUILLET



LA VEUVE

(THE WIDOW)

BY OCTAVE FEUILLET

(MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY)

AND

THE MOTHER OF A MARCHIONESS

BY EDMUND ABOUT

TRANSLATED BY

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LA VEUVE.

CHAPTER I.

In the year 1868 Ensign Robert de La Pave, a young naval officer of very brilliant prospects, was made lieutenant of his vessel. At almost the same time. Maurice Du Pas-Devant de Frèmeuse, his companion and friend from childhood, was promoted to the rank of captain of artillery in the army. The nature of their callings had often been the cause of separations between these two young men, but without loosening the bonds of their intimacy in the least. They were both honorable in the highest degree; in every other respect they were entirely different, and got along all the better on that account all proverbs to the contrary notwithstanding. Robert de La Pave, after having been a violent, turbulent and generous child, grew up into an energetic, passionate and enthusiastic man. In appearance he was

brown, squarely built and vigorous and had flashing black eyes. One would have thought that this robust young sailor could have broken de Frémeuse in two over his knee, for the latter young man had the form and build of a girl; such a feat, however, might have proved more difficult than it appeared, for beneath the frail exterior of the young captain of artillery were hidden nerves of steel and the heart of a lion.

Maurice de Frémeuse had joined the artillery from choice as soon as he had finished his course at the *Ecole polytechnique*, and had a great love for his calling. In appearance he was distinguished and in manner mild; his eyes were blue and his mustache was fine and silky. Nothing could animate him but the roar of his cannons, and then his usually charming countenance became as terrible as that of the fighting archangel. To conclude the description, he was not of a demonstrative temperament; from his childhood his disposition although very lively, had been timid and reserved. He still remembered having felt as much embarrassment as emotion the day on which the impetuous Robert,

then aged ten, had led him mysteriously to the foot of an old stone cross that stood on a deserted square on the outskirts of the village, and had made him swear to a compact of eternal friendship.

He took the oath, nevertheless, and both of them had kept it faithfully. Their families lived in Paris during the winter, and as they were neighbors in the country in the summer, they were naturally brought together when the uncertainties of their professions allowed them a few days of liberty. They took advantage of these occasions to fill up those voids which the most exact correspondence always leaves in the discharge of the duties of an intimate friendship. They then familiarized themselves more particularly with each others' affairs, and with their brave hearts cheered by the renewal of their compact, they could return to their duties better equipped soldiers for the battle of life.

In June, 1869, M. de La Pave returned, somewhat worn out, from a campaign in the distant Orient. He had only time to shake Maurice warmly by the hand, for the company of the latter had been ordered to Africa,

but he promised to join him at Algiers, and spend some time with him here, when he had recuperated somewhat at Vichy. Three weeks later Maurice de Frémeuse, who was commencing to be somewhat uneasy on account of having had no word from Robert, received the following letter:

"Have you ever, anywhere in the world, met Mademoiselle Marianne d'Épinoy, daughter of the late General d' Épinoy? Answer by telegram. Very urgent."

After having vainly tried to decipher the meaning of this brief epistle, M. de Frémeuse found it impossible to do so; and addressed a telegram to Robert in these words:

"Never in my life."

Then he waited impatiently for a letter of explanation, and a few days later he received the one which we transcribe here; and to which we add the comments which Maurice made from time to time.

"Dear old friend:—I knew very well that I had never been in love; (Ah, here is something new; I declare!) it is only for the last forty-eight hours that I have really known what love is. It is a thunder-bolt. (ta, ta, ta!)

I know that I have sometimes imagined myself a lover, (Quite true!) but, ah, my friend, how shabby, false and miserable all these mistaken passions seem when, all at once, the real love appears before you. When one feels that it is he, at last—the master,—the god—*Deus ecce Deus.* (He is insane, on my word!) I am really convinced that we are destined to love but one woman between us. We have often thought that we had found her; (Oh yes, very often!) but now she is found at last, and what a light, what a shock! By what all-powerful, mysterious, irresistible force are we drawn, enveloped, chained! (Well, he is done for.)

"You understand now, dear friend, my crazy note of a few days ago; (Not at all.) when I felt myself seized by this tremendous passion, when I knew that it was to engage my heart, my soul, my life—everything—I was seized also by a scruple—a terror. I said to myself—you know my eccentricities—that perhaps you had met this young lady in Paris this winter, and that if you had met her, you necessarily adored her. On such an important point, I wanted to enlighten myself

at once; for, rather than compromise our sacred friendship in an amorous rivalry, I would flee to the ends of the earth. (Poor boy!) But, thank God! you have not seen Marianne; consequently you do not love her, therefore I shall win her, at least that is my intention, my dream and my hope. You know, my friend, how fond I am of women, (Yes, certainly!) when I came here Vichy, from my point of view, was an enchanted place. The number of pretty girls who promenade in the parks when the bands play is incalculable; I was at once charmed and disturbed, as a man who is naturally fond of the beautiful, and who has just returned from Hindo-China besides, naturally would be. I said to Charles Villedieu, whom I met here, and who has been acting as my pilot, 'The devil take me! but I am going to leave; there are too many pretty girls here, it disturbs me, it is affecting my heart.' That was my condition when, last Thursday at the afternoon serenade—the weather was magnificent —never had there been a larger or more brilliant crowd of people here—two ladies, whom I had not yet seen, made their way

modestly through the crowd and sat down within five steps of where I was. Immediately, dear friend, the pretty women of the day before—objects of my most exalted enthusiasm—ceased to exist. I saw nothing about me but homely women and ill-shaped dolls. There is but one pretty woman in the park, in Vichy—in the world!—it is *she*!

"'Good Heavens!' I said to Villedieu, 'what is that?'

"'That,' replied Villedieu, 'that is a goddess.'

"'I can see that very well, but her name! her earthly name?'

"'It is Mademoiselle d'Épinoy, first name Marianne, daughter of the late General d'Épinoy. Near her is her aunt, Madame de Combaleu, mother of Combaleu of the Club.'

"I asked him if he knew these ladies personally—he knew them personally; I begged to be introduced—I was introduced. That night I met them again at the Casino. I talked, rather I chattered, with Mademoiselle d'Épinoy, and I knew at once that my destiny was settled. It was the following night, my friend, that I was seized by those chimerical

terrors of which I have spoken, and which your excellent telegram has so happily dispersed.

"Now, my dear friend, shall I draw Mademoiselle d'Épinoy's portrait?—Never would I be so presumptuous as to make the attempt. Beauty and grace are not to be described. She is beautiful, undoubtedly; but that is only a quality which she has in common with many other women. That which belongs to her alone is her manner, her style, her *tournure*, that I don't know what, which is indescribable, and which made Villedieu, the most prosaic of men say, 'She is a goddess.' Why a goddess? one does not know—*incessu patuit*—that is all.

"I see you smile, my captain, and I understand why you smile. 'What infatuation can it be,' you will say, 'that can make the worthy Robert, whose physique is the most prominent thing about him, flatter himself to such an extent as to make him imagine that he can win such an etherial creature?' My dear friend, I am very much surprised myself; but, it seems to me, that she does not find me unpleasant. In the first place, you know

that when I want anything I want it very much, then I have the eyes and general appearance of a corsair, and the women do not dislike that style; finally—for I must tell you everything—the late misfortunes in my family have made me the recipient of an income of three hundred thousand livres a year, and that is something that puts a halo around the most ordinary brow. It is true that Mademoiselle d'Épinoy is not poor, she will have a *dot* of four or five hundred thousand francs, that is to say, an income of from twenty to twenty-five thousand francs; but nevertheless, I would make her a very suitable *parti*. The aunt seems to look upon me very favorably; and, in short, my dear friend, in spite of the innumerable shortcomings which separate a pirate like me from this enchanting creature, I have very good reasons to hope that I may give you very soon a sister who you will thank me for. For all of which I embrace you—no I am too nearly stifled!

"Robert."

"P. S.—You know, besides, that marriage has always been my dream."

"His dream," murmured M. de Frémeuse as

he folded the letter, "*parbleu*, yes! undoubtedly; it is a mania of theirs. There are two things which these sailors love dearly, to ride horseback and to get married—well!"

But he did not communicate these morose reflections to M. de La Pave. He contented himself with ridiculing him, just a little, for his susceptibility, and advised him affectionately not to precipitate matters, but to take time to study the character and the mind of the woman who seemed to have taken such complete possession of his heart.

Robert de La Pave, notwithstanding the natural ardor of his emotions, was not lacking in good sense or even shrewdness; but he paid no attention to the sage suggestion of his friend to obtain, from people who would be likely to know, an authentic account of Mademoiselle d'Épinoy's finances, and some information in regard to her general character and disposition. He himself endeavored to obtain this information from personal observation and the result was, as is always the case, that he found out nothing. Our customs require a husband to know absolutely nothing about his wife before marriage so that nothing

may lessen the surprise that is awaiting him afterwards.

What follows of this story will show that, beneath the impenetrable *incognita* of a well-bred young lady, Marianne d'Épinoy did not hide anything particularly monstrous. She was simply a woman like her grandmother Eve, a female upon whom all the charms of her sex had been lavishly bestowed, and who was not wanting in good sense to make the best possible use of them.

As soon as she noticed that M. de La Pave was in love with her, (She was not long in making the discovery) she felt very strongly inclined towards him. She knew, it is true, that he had an income of three hundred thousand francs, but she found him attractive in other respects also; for, as Robert himself had hinted, his striking and imperious manly beauty seldom failed to impress the women; besides, he was a marvelous waltzer.

The marriage took place on the festival of Saint Clotilde, three months after the young people first became acquainted at Vichy; but, as there is no such thing as unadulterated joy in this world, Robert felt a tinge of sadness,

even in his most exalted raptures, which was caused by the absence of his friend Maurice, who had been unable to obtain a leave of absence at the time. Among the other consequences of this marriage, was one which, we regret to say, is very unusual. The love of M. de La Pave for his wife in place of following the usual course of such passion, that is to say the descending plane, was even increased by possession. His wife was certainly greatly honored by such devotion; but, unfortunately, such a violent and absorbing passion usually produces some corresponding moral defect. When Robert's furlough had expired and he was recalled to his vessel, he could not summon the courage to leave this idolized woman for several months. He even preferred to abandon his career and lay aside his epaulettes; so he sent in his resignation. Notwithstanding the fact that Robert had the most perfect right to arrive at such a determination, and that there was in it nothing derrogatory to his honor, Captain de Frémeuse was very much displeased. He saw in his friend's conduct a disregard of duty, or at least a certain weakness of character which,

while it did not lessen his affection for him in the least, caused him to entertain a feeling of antipathy and malice towards Madame de La Pave, whom he blamed for having placed a distaff in the hands of Hercules. His correspondence with Robert continued to be as regular and affectionate as ever, but perhaps he made it too apparent by a number of mildly ironical compliments that he had a feeling of preconceived hostility towards his wife.

When M. de Frémeuse was in Constantine the following spring he received a visit from his mother, the Countess de Frèmeuse, a shrewd, thin and clever old lady whose greatest object in life was to repair the fortune for her son, which had been considerably damaged by the rash speculations of the late M. de Frémeuse. With this object in view, she had retired to her country-place in Normandy, which joined, as we have already said, the Chateau de La Pave. The arrival of M. de La Pave and his bride at the chateau, which had for a long time been empty and desolate, was an event of considerable importance in the solitary life of Madame de Frémeuse. As a matter of course, she did not fail to relate

all the details to her son, who was very glad to hear the beautiful Marianne described by a less partial critic than her husband.

According to Madame de Frèmeuse's account of her, Marianne de La Pave was in reality a very fascinating young woman. "She is a veritable *odalisque* ," said the old lady, "and your friend Robert did well in marrying her; but what a jealous Turk he is! It was jeaously that made him send in his resignation; and, if you will take my word for it, he committed a great folly, for the wives of these naval men hold it to be a point of honor that they shall not misbehave while their husbands are away, and they seldom do. In my opinion, it would have been much better for Robert to leave for a month or two from time to time. It would at least have had the effect of making it less likely that she would tire of his very ardent love and jealous watchfulness. My friends have written to me that, even this winter at Paris, he looked like a cannibal whenever she waltzed with another man. She is perfect this young woman—so far at least —and she is unusually honest, but then she is a coquette by nature. She loves Paris, and

it is her natural element; Robert knows this and you will see that each year he will make the stay at Paris shorter and shorter; and, before long, he will have her securely cloistered in the country. Even this year, he brought her back in the middle of April; and it is amusing to hear the pretexts which he is already making use of; how he extols the life of the farmer, of the noble lord who leads a peaceful existence on his estates and sets good examples to his tenants. Yes truly, but you should see the face of the fair Marianne at such times; she does not seem to be over anxious to set good examples, I assure you. The other day, Robert spoke of selling the hotel in the Rue de Varennes, and his wife nearly turned green. In every other respect they get along splendidly, but that is the skeleton. Dear knows! that as far as I am concerned, I would be delighted to have them for neighbors all the year around; but that young woman needs movement and excitement, and if Robert confines her in that bit of a village, she will become not only discontented, but enraged and he will have gained nothing. *Elle prendera le notaire, vola tout.*"

His mother's gossipy chatter, while it made Maurice smile, did not by any means quiet his anxieties. In these times of moral relaxation and skeptical indifference, it may seem strange that a man should take such a lively interest in the happiness or misfortunes of his friend; but friendship is a sentiment which is natural to great souls, and that of M. de Frémeuse was capable of those feelings which seem to belong to another age. He was greatly annoyed by the pessimistic prophecies of his mother in regard to the outcome of Robert's marriage; and, although he knew that they were in some measure purely fanciful, he could not help realizing that they were not without a reasonable foundation. He felt an increased hostility towards the woman who, after having weakened his friend's character, threatened, from one day to the other, to compromise his peace, and perhaps even his honor. He promised himself that he would use all his influence with Robert to dissuade him from such foolish jealousy; and to arouse, if possible, his lagging ambition. If this could not be accomplished by letter, he resolved to ask for a furlough and advise his

adopted brother in person; but the destiny that spared his friendship such a task, reserved for him one which was to be but all the more difficult and unpleasant.

CHAPTER II.

The disastrous war of 1870 broke out at this time; and Captain de Frèmeuse was recalled to France and attached to MacMahon's troops. After the battle of Sedan, MacMahon took to Belgium; at once recrossed the frontier, and hurried to join the army of the Loire under Orleans. After the battle of Pattay, a few regiments from the army of the North were sent to join the army of Chanzy. It was at this time, and at the beginning of the retreat towards Mans, that Maurice found Robert de La Pave at the head of a battalion of infantry. When the young officers first met at this unhappy time, they embraced each other affectionately without having the courage to speak, but after this meeting there were few days on which they did not find an opportunity to see each other.

At the beginning of the war Robert de La Pave had been chosen to command a battalion of infantry from his department. Before

leaving his wife in response to the call of duty and honor, he wished to give her a final and supreme proof of his love and, as he had no relative, except distant collateral ones, he willed her the whole of his fortune. Up to this time, Madame de La Pave had loved her husband with a love that was sincere though rather tranquil; but gratitude for such generosity, the emotions attending separation, absence, uncertainty and the knowledge of the dangers Robert would have to undergo, inspired her from the day of his departure with a deeper and more impassioned love. The letters which Robert received from her from time to time, throughout the hazards of the campaign, gave expression to this increased tenderness; these letters he always showed to Maurice.

"She loves me," he said to him one day, "she loves me as she never loved me before; I feel it and, I feel also," he added, with a strange melancholy smile, "that I shall never see her again."

These were strange words from the lips of a man of such a cheerful nature as Robert, and Maurice heard them with surprise and uneasiness.

One night, as they were walking and smoking before the camp-fires, Robert, whose brow was knitted as had lately been his custom, suddenly stopped in front of Maurice and said: "Have you noticed that I have been shirking lately?"

"That," replied Maurice, "is something of which you are incapable, even if you wished."

"It is true, nevertheless, I am shirking. I notice it myself, and I believe that my men notice it also"—and he added after a moment, "admit that you think me a sluggard?"

"Nonsense; you behave like a hero from morning until night; every one says so."

"No, I feel that I am shirking."

The next day at sunset Major de Frèmeuse —he had lately been promoted to this rank— had just placed his batteries, with all the men he had left, at the edge of the forest of Marshenoire. The day had been a hard one, and as he was excessively tired, he wrapped himself in his blanket and fell asleep on the snow. About the middle of the night, he felt some one pulling at his sleeve and calling him by name. He raised himself upon his elbow, and recognized a brave little lieutenant who

belonged to Robert's battalion, and of whom the latter was very fond.

"Major," said the young man in a trembling voice, "Major de La Pave asks for you."

Maurice sprang to his feet.

"Wounded?" he asked.

"Yes, Major."

"Seriously?"

"I am afraid so. Come, it is not far. I am very glad that I found you, for he is very anxious to see you."

Major de Frémeuse followed and they walked rapidly for twenty minutes on a path that ran along the edge of the woods. On the way Maurice asked the little lieutenant many anxious questions, and learned that Robert had been wounded at the recapture of the village of Origny, having been struck in the chest with a piece of shell.

"It was sure to happen," said the young officer, "you know him, you know how brave he is; but to-day he was wild. I don't know what was the matter with him; he acted so strangely. He was laughing, which is something he does not often do lately, and he cried to me: 'Ho, there little Julien!' I am not

shirking to-day, am I?' and he fell as he was speaking. This is the place, Major."

They stopped before a large hut which stood along the edge of the woods, that had formerly been occupied by coal miners. They could see the rays of light shining through the window and trembling outside on the snow. Several groups of soldiers were sleeping under the trees, and three or four men were talking in low tones before the door of the cabin when Major de Frèmeuse entered.

Robert de La Pave was lying on a pile of blankets on the floor of the hut; his uniform was open, and his shirt was covered with crimson stains. A soldier who knelt beside him held an earthen vessel filled with water in which he soaked pieces of blood-stained linen. An army physician, who was bending over the wounded man, stepped aside when the door was opened, and this enabled Robert to see Major de Frémeuse; his large eyes, which were made still larger by fever, flashed with joy.

"Ah!" he said in a loud firm voice, "I am glad you came; very glad."

"Well, old friend," said Maurice, as he took

the hand that was painfully held out to him, "I see you have been scratched a little?"

"Yes, a little," replied Robert coldly. "How much time have I yet, Doctor?"

"Why, years I hope!" replied the physician. "Let me feel your pulse again—very well; be careful not to remove the bandage. You wish to speak to your friend so I will leave and return to-morrow."

Robert made an effort to raise himself upon his elbow, and looked at him with a fixed and anxious glance; it was that mute and terrible interrogation of a dying man.

The physician's face became rigid: "Come," said he, "have courage, I will see you to-morrow."

"Thanks, monsieur," said the wounded man, as he fell back heavily upon the blankets. The soldier who had been in attendance soon left the hut, and he raised his voice again:

"Julien," said he to the little lieutenant, "leave me here a little with de Frémeuse; and ask those men outside to move a little farther away. Come now child! there is nothing to cry about."

Little Julien could not restrain a sob as he

left the hut; when he was gone, Robert took Maurice's hand and held it tightly.

"My friend," he said, "you must take all I have about me, my watch, my cross and all my trinklets, and keep them for my wife—kiss me."

Two large tears rolled down his cheeks as he spoke. Maurice kissed him fervently on both cheeks and turned away his head.

"Maurice," continued the wounded man, whose face was rapidly assuming a death-like pallor, "there is something I must tell you: I do not want her to marry again, you understand? I forbid it. If you love me, if you want me to die in peace, if you do not want me to pass into eternity with rage in my heart—"

"Oh, my dear friend!" sobbed Maurice, unable to restrain his grief.

"Well, promise me."

"Promise, but promise what?"

"Promise me," said Robert, whose sentences were marked with an almost savage emphasis, "promise me that if she should ever remarry, if she should ever be guilty of such a crime, rather than allow another to possess her, you will kill her!"

"Robert," said Maurice, as he looked him in the eyes.

"Swear that you will do it."

"But you must know that it is impossible for me to make such a promise."

Neither spoke for some time, then Robert said:

"I have left her all I had, why would she need to marry again? You see, I can not bear the thought of her belonging to another man; it is impossible!—it drives me mad! Have mercy on me, my dear friend, you see that I am dying, have mercy on me!"

"My dear Robert, I beg of you to try to be calm," said Maurice as he knelt beside him.

"At least promise me," continued the unhappy man, "that I have forbidden her to marry again; that my dying wish is that she shall remain single; that I beg her—I implore her—to observe it! that if she should ever remarry, if she should ever give herself to any one else, I would rise from my grave! that she should see my spectre! that she should hear me curse her! will you tell her this; do you promise?"

"Yes, that I can promise."

Robert lightly pressed Maurice's hand and continued:

"Ah, Maurice! never love a woman as I love her, you see what comes of it, but you have promised to tell her?"

"Yes."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor."

"Thank you."

During the rest of the night he held Maurice's hand in his own. He soon became delirious and talked incoherently, always about his wife and the promise that Maurice had made to him. At the first break of day he died.

Major de Frèmeuse sadly gathered together all the souvenirs that he had been told to preserve for the widow. By the help of the little lieutenant, he was able to make arrangements with the priest and the mayor of the nearest village for a Christian burial for his friend. When this sad duty was done he returned to his regiment.

The next day he utilized a few spare moments to write to his mother. He told her in a few brief lines of the death of his boyhood friend, and imposed on her the sad duty

of informing Madame de La Pave of the misfortune which had befallen her. He said that, as soon as the campaign was over, he would take to the widow the last tokens of her husband's love; and that he would at the same time deliver to her a confidential message which Robert had left for her with his dying breath. He said that he could not deliver this message by letter, as it was of too delicate a nature to trust to the mails in those hazardous times.

The battle of Mans took place a few days later. The country-place of Madame de Frémeuse, like that of the La Paves, was situated in Perche, within twenty leagues of Mans; and as soon as the old countess learned that the retreating army was approaching that town, she went there in the hope of seeing her son. She arrived only in time to hear, with all the anguish of a mother's heart, the last echoes of the cannons after the battle. The next day she learned at the Prussian Military Bureau that Major de Frémeuse had been wounded and taken prisoner; and that he formed part of a convoy of prisoners who were then on their way to Germany.

CHAPTER III.

After a month of the greatest anxiety, Madame de Frèmeuse received a letter from her son, dated at Hamburg. He said that he had entirely recovered from his wound, which had only been a slight one on the head; but it was plain that he was prostrated by the blow that had been dealt to his affections in the death of his friend, and the patriotic sorrow which he felt at the result of the war. In his letter he made respectful inquiries after Madame de La Pave.

His mother replied that the conduct of Madame de La Pave was admirable in every way; she had, of course, gone into the deepest mourning, and had shut herself up in the country; but besides that, she refused all other company than that of her aunt, Madame de Combaleu; which, according to Madame de Frémeuse was the crowning proof of the young widow's distress. During the course of the correspondence that followed between

Maurice and his mother, he was more than once tempted to confide to her the strange message that Robert had asked him to deliver to his widow; but he always concluded that a task of such a delicate and confidential nature should not be delegated.

This message, which he had almost forgotten in the tumult of military life, began to look much more troublesome now that he was condemned to inactivity. He thought of it night and day, and he became more and more alarmed at the idea of making such a communication to a young woman whom he had never even seen. He tried to picture to himself the scene there would be when he would tell Madame de La Pave of her husband's last wishes. He thought of the words he would use and imagined the confused, and perhaps angry, appearance of the young woman. In fact, the more he thought of it, the more embarrassing and difficult the task seemed to become.

* * * * *

He had hardly returned to France, after peace was declared, when he was ordered to join the army which was sent against the

Commune; and it was not until the last of June, 1871 that it was possible for him to obtain a furlough and go to see his mother.

In the excitement which he had gone through, he had found diversion from his troubles, but he was still unable to keep from worrying over the unpleasant task which he had undertaken. The time had come when the duty must be performed, and he resolved to consult his mother, in whose judgment and tact he very justly placed the greatest confidence.

The very evening of his arrival, after the first demonstrations of the meeting were over, he told his mother all the details of the death of M. de La Pave, not omitting the solemn promise that Robert had asked him to make. This intelligence had a strange effect upon the old countess; for several minutes she seemed completely dazed, and her tongue, which was usually limber enough, seemed for a moment to be completely paralyzed. All the time that her son was talking, she kept her hands clasped tightly together and gazed at the ceiling. Maurice, who expected encouragement and advice from her, was very

much surprised and nonplussed at such demonstrations.

"The matter seems to be a very delicate one, does it not, mother?" he asked.

"Delicate!" cried the old lady, "it is monstrous! What did you mean by making such a promise? it is monstrous."

"What, could I refuse anything to a dying friend?"

"But, my dear boy, he was delirious; one is not obliged to keep promises made to a man who had a fever. I hope you have no real intention of disturbing the mind and the conscience of that young woman by delivering such a ridiculous message."

"I beg your pardon, mother, but a promise made under such circumstances is absolutely sacred and you may be sure that I shall not fail to keep it."

"But listen, my child, when a man is delirious, one promises him everything he asks; just as one promises the moon to a child."

"Robert was not delirious, mother, at that time; his mind was perfectly clear. He died confiding in my word, and I shall certainly keep it; although, I admit, that the task is

extremely embarrassing, and that I had counted on your help to get through with the unpleasant business as well as possible."

"Ah, my dear child, it would be very hard for me to refuse you anything; but I declare that if you expect me to deliver such a message, I must tell you that I have not the heart to do it."

"I do not ask anything of the kind, mother. I think that poor Robert's words and his wishes will be more kindly received if they are told to his widow by one who heard them from his dying lips. All I ask is that as you are acquainted with Madame de La Pave, who is an entire stranger to me, you will be so kind as to advise me how I should proceed, what precautions to take and what language to use; and that you will also tell me how you think she will take it."

"She will think the whole proceeding abominable; no matter how you go about it, that much you may be sure of. Really! a young woman of twenty-three—and who is beautiful besides—to be a widow for the remainder of her days. It is barbarous! it is immoral! I can not even imagine anything of the kind."

"My dear mother," said Maurice, as he took her hands and looked her straight in the eyes, "who was it that taught me, when I was a very little boy, that one's word of honor is not to be argued with, and that when once given, life itself would not be a compensation for breaking it."

She kissed him affectionately.

"You are a good son," she said, deeply, moved, "and a brave man. I beg your pardon; but I was never so greatly disappointed in my life."

"Disappointed?" repeated Maurice, as he looked at her attentively.

"Undoubtedly," she replied with some confusion, "I was thinking of that young woman, who will naturally take a dislike to you for your part in the matter, to say nothing of the fact that she does not love you any too well already."

Maurice shrugged his shoulders in resignation.

The truth was that what she had just heard utterly demolished a most splendid castle which Madame de Frèmeuse had been building in the clouds. Ever since the death of

M. de La Pave, she had been planning a marriage between her son and the rich heiress. Such a marriage would have been the greatest comfort to her; she had that very common maternal anxiety that her son should marry well; and, so far Maurice had shown but little interest in matrimonial matters. In spite of this, she counted on the exceptional charms of Madame de La Pave to enthuse him; and at the same time, she relied on the many excellent qualities of her son to make an impression on the young widow, and also to make amends for the difference in their fortunes.

The fact that they were neighbors in a quiet country-place was a circumstance that certainly would be conducive to mutual appreciation. Madame de Frèmeuse herself had lived in the country so long that she had acquired for it the taste, or rather the passion, of the Normandy peasants. The immense La Pave estate was continually before her eyes, with its beautiful lawns, its trees, its woods and its farms; and she thought it the ideal country-place. By careful management she had considerably improved her own little property; and she thought that to annex it to

the La Pave domains would be such another act of statesmanship as the annexation of the Duchy of Savoy to the kingdoms of Italy. For the success of her diplomatic scheme, the old countess would have risked her very life.

One can easily understand, therefore, the consternation with which she heard the announcement which destroyed this delightful dream. That M. de La Pave had on his deathbed implored his wife never to marry, and that Maurice was the agent charged with the presentation of his supplication, seemed to her to be a misfortune which threatened to ruin her dearest and deepest hopes. However, when the first shock of her disappointment was over, she again began to gather courage. It did not seem impossible to her that, between feminine weakness and masculine ambition, Robert's message might yet become a dead letter.

The morning after his arrival, Maurice sent a servant to take a note to the chateau. He addressed it to Madame de La Pave, and asked her to be so kind as to set a time when she would do him the honor of granting him an interview. She answered that she would

be pleased to see Major de Frèmeuse at any time that day that would be the most convenient to him; so at three o'clock in the afternoon Maurice started for the chateau. The idea of the intended interview did not please him, and he was dreadfully afraid of a scene; yet he was very curious to see the woman who had been so idolized by his friend. For a number of reasons, he made up his mind to dislike her; and, as his mother had given him to understand, he could expect a like feeling from her in return.

The path to the chateau led through the fields and woods which had been such familiar scenes in his childhood, and the recollections which they recalled made a profound and melancholy, although still pleasant, impression upon him now. When he came to the end of the path he saw an old stone cross which had, for time out of mind, been the starting and ending place of the religious processions which were held in the parish every feast of *Corpus Christi*. Maurice found a still fresh piece of evergreen that had been left on the cross at the time of the last procession, which had taken place only a week

before. Here it was that, years before, Robert had led him in such a mysterious way; it was here that the two children had sworn to a compact of eternal friendship, with all the ardor and sincerity of youth. When Maurice reached the old cross he hesitated, paused, and then sat down on the steps that formed the pedestal, and, as memories of his childhood, his youth and his lost friend crowded upon him, his eyes became filled with tears.

The chateau de La Pave is a magnificent, antique edifice which, to judge from the architecture, was built about the beginning of the 13th century. It is not without surprise that one sees this stately structure in an obscure corner of Perche. It has one large main building, and two narrow projecting wings. The roof is flat, in the Italian style, and the cornice is decorated with carved stone work. The whole place has a splendid appearance from the main road, with its lawns and terraces and its shrubbery. A large garden back of the chateau is laid out in walks, shaded by stately elms and decorated with evergreen shrubbery. One could still see

twenty years ago—and no doubt they are there still—tall yew-trees, trimmed in the shape of pyramids, and carefully tended flower beds, laid out in the most tasteful shapes.

When Maurice entered the gate of the chateau, Madame de La Pave and her aunt, Madame de Combaleu, both attired in the heaviest mourning, were walking slowly in a shaded path in the garden and talking in low tones. If the young major could have heard their conversation, his uneasiness would not have been by any means lessened.

It is not often that a woman can find it possible to like her husband's old friends, or allow them to obtain any kind of influence in her household if she can prevent it. They are influential rivals, and have a certain share of her husband's affections, of which she is always more or less jealous. Madame de La Pave was not above these prejudices of her sex by any means, and as far as Major de Frémeuse was concerned, every circumstance tended to make them unusually bitter and strong. She was even then pouring her grievances into the sympathetic ear of Madame de Combaleu. In one hand she carried a small

embroidered handkerchief, and in the other a bottle of smelling salts which she frequently raised to her nostrils.

"It is very trying, aunt," said she. "Of course, I must receive him, and receive him politely at that; for my husband was very fond of him, and he himself proved a faithful friend to Robert to the very last. I know all that, and I will try to be as gracious to him as duty requires me to be; but you can not imagine how hard it is. He has always been my enemy; I have always known that, and I have always felt that he was between my husband and me. I have lately read all the letters that he wrote to Robert; and I can see very plainly, in spite of the politeness with which every phrase is wrapped, that he dislikes and despises me. He even calumniates me, for he would have it that I was my husband's evil genius; and he thinks that I have weakened Robert's sense of duty and honor. Oh, I can see all that, notwithstanding his periphrases and his compliments! Is it not hateful? I have no doubt that he now accuses me of being the cause of Robert's death. Can anything be more odious than

to be obliged to be polite to that man?"

"It is very hard, my dear, and I can fully understand your feelings; for, if there is anything I detest, it is a hypocrite; but my child, this annoyance can not last long, it is only a matter of a few days. Monsieur will call two or three times, and then he will go back to his cannons, and you need never see him again if you do not wish."

"Yes, my aunt, I know it will not last long; but to be obliged to put up with him, even for a few days, it is hateful?"

Their conversation was interrupted by a servant who announced that Major de Frémeuse was in the salon. Madame de La Pave became as pale as death.

"Shall I go with you, my dear?" asked Madame de Combaleu.

"No, my aunt, I beg of you," and she started for the chateau with her head erect, and with a slight swaying motion of her form as she walked that reminded one of the graceful and rhythmical movements of a swan.

When she came to the door of the salon, she sighed deeply, and then with abrupt resolution, she opened the door.

The woman who appeared before Major de Frèmeuse did not correspond to the stately beauty that he had pictured in his mind. Madame de La Pave seemed to him to be graceful and pretty rather than beautiful. Her features were delicate and regular, her complexion was of a pale olive, her hair, which was very black, was arranged gracefully about her forehead and her neck was beautifully shaped. She was built with that harmonious proportion of parts which makes every movement of such a woman seductive.

Madame de La Pave did not return Maurice's bow, but walked straight towards him, murmuring something which he could not understand, and gave him her hand; he took it with a firm grip, and sat down on the chair that she pointed out to him. The young widow took a chair opposite and placed her elbow on a small table, which gave her an opportunity to rest her head on her hand.

"Tell me all," she said.

Maurice then related, in that solemn sweet tone of voice that was peculiar to him, all the particulars of Robert's death. He spoke of the last day of his life, dwelling at some

length on the battle of Origny and Robert's heroic conduct there. He then told Madame de La Pave how Julien had come for him the following night, and all that had passed in the miner's hut. Sometimes he stopped to steady his voice, which trembled in spite of all the efforts he could make, and he tried to abridge his story in places that Madame de La Pave might be spared useless emotion, but she insisted, in an imperious and dignified way, that he omit none of the details of Robert's last night on earth. He came at last to the message which Robert had charged him to deliver to his wife, but he first went to a table and took an ebony box, that he had left there when he entered, and placed it in the hands of Madame de La Pave, she opened the lid and gazed fixedly at all the sad relics that the box contained, a watch, a cross, several trinkets of different kinds, a lock of black hair and a piece of blood-stained linen.

The young widow, who had been impassible up to this said, almost in a whisper, "Poor Robert! poor boy!"

Then she threw her arms over the back of her chair and sobbed violently; her bosom

heaved and fell, and Maurice could see the tears flowing between her taper fingers. The tears came to his own eyes; and, in the midst of the sympathetic emotion which he felt at that time, he was greatly troubled. He had not finished his task, he had only told the least painful part of his message; and how was he to tell the balance to this distressed and sobbing woman? If she had shown the least suspicion of indifference to the memory of her husband at that time, he could have felt a malicious pleasure in telling her of his last wishes, but, when he saw this outburst of sorrow and genuine grief, he could not raise the courage to deliver the message which, however delicately he might proceed, must appear to be the most unmerited of injuries.

Was he not running the risk of lessening, rather than increasing, the tenderness which the young woman had for the memory of her husband?

Maurice hurriedly thought the matter over and concluded, not without a strong show of reason, that it would be best to reserve the balance of his message for an other time, when Madame de La Pave would have recov-

ered from the first paroxysms of her emotion. Considerably comforted by the conclusion he had arrived at, he waited until she was somewhat calmer and arose to leave.

"Thanks, Monsieur," she said simply, as she held out her hand; "you will come back again, will you not?"

Maurice bowed and retired.

CHAPTER IV.

Maurice returned to his home with a clouded brow. He found his mother seated under a lime-tree in the garden knitting with nervous haste.

"Well," she said as soon as she saw him, "what is the matter? You seem disturbed about something?"

"And I am disturbed, mother; I had hoped to get through, once for all, with this unpleasant business which has been bothering me for so long, and here I have brought my burden home with me again, almost intact."

He then told her all that had taken place at the chateau, and of the scruple that had prevented him from finishing his task. One can easily understand how thoroughly Madame de Frèmeuse approved of the scruple.

"You will see, my dear child," said she, "that the more you think of it, the more doubtful will it appear whether duty requires you to make any such communications to

Madame de La Pave. I will tell you! Let us consult the priest, who is a very good and intelligent man, his opinion may be valuable."

"But, my dear mother," replied Maurice who could not help smiling at the suggestion, "this is no matter for a priest. If I am doubtful as to the proper time to perform this duty, it does not follow that there is the least doubt as to the duty itself; that is as plain as day. I am sure that you yourself would be very much grieved if I should fail. You would have very good reasons for being ashamed of me as long as you live; even if you should have the pleasure of seeing me become the husband of the beautiful Marianne, and the owner of the three thousand acres that would go with her."

When Madame de Frèmeuse found that her plan was discovered, she felt as if a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet. She looked at Maurice for a moment in a confused and embarrassed way, and then putting on a bold front, she said:

"Well then, yes, I will not deny it; that was my dream. How was I to know any thing of the posthumous absurdities of the

unfortunate Robert? I had even taken the good priest into my confidence; and, to tell you everything, he thought it all very suitable and possible."

"Ah, my dear mother," said the young man, with a smile, "you wanted me to consult the priest and you already had him on your side, that was decidedly wrong, but, even if Robert's last wishes had not been an insurmountable obstacle, what could have led you to imagine that Madame de La Pave would ever have accepted me? She has an income of three hundred thousand francs and we have twenty-five or thirty."

"Thirty-two, my son, and I must tell you that a man who has an income of thirty-two thousand francs, who is handsome and has a good name and good prospects besides, can, in all honor, aspire to anything. I had hoped all my life," she admitted with a smile, "that you would find such an opportunity as this, and such a wife as Marianne; for, in truth, she is a Venus."

"Well, for my part," said Maurice gayly as he kissed the old lady's white hair, "I care more for my mother than for the richest and most beautiful woman on earth."

"Heavens! how foolish you are," said his mother, as she tenderly returned his caress.

While Madame de Frèmeuse was catechising her son in regard to the impression that Madame de La Pave had made upon him, Madame de Combaleu was with equal curiosity interrogating her niece with the intention of finding out what opinion she had formed of the young major. She also had her reasons for keeping an eye on the relations that might be established between Maurice and the young widow. Madame de Combaleu was a tall thin woman, with a nose like an eagle's, and with eyebrows that were so black and well curved that one might have thought they were pencilled. This was all she had left of the beauty with which, in the opinion of some more rigid and less attractive ladies of that time, certain contemporary gallants of her youth had been almost too familiar. However this might be, she was austere enough now. Her entire affection was concentrated on an only son, whom she had spoiled dreadfully; and who, in return, gave her all the trouble that the fondest mother could hope for. This son, Gerard de Com-

baleu, was a tall good-natured and worthless young man of twenty-seven, who was considered rather entertaining, especially when he was in bad company. His mother, in the hope of keeping him from the gambling tables and wine houses, was anxious to see him well and safely married. She had at one time thought of having him espouse his cousin, Marianne d'Épinoy, but as at that time the fortune of Marianne was inferior to that of Gerard, she had abandoned the idea. Now however the situation was very different; her niece, as the heiress of Robert de La Pave, would make a most desirable wife for her son. Gerard himself had been carefully sounded on the matter, and he did not seem to be at all averse to becoming the practical owner of his cousin's millions, which would give him the opportunity to gratify his extravagant tastes with royal magnificence.

This marriage had become the dearest hope of Madame de Combaleu, and she surveyed the field with a jealous eye. Although she had only the nose, and not the eye, of an angel, she had a sort of a vague consciousness of the rival pretensions of Madame de Frè-

meuse. She had noticed that in all of the old countess's conversations with Madame de La Pave, her favorite themes were the many excellent qualities and achievements of her son; and it rather seemed to Madame de Combaleu as if she wished to see Maurice quietly installed at the chateau as the natural successor of his friend. She had paid little attention to this, for she well knew the dislike that her niece had for Major de Frèmeuse; but the personal appearance of the young officer on the field was a circumstance which made her somewhat uneasy.

As soon as Maurice was gone, she rejoined her niece in the *salòn* and found her still in tears. They wept in company for a while and then, for the sake of withdrawing the mind of the young woman from her grief, Madame de Combaleu asked her what she thought of Major de Frémeuse.

"I do not know, my aunt, I don't believe that I have thought of him at all. You may imagine that I have had other things to occupy my mind."

"But does he resemble his photograph, my love?"

"Naturally," replied Madame de La Pave.

"I have no doubt," continued Madame de Combaleu, "that he has a deceitful looking eye, like all hypocrites?"

"Naturally," again replied her niece in an absent-minded way.

She sighed deeply, raised her smelling salts to her nostrils and took the ebony box under her arm.

"I am going to sleep for a little while," she said, "my head feels as if it were on fire."

Then she walked majestically across the room with her head slightly raised and thrown back. Madame de Combaleu had found out nothing.

CHAPTER V.

At the end of three or four days, Maurice concluded that a second visit to the chateau could not be put off any longer. The more he thought of it, the more he regretted that he had not acquitted himself of his whole obligation the first time he was there; as it now seemed all the harder since he had no available excuse for introducing the subject.

In the midst of his anxieties, the happy idea occurred to him that perhaps there would be some one else who would be just as suitable a messenger as he. The parish priest, Abbè Desmortreux, whom his mother had wished him to consult, was Marianne's spiritual director; and in that capacity, with all the authority of his office, was he not the proper person to inform Madame de La Pave of her husband's last wishes? Did not such duty belong to the profession of a priest? Maurice had several times met the old abbé, and had found him to be a man of rare intel-

ligence, but entirely lacking in ambition. He had, by his own choice, grown old in this little country village; where he occupied his time with local matters, corresponding with the members of the learned societies of his religion, taking care of the sick, saving the souls of his parishioners and fishing with a hook and line in a small stream that flowed by his garden.

Major de Frèmeuse called upon this amiable philosopher and theologian; and, after having asked him to consider the story he was about to tell as being as confidential as a secret of the confessional, he told him of the last wishes of Robert de La Pave, and asked him if he would be so extremely kind as to communicate them to his widow. "No one," said Maurice, "was so well qualified to deliver this message, which was essentially a matter of conscience, as Marianne's confessor and spiritual director."

The abbé Desmortreux, whose honest and cheerful face had been growing more and more grave while Maurice was speaking, remained silent for some time and ran his fingers nervously through his white hair.

"My dear sir," he said at last, "this is a bad business—very bad—and it would be very likely to put me on bad terms with my penitent, if I should be so imprudent as to undertake your commission. I do not deny that I have selfish reasons for refusing. In the first place, I am old, I dislike to assume annoying responsibilities, and I like to keep on good terms with my parishioners; but, besides all that, as a priest and confessor, I am of all the world the last man who should undertake to perform the task. Why? my dear sir, just because I am the spiritual director of Madame de La Pave; and the first thing she will ask me will be to tell me to tell her just how far her conscience is bound by her husband's last wishes. Well I know nothing about it; I do not want to be called upon to pass judgment upon that question. As a theologian, I can not say how far a woman—a young woman—is bound to observe the command of a deceased husband who has forbidden her to marry again. I admit that the question is outside of my experience and its solution is beyond my abilities. If she should ever confide in me, it will then be time enough for me

to think about it; but I do not want to interfere in such an entirely personal matter when it in no way concerns me. I beg of you, Monsieur, that you will not even hint to Madame de La Pave that I am in possession of the secret, for you must know that he who shares this secret with her must become either her enemy or her accomplice."

"I am sorry to have disturbed you, Monsieur le Curé," said Maurice coldly, as he arose to leave.

"It would be either one or the other," repeated the old priest as though he had not heard him, "enemy or accomplice."

As he was showing Maurice to the door, he stopped suddenly, tapped his forehead with his finger and said:

"But, my dear sir, there is one way out of the matter for the present at least, and perhaps forever."

"Ah, Monsieur le Curè, how good you are!"

"Let us see, Mónsieur, have you ever heard that Madame de La Pave has the least intention of marrying again?"

"No, thank Heaven!"

"Well then, why not wait until such a thing

is likely to happen before telling her anything? It will do her no sort of an injury, but rather it will spare her the mortification of listening to an unpleasant story which, so far, she does not need to hear, and perhaps she shall never need to hear it. What was it that Robert de La Pave wished? that his wife would remain single. Well if she does so of her own free will, is it not more than useless to command her?"

"On my word! Monsieur le Curè, you seem to be in the right; still I am a soldier, and you know that we allow ourselves but little margin in keeping a promise. At any rate, I thank you very much, and I will think of your suggestion."

When a man has a disagreeable duty on hand, he finds it a great comfort to have plenty of time before him, and to be able to choose the proper moment for its performance.

When Major de Frèmeuse left the priest's house he breathed more freely. Without coming to any definite conclusion on the subject, he no longer felt under the same obligation to appear at once before the young widow as the bearer of evil news and threat-

ening commands. He could at least wait until he was better acquainted with her, and until friendship opened the way and suggested the time when this duty might be performed without any violence to the young woman's feelings. The first thing to be done was to establish the necessary relations of friendly confidence between himself and Madame de La Pave. It is true that he had fully made up his mind to dislike her, but he was not very strongly inclined to continue a feeling of preconceived antipathy towards a woman whom he saw for the first time with her eyes filled with tears.

He called at the chateau that very day and found Madame de La Pave alone, Madame de Combaleu having gone to Paris to spend a few days with her son. The young widow had seen and noticed Maurice more closely than she had given her aunt to understand, and she was not at all sorry to see him again. Although she did not like him, she was not indifferent towards him; and, owing to the lonely existence which she led, his presence caused an emotion which, while there was much about it that was necessarily painful,

was still a welcome excitement. It would have given her much pleasure to have found her rival and her enemy to be a coarse vulgar person, or a man who was her social inferior, and she would have been delighted to treat him accordingly. Unfortunately, she could see by the delicate features of the young man, by his intelligent brow, by his manners and his language, that he was a singularly well-bred gentleman; and she admitted it reluctantly.

She was really sorry to be disliked and misunderstood by a man who seemed to have such good taste, and who was himself so prepossessing—by this young officer whose face was grave and whose smile was so sweet. During the course of their conversation, which naturally turned on Robert and the war, and later, on Maurice's imprisonment in Germany, it appeared to Madame de La Pave that her supposed enemy spoke to her with charming frankness and the most respectful courtesy, as if their slight acquaintance had already changed the unjust opinion he had formed of her. This was decidedly interesting, and she was greatly pleased at what she

looked upon as a little personal triumph, which she meant to follow up. It was with great sincerity, therefore, that when Maurice left the chateau she asked him to come to see her very often while his visit lasted.

Nothing could have been more acceptible to Maurice at that time than the friendship of Madame de La Pave. His visits to the chateau became more and more frequent; sometimes he came alone, sometimes with his mother, and he was already on terms of decided intimacy with the young widow when, a couple of weeks later, Madame de Combaleu decided to leave Paris to return to her niece, after having spent a couple of days with friends at Alençon.

The first time that Maurice called after Madame de Combaleu's return, she took great care to be present, and she then had the opportunity of seeing him for the first time. She was more than sorry to find that he was, in fact, as unobjectionableayoung man as she had ever known, and that he spoke to her niece as if there had been a friendship of long standing between them. Decidedly displeased at this discovery, she was still more

alarmed when she learned that Major de Frémeuse and his mother had been invited to dine at the chateau the following day. She passed the remainder of the day in trying to familiarize herself with the situation, meditating on the dangers and gathering up her forces for the defense. She understood her niece thoroughly; she knew that she was extremely proud, and that, beneath great calmness of manner, she hid a deep fund of passion. Madame de Combaleu was not long in deciding where to begin the attack.

The next day, about half an hour before dinner, Madame de La Pave and her aunt, after having finished their toilettes, met in the salon. Madame de Combaleu began the conversation by saying very sweetly:

"You have not told me, my dear, what you think of Major de Frèmeuse?"

"You have seen him for yourself, my aunt," was the reply.

"He is civilized, after all, one would judge?"

"So one would judge," repeated Madame de La Pave, and a faint ironical smile played about the corners of her mouth

"He is not making love to you, I hope?"

"Oh, no! I could hardly say that it has gone so far as that; he despises me a little less than he did, that is all."

"And you, my dear?"

"Oh, I?" said the young widow with a strange movement of her lids, "I am studying him; I am trying to understand him"—then she added seriously: "There is no use in denying it, he has formed a better and more just opinion of me, and I am glad he has. Before he had seen me, he had misjudged me, and the more he sees of me, the more willing he is to lay aside his prejudices. I can tell by his manner and his conversation that he is making every effort to make honorable reparation without going into tiresome and offensive explanations. Well, I admit, my aunt, that all this is very pleasant from a man whom we also had misjudged; and who is, after all, entirely unobjectionable. I am forced to say that it gives me great pleasure to find that we were both mistaken in the opinions we had formed of each other."

"Ah, my poor child, how young you are!" said Madame de Combaleu, as she wrung her hands tragically.

"What do you mean, my aunt?"

"In the first place, my dear, you must tell me the honest truth—you do not need to mind being perfectly frank with your old aunt —what impression has Major de Frèmeuse made on you; is your heart involved in any way?

"I suppose, my aunt, that you are indulging in a pleasant jest," said the young woman in a calm tone, though her eyes flashed fire.

"No, my dear, I am perfectly serious. I am older than you are, and better acquainted with the world; there is something that I must tell you which it is well that you should know, for it may save you from a great deal of embarrassment and humiliation. You have a habit of being perfectly frank and honest with every one which is very commendable, but it may sometime lead you into trouble. Now here is Major de Frèmeuse, who has always been your declared enemy—we know that from his letters, and your poor husband himself used to speak of it in jest—and now, all at once, this enemy becomes a friend, the wolf becomes a lamb. According to your explanation, it is because he has discovered

his mistake; he repents, and wants to make honorable amends. That may be true or it may not—I am not prepared to say—what I do know is that he openly pretends to be your suitor, and that every one is already speaking of your marriage."

"You are certainly jesting again, my aunt."

"Nothing is farther from my mind, my dear, I assure you. Dear knows! if he suits you I have nothing to say, as a matter of course; but it is well that you should know what is going on, and what is the real reason of this sudden metamorphosis. Why, even at Alençon when I arrived there, this marriage was all that was talked about. Madame de Frémeuse has had no other idea since your poor husband's death and she is not sensible enough to keep it to herself. She speaks of it to the priest, to her servants, to every one. You know yourself how avaricious she is. I have no doubt, her son has inherited this failing from her; and you can easily understand what a temptation three hundred thousand francs of an income would be to almost any one. Of course, it is quite probable that he really loves you in the bargain—

you are attractive enough to win the love of any man—but his mother really talks too much, and he is in too much of a hurry."

There was indeed a grain of truth in Madame de Combaleu's story, though for the most part it was made up of calumny, perfidoius misrepresentation and pure falsehoods. A few ill-considered words uttered by Madame de Frèmeuse, and a few chance allusions made by the priest, had formed the text from which had been spun this plausible tale. Nevertheless, the venomous shaft went straight to its mark and made a painful wound in the heart of Madame de La Pave. She was, like many other women, bright and clever rather than profound, and passionate rather than wise. There was such an appearance of truth in her aunt's explanation of Maurice's change of conduct that she accepted it without doubt.

"All this is simply ridiculous," said she, as she slightly shrugged her shoulders.

But even as she spoke these words in a supremely disdainful tone, the brightness of her eyes, the color of her cheeks and the increased pallor of the rest of her face, indicated the angry storm that was raging within her.

The mere fact that her vanity had been gratified by the courtesy of Major de Frémeuse, and that she had felt a personal trimph in the delicate reparation which she imagined he was making for having misjudged her, made it all the more humiliating to discover that this atonement was made not to her, but to her fortune. All her old dislike for Maurice returned with increased bitterness, and she thought him to be a man capable of any kind of treachery, not only to her, but also to the memory of her husband. She was greatly hurt, and she determined to be revenged.

Her meditations were disturbed by the arrival of Major de Frémeuse and his mother. She received them very graciously, and Madame de Combaleu also extended them the most cordial welcome.

The abbè Desmortreux came a few moments later, and they all went to the table. Madame de La Pave seemed to be gayer and more animated than usual, and she talked and chatted pleasantly with every one. From time to time, she would remain silent and abstracted for a moment, and then she would

again amuse the company with an epigram or a witticism. In short, she had the appearance of a woman who had undertaken to play a part which she found extremely painful, but which she was determined to carry out to the end. Maurice noticed her unusual liveliness of manner, but he thought that she had something on her mind which she was trying to hide. He noticed also that she drank more champagne than he thought a young woman should; and attributed this to the desire to raise her mind above her troubles that she might show the proper attention to her guests.

After they had had coffee in the salon, Madame de La Pave led her guests to the garden and insisted that Maurice light a cigar. She walked beside him as he smoked so that she might fully enjoy the fragrant aroma, which she said she adored; for she remembered that her husband had been a great smoker. As they walked on, chatting about one thing and another, they kept getting farther and farther away from the rest of the company, and soon found themselves entirely alone in a distant part of the garden. This did not seem to frighten Madame de La Pave

in the least; she stopped under a huge elm, whose shade was but dimly lighted by the feeble rays of the setting sun, and walked slowly up and down for a few moments, keeping all the while within the shadow of the tree; and then, raising her head and throwing back her chin with a characteristic gesture, she said:

"Monsieur de Frémeuse?"

Her voice was always grave, musical and very womanly, but there was a strangely ironical accent about it now that made Maurice wonder what she was about to say.

"Madame?" he replied.

"You know how generous Robert was to me?"

He made an affirmative inclination of the head.

"He left me his whole fortune."

"Yes, Madame, he told me so."

"Ah, I thought you knew it. Well, would you believe that I am an ingrate, and that I sometimes feel like reproaching my husband for his generosity?"

"I am unable to understand why that should be," replied Maurice quietly.

"Why? It is because this immense fortune will bring me—has brought me already—innumerable and endless troubles. It makes me too rich, and all the ruined noblemen and fortune-hunters in France are getting ready to besiege me as soon as my period of mourning shall be over. I shall be exposed to all the machinations of avarice, and all the artifices of deceit; I shall be the subject of gossip and of the most disgraceful calumnies—in fact I am so already. Have you not heard that I am to be married again?"

"No, Madame," replied Maurice.

"No, really? Well then ask your mother, she knows more about it than any one."

It was impossible for Maurice to misunderstand her meaning. He was too greatly surprised to speak for several seconds, and then he said:

"If I have the honor of understanding you rightly, you mean to accuse me of aspiring to your hand—or rather to your fortune—under a false show of friendship. My answer shall be a plain one, and I think I can succeed in convincing you that you are mistaken. If there is a man in the world who, more than

anyone else, would never allow such an idea to enter his head, it is I—you shall know why this very instant. I have deferred telling you something which you must now hear, in the hope that the time would come when, having obtained your friendship and your confidence, I might acquit myself of my responsibility with less violence to your feelings and less embarrassment to myself. I see, however, that that time will never be, and I beg of you to be so kind as to listen now to what I have to say: I have not yet unburdened my conscience of the entire obligation I assumed the night of your husband's death. His last wishes remain to be told to you. His dying supplication was that, in return for the great love that he had for you and the substantial proof which he made to you of his esteem, you would never marry again. He begged of you—he implored you with his latest breath—to never show such a lack of respect to his memory as to contract a second marriage."

A faint cry escaped the lips of the young widow.

"Do you wish me to tell you," continued Maurice, "the language in which your husband

related to me his apprehensions and his fears —the agonized tone in which he made his last supplication? I can do so if you wish, for there is not a single word that he uttered that night which is not yet ringing in my ears, but spare me—spare yourself—those harrowing details, listen only to his last words:

"'Tell her,' he said, 'that if she should ever marry another, I would rise from my grave! she should see my spectre!—I would come back to curse her!'—and he said to me in his agony: 'Swear to me, Maurice, that you will tell her this.'

"'On your honor'.

"'On my honor.' Now Madame, you know all."

She had stopped walking to listen to him. He could not see her face, for by this time it was quite dark; but a few moonbeams that shone through the leaves fell upon a stone bench which was under the tree. She sat down upon it, and he could see how pale she was. She trembled violently; and as she held her head in her hands, he could see that she was weeping bitterly.

"Do you wish me to retire," asked the young man.

She shook her head to signify that she did not; so he remained standing within a few feet of her and listened to her sobs. As soon as she could speak, she said very quietly:

"Monsieur de Frèmeuse?"

He approached, undecided.

She arose from the bench and held out her hand.

"Pardon?" said she.

Maurice accepted her hand with great dignity, and she said:

"Will you be so kind as to lend me your arm? I do not feel very well."

He offered her his arm and they started for the chateau, some of the windows of which were already lighted. As they passed a marble fountain where a stream of water flowed from the open jaws of a huge dragon, she released his arm and dipping her handkerchief in the basin, she bathed her eyes and temples.

"I do not want them to know that I have been crying," she said.

She took his arm again, and they walked on at a slower pace.

"I really do not know," she continued,

"why I did cry, for it is a long time since I have been so happy."

"Happy?" said Maurice in surprise.

"Yes, happy—very happy—to discover that I have been entertaining unjust suspicions, to know that I can rely upon an honest affection which is absolutely free from all self-interest and deceit; and to know that I can lean with confidence upon the arm of a true friend—for you are still my friend, are you not?"

Standing in this beautiful old garden, on a magnificent night, with the silver moonbeams falling as if from Heaven on the white marble of the fountain, and with the delicious fragrance of the flowers permeating the atmosphere, these sweet words had for Maurice an additional sweetness which they borrowed from the surroundings; and the voice that uttered them seemed all but magical. While she was speaking, he could feel the pressure of her form against his side and, as the moonlight fell full upon her face, he thought that he had never seen a woman so beautiful. He felt her tremble with emotion, and the blood tingled in his own finger-tips

as he murmured some confused words assuring her of his devoted affection.

She replied by lightly pressing his arm, and they walked on in silence. When they came to the steps of the chateau, she stopped as though undecided about something, and then, suddenly withdrawing her arm from his, she said:

"Come, let us go in."

He followed her into the salon, the door of which opened into the garden, and found Madame de Combaleu, Madame de Frémeuse and the old priest, all three of whom seemed surprised that they should have taken such a long *tete-a-tete*, and remained silent as if expecting some kind of an explanation; but, as none was forthcoming Madame de Frémeuse pleaded a head-ache and arose to leave. Madame de La Pave, after having cast a withering look at her aunt, said to Maurice:

"When did you say you would be so kind as to take a horseback ride with me?"

"It will give me great pleasure to go any time you wish," he replied.

"Well then, to-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

He bowed, and giving his arm to his mother, they left the chateau.

As soon as they were alone, he anticipated his mother's questions and said:

"My dear mother, your hopes are ruined; the message is delivered."

He then told her how the unmerited suspicion of Madame de La Pave had caused him to tell her of her husband's last supplication, and how the young widow had received the communication.

"But I am happy to say, my dear mother," he continued, "that your fears as to the result of my embassy were entirely groundless; and Madame de La Pave has not declared war against the embassador, as you predicted."

"My son," said the old lady, gaily, "I had forgotten that to correctly prophesy a woman's conduct in a crisis in which her affections are involved, one should begin by consulting Satan."

CHAPTER IV.

Madame de Frémeuse was surprised and even alarmed when, at seven o'clock the next morning, she saw her son enter her chamber. He was very pale and he had the general appearance of a man who has passed a restless night.

"Ah, Maurice, what is the matter?" asked his mother.

"Nothing is the matter, mother, nothing whatever."

He approached her bed and kissed her.

"You are going to be disappointed a little, mother," he said, "that is all. I have been ordered back to my regiment, and I must leave this morning for Rennes."

"This morning? impossible! Your furlough was to last for six weeks. Have you received a telegram?—No, I would have known it—Maurice, you scamp! you are not telling me the truth."

"Well then," he replied with a smile, "I

was telling a falsehood—trying to rather—but really I can't to my mother. I will tell you the real reason why I am leaving so suddenly, and you will see that there is nothing alarming about it, and nothing of which you can not approve."

He sat down beside his mother's bed, and taking one of her hands, he said:

"My dear mother, you know that a man sometimes receives impressions which, though light and superficial enough at the time, gain in intensity and depth the more he allows his mind to dwell upon them. That is what has happened to me as the result of my interview last night with Madame de La Pave. The events of yesterday evening were so exciting and so rapid, that I could not then grasp their full significance. I have passed a restless night thinking about them; and, it seems to me, that the consequences of that interview might become so serious, so delicate and so dangerous that I have made up my mind to show my bravery in flight. Do you understand me sufficiently, dear mother, or am I under the embarrassing necessity of explaining my meaning more fully?"

"What!" cried Madame de Frémeuse, "are you in love with Marianne?"

"In love with Marianne! About as much as Marianne is in love with me; but by mere force of circumstances, and of the complications with which you are familiar—and, I have no doubt, the devil *has* had a hand in it, as you yourself said last night—I had one of those extremely emotional experiences with Madame de La Pave that a man cannot go through without great agitation of the feelings and some kind of a disturbance of the heart. Should we now see each other every day for several weeks, with all the privileges of an intimate friendship and with the still lively remembrance of that night of reproaches, tears and tender reconciliation, it certainly would not be dangerous for Madame de La Pave, but I could not answer for myself; I admit frankly that I would be in danger. It is a matter in which my peace of mind and my honor are both at stake; and, I assure you that I do not want to risk either the one or the other, that is why I am leaving."

"What! my dear boy," said Madame de Frémeuse, "is your heart so weak as

that, and you a soldier and cannoneer?"

"It is all very well, mother, to be a soldier and a cannoneer, but when a man walks on a splendid moonlight night with a beautiful woman at his side, who weeps and tenderly presses his arm, he finds that he is but a poor weak son of Adam, after all."

"Well!" said the old countess with a sigh, "I have a son who is an honorable man, and that is one consolation. There is nothing I can say to you, my dear child, but farewell. Where are you going?"

"I am going to meet my regiment at Rennes. I shall take the noon train at Alençon."

"But you are to take a horseback ride with Madame de La Pave at ten o'clock?"

"I have written to her."

An hour later Major de Frémeuse, seated in his mother's little coupè, was already on his way to Alençon.

Half an hour after his departure, Madame de La Pave received the following note:

"Madame, and very dear neighbor:—

"I have suddenly been recalled to my regiment, and I regret exceedingly the necessity which compels me to leave without having

had the pleasure of seeing you again. Allow me to hope that you also will hear, with some degree of regret, the farewell of one whom you have been so kind as to call your friend. Believe me, I shall always endeavor to merit that title by the most respectful and faithful devotion.

"MAURICE DU PAS-DEVANT DE FREMEUSE."

Madame de La Pave, after having read this brief epistle, closed her beautiful dark eyes and dreamed for a moment. As a general rule, the feelings which agitated her were not revealed in her face; only this morning Madame de Combaleu, who had been briefly told of Maurice's sudden departure, noticed that her niece was unusually silent at breakfast, and that she seemed to have lost all appetite. Later in the day, Marianne ordered her carriage and went to call on Madame de Frémeuse.

Maurice had made his mother promise that she would not, under any circumstances, tell Madame de La Pave the real reason of his sudden departure. Madame de Frémeuse kept to her promise, but in the way of a person who is dying to reveal a secret. In replying to the

young woman's questions with the ready made answers that Maurice had given her, she would sigh, look embarrassed, and keep up a general air of mystery, which flatly contradicted her words. The two women understood each other perfectly; and, from the mute language and vague insinuations of the old countess, the young widow deduced the real state of affairs with tolerable accuracy.

When she returned to the chateau, she went to her desk and hurriedly wrote three letters to Maurice, one after the other. The first was sarcastic and imprudent, the second friendly and kind and the third was cold and supremely indifferent; then she destroyed all three, and decided that it was better not to write at all.

It would have been impossible for Madame de La Pave herself to describe the conflicting emotions which she felt on account of the sudden departure and strange conduct of the young major. She was conscious of a strange mixture of anger and disdain, of sorrow and admiration. What was particularly distressing was the fact that she could relate to no one, not even to him, the many feelings which

agitated her. She would have loved dearly to tell this peculiar young man the contempt she had for his weakness, or the admiration she had for his delicate chivalry—she did not know which, only she was quite sure that she would like to tell him something. Then came doubts as to his real motive for leaving. Was it not possible, after all, that he had told the simple truth; that he had really been obliged to go back to his regiment, and that she had misinterpreted the mysterious insinuations of Madame de Frémeuse? In that case, he would certainly write her another letter besides the laconic one that he had sent that morning; and she waited impatiently for some further word from him.

But the letter which she waited for so anxiously did not come, and she was sufficiently acquainted with the delicate tact of Major de Frémeuse, to understand from his prolonged silence that he had chosen that method for breaking off all relations with her entirely.

In the latter part of August she left the chateau and returned to Paris to spend the winter. She lived in great seclusion for awhile,

as became a young widow in her first year of mourning; but after the month of December, which was the anniversary of her husband's death, a kind of relaxation was visible. Her dresses were less severely plain, she occasionally entertained her intimate friends and she sometimes even went to the opera.

She was on all occasions accompanied by her aunt, and sometimes by Gérard de Combaleu, whose manners and habits, owing to the good influence of his cousin, seemed to be decidedly improving. A rumor soon began to be circulated very quietly that a marriage between the rich heiress and the gay Gerard was not entirely among the impossibilities. This rumor reached the ear of Madame de Frémeuse who from her quiet country home managed to keep herself posted on what was going on in the metropolis by keeping up an active correspondence with intimate friends that she had there. She at once wrote to her son what she had heard; and Maurice replied in a perfectly respectful, but rather laconic letter, in which he spoke of the rumor as a piece of senseless gossip.

About the first of the following April, Mad-

ame de La Pave returned to the chateau, and her aunt and Gérard came with her. From this time on, Madame de Frèmeuse saw unmistakable confirmations of the rumor she had heard. The prolonged stay of Gerard at the chateau the bouquets which he was continually presenting to Marianne, the presents of all kinds which came from Paris almost every morning, and the carriage rides which Madame de La Pave took regularly with her cousin, made it very plain that she recognized him as a suitor. At last one day, about six weeks after Madame de La Pave had returned, Madame de Combaleu called upon Madame de Frèmeuse and began the converastion in her most gracious manner by saying:

"My dear Madame, I have always appreciated your kind friendsip so much, and I realize so well the generous interest which you always take in everything that concerns me or my dear niece, that I am sure you will be pleased to hear of the happy event that is to take place in our family. My son is engaged to be married to dear Marianne."

Madame de Frémeuse seemed to be enraptured at the news.

"Ah," said she, "allow me to embrace you. I am sure I could hear nothing which could give me so much pleasure."

The two ladies kissed each other in the most affectionate way imaginable, and Madame de Combaleu continued:

"No one can understand so well as you, my dear, how happy I am; for you also have a son, whom you no doubt wish to marry well and you know how anxious we mothers are about such things, and how much we are to be congratulated when we have been successful."

"My dear," replied Madame de Frèmeuss, "do not speak to me about my son, I am unfortunate enough to be the mother of a ridiculously quixotic young soldier who, for the very reason that he is poor himself, could never be persuaded to marry a woman with a fortune. He has actually thrown away many splendid chances for such an absurd reason."

"One can not have everything, my dear. You have the rare distinction of being the mother of a phœnix; and, as the phœnix is a strange bird and has a peculiar way of repro-

ducing its species, it can have no possible use for a mate. Good bye! I must go now to tell the priest; but I made up my mind that you should be the first."

Madame de Frèmeuse again thanked her for having been so remarkably kind, and the two ladies took affectionate leave of each other.

In spite of her bitter disappointment, Madame de Frèmeuse could not help feeling a sort of malignant triumph in informing Maurice of the official confirmation of the rumor which he had been pleased to look upon as idle gossip. By one of those strange contradictions of human nature, she both blamed and admired the conduct of her son. She appreciated the honorable motive which prompted him to avoid Madame de La Pave, and admired the delicate way in which he had withdrawn himself from unpleasant entanglements; yet, at the same time, she also felt a certain antipathy towards these very principles which had proved so antagonistic to her maternal hopes.

"You see, my dear son," she wrote Maurice, "that Madame de La Pave was mocking you

with her outburst of noble sentiments. I would not go so far as to say that your honor has succeeded in making a dupe of you, but your scruples have been the cause of an unworthy marriage for Marianne, and of the triumph of the horrible Combaleu. In place of choosing an honorable man, Madame de La Pave is going to marry a worthless scamp, who will disgrace her and squander her fortune besides; that is just the difference, and I must confess that I am unable to see how the shade of poor Robert gains by it."

As she received no reply to her letter, Madame de Frèmeuse concluded that Maurice was indignant at Madame de La Pave for showing such a lack of respect for the memory of her husband, and that he preferred to remain silent on a subject which must necessarily be painful to him. She did not suppose for an instant that the announcement of the engagement would cause her son anything more than a few heart-pangs from which he would soon recover. He had now been gone nearly a year; during that time she had spent a couple of weeks with him at Rennes, and had had many letters from him, and neither in his

letters nor his conversation, had he ever said anything that might lead her to imagine that he entertained any other feeling for Marianne than sincere and respectful friendship.

One evening, about two weeks later, as the Countess de Frémeuse was doing some needle work in her boudoir she heard the noise of a horse's feet on the pavement of the yard. She ran to the window and saw her son dismounting from his steed. She vaguely understood that this sudden return was a reply to the letter she had sent him, and that such a move on his part was likely to involve serious consequences.

Maurice entered the room with a smile on his lips, but his face was very pale. His mother seized the two hands which he held out to her, and as he kissed her, she said:

"You! why what brought you here?"

"I came to rest myself, mother. I have been rather worn out and indisposed for some time, and my old wound in the head has given me some trouble. The physician recommended rest and country air; and, as I did not take my full furlough last year, I had no trouble in getting another now, so here I am!"

"Maurice," said his mother, as she looked him straight in the eyes, "you are trying to deceive me again."

He commenced to laugh, kissed her again and made her sit down beside him.

"My dear mother," said he, "I know what you mean. You think I have come hcme to do something tragic because I have heard of our fair neighbor's engagement, just as they do in 'Lucie de Lammermoor'; and that I want the blood of Bernard-Gérard, what's his name? but I assure you that I have no intention of doing anything so ferocious or so ridiculous. I would not be telling the truth however," he continued, somewhat haughtily, "if I should say that this engagement has had nothing to do with my coming home. Tlere are some things which one cannot allov to happen without protesting against them, at least. If Madame de La Pave wishes t« get married, she is at perfect liberty to dc so; but Robert has said that if that should ever be she would see his spectre, and I shall be that spectre. It is the last service tha I can render my poor friend, and I will not hesitate in doing it. I will remonstrate wih her,

nothing more. You need not be afraid of anything in the way of publicity or scandal. I am not insane, and I am proud, you know that very well; so you need no be at all alarmed."

His mother wiped a tear from her eye, and made no answer.

"My dear mother," said he, affectionately, "what would you have me do? Do you want me to promise that I shall not go to see Madame de La Pave without taking you with me; would that reassure you any?"

"A little," replied the old lady, as she continued to weep.

"Well then, I promise."

But it was Madame de Frèmeuse herself who, the very next afternoon, urged her son to go to the chateau. Since she could not prevent a meeting between them, she thought she would be more at her ease when the ice had been broken, and new relations between Maurice and the young woman had been established. She had heard from a neighbor that Gerard de Combaleu had gone to Paris for a few days, and she was very glad that her son's first visit could be made in his absence.

When mother and son presented themselves at the chateau, they were very cordially received by Madame de Combaleu; who, having heard of Maurice's return, had been watching all the approaches to the chateau with the eye of a field major. She begged her guests to excuse her niece for not appearing, but it would be entirely impossible for the poor child to do so. She was not well, and was obliged to remain in her room.

"My son is in Paris," said Madame de Combaleu; "it is the first time they have been separated since their betrothal, and you can imagine how distressed dear Marianne is. She has been in tears all day."

Just as Madame de Combaleu was saying these words in a loud tone, the door of the salon was opened, and Marianne herself came in, not with any show of languid grief such as one might have expected from her aunt's description, but beautiful, radiant and gay.

"Ah, what a happy surprise!" she cried, as she held out both her hands, one to Maurice and the other to Madame de Frèmeuse.

Her appearance and her manner were not by any means what Maurice had expected.

He had fondly flattered himself that the sight of him would have the effect of a Medusa's head upon the faithless widow, and, instead of that, she seemed to be decidedly pleased to see him. It was he who felt uncomfortable, and his mother also was decidedly ill at ease. Madame de La Pave seemed to enjoy the embarrassment of her guests and the discomfiture of her aunt. As no one else seemed inclined to talk, she chattered gayly herself and seemed to be in excellent spirits. Maurice was decidedly puzzled, for neither in her manner nor in her speech did she show the least sign of affectation.

When he and his mother were about to leave, she said:

"Well, Major, that horseback ride that you owe me for nearly a year?"

Maurice was too much surprisd to reply for a moment, then he said:

"When you please, Madame."

"Yes, she replied, laughing," you always say, when you please; and then when I please you are not to be found, you have run away."

"I beg of you to give me one more trial," said the young man.

"Admit that I am good-natured—well then, to-morrow at ten o'clock."

While Maurice and his mother were discussing the strange conduct of the young widow on their way home, Madame de Combaleu was asking her niece whether she thought it exactly the proper thing to ride tête-à-tête with a stranger so soon before her marriage.

"In the first place," replied Madame de La Pave, "Major de Frémeuse is not a stranger, then we will not be tête-à-tête for the stableman, François, shall accompany us; and finally, my aunt, I am not a young girl but a widow, and in that capacity I think that I may go wherever I wish, and with whom I please."

"But my dear, are you not afraid of offending Gerard?"

"Not in the least," replied Marianne as she left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

"The fact of the matter," said Maurice to his mother on their way home, "is that I have made a mistake in taking that woman seriously. I supposed her to have considerable strength of character, and attributed a certain depth to her feelings which would have made her present conduct very culpable, but it is very evident that it is not. Her surprising gayety when she met me proves that she does not realize what she is doing. She is in reality a child, and I should rather laugh at her than be angry."

Madame de Frémeuse was not so ready as her son to believe that Marianne was irresponsible for her conduct, but she was greatly relieved to find that there was no occasion to fear that Maurice would do anything violent; which she had greatly dreaded, in spite of his assurances to the contrary; and that night she slept, which was something she had not done since her son's sudden return.

The next morning Maurice arrived at the château a little before ten. An old servant was holding by the bridles two beautiful young horses who were restlessly pawing the ground and champing their bits. Before he reached the steps Marianne herself appeared, looking entirely bewitching in her neat riding-habit. She crossed the lawn with a light step, snapping her riding-whip gayly in the air.

"Good morning, monsieur," said she, with a smile, as she held out her hand to be helped into the saddle.

They started up the main road, followed at a short distance by the old servant. The young widow was in the same high spirits as the day before; but, in spite of her gayety, Maurice fully expected that at the first opportunity she would make some allusion to the secret which they held between them, and would apologize in some way for her approaching marriage. He was prepared to listen to her with cold indifference, and to treat her like the child he supposed her to be.

But the truth was that the child who rode beside him, talking the lightest kind of nonsense and snapping the leaves from the trees

with her riding-whip, was in reality a woman, and one who was fully conscious of what she had done and intended to do. She had undertaken to play a dangerous part; had won a first success, and she now felt herself enveloped in an atmosphere of danger and excitement, which made every feminine instinct within her pulsate with pleasure.

They were riding along at a brisk gallop, when she suddenly reined in her horse and looked inquiringly at Maurice.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing but my usual forgetfulness; will you be so kind as to call François?"

He motioned to the old servant who came up quickly, and Madame de La Pave said:

"François, I will have to ask you to go back to the chateau; I have left a letter on my desk which must go on the noon train. Come back as soon as you have mailed it."

François started back at once, and Marianne again took her place at Maurice's side. They rode on for several minutes in silence, then turning suddenly in her saddle, she said:

"You think that I am doing wrong?"

"Yes, madame," he replied, gravely, "I think you are doing very wrong."

"I know it," said she, "I know that I am terribly wicked, but it is you who are the cause of it."

"I?"

"Yes you. Why did you abandon me? If you really were called back to your regiment —which I never believed for a moment—could you not have written to me once in awhile; could you not have given me some sign of your interest and affection, some indication that you were still alive? If I am condemned to live without love, do you think that I can get along without friendship also? Well, in the situation in which I was placed, you were the only person upon whom I could rely as a true friend—you knew it, for I told you so. The friendship of such a man as you might have been some consolation for the blank destiny that I have drawn; it was the only hope I had, and you abandoned me—you ran away. Do you think I could stand all that and do nothing? Heavens, monsieur, you must take me for one of the stone statues in my garden. I am going to be perfectly frank with you. If I marry it is to revenge myself for your desertion, for your distrust, for your

hardness of heart; it is to strike back in my turn, and cause you whatever pain I can."

"If that has been your object, madame, allow me to congratulate you upon your success; for you have indeed pained me grievously. In regard to the charges which you make against me, they are perfectly true; and in explaining them I will follow the example which you have set and be perfectly candid. I went away because I thought the role of an intimate friend to a woman so charming as you was too difficult and too dangerous for me to assume."

"I suppose that speech deserves a bow," said Madame de La Pave, as she checked her horse and saluted him with mock seriousness; then she said after a pause.

"I suppose the same programme is to be gone over, you are going away again?"

"Since you are to be married, it can make no difference whether I go or stay."

"Ah," said she, "that is true."

She remained silent for a few moments, her body gracefully following the movements of her horse, then looking straight at Maurice, she said:

"And if I should not marry, what then?"

Before he could reply to her pointed and embarrassing question, their *tête-à-tête* was interrupted by the appearance of a horseman a short distance ahead of them who was coming in their direction.

"It is Gerard!" cried the young widow, and turning to Maurice she said:

"This is a surprise; I did not expect him until to-night. He must have taken a night train—amiable impatience—Monsieur de Frémeuse, I ask as a favor to myself, that you be civil to him."

Maurice bowed.

Gerard de Combaleu was a robust, well-built young man, whose face did not yet show any sign of the many dissipations in which he indulged. He was not without a certain manly beauty, though it was of a low order; and was a sort of a Don Juan of the wine houses and the theaters. He was not afraid of any man's sword, and was considered sufficiently honorable, judged from a worldly standpoint.

Madame de La Pave went ahead to meet him and held out her hand.

"Welcome, cousin," said she, then turning in her saddle—"Monsieur de Frémeuse, my cousin, Monsieur de Combaleu — Gérard, Major de Frémeuse, my husband's dearest friend."

The two gentlemen bowed to each other coldly, for if there was a man in the world whom Maurice would have loved to caress gently with the point of his sword, it was the *fiancé* of Madame de La Pave; and, on the other hand, M. de Combaleu, good-natured though he was, could not find it in his heart to be pleased to find his intended bride riding alone with such a distinguished young officer. Still on second thoughts Gérard, who thought himself as good as married to his cousin, decided to be agreeable, and the frown on his brow cleared at the first courteous words which Maurice, who remembered his promise, felt obliged to speak to him.

While Gérard was helping her from her horse at the gate of the chateau, Madame de La Pave asked Maurice if he would remain for lunch. He declined discreetly, and she did not insist; so he started on his way to his home. When he arrived there he told his

mother that the ride had been entirely uneventful, and that she could now sleep in peace.

CHAPTER VIII.

After lunch Madame de a La Pave, who complained of a headache, retired to her room, were she remained all the afternoon restlessly pacing the floor. Of what could she be thinking? What was it that was agitating the very depths of her soul? For it was very evident from her manner that she was turning some serious question over and over in her mind, the solution of which was beyond her. Could it be that her engagement with her cousin, after having served to accomplish some secret end, now seemed irksome to her? Was it possible that she wished to break it? Her marriage was to take place in six weeks; the preparations had been already made, all the questions in regard to the settlements had been settled and the very day had been fixed. Under such circumstances, upon what honorable pretext could the engagement be broken? How could she escape without scandal, and with due regard to the

conventionalities of society and the world?

If Madame de La Pave really asked herself these questions, she must have been unable to answer them, for, from that day, she received her cousin's attentions with greater cordiality than before. She teased him pleasantly about his reputation as a fast young man; and at the table she said to her aunt, who was frowning at Gérard for doing too much honor to his cousin's wines:

"My dear aunt, what is the use of being so severe. Let Gérard drink what he will. For my part, I am delighted that his head and his stomach are both so good that he can drink a reasonable amount of wine without being any the worse for it. I can not bear an effeminate man. Look at our forefathers, they drank like fishes, and were none the less genteel on that account. Just the other day, I was reading the *Memoires de Bassompierre.* Certainly Bassompierre was the very type of a gentleman, yet he could hold his own with the heaviest drinkers of Germany. Then think of those chivalrous knights of the time of the Stuarts—all of those valorous cavaliers could drink as well as they could fight. In

my opinion, society nowadays has grown supercilious on that subject, which simply indicates that we are growing weaker. So my dear Gérard, do not drink enough to injure yourself, that would grieve me greatly, but do not stint yourself for any prudish reasons and you will give me great pleasure."

"My dear cousin," said Gérard, deeply moved, for his heart could not have been reached in a surer way, "I admire the liberality of your views. Be assured I shall not abuse your kindness, but I appreciate it thoroughly. I am entirely of your opinion in regard to Bassompierre, he was a *bon vivant* such as we no longer see—I drink this glass of your excellent Madeira to your generous heart."

Gérard de Combaleu, who was more accustomed to bad company than good, had never felt entirely at his ease in his cousin's presence, for her well-bred manners and dignified bearing intimidated him; but a few little encouragements such as this soon gave him more confidence in himself and he began to gradually overcome his embarrassment. In spite of the coarseness of his tastes, he was far from

being indifferent to Marianne's refined beauty; and, in his own way, was very much in love. He stood in great awe, however of the straight-laced restrictions of good society. "The devil take me," he once admitted confidentially to some intimate friends at the Club, "if I know how to act with women of that kind."

Madame de La Pave seemed to know of Gérard's misgivings and, laying aside her usual haughty reserve, made every effort to dispel them. She made tender little speeches to him, put roses in his button-holes and found pretexts for passing her lovely perfumed hands before his eyes as though she wished to enchant him by some magic spell.

With such gracious advances on the part of his cousin, it would have been hard for Gérard to continue to be as diffident as he had at first shown himself, but he soon felt embarrassment of another kind. He was but little versed in the art of making love except to *grisettes*, and did not know how to respond to Marianne's amiable cajoleries. He always felt that he was running great risks of offending a person of her refined breeding when in

his honest heart he had the least intention of anything of the kind, and this fear made him even more reserved than ever. When they were on one of their horseback rides Madame de La Pave, who was no doubt surprised to see her attentions so coldly received, said to him:

"Gérard, is it really true that you have been so very fast?"

"Well, my dear cousin, you know how it is —I have been young like the rest of the world."

"And you are young still, thank Providence! but you must have been slandered dreadfully?"

"Very likely, my cousin."

"Or perhaps," continued Madame de La Pave, "it is I who have been mistaken—you know that we women have but very vague ideas about such things—but I had heard so often that you were a *mauvais sujet* that I had formed a terrible opinion of you. I was really afraid to meet you; and there is nothing about you to frighten one, after all."

"I am very happy, dear cousin, to correct your error."

"Well no!—you must not be so very happy

about it. Of course, I am very glad to find that you do not correspond to the idea I had formed of a *mauvais sujet*, but still I am a little disappointed. You know how curious we women are—the women of our set especially. To us a *mauvais sujet* is a formidable, mysterious kind of a personage, of whom the mere thought gives us little chills of terror, and of whom we would expect the most extraordinary things. He is a sort of a monster whom we are dreadfully afraid of meeting, and yet who rather disappoints us if he does not present himself to be subdued."

"Well, thank Heaven! you can see that you have no reason to be alarmed."

"Oh, none whatever," replied Marianne, as she started off at a gallop.

A new idea entered Gerard's head as he followed her. His perceptions were not remarkably keen, yet he was not too dull to see the point of his cousin's speech; which made it plain to him that, in his excessive efforts to observe the proprieties, he had simply succeeded in making himself insipid and uninteresting.

He remembered having heard from some

of the gallant beaux of the club that even the most virtuous women have often a secret admiration for men whose morals are just sufficiently questionable to make them interesting. This seemed to him to explain the vexation and disappointment which Madame de La Pave had not been able to hide. It was very evident that, having heard of his reputation as a *mauvais sujet*, she expected from him, not coarseness nor vulgarity, but greater animation and demonstrativeness of manner, something to make her feel the delightful emotions attending adventure and danger.

Yes, he had undoubtedly been very stupid. He had been too much on his good-behavior and had simply made himself insipid. He had disappointed this charming little woman who had hoped, for the first time in her life, to be able to rise with him, just a little, above the platitudes of conventional love.

M. de Combaleu was still pondering over his error when he went to dinner, and in the frame of mind in which he found himself, he was very glad to imbibe his cousin's wines with the perfect freedom which she had been so kind as to allow him. He soon began to

show the coarse gayety which formed the basis of his character, and which was so fully appreciated at the club. He saw his mother frown, but a look from Marianne reassured him. Madame de La Pave seemed to relish humor *à la Rabelais*, which, undoubtedly, struck her delicate ears now for the first time.

After dinner they retired to a cosy little. boudoir where the now exuberant Gérard received from the hands of Marianne, first a cigar for which she lighted the match herself, then a cup of coffee and a glass of *liqueur*. As she performed these little services, he would bow his thanks until his mustache almost touched her hair, murmuring, in a husky voice, compliments which made her smile and blush at the same time. Madame de Combaleu, who saw the young people getting along so well together, was discreet enough to leave, saying that she thought that a walk in the garden would be good for her nerves.

When Gérard found himself alone with his cousin, he fell heavily upon the divan where she was already seated, and gazed at her attentively. His eyes were watery, his cheeks

inflamed and he slightly coughed and raised his head several times as a man does when he can not find words sufficiently strong for the adequate expression of his feelings. Finding himself unable to overcome this sudden deficiency in his vocabulary, Gérard took his cousin's hands and pressed them to his lips with unusual ardor.

"It seems to me, Gérard," she said, "that you are unusually gay this evening; and that you are rather inclined to be forward. Is it because I have seemed to be disappointed because you are not a *mauvais sujet?*"

"My dear cousin, "replied Gerard, "I will admit that I have never before had such a desire to relax a little from the conventional rules of behavior. Can you wonder that I should—you know that you yourself have given me some encouragement?"

"Oh! I hope that you have understood," said the young woman who appeared to be decidedly ill at ease, and who really was so—"that I was only joking."

"What, my dear cousin—my beautiful and delightful Marianne! am I not allowed at this stage of our engagement to place one kiss upon that charming forehead?"

She hesitated, and then slowly bowed her head until her brow met his lips.

Gerard was decidedly too much encouraged by this first victory; and immediately endeavored, somewhat violently, to steal a less Platonic kiss.

Partly offended, but unable to restrain her laughter, Marianne arose from the divan, murmuring some undecided words.

"Come now, Gérard! compose yourself, I beg of you—seriously—you must not behave in that way!"

Probably the unfortunate Gérard remembered at that time such unfortunate proverbs as "None but the brave deserve the fair" and "Nothing ventured, nothing won;" or, more likely, he remembered nothing and simply obeyed the blind prompting of passion as he encircled the young woman's waist with his arm and pressed her to his bosom with almost brutal force. She made an effort to push him away, and gave vent to a scream, which this time was not in jest, for she was greatly incensed at such conduct, never having been treated in this way before—perhaps not even knowing that such things were possible. He

kept his hold, however, and drew her towards the divan at the same time kissing her several times on the cheeks, in spite of all the resistance she could make.

"You horrible wretch! will you let me go?" she cried; and then escaping by a supreme effort, she ran to the mantelpiece and pulled the bell-rope several times.

The door was opened instantly and her aunt appeared, followed by two servants.

It was with great amazement that Madame de Combaleu saw her niece standing, erect, defiant, her hair loose and her cheeks inflamed; and, in a corner of the room, Gerard sitting mute, pale and crushed.

"My aunt," said the young woman, "it is to you that I wish to speak."

The two servants immediately left the room.

"My aunt," continued Madame de La Pave, "your son has just been guilty of conduct which would be an insult to the meanest servant girl. Never shall a man capable of such vulgarity become my husband—never! —Not one word, my aunt, I declare to you that it is useless! You will have some preparations to make—take all the time you wish

—but from this moment a home in common for the two of us is entirely out of the question. I shall go to my cousin's in Alençon while you remain here."

Then quickly rearranging her hair with a deft movement of her hand she left the room with tragic dignity and left mother and son to their own reflections.

Three quarters of an hour later, having absolutely refused any kind of an interview to her aunt, Marianne ordered her carriage and started on her way to Alençon.

From the confused and evasive answers that Gérard made to her questions, Madame de Combaleu did not learn anything that might lead her to suppose that her licentious and thick-witted son had simply fallen into a trap that had been very cunningly laid for him; nor that Madame de La Pave had contrived to have herself treated with a lack of respect for the purpose of providing herself with an excuse for breaking an engagement which no longer served her ends; yet she quickly saw that there must be some sort of connection between the rupture with Gérard and the sudden return of Major de Frémeuse, for

whom she had always felt that her niece had a secret liking. If anything could add to her horror of the situation, it was to know that this catastrophy, which completely ruined her own hopes, would, in all probability, result in the triumph of her detested neighbor and rival Madame de Frémeuse. Nevertheless, she dared not mention her suspicions to the son, for she well knew that a single imprudent word might bring about a meeting between that humiliated and exasperated young man and an adversary who was just as courageous and, in all probability, much more skillful. Madame de Combaleu could only nourish her rage in silence; and, hastily making what preparations were necessary, she left the château the following night.

CHAPTER IX.

For several days Major de Frémeuse had been thinking of the strange incidents of his ride with Madame de La Pave, and was very much surprised at receiving no further word from her; when, about a week later, a strange rumor began to be circulated in the neighborhood. It was said that a terrible scene had taken place at the chateau between Madame de La Pave and her *fiancé*, that an insurmountable incompatibility of temperament had been made manifest, in short, that Gérard had been deposed and the engagement broken.

This news caused Madame de Fremeuse ecstasies of pure joy, for they entirely dispelled her anxieties, and at the same time restored all her hopes. Her son heard the announcement with less enthusiasm, though, as a matter of course, he was greatly pleased.

"I have no doubt," said he, "that though she has broken this particular engagement,

she is likely to marry some one else at any time. It is a consolation, however to know that it will not be so soon after poor Robert's death; and we may hope that the next time she will display better taste in making her selection. There was something particularly disagreeable in seeing such a beautiful and refined young woman falling into the hands of a brute—it was like a horrible dream."

The idea occurred to him that perhaps Madame de La Pave, after having taken such a decisive step—and one for which he might be in some part responsible—expected from him some expression of his sympathy and approval, and, for the purpose of performing this act of courtesy and approval he went to the château.

He was ushered into the library where he found Madame de La Pave writing at her desk.

"Ah," said she, as she arose to meet him, "you have anticipated my intentions; I was in the very act of writing to you."

They were entirely alone; and she approached him, placing her hand lightly on his sleeve, looked him straight in the eyes and said:

"Well, are you satisfied?"

"Entirely satisfied," replied Maurice, "and very happy. If I have had anything to do with the step you have taken, I congratulate myself sincerely."

"You have had everything to do with it," she replied, emphatically; then as he sat down on a low chair, she pointed to the chair in front of her and said:

"Sit there."

He obeyed her and she continued:

"Monsieur, my greatest desire is that you will understand me. Like many other women, I am often fickle and sometimes heartless—my cousin can testify to that—but as a rule, I am honest and sincere enough, as you know already, and shall know still better. Listen then to what I have to say: I loved my husband, perhaps not with all the impassioned tenderness of which I am capable, but I loved him sincerely. I loved him living; and I loved him after his death, until the day on which you told me of his last wish —or rather his last command. You must know, Monsieur de Frémeuse, as well as one person can answer for the feelings of another,

that I would have been capable of the devotion and eternal fidelity to his memory which he asked; but such devotion and such a sacrifice can have no value nor sweetness unless they are entirely voluntary. My husband, in presuming to place such a charge upon my conscience and such a burden upon my life, showed a lack of confidence in me which I can never pardon. I am obeying him, it is true, but understand well that it is entirely for your sake—not his. After I had misunderstood and even hated you for a long time, I learned to esteem you greatly; so much so that I would not now do anything for which you would despise me. I have told you the truth, monsieur—the whole truth. You may now judge me as you wish, and do as you wish. I shall always admit that you are in the right."

As she stopped talking, two tears trembled at the ends of her long lashes and fell upon her cheeks.

"Madame," said Maurice, as he mastered his own emotion with difficulty, "such an impassioned soul as yours must be able to understand all the weaknesses, all the extrava-

gances, of passion. I beg of you to pardon poor Robert who loved you so madly, for my sake—"

There was at that time such a variety of emotions in the young man's heart, that he was obliged to pause for a moment; then he continued:

"For my sake, for the sake of the friendship I had for him, and which I must now have for his widow; for from this moment I consecrate myself to you absolutely. I shall always try to be the true and devoted friend you have hoped for."

"Thank you," was all she said, as she held out her hand.

Marianne mingled with her most cunning stratagems a sincerity of passion which was, at the same time, an excuse for them and the secret of their success. She had found the means of making Maurice look upon devotion to her as an act of generosity and a charge upon his honor. This devotion brought their friendship to a point which was almost love, and this love, which they were so dangerously near was almost a crime. From that day he belonged to her and it was impossible for him

to free himself from the web which she had spun around him. He surrendered himself entirely to this strange *liaison*, from the charms and the dangers of which he had once thought it necessary to flee. Experience now taught him that he had mistaken neither the charms nor the dangers. He understood now, better than ever before, how difficult it would be to remain on terms of such extreme intimacy with this fascinating young woman without jeopardizing his honor or hers.

Madame de La Pave was not only a woman of that idealistic grace and irresistible charm of manner which has been the favorite theme of poets ever since the dawn of literature, but she had also the fatal fascination of a Circè, a kind of magic beauty which does not appeal to the better instincts of a man's true nature, but to the influence of which all men are subject. She was one of those sorceresses who, in their languid graces, their deep caressing eyes and their seductive smiles, seem to hold the secret of unimaginable and voluptuous love. The friendship of such women will satisfy no man, but they produce in all who are brought under the influence of their

witchery a furious desire of complete possession or a crushing and bitter disappointment which lasts until death.

It is said that certain serpents envelop their victims in a magic spell which, though fatal, is entirely painless, and is not without its own voluptuous secret. Maurice felt himself subdued in such a spell whenever he was in the presence of the young widow. It was a charm against which he made no effort to defend himself, and which made him forget everything but the enchantress; but he was no sooner out of her sight, and beyond the hearing of her voice, than the spell was broken, and—merciful Heavens! what was he doing? What was to be the final end of this nameless *liaison* which, so far, was innocent enough, but which was already becoming the subject of gossip, and endangering the reputation of the woman whose honor should be dearer to him than his own? And when his furlough should be expired, what then? Would he go? Could he leave her now? Was he going to do that for which he had blamed Robert so much, for the same woman, and without Robert's excuse? Was he, also,

going to lay aside his epaulettes and allow his sword to rust for the sake of a woman whom it would be a crime to love? Was not this the sheerest folly and the deepest disgrace? But, if she asked him, could he refuse her anything? Finally, and above all, was he not wildly in love with her?

One night as he was returning from the chateau, and, as he was out of sight of the enchantress, being again seized by his scruples and his doubts, he saw a light in the Abbe Demortreux's study window. This light as it fell upon the shrubbery in the yard, gave him an idea of peace which seemed almost divine, and which made him envy the old priest who could spend his declining years in this quiet retreat. He hesitated for an instant, and then suddenly entered the yard and knocked at the door of the parsonage.

The Abbé Demortreux, armed with a magnifying-glass, was busy examining some medals when the servant announced Major de Frémeuse. He welcomed his visitor cordially, but not without an anxious expression on his face.

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur le Curé,

said Maurice, "for disturbing you at such a late hour; but I am so troubled and so unhappy that I have come once more to ask your advice."

The old Abbé bowed and waited for him to go on.

"I have no doubt, that my mother has already told you something of what has passed between Madame de La Pave and me?"

The priest bowed again.

"Undoubtedly I could consult with my mother, whose judgment I highly appreciate, but, under the circumstances, I fear that she would not be an impartial judge; so I have come to you, Monsieur le Curé, in what I have no doubt is the greatest crisis of my life. I have come to ask the opinion of a wise man, a priest and, allow me to say, a friend. Not only my own welfare is concerned, but, perhaps, also that of our neighbor, Madame de La Pave; and, as her confessor and spiritual director, you, if any one, can direct us properly."

"Well, my son?"

"I have already told you, Monsieur le Curé, that I was charged to tell Robert de La Pave's

last wishes to his wife, and you remember what they were: he forbade her, with tragic solemnity, to marry again. You know also what my relations are to-day with Madame de La Pave, how delicate, equivocal and impossible they are. Well in the name of Heaven! what must I do—what can I do—and remain an honorable man?"

"My son," said the old priest, "I think I understand the situation fully, and it distresses me greatly. I blame neither of you, for you have premeditated nothing. Unavoidable circumstances have brought you together and have put you on a footing of intimate and confidential friendship. It was impossible for this friendship to last; you now love each other, which is a misfortune—a great misfortune—but such is the situation, and let us look at it carefully. At the first view, your duty seems to be perfectly plain; summon all your courage, stifle all sentiment, brave reproaches, tears and even ridicule, and go away never to return; but, if I know Madame de La Pave as well as I think, if you do that she is a lost woman. To revenge herself against you, against me—even against the

good God—she would become desperate, possessed—I need not say what she would do, you know it but too well already."

The Abbé Demortreux paused for a moment, and seeing that Maurice, who did not raise his head, did not intend to reply, he continued:

"Now, monsieur, allow me to forget for a moment that I am a priest, and let me speak to you simply as a man. If you remain here, if you attempt to continue with Madame de La Pave those relations of pretended friendship, in one month, or in one year, your friend's widow will be your mistress. You know this as well as I. Well, she had better be your wife."

Maurice became as pale as death.

"Oh, I know," continued the priest, "how terrible is the obstacle. I do not underestimate it. To marry this young woman when her husband, who was your dearest friend, has implored her to never contract a second marriage, and when you yourself heard his supplication and were the trusted messenger whom he selected to deliver it to his wife—all this is terrible—but again I say, that under

the circumstances it is the only way in which you can save Robert's widow from dishonor."

"But, merciful Heaven! Monsieur le Curè, is there no way in which I can save her honor without sacrificing my own?"

"None, my son, none whatever. I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that if I had remained in the world and had ever been placed in such a situation, I would rather have sacrificed something of my own honor than endanger that of the woman I loved."

Maurice sighed deeply as he arose to leave.

"Pardon me, Monsieur le Curè," said he, "for having kept you up so late." As he took the old priest's hand at the door he said:

"It is just as you predicted, 'enemy or accomplice,' and now I am an accomplice."

During the restless night which he passed, Maurice de Frèmeuse made a resolution. He would have a final understanding with Madame de La Pave which would settle the matter one way or the other. He had been excusable for not doing this as long as he could delude himself as to the real nature of their so-called friendship, but his consultation with the priest had opened his eyes. If he

undertook to keep up his present relations with her any longer, he would be acting the part of a hypocrite and a coward—anything would be better than that.

The next morning the weather was beautiful, but in the afternoon the air became somewhat sultry. When Maurice started for the chateau, the sun was still shining brightly, but a dark cloud had appeared in the Western horizon and was spreading itself rapidly over the sky. In the woods and the fields there was that ominous silence of all things which indicated an approaching storm.

Maurice was told that Madame de La Pave was in the garden. He went to join her there and found her seated on a stone bench with a book in her hands. It was the same bench on which she had sat the night of their quarrel and reconciliation and the place was dear to both of them. This afternoon Madame de La Pave had come there to escape from the extreme heat; but now the sky was entirely covered by the storm cloud, the sun no longer shone and the garden was as silent as a church. The happy smile that came to her lips when she saw him coming gave place

to a more serious expression when she noticed the rigid look in his face.

"You have something to tell me, my friend?" she asked timidly.

He sat down beside her and, as she fixed her beautiful dark eyes on his face he saw the anxious frightened look in their depths, he was greatly tempted to abandon his resolution; but, gathering up all his courage, he said:

"Yes, Marianne, I have something to tell you: The existence we are leading now can not last. Your reputation might suffer, and I myself can not endure it; for, if the truth must be told, I love you as a lover and not as a friend. We must come to an understanding, otherwise you would soon have reason to distrust me, as I already distrust myself. I shall not leave you if you want me to stay; but, if I remain, you must do me the honor of taking my name—of becoming my wife. I know quite well what I am doing—what I propose is a crime—but there is but one alternative. It is for you to choose; I shall be entirely subject to your decision."

She hid her face in her hands and remained silent for several minutes, her head moving from side to side, then she said:

"As far as I am concerned, I love you well enough to do anything; I would not want to give you up; but, if I understand you rightly, you would be very unhappy?"

"Very," repeated Maurice.

She sprang to her feet.

"Very well then," she cried, "not another sentence! Not a single word! Go, I wish it! Go, I command you! Farewell!"

She gave him her two hands and bent her brow towards his face.

Maurice coldly kissed her hair.

She gave him one despairing, agonized look and started to leave, but her strength failed her, and she sank to the ground, almost at his feet.

He took her in his arms and folded her to his bosom, pressing burning kisses upon her lips. All was over, they were betrothed.

CHAPTER X.

Madame de La Pave bore her triumph with wise discretion. She had accomplished her purpose, and asked for nothing more. She did not say nor do anything that might lead Maurice to expect that she would ask him to resign from the army; so he simply asked for an extension of his furlough on the occasion of his marraige, which was not refused.

With her usual delicate tact, the young widow proceeded to let the world know of her engagement with Major de Frémeuse. Maurice remained at home, but Madame de Frémeuse, at the solicitation of her future daughter-in-law, took up her residence at the château. At the same time, Madame de La Pave began to entertain her neighbors and invited several relatives, among whom there were four young women, to the château. She also persuaded several gentlemen friends from Paris, who were returning from the races at Dieuville, to remain; and the old chateau, for

the first time in many years, was filled with guests.

The gayety in which Maurice was forced to take part diverted his mind from the burden that was on his conscience; and, since his resolution had been made, he saw that the old priest's argument was entirely unanswerable, and that he was only submitting to a sort of fatal necessity. He thought also of the great happiness of his mother, and, above all, he was sustained by the ardent love with which his heart was filled, and the responsive passion of his adored one; which made sorrow, and even remorse, seem sweet with such a recompense.

The day of the wedding was fixed for the last Monday in September. When that day arrived the civil and religious ceremonies, according to the custom of the province, were performed on the same morning; and the wedding party left church about one o'clock in the afternoon. As there were a great many relatives and guests present, after a short time spent in the garden, a dance was held in the salon to pass the time that still remained before dinner.

The walls of the *salle à manger* were elaborately decorated with flowers; and the dinner, which consisted of some forty courses, was a most sumptuous one, and lasted until late in the evening. The young major and his bride exchanged tender glances from time to time, but were careful not to transgress the decorum which society and the world expect from newly married couples of high rank. Confident as they were of each other's love, they did not need to make a public display of their ardor nor to take the world into their confidence.

Maurice, who was dressed in the uniform of his regiment, seemed the very type of a graceful and well-bred groom. He was remarkably polite to women at all times, but his attentions to his wife sprang from his heart. When speaking to her, his most insignificant expressions were words of love and his very silence adoration. None knew this better than she, and her happiness was complete.

When the guests left the *salle à manger*, the young bride lost sight of her husband in the attendant confusion. As soon as she

noticed that he was gone, she made some inquiries from a servant, who told her that Major de Frémeuse had gone to smoke a cigar in the garden. As the air was very chilly, she was rather uneasy for fear that he would take cold, but she was told that he had thrown his military cloak over his shoulders.

Maurice, who was tired of the noise and the crowd, had gone to take a solitary smoke on the terrace. After standing there a moment, he descended the steps and walked out upon the main road. Lost in his thoughts, he walked on, leaving the avenue for a narrower path, and soon found himself at the foot of the old stone cross.

He had avoided the place for some time, for the cross recalled painful memories; but, to-night, he rather seemed to seek these memories than avoid them. He stood for a long time, entirely motionless; but a mighty tumult was taking place in his mind and in his conscience. He had reached the time when his crime was to become formal and irrevocable; and, like a man who awakes from a dream, he saw all the horror of the situation for the first time. The past came up before

him; and, at the foot of the cross, he saw two children kiss each other as they swore eternal love and confidence. He saw also the cabin in the forest of Marshenoir, where his friend had died the death of a hero. He witnessed his despair, and heard his agonized supplication; and then he saw the grateful look that came to his eyes when he had been given the promise of his trusted friend.

"Do you promise, Maurice?"

"Yes, I promise."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor."

And it was he who was disturbing that friend's last sleep—who was outraging his very memory.

And then the young officer threw far away from him, with disgust and repulsion, all the vain arguments and idle sophistries with which he had endeavored to excuse himself.

He thought only of his honor, which he had always held dearer than anything on earth, and which he had now violated. Would he ever dare to mention the name of honor again? Does honor know anything of equivocations and compromises? Did not a man who had

broken his word become unfit for the company of honest people? Was he going to lead the life of a hypocrite—No, anything but that.

* * * * *

The following notice appeared in the Alencon newspapers two days later:

"A very tragic event has just occurred which is the cause of the greatest grief to two of the most illustrious families in France. Day before yesterday, September 29th., Major Du Pas-Devant de Frémeuse was married to Madame de La Pave, widow of the late naval lieutenant of that name. After the ceremony, the guests were entertained at the chateau de La Pave; and, after dinner, Major de Frémeuse went, as he said, to smoke a cigar on the terrace. About half an hour later, those who were in the chateau were startled by the report of a pistol which to judge from the sound had been discharged in the park of the chateau. No particular attention was paid to this as the report was supposed to have been from the gun of some hunter, the hunting season of the province having lately opened; but at ten o'clock, one

of Madame de La Pave's tenants presented himself at the chateau, and brought the distressing news that, as he was passing an old stone cross that stands just outside the grounds of the chateau, he came upon the lifeless body of Major de Frémeuse stretched upon the sod and bathed in his own blood. A small revolver, which was identified as one that the deceased was in the habit of carrying about with him, was found within a couple of feet of the corpse. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that the man was murdered. The only possible explanation of the rash act is that the major received a wound in the head at the battle of Mans which must have produced sudden and temporary insanity. It is impossible to even imagine that he could have done the deed in his sober senses; for Major de Frémeuse was a young man of the most brilliant prospects, had that very day, been married to a beautiful woman whom he dearly loved, and was rich in his own name as well as that of his wife. We refrain from mentioning the grief of the Countess de Frémeuse, his mother, and her distressed daughter-in-law."

THE MOTHER OF A MARCHIONESS,

CHAPTER I.

On the 14th of April, 1846, the following notice appeared in all the large journals of Paris:

"A young man, of good family, who is a graduate of a government school, and who has made a special study of mines, foundries and forges, desires to obtain a situation. Write to M. L. M. D. O., Paris."

Mme. Benoit, the proprietress of the forges of Arlange, was in Paris at that time; but she did not read the newspapers. Why should she have read them? She was not in search of a superintendent for her forges, but of a husband for her daughter.

Mme. Benoit was, at that time, a remarkably amiable woman, in the full enjoyment of that second youth which nature does not accord to all women, and which usually comes

between the fortieth and fiftieth years. Her plumpness gave her the appearance of a flower in full bloom, but did not by any means suggest a flower that has begun to fade. Her little eyes shone with as much brightness as twenty years before; her hair had not turned gray, nor had her teeth grown long, while her arms and shoulders might have been the envy of many a young girl. Her foot was rather crushed beneath the weight it had to carry, but her little hand, covered with rings and bracelets, looked like a jewel among jewels.

The inner qualities of Mme. Benoit were in perfect harmony with her external ones. Her mind was as bright as her eyes, and her face was not more open than her character. She was generous to a fault, and, like all generous people, she was happy. To those who wondered at her invariable gayety and open-handed benevolence, she would say:

"Que voulez-vous? I was born happy, and I like to make others happy, also. There has been nothing unpleasant about my past, except a few hours that I have long since forgotten; my present is like an unclouded sky,

and as for the future, if it holds anything unpleasant for me, it will be time enough to worry about that when it comes. You see that I would have to be insane to complain of destiny, or to be otherwise than satisfied with the world."

As there is no such thing as perfection in this world, Mme. Benoit had a fault; but that fault was an innocent one which never injured anyone but herself: She was passionately ambitious. I regret that I can not find a more suitable word to express my meaning, for the ambition of this good woman had nothing in common with the ambition of other people. She coveted neither riches nor honors; the good forges of Arlanges brought her in an annual revenue of fifty thousand francs with invariable regularity, and Mme. Benoit was not the woman to accept any favors of the government of 1846. What then did she desire? Nothing much; so little that you will not understand, unless I give you a short account of the earlier years of Mme. Benoit, nèe Lopinot.

Gabrielle-Auguste-Eliane Lopinot was born in the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Germain,

on the banks of the little stream of the Rue du Bac, which Madame de Stael preferred to all the rivers of Europe. Her parents, who were bourgeois to their finger-tips, were notion dealers and amassed a colossal fortune. M. Lopinot practiced some strange business principles; he made it a rule never to send in a bill until it was asked for; and it was never said that he brought a delinquent debtor to justice. His prices were so arranged that those who paid made up for those who did not, which arrangement was satisfactory to all the parties concerned. The estimable merchant was surrounded by illustrious personages, some of whom robbed him while the others allowed themselves to be robbed, and he learned, gradually, to mistrust them all. He was very humble and respectful at his shop, but at home he would astound his wife and daughter by the pessimism of his opinions and the audacity of his maxims. "I am very fond of marquises," he would say, "and they are very pleasant people to do business with, but, under no circumstances, would I have one for a son-in-law." At which blasphemous utterance, his wife felt it almost necessary to cross herself.

Mme. Lopinot was not of her husband's opinion. She did not see any reason why noblemen should be objectionable as sons-in-law, and, as all people have their particular fancies, she even preferred a marquis. As for Mlle. Lopinot, when she was twelve years old a great name had a strange fascination for her ears; and, at fifteen, she had a profound respect for the Faubourg Saint-Germain; that is to say, for that incomparable aristocracy which considers itself superior to the balance of human kind by mere right of birth. When she arrived at a marriageable age, her first thought was that perhaps a lucky stroke of fortune might make it possible for her to enter those great houses which she had never seen except from the outside, and associate on terms of equality with the *grandes dames* whom she hardly dared to look in the face.

"After all," she thought, "my face and my *dot* should be sufficient to make the conquest of some count, or duke or marquis." Her ambition aspired in particular to a *marquisate* and for a very good reason; there were counts and dukes who had received their peerages but lately, and who were not re-

ceived in the Faubourg, whereas there have been no marquises created since the time of Molière.

It is probable that if she had been left alone she would have found her marquis, but she lived under her mother's guardianship, in profound seclusion, where M. Lopinot came, from time to time, to offer the hand of a merchant or a notary. She refused all offers with great disdain until the year 1829; but, one day, she realized that she was already twenty-five, and she suddenly decided to accept M. Morel, the proprietor of the Arlange forges. He was a very worthy man, whom she could have loved if he had been a marquis; but he died in 1830, six months after the birth of his daughter. The pretty widow was so greatly interested in the revolution of July that she almost forgot to weep for her husband. Business matters called her to Arlange, where she remained until 1832, in which year both her parents died of the cholera. She returned to Paris; sold her father's shop, and bought a house in the Rue Saint-Dominique, between those of the Count de Preux and Marshall de Lens.

It was not without a great deal of pride, that she found herself and her daughter residing in a splendid house, with a count on one side and a marshal on the other. Her furniture was more costly than that of her neighbors; her conservatory was larger, and her horses were of better blood; still she would willingly have given furniture, conservatory and horses for the privilege of being a little more neighborly. The walls of her garden were not more than three metres high, and, in the quiet summer nights, she could hear voices, sometimes in the count's garden, sometimes in the marshal's; but, unfortunately, she was not permitted to take part in the conversation.

One morning, the gardener brought her a parrot which he had caught on a tree in the garden. She blushed with pleasure, for she knew the bird belonged to the marshal. She did not think of allowing any one else to return it, and, braving all damage that the bird might do with beak and claws, she took it home herself; but she was met by a fat butler who received the parrot on the steps and thanked her profusely. A few days later,

a toy balloon which belonged to the count's children fell in her yard. For fear of being thanked by another servant, she sent her maid with the balloon and a very clever letter, written in the most aristocratic style. The letter was answered by a governess, and the pretty widow—she was then in the height of her beauty—gained nothing by her kindness.

"It is very ridiculous," said she, "I may enter No. 57 as much as I please, but I am not allowed in 55 or 59 for a quarter of an hour." Her only acquaintances in the Faubourg were a few debtors of her father, whom she never asked for money. In return for such delicate consideration, these illustrious people sometimes received her in the morning. After twelve o'clock, she could dress in deshabille; all her social duties were attended to.

Business matters called her away from this intolerable life; and, at Arlange, she found what she had vainly sought for in Paris, the key to the Faubourg Saint-Germain. M. le Marquis de Kerpry, captain of the second regiment of dragoons, was visiting one of her neighbors. He was a man about forty years

old, who had the reputation of being a poor officer and a *bon vivant.* He was celebrated for his debts, his duels, and his intrigues. "I have caught my bird," thought the beautiful Eliane, and she began at once to make love to the marquis, who, two months later, sent in his resignation to the Minister of War, and led the widow of M. Morel to the altar.

Notice of the marriage was published in the 10th *arondissement* of Paris and in the Commune of Arlange, in due observance of the law. The *act de naissance* of the marquis, which had been written during the Reign of Terror, mentioned only the vulgar name of Benoit, but there was a certificate of a notary attached stating that, "for time out of mind," M. Benoit had been known as the Marquis de Kerpry.

The new marchioness began by opening her salon to the Faubourg Saint-Germain of the neighborhood, for this Faubourg extends to the very frontiers of France. After having astounded all the country gentry of Arlange with her elegance, she wanted to go to Paris to take her revenge upon the past, and told her project to her husband. The captain

knitted his eybrows and declared that he was very comfortable in Arlange; that the cooking was to his taste; the wine-cellar was good, and the hunting excellent; he asked for nothing more. The Faubourg Saint-Germain, he said, was a country as unknown to him as if it were in America; he had neither relations, friends nor acquaintances there. "Merciful Heaven thought poor Eliane, "is it possible that I have married the only marquis in the world who is not known in the Faubourg Saint-Germain?"

But this was not her only trial; she noticed, before long, that her husband drank absinthe four times a day; not to mention another *liqueur* called Vermouth, which came from Paris for his personal use. The Captain's reason could not always resist the effects of these repeated libations, and when he recovered his senses, he was usually in a very ill humor; so much so, that Eliane soon began to realize that the life of a marchioness was not what it was represented to be.

One morning, the captain was paying the penalty for having been too convivial the night before; his eyes were heavy and his

head ached. His wife was standing before a *samovar*, pouring out cup after cup of tea, when a servant came to announce M. le Compte de Kerpry. The captain, sick as he was, sprang suddenly to his feet.

"Did you not tell me that you have no relatives?" asked Eliane, somewhat astonished.

"I know of none," replied the captain, "and the devil take me; but we will see."

He smiled disdainfully when he saw a young man, about twenty years old, whose face was almost effeminate in its beauty. The count was of ordinary height, but so frail and delicate of build that, had it not been for a small brown mustache on his upper lip, he might have been taken for a girl disguised in boy's clothes. His large blue eyes glanced about the room with a sort of timidity, and he blushed deeply when they fell upon the fair Eliane.

"Monsieur," said he to the captain, "although I have not the honor of your acquaintance, I have come to speak to you about family affairs. As our conversation will be long, and very likely tedious, I am afraid madame will not find it interesting."

"You are mistaken, monsieur," replied Eliane, "the Marchioness de Kerpry should know all the affairs of the family, and, since you are related to my husband—"

"I do not know about that, madame, but it is that which I have come to discuss." Turning towards the captain, he said:

"Monsieur, I am the eldest son of the Marquis de Kerpry, who lives in the Rue Saint-Dominique and is well known in the Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"What good fortune!" exclaimed Eliane, involuntarily.

The count replied by a ceremonious bow and continued:

"My father, my grandfather and my great grandfather were only sons, and, as there are not two branches to the family, you will pardon me for having been astonished when I read the announcement of the marriage of Marquis de Kerpry."

"Had I not the right to get married?" asked the captain, as he rubbed his eyes.

"I did not say that, monsieur. I have at home all the papers which establish my right to the name of Kerpry. If you are related to

me, as I sincerely hope, I have no doubt that you, also, have some family papers."

"What is the use? papers prove nothing, and all the world knows who I am."

"But, monsieur, very little is necessary, to prove a substantial claim; it suffices that there be an *act de naissance* with—"

"Monsieur, my *act de naissance* bears the name of Benoit, because it was written during the Reign of Terror; do you understand?"

"Perfectly, monsieur, and, in spite of that fact, I still retain the hope of being your relative. Were you born in Kerpry, or the suburbs?"

"Kerpry, Kerpry? Where is Kerpry?"

"Why, where it has always been; three leagues from Dijon, on the road to Paris.

"How does that concern me, since Robespierre sold the family rights?"

"You have been wrongly informed, monsieur. It is true that the chateau was put up for sale, but there were no bidders, and His Majesty Louis XVIII was gracious enough to give it back to my father."

The captain had been gradually rousing himself from his stupor, and at this last intel-

ligence, he became completely awake. He stood on his feet and, shaking his fist in the count's face, he said:

"My little monsieur, for forty years I have known no other name than that of Kerpry, and he who takes it from me must have a more skillful hand than I!"

The count's face became pale with anger, but, recollecting that Eliane was present, he simply said.

"My great monsieur, as trial by wager of battle has gone out of fashion, permit me to return to Paris; the Tribunal shall decide which of us is usurping the name of the other."

Thereupon, he made a formal bow to Eliane, another to the pretended marquis, and turning on his heel, he was out of the house before the captain thought of detaining him.

The tea in the samovar was no longer boiling; but it was not that neglect on the part of Eliane that caused the unpleasantness between her and her husband. Naturally, she wished to know whether or not she was a marchioness; and when she asked the simple question, the impetuous captain, who had exhausted all his patience in his conversation

with the count, forgot himself to such an extent as to strike the most beautiful woman in the province. It was to this incident, in particular, that Mme. Benoit alluded when she spoke of the few unpleasant hours in her life, which she had since forgotten.

The suit of Kerpry versus Kerpry was begun at once. It was in vain that M. Benoit repeated, in the person of his attorney, that he had always been known as the Marquis de Kerpry; he was sentenced to sign himself Benoit and to pay the costs. The day on which he received notice of his defeat, he wrote the young count a vulgar and insulting letter; and, the next Sunday at eight o'clock in the morning, he was carried home on a stretcher, with ten inches of steel in his body.

He had fought a duel; and the count's sword had broken in the wound. Eliane, who was still asleep when he arrived, reached his bed just in time to receive his apologies and his *adieux*.

If all this had not raised a commotion in the neighborhood, the province would have ceased to be provincial. The scandal was the sole topic of conversation in Arlange for

some time, and some of the ladies were greatly distressed because they could not take back the visits they had made on the false marchioness. The widow heard what was said but she was too greatly distressed to pay any attention. It was not the loss of Benoit that she mourned, so much as her misplaced confidence, her ruined hopes and her impotent ambition. Through the smoke of her forges, she gazed at the Faubourg Saint-Germain as the exiled Eve looked back upon Paradise. One morning, she was seated on a rustic bench in her garden weeping over her sorrows, when her little daughter ran by her in hot pursuit of a butterfly. She caught the child by the dress and kissed her several times, reproaching herself for having thought less of her daughter than of her own troubles. When she had done caressing her, she gazed intently into the child's face and saw that little Lucile already gave promise of great beauty, of the most aristocratic type. Eliane kissed the child again, and dried her tears; from that day she wept no more.

"Where have my eyes been?" she murmured, as the old smile came back to her lips; "all

is not lost; everything may yet be arranged —shall be arranged! It will take time and patience; but those proud doors shall yet be opened to receive me. I shall never be a marchioness, that is true—I have had enough of marriage, and I shall not be caught again —but there is the marchioness in the garden, staining her mouth with strawberries. My experience will be of use to me; I will choose her a marquis, a real one, and I will be the real mother of a real marchioness. She will be received everywhere, and I also; dined everywhere, and I also; she will dance with dukes, and I—will look on."

From that day, her greatest care was to train her little daughter for the role of a marchioness. She dressed her like a doll; taught her to curtesy, and to make various grimaces *a la grande dame*, before the child had learned her alphabet. Unfortunately, little Lucile did not live in the Rue de Bac: she was wakened each morning by the songs of the birds and not the rumbling of carriages; she saw more peasants in blouses than lackies in liveries, and she paid no more attention to the lessons her mother gave her in Faubourg manners

than Eliane had paid to the cavil of M. Lopinot against marquises. Mme. Benoit might teach and scold all she pleased, the greatest pleasures of the future marchioness were to fight with the little girls of the village, and to roll in the sand in her best dresses; to steal the eggs from the coop, and make a huge mastiff drag her about, while she held on to his tail. Her mother was greatly distressed to find in her no symptoms of vanity nor pride, nor even of the most innocent coquetry. She waited impatiently for the day when her daughter would mistrust some one, but Lucile opened her heart to every one, including Margot, the milk maid, and the workmen of the forges.

Mme. Benoit was so impatient to begin life in the Faubourg, that she would have married her daughter at fifteen if such a thing had been possible; but, at fifteen, Lucile was still a child. It is a well known fact that children of the provinces mature later than those of the cities, and, undoubtedly, it is for the same reason that wild flowers bloom later than those of the conservatories. At sixteen however, Lucile began to develop. She was still rather thin, but her face was pretty, and,

on the whole, she was attractive enough, in her mother's opinion, to become the bride of a marquis. One morning, Mme. Benoit said to her:

"I am going to Paris to find a marquis for you to marry."

"Yes, mamma," she replied, without the least objection, for she had known for a long time that she was destined to marry a marquis. She had but one uneasiness on the subject: in the salon of one of her mother's friends, she had seen the portrait of a marquis. He was a little old man, attired in the costume of the time of Louis XIV, with knee breeches, shoes with gold buckles, a plumed hat and a sword in his hand. This picture was so vivid in her memory that it appeared before her mind's eye at the mere name of a marquis. The poor child thought all marquises were made on the same design, and wondered how she could keep from laughing in church when she gave her hand to such a husband.

In the meantime, her mother was on the hunt of a marquis who did not wear knee breeches, and she was not long in finding one. Of all her father's debtors, the most amiable

was the old Baron de Subressac; not only was he always at home when she called, but he sometimes did her the honor of taking breakfast at her house tete-a-tete, such familiarities being permissable to a man of seventy-five.

One morning, after the baron had just finished the last glass of a bottle of Tokay, Mme. Benoit said:

"Monsieur le baron, do you ever have anything to do with arranging marriages?"

"Never, my dear,"—he called her "My dear" in a paternal sort of a way—"I leave that interesting occupation to the women."

"But, monsieur le baron, supposing that you could render a service to two of your friends?"

"If you were one of them, my dear, I would do anything you would ask."

"Well, monsieur le baron, I know a young girl of sixteen who is pretty, well-bred, and who has never been to a boarding school—in fact she is an angel. There is no use of being mysterious; I am speaking of my daughter. For her *dot*, she will have, in the first place, this house; then four hunderd hectares of

land in the province; and, finally, the forges, which bring in a revenue of one hundred and fifty thousand francs in the dullest years. From that, we must deduct fifty thousand francs a year for my own use, which, added to a little property which I hold in my own right, will suffice for my modest needs."

"All that is very grand."

"Listen: for reasons which I can not explain to you, my daughter must marry a marquis. I will not be very particular in regard to age, beauty, intelligence or any exterior qualities; what I want is a marquis whose title is unquestionable; who is known everywhere in the Faubourg, and who wlll be received everywhere, with his wife and me. Do you know, monsieur le baron, a marquis who is worthy of a pretty wife, and one hundred thousand francs of an income?"

"On my word, my dear, it just happens that I do. If your daughter accepts him, she will wed a man whom I love as if he were my own son. I am giving you much more than you ask."

"Really?"

"In the first place, he is young; only twenty-eight."

"That is but a detail; what next?"

"He is very handsome."

"Vanity of vanities!"

"Your daughter will not say so. He is very intelligent."

"A useless quality in the household, and in society."

"He is well educated; a graduate of the École Polytechnique. "Besides, he has made some special studies that will not come out of place in—"

"What next, monsieur le baron?"

'In regard to his fortune, he fills the program exactly; he left the École Polytechnique because—"

"We will pardon his poverty, monsieur le baron."

"The last time I saw him, the poor boy was thinking of advertising for a situation."

"His situation is found; but tell me, monsieur le baron, is he very noble?"

"As noble as Charlemagne; one of his ancestors came near being made king of Antioch in 1098."

"And his connection?"

"All the Faubourg."

"Is his name well known?"

"Like that of Henry IV. I am speaking of the Marquis d'Outreville; you must have heard the name."

"I think I have; it is a pretty one. I will have a marble slab put over the *porte cochere* 'Hotel d'Outreville.' But will he accept my daughter? Will it not be considered a *mesalliance?*"

"Ah, my dear, a man does not make a *mesalliance.* I understand that a young lady, whose name is Mlle. Noaille, or Mlle. Choiseule, does not like to have it changed to Mme. Mignolet; but a man keeps his name, and loses nothing. Besides, the Marquis d'Outreville has none of the prejudices of his caste. I will see him this very day, and report to-morrow."

"Do better than that, monsieur le baron; if you find him willing, bring him here to dine. Has he family papers, a geneological tree?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Try to bring them with you."

"Never mind, my dear, I will come myself one of these days and attend to all that. *Au revoir.*"

The baron started for No. 34, Rue Saint-Benoit, which is a large lodging house occupied, at that time, by students. He mounted the steps to the second story and knocked at the door of room No. 9. The marquis, who was in his shirt-sleeves, opened the door. He was a handsome young man; very tall, but admirably proportioned. The delicate shape of his hands and feet indicated that his ancestors had been people of leisure for centuries. He had a well-shaped head; large blue eyes; a nose proudly arched, the nostrils of which trembled at the least emotion. His mouth was rather large, but his teeth were white and regular. His thick black mustache displayed the ripe color of his lips to great advantage. On the whole, he was in every way a desirable *parti.*

When the baron entered the room, the young man was busy covering a large draughting-board with China ink. On the bottom of the board was written: "Plan and Design for a Fuel-Saving Furnace." The table was covered with designs of different kinds, and books on mining, engineering and various industrial subjects. Besides the table, the

room contained a small bed, half a dozen cane-bottom chairs, an arm-chair, upholstered in red velvet, a pair of red curtains, a small book case, filled with books, a portrait of Lafayette and one of General Foy, besides various articles of *bric-a-brac.*

"My son," said the baron, "it is eight long days since I have seen you; how have you been prospering?"

"Splendidly, monsieur; my note in the papers brought me a situation. One of my old schoolmates, who is superintending the construction of the mines at Poullaoen, guessed my name beneath the initials. He recommended me to his employers; and they have offered me a situation of three thousand francs a year to begin the 1st. of May. It was just in time, for I have changed my last bill of a hundred francs. I will leave in two weeks for Brittany. Poullaoen is an unpleasant place, where it rains ten months in the year; and I am very fond of the sunshine, but I will have an opportunity to continue my studies and make my experiments; it is a great opening."

"Then, I have come at a bad time; I had something else to propose."

"State it, at any rate; I have not yet accepted."

"How would you like to get married?"

The marquis made a gesture expressing complete disdain of the proposition.

"You are very good to take so much interest in me," said he to the baron; "but I have never thought of matrimony; I haven't time. You know how much I have to do: science is a jealous mistress."

"Ta, ta, ta!" laughed the baron. "Let us be sensible; you are twenty-eight years old; and you live here like an old book-worm. I have come to offer you the hand of a young girl who is clever, well-bred, pretty and sixteen years old, and this is how I am received."

A bright flash lighted up Gaston's blue eyes for a moment, but it was as quickly gone. "A thousand thanks, monsieur le baron," he replied; "but I cannot spare the time. Marriage would involve duties which are not to my taste, and occupations which would simply bore me."

"It would do nothing of the kind. The father has been dead for fifteen years; the family is made up of a mother, who is an

excellent bourgeoise, in spite of her pretensions, and a charming daughter. To give you an idea of the mother's originality, I will tell you that I am charged to bring you to dine to-morrow at her house, if you are willing to consider the proposition You see that all ceremony has been left aside."

"Thank you, monsieur, but I have Poullaoen in my mind."

"What a man! You are offered, for a *dot*, a house in the Rue Saint-Dominique; four hundred hectares of provincial lands, and an income of a hundred thousand francs. Will you get so much at Poullaoen?"

"No, but I will be in my natural element; would you offer a fish an income of a hundred thousand francs to live on land?"

"Very well; we will say nothing more about it; but I thought it just as well to let you know. I have some visits to make, so *au revoir*. You will not leave without coming to bid me farewell?"

The baron walked toward the door with a malicious smile on his lips; just as he was crossing the threshold, he turned and said:

"By the way, I forgot to mention that the

hundred thousand francs are the annual profits of a magnificent forge in the provinces."

The expression of Gaston's face changed at once. "A forge! Am I to marry a forge? That is different. Allow me to stop for you to morrow; we will go to dine at my future mother-in-law's."

"No, no; perhaps you had better go to Poullaoen."

"My old friend!"

"Very well then, to-morrow."

CHAPTER II.

As soon as the baron had left, Gaston d'Outreville threw himself in his arm-chair, buried his face in his hands, and reflected for such a length of time that the China ink had plenty of time to dry. What does this worthy woman mean, he asked himself, by offering me her daughter and a hundred thousand francs of an income? Most young men would not have found the situation so wonderful; they would simply have attributed the magnificent offer to their personal attractions; but Gaston was as absolutely devoid of vanity as Lucile was of coquetry. The only explanation that occurred to him was that Mme. Benoit wanted a well-bred son-in-law to manage her forges. "Some one has told her of my studies and my patents," he thought. "I was quite well known in the Faubourg before I realized the vanity and the shallowness of that gilded society. She evidently needs a man in the family; a mother and her daugh-

ter do not make a manager for the forges. Who knows but the business is failing and the enterprise in danger? Well, if it is, we will put it on its feet again, that is all!" This meditation over, he took up the bottle of China ink again and continued his task with conscientious care.

The next morning, he took a walk in the gardens of the Luxembourg which lasted until breakfast time. In the afternoon, he went to a public library and turned over all the periodicals of the last month; it was a long time since he had dissipated to such a reckless extent. "It is well," he thought, "that one does not need to get married often; there would be but little work done." At five o'clock he began his toilette, which took a long time, and at half past six he presented himself at the baron's lodging. He had hoped that his old friend would tell him how it came that Mme. Benoit had been so gracious as to choose him for her son-in-law, but the baron kept up an appearance of mystery and wisdom which would have done credit to an oracle. When they arrived at the house in the Rue Saint-Dominique, they

saw two workmen perched upon ladders who were busy measuring something above the *porte cochere*. "What do you suppose," asked the baron, "that those men are doing up there? They are taking the measure for a marble slab, upon which will be written, 'Hotel d'Outreville.'"

"That is a pleasant jest," replied Gaston, as he blushed painfully.

"You do not believe me? Well, just stop a minute. Hola! there, Monsieur Renaudot; is it not you that I see up there?"

"Yes, monsieur le baron," replied the marble-cutter, as he quickly descended the ladder.

"How long do you think it will take you to make the slab?"

"A month, at least, because the coat of arms is to be in bas-relief."

"How so? you were but two weeks in making a slab for the Marquis de Croix-Maugars."

"Ah, monsieur le baron, the d'Outreville arms are of a much more complicated design."

"That is true. Good-night, M. Renaudot."

"What do you think now, skeptic?"

"My dear friend, am I one of the characters in a fairy tale?"

"It is something like 'Puss in Boots,' for there is a marquis in it."

"I am greatly complimented.

"Or like the 'Sleeping Beauty,' since the marchioness, who has never heard of you is sleeping away, in serene unconsciousness, in the depths of the forest of Arlange."

"What! is she not here?"

"We will send her word that you regret that you were unable to see her."

Madame Benoit received her guests with open arms—figuratively speaking. As conversation flows more smoothly at the table than anywhere else, but little time was spent in the salon. Gaston sat next to Madame Benoit, and he at once began to talk about Arlange; she answered with something about the Faubourg, from which she passed on to questions of titles, pedigrees, etc., and Gaston made a circuit and came back to the forges. This was kept up for some time and no one was enlightened, not even the baron, who, availing himself of the opportunity to indulge himself in the only pleasure possible to a man of his age, was doing greater honors to the dinner than to the conversation.

Mme. Benoit knew nothing about Gaston's love for mechanics, and he did not suspect her passion for the Faubourg. He said to himself: "Either, from, *bourgeoise* vanity, she wants to avoid the subject which she is most interested in, or else she does not wish to tire the baron, who is not listening to us."

Mme. Benoit was thinking: "The poor boy thinks he is doing me a kindness by talking of things with which I am familiar; he does not dream that I know as much about the Faubourg as he."

In spite of this misunderstanding, Madame Benoit managed to find out that Gaston had dined at a certain great house, and that he had danced at another; that he was "theed" and "thoud" by the Duke de —— and related to the Count de ——; that he had played at ten years with the Marquis de ———, and ridden at twenty with the Prince de ———. All this she inscribed in her memory.

After they had had coffee, the hostess took her guests to the garden. The night was magnificent, and the moon was at its full. Mme. Benoit showed them the adjoining gardens.

"This," said she, "belongs to the Count de Preux; do you know him?"

"He is my cousin, in the Brittany fashion; that is to say, my first cousin."

The happy *bourgeoise* put this down, triumphantly, on her tablets. "There," she continued, "is the garden of the Marshal de Lens; it would be a strange coincidence if he, also, were related to you."

"No, madame, but he was the godfather of a brother whom I have lost."

"Good!" thought Mme. Benoit; "if that fat butler is still alive we will have him discharged. Such a son-in-law is a treasure."

If Gaston had been inclined to say: "Let us jump over the fence and surprise the Marshal," Mme. Benoit would have jumped.

When the Baron and Gaston took their leave, they found Mme. Benoit's carriage waiting for them on the pavement.

"My dear son," said the baron, when they had taken their seats, "I have eaten an enormous dinner; and you—but one does not dine at your age. How do you like your mother-in-law?"

She is all that I could ask: a vain and shallow woman, who will not meddle with the forges, nor contradict my practical experience."

"So much the better if she suits you. On your part, you have made a conquest; she told me so by a sign when I kissed her hand."

"Already?"

"But that is the way things are done in the fairy tales. When the prince awoke the Sleeping Beauty, he proposed to her on the spot, without even going through the formality of consulting her parents."

"For my part, I, unfortunately, have no one to consult."

"If you think to-morrow is too soon to make the proposal, we will wait a few days; will always find me at your service. In the meantime, you must lend me your *act de naissance* and a few other necessary papers."

"Whenever you want them. I have all my papers in a box; you can take what you need."

When the carriage stopped before the baron's house, Gaston descended also, and continued the rest of his way on foot to make sure that he was not dreaming.

The next day, Baron de Subressac came to get the *act de naissance* and the other papers and took them to Mme. Benoit. She, recollecting her former mistake, took them to

an *archiviste paleographe*, who was a graduate of the École de Chartres, and an officer of some kind in the Royal Library. This gentleman pronounced the genuineness of the papers to be beyond question, and, the next day, the baron made the official demand for Lucile's hand, which was granted by acclamation.

The happy widow was undecided for some time whether her daughter should be married in Paris or in the little church at Arlange. On the one hand, it would have been very pleasant to have the grand ceremony performed at the church de Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, and inconvenience half the Faubourg by having the nuptial mass at eleven o'clock; but it was necessary that the last traces of the Marquis de Kerpry should be effaced at Arlange, and, after careful consideration, she decided for the latter place; but with the firm intention of returning to Paris as soon as possible.

She remembered that it was her daughter who was to lead her into the world, and this idea prompted her to write to Lucile, who was not accustomed to receiving many letters from her mother, as follows:

"My dear child, my adored Lucile! I have found the husband for you that I was looking for. You will be the Marchioness d'Outreville. I have everything arranged. The marquis, my dear, is young, handsome, intelligent, of a very good family and related to many of the most illustrious families in France. Dear child, your happiness is assured. You will soon leave that frightful Arlange, where you have lived like a beautiful butterfly in a black chrysalis. You will come to Paris, where you will be received in the greatest houses. I will lead you from pleasure to pleasure, and from triumph to triumph; what a spectacle for the eyes of a doting mother!"

Mme. Benoit was radiant with happiness; her feet scarcely touched the ground, and she seemed to have grown ten years younger. She danced while she sang, and wept while she laughed. She felt like stopping all the passers-by to tell them of her success. She was so kind to the marquis, and showed him so many tender little attentions, that Gaston, who had been no one's spoilt child for many years, felt a genuine affection for her. He seldom left her; took her everywhere and

never felt bored in her presence, notwithstanding the fact that she was deaf to the least word about the Arlange forges.

The day before she started for Arlange, Mme Benoit told Gaston that she needed him for the day, and took him, first, to Tahan's, where she selected a large rose-wood box, which was ingeniously divided in the inside into places of different sizes.

"For what is that strange chest?" asked Gaston, when they had left the shop.

"It is my daughter's *corbeille de marriage.*"

"But," replied the marquis, with all the pride of poverty, "it seems to me that it is I—"

"You are mistaken, my dear marquis, when you are married to Lucile you may buy her all the presents you please, but, until then, I will not surrender the privilege of providing her with everything she needs. I do not approve of the custom which allows the fiancè of a young woman to make her fifty thousand francs worth of presents before they are married, and before he has acquired any rights to her. You may think that my prejudices are ridiculous, but I am too old to correct them.

I am going now to select my wedding presents; in a month, I will go with you, if you wish, to help you to select yours."

The reasoning of Mme. Benoit would have been easy to refute, but she spoke in such a maternal way, and in such a caressing tone, that Gaston could make no reply, although he had spent three days in negotiations with the Jews on account of that *corbeille.* The widow started for Arlange the following day, and assumed all responsibility of the publications in the church, and attending to her daughters preparations for the wedding, while Gaston remained in Paris in the hands of his furnisher and his tailor. In the confusion attending the packing of the trunks, Mme. Benoit thoughtlessly took along with her all the papers belonging to the house of d'Outreville.

When Lucile saw Mme. Benoit, she could hardly believe that she was the same mother whom she had always known. Never had the pretty widow been so indulgent. Everything Lucile did was well done; everything she said was well said. Never could the devoted mother leave such an accomplished daughter; she

would follow her everywhere, and nothing but death should ever separate them. Lucile was delighted to learn that some marquises were young and handsome, and that they did not all wear knee breeches, and gold buckles on their shoes.

The day after Mme. Benoit's arrival, her neighbor, Mme. Melier came to announce the coming marriage of her daughter with M. Jordy, a sugar refiner of Paris. M. Jordy was a very rich young man, and Mme. Melier did not attempt to conceal her joy at finding such a husband for her daughter. Mme. Benoit rewarded this confidence by telling Mme. Melier that Lucile was to be married to the Marquis d'Outreville. Congratulations were exchanged, and the ladies kissed each other several times in their joy. When Mme. Melier was gone, Lucile who had all her life been the bosom friend of the future Mme. Jordy, cried:

"What happiness! when I go to Paris I will be near my dear Celine. We can see each other every day."

"My dear," replied her mother, "you shall go to see her in your carriage, but receiving

her at your house will be another matter. In Paris, one must make some concessions to the society in which one lives. When a duchess comes to your salon, she must not brush her skirts against those of the wife of a refiner. That is no reason for looking so sad, my dear. Come! you shall receive Celine in the mornings."

"Heavens! what a frightful place is Paris; I would rather live in Arlange, where one can receive one's friends at any time in the day."

Mme. Benoit replied very gravely: "A woman must follow her husband."

News of the great event which was to take place at the forges was soon known all over Arlange and the suburbs. Mme. Melier was making a round of visits, and, as her object was to announce a marriage, it involved no extra trouble to announce two. In all of the houses at which she stopped, she repeated a formula which she had arranged when she left the house of Mme. Benoit: "Madame, as I am proud to count you among my most intimate friends, I have come to announce the betrothal of my daughter. It is true, she is not marrying a marquis, like Mademoiselle

Lucile Benoit, but a manufacturer, M. Jordy, who, although he is but thirty-three years old, is already one of the richest refiners in Paris."

Mme. Melier had good horses, and her carriage traveled ten leagues before night. The Faubourg Saint-Germain of the neighborhood began at once to pity Lucile, and to laugh at Mme. Benoit for having found another Marquis de Kerpry. The clever widow soon heard what was said. She took all the d'Outreville papers and called upon Mme. la Baroness de Sommerfogle, who was the acknowledged leader of society in the province.

"Mme. la Baroness," began the widow, "although I have had the honor of receiving you only two or three times, I have nevertheless, learned to appreciate your judgment in matters pertaining to pedigrees and titles. You know that I had the misfortune of marrying a man who had stolen, I do not know where, an honorable name. That experience has taught me to be prudent. To-day, an apparently unobjectionable *parti* asks for the hand of my daughter. It is the Marquis d'Outreville. I have here his *act de nai-*

sance and all the family papers, but I am but a poor *bougeoise*, and I know nothing about such things,—I made the discovery with much sorrow—so I do not dare to rely upon my own judgment. Would you be so kind, my dear madame, as to examine these papers, so that I can have an opinion on them that is final, and beyond appeal?"

The speech was a clever one; it flattered the baroness and aroused her curiosity at the same time. She took the papers, and assumed the task with evident satisfaction. That very day, all the papers of the house d'Outreville passed under the eyes of at least twenty of the nobility and gentry of Arlange. This was exactly what Mme. Benoit wished; she knew that a true aristocratic odor emanated from the old parchment which could not fail to make an impression upon the delicate nostrils of the people who had once disdained her. The most hostile of her enemies were anxious to sign a treaty of peace. In Mme. de Sommerfogel's salon there was held a concert of praises of the future mother of the marchioness, in which the old baroness filled the position of chef d'orchestre.

"The marriage will be a great consolation to poor Mme. Benoit, and I am delighted to hear of it; she is a deserving woman."

"That Benoit was a brute! If we had known her at that time, we would have put her on her guard."

"After all, for what can she be reproached? for having aspired to associate with the aristocracy. That only proves the refinement of her taste."

"She is a pretty woman; I would like to know how she manages to remain young."

"Her daughter is a little angel!"

"We will see her often; she shall belong to our set!"

"She is prepared for it already by education. Her mother always intended her to be a marchioness."

"Mme. Benoit shall belong to our set, also; a mother must be received where her daughter is."

"The marquis will be a great addition to the aristocracy of Arlauge."

"They say he is immensely rich!"

"They will build a grand house!"

"They will give splendid balls!"

"We shall be invited to the wedding!"

The next day, Mme. Benoit's salon was invaded by a horde of "intimate" friends whom she had not seen for twelve years.

The marquis arrived on the 12th. of May.

Although he and Lucile had never met, they both felt that they had been created for each other. When their eyes first met, they were friends; and, at the first words exchanged between them, they were lovers.

Beauty attracts beauty, and youth wins youth. There was not the least embarrassment between them, and they looked each other in the face. The heart of Gaston was almost as fresh as that of Lucile, and their love rose like the summer sun in a cloudless sky. There is no more beautiful spectacle in this world than that of a mutual and legitimate passion advancing peacefully along a flowery road, with Honor on the right and Confidence on the left.

Mme. Benoit was too happy, and too well satisfied to hinder the progress of a passion which served her ends so well. She allowed the lovers that sweet liberty which is permitted in the provinces. Their morning walks were

but long *tete-a-tetes;* Lucile showed Gaston the house, the garden and the forest; and, in the afternoon, the forge had its turn. Gaston had had the courage to resist the temptation to go there alone, but when he found that, unlike her mother, Lucile had not the least objection to taking him there; that she knew the workmen by their names; and that she was not afraid that their blouses might touch her skirts, his cup of happiness was full. When Mme. Benoit saw them returning, with their faces black with smoke, she exclaimed:

"How happy young people are! they can find joy anywhere, even at the forges."

To rest themselves, they sat upon a bench in the garden, beneath the shade of an immense elm. They promised each other that they would spend their lives in the woods of Arlange; not a word was spoken of Paris, of the Faubourg nor of the vanities of the world. Lucile ignored the fact that happiness could be found outside of Arlange; Gaston had forgotten it.

One morning, Mme. Benoit announced that the marriage articles would be signed that night. The day of the wedding had been

fixed for the 1st of June. As there is no pleasure without its pain, the signing of the articles was preceded by an interminable dinner, at which all the personages of the province, of the least pretensions were present. All eyes were upon the marquis, and all the guests expected a smile from him or a pleasant word, but his two passions occupied his attention too much to permit him to take much notice of the people present. He sat opposite his affianced, and next to a young engineer of the salt mines of Dieuze, and, throughout the dinner, he had no eyes except for Lucile and no ears except for the engineer. The gentlemen engaged in a semi-political conversation which was replete with condemnation of all that existed, and with regret for all that which existed no longer. This discourse, which certainly would have interested a marquis of the old school floated about Gaston's ears, without penetrating as far as his mind.

In an interval of silence, they hear him say to the engineer:

"You say that you are building an underground railway at the mines; how much do you pay for the rails?"

"360 francs per 1000 kilos, delivered in France. The English ton, which has 15 kilos more, is worth—"

"I think, that by using a fuel-saving furnace that I am drawing a plan of, we can manufacture rails here that will be just as good as the English ones for two hundred francs a ton; perhaps less."

"It would be a great saving."

"Do your cables ever break?"

"Yes, and it is quite serious when they do; we had four men killed last month by accidents of that kind."

"I think I can suggest a remedy for that."

"Have you invented a cable that does not break?"

"Not exactly, but I have a way to stop the car in the shaft. I tried the system for three years at Saint-Etienne, and we did not have a single accident in all that time."

The Viscount de Bougatroff edged himself timidly into the dialogue:

"Does monsieur le marquis own coal mines in the department of the Loire?"

"No, monsieur, I was a superintendent there."

At this, Mme. Benoit realized suddenly that her guests had had enough desert, and arose from the table. Before the articles were signed the *corbeille* was brought out, and it won the hearts of all the ladies for Gaston. The poor young man was so overwhelmed with the compliments showered upon him that he could not defend himself; but he explained to Lucile, the next day, that it was her mother whom she had to thank for the *corbeille* and not he.

When the notary unrolled his papers, every one crowded about him. It was not that they wanted to learn the size of Lucile's *dot*, for that was known already; but they expected to hear an enumeration of the lands and property of the marquis. Their curiosity was not satisfied; the Marquis d'Outreville was marrying simply with his *civil rights*.

The next day, Gaston and Lucile again took up the chain of their pleasures, and the last days of the month passed like so many hours. On the 31st. the civil marriage was celebrated, and they both answered "Yes" without hesitation or embarrassment. When the Mayor, with the code in his hand, re-

peated that "A woman must follow her husband," Mme. Benoit nodded to her daughter in approval of the sentiment. After they returned to the house, the triumphant mother-in-law said to Gaston, in the presence of Lucile:

"My dear son-in-law, to-morrow I will pay you the first installment of your income."

"Have patience, my dear mother," replied Gaston, who was looking at Lucile, how can you expect me to think of money matters now?"

"Ah, do not disdain money; you will need a great deal of it in a few days at Paris."

"At Paris! Why what would I do at Paris?"

"Assume your position in society; receive our friends and relatives, and prepare yourself for the winter and for life.

"But, madame, I am fully decided to not live in Paris; it is an unhealthful place, where all the women are sick, and where families become extinct in three or four generations. Do you know that Paris would become a desert in a hundred years, if the people of the provinces were not foolish enough to repopulate it?"

"It is to prevent it from becoming a desert that my daughter and I wish to go there as soon as possible."

"You said nothing to me about that, mademoiselle?"

Lucile dropped her eyes without replying; her mother's presence intimidated her.

"It is useless to say that which is necessarily understood," continued Mme. Benoit; "my daughter is the Marchioness d'Outreville, and her place is in the Faubourg Saint-Germaine. Is it not so, Lucile?"

Lucile murmured an inaudible "Yes;" it was not thus she had said "Yes" to the mayor.

"The Faubourg!" cried Gaston, "the Faubourg! you wish to enter the Faubourg?" For some personal reason which he had never divulged, he had conceived an uncompromising antipathy against the Faubourg. "Do you know, mademoiselle, of what the Faubourg society is composed? Of young girls, as insipid as hot-house fruits; young women who are lost in their vanities; matrons, prematurely aged; old men who have been made stupid by whist, and young ones who utter the names of their fianceès, their mistresses

and their race horses in the same sentence. That is the Faubourg, mademoiselle; you know it as well as if you had seen it. What would you have? you live in a charming country place, surrounded by people who love you—not to speak of myself who adore you; you have the wealth which will enable you to make many people happy; the health, without which nothing can be enjoyed; the pleasures of summer and the more domestic amusements of winter. Your present is like an unclouded sky, and the future is peopled with rosy-faced children; and you wish to abandon all this for a life of shallow pleasures and absurd vanities in Paris! I will not be a party to such a resolution, mademoiselle; if you wish to enter the Faubourg, I refuse, decidedly, to take you there."

Mme. Benoit's face wore such an expression as that of a child who has built a tower of blocks, and who sees the structure falling before his eyes. She could scarcely find the breath to say to Lucile:

"Answer him!"

Lucile gave her hand to Gaston, and, looking at her mother, she said:

"A woman must follow her husband."

He paid no further attention to Mme. Benoit, but, taking Lucile in his arms, he kissed her tenderly.

Mme. Benoit spent the balance of the day in forming her plans, giving her orders to her servants and deciding how she would proceed.

The next morning, after the religious marriage, she said to her son-in-law:

"Am I to understand that you are fully decided to not introduce us into the Faubourg?"

"Why, madame, did not Lucile renounce the Faubourg of her own free will?"

"And what if I do not renounce it? What if I tell you that for the last thirty years, (I am now forty-two) my sole ambition has been to enter there? What if I tell you that—such was my desire to associate with the nobility—I married, in my blindness, a bogus marquis, who beat me? Finally, what if I tell you that I have chosen you, not for your face nor your talents, but for your name, which is a key to all the doors in the Faubourg? Ah, do you think I have given you an income of one hundred thousand francs that you might waste your time working?"

"I beg your pardon, madame, but, in the first place, I have the vanity to think that, at the present price of stainless names, mine was not dear at the price; but, besides, you have given me nothing. The forges, and all the Arlange property, is the inheritance of Lucile, the fifty thousand francs which you will draw annually fully covers the interest of all the money which you have ever put into the enterprise, as well as on the two hundred thousand francs which you paid for the house in the Rue Saint-Dominique. It is to Lucile that I owe everything, and, with her, I think I will have no difficulty in agreeing."

"But it is to me that you are indebted for Lucile, and you are ingrates, both of you, if you refuse me that for which I have hoped all my life!"

"Madame, I would refuse you nothing that it is in my power to give, with that single exception; but I have sworn that I will never again put my foot in the Faubourg."

"In the name of Heaven why did you not tell me so?"

"You never asked me."

When Mme. Benoit left the room she

whispered three words to her maid and four to the coachman. She said nothing more to the marquis about the first installment of his income.

At the ball in the evening, Lucile won the admiration of all eyes. None of the ladies present remembered ever having seen a bride who was more frankly happy. All the young men envied Gaston, and it can not be said that none of the young ladies envied Lucile. At two o'clock in the morning, the dancers were all gone. Mme. Benoit asked for permission to speak to her daughter for a quarter of an hour, and led her to the bridal chamber, while Gaston, in the meantime retired to his own room. When he descended the steps again, he was surprised to hear the noise of a carriage passing by at a rapid speed. He went to the bridal chamber and found it empty, as well as the rooms of Lucile and Mme. Benoit. He rang but no one came. He went out into the yard where he met Jacquet, the groom, to whom he said:

"Did I not hear a carriage go bye, a moment ago?"

"Yes, monsieur; of course you did."

"Who was leaving so late? I thought all the people had been gone for some time."

"Why, monsieur, it was madame and mademoiselle, with Mlle. Julie. Pierre is driving."

"Very well. Have they left any word for me?"

"Yes, monsieur, madame has left a letter."

"Where is it?"

"Here, monsieur, under the lining of my hat."

"Well give it to me, idiot!"

"You see, I put it there for fear of losing it; here it is."

Gaston ran to the lamp in the vestibule and read:

"My dear maqruis:—In the hopes that Cupid and cupidity will induce you to leave your beloved Arlange, I have taken your wife and your money to Paris; come and get them."

CHAPTER III.

Gaston put the note in his pocket, and returned to the garden where Jacquet was still standing, turning his cap nervously in his hands.

"Did madame la marquis say anything to you?" asked Gaston.

"Mademoiselle? No, monsieur, she did not even look at me "

"Is there any other road to Dieuze than the regular highway?"

"Yes, monsieur, there is a by-road."

"Is it shorter?"

"Yes, monsieur, a full mile."

"Saddle Forward and Indiana at once! Come, I will help you! A louis for you if we arrive at Dieuze before the carriage!"

Half an hour later, Jaquet in his blouse, and Gaston in his wedding clothes, arrived at the poste at Dieuze. Jaquet awakened a stable boy and asked if any one had passed by during the night; he was answered in the negative.

"Here Jaquet", said the marquis, "are the twenty francs I promised you."

"Monsieur," asked the groom, very timidly, "is not a louis twenty-four francs any more?"

"Not for years; stupid!"

"It was my grandfather who told me so; in his time a louis and forty sous made fifty francs."

Gaston did not reply; he was listening for the carriage. Jaquet continued to murmur to himself:

"How does it come that those pretty gold pieces have fallen to such a price as that?"

"Listen!" said the marquis, "did you not hear a carriage?"

"No, mosnieur. Ah, it is too bad."

"What?"

"That a louis has fallen to twenty francs."

"Here is another, you miser! Now keep quiet."

Jaquet was silent for a moment, but pretty soon he began again, still speaking to himself:

"It is all the same; if a louis were still worth twenty-four francs, the two louis which I have, added to the forty sous which madame

gave me, would make me just fifty francs; but the times are hard, as my grandfather used to say."

Gaston waited for an hour, and, at the end of that time, he began to fear that the carriage had met with an accident; but Jaquet reassured him.

"Monsieur, there is another road, which they may have taken, which does not come by Dieuze."

"Let us go there!"

"It is useless, monsieur, they have two hours start of us."

"Well then, let us go back."

On his return, Gaston's first thought was that he had better make sure that Jaquet would not reveal the secret of his nocturnal ride to the gossips of Arlange, and he could think of no better plan than to send him to Paris. "Take the coach for Nancy," he said; "at Nancy you can take the train for Paris. You will go to No. 57, Rue Saint-Dominique, and tell madame la marquis that I will come in two days. Here is the money to pay your fare."

"Monsieur," asked Jaquet, with his usual

timidity, "if I should make the trip on foot, would the money be mine?"

For answer, he received a kick which sent him three steps on his way.

Gaston, who was greatly fatigued, went to his room and threw himself upon the bed to rest, but not to sleep. Lucile's flight seemed inexplicable to him. Evidently, it had been premeditated; it would have been impossible to make the preparations in a quarter of an hour. But, in that case, her conduct had been false from beginning to end; the happiness which shone in her eyes, the tender pressure of her hand in the quadrille, and the sweet words which she had whispered in his ear just a few hours before, were but deceitful stratagems. Still if she did not love him, why had she married him? Her mother would not have compelled her, since she favored her flight. Then he remembered the discussion, almost amounting to a quarrel, which he had had with Mme. Benoit the day before. Doubtless, she wished to be avenged. But how had the ambitious mother been able, in less than a day, to convert her daughter to her opinions? Why had Lucile not written

one word of explanation? This thought naturally led him to look in his pocket for Mme. Benoit's note, and he noticed in it a phrase that had escaped his attention in the first rapid glance which he had given to the brief epistle: "your wife and your money." And it was with money that they expected to allure him! As if money were a consideration to a man who sees all upon which he had relied for happiness crumbling before his eyes! What signifies gold to him who has lost that which money cannot buy? Gaston imagined, very naturally, but still unjustly, that his mother-in-law wished to remind him of the poverty from which she had raised him, and his natural pride revolted at the insinuation. The more he read the unfortunate note, the more firmly he became convinced that he would be sacrificing his dignity in pursuing a wife who chose to remain away from him, especially since he could not make it plain that he was pursuing her and not her money. He resolved that he would not go to Paris until his wife had written to him.

The news of Lucile's departure was told from mouth to mouth in the neighborhood,

and Gaston was besieged by sympathizing visitors. He received the curious horde in a way that convinced even the most fastidious that he could be a man of the world when it suited him and he could spare the time. The visitors, who had been attracted by the scent of scandal, were astounded at his tranquility and his happy and smiling face. He told every one that Mme. Benoit had urgent business in Paris which required her presence there as well as that of her daughter. That, being an indulgent mother, she had not wished to postpone the marriage on that account; and, being at the same time a wise business woman, she had wished to leave the forges in the hands of a reliable man. As a gracious hostess, she had not wished to throw cold water over the festivities of the wedding-night by telling her guests of her intention. If any one assumed an expression of condolence, Gaston hastened to assure the good soul that, in a few days, husband, wife and mother-in-law would be definitely reunited. Not content with disappointing their curiosity, he took the trouble to make himself popular with them. By the help of his natural and acquried

graces of manner, he won the admiration of all the women and the esteem of all the men. The result of this comedy was that he made a hundred and fifty devoted friends, and he succeeded, also, in making them believe that his account of Lucile's departure was the truth.

The truth was this: After the ball Lucile, radiant with happiness, followed her mother into the bridal chamber. She had hardly crossed the threshold, when Mme. Benoit laid hands upon her and quickly removed her ball-dress, which she replaced with one of heavier material, while Julie took off the satin slippers and quickly buttoned on a pair of boots. All this was done so quickly that Lucile had not even time to be surprised. She heard her mother say:

"My dear child, the obstinate Gaston has surrendered; we are going to Paris!"

"So soon? He said nothing to me about it."

"That is because he wanted to surprise you, my dear; for you know that, in your heart, you really want to see this beautiful Paris."

"No, Mamma."

"You do, my child; I know you better than you know yourself."

"There was a knock at the door, and Mme. Benoit asked, uneasily:

"Who is there?"

It was Pierre, who replied:

"Madame, the carriage is waiting.

The widow hurriedly led her daughter out of the house. "Quick!" she said, "the people are still dancing; if they knew that we are going we would have to bid them farewell!"

"But I think we should say farewell to them," replied Lucile.

Her mother pushed her into the carriage, and entered after her.

"And where is Gaston?" asked the young woman.

Mme. Benoit turned to the coachman:

"Pierre, where is monsieur le marquis?"

Pierre, who had learned his lesson by heart, replied:

"Monsieur le marquis has charge of the baggage, and he is going in the chaise as far as Dieuze. He told me to tell madame that he would meet her there."

Lucile suspected treason, and attempted to open the right hand door of the carriage, but, either from accident or design, it was

locked. She knew that she could not escape by the other door without walking over her mother's dead body, and her courage was not equal to that.

Madame Benoit whispered to Pierre:

Drive straight to Moyenvic; do not go by way of Dieuze."

Lucile saw that she was betrayed, but she could only weep.

"Your husband," said her mother, "was obstinate and refused to take you into the world; for your sake, I have resorted to this method of compelling him to do so. He will come to Paris within twenty-four hours, if he loves you. That is no reason why you should be weeping there, like Hagar in the desert! I am your mother, and I know, better than any one else, what will make you happy. I am taking you to Paris to save you from Arlange."

"But I do not want to be saved; I only want Gaston," sobbed Lucile.

"Of what can you complain? You love him, and you have married him; what more can you ask?"

"But, if this is all that marriage is good for,

I am sorry that I am married; I saw him every day when we were single."

When they arrived at their destination, Lucile thought that Paris without Gaston was but an immense solitude. and the Faubourg a desert within a desert.

One day passed, and then a whole week, without any news of the marquis. Mme. Benoit endeavored to conceal her disappointment, and Lucile, who did not dare to let her mother see her grief, shed her tears at night.

Mother and daughter drove about in the carriage from morning until night. Everywhere that fashionable people went, and no invitation was required, they went. They went to the Champs Elysèe and the Bois de Bologne in the day time, and, in the evening, to the opera, but Lucile took no pleasure in seeing or in being seen; she was always anxious to return home in the hope of finding Gaston there.

Mme. Benoit guessed that the marquis had resolved to be obstinate, and, as there was considerable obstinacy in her own character, she said to herself: "So monsieur my son-in-law can get along without us? Well we

will show him that we also can dispense with him." All at once a happy idea occurred to her. "I will go to see my debtors, my dear debtors! They could patronise the daughter of a notion dealer, but the mother of a marchioness is a different person."

The first whom she visited was the old Baron de Subressac. She did not take Lucile with her, for she did not want the child to know how much it cost to open the doors of the Faubourg.

"Ah, my dear baron," she said, as soon as he had kissed her hand, "what an accursed fool you have given my daughter."

The baron looked at her for a moment, quite bewildered, and then he replied, somewhat angrily:

"Madame, the fool who has honored you by marrying your daughter is, taking it all in all, the most exemplary young man I have ever known."

"But alas! you do not know what he has done; he has been married but a week and he has already deserted his wife."

Then she related all the events of the last eight days, which the reader already knows.

As she advanced with her story, the smile came back to the baron's lips. When he had heard everything, he took her hands and said gayly:

"You are right, my dear; the marquis is a very wicked man; he has abandoned his wife just as Menelaus abandoned Helen."

"Monsieur, Menelaus pursued Helen. I maintain that a husband who sees any one take his wife away and does not pursue her deserts her."

"Happily, in this case, there is no Paris in the scene. You must take your daughter back to her husband; it is your duty. Whom God has joined together let no one put asunder."

The widow made a gesture which meant "never."

"What then do you intend to do?" asked the baron.

"Monsieur le baron, can I count upon your friendship?"

"Have I not often told you so, and proved it besides?"

"And I will never forget it, monsieur le baron. If you do not abandon me now, I think we can get along without the Marquis d'Out-

reville. What I have asked all my life, from God and man, is to enter the Faubourg; to enter there myself, it is necessary that Lucile be admitted first. She has all possible rights; all she needs is some one to introduce her. Do you refuse to do that for us, monsieur le baron?"

"Absolutely. In the first place, that honor belongs to a baroness, rather than to a baron, and then I will not be a party to anything which will retard Gaston's happiness; finally, even if I wished to help you, I could not do so. Your daughter certainly has the right to enter everywhere, but on what title? Because she is the Marchioness d'Outreville. As Gaston's wife, she will be received wherever her husband is known, that is to say, anywhere in the Faubourg; but with what grace could I say: 'Ladies and gentlemen, you know and esteem the Marquis d'Outreville; you are his relatives and his friends, permit me to introduce you to his wife who will not live with him?' Believe me, my dear, it is the experience of seventy-five years that is speaking to you. A young woman can not make a very good appearance in the world without her

husband; and the mother who attempts to take his place, does not play a part which society will applaud. If you are determined to associate with duchesses, make another effort to persuade your son-in-law to come to Paris. He naturally feels slighted, and, I for one, can not blame him for being sulky. I know him very well, and I assure you that, if you wait for him here, you will wait for a long time. Go back to Arlange. When Mahomet found that the mountain would not come to him, he went to the mountain; do not be prouder than he."

The baron's speech was a good one, but Mme. Benoit was not convinced. In the afternoon she called upon a half a dozen of her debtors. None of them denied her daughter's marriage, but none expressed any desire to know her. They all spoke well of the marquis; regretted that he was such a misanthrope, and that he so seldom allowed himself to be seen. They inquired after his health, and asked if he would spend the winter in Paris, but there was none of them to whom the widow felt that she might look to for aid.

Still she did not give up the chase; she had one arrow left, which she had reserved for an extremity. The Countess de Mamesy owed her more than any other of her debtors, and it was from her that she had the most to expect. The countess was an old lady who was still pretty, in spite of her sixty years. She had never been reproached with anything but her vanity, her passion for gambling, her greediness and her extravagance. Mme. Benoit thought, with very good reason, that a woman who had so many weak spots in her armor would be found vulnerable by some means or other, and went to see her.

While her mother was visiting the countess, the Marchioness d'Outrveille went to her own room, and, without asking for any one's advice, wrote her husband the following letter:

"What are you doing, Gaston? When will you come to Paris? You promised to join us here in two days. How have you been able to live ten long days without me? When we were in Arlange, you did not want to leave me for an hour. Heavens, how long the days are in Paris! Mamma says hard things about you, but, at the mere sound of your name,

there is such a beating in my heart that I can not hear her. She says that you have abandoned me, but you may be sure I do not believe her. Sometimes I imagine that I am not really your wife, and that the wedding at the church and the ball, where we were so happy, were but a beautiful dream from which I awakened too soon. Can you imagine how much I miss you? All I have seen in Paris, so far, is that you are not here. Is it possible that I should think so much of you and that you have forgotten me? Perhaps, you are angry because I left so suddenly. If you only knew! It was not I who went away, but mamma who carried me off. I thought you were going to meet us at Dieuze; mamma told me so, and so did Julie and Pierre. I would cry all the time, but I do not want mamma to know how badly I feel, and, besides, I do not want you to find me with my eyes red when you come. You must not be angry with me for not having written sooner; you sent word that you were coming, and I did not write because I was expecting you. Now, I am going to write every day until you come. Do come and get me! If you do not

like Paris any better than I do, you may be sure we will not stay long. Something tells me that you will certainly come when you get this letter. Think of two little hands which are extended towards you!"

Mme. Benoit returned while Jaquet was taking the marchioness' letter to the post-office.

"Have you not been lonesome while I was away, my dear?" asked the widow.

"No mamma," replied the marchioness, "not at all."

CHAPTER IV.

The next three days were anxious ones for Mme. Benoit and her daughter. While Lucile walked in the garden meditating on the future, Mme. Benoit sat by a window in the salon and kept her eyes upon the *port cochère*, but none of her noble debtors appeared. They paid her neither in money nor in politeness and returned nothing, not even her visits.

She was seated behind a curtain, meditating sadly upon the ingratitude of man, when she saw a carriage stop at her door. She felt her heart palpitate, for it was the first time that another carriage than her own had stopped there since she occupied the house. She saw a middle-aged man ascend the steps. It was not a debtor but, a thousand times better, the Count de Preux in person. She cast a hurried glance at the furniture, another at her toilette, and began to prepare her first words of welcome. The count was slow in making his appearance, and she began to grow angry

at Jaquet for keeping him waiting in the vestibule. Finally, the door was opened and a man entered, it was Jaquet.

"Show him in!" said Mme. Benoit, impatiently.

"Who, madame?" asked Jaquet, in that drawling tone which is characteristic of the Lorraine peasants.

"The count!"

"So it was a count; well he is gone."

Mme. Benoit ran to the window and saw the Count de Preux enter his carriage, without once turning his head.

Returning to Jaquet, she cried:

"You blundering fool, what did you say to him?"

"Madame, the gentleman asked for monsieur le marquis I told him he was not at home, that is all."

"Idiot! did you not say that madame la marquise was at home?"

"I did, madame, but he did not seem to hear."

"Why did you not repeat it?"

"I did not have time. He asked me when monsieur le marquis would return, and, as he

is a very pleasant gentleman, and not at all proud, I told him the good joke you and mademoiselle had played upon monsieur."

"You wretch. You are discharged. How much is coming to you?"

"I do not know, madame."

"How much do you earn a month?"

"Nine francs, madame. Do not discharge me; I have done nothing and will never do it again." Then some tears.

"When were you last paid?"

"Two months ago, madame. What will become of me if you discharge me?"

"Come here. Here are your eighteen francs, and here are twenty more to help you to find another place. Now go!"

Jaquet took the money; counted it to see that no mistake had been made, and fell upon his knees.

"Pardon me, madame, I have not done anything; I have never harmed any one!"

"Monsieur Jaquet, you must learn that stupidity is worse than all the vices."

"Why so, madame?"

"Because it is incurable."

Mme. Benoit left him and threw herself

upon a divan in another room. Jaquet left the house, carrying, like the philosopher, all his fortune on his person. Had any one followed him he might have heard him say: "Sixty-two and eight make seventy, and ten, eighty, and twenty, one hundred; but I have killed the hen; I will get no more golden eggs."

Lucile heard of Jaquet's disgrace at dinner, but she did not dare to ask the cause. The mother and daughter, each occupied with her own sorrows, were eating in silence when a servant brought in a letter for the Marchioness d'Outreville.

"From Gaston?" cried Lucile.

Unfortunately it was not, but from Celine Jordy, *née* Melier, who wrote to her friend as follows:

"My dear Lucile:—I am sending a letter both to Paris and to Arlange, for, since your wedding, I have not known where to find you. I am happy, happy, happy! that is all I can tell you now; if you want the details, come and get them, or let me know where you are hiding. Robert is the most perfect man on earth, with the possible exception of the

Marquis d'Outreville, whom I have not yet seen. I have a thousand secrets to tell you, but I can not write them. Come to-morrow if you are in Paris, and whenever you can, if you are in Arlange. I do not want to think that you are going to be a marchioness as far as I am concerned. Let us go to see each other as often as we can, without counting the visits. You must see our house; it is the most delightful *bourgeois* nest you can imagine. I suppose I will be dazzled when I see your palace, but I must see it, and I will not be envious. Come soon! I send you a kiss, wherever you are."

"Your Celine."

"No. 16, Rue des Tilleuls."

"Dear Celine! I will go to spend the day with her to-morrow. You will not need me, mamma?"

"No, I am going to see one of my friends."

"Who is it, mamma?"

"You do not know her; the Countess de Malesy."

Mme. Benoît had not seen the venerable friend upon whom she placed her last hope for at least twelve years. She found her but

little changed. The countess had grown a little deaf, from continual listening to the upbraidings of her creditors, but it was a convenient sort of an infirmity, which did not prevent her from hearing anything that pleased her. Her eye was still clear, and her digestion admirable. She recognized her creditor, and received her with great familiarity.

"*Bonjour, petite, bonjour*! I have never refused to see you; you have too much sense to come to ask me for money."

"Ah, madame la countesse, avarice has never prompted the visits I have made you."

"Dear *petite*, you are just like your father. Ah, my child, Lopinot was a good man!"

"You are very kind, madame la countess."

"Can you understand that they should come to ask a poor old woman like me for money? It is less than a year since I married my daughter to the Marquis de Croix-Maugars. It was a good match, and I am well pleased with it, but it nearly cost me the eyes from my head."

(Mlle. de Malesy did not receive one centime for a dot.)

"I, madame, have just married my daughter to the Marquis d'Outreville."

"What did you say the man's name is?"

Mme. Benoît made a trumpet of her two hands, and shouted:

"The Marquis d'Outreville."

"Very well; I can hear you. But which family? There are the genuine d'Outrevilles and the bogus d'Outrevilles."

"One of the genuine."

"Are you sure? Is he rich?"

"He had nothing."

"So much the better for you; the bogus d'Outrevilles have millions. They have bought the lands and chateau, and have taken the name in the bargain. What kind of a nose has he?"

"Who?"

"Your son-in-law."

"Aquiline."

"I congratulate you; the bogus d'Outrevilles have snub noses."

"This is the one who graduated from *l'École Polytechuique*."

"Yes, I know him; rather eccentric, but he is genuine. But tell me—you will not

mind the question—how did he come to make such a blunder."

It was Mme. Benoit's turn to be deaf.

The countess continued:

"I mean the blunder of marrying your daughter. Is she very rich?"

"An income of a hundred thousand francs goes with her. We *bourgeois* have preserved the habit of giving *dots* to our daughters. Digest that!"

"All the same, I am astonished at him. I thought he was too proud. You understand, *petite*, that I would not say that if he were here, but we are speaking confidentially. Who is it, Rosine?"

"It is the notion dealer, madame," replied the maid.

"I am not at home! Those merchants are becoming insupportable. Ah, *petite*, your father was a good man! I was saying that the whole world will criticise the marquis. Not to his face, of course, for a man's name belongs to him, and he can drag it where he chooses, but—Who is it now, Rosine?"

"Madame, it is M. Majou."

"I am not at home! I am out for the day!

The merchants, nowadays, are worse than the beggars; you can chase them away, but they always come back. Your father was the only one among them who understood his business. Is your daughter pretty, at least?"

"Madame, I will have the honor of presenting her to you one of these afternoons. My son-in-law is, at present, at our country place."

"Is that it. Bring her some morning. Another one, Rosine? Are they having a procession this morning?"

"Madame, it is M. Bouniol."

"Tell him I have gone to the country."

"I have already told him that you are not at home, and he replied that he had been here five times within a week, and that he would not return."

"Show him in then; I will tell him what I think about him. Permit me to say, *à revoir, petite*; you see I have business to attend to."

As Mme. Benoit entered her carriage, she said to herself:

"You may patronise as much as you please, you impudent old butterfly; you have debts and I have money. You are in my power,

and you shall lead me by the hand as far as your daughter's salon, even if it should cost me five thousand louis."

Lucile had for many hours been with her friend. She left the house in the Rue Saint-Dominique at eight o'clock, and, an hour later, she descended at the prettiest house in the Rue des Tilluels. The morning was beautiful, and there were so many flowers in the garden that it looked like an immense bouquet. The morning breeze brought to the nostrils the refreshing fragrance of a huge acasia. All the vines that climb were clinging to the walls, and the place reminded Lucile so much of Arlange that she would, at that moment, have been willing to give away, to any one who would accept it, the little house in the Rue Saint-Dominique, with its narrow garden, where the flowers died within the shade of the walls.

Celine welcomed her friend with girlish rapture. Have you ever noticed, at the theater, the meeting between Orestes and Pylades? No matter how clever the actors may be there is always something ridiculous in the scene. It is because the friendship of

men is in its nature neither expansive nor graceful. A heavy clasp of the hand; the arm of one grotesquely passed around the neck of the other and the absurb rubbing of two beards can not charm any one. How much more elegant and fascinating is the tenderness of women. The most unapt among them are artists in friendship.

Celine was a tiny blonde, with a turned-up nose, who was always showing her teeth, white and pointed as those of a terrier. She laughed simply because she was alive, cried for no reason at all, and changed the expression of her face twenty times an hour. Her features were irregular and she could not have been called pretty; but her face had a power that beauty does not always give, that of pleasing all eyes which beheld it.

Lucile was a striking contrast to Mme. Jordy, and, if friendship depends upon contrast, theirs was built upon an enduring foundation. The young marchioness was a head taller than her friend, and not nearly so plump. Have you ever seen in the illustrations of the delightful books of M. Carnot, those nymphs with the slender and graceful

forms who dance around a tree, holding each other by the hand? If the Marchioness d'Outreville had come to join their games, without other garment than a tunic, or other ornament than a golden arrow in her hair, they would have opened to give her a place, and the game would have gone on with one sister more.

"How good it was of you to come!" said Celine to the marchioness, as she kissed her again and again. "I dreamed about you last night. How long have you been in Paris?"

"Since the day after I was married."

"Ten days lost for me: how terrible!"

"If I had only known that you were here! I wanted to see you so much."

"And I! In the first place, look me in the face; do I look like a married woman? Will people still call me mademoiselle?"

"It is true; there is something more of dignity, or something of that kind, about you."

"You have not changed at all.

"What a beautiful garden you have!"

"Do not call it my garden. Every one sees it; every one stops to admire it, and it belongs to every one. My garden is over there

where you see the green door. No one ever walks there but Robert and I. You shall be the third. Let us go there."

"This," said Celine, when they entered the little garden, "is our private park. We walk here every morning before Robert goes to his office. It was he who planted those vines and hung those hammocks, and he had those benches and that pretty little table put in here. You never knew such taste as he has; he is an artist, an architect, a gardener, everything!"

After the garden had been admired sufficiently, they went into the house, and Celine was still enumerating the many excellent qualities of her husband when M. Jordy himself entered. He was whistling a merry air, and twirling his straw hat about on his finger. At the sight of the marchioness, he stopped and made a respectful bow. Celine without any ceremony, flew to his arms and kissed him upon both cheeks. "Do not mind Lucile," she said, as she noticed a look of admonition on his face, "she has been married only two weeks, and she is just as crazy as we are. But I had forgotten that you have not been

introduced—Robert, this is Lucile," she said, with a simple but graceful gesture.

This was all of the introduction. M. Jordy paid Lucile a pleasant little compliment, to show her that he had heard of her very often and that he did not look upon her as a stranger, and, as it was twelve o'clock, they all went to breakfast, which was served under the trees in the garden. All conventionality was left aside at the meal, and everything was talked about, except their neighbors and the latest opera. Such was their own happiness, that neither M. Jordy nor his wife noticed that there was something of constraint in Lucile's gayety.

At two o'clock, M. Jordy returned to his office, and the two friends again took up the chain of their confidences. The slightest incident furnished them material for an hour's conversation. Women are admirably constituted for microscopic labors; they enter into the minutest details of their pleasures and their sorrows.

When the dinner hour approached, Celine was still doing all the talking, and Lucile listened as well as she could, but her friend's

happiness recalled her own grief to her mind so vividly that she finally burst into tears.

"Why Lucile! what is the matter? You are crying!"

"Ah, Celine, I am very unhappy! Mamma took me away the night of the ball, and I have not seen Gaston since.

Celine's face took on a severe expression.

"Why that is treason!" she cried "Why did you not tell me sooner?"

Lucile then told her the whole story.

"Why did you not write to your husband?" asked Celine.

"I did"

"When?"

"Four days ago"

"Well then, do not cry any more; he will come to-night. He could not have come sooner."

During the dinner, Mme. Jordy preserved the dignity of a Roman matron. At ten o'clock Lucile took her departure. When they escorted her to her carriage, the sight of the coachman gave Celine a sudden inspiration.

"Pierre," she asked, in a tone of indifference, "has monsieur le marquis arrived?"

"Yes madame."

Lucile uttered a cry, and threw herself into the arms of her friend.

"What is the matter?" asked M. Jordy.

"Nothing," replied Celine.

CHAPTER V.

When Gaston received Lucile's letter, he said what any man would have done under the same circumstances; he kissed the signature a hundred times, and started at once for Paris. Fortune, which sometimes handles us in about the same way that a little girl does her dolls, brought him to his mother-in-law's house, in the Rue Saint-Dominique, on Tuesday evening, precisely two weeks from the day of his marriage. This time he was fully resolved to resist the maternal tyranny of Mme. Bénoît, and to fight the battle to a finish.

He had hardly entered the door before Julie ran to her mistress crying:

"Madame, madame! monsieur le marquis!"

The widow, who did not know that Lucile had written to Gaston, thought he had surrendered. With ill-concealed joy she said to the maid:

"There is nothing to scream about, Julie; I expected him."

When Gaston entered the room, he looked about him in an enquiring sort of way. Mme. Benoit, whose powers of observation were keener than formerly, said:

"You are looking for Lucile? She is dining with a friend; but she will return within an hour. Well you have come at last! Kiss me, my son; I pardon you."

"Well, my amiable mother, you have taken the words from my mouth; the first thing I wanted to say is that all your wrongs are effaced by this kiss."

"If I have done wrong, you have justified it in advance by that ridiculous mania, from which, I am happy to see, you are now cured. Admit that you were wrong, and thank me for having enlightened you. Are you not more contented here than anywhere else? Can anything else than necessity persuade a mortal to live anywhere than in Paris?"

"Pardon me, madame, but I have not come to Paris to live."

"And for what have you come? To die?"

"I do not intend to remain long enough even for that. I have come to Paris to get my wife, and also on business."

"Do you intend to take my daughter back to Arlange?"

"As soon as possible."

"Do you think she will be willing to go."

"It semes to me it is her duty."

"Do you intend to take advantage of your legal rights? Is your love sufficient to lead her there, or do you intend to have it reinforced by a couple of gendarmes?"

"Madame, I would renounce my rights, if I had to claim them before the Tribunal; but there will be no necessity for that. Love will be a sufficient inducement for Lucile."

"Love of you, or of Arlange?"

"Of one or the other."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"We will see. May I ask the nature of the business which shares with my daughter the honor of having brought you to Paris?"

"It is of a kind in which you are not at all interested."

"Who is the privileged personage whom you have come to see?"

"The Minister of the Interior."

"The Minister of the Interior! And for

what purpose? What would the Faubourg say, if it were known that you have called upon the minister?"

"It shall be known! In the interests of the forges and of Arlange, I want to sit in the Council-General. There is at present a vacancy; and I have come to ask the minister to announce me as a candidate."

"But you will put me on bad terms with all the aristocracy!"

"I beg your pardon, but one can be on bad terms only with people one knows. If you had taken the pains to ask me my political opinions, I would have told you that I do not belong to the Opposition."

"At any rate, you have come here because I compelled you to do so. Will you sign a treaty of peace?"

"With great pleasure, if you are reasonable."

"You will find me so. You love Arlange and wish to return there. You want to take your wife with you, which is very natural. I have no objection to that."

"That is all I ask. Let us sign at once."

"Wait! On the other hand, I love Paris

as you love the forges, and the Faubourg as you love Lucile. If I cannot enter it, I have nothing to live for. Would it be too much trouble for you, while you are here, to introduce your wife and me in half a dozen houses of that terrestial paradise from which I have always been excluded because of—"

"Of original sin! I must tell you again that I hold against the Faubourg an old-time grudge which absolutely prohibits me from ever appearing there again. You may think you have claim enough upon me to ask me to lay aside my prejudices for the time being; but upon what ground can you ask me to endanger Lucile's whole future? The quiet pleasures of country life suffice for her ambition; she has told me so. Who can assure me that a view of the life where all is show and glitter will not turn her head; that if her eyes are once dazzled by the brilliant illuminations of the Faubourg, they can ever accustom themselves to the soft light of the lamps in Arlange, that if she once listens to the gossip and babble of the world, she will always be attentive to the voices of her children and my own? So far, she is still the Lucile of Arlange; she is very unhappy in Paris."

"What makes you think so?"

"I am sure of it; but I am not sure that in six months she would feel the same as she does to-day. A ball is sufficient to change the heart of a young woman, and a waltz can cause greater upheavals than an earthquake."

"You think so? Well, let us grant that. Lucile is yours; you can do with her as you please; but with me it is different. Listen well! Here is my ultimatum, and if you refuse to accept it, we will no longer attempt to agree: What is to prevent you from presenting me in five or six houses of your connection?"

"Without my wife? Believe me, my dear madame, you are as well known among the aristocracy as your father was. Your persevering ambition has become the fable of the Faubourg; the baron has written as much to me. It is said that with your millions, you have bought the right to fly through the world as the tail piece to a marchioness' kite. If I were to take you out to-day, to-morrow they would count the visits we have made and calculate, within a centime, the amount I have realized from each one. In a week my

wife and I will leave for Arlange. We would be very glad to offer you a home with us, but that is all that duty and common sense require us to do."

Mme. Benoit was strongly tempted to scratch the eyes from the head of this model son-in-law, but she managed to conceal her vexation.

"My friend," said she, "you have been traveling for two days; you are tired and sleepy, and I have been very foolish in trying to convert you at such a time. You will be more agreeable after a night's rest. Wait for me here while I send a servant to prepare your room."

When she was returning to the room, she was saying to herself:

"He has come here to defy me; well I will show him that I can get along without him; the Countess de Malesy shall help me. But I must act quickly; he might take Lucile back to Arlange sooner than he said, and then, farewell to the Faubourg!"

Just then, Pierre opened the *porte cochère* and Lucile ran into the vestibule. Mme. Benoit ran into the salon in order to be there

before her, for there was nothing she dreaded more than the first interview between Gaston and his wife, and she wished to dampen with her presence the enthusiasm of those young hearts. Lucile expected to run into the arms of her husband, but it was her mother who received her, with her usual volubility and with unusual tenderness.

"My dear child, have you returned at last? You staid so long that I was beginning to grow uneasy. My heart seems to be suspended by a single thread when you are away; the least thing shakes it. How have you passed the day? Are you feeling better than you have been for the last few days? You see, monsieur, how changed she is; the mere sight of you makes her blush and turn pale at the same time. Emotion is fatal to her. And you, my dear marquis, look badly also. You pretend that the air of Arlange agrees with you, but your face does not show it. I hope you will be better after you have had a night's rest.

The next day, Mme. Benoît made her final attack. She had heard that Gaston was to have an audience with the Minister of the

Interior at eleven o'clock. The Marchioness de Croix-Maugars' ball was to be held two days later. All the aristocracy was to be there, for balls are rare in Paris in the latter part of June, and when there is an opportunity to dance under a pavilion, every one goes. The widow took advantage of her son-in-law's absence to leave Lucile at home, while she went to see the old countess.

"Madame," she began, bluntly, "you owe me about eight thousand francs."

"What did you say?" asked the countess, who was always deaf when money was mentioned.

"I did not come to collect them nor to reproach you."

"Well that is better!"

"I care so little for money that I would be willing to cancel the debt, and even to make some other sacrifices, to accomplish my purpose. I wish to enter the society of the Faubourg with my daughter, the Marchioness d'Outreville, and that at once. It is the day after to-morrow that your daughter gives her ball; you are her mother, and she can refuse you nothing. Would I be abusing the right

which I have acquired to your good will if I should ask you for two invitations?"

"Alas! my dear," replied the countess, with tears in her eyes, "you do not understand. My daughter is my daughter, there is no denying that, but she is in her husband's power. Do you know Croix-Maugars?"

"If I knew him, I would not need your help."

"That is true. Well, *petite*, all I have to do is to ask him to do me a favor to be sure of a refusal. I am the most unhappy woman in Paris! My creditors are persecuting me, although I have never done them any harm! My son-in-law is a man and he should protect me, but he abandons me! I do not know where to turn my head! How have you the heart to speak of balls and pleasures to a distressed woman like me? I have no doubt, they will sell my furniture!" Here the countess began to weep.

Mme. Benoit took out her handkerchief and said to herself:

"Since weeping is in order, let us weep. After all, my tears are as sincere as hers."

Speaking aloud, she said:

"Come, madame la comptesse, have cour-

age. Nothing can conquer a heart like yours. How much do you owe?"

"Alas! petite, I hardly know."

"That is a great misfortune.

"Yes, it is a misfortune, assented the Countess de Malesy, "to be the mother of a Marchioness de Croix-Maugars, to be received everywhere, and to be unable to pay a few hundred francs. I make you sad, do I not? Adieu, my dear, adieu! It but doubles my grief to see your tears; leave me to my misery!"

"How much do your most pressing debts amount to?

"Ah, how much? I do not know myself; I am loosing my memory, but here they are in my desk. First comes M. Bouinol; I owe him two thousand francs."

"Will you permit me to call upon him; I will take charge of the matter?"

"I forbid you!—Or rather, yes; go there. You can get along with him better than I can. You merchants do not eat each other. You can buy the claim for half, and it will be to you that I will owe the two thousand francs."

"Vey well, madame. Who are the others?"

"Here is a baker in the Rue de Poitiers, who claims five hundred francs for a few miserable cakes that I bought at his shop."

"I will say a word to him."

"Yes, tell him that he should be ashamed, and that I never want to hear of him again."

"He will not trouble you any more."

"Then here is M. Majou, with his bill for a few cases of wine."

"That is but a bagatelle. Give me the bill. How much is it? A thousand francs! Heavens! madame la comptesse, it is an excellent quality of wine you use."

"Here is the bill of the furniture dealer; he asks for fifteen hundred francs, but if one knew how to go about it, he would take half."

"I will try, madame la comtesse," said Mme. Benoit, as she took the four bills and folded them carefully together. "It is twelve o'clock and I will go now and look after your affairs. Now that your mind is more at ease, will you not try the effect of your eloquence upon the Marquis de Croix-Maugars?"

"Yes, my dear, my mind is more at ease, but you do not yet know all my grief."

She went to the desk again and took from it a *portfeuille* filled with papers.

"Five thousand francs," said Mme. Benoit to herself, "is not a high price for a passport into the Faubourg, but if I remain here, the old lady will want me to buy her the Louvre or the Tuilleries as I pass by."

She laid the bills she had taken upon the table, and said:

"Alas! madame, I am afraid your sorrows are beyond cure."

"No, no; they are not," quickly replied the countess. "I will be sure to get out of difficulty one of these days; and you have raised my courage. The bills I have shown you are the most urgent ones, the others can wait. I will go to see my daughter at once, and I will get an invitation for the Marchioness d'Outreville. There will be no need for two; you can come with your daughter. In the meantime, go to see those tradesmen, and return here at three o'clock with the receipts. You can exchange them for the invitation."

The Marquis de Croix-Maugars made a grimace when he saw his mother-in-law enter his house. Her needs were so many that he

had grown accustomed to look upon the old countess as a bill of exchange. When he found that she did not ask for money, he had nothing to refuse her, but smilingly gave her the blank card she asked for, without dreaming of its value.

Mme. Benoit, happy as a sailor when he enters his native port, called upon the four creditors of the Countess de Malesy and paid them all without disputing an account. At three o'clock the countess pocketed her receipts and the widow returned to her house, with the precious invitation in her hand. "At last", she said, "I have my naturalization papers; I am a citizen of the Faubourg Saint-Germain!"

When she alighted from her carriage, she saw the victim of her former rage, the undiscerning Jaquet, standing in the yard.

"Come here, my boy," she said; "you do not need to be afraid. I have pardoned you. You want to be taken back?"

"Oh, thank you madame, monsieur le marquis has given me a place."

"The marquis has given you a place! You are fortunate."

"Yes madame, very fortunate; I earn fifty francs a month."

"I congratulate you. Is that all you have come to say?"

"No, madame, I have brought you two letters."

"Where are they?"

"I have to get them out of the lining of my hat; here they are."

One of the letters was from Gaston; the other from Lucile. Gaston said:

"My dear mother-in-law:—With the confident hope that maternal love will induce you to leave the Paris which you love too well, I have taken your daughter to Arlange. We would be delighted to have you join us there."

"Who gave you this?" cried Mme. Benoit; but Jaquet was gone, like a bird before the storm. She unsealed the other letter and found three pages of apologies and excuses, which terminated with: "A woman should follow her husband."

When Mme. Benoit read these letters, she thought neither of the treason of her daughter, nor the ingatitude of her son-in-law, nor of the rupture of any domestic tie; she thought

only that she had bought an invitation for five thousand francs; that it was in the name of the Marchioness d'Outreville, that it could not be of the least possible use to Mme. Benoit and that they would dance without her at the marchioness' ball.

CHAPTER VI.

Gaston, confident of his rights and of Lucile's love, was not afraid of being pursued by his mother-in-law. The trip to Arlange was made one of pleasure. They chose their route and stopped when they pleased. It took them three weeks to reach their destination, and although Lucile had made the same journey with her mother in less than two days, the second journey seemed shorter to her than the first.

The arrival of the bride and groom was the occasion of a *fête* in Arlange, for Lucile was adored by all the people in the village. The workmen of the forge told her in their *patois*, that they had found the time very long while she was away. The companions of her childhood presented themselves, with awkward timidity, to extend their congratulations, and she received them in her arms. She inquired after the absent and the sick, and made the whole village radiant with the joy which filled her heart.

After she had shown proper appreciation of the overtures which were made to her, Lucile would have been willing to lock herself up at the forges with Gaston and see no one else than him; but he persuaded her to make and receive visits, and he even had the heroism to take her to call upon the Baroness de Sommerfogel. He joined her in sending an invitation to M. and Mme. Jordy to come and spend their summer vacation with them in Arlange, and he dictated to Lucile half a dozen letters intended to pacify Mme. Benoit and bring her back to Arlange. These marks of filial affection served only to exasperate the disappointed widow. She had no use whatever for those idle letters, which could not serve to open the door of a single salon. If she had forgotten for an instant what she called the treason of her daughter, the invitation to the Croix-Maugars' ball, which she always carried about with her, would have served to remind her. She thought that the whole nobility of France had formed a plot against her, and she looked upon the Marquis d'Outreville as the chief conspirator. If she did not bid an eternal farewell to the scene of

her failures, it was because she did not wish to admit herself vanquished, for she knew that she had nothing to expect, except from chance.

She no longer visited any of her debtors, except the Baron de Subressac. It was not that she expected any favors from him, but she was at least sure of his good will, and the good will of a baron is not to be disdained.

M. de Subressac was more aged than a man of seventy-five should be, and, unfortunately for him, he had forgotten to marry in time. He lived upon an income of six thousand francs, in an upper story, with a valet and a cook, who served him from force of habit and who did not mind the irregularity of their pay. Every morning, after breakfast, he made his toilet with all the coquetry of a woman whose beauty is beginning to fade. It was said that he used rouge, but this assertion has never been substantiated. When he was once dressed, he made his visits. He was well received everywhere, and was invited to dine seven times a week. On the whole, he was as happy as a man who is seventy-five years of age, and who has to look in the homes of other people for his pleasures, can possibly be.

He had no infirmities, but, in the winter of 1845, his most intimate friends noticed that he was beginning to fail. His conversation was less lively than formerly, and he had absent moods. One evening, after dinner at the Marquis de Croix-Maugars, he fell asleep in his chair. The Countess de Malesy, who noticed him, made the lugubrious observation: "Insomnia in youth, or drowsiness in age, is a forecast of death." In April, he was seized in the rue Bellechasse with a spell of dizziness, and he would have fallen had it not been for a gendarme who caught him in his arms. After this, he staid at home most of the time, and he regretted more than ever that he could not afford a carriage. He was well received everywhere but few people came to see him. Mme. Benoit was the first person to care for him, and she placed at his disposal the easiest of her carriages. The baron felt a tender gratitude for her kindness. Aged people are like children; they become attached instinctively to those who guard their weakness. He came to dine in the Rue Saint-Dominique every day. The dinners were gotten up expressly for him, and he was given the dishes

he was most fond of, as well as the best wine in the cellar. At desert, he would relate his sorrows and Mme. Benoit would listen. After he had exhausted his real woes, he would enumerate imaginary ones, and then she would weep. As tears are contagious, the baron would always weep with her. One night in the latter part of September, he said to the widow:

"My dear, I resemble an old carpet whose design is faded, and which shows only cords and strings; but, such as I am, I can still give you what you have wanted all your life. Do you wish to be a baroness? Something tells me that you will not have to endure me very long; I even think you will have to make haste if you want to become Mme. de Subressac. I have many relatives in the Faubourg, and I am rather popular everywhere. I will only have time to present you to my friends; but, after my death, they will continue to receive you for my sake. Reflect upon this proposition. Take a week to decide; take two, I am still good for two weeks. Write to your children; perhaps fear of this marriage will induce them to do as you wish.

For my part, whatever happens, I will die more tranquilly if I have the consolation of knowing that I have contributed to your happiness."

Mme. Benoit was not prepared for such overtures, but she did not need two weeks to decide. An hour after the baron was gone, her mind was made up. She said to herself: "I have sworn that I would never marry again; but I have sworn, also, that I would enter the Faubourg. This time, I can at least, be sure that my husband will not beat me."

She sent her reply to M. Subressac, and began the preparations for her marriage without writing to her daughter of her intention. A slight indisposition of the baron warned her that she had no time to lose. While he was confined to his room she attended to the publications in the church and all the legal formalities. The ceremony was fixed for the fifteenth of October. On the fourteenth, M. de Subressac complained of a slight pain in his head, but, towards evening, he was better and he dined with his prospective bride with his usual appetite.

While Mme. Benoit was pursuing her barony

M. and Mme. Jordy were spending their autumn vacation of three weeks in Arlange. Mme. Melier entertained them for a week, and allowed them to spend the balance of the time at the forges. The marquis and M. Jordy soon became almost as firm friends as Celine and Lucile. The day on which Gaston was to gain a father-in-law and lose a fortune—for Mme. Benoit had determined to leave her own wealth to a hospital, and thus disappoint whatever expectations her son-in-law might have—both couples arose almost at break of day and had a picnic in the forest, at which they all enjoyed themselves greatly, little dreaming of the important events that were taking place at Paris.

At ten o'clock in the morning, Mme. Benoit took her seat in her carriage and started for the baron's lodging, for, contrary to the usual custom, it was the bride who was going for her groom. When she ascended the steps, she was met by the two servants who were in tears. The baron had died suddenly during the night. She asked to see the remains and, holding the cold hand, she sat for an hour beside the bed, stupefied and tearless.

It was Mme. Benoit who presided at the baron's funeral. She took his two servants into her service, and assumed all his debts. "For," said she, "am I not his widow in the eyes of God?" At the grave, when she saw the long line of carriages behind her own, she burst into tears and cried, between her sobs:

"How unhapy I am; all those aristocratic people would have danced at my house."

* * * * *

Gabrielle-Auguste-Eliane Benoit died, like Moses on Mount Nebo, without having placed her foot in the promised land.

THE END

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327. Samantha at Saratoga.....Josiah Allan's Wife
328. Sartor Resartus.....Thomas Carlyle
329. Scarlat Lattar, The.....Nathanial Hawthorna
330. Salf Raisad, or, From the Depths.....Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
331. Senaca's Morals.....Sir Rogar L'Estranga
332. Sesama and Liliaa.....John Ruskin
333. Shadow of a Sin.....Bertha M. Clay
334. She's All the World to Ma.....Hall Caina
336. Ships That Pass in the Night.....Beatrica Harradan
336. Sign of the Four.....A. Conan Doyle
337. Single Heart and Double Face.....Charlas Raada
338. Singularly Daludad.....Sarah Grand
339. Six Gray Powders, Tha.....Mrs. Hanry Hood
340. Sketch Book, Tha.....Washington Irving
341. Snow Imaga, The.....Nathanial Hawthorne
342. Squira's Darling.....Bartha M. Clay
343. Stickit Miniatar, Tha.....S. R. Crockett
344 Stories from tha Franch.....Guy de Maupassant and othara
346. Story of an African Farm.....(Ralph Iron) Olive Schreiner
346. Stranga Casa of Henry Topiaas.....John W. Postgate
347. Stronger than Daath.....Emila Richebourg
348. Study in Scarlat.....A. Conan Doyle
349. Swiss Family Robinson.....J. D. and J. R. Wyss
350. Tales from Shakaspaara.....Charlas and Mary Lamb
351. Talas from the Odyssay.....Walter C. Parry
352. Talas from Tannyson.....G. C. Allan
353. Tanglawood Tales.....Nathaniel Hawthorna
354. Thraa Men in a Boat.....Jarome K. Jaroma
355. Thalma.....Maria Coralli
356. Through the Looking Glass.....Lewis Carroll
357. Tom Brown at Oxford.....Thomas Hughas
358. Tom Brown's School Days.....Thomas Hughes
359. Trassura Island.....Robart Louis Stavanson
360. True and Baautiful.....John Ruskin
361. Try Again.....Oliver Optic
362. Tampast and Sunshina.....Mary Jane Holmes
364. Twice Told Tales.....Nathanial Hawthorna
365. Undar tha Maplas.....Walter N. Hinman
366. Uncle Tom's Cabin.....Harriet Baachar Stowa
367. Vashti and Esthar.....Author of Belle's Letters
368. Vicar of Wakefield.....Oliver Goldsmith
369. Voyaga of tha Sunbaam.....Lady Brassey
370. Watar Babies.....Charlas Kingsley
371. Wedded and Partad.....Bartha M. Clay
372. What Will tha World Say?.....Mary Jana Holmes
373. What Would You Do, Lova?.....Mary Jana Holmes
374. Whittiar's Poams.....John Greanleaf Whittier
375. White Company, The.....A. Conan Doyle
376. Winkad Girl, A.....Mary Cacil Hay
377. Wida, Wide World.....Susan Warnar
378. Williams Brothers.....Adrian Parcy
379. Window in Thrums.....J. M. Barrie
380. Wit, Humor and Pathos.....Eli Perkins
381. Wonder Book, The.....Nathaniel Hawthorna
382. Yallow Aster, Tha.....Iota
383. Youngast Soldiar of tha Grand Army.....Du Boisgobey
391. Zoa.....Author of Laddie