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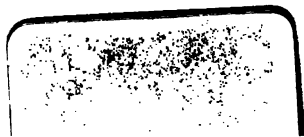
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A SALON  
IN  
THE LAST DAYS OF  
THE EMPIRE.



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A SALON  
IN  
THE LAST DAYS OF THE EMPIRE,  
And other Sketches.

By GRACE RAMSAY,  
AUTHOR OF "IRA'S STORY," "A WOMAN'S TRIALS," "BELLS OF THE  
SANCTUARY," ETC.



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# A SALON IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE EMPIRE.



## I.

### THE PARISIENNE EN DESHABILLE.

IT was not twelve o'clock. No one conversant with civilised life in Paris would commit the absurdity of calling to see a Parisienne at that hour; but being among the *intimes*, to whom my friend's door was never closed, I made no scruple of breaking in on her *déshabille*.

Francois, the valet-de-chambre, was still in *petite tenue* when he answered my summons,

“Madame la Comtesse n'est pas chez elle; mais madame peut entrer!” he said, and went on tickling the panoply and the picture-

frames in the ante-chamber with the tips of his plumeau. I passed into the grand salon, which was empty, to the petit salon where madame usually sat when she left her room in the morning to devote an hour or so to improving her mind, and storing it with such intellectual food as suited her appetite and her *monde*. The wholesome meal, composed of the "Vie Parisienne," Feydeau's last novel, and the inevitable pièce de résistance, "Figaro," was made ready on the chiffonière beside the sofa where madame reclined during the process of study; but she was not there. The door of the bed-room was ajar; I raised the portière and passed in. Let me describe this room; it may be taken as a type of its class. The walls were hung with light-blue satin damask, relieved by a silver border; curtains and portières of blue satin, caught up by massive silver ropes, fell in rich drapery from two windows and four doors, and filled the room with an azure twilight. The dressing-table, placed between the windows, was a miracle of artistic bubble

evolved out of satin and lace; its silver-framed mirror reflected, from beneath, a regiment of vermilion phials and boxes and brushes, and a variety of cunning little implements instinct with some occult power of "beautifying for ever"—in fact, every conceivable apparatus for the adorning or disfiguring of the human face and head. Opposite to the mirror stood the bed. The wood-work, like the rest of the furniture, was in azure-blue laquer; a double set of curtains, lace falling under the blue lined with quilted white satin, fell from a canopy fastened to the ceiling, and fringed with blue and silver. Shaded by these appropriate surroundings was a large ivory crucifix. The panels of the blue-laquer wardrobe were mirrors; a full length mirror à cheval stood opposite to it, so placed that no aspect of the occupant's dress and figure could escape her admiring or critical eye. There were blue couches and causeuses with the most elastic of spring seats, placed here and there about the luxurious little temple, and in the

centre of the flowery Aubusson carpet stood a Louis-Quinze pouff, embroidered by her own fair fingers.

I did not wait to scan the details of the room on this particular morning. I knew every object in it by heart ; but had it been otherwise, I was too much startled by a presence that met my view on entering, to take note of anything else.

Close by the Louis-Quinze pouff stood a man. A man got up in all the outward trappings of a gentleman : an extensive display of snowy linen, unimpeachable tailoring, ganté, botté, in perfection ; nothing overdone.

Whatever my feelings were on beholding him, it was quite clear his underwent no shock whatever on beholding me. He bowed very low ; rather too low, it struck me. I sat down under the shadow of the nearest curtain, and took up the "Gaulois"—it had evidently been just tossed open on the guéridon in the act of being read—and I began to discuss within myself who this man could be, and what kind of business had brought him where he was.

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My friend was a widow, and had neither father, brother, nor uncle living. The stranger was not her medical man, I knew. Who could he be? He was tall, young, and decidedly good-looking. I puzzled over it to no purpose. I looked up and down the edifying columns of the "Gaulois" in hopes of their suggesting a clue to his identity; but the "Gaulois" suggested nothing. After about ten minutes of this fruitless cogitation, our juxtaposition—he standing, twirling his moustache, or making a show of examining the weather through the lace maze of the window, I sitting in confidential discourse with the "Gaulois"—struck me as so unendurably grotesque that I resolved, by way of diversion, to make a sortie. The weather, the kind weather, always at hand for distressed conversationalists, came to my rescue.

"Quelle chaleur étouffante!" I remarked.

"Effectivement, madame, on étouffe."

"Je ne me rappelle pas un été pareil à Paris."

"Ni moi non plus, madame."

Here the conversation broke down.

It left me where I was when it began. Suddenly the thought occurred to me that he was the dentist.

There was nothing for it, however, but to wait patiently till my friend came in to clear up the mystery. Her voice, in animated discourse with Clarisse, the femme-de-chambre, was audible from the cabinet-de-toilette next door. In a few minutes the door opened, and my friend, gliding like a blonde nymph from under the blue cloud of portière, made her appearance.

She nodded en passant to the profuse bow of the gentleman, who immediately drew off his lavender gloves with the air of a man preparing for work; and then, taking no more heed of him than if he had been a bottle on the toilet-table, she embraced me, and broke out into inquiries about my health, and gossip about our mutual neighbours.

Clarisse meantime rolled out a low arm-chair to the middle of the room, placed a diminutive table beside it covered with a nap-

kin, on which were set out several crystals, etc., and a small cushion. The gentleman took a chair on the other side of the table, opened a dainty morocco case, from which he drew two or three tiny brushes, and what appeared to me some surgical instruments.

“It is the dentist!” I mentally concluded, and forthwith felt a sympathetic thrill of horror. But a glance at the face of my friend checked the thrill.

There was no expectation in those sparkling eyes of anything approaching to the horrors of dentistry or to horrors of any kind; and two pearly rows of teeth that glistened through the laughing red lips seemed to rebuke me mockingly for the injurious suspicion.

“C’est prêt, Madame la Comtesse,” said Clarisse. The lady took her seat in the causeuse, adjusted her arm comfortably on the cushion, and extended her hand to the gentleman opposite.

The mystery was solved. He was the manucure. Though I had lived all my life in



Paris, and knew that such an *industrie* was carried on by needy women, and patronized by fashionable women, it was the first time I became aware that it counted male practitioners, that men devoted their time and energies to the trimming and polishing of ladies' nails. The fact that such is the case, and that women of high rank and immaculate reputation make a practice of employing male manucures, is so significantly characteristic of the tone of society in Paris, that it would be superfluous to moralize upon it.

My friend was one of the loveliest women in Paris; a widow, young, rich, and, in spite of these dangerous attributes, universally admired and respected. She was, in the reputable sense of the word, *une femme à la mode*. Her salon was frequented by the leading men in every department — art, science, literature, and fashion; politicians of all colours met there on neutral ground. A salon is no longer in France the great institution it was in the days of the Hôtel Ram-

bouillet, or the Boudoir Pompadour, where the strings of home and foreign affairs were pulled by the fair fingers of noble or ignoble beauties; when a war could not be declared, or a new word adopted, or a new law promulgated, till each had been canvassed and carried in the counsels of the fair despots and pedagogues who ruled alike over the palace and the academy. Those days of woman's tyranny have passed away, and with them much of the cultivated grace and native genius that made her sway at once so dangerous and so fascinating. Yet there is no denying that the *salon d'une jolie femme* is, even in this degenerate age, an agent of considerable social power in Paris. To be *jolie femme* in the city of art and pleasure includes something more than the mere possession of a pretty face, a possession in itself no despicable element of happiness and power to women all over the world; but which in Paris comprehends a wider and more heterogeneous empire than in any city under the sun. Beauty is there a recognized supremacy before which

all men, the wise and the foolish, the old and the young, bow down, not merely in idle flattery, but in genuine reverence, in the belief that it is one of those things set up by Nature for especial worship—a sort of demigod, endowed with goodly, humanizing attributes, very kindly and beneficial to the rougher animal, man. Grey-headed statesmen, who would hardly condescend to discuss the question of their separate porte-feuilles with intelligent men outside the radius of their particular spheres, will enter quite confidentially into discourse on such grave topics with the *jolie femme*; and when she responds to the veteran homage, as the genuine *jolie femme* invariably does, with a tact all her own, by eyes that sparkle brighter with listening interest, and a countenance alive with intelligent sympathy, it is quite a study to see how seriously and how gratefully the response is acknowledged. She is sure to want some point elucidated.

“C’est si précieux pour moi de pouvoir m’instruire auprès d’un homme comme vous,

M. le Ministre ! Les autres ne me parlent que de bêtises ; mais vous, vous êtes si aimable, que vous ne dédaignez pas de causer raison avec une pauvre petite ignorante comme moi. Expliquez-moi donc," etc.

And, of course, M. le Ministre explains.

So in turn every male superiority goes up to the shrine and worships, each contributing some store of logic or learning to the fair divinity. The naturalist talks to her of his travels, the man of science of his experiments, the diplomatist gives her the gossip of foreign courts ; sometimes more serious items of information when she chooses to extract them. They all conspire to educate her. The poet and the dramatist take their MSS. to her for private inspection, not so much with a view to provoke criticism or eulogy, as for the delicious flattery of her admiring attention. The kindling glance of her eyes, smiling or tearful at will, the graceful clapping of pretty hands that accompany her gushing exclamations of delight, make up a more sympathetic

audience for the French man of letters than the choicest Areopagus of intellectual equals. The result of this desultory but sustained education is, that the *jolie femme*, who starts at a considerable disadvantage of learning, and even of natural ability, with her plainer sisterhood, very soon outstrips them. She culls as she goes along ; the gleanings requires no effort ; she has but to stretch out a deft but careless hand to take from the feast of knowledge spread all around her in its most attractive form. Under such circumstances the *jolie femme*, unless she be born a fool, generally develops into the *femme d'esprit*. She soon tires of the simpering dandy, who can only tell her she is beautiful ; even on this graceful theme the changes must be rung cleverly and delicately to find favour in her ears ; the *enfant gâtée* of talent in its most varied and influential representatives, has no room for fools in her temple thronged by such votaries.

The Comtesse Berthe is an accomplished type of the *jolie femme*. She is accomplished

in no other sense. She is not a clever woman ; intelligent is the utmost that could be said for her native endowments ; yet I have often sat dumb with surprise while she held forth on some knotty political question, running through the rings of a diplomatic puzzle as lightly and as easily as a musician modulates a series of intricate chords and gradually resolves them to the tonic.

“How in the name of the fairies did you get at that precedent of Charles Quint and Ximenes, my dear Berthe?” I asked one day, when the crowd had dispersed after listening to her holding her own against an octogenarian senator who had a thousand to one her sense.

“Chérie, M. del——” (the Spanish ambassador) “has been in here all the morning, boring me with the story of that row between the Queen and the Cortes. *C’était à dormir debout* ; but he told some amusing incidents of Spanish history to make me take in the point at issue. That one of Charles Quint and the Cardinal came

in apropos just now, and I applied it. Voilà toute ma recherche ! ”

So it was on every subject. She was a plagiarist unconsciously. She caught the tone, and, to a certain extent, the wit, of the clever men who surrounded her, quoting their sayings and opinions, till, by force of habit, she grew to fancy them her own.

But to return to the manucure. He was busily working away at the fair hand that resigned itself passively to his beautifying skill. First he soaked the fingers in some fragrant essence, whose virtue it was to render the nails pliable; then he filed them; then he alternately anointed them with *pommade à la Reine*, and brushed them with *poudre à l'Impératrice*, and polished them off with *crème à l'invisible*, and finally perfumed them with *baume à l'impossible*.

While this operation was going on, the patient and I conversed as unreservedly as if the operator had been a machine, set going by an electric battery, or a dumb

animal, devoid of ears to hear, and a brain to understand. No part of the proceeding amused me more than this. While the man rubbed away at her hand, she ran on discussing her own and her friend's most private and intimate concerns; just as if he had been a bear at the North Pole. Suddenly she turned her head towards him, and began watching, abstractedly, his manipulation. "Vous soignez les mains de ma voisine, la Marquise de B——, I think?" she said.

"I have that honour, madame. It is one of my most agreeable pratiques. Une femme distinguée et on ne peut plus sympathique."

He was at the third finger now. As he finished each, he laid the hand on his coat-sleeve, and held it towards the light to judge of the effect. The nails glistened with every tender shade of pink and white, like enamelled rose-leaves, as they came from his powder and paste.

"Her sister is handsomer," remarked



my friend, not the least ruffled by the cool impertinence of his comment on her neighbour, the Marquise.

“Handsome, yes, I am of the opinion of Madame la Comtesse; but she lacks that supreme distinction which captivates in Madame la Marquise.”

“She has a pretty hand,” I observed, by way of leading the creature back to his proper walk; “she does your skill credit; it must be discouraging to take so much trouble, and waste so much ability, on an ugly hand.”

“That is quite a secondary consideration with me,” he replied, with a smile of serene benevolence, that rebuked my low estimate of his character and profession. “The first thing I look for in my patients is that they should be *des femmes distinguées*, and that they should be sympathetic to me. My large connection enables me, happily, to choose my subjects, and I never accept one that does not realize to my eyes, those two conditions. I have but the *embarras*

*du choix*, see!" he pulled a blue and gold carnet out of his waistcoat pocket, opened it, and ran his fingers down several pages, covered with addresses. "Behold, the multitude of my engagements! There are ten marquises, fifteen countesses, and wives of bankers, and such like, without end, counting on me at this moment. Does madame think I shall attend them all? No; my life, if its days numbered twenty-four hours instead of twelve, would not suffice. I multiply myself in vain; I cannot arrive at contenting all. I am compelled to select a few out of the multitude. This morning, I was stepping into my cab, on my way to the Princess M——s, when the valet-de-chambre of Madame la Comtesse came up with her note. I immediately turned the horse's head towards the door of Madame la Comtesse. Her orders for me are supreme. Let all the world wait, rather than Madame la Comtesse should be deranged."

He suspended the chamois brush that

was doing duty with the *poudre à l'Impératrice*, and bowed elaborately to my beautiful friend. She smiled, and half nodded as she might have done to an intelligent poodle which had licked her hand.

“You must find it rather an uninteresting profession as a continuance,” I ventured to remark.

“Madame, that depends. Like all professions, it has its ennui, its deceptions; but it has many compensations. One must take a higher view of one's art than to make it a mere question of money. What is money? Bah! It is the mud! One must have a soul of mud to think of money!” He shrugged his shoulders—that contemptuous shrug, the Frenchman's *dernier mot* to every argument. “Besides, I am a bachelor; I have no need of it. I pursue my avocation; first, because a man owes it to society to do something, and secondly, *par culte pour l'esthétique*. The world is full of idlers; the world goes badly: what must save it is the *esthétique*. It will not let itself be converted by philosophy

or philanthropy. You must get at its soul through its senses. *L'esthétique*, mesdames, that is the thing! Now, who will deny the influence that the human hand, full of charm, and character, and expression, may exercise on the beholder? What may not this agent of power accomplish when wielded by a beautiful and distinguished woman? Ergo, mesdames, if I by my art place such an omnipotent instrument for good in the keeping of a number of femmes distinguées, am I not furthering the progress of humanity practically more than nine-tenths of the men who make noisy speeches and write noisy books on *le progrès et le genre humain*? Am I not a benefactor of my kind? I ask it of ces dames!"

He dropped his pomatum-pot, and looked from one to the other of us, challenging a denial.

"Mais parfaitement!" exclaimed Berthe.

She had listened at first with languid surprise to the manucure's credo; but gradually her face lighted up with an awakened look of

interest, or at least of curiosity. I did not trust myself to make any comment beyond a mumbled "sans doute!" lest my risible faculties should give way.

That he believed in himself, that this æsthetic apostle was thoroughly in earnest, no one could look at him, and listen to him, and doubt. But, indeed, every Frenchman is endowed at his birth with the faculty of working himself up to believe in anything that he makes his theme; the more paradoxical the better; it only calls on his *feu sacré* for a greater momentum to supplement the want of sense and reason in his thesis.

When the hands were finished, M. Dalmonferac, having carefully adjusted his professional implements, and bathed the tips of his own fingers in the basin of perfumed water, rose to depart.

"I put myself at the feet of Madame la Comtesse. I am ever at her disposition. She has but to signify her pleasure, and no matter at what hour or under what circumstances, I fly before her orders!"

And he bowed himself out of the room.

“It falls well. I dine at Madame de K——’s; *je poserai pour la main ce soir,*” said my friend; and, holding up her hand, she surveyed its effect in the nearest mirror.

It looked so bewitchingly lovely, fresh from the experimentalizing of Monsieur Dalmonferac, that I could not but admit it to be a very convincing argument in favour of his æsthetic doctrine.

## II.

## THE BUSINESS OF LIFE.

M. GRANDHOMME was holding his levée. The Rue de la Paix was lined with carriages waiting for the fair owners who were waiting on M. Grandhomme. It was no trifling matter to obtain an audience from M. Grandhomme, to be admitted into the sanctum sanctorum of the man who, from his atelier, ruled the fashion of Europe and America: it was a distinction coveted by all, but granted only to a few. In the choice of those few the despot was controlled by no recognized standard of rank or wealth. They were, of course, drawn from that intangible and exclusive Walhalla known as society; but he showed no distinct deference to the relative degrees of rank within that hierarchy. Like

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M. Dalmonferac, M. Grandhomme exacted, above all, that his protégées should be *distinguées* and sympathetic. Acting on this first principle, he behaved with startling audacity in the distribution of his favours. An ambassadress would be kept "making anti-chamber," and allowed to return again and again before being admitted to the presence-chamber, while the autocrat was deliberately devoting the energies of his milliner-mind to the decoration of some new beauty from the provinces, whom Madame l'Ambassadrice would hesitate before inviting to her Samedis. A millionaire banker's wife would be dismissed with oracular laconism, and handed over to one of the subaltern priestesses of the Grandhomme temple, while the great man himself attended to the case of one of his favourites, a lady of moderate income, comparatively speaking, (all M. Grandhomme's votaries were supposed to be women of fortune,) and expended himself in the combination of a succès for her next ball. Like all human beings possessed of absolute power,



he was apt to exercise it too often at the bidding of his own caprice.

It was rather a formidable undertaking to make an entrée into those crowded rooms with the determination to order one plain silk dress, and inquire the price beforehand; and I take credit for no small degree of moral courage in having performed this feat once every winter. I am not clear whether I should have ventured quite alone on the desperate step; but I was always sure of meeting a number of friends, whose habitual contempt for expense and utter disregard of it in their dealings with the Grandhomme establishment, threw a mantle over my shameless economy, and pleaded for my odd common sense.

The first person who caught my eye on this particular day was my beautiful friend, Berthe. Indeed, I had begged her to look in there during the afternoon to keep me in countenance; and as the Grandhomme galleries were a sort of fashionable lounge, where *tout* Paris met for "combination"

and gossip, she made no difficulty of doing so.

“It’s very *gentille* of you to have come,” I said, making my way up to her, after answering nods of recognition on either side; “and now you must help me to order my costume.”

“What is it to be?”

“Nothing very showy. I thought of having a violet gros grain.”

“Hum,” muttered Berthe, looking dubiously at my hair; “I doubt the wisdom of that. You are rather pale to venture on violet, *chérie*. But here comes M. Grandhomme, we will consult him.”

Consult M. Grandhomme! Why, I had as soon dreamed of consulting the Grand Lama. Scores of women, whose reckless extravagance could have laid legitimate claim to that honour, had gone on ruining their husbands season after season, and never been so privileged. But Berthe was in her own way as great a power as M. Grandhomme. If he was *l’homme de la mode*, she was la

femme à la mode; each ruled fashion in a separate empire, and treated together on equal terms.

“What nonsense!” I exclaimed, laughing at the bare notion of such an absurdity; “while all Paris is waiting here to order unlimited wonders, is it likely he will lose his time with me?”

“Nous verrons,” replied Berthe, with a saucy air of conscious supremacy over all Paris there assembled. “Ah! the Princess de M—— has caught him, I see, and she’s sure to keep him half an hour. Let us sit down and bide our time.”

We sat down.

“Chère Comtesse, you would be an angel of charity to give me a petit conseil about my fancy dress for la Marine,” said a young girl running up to Berthe, and taking her hand with pretty beseechingness. “I’ve come four times, and waited the whole afternoon each time, and lost my singing-lesson twice, in hopes of getting to speak to M. Grandhomme; and he has never even looked

at me. Do please, give me an idea! I have more confidence in you than any one, except M. Grandhomme. Mamma advises me to go en Bergère de Watteau; but I'm afraid I'm too tall for that?"

Berthe was good-nature personified: she did not know what jealousy meant, and she took a nice womanly pleasure in helping other women to look their best.

"Well—perhaps," she answered reflectively; "but I'm not sure. Watteau would suit your face to perfection; and as to your height, I don't see why a shepherdess should invariably be small. Besides, the short petticoat and the hat, and the whole character of the costume, are adapted to take from one's height. On the other hand, there are sure to be flocks of Bergères. Chère enfant, you should have spoken to me of this before—quietly, when I could have pondered it over à tête reposée. One cannot think out a subject seriously in a whirl like this. Come to me this evening; you will find me alone, entre chien et loup, and we will put our heads

together, and combine something delicious and new."

"Chère madame, que vous êtes bonne!" and the girl kissed her in a rapture of gratitude. "Then I will tell mamma we may go now; she is so tired waiting here day after day, and always being disappointed."

"Stop!" cried Berthe, calling after her; "wait a little; Madame de M—— is going to release M. Grandhomme. See, they are moving this way; I shall seize him, and make him decide for you on the spot."

The girl blushing with delight, did as she was told, and in a nervous flutter of excitement stood close to Berthe, watching the great man drawing nigh.

While the Princesse de M—— was closing her conference, many minor ones were going on all round us.

"I don't feel my mind made up about it," observed a dashing, handsome, and, as she would herself have said, gorgeously-dressed person, whose loud voice and nasal intonation left no doubt as to her nationality.

“It’s not the expense that stops me. Mr. T. K. gives me ten thousand dollars a year for my clothes, and likes me to be as well dressed as any lady in the States. Besides, I’m going over to London by and by; and I want the Britishers to think pretty considerable pumpkin of me.”

“I reckon, they’re sure to,” replied the lady addressed. “I’d have it if I were you. You’re safe not to see one like it in London; and I know there’s nothing takes there in society so much as that style of dress; and, as you say, Mr. T. K. don’t mind about the expense.”

“Mademoiselle!” called out the first speaker; “I want to give an order.”

“Madame est Anglaise? Américaine? Ah! bon. Will madame take the trouble to pass to the room on the right. She will be attended to at once.”

“Are there separate establishments for every nationality?” I inquired of Berthe, who, being an habitué, knew the ways of the house.

“For the Americans, yes. They pay double for most things.”

“What a shame !”

“O dear, no ; they like it—at least the set of which these are specimens. The nice one’s don’t come here. Oh, see there ! Madame de K. is ordering something pretty.”

In a group near us, an elderly lady was concentrating her whole soul on the discourse of a première demoiselle, who was holding forth in an earnest, declamatory manner on some “combination” which clearly did not approve itself to the elderly lady’s judgment.

“How unfortunate that my daughter-in-law cannot return in time to select for herself,” she observed with grave anxiety ; “the world has changed so much since I went to balls—twenty years ago—that it is very puzzling ; and I don’t like the responsibility of choosing one out of such a multitude.”

“Let Madame la Marquise be tranquil,” urged the Frenchwoman, soothingly ; “let

her confide in me. I have studied the complexion, the tournure, the physiognomy, in a word, the whole *façon d'être* of Madame la Marquise jeune; and I take on myself the responsibility of the choice."

"But my daughter-in-law is so *difficile*. If it should not please her? or if some one else should order the same for the same evening. Think what a deception! She would never forgive me."

"I entreat Madame la Marquise to put her trust in me. Her daughter-in-law left entirely to my imagination the toilet she wore on Thursday last at la Guerre; and if Madame la Marquise reads the 'Figaro' cautiously" (that she should not read it at all, was a flight of absurdity that never occurred to the Frenchwoman), "she will have seen the *compte-rendu* of that toilet. It was the succès of the night, both in beauty of execution, and in becomingness."

"On Thursday night!" repeated the elderly lady, brightening up; "why, then it must be quite fresh, and she can wear



it at the Marine. How glad I am you mentioned it."

"De grâce, madame!" exclaimed the demoiselle, clasping her hands with an expression, half shocked, half amused; "that would, indeed, be a misfortune! What! la Marquise de C—— appear twice in the same ball dress! In Paris! *une femme élégante* so much looked up to!"

"And why not, if the dress is so becoming?" boldly demanded the mother-in-law, yet with a vague, uncomfortable sense of impropriety.

The demoiselle shook her head, drew near, and lowering her voice to a tone of confidence:

"Sérieusement, Madame la Marquise, it cannot be. *Une femme qui se respecte ne fait pas de ces choses là.* In the provinces or in England," with an exhaustive shrug; "but in Paris—impossible!"

"Then I wash my hands of it. I can make nothing out of it. The world is turned topsy-turvy. Women are gone mad. *Une*

*femme qui se respecte !*" And, tossing up her head, the mother-in-law walked off, repeating as she went, "*Une femme qui se respecte ! Mais elles sont toutes folles !*"

Meanwhile, M. Grandhomme, who occasionally, suiting himself to his company, aped the manners of a courtier, having bowed his princess to the head of the stairs, came back to the gallery; he had no sooner reappeared, than every head was turned towards him in eager expectation, each impatient for a sign. But the enchanter moved amongst them with averted eye, and an air of patronising conceit, that bespoke the man, "whose chariot was the nucleus of a comet, whose train filled whole streets." He bowed jauntily on either side, with a chorus of supplication ringing in his ears:—

"*Cher M. Grandhomme !* only five minutes."

"*Cher Monsieur ! De grâce, say, may I venture on mauve ?*"

This last was from a lovely young woman whose beauty had carried off trium-

phantly some of M. Grandhomme's latest eccentricities in fashion. He pulled up, bent a scrutinizing gaze upon her :

“ At night ? ”

“ No ; for a visiting costume . ”

“ It is a risk : but you may try it ; ” he passed on, then suddenly turning back, added, his finger uplifted warningly :

“ Mais que le chapeau soit rose ! ”

“ Et moi ? ” entreated another.

But M. Grandhomme was inexorable. He shook out his hands, and hurried past, calling out in tones of despair, “ Mesdames, mesdames, I am at the feet of each one of you, give me but time ; one moment and I am at your orders ! ”

Berthe stood up as the Turkish fez in which Monsieur Grandhomme was pleased to cover his noble head approached. She was too good a woman and a gentlewoman to “ *Cher Monsieur Grandhomme* ” him, or to stoop to any of the servile graces with which others fawned on his Czarship ; she merely said in her gracious, grande dame way,

“Bon jour, Monsieur Grandhomme. When you are ready, I want you for a moment.”

“I am always ready when Madame la Comtesse commands.”

He bowed down till the tassel of his fez nearly swept the ground, threw open a door of the long gallery, and motioned her to enter. She beckoned me and her little protégée in first. M. Grandhomme followed, and closed the door behind him. We were in Madame Grandhomme's boudoir. It was a superlative mark of distinction to be admitted into this room. Wonderful stories were current concerning the Asiatic splendour of the furniture, and the beauty of the works of art that adorned it. The effect of the whole was certainly dazzling. But what struck me most was the carpet. It was composed of alternate squares of Aubusson and Zibeline, the design being an inspiration of Monsieur Grandhomme's.

Before this original chef-d'œuvre was sent home to its author, an exiled Queen, who was just then furnishing an hotel in the Champs

Elysées, saw it and envied it; but on hearing by whom it had been ordered, and at what a price—twenty thousand francs—she observed with a smile, “ Ah, I might have known that such a costly folly could only be for a reigning Sovereign.”

In this boudoir, her feet nestling in the silky fur, or pressing the delicate tapestry, her person attired in M. Grandhomme’s latest “ combination,” Madame Grandhomme delighted to *poser* before the envied few who were admitted within the enchanted ring.

To-day she *poséd* as Marie Antoinette au Temple, and anything more insolently picturesque than the *pose*, from beginning to end, it would be difficult to conceive.

Her luxuriant fair hair was caught up under the white coiffe worn by the Queen in prison; a kerchief of simple white cambric was crossed upon her breast and relieved the severity of the long black gown, that fell in soft pathetic folds round her slight, well-moulded figure.

There was something to me shocking at the first glance in the mockery of majesty and martyrdom *posing* in this magnificent theatrical framework ; but apparently I was the only spectator who took this view of it. Berthe and her little friend expressed nothing but surprise and admiration.

“ What a success ! How perfectly it suits you ! The very type ! One sees Marie Antoinette before one ! ”

“ Yes, ” said Madame Grandhomme, smiling, while she rose to receive us, affecting a slow melodramatic movement in harmony with the tragic figure she personified, “ they tell me the character of my head and features recall well those of the unhappy Queen. ”

There were already three ladies in the consultation-room, but we were so startled by the vision of Marie Antoinette that we did not at first notice them. One was blonde, still young, but fatally overtaken by an *embonpoint* that robbed her of the appearance of youth ; the second was blonde also, with

large brown eyes and a tall slight figure ; the third was dark — a dangerous gazelle-looking creature. The three had spent their morning here, combining for the approaching ball at the Marine. Berthe knew them all ; I only knew the gazelle. We began chattering together, when Monsieur Grandhomme broke in with an abrupt, “Voyons, mesdames ! To business. We are not here to amuse ourselves.”

“I want you to give an idea to mademoiselle for a fancy dress,” began Berthe, laying a hand on the young girl’s arm in a motherly way that she affected with women younger than herself. “What do you say to a pink Bergère ?”

“Permettez, mademoiselle.”

Monsieur Grandhomme drew her towards the window, set her standing before him with the light full upon her face, looked at her intently for a moment, and shook his head.

“No ?” said Berthe, inquiringly, “she’s too tall ?”

“Too tall and too pale. But we must see her by night.”

He crossed the room, and opened a door into one that was brilliantly illuminated with waxlights. We all trooped in after him, all except Marie Antoinette who retained her *pose* in the Louis XV. fauteuil.

“Pauvre enfant! What a perfidious counsel it was to suggest pink to her!” he said, looking rather reproachfully at Berthe. “Let us see how you bear deep rose.”

He stretched out his hand, and, with the rapidity of magic, a satellite, whose talent, only second to that of the great luminary round which she revolved, had promoted her to the high post of assisting Monsieur Grand-homme in his æsthetic combinations, flew towards us with a cloud of tulle of every shade of rose, pink, and crimson in the gamut of carmine. He flung a rose-coloured scarf round the girl's shoulders, held it close to her cheek, cast it aside, snatched up a crimson one, applied it in the same way, and threw that from him. He called for a blue gamut.



It was brought, tested, and rejected impatiently.

“A very difficult subject, I see,” observed Monsieur Grandhomme, drawing his hand across his forehead, and looking down intently at his boots. Presently glancing up at her, he said,

“Did you ever appear as a *naïade*?”

“Never, monsieur. I should be afraid of the green.”

“There is green and green; your palor would suit certain attenuated shades of it. But no; this is your first fancy costume?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Then we must run no risks. I shall order you white—all white. You shall appear as a snow-storm. Write:—*skirt, white satin, short; bouillonnés tulle en profusion; flots de tulle par dessus les bouillons; flocons de duvet de cygne pleuvant sur les flots. Souliers: cygne; perce-neige noyés dans le duvet. Coiffure: cheveux en tourbillon, perce-neige piqué ça et là; glaçons de cristal clair-semés*

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*de la tête aux pieds. Nuage de tulle jeté sur le tout."*

"*Quel rêve !*" burst from the breathless girl, as she clasped her hands in ecstasy, and looked at Berthe.

"Et maintenant, madame ?" said Monsieur Grandhomme, turning to me with the peremptory manner of a man who knew the value of his time.

I shall spare my readers the platitude of my own costume. It may, however, interest them to know that violet was discarded as too great a risk for my complexion, and for my hair, which, according to M. Grandhomme, had not sufficient tone to relieve it. I confess the whole scene amused and interested me more than, as a reasonable being, it ought to have done. But there was something irresistibly contagious in the man's earnestness. He imbued you, for the time being, with his own strong individuality, with his thorough belief in combinations, his intense respect for dress as an institution. He literally wore himself out com-

bining. He travelled once a-year to out-of-the-way Italian and Spanish towns with a view to evolving combinations, studying assiduously the models of colour, form, and drapery in the old Masters. He dreamed over costumes. He would constantly start up out of his sleep in the dead of the night, and seize the sketching appliances always left at his bedside, that he might catch the passing inspiration of the dream and fix it on paper before it evaporated. He lifted dress to the position of a fine art in France, and in a few years did more towards subverting the standard that once prevailed there, and which made the simplicity and elegance of a Frenchwoman's dress the model of cultivated taste all over the world, than half a century of dressmakers did before him.

“Au revoir, chérie,” said Berthe, as we parted at Monsieur Grandhomme's door. “I shall be at Madame Folibel's to-morrow between three and four. Try and look in, and help me about bonnets.”

## III.

## EXTREMES MEET.

MESDAMES FOLIBEL occupied a double set of rooms, *au premier*, on the Boulevards des Italiens. On a door to the right a large brass plate announced that Madame Augustine Folibel presided over *lingerie et dentelles*, and invited the public to "turn the button." To the left, a large steel plate proclaimed Madame Alexandrine Folibel, *modiste*, and invited the public to "ring the bell." But after a certain hour every day, both these invitations were negatived by a page in buttons, who, stationed at either door, kept the way open for the ceaseless flow of visitors passing in and out of the two establishments.

My friend, Berthe de Bonton, was just

turning into the lingerie department, when I came up the stairs.

“How lucky!” she exclaimed, running across the landing to me, and then in a *sotto voce*, “Madame Clifford” (pronounced Cleefore) “is here, and wants me to choose a bonnet for her. Now, if there’s a thing I hate, it’s choosing a bonnet for an English-woman. To begin with, they haven’t the first rudiments of culture in dress, then they can never make up their minds, and they find everything too dear; but the crowning absurdity is, that they bring their husbands with them, and *consult them!* Figurez-vous, ma chère!” and Berthe, with a French-woman’s keen sense of the comic, laughed merrily at the conceit; I laughed with her, though not perhaps quite from the same point of view; “I made an excuse to get away for a few minutes, and left the *ménage* discussing a pink tulle, with marabout and beetlewings trimming; un petit poème, chérie; but—” she seized me by the arm, “fancy Madame Cleefore’s complexion under it!”

“Ah, bon jour, mesdames! I am at the orders of ces dames. Will they take the trouble to seat themselves just for one second!” entreated Madame Augustine, who greeted us in the first salon, where she was carrying on a warm debate on the merits of Alençon *versus* Valenciennes, as a trimming for a bridal peignoir.

“I only want to say a word with reference to my order of yesterday; where is Mademoiselle Florine?” inquired Berthe, looking round the room where there were several groups ordering pretty things.

“Florine! Florine!” called out Madame Augustine.

“Voici, madame!”

Mademoiselle Florine was a plump little *boulotte* of a woman, who wore her nose *retroussé*, and always looked at you as if she had reason to complain of you. Without being the least uncivil she looked it; her nose was uncivil: it had a supercilious expression that made you feel it was considering you *de haut en bas*. The fact is,

Mademoiselle Florine was not happy—she was disappointed; not in love, but with life in general, and with *lingerie* in particular. She had adopted *lingerie* as a vocation, and it was going down in the world; it was degenerating into *pacotille*; *grandes dames* were beginning to grow cold about it, and to wear collars and cuffs that a *petite bourgeoisie* would have turned up her nose at ten years ago. More grievous still was the change that had come over petticoats. The deterioration in this line she took terribly to heart, and the surest way to enlist her good graces and secure her interest in your order, be it ever so small, was to preface it with a sigh or a sneer at red Balmorals or other gaudy and economical inventions which had dethroned the snowy *jupon blanc* of her youth, with its tucks, and frills, and dainty edgings of lace or embroidery.

Berthe, it so happened, shared very strongly this dislike to coloured petticoats, and was guilty of considerable extravagance in the choice of white ones; Mademoiselle

Florine's sympathies consequently went out to her, and no matter how busily she was engaged, or with whom, she would fly to Berthe as to a kindred soul the moment she appeared.

"I have been thinking over those jupons à traîne, that I ordered yesterday," said Berthe, to the pugnacious-looking little *lingère*, "and I have an idea that the *entre-deux anglais* will be a failure. We ought to have decided on *Valenciennes*."

"Ah! I thought *Madame la Comtesse* would come round to it!" observed *Mademoiselle Florine*, with a smile of supreme satisfaction; "I told *Madame la Comtesse* it was a mistake."

"Yes, I felt you did not approve; but really twelve hundred francs for six petticoats did seem a great deal," observed Berthe, deprecatingly; "now, suppose we put, alternately, one row of deep *entre-deux* and a *tuyauté* of *batiste*, edged with a narrow *Valenciennes*, instead of *all Valenciennes*?"

"Voyons, réfléchissons!" said *Made-*



moiselle Florine, putting her finger to her lips, and knitting her brow.

“It occurred to me in my bed last night,” continued Berthe; “and I fell asleep and actually dreamed of it, and you can’t think how pretty it looked, so light, and, at the same time, so furnished.”

“A la bonne heure! Parlez-moi d’une pratique comme cela!” exclaimed Mademoiselle Florine, clasping her hands, and turning to me with a look of admiration, which was almost affecting from its earnestness; “there is some compensation in working for madame, at least. If ces dames knew what I have to endure from nine-tenths of the people I work for!” and she threw up her hands and shook her head in the direction of the *premier salon*. “But let me get out the models, and see how this dream of Madame la Comtesse’s looks in reality.”

Boxes of lace and embroidery were ordered out by the excited *lingère*, and under her deft and nimble fingers, the dream was

illustrated in the course of a few minutes. Berthe was undecided. She sat down and surveyed the combination in silent perplexity.

“Vraiment cette question de jupons complique trop la vie!” she sighed, presently; “and now I begin to ask myself if these will go with any of my new dresses? The *crinoline éventail* is going out, Monsieur Grandhomme told me, and they will never go with the *queue de moineau* that he is bringing in?”

Here was a predicament!

“Attendez,” said Florine, dropping a dozen *rouleaux* of lace on the floor, as if such costly *chiffons*, the mere mortar and clay of her airy architecture, were not worth a thought; “laissons la question de jupons pendante; I will go myself this evening and discuss the toilettes of Madame la Comtesse with her femme de chambre; we will see the style and fall of the new skirts and adapt the jupon to them.”

“Que vous êtes bonne!” exclaimed Berthe, looking and feeling grateful for

this unlooked-for solution of her difficulty.

“It is a consolation to me, Madame la Comtesse,” replied Mademoiselle Florine, with a sigh, “and I need a little now and then!”

We wished her good morning.

“Let us go back now to Alexandrine,” said Berthe. “I hope Mrs. Clifford has made up her mind by this time.”

But the hope was vain. Mrs. Clifford was standing with her back to the long mirror looking at herself as reflected in a hand-glass that she turned so as to view her head in every possible aspect, while Mr. Clifford looked on.

“Do you think it does?” she inquired, as we came up to her.

“I think a darker shade would suit you better,” I said, “that pale pink has no mercy on one’s complexion.”

“I’ve tried on nearly every bonnet on the table,” she said, looking very miserable, “and they don’t any of them seem to do.”

“Madame will not understand that the first condition of a bonnet’s suiting, after the complexion of course, is that the hair should be dressed with regard to it,” interposed Madame Alexandrine, who, I could see by her flushed face and nervous manner, was, as she would say herself, *à bout de patience*; “these bonnets are all made for the coiffure à la mode, whereas Madame wears un peigne à galerie. Mon Dieu! mais il y a six mois que le peigne à galerie ne se porte plus!”

I suggested *à l’appui* of this undeniable argument, that the comb should be suppressed.

“Oh, dear no, I wouldn’t give it up for the world!” said Mrs. Clifford, with the emphatic manner she might have used if I had proposed her giving up her spectacles.

“Then you must have one made to order.”

“Yes,” said Madame Alexandrine, “I will make one for madame after a special model.”

“But then it will be dowdy and old fashioned!” demurred the Englishwoman.

“Then let madame sacrifice le peigne à galerie! What sacrifice is it after all? Nobody wears them now; it belongs to the past,” argued Madame Alexandrine, appealing to me.

“This one was a present from my husband,” replied Mrs. Clifford, in a tone that seemed to say, “You understand, there is nothing more to be said.”

I did not dare look at Berthe. Luckily she was beside me so I could not see her face, but I saw the muff go up in a very expressive way, and suddenly she disappeared into a little salon to the left set apart for caps and *coiffures de bal*; I heard a smothered “burst,” and a treacherous *armoire à glace* revealed her thrown back in an arm-chair, stuffing her handkerchief into her mouth and convulsed with laughter. Madame Folibel, whose risible faculties long and hard training had brought under perfect control, received the communication however with unruffled equanimity.

“That explains why madame holds to

it," she answered, very seriously; "it is natural and touching. Still, one must be reasonable; one must not sacrifice too much to a sentiment. Monsieur would not wish it," turning to the gentleman, who stood with his back to the fire-place listening in solemn silence to the controversy.

"Monsieur understands that the chief point in madame's toilette is her bonnet. I grieve to say English ladies themselves do not sufficiently realize the supremacy of the bonnet; yet a moment's reflection ought to show them how all-important it is, how necessary that every other feature in the dress should succumb to it. The complexion, the hair, the shape of the head, are all at the mercy of the bonnet. Of what avail is a handsome dress, and fashionable shawl or mantle, costly fur, lace, an irreproachable tout ensemble in fine, if the bonnet be unbecoming? All these are but the rez-de-chaussée and the entresol, so to speak, while the bonnet is *le couronnement de l'édifice*. *Le chapeau enfin c'est la femme !*"

At this climax Madame Folibel paused. Mr. Clifford, who had listened as grave as a judge, his hands in his pockets, not a muscle of his face moving, while the modiste, looking straight at him, delivered herself of her *crédo*, now turned to me.

“Unquestionably,” he said, in a serious and impressive tone, “there must be a place in heaven for these people: they are thoroughly in earnest.”

Mrs. Clifford took advantage of the *aparté* between her husband and myself to follow up Madame Folibel’s oration by a few private remarks.

Clearly she was staggered in her fidelity to the “sentiment” which interfered so alarmingly with the success of the *couronnement de l’édifice*; but she had not the honesty to confess it outright. She was ashamed of giving in. Without being often one whit less devoted to the vanities of life, an Englishwoman is held back by this kind of *mauvaise honte* from proclaiming her allegiance to them. She is ashamed of

being in earnest about folly. Now this British idiosyncrasy is quite foreign to a Frenchwoman; even when she is personally, either from character or circumstances, indifferent to the great fact of dress, she is always alive to its importance in the abstract, and will discuss it without any assumption of contemning wisdom, but soberly and intelligently as befits a grave subject of recognized importance to her sisterhood in the carrying on of life.

“What do you advise me to do, dear?” said Mrs. Clifford, appealing to her husband, the wife and the woman warring vexedly in her spirit.

“Give in,” said Mr. Clifford. “What in the name of mercy could you do else? A dozen men in your place would have capitulated after that broadside ending in the woman and the bonnet.”

“What does monsieur say?” inquired Madame Folibel.

Monsieur had answered his wife with his eyes fixed on the Frenchwoman, as if she



were a wild variety of the species that he had never come upon before, and might not have an opportunity of studying again.

“I suppose I must sacrifice the comb,” observed Mrs. Clifford, affecting a sort of bored indifference, and looking about for her old bonnet, “so we will leave the choice of the model open till I have had a consultation with Macradock, my maid, and see what she can do with my hair; she is very clever at hair-dressing.”

“Oh, de grâce, madame!” exclaimed la Folibel, terrified at the rough Scotch name that boded ill for the *couronnement*; “your maid instead of mending matters will only complicate them still more. You must put yourself in the hands of a coiffeur who understands physiognomy, and who will study yours before he decides upon the necessary change. If madame does not know such a man I can recommend her mine, a coiffeur-artiste in whom I have unlimited trust. I send him numbers of my customers, he never fails to please them,

and I can trust him not to compromise me. Madame understands, the success of my bonnets depends in no small degree on the way in which the head is adjusted for them. *Il y a des têtes impossibles* that I could not commit my reputation to. I am sometimes obliged to make a bonnet for them, but I never sign it; I have my name removed from the lining, and so edit the thing anonymously. It would compromise me irremediably if my signature were seen on some of your countrywomen's heads."

Mrs. Clifford, awakened to the responsibility she was about to incur, promised to consult the artist instead of her Scotch maid, whereupon Madame Folibel handed her a large card which bore the name Monsieur de Rysterveld, and his address. Under both was a note setting forth his capillary capabilities, and informing the public that:—

"Monsieur de Rysterveld tient à prouver qu'il est possible de rester gentilhomme tout en devenant coiffeur."\*

\* A Fact.

The *modiste* then assisted Mrs. Clifford to tie on her own bonnet, observing while she smoothed out the ribbon carefully, as if trying to make the best of a bad case,

“I am glad that madame has consented to give up that *peigne à galerie*, it really is an injustice to her head, and it is simply out of the question her having a proper bonnet while that impediment exists. Madame will be quite another person,” she continued, addressing Mr. Clifford; “monsieur will not recognize her with a new *chignon*, and in a bonnet of mine.”

“Oh, then I protest,” said Mr. Clifford, drily; he understood French, but did not speak it: “I protest against both the *chignon* and the bonnet, madame.”

“*Plâit-il, monsieur?*” said Madame Folibel, looking from one to the other of us.

“Dear Walter! She means I shall be so much improved,” explained his wife, laughing.

“Improved!” repeated Mr. Clifford, not lifting his eye-brows, but writing *incredulity*

on every line of his face. His wife blushed, and her eyes rested in his for a moment. Then turning quickly to Madame Folibel she made some final arrangement about a meeting for the following day.

Just at this juncture Berthe came back. I was glad she was not there in time to catch the absurd little passage between the two. A husband paying a compliment to his wife, and she blushing under it after ten years' *ménage*, would have been a delicious morsel of the *ridicule anglais* that Berthe could not have withstood; it would have diverted her salon for a week.

"Well?" she said, five notes of interrogation plainly adding: "Are you ever going to have done?"

"It is decided," answered Madame Folibel, coming forward with an air of triumph; "madame sacrifices the comb!"

"A la bonne heure!" exclaimed Berthe; "I congratulate you, chère madame. Even au moral, you will be the better for it. For my part I know no *petite misère*

more demoralizing than an unbecoming bonnet."

We all went downstairs together; but at the street-door we parted from the Cliffords.

"Where are you going now?" asked Berthe.

"To the réunion at the Rue de Monceau," I said; "I got the *fairepart* last night, and I want particularly to be there to try and get a child into the Succursale school. There is only one vacancy and six are trying for it, so I fear my little protégée has small chance of success. Come and give me your vote, Berthe."

"Chérie, I would with pleasure; but I am so dreadfully busy this afternoon. I promised the Princess M—— to look in during the rehearsal chez elle, and then I've not been to Madame B——'s Thursdays for an age, and I almost swore I'd go to-day."

"Well, what's to prevent your going afterwards?" I said; "it's not yet four, and the réunion does not last more than an hour.

Monsieur le Curé arrives at a quarter past four and leaves at five."

"But one is bored to death waiting for him," argued Berthe, "and the room is so hot, at the good sisters'; and there won't be a cat there to-day, I'm sure; everybody is at the skating."

"Oh! the parish and the skating don't interfere with each other," I said, laughing; "but I see you can't come; so, good-bye, I must be off. Mademoiselle de Galliac will be waiting for me."

"Comment! Is la petite to be there? I particularly want to see her. I want to know how her snowstorm costume went off at the Marine, for in the crowd I never caught sight of her. Chère amie, I'll go with you to Monceau. After all," she continued, drawing a long sigh, as we stepped into her carriage, "this life will not last for ever; il faut songer de temps en temps à la pauvre soul."

We were a little behind our time for the canvassing. Four of my rivals were before me in the field, and had robbed me of a few

votes that I might have secured by being there a quarter of an hour sooner.

“ Now, Berthe,” I said, “ it’s your fault ; so you must bestir yourself to help me. Attack those young girls in the window and persuade them to vote for my child.”

“ Who are they ? ”

“ I don’t know ; go and ask them.”

Berthe charged valiantly at the group in the window, introducing herself by embracing the young girls all round, and declaring her perfect confidence in their support. They gathered round her, fascinated at once by her beauty and her frank, attractive manner. I saw at a glance that the votes were safe, and that I had no need to bring up reinforcements in that quarter ; so I set to work elsewhere.

Perhaps it would interest my readers to hear something of the *bonne œuvre* itself. Its object is to take charge of orphans of the poorest class, clothe, feed, and educate them till the age of twenty-one. The members are exclusively ladies, married or single. To be

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a member it is necessary to be a parishioner, to pay a small sum yearly for the maintenance of the confraternity, and to assist at the monthly meetings, where the wants, plans, and progress of the work are discussed in presence of the Curé, who is always president, and another parish clergyman elected *directeur*, the rest of the board—treasurer, secretary, and vice-president—being chosen amongst the members. When an orphan is proposed for admission, a written statement, giving her birth, parentage, and circumstances, and setting forth the special claims of the case, is placed on the green table of the assembly-room, at which the dignitaries preside during the meeting. This preliminary fulfilled, the next step is to secure the votes of the confraternity. The demand being always much greater than the supply, when a vacancy occurs it is sure to be sharply contested. A zealous patroness takes care to canvass beforehand ; but, from one circumstance or another, there are always a good many votes still to be disposed of on the day



of the election, and the half-hour that elapses from the opening of the assembly to the arrival of the Curé is spent in fighting for them, and presents a scene of interesting excitement. The patroness is looked upon as the mother of the little petitioner, who, once admitted into the orphanage, is called her "child." Those who are long members, and very zealous, succeed in getting in many orphans, and thus become mothers of a numerous family. The most devoted of these mothers are generally the very young girls. The way in which some of their young hearts go out to their adopted children is touching and beautiful beyond description. They seem to anticipate the joys and cares, and to invest themselves with something of the very dignity of motherhood in their relations with the little outcasts, who look to them for help in a world where, but for them, they would apparently have no right to be, where no one cares for them, no one loves them, except the great Father who suffers the little ones to come to Him, and will not have them for-

bidden. Every month the *sœurs* send in a special bulletin of the conduct and health of each child, addressed to the adopted mother, and read by M. le Curé at the meeting. According to the contents of the bulletin the mothers are congratulated, or the reverse. Little presents are sent to the good children, and letters of reproof written to the naughty ones. In this way the maternal character is kept up till the children leave the shelter of their convent home. Then the mothers assist in placing them as servants or apprentices, or, better still, in getting them respectably married.

While Berthe was gathering up votes for me on her side, I was busy on my own, and when the bell rang, announcing, as we thought, M. le Curé, I had a pretty good poll.

The buzz of talk subsided suddenly, the high functionaries broke away from the common herd, and took their places at the green table, near the *fautouils*, awaiting the Curé and the Vicaire. Some of the very young

mothers looked eager and flurried. One in particular, who was a rival candidate with me, seemed terribly nervous. She was about seventeen. Two juvenile mothers on either side of her were speaking words of encouragement, and trying to keep up her hopes.

“Tu as bien prié pour que je réussisse ?” I heard her say to one of them ; “the poor old grandfather will break his heart if Virginie is refused. He can’t take her into les Vieilliards—even if it weren’t against the rules—because he hasn’t a crust of bread to give her. He has nothing but what the sœurs give him for himself. Oh ! do pray hard that I may succeed !”

“Let us say another Pater and Ave before M. le Curé comes in,” suggested her companions ; and the three friends lowered their voices and sent up their pure young hearts together in a last appeal to the Father of the fatherless in behalf of the little orphan.

The door opened. It was not M. le Curé.

“Ah! bon jour, cher ange!” exclaimed Madame de Nérac, embracing Berthe with effusion, and talking as loud as if she were “receiving” in her own *salon*. “What a charming surprise to meet you! I came to vote for Marguerite’s *protégée*, and see how my *dévouement* is crowned!”

I expressed my satisfaction at virtue’s proving in this case its own reward.

“But why have I not seen you before?” inquired Berthe. “I did not even know you were in town.”

“I hardly know it yet myself,” replied Madame de Nérac; “I only arrived last night. Marguerite wrote to me imploring me to be here if I could in time to vote for her. *Chère amie*,” she continued, turning to me, “till you reminded me of it I actually forgot I was member at all.”

“Well, now that you are in town, you mean to stay?” said Berthe.

“Hélas! I only remain a week.”

“But you said you meant to spend the Carnival here?”

“ When I said so I believed it.”

“ And what has changed your plans ? ” I inquired.

Madame de Nérac shrugged her shoulders.

“ Mon mari a l'indélicatesse de me dire qu'il n'a pas d'argent ! One can't stay in Paris without money.”

“ Quel homme ! ” exclaimed Berthe, with a look of pity and disgust.

The door opened again. This time it was the Curé.

After the usual blessing and prayer he declared the *séance* opened, and read the reports of the board and the bulletins. These matters disposed of, the business of the election began at once. A brisk cross-examination soon put four candidates *hors de concours*. Two had fathers who could support them, but would not. The confraternity found the children not qualified for its charge. Two others were not parishioners of St. Philippe du Roule. Of the six who had started, two, therefore, only remained on the field. One

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was mine, the other was the *protégée* of the young girl whose conversation I had just overheard. We were to divide the votes between us. Our respective orphans had the necessary qualifications ; it only remained to see which of the two, as the more destitute, could establish the primary claim on the protection of the confraternity. Mine was ten years of age. She had two tiny brothers, and a sister some five years older than herself, who, since the death of their mother, six months ago, had supported the whole family by working as a *blanchisseuse de fin* by day, and as a *lingère* half the night. But the bread-winner gave way under the load of work, and now lay sick at the hospital, while the brothers and the sister, clinging to each other in a fireless garret, cried out for bread to the rich brethren who could not hear them. The Curé de Sainte-Clothilde had promised to find shelter for the boys ; but what was to be done with the girl ? I had stated these plain facts in the petition, and now verbally recommended the case to the compassion of

the members, and once again asked for their votes.

My rival's child was twelve years of age. She had no brothers or sisters. She was utterly destitute, but in good health, and nearly of an age to support herself. M. le Curé listened to the two cases, and when he had heard both, his judgment seemed strongly impressed in favour of mine.

In spite of the interest I felt in my poor little *protégée*, I could not help regretting the impending failure of my young competitor opposite. She had answered the Curé's questions in short nervous monosyllables, and now sat drinking in every word he said, two fever spots burning on her cheek, while her eyes swam with tears that all her efforts failed to swallow.

"To the vote, mesdames!" said the Curé; "I fear Mademoiselle Hélène, you have a bad chance."

"Oh, Monsieur le Curé!" burst from Hélène; "her poor old grandfather will die of disappointment!"

“My poor child, I hope not,” said the Curé, evidently touched by her distress, but unable to repress a smile at this extreme horoscopic view; “your *protégée’s* having a grandfather is indeed an advantage on the wrong side.”

“He’s blind, Monsieur le Curé! and paralysed! and eighty-six years old!” urged Héléne, gaining courage from desperation; “and his one prayer is to see the *petite* safe, somewhere, before he dies. Oh, Monsieur le Curé!” . . . . She stopped, the big tears rolling down her cheeks.

“Voyons!” said the good old pastor, rubbing his nose and fidgeting at his spectacles; “let us take the vote and then we shall see. You have a child already, have you not, mademoiselle?”

“Yes, Monsieur le Curé, I have two, but one is in the country, at the Succursale.”

The votes were taken, and by a very small majority I carried it. My voters congratulated me, while Héléne’s friends crowded round her,



condoling. But the poor child would not be comforted ; overcome by the previous emotion, and the final disappointment, she sobbed as if her heart would break.

“ Oh, really it’s too cruel to let that dear child be disappointed,” said Berthe ; “ can’t we do something, Monsieur le Curé ? Can’t we, by any possibility, squeeze in another child ? ”

“ Nothing easier, madame : you have only to create a new *bourse*, or get subscribers to the amount of three hundred francs a-year for the term of the child’s education,” replied Monsieur le Curé.

“ Then I subscribe for two years down,” said Berthe, impulsively. “ Who follows suit ? ”

“ I do,” said another speaker ; “ I will subscribe for one year ! ”

“ And I will give forty francs,” said a third.

“ And I a hundred,” said the Curé, who was always to the fore when a good work was to be helped on.

In a few minutes the green table glistened with gold pieces and notes. It was all done so quickly that H el ene had not had time to ask what it was all about, when Berthe ran up to her with the good news that her child was taken in.

“How good you are, madame!” said the young girl; “but I knew you were good; you have the face of an angel!”

“It is better to have the heart of one,” said Berthe, laughing, and hastily rubbing a dewdrop from her own fair face.

“Now I must make haste away, or I shall be late for my lesson,” said H el ene.

“What lesson are you going to take, ma petite?” inquired Berthe, affectionately.

“I am going to give one, madame,” replied H el ene; “I live by giving music lessons.”

“Then you must come and give me some,” said Berthe. “Here is my address. Come to me to-morrow as early as you can!”

“You are not sorry I made you come, are you, Berthe?” I asked, as we went out together.

“Sorry! I would not have missed it for the world.”

IV.

“WANTED THREE MILLIONS.”

“Au revoir, à demain !” said Berthe, kissing a fair-haired young girl, and conducting her to the door.

“What a sweet face ! Whose is it ?” inquired Madame de Beaucoeur.

“Hélène de Karodel’s. Her character is sweeter still than her face,” said Berthe. “I have fallen quite in love with her.” And she related the story of their meeting at the réunion de Monceau, and the acquaintance which had followed.

“It is a fine old Breton name, and used to be a wealthy one. How comes she to be earning her bread, poor child ?”

“The old story,” said Berthe ; “General de Karodel mismanaged his property, took to speculating by way of mending matters,

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and, of course, lost everything. Then he died, leaving a widow and three children to do the best they could with his debts and his pension—some forty pounds a year. Hélène is the eldest, and what she earns pays for the education of the second sister."

"But the rest of the family are well off. Why don't they do something for them?"

"Rich relations are not given much, as a rule, to helping poor ones," replied Berthe. "Besides, these de Karodels are as proud as Lucifer; and benefits are pills that a proud spirit finds it difficult to swallow; it takes a good deal of love to gild them."

"Very true." And dismissing Hélène de Karodel with a sigh, Madame de Beaucoeur resumed: "Chère amie, I am come to ask you to do me a service."

Her presence, indeed, at so early an hour on Berthe's day suggested at once something more important than an ordinary visit.

Amongst the many institutions of modern Paris life a day is one which deserves to be noticed. Everybody has a day. Women in

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society have a day from necessity, for the convenience of themselves and their visitors, whose name is legion. Women not in society have a day because they like to think it a necessity. The former speak of their day as “mon jour,” and, as a rule, hate it because it ties them down to stay at home one day in the week. The latter speak of it as “mon jour de réception,” and glory in it. For the former it is a mere episode, an occasion amongst many for gossip, mostly of the *Grandhomme* and *Folibel* kind, but now and then of a more serious character, sometimes of conversation on such grave topics as politics, science, and even theology. For the latter it is a grand opportunity for dress, and dulness, and weary expectation. Madame, attired in state, sits on a sofa, like Patience on a monument, smiling, not at grief but at hope; hope of the visitors who come like angels few and far between. Woe be unto the false or foolish friend, who, under pretext of business, or kind inquiries, or lack of time, should pass by this day of days, and call on some common,

insignificant day, when neither madame nor the *salon* nor the *valet de chambre* are in toilet to receive him!

But it is not into one of these dreary Saharas that we have strayed. Berthe's day is as busy as a fair. So great is the concourse of visitors, that, although her reception begins officially at three, the room begins to fill long before that time, her friends protesting that the crowd is so great, there is no getting to say a word to her unless they break through the *consigne*, and come early.

"A service!" she repeated, eagerly extending her hand to Madame de Beaucoeur. "I hope that is not too good to be true."

"Toujours charmante!" said Madame de Beaucoeur, pressing the fair little hand; "but the service I am going to ask does not directly concern myself. You know Madame de Chassedot?"

"Slightly. I meet her *par ci, par là*; we bow, but we don't speak."

"To-day she has requested me to speak for her. Do you know her son at all?"

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“A fair youth, tall, and rather good looking?”

“Precisely.”

“I have seen him often, and I think I danced with him at the Marine the other night,” said Berthe, reflectively.

“Then you know him at his best. He dances admirably; but I believe that is the only thing he does well,” was Madame de Beauccœur’s comment.

“Il est très-bête?” observed Berthe.

“Pas très-bête, bête simplement. But this is a detail. He is, as you know, good-looking, *bien né*, and very rich. He is heir to his uncle, and will be one day, therefore, at the head of two of the finest châteaux in France, each representing two millions of money. The paternal millions have grown smaller since the old gentleman’s death; but the uncle’s will replenish them by-and-by; he is in very bad health, and seventy-six years of age; so his nephew cannot have very long to wait now, and he is safe to have a splendid fortune by the time he settles down.”



"En attendant—?" said Berthe, pretending not to see the drift of these preliminaries.

"En attendant, his mother is very anxious to marry him."

"To whom?"

"Ah, that's just it! She spoke confidentially to me, and begged I would look out a daughter-in-law for her. I promised I would do my best. Like all belles-mères, she wants impossibilities—perfection, in fact: sixteen quarterings en règle, that is of course understood, equal fortune, and so on; but, though Edgar's fortune will be nominally four millions, as he has compromised one million already, she would count it as *non venu*, and only exact three millions with his wife. You see," continued Madame de Beauccœur, "she is willing to do things en grand seigneur."

"How did he compromise the odd million?" inquired Berthe, evasively.

"Mon Dieu! On n'y regarde pas de si près!" said Madame de Beauccœur, smiling at the *naïveté* of the question.

"Après?" said Berthe.

“The girl must be pretty and well brought up. I must tell you, *ma chère*,” continued the negotiatrice, with a sort of diffidence, as if conscious that she was about to state some ludicrous or damaging fact—“I must tell you that Madame de Chassedot donne dans la haute dévotion, and she would like to find a daughter-in-law qui y donnerait aussi. Otherwise she is the best of women, good-natured and intelligent, and disposed to do all in her power to make her son’s wife happy.”

“And the son himself, does he pledge himself at all towards the same end?”

“Ah! there is the difficulty! Unfortunately, he won’t even hear of being married. The moment his mother mentions the subject, he turns it off with a joke, or, if she insists, he flies into a tantrum, rushes out of the house, and she doesn’t see him again for a week. You can fancy how this complicates the matter for her, poor woman.”

“It certainly is a complication,” observed Berthe.

“And it makes it the more incumbent

on us to help her," continued the envoy. "I promised that I would enlist your good offices in her behalf, and that she might count upon them. Did I promise too much?"

"If you promised that I would marry her son for her, nolens volens, you certainly did," replied Berthe, laughing ironically.

"Oh I did not go that length," protested Madame de Beaucoeur, who began to feel snubbed, and laughed very heartily to hide her pique, "I only said you were more likely than any other woman in Paris to know the girl who united all she was looking for; and that if you did know her, you would give Madame de Chassedot an opportunity of meeting her."

"And how about Monsieur de Chassedot meeting her?" inquired Berthe, perversely; "after all, I suppose, they must look each other in the face once before they swear eternal love and duty par devant Monsieur le Maire; and if this disobliging young man flies out of the room at the bare mention of a wife—? Chère Madame, with all

due respect for your high diplomatic abilities, believe me, this enterprise is beyond them.”

“It is not beyond his mother’s,” said Madame de Beauccœur. “Trust me, if you find the right person, you may be quite satisfied Madame de Chassedot will manage the rest.”

Berthe was going to reply, when the door opened, and the Princess de M—— was announced.

As soon as the usual greetings were exchanged, the three ladies entered on what formed the chit-chat of the day, viz., the cholera, the exhibition of paintings, and a new comedy called “La Beauté du Diable,” that was setting all Paris by the ears. But they were not left long alone; the rooms filled rapidly; the new-comers, however, instead of checking the conversation, enlivened it, every fresh arrival falling in with the current, and giving it additional animation. The cholera was still on the *tapis* when an old senator joined the circle.

“The Empress does not believe it to be

contagious," he said, "and holds it of primary importance that the popular prejudice on this point should be broken down both by theory and practice. This was the chief motive of her visit to Amiens. I have just been to the Tuileries, and heard all about it."

"Racontez, monsieur, racontez!" exclaimed Berthe, recognizing his white hairs by making room for him on the sofa beside her.

"Vous me comblez, madame!" said the old courtier, bending to his knees before assuming the place of honour. "I should, at least, have run the gauntlet with the plague myself to deserve to be so favoured. You are aware," he continued, in a more serious tone, "that it was raging furiously at Amiens. The townspeople were so panic-stricken that the victims were deserted the moment they were seized. Every house was closed; no one walked abroad for fear of rubbing against some infected thing or person; and, except the Sisters of Charity going in and out of the condemned houses and

hospitals, there was hardly a soul to be seen in the streets. In fact, it threatened to be a second edition of the plague of Milan. The Empress, hearing all this, suddenly announced her intention of visiting the city. The Emperor strongly opposed the project, and her ladies seconded him. The Empress, however, held her own against them all, like a Spaniard and a woman; she said she would have nobody run any risk on her account, and declared herself determined to go alone; whereupon two of her ladies, piquées d'honneur, volunteered to go with her. They started by the first train next day, and returned the same evening, no one the worse for the journey.”

“I dare say,” remarked a young *crevé*, a Legitimist *enragé*, who always spoke of the Emperor as *ce gaillard-là*, and who would have as soon dined with his *concierge* as at the Tuileries; “they made a tour in a close carriage round the town, and took precious care to keep clear of the dangerous quarters.”

"I have the word of her Majesty to the contrary, monsieur," affirmed the senator; "she visited the wards, inquired minutely into their organization, and spoke to several of the sufferers. The equerry who accompanied her told me that she actually held the hand of one poor fellow who was dying, and stooped down, putting her ear close to his lips, to hear something he had to say about his little children: there were three of them; their mother had died that morning, and now they were going to be left quite destitute. The Empress sent for them on the spot, embraced them in the presence of their father, and promised to take care of them. He expired soon after, blessing her."

"Noble cœur!" murmured Berthe, and a tear stood in her eye.

"Comédie, haute comédie!" sneered the crevé du Faubourg.

"Politique plutôt," observed a deputy of the Centre, stroking his beard; "politique."

"Politique de comédienne!" said a de-

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puty of the Left; “ but it is time and trouble lost; the people are no longer duped by that sort of charlatanism.”

“ Say, rather, the people are tired of peace and prosperity, and want a change at any cost,” said the Princess de M——. “ You are the most unmanageable people under the sun; the wonder is how any one can be found willing to govern you.”

“ That is quite true,” assented Berthe, whose politics were of no absolute colour, but leaned towards Imperialism; partly because it was the established order of things, and because the court was pleasant, and its hospitalities magnificent. “ We are an unruly nation; but whatever one thinks of the Empire, it is ungrateful and unjust not to give the Empress credit at least for good intentions in this visit to Amiens. It was an act of heroic charity and courage; and that it was a wise step as well as a bold one, is proved by the fact that the pestilence has decreased sensibly from the very day of her visit.”



"Oh, madame, de grâce!" protested in chorus the *crevé*, and the two deputies.

"The bulletins of the last week are there to prove it," said Berthe.

"Where are they fabricated?" demanded the deputy of the Left; "perhaps M. de Taitout could tell us?"

Monsieur de Taitout was *chef de Cabinet* au Ministère de l'Intérieur.

"They were issued at Amiens by the medical men attached to the hospitals, and by the Commission of Public Health, I presume," replied the ministerial functionary, with hauteur.

"Ces messieurs had a roll of red ribbon a-piece, I hope, in return for the satisfactory bulletins?" pursued the deputy of the Left, superciliously.

"You appear well informed, monsieur; we must infer that you are honoured by the confidence of the Minister of Police?" observed M. de Taitout, provoked out of his official smoothness, and darting a glance of peculiar meaning at the deputy.

The latter bit his lip and reddened, while a suppressed titter ran through the company. This suspicion of complicity with the police, which the established system of compression, and its attendant *espionnage* engendered too readily, was apt to fall sometimes on the most unlikely subjects. It may have been quite erroneous in the present instance, but it was all the more galling from the fact that certain previous *on-dits* had prepared the public mind for credulity. Many people attributed the fierce antagonism of the deputy to his having been disappointed in obtaining a prefecture under the existing government.

But, be this as it may, Berthe, though she disliked, and unconsciously perhaps mistrusted the deputy, did not choose that he should be made uncomfortable in her *salon*. She did not like the turn the conversation was taking, and by way of diverting it without breaking off too brusquely from the line of discussion, she said, addressing an Academician, who had just joined the circle :

“ Is it not quite possible, admitting panic

to be the first condition of contagion, that the presence of the Empress in the midst of the sick and dying may have had such an effect on the *moral* of the people as would sufficiently explain, on common-sense grounds, the immediate decrease of the disease? Instruct us, monsieur le philosophe!"

"Madame, I come here to learn, rather than to teach," replied the man of science, with the gallantry of his three-score years and ten; "but since you do me the honour to ask my opinion, I am happy to say it has the good fortune to agree with your own. The people were convinced that to breathe the infected atmosphere was to die. The Empress, of her own free impulse, comes boldly into the midst of it, stands beside the dying and the dead, breathes long draughts of contagion, and does not die; ergo, contagion is a fallacy, and panic is straightway killed."

"Votre ergo, monsieur, est un homme d'esprit!" said the Princess de M——, tapping the arm of her chair with her parasol; "and now that we have killed panic, let us

dismiss the plague, and talk of something else!”

“Yes,” said Berthe, “or else talking might bring on a panic, and make us catch it. Have you been lately to the theatre, monsieur?”

“I went last night to see *La Beauté du Diable*,” replied the Academician.

“Ah! and what did you think of it?”

“I think, madame—*que la France est bien malade*,” said the old man, impressively.

“One need not be ‘un des quarante’ to find out that,” remarked the deputy of the Left.

“Is it so very bad?” inquired Berthe, turning a deaf ear to this not very polite comment.

“It is so bad,” replied the Academician, “that if I had not seen with my own eyes, and heard with my own ears, I could not have believed it possible that the French drama and the French public could have fallen so low. I asked myself whether I was in Paris

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or in Sodom. From first to last, the piece is a tissue of licence and blasphemy for which I know no parallel, even approximately, in the most ribald productions of ancient or modern literature."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Berthe, "you quite horrify me. We had just arranged a *partie fine* to go and see it on Wednesday!"

"Take an old man's advice, madame; don't go," said the Academician, gravely.

"Ma foi," said the Princess de M——, twirling her parasol, and lolling back in the luxurious *fauteuil*; "it all depends if one is prepared to risk it. *Moi, je me risque!*"

The philosopher bowed to the brave lady, but made no comment.

"Why does the censorship permit such bad comedies to be played?" asked Madame de Beauceur; "I thought its *raison d'être* was the protection of *la morale publique*?"

"*La morale politique*, madame," corrected the deputy of the Left, with an air of mock solemnity; "and most conscientious it is in the discharge of its duty. An irreverent in-

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sinuation against the government suffices to bring down anathema on a comedy or a drama, from which no amount of talent can redeem it. My friend, Henri —, has just had a chef-d'œuvre, the result of a whole year's toil, rejected on the plea that some passages which cannot be removed without changing the entire plot, might be construed by sensitive Imperialists into a covert hit at the dynasty.”

“The judges would serve the dynasty better by exercising a little wholesome restraint over what may prove more fatal to it in the long run than even servile flattery,” observed the philosopher. “What think you, M. le Sénateur ?”

The senator shrugged his shoulders.

“Que voulez-vous ? One must reckon somewhere with human nature ; you cannot lock it up on every side ; if you don't leave a safety-valve to let off the superfluous steam the ship will blow up.”

“Take care the valve does not turn out to be a leak that will sink the ship !” said the

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Academician. " Our press and our literature are like a canker eating into the very heart of the nation, and rotting it; the people are taught to scoff at everything; to make a jest of everything, human and divine; nothing is sacred to the venal scribes who pander to the base passions of humanity, and prey upon its vices and follies. When public morality has come to that pass where one of the first writers of the day publicly vindicated the devil's claim to our respect as ' un révolutionnaire malheureux,' and when one of the last writes and prints such a sentence as ' je vous cède le bon Dieu, mais laissez-moi le diable!' and that the cynical blasphemy calls out no stronger comment than a laugh or a shrug: when, I say, *le progrès* has arrived at this point, it is time the ship's hold were looked to!"

" I grant you the signs are disquieting," assented the senator, shaking his head; and having conceded so much he took out his enamelled *tabatière*, and prepared a pinch.

" A sign to my mind much more to the purpose, is that the nation is *mortellement*

*ennuyée*,” observed the député du Centre, with a weighty emphasis on the adverb; “ when France ennues herself it is time to cry—gare!”

“ Gare à qui?” said the Princess de M——.

“ To the Government, madame. We have had this one now eighteen years—three years beyond the lease France usually gives to any government—and the people are sick of it. Paris especially is ennuyée to death of late.”

“ Paris is always ennuyée, unless she has an exhibition, or a war, or a carnival of some sort to keep her in good humour,” said Berthe; “ but Paris is not France.”

“ Paris, c’est le monde, madame!” replied M. du centre, with a melodramatic accent.

“ Le monde, non,” protested Madame de M——, “ le demi-monde peut-être.

There was a laugh at this little sortie of the Princess’s, and before it subsided a group of new arrivals, amongst whom were the snow-storm and her mother, broke up



the controversy. Several of the company, some who had not spoken a word to Berthe, but had only made *acte de présence* in the crowd, withdrew. Madame de Beaucoeur and the Princess remained.

"Quelle ravissante jeune fille!" said the former, in a *sotto voce* to the Princess, as Madame de Galliac and her daughter sat down near them. "Who is she?"

"Mademoiselle de Galliac; she is the parti of the season; *on dit*, gives her four millions."

"Indeed!" Madame de Beaucoeur, on marriageable maids intent, pricked up her ears, "How odd I should not have met her before!"

"She has only lately arrived from Brittany. Our hostess patronizes her very zealously; I suppose she is looking out for a husband for her."

Madame de Beaucoeur said nothing; but committed the remark to her mental notebook. Why had Berthe not suggested this girl to her for Madame de Chassedot? It

was the very thing she wanted. Old name—four millions—one too many, but the inequality was on the right side—beauty, and, of course, good principles. How could Berthe be so disobliging, or so thoughtless? Big with a mighty purpose, and unable to resist the *besoin d'épanchement*, Madame de Beauceur turned to the Princess de M——, and in the strictest confidence opened her heart to her.

But Madame de M—— was a foreigner, and did not fall in sympathetically with French views on the subject of marriage, and was moreover given to call things bluntly by their names.

“A girl with her name, and beauty, and money, will find plenty of willing purchasers,” she replied, “and I see no conceivable reason for supposing she would let herself be forced on an unwilling one. There are husbands to be had at all prices, and she can bid for the best; the best, moreover, are already bidding for her.”

“Ah!” said Madame de Beauceur,

alarm mingling with curiosity in the interjection.

"Why, you don't think a prize like that would be twenty-four hours in the Paris market without having scores of the highest bidders fighting for it?"

"How mercenary men are! It is quite disgusting. They are greatly changed since my day," said the Frenchwoman.

Madame de Beaucoeur was on the sunny side of forty; she had been married at eighteen, from school, to a man she had never laid her eyes on till ten days before her marriage. Of the many and exciting interviews that had previously taken place between notaries and *belles-mères*, she had heard no particulars, and being a rather romantic young lady in those days, she had ignored their existence altogether.

"Very likely; but in this case it strikes me the woman is the mercenary party; you say the young man resents being married at all, big *dot* or little *dot*?" said Madame de M——, laughing, and speaking rather

louder than was desirable in the vicinity of the marketable *dot*.

“Introduce me to Madame de Galliac,” said her companion, striking a *coup d'état* on the spot. The request was complied with, and the two ladies were soon absorbed in each other.

“How are we going to kill the week, chère madame?” asked the Princess de M——, who had risen to go, and now pounced upon Berthe as she stood speeding a parting guest at the door; “for Wednesday we have the *Beauté du Diable*, and a *dîner au cabaret*; Thursday there is a *petit souper*, at Tortoni’s after the Palais Royal; but the other three days, what shall we do with them?”

“I have not an idea just now: we will talk it over to-morrow night at Madame de Beauceur’s; but do not count on me for Wednesday,” said Berthe; “I have changed my mind about going.”

“What! you are going to play us false!” exclaimed the Princess, her ugly

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but expressive features lighting up with irresistible humour, while her eyes shot out a cold sardonic glance into Berthe's; "that old perruque has put you out of conceit with it? But no! It is too absurd, ma chère!"

"Absurd or not, I don't intend to go," said Berthe, resolutely; "I'm not as brave as you are; je ne veux pas me risquer."

"It will get abroad that you have turned dévote; de grâce, madame, ne vous donnez pas ce ridicule! Tout Paris va se moquer de vous!"

"Tout Paris may say what it likes," answered Berthe, bridling up, while a blush of defiant pride suffused her cheek; "I despise its gossip, and, in short, I don't mean to go."

"Seriously?"

"Quite seriously."

The Princess lifted her shoulders slowly till they touched her ears, and then as slowly let them fall.

"Then there is no use in proposing to

you a little distraction we had planned for Saturday, an escapade in dominoes and masks to the bal de l'opéra ?”

“Merci ! Je ne veux pas me risquer !” said Berthe, smiling.

“Adieu ! you will make a charming saint, but I fear I shan't love the saint as much as——”

“The sinner,” added Berthe, good-humouredly ; “oh, well, I've not donned sackcloth and ashes yet, so you must not give me up for lost quite ; but don't suppose,” she continued, seeing Madame de M——'s eyes fixed on her with a puzzled expression, “that I mean to reproach you for amusing yourself. Our positions are different : you have your husband to stand between you and evil tongues ; and again, you are not amongst your own people here. Would you go on at Berlin as you do in Paris ?”

“Oh!!!” The Princess threw up her parasol, caught it again, and laughed out loud. “Mais Paris c'est un cabaret, on y

*fait ce qu'on veut!*" she said; and with this exhaustive apology passed out.

Berthe had turned in to the second *salon*, where some of the earlier visitors had gathered to leave room for new arrivals in the first; but she was hardly seated when the door was again opened, and François announced—

"Le Marquis de Chassedot!"

He could not have startled his mistress more if he had announced the Marquis de Carrabas. Was it a trap set for Edgar by Madame de Beaucoeur? But no. Mademoiselle de Galliac's presence to-day was quite fortuitous, and moreover, Madame de Beaucoeur did not know her, so she could have laid no scheme into which the heiress's visit adjusted itself.

"You were kind enough to permit me to pay my respects to you, Madame la Comtesse," said the young man, walking up to Berthe, with his hat in both hands, and blushing violently, while he doubled himself in two before her. "I hope I am not

indiscreet in availing myself so precipitately of the permission.”

Berthe smiled her gracious clemency on the indiscretion; and the gentleman, backing a few steps, carried himself and his hat to a group of politicians, who were shaking hands in the window and making appointments before separating.

“*Quel toupet!*” muttered Berthe, laughing to herself at the cool audacity of M. de Chassedot; “I was kind enough to permit him! Perhaps he is under a delusion, and mistook somebody else’s permission for mine; or perhaps it’s a ruse of his mother’s to put him unawares in the way of the three millions.”

But Berthe was wrong. M. de Chassedot had really said something to her, between the links of the *chaîne des dames*, about placing himself at her feet, and, as she looked very smiling and gracious, he took the smiles for a permission. He had no view in asking it beyond the pleasure of being received in the *salon* of the fashionable beauty, where he



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was not likely to meet his mother. It would be a free territory, where he might flit about without being in perpetual dread of falling into some matrimonial net, such as she was for ever spreading for him in the *salons* of her own particular allies. Madame de Beauccœur did not figure amongst those redoubtable belligerents. When she called during the day at Madame de Chassedot's, Edgar was never there, and as the *habitués* of the Marquise's *Mardis soirs* were recruited chiefly amongst the old fogies and *dévotés* of the Faubourg—a class of her fellow-creatures whom Madame de Beauccœur carefully avoided—there was no chance of his meeting her there in the evening. It was precisely this that made her mediation so precious to Madame de Chassedot; Edgar was disarmed before her; he did not mistrust her; and when, reconnoitring the company in the adjoining room, through the broad glass panel that divided the *salons*, he spied her sitting next a very pretty girl, the discovery gave him no shock. Madame de Beauccœur,

catching his eye, nodded familiarly to him, and he at once made his way towards her, and took up a position behind her chair.

“I should like to go very much,” she said, continuing her conversation with Madame de Galliac; “but I have not been there this year. One cannot go without a gentleman, and Monsieur de Beauccœur is always too busy in the evening to accompany me.”

“There are hundreds who would cross swords for the honour of replacing him, madame,” declared M. de Chassedot, stooping over her chair, and throwing into his voice and manner all the *empressement* which her position as a married woman authorised.

“Then you shall have the honour without crossing swords for it,” said the lady, briskly. “Come and fetch me to-morrow evening at eight o’clock; unless you are equal to a *dîner de ménage* with myself and Monsieur de Beauccœur, and in that case come at half-past six.”

“Madame! Tant de bonté me confond!”

Madame de Beauccœur said au revoir to the heiress and her mother, kissed hand to

Berthe in the distance, and, granting M. de Chassedot's request to be allowed to see her to her carriage, they left the room together.

“ Who is that young lady who was sitting beside you, madame ? ” he asked, with some curiosity, when they were out of earshot on the staircase.

“ Mademoiselle de Galliac. Did you never see her before ? ”

“ Yes ; but I did not know her name.”

“ How stupid of me ! I ought to have presented you. She is a nice girl to talk to.”

“ She's an uncommonly nice girl to look at. A l'honneur de vous revoir, madame ; à demain soir.” And the carriage rolled off, leaving M. de Chassedot bowing on the *trottoir*.

Punctual to the minute, he presented himself in Madame de Beauccœur's drawing-room as the clock chimed the half-hour. M. de Beauccœur had, of course, an appointment at the club, which, to his infinite regret, prevented his escorting his wife to the Concert Musard, so he remained sipping his *café noir*,

and wished them a pleasant evening. The gardens, although they were only beginning to fill, presented a brilliant and animated appearance. The central pavilion, its roof and pillars girdled with light, glowed like the starry temple of an Arabian tale; while from within, the orchestra sent forth its melodic stream, now tender and plaintive as the zephyr wooing the rose at midnight, now loud and valiant in the rhythmic dance. Balls of light gleamed through the foliage, and made every tree stand out in radiant illumination. But not everywhere. Artistically mindful of the worth of contrast in scenic effect, the light distributed itself so as to leave parts of the garden in comparative shade; here those who shrunk from the dazzling glare of the centre could walk and enjoy the scene and the music without inconvenience.

“Why, there is Madame de Galliac, I declare! Let us go and meet her,” said Madame de Beaucoeur, walking on quickly. “What an unexpected pleasure, madame!

I thought you were going to the opera to-night!"

"So we were; but at the last moment we found there was a mistake about the box, and Henriette was so disappointed that, to console her, I proposed coming here for an hour."

"Pauvre enfant! But I assure you it is no despicable compensation; the music is excellent. Let us go round by the left; the breeze is blowing from that quarter," said Madame de Beaucœur; and without taking the slightest notice of M. de Chassedot, she turned to walk on with Madame de Galliac.

"Madame!" whispered the young man, touching her on the arm, and intimating by a sign that she had left him out in the cold.

"Oh! que je suis étourdie! Allow me to introduce you. Le Marquis de Chassedot—la Baronne de Galliac."

"Ma fille, monsieur," said the latter pointing to Henriette.

Everybody having bowed to everybody, the party moved on, the young people walking

in front. M. de Chassedot, serenely unconscious of being caught in a trap, and finding Henriette a lively, unaffected girl, talked away pleasantly, confining himself, of course, to authorised insipidities, such as the weather, the music, the decoration of the gardens, etc., and making himself, as he could do when he liked, very agreeable.

“Is not that the Comtesse Berthe’s voice?” said Henriette, stopping and bending her ear in the direction of the sound.

“I think it is. Let us walk on and see,” said her mother.

Now, though Madame de Beauccœur liked Berthe, and was generally delighted to meet her anywhere, on this particular occasion she was the last person in Paris she cared to meet. It was not possible, however, to avoid her without awaking in M. de Chassedot’s mind suspicions which might prove fatal to her benevolent designs on himself. When Berthe came up with the quartet her surprise was great, and though she said nothing, her face expressed it so plainly that Henriette,

being intelligent, noticed it, and bethought to herself that there must be some stronger reason for it than the ostensible one of meeting Madame de Beauccœur and Madame de Galliac at the Concert Musard.

Berthe had four gentlemen in attendance on her: a tall, *distingué*-looking Austrian, who spoke to no one, and squirted vinegar out of his eyes at a handsome young Breton, on whose arm Berthe leant; one Englishman, whose notablest idiosyncrasy was an eye-glass that seemed a fixture in the right eye of the wearer, so immovably did it stick there morning, noon, and night; and another of low stature, with a Shakesperian head. Over and above this guard of honour, the beautiful widow was accompanied by Hélène de Karodel. She introduced the two girls, who walked on together, while the gentlemen and the three married women followed. Hélène and Mademoiselle de Galliac had not proceeded far, however, when they were joined by M. de Chassedot.

"Mademoiselle," he said, addressing

Hélène, “I have just made a discovery; but it is of so agreeable a nature that, before I dare believe it, I must have your corroboration.”

“Indeed!” said Hélène, with a look of surprise at the young man, who remained bare-headed awaiting her answer. “Couvrez-vous, monsieur, and let us hear what this wonderful discovery is.”

“You are the daughter, I am told, of that brave soldier and true gentleman, Christian de Karodel?”

“I am his daughter,” replied Hélène, her eye moistening with grateful emotion at hearing her father so named.

“He was my mother’s first cousin, consequently I claim kinship with you,” concluded the young man.

“And your name is——?”

“Edgar de Chassedot.”

“Ah! yes, we are cousins, I believe; but as your family seemed quite to have forgotten the fact, we had almost forgotten it ourselves,” replied Hélène, coldly.



"Is it too late for us to remember it?" said Edgar, imperceptibly emphasizing the *us*, and throwing a gentle deference into his tone.

"It is strange that you should care; but, since it is so, let us be cousins," and H el ene held out her hand to him.

Six weeks after this promenade in the Jardin Musard there was a *d ner de contrat* at Madame de Galliac's. The *fianc * wore the full-dress uniform of a Chasseur d'Afrique. His bronzed features attested long residence under Algerian skies, and the stars and medals on his breast bore witness that his time had not passed there in idle dalliance. The plot against M. de Chassedot's liberty had collapsed, to the inexpressible vexation of his mother. Her case was really a hard one. She and the family lawyer had done their best; all the preliminaries of her son's marriage with Henriette's four millions had been gone through; everything was ready, when, the consent of the young people, as a necessary detail towards the final arrange-

ment, was asked, and refused. It had somehow come to the young lady's ears that M. de Chassedot was no party to the business, and that if he allowed himself to be bullied into marrying her, it would be *de son corps défendant*. Mademoiselle de Galliac there and then declared that she would be forced upon no man, were he Roi de France et de Navarre. And so this most eligible marriage, for want of a bride and bridegroom, fell through.

Madame de Beaucœur then called to mind a nephew of her husband's, who was serving in Africa. He was two millions short of Henriette's figure ; but he had great expectations, and was in every other respect qualified for the place, and, moreover, he was willing to be married ; he had written to his family, stating the fact, and requesting them to look out for a wife for him. Photographs were exchanged, character and principles inquired into, and vouched for satisfactorily—Henriette made this a *sine quâ non*—and within one month from the day that his aunt opened negotiations with Madame de Galliac, Alexandre

de Beaucœur arrived in Paris, the affianced husband of Henriette de Galliac.

They were presented to each other at a morning reception, and met next day at the *dîner de contrat*. He took her in to dinner, Madame de Galliac saying to him, playfully, as Henriette accepted his arm :

"Maintenant faites votre cour !"

This was easier said than done. The position was embarrassing. M. de Beaucœur wished to avail himself of the opportunity to win his bride's affections ; but, like most brave men, he was timid, and the more he strove to find something agreeable to say, the less he found it. When dessert was served, however, and the wine passed round, he plucked up courage, and bending over Henriette's glass, he murmured in a low voice :

"Mademoiselle, de quelle couleur voulez-vous votre voiture ?"

"Bleue, monsieur ?" replied Henriette. .

He bowed, and they relapsed into silence. This was all that passed between them till

they swore at the altar to cling to each other until death did part them.

This prosaic marriage turned out a singularly happy one. The young man was a gentleman, and he had a conscience and a heart. The girl was sensible, high-principled, and affectionate. They cared for no one else, and did their duty by each other. After all, the most romantic union seldom embarks with surer and fairer elements of happiness.

## V.

## A BERLIN !

SUMMER had come, and was nearly gone. Paris was deserted. As autumn approached and laid its fiery finger on the city, the *flâneurs* disappeared. All who could fly, fled. The noble *faubourg* had fled long ago to its châteaux. The Champs Elysées and the Chaussée d'Antin were flying *aux eaux*, or, *aux bains de mer*; and the Boulevards with their glittering shop windows, and cafés, and theatres were left to the mercy of the tourist. Perhaps the tourist would retort that he was left to the mercy of the Boulevards, and, perhaps, he would be right. Chignoned syrens, who dwelt in glass cases, surrounded by myriads of glass phials ranged in harmonious colours from the ceiling to

the floor, so as to make the syren look like the central point of a dazzling kaleidoscope, smiled through their crystal shell at the reckless man who stood outside to peep and wonder. He might not hear the syren's "Entrez, monsieur!" but there was no being deaf to her smile. It drew him like a magnet. "Would monsieur not like to taste their last novelty in bonbons, Cerises à la Victor Noir? Would he not very much like to take home some little *douceurs* to madame?"

Of course monsieur would. The weak mortal unbuttons his coat, and straightway the bees that had sipped abundantly of native porte-monnaies all the rest of the year alight on the purse of the tourist, and suck it, if not dry, as nearly dry as they can. A busy season it is for them, this so-called dead season when stale bonbons and faded finery are dragged out, christened by new names, and sold to the barbarians d'outre manche. "Paris n'en veut pas, mais Londres, cette ville que les anglais dans

leur ignorance de la langue française appellent *London*, Londres trouvera cela charmant !”

Merrily, busily the bees were plying their task. The long white lines of Haussman barracks glared shadowless in the fierce sunshine ; gilded rails and balconies flashed in gingerbread magnificence ; the dome of the Invalides rose up against the cloudless blue, and blazed like a burning mount in the red heat that poured down from the zenith, pelting the miles of asphalté that meander through the city, till it softened and gave under your foot like india-rubber ; everything drooped, everything was burnt ; even the lordly chestnuts of the Tuileries, so copiously watered and so carefully tended, hung their heads, parched and brown, and dropped their leaves from sheer exhaustion ; not a vestige of green was anywhere visible. The fountains were playing ; but they had a tired, blasé look, and the water seemed to go on splashing from mere force of habit ; the flag was still floating above the palace, the grey

old palace that blinked with its million glass eyes in the blazing noon, but gave no other sign of life; the broad walks were deserted; no little feet were heard pattering on the gravel, no merry child laughter rang through the shade to scare the swallows from their cool siesta; the whole scene, lately so animated and bright, had a weary, day-after-the-ball look that was premature in the first days of July. But close by the bees were buzzing and bestirring themselves.

Hark! what sound is that? Not the cannon's opening roar, nor "the car rattling o'er the stony street," but a sound that jars upon the lively hum, and makes the hive suspend labour, and hush itself to listen. It comes from the Corps Legislatif—first a low, surging noise, then a clamour as of the waves rising and lashing themselves up for a tempest. Louder it grows, and nearer. It crosses the tepid waters of the Seine lying low between its banks; lo, it is on the Boulevards! At first all is indistinguishable, a torrent of human voice, rolling, and heaving,



and rushing like the roar of a cataract. On it rolls, gathering strength in its progress, waking up the echoes of the trottoir, making the crisp leaves quiver and drop, and drive along the dusty pavement before the breath of the vociferating multitude like straws before a bellows.

“What is it? Is it a revolution?” cried Berthe, as the horses, laying back their ears, stood frightened and threatening mischief.

“I don’t know, madame,” said the footman, who had jumped down to hold their heads, and now glanced up and down the Rue de la Paix, at the stream that was flowing past at either end to the sound of beating drums and braying trumpets, and all manner of Parisian excitableness in the shape of noise. “It’s more likely a patriotic demonstration,” suggested the coachman; “the horses don’t seem to like it, or else we might drive up close and see.” But even if the horses had liked it, Berthe’s curiosity was not proof against a certain mistrust of the Sovereign people. The noise might turn out

to be nothing worse than a patriotic demonstration, but Paris patriotism had many moods and phases and innumerable modes of expressing itself; and its "attitudes," if always effective from a dramatic point of view, are not always agreeable to come close to, and whatever the character of this particular one might be, Berthe preferred admiring it from a respectful distance.

"Turn back, and drive home by the Champs Elysées," she said.

The tide had risen rapidly. The Rue de Rivoli was flooded. It had caught the delirium of the Boulevards, and was sending back their echoes with frantic exultation. Cabs and omnibuses were seized with the sudden insanity, private coaches caught it, foot-passengers caught it, gamins, bourgeois, messieurs les voyageurs on the tops of omnibuses, all en masse caught it, and were shouting as one man—

"Vive la France! Vive la guerre! A Berlin! A Berlin!"

Ladies and gentlemen reclining in soft-

cushioned carriages started suddenly into effervescence, waved hats and handkerchiefs, and cried, "A Berlin! "A Berlin!" Horses neighed and dogs barked, and the very paving stones shook to the popular passion. All Paris shouted and shrieked till the city, like a reeling belfry, rang with multitudinous peals of "A Berlin! A Berlin!"

Berthe's horses, scared by the uproar that was now close upon them, played their part in the general row by plunging and prancing, and eliciting screams of horror from the adjacent women and children, while the coachman brandished his whip, and the footman whirled his hat, and shouted with all their might, "A Berlin! A Berlin!" A troop of gamins laid violent hands on a Savoyard, who was grinding "Non ti scordar di me," to the delight of the concierge and a select audience of small boys in a portecochère, and, dragging him to the fore, bade him at once strike up the Marseillaise. Luckily for the Savoyard, the despotic command was within the compass of his hurdy-

gurdy; he turned his handle, and began vigorously grinding away at the Republican chant. Every man, woman, and child within ear-shot took up the chorus, "Marchons! Marchons!" till the palpitating air thrilled to the voicing of the multitude.

Berthe was not proof against the magnetic current sweeping round her. At first terrified, then bewildered, then electrified, she caught the intoxication and yielded to its impulse.

"Vive la France! Vive la guerre! A Berlin! A Berlin!" and the fair hand was thrust from the window, and waved its snowy little flag as the carriage moved slowly past the Tuileries Gardens.

Emerging into the broad space of the Place de la Concorde, the horses seemed to breathe more freely, and quickening their steps, tore at full speed up the Champs Elysées.

"What possessed me to shout and cheer with those madmen?" said Berthe, soliloquizing aloud, and laughing at the absurdity

of her recent behaviour. "I must have gone mad myself for the moment. Vive la guerre indeed! Heaven help us! We shall hear another cry, by and by. Thank God I have no brothers!"

"Madame la Marquise de Chassedot attend madame," said François, as Berthe entered.

"Has she been long waiting?"

"A little half hour, madame."

"What can she have to say?" thought Berthe.

When she entered the salon Madame de Chassedot rose to welcome her, and looking up "with eyes that had wept," extended her hands in a way that asked rather for sympathy than for greeting.

"You are in trouble, madame!" exclaimed Berthe, her ready kindness going out at once to the sufferer.

The two ladies were not friends. They had met at Madame de Beauccœur's and Madame de Galliac's, but only once had there been a personal interchange of visits. Madame

de Chassedot had called on Berthe to thank her for her kindness to their young kinswoman, H el ene de Karodel, "whom the family had indeed of late lost sight of, but with whom they were delighted to renew cousinship," the marquise declared effusively, and as a proof of this she was carrying off H el ene to the country to spend the long vacation with them. Berthe did not inform the marquise that it had taken all her influence with the high-spirited young lady to induce her to accept the hospitality so tardily offered. She returned Madame de Chassedot's visit; the latter soon left for the country, and they had not met since.

"*Oui, j'ai du chagrin!*" said the marquise, holding Berthe's hand, and as she sat down beside her, Berthe's first thought was of Edgar. The mother, however, was not in mourning. The worst had so far not come.

"Your son is ill?" she said.

Madame de Chassedot shook her head. For a moment she was so choked with emo-

tion that she could not answer; at last she sobbed out:

“Il se marie!”

“Comment! And isn't that precisely what you wanted him to do!” exclaimed Berthe.

“*Je voulais le marier moi, aujourd'hui c'est lui qui se marie!*” replied the marquise.

“Ah! It is a *mésalliance* then!”

The fact was startling certainly, but less so than it might have been, owing to certain rumours that had prepared the public to believe in any extravagance coupled with Edgar de Chassedot's name.

“*Oh, mon Dieu non! Mille fois non!*” cried his mother, with quick resentment. “Edgar has done many *bêtises*, but he is incapable of dishonouring his name. Oh, no! The girl is *parfaitement née*; she is, in fact, a cousin of our own.”

“It is her principles then, or her——character that you object to?” said Berthe, with some hesitation.

“Bless my soul! She is as pious as a

seraph, and as beautiful as an angel, and brought up like a lily!" protested the marquise waxing wrath at the bare suspicion of *her* daughter-in-law's character being anything but the best.

"Then is she a hunchback, or lame, or blind, or what?" demanded Berthe.

"*She is a beggar!*—a beggar who cannot provide her own trousseau! It is a beggar who has stolen the heart of my son!" And tears of bitter disappointed motherhood flowed down the cheeks of the marquise.

"And her name is——"

"Mademoiselle de Karodel!"

"What, Hélène! Hélène de Karodel, that brave, true, gentle creature is going to be your son's wife, and you are in tears, and not of joy! You call her a beggar! A woman whose love, if your son has been lucky enough to win it—and Hélène is not the girl to marry him if he hadn't—would be a prize for a prince! And you, a Christian mother, weep over it, and expect to be pitied! En vérité, madame, s'il n'y avait pas de quoi rire, il y



avait de quoi pleurer, non pas sur votre fils mais sur vous !”

Madame de Chassedot was so staggered by this unexpected sortie that she was actually struck dumb.

“Do you know,” she said, after a pause, looking steadily at Berthe, and bringing out the words with slow emphasis—“do you know, madame, that my son has four millions of patrimony, and that he might have married any girl in France?”

“Admitting that they were one and all ready to marry M. de Chassedot, was he ready to marry them?” demanded Berthe, answering her look with a glance as significant. “And as to his four millions, they are his excuse and justification in marrying a girl who has none—a woman who is as well born as himself, who is, you admit, pure as a lily and pious as an angel, quite graceful and pretty enough to satisfy your pride and his, to make her an ornament as well as a treasure in your son’s house; a wife who will rescue him from much that I should fancy would

give you greater cause for tears than his marriage with such a woman as H el ene de Karodel. Frankly, ch ere marquise, I am at a loss to understand you; so far from pitying you, if I had heard this news from anyone but yourself, my first impulse would have been to fly to you with my heartfelt congratulations."

Madame de Chassedot's tears were flowing still, but perhaps less bitterly. She was going to speak, when a noise of steps in the antechamber made her rise hastily and look round for a means of escape.

"Into my bed-room!" said Berthe, pulling aside the porti ere.

The marquise pressed her hand, and disappeared through the cloud of blue satin just as the drawing-room door opened, and H el ene de Karodel holding out her arms with a cry of joy rushed into Berthe's.

It was a disappointment to H el ene to find that Berthe already knew her secret, but there was a great deal left to tell. Most of the tale was told with blushes and smiles,

and tears that had no brine in them. Her marriage was to take place in a fortnight. Edgar, from family reasons, chose to precipitate the dénouement, and his young fiancée had come up to town to make the few bridal preparations that he could not possibly make for her.

It happened unluckily to be Berthe's day, so the usual stream of visitors began soon to pour in, and the tête-à-tête of the two friends was broken up.

The declaration of war was the topic of every tongue ; but the animation with which it was discussed was not to be mistaken for enthusiasm. Some indignantly repudiated it, denounced the Government, and protested that so far from being a popular war it was universally condemned as senseless, and iniquitous, and ill-timed, and declared there were not ten men in the Empire who cried "Vive la guerre !" without being paid for it. Others who had been on the Boulevards an hour ago thought differently.

"There are madmen to be found in every

city who are glad of an opportunity to bark, and bray, and demean themselves after the usual manner of madmen," said the Austrian habitué, "and Paris can muster as good a roll of lunatics on short notice as any city in Europe; but I don't believe there were ten sane men on the Boulevards just now who cried 'Vive la guerre!'"

"I can tell you," said Berthe, "I saw hundreds, to all appearance in their right mind, who were crying it frantically; I got quite carried away myself, and shook my handkerchief, and shouted with the best of them."

"Why did you shout, madame?" inquired the Austrian, with provoking coolness.

"I tell you I was carried away; I could not help myself; the excitement was catching."

"Of course it was. Most fevers are, especially malignant ones; and I stake my head if you got nine-tenths of the crowd into a dark corner and asked why it shouted, the answer would be the same—they could not

help themselves, the excitement was catching. If an arsenal blows up, whose fault is it, the powder's, the match's, or your's, who fired the train? You might just as well blame the powder for blowing up, as the French people for marching, and bugling, and *Vive-la-guerre* when they hear the blare of a trumpet."

"Do you agree with monsieur?" asked Berthe, addressing a quiet military-looking man, who had listened in silence to the foregoing conversation; "are the people not really glad of the war?"

"It is difficult to say yet," replied the officer, "with the people all depends on how it turns out; *le succès seul a raison avec lui.*"

"But you do not contemplate such an absurd alternative as the defeat of the French arms?"

There was a quick and general protest from the company. The military man alone stroked his moustache with a meditative air, and was silent.

“ Answer me, I pray you, Commandant,” said Berthe; “ you are not afraid of our troops being beaten ? ”

“ Our troops are a match for the best in Europe,” answered the Commandant proudly.

“ And our generals ? we have no lack of them ? ”

“ Not of veterans,” was the evasive rejoinder.

“ Oh, the young ones will turn up as soon as they are wanted. We shall have a new generation of heroes that will out-do the *vieux de la Vieille* themselves. As for you, you will come back a Marshal of France ! ” declared Berthe, merrily.

The prophecy elicited gentle cheering and congratulations from the ladies, while the men approved in their own way, joking the Commandant, and dubbing him, *Monsieur le Maréchal* on the spot.

“ If it is not a futile or indiscreet question,” observed Mr. Clifford, addressing himself to the company in general ; “ may I ask what you are going to war for ? ”

“For the security of the Dynasty,” replied a Legitimist.

“For the honour and security of France!” retorted the Commandant.

“Do you separate them, monsieur?” cried the Legitimist with mock horror; “I arraign you *de par l'Empereur* for high treason against France!”

The circle laughed, and the Commandant, not caring to challenge the *persifleur*, laughed too.

“Shall I tell you, monsieur, why we are going to war!” said the deputy of the Left to Mr. Clifford; “we are going to war to *désennuyer* Paris. If Paris goes on much longer *ennuying* herself, as she has done for the last six months, she will make a revolution!”

“That may be,” assented his colleague of the Right, “but the preventive is rather violent, some milder distraction might surely be found for Paris than taking her to Berlin; her ennui is hardly a sufficient reason for plunging the whole nation into war. No;

I prefer to think we are going to fight for the honour of France, and, *qui sait!* perhaps for her aggrandizement."

"Yes," said Madame de Beauccœur, "Monsieur le Maréchal will win his *bâton* by taking the Rhine for us!"

"Bravo!" cried in chorus the Legitimist, the Right, the Left, and all the company in a unit; "*Le Rhin! le Rhin! Vive le Rhin!*"

"I will be capable of shaking hands with *ce gaillard là*, and crying 'Vive l'Empereur!' myself, if he comes back with the Rhine in his knapsack," declared the Legitimist with desperate patriotism. And the sentiment was echoed by everyone present; Orleanist, Bourbonnist, Bonapartist and Republican—all united in a common thirst for the blue waters of the Rhine, and vowed themselves ready to proclaim the war, whatever its motive, a wise war and a righteous, if it gave the Rhine to France. All with one exception; the old Academician shook his head, and muttered to himself some broken



sentences in which the words *démonce, fanfaronade, décadence des mœurs, feu-follet de la gloire*, etc., were audible through the buzz and hum around him.

“*Quel peuple, mon Dieu!*” murmured the philosopher, as descending the softly-carpeted stair, cries of a ‘A Berlin! Vive le Rhin; Vive la Guerre!’ followed him through the open door of Berthe’s apartment; “fitful as the breeze, fierce as the hurricane; one word that touches our vanity, touches every chord in our nature, and sets us ablaze as the spark fires the powder flask. *Quel peuple! Mon Dieu! Quel peuple!*”

VI.

“AWAKENING.”

BERTHE was holding a council about bonnets with her maid and Mademoiselle Augustine when I went in. The complexion of the sky it would seem was a grave complication in the question at issue; it was of a dull leaden colour, for though the heat was intense, the sun was not shining outright, but sulking under a heavy veil of cloud that looked as if it might explode in a thunderstorm before the day was over.

“How thoughtless you are, Clarisse!” exclaimed Berthe, impatiently; “the idea of putting me into *gris perle* under a sky like that! where are your eyes?”

Clarisse looked out of the window, saw the folly of her ways, and proposed a pink

bonnet to relieve the unbecoming sky and the grey costume. The amendment was approved of, so she left the room to fetch the bonnet.

"Elle est bonne fille, cette Clarisse, mais elle a des distractions étonnantes," remarked Berthe.

Mademoiselle Augustine sighed, smiled, and shrugged her shoulders. "What will you, Madame la Comtesse? Every one is not born an artist."

"Every one who is born with eyes in their head can use them," said Berthe, and she took up the ivory puff on her dressing table, and began very deliberately shaking out delicate clouds of *poudre à la violette* over her forehead and cheeks.

We were going together to a marriage at St. Roch, and we were to be there at noon precisely, the *faire-part* said; so I had to remind Berthe that if the business of powdering and puffing proceeded at this rate we might save ourselves the trouble of the drive. With the sudden impulse that carried her so rapidly from one object of interest to another,

she dropped the puff, snatched the pink bonnet from Clarisse, put it on hastily, seized her gloves and prayer-book, and we hurried downstairs and were off.

On turning into the Faubourg St. Honoré we found a crowd collected in front of the *mairie*. Berthe pulled the checkstring. “It’s news from the frontier,” she exclaimed, eagerly; “if we were to miss the wedding we must hear it.”

She sprang out of the brougham and I after her. The crowd was so deep that we could not get near enough to read the placards, but judging by the exclamations and commentaries that accompanied its perusal by the foremost readers, the news was both exciting and agreeable.

“Fallait pas vous effrayer, mes petites dames,” said a blouse who had seen us alight, and saw by our faces that we were alarmed; “we’ve beaten one half the Prussians to a jelly, and driven the rest across the Rhine!”

“The canaille! I always said they would run like rabbits the first taste they got of our

chassepots!" exclaimed a lad of fourteen, who halted with arms akimbo and a basket of vegetables on his head to hear the news.

"And these are the chaps that marched out of Berlin to the cry of '*Nach Paris! Nach Paris!*' The beggars! They were glad enough to clean our streets, aye and would have cleaned our boots with their moustaches, and thankful, just to turn a penny that they could not get at home," returned the first speaker.

"*Nach Paris*, indeed!" cried the lad with vegetables. "Let them come, let them try it!"

"Let them!" echoed several voices; "we'll give them a warm welcome!"

"Ay, that we will!" declared a pastry-cook from the other end of the *trottoir*; "we'll treat them well, we'll serve 'em up *aspic à la baïonnette*, and *petits pois à la mitrailleuse*, and see how they like it."

This keen joke was received with hilarity and immense applause, and the pastrycook, his *bonnet de coton* perched on one side,

strode off with the air of a man who has done his duty and knows it.

The remarks of the crowd, if not very lucid, were sufficiently conclusive as to the nature of the placard that held it gaping before the *mairie*. The news was clearly good news, so, satisfied with this broad fact, Berthe and I jumped back into the brougham and continued our way to St. Roch. But it seemed as if there were a conspiracy against our getting there. At the entrance to the Rue Royale we were blocked by a troop of recruits marching down from the Boulevards to the Rue de Rivoli. Flags and banners, and bunches of tricoloured ribbons hoisted on sticks floated at intervals above the moving mass, and the stirring chaunt of the Marseillaise kept time to the roll of drums and the broken tramp of undrilled feet. The shops emptied themselves into the street; buyers and sellers rushed out to see the recruits, and greet them with cheers and embraces, while many joined in the chorus and shouted enthusiastically—“Marchons!

marchons pour la patrie!" The recruits every now and then, to the utter detriment of all choral harmony, relieving their pent-up patriotism by hurraing and *Vive la France*—ing with frantic energy.

"Pauvres diables!" exclaimed a tradesman, who stood near us watching the stream flow past; "how many among them will ever set eyes on Paris again, I wonder?"

"Ah, indeed!" said his wife, "but all the same, it's a proud day for them this, whatever may come of it; if our *gamin* were but a few years older he would be stepping out with the best of them, and, who knows, he might come home with a pair of gold epaulets to his coat?"

"Tush, woman!" retorted the man, sharply; "there is plenty of *chair-à-canon* without him," and he went back to his shop.

"What a horrible thing war is when one comes to think of it," said Berthe, turning suddenly round with a flushed face; "every man going by there is the centre of another life, some, perhaps, of many lives, that will

never know happiness again if he be killed. It is a dreadful scourge. Thank God I have no brothers!"

The way was clear at last, and the carriages were able to move on. The noise and clamour that rose on all sides of us grew louder and wilder as we proceeded; one would have fancied the entire population had been seized with delirium tremens. The news of a victory, coming unexpectedly after the first disasters of the campaign, had elated the popular depression to frenzy, and, as usual with Paris, there was but one bound from the depths of despair to the giddiest heights of exultation. Flags were thrust out of windows and chimney pots, an eruption of tri-colour broke out on the houses, and as if by magic their blank fronts were variegated with red, white, and blue. Innumerable *gamins* cropped up from those mysterious regions where *gamins* dwell, and whence, at a moment's notice, they emerge and improve the opportunity; the merry-faced, ragged young vagabonds mustered in force on the



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macadam, formed themselves into an impromptu procession, and marched along the middle of the street, bawling out the Marseillaise at the tops of their voices; older *gamins* caught the infection and bawled in response, and turned and marched with them. At the corner of the Place Vendôme a citizen, unable to restrain the ardour of his patriotism, stopped a fiacre, jumped up beside the driver, and bade him stand while he poured out his soul to the *patrie*. The cabman reined in his steed, and stood while the patriot spouted his improvisation, stretching out his arms to the column—the immortal column! and pointing his periods with the talismanic words, "*Invincible! Enfants de la France! Terreur de l'ennemi!*" and so forth. No speaker in the forum of old Rome ever elicited more inspiring response from his hearers than the citizen patriot from the motley audience round his cab. Again and again his voice was drowned in vociferous cheers and bravos, and when he was done and about to retire from the rostrum, the

cabman, altogether carried away by the emotions of the hour, flung his arms round the orator and pressed him to his heart, and then addressing himself to the assembled citizens, defiantly demanded if their fellow-citizen had not deserved well of them, if there was any danger to the *patrie* while she could boast such sons as that! The appeal was rapturously responded to by all, but most notably by an *enfant des Vosges*, who tossed his *beret* in the air and caught it again, and cried vehemently—

“*Prafo ! prafo ! Fife le pourgeois ! Fife la padrie !*”

If the words had been a shell scattering death amongst the listeners, their effect could not have been more startling. Like lightning the spirit of the crowd was changed; its joy went out like the snuff of a candle; it swayed one moment to and fro, hesitating, then a yell, a hiss, and a scream shot up in quick succession.

“A spy! a traitor! a Prussian! à l’eau! à la lanterne!” and away they flew in hot

pursuit of the luckless Alsatian, whose German accent had raised the devil. The orator stood by the column alone in his glory, pelted by the jargon of cries that shot across him on every side from the Boulevards and the many streets running out of the Place : "Marchons ! à l'eau ! à Berlin ! à la lanterne !" It was like the clash of contending tongues from Babel.

This was our last adventure till we reached St. Roch. As might have been expected we were late ; the ceremony was over, and the bride was undergoing congratulations in the sacristy. We elbowed our way through the throng of guests, and were in due time admitted to embrace the Marquise de Chassedot, *née* Hélène de Karodel, and to shake hands with the bridegroom, and sprinkle our compliments in proper proportion over the friends and relations on both sides.

At the wedding breakfast the conversation naturally turned to the exclusion of all other topics on the happy event which had brought us all together, but as soon as the

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bride left the table to change her bridal dress for a travelling one, everybody as if by common consent burst out into talk about the war, and the news that had thrown the city into such commotion. The cautious incredulity with which the bulletin was discussed, contrasted strangely with the tumult of enthusiasm which we had just witnessed outside. It was quite clear no one believed in the “famous victory;” some went so far as to declare it was only a blind to hide some more shameful disaster than had yet befallen the troops; others less perverse thought it might be only a highly-coloured statement of a slight success. As to the authorities, it was who would cast the first stone at them; the government *en bloc* was a rotten machine that ought to have been broken up long ago; a crazy old ship that held together while she lay rolling in the port, but must inevitably fall to pieces in the first gale of wind, and go down with her crew; they were all a bad lot; the only exceptions to the universal rule of rottenness were those few officials who

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happened to be present, and who had been left behind by the stupidity of the captain. But has not this been the case from time immemorial? In the downfall of every government we see the same short-sighted jealousy prevail against the interests of the state—men, who might have saved the country, shoved aside by *intrigants*, who sacrifice it to their own base ambitions.

Some allusion was made to the impending siege of Paris, but it was cut short by the irrepressible merriment of the company; the most sober could not speak of such an absurdity without losing their gravity; it was, in fact, a heavy joke worthy of those beer-drinking German braggarts, and no sane Frenchman could speak of it as anything else without being laughed at. As a joke, however, it was discussed, and gave rise to many minor pleasantries that provoked a good deal of fun. An interesting young mother wished the city might be invested and starved, because it would be so delightful to starve oneself to death for one's baby, to store up one's

scanty food for the innocent little darling, and see it grow fat on its mother's *dévouement*. A young girl declared she quite longed for the opportunity of proving her love to her father; the Grecian daughter would be a pale myth compared to her, and the daughter of Paris would go down to posterity as a type of filial duty such as the world had never seen before. The kind and quantity of provisions to be laid in for the contingency gave rise to a vast deal of fun. One young *crevé* hoped his *maître d'hôtel* would provide a good stock of cigars; he could live on smoke by itself rather than without smoke and with every other sort of nourishment; but it should be unlimited smoke and of the best quality; his sister thought of buying a sack of chocolate bon-bons, and contemplated herself with great satisfaction arrived at her last *praline*, which she heroically insisted on her brother's accepting, while she embraced him, and, seated on her empty sack, expired of inanition at his feet.

"Do you intend to stay for the tragedy,

madame?" inquired the gentleman who was to live on smoke, addressing himself to Berthe.

"If I believed in the tragedy, certainly not," she replied, "but I don't; Paris is not going to be so obliging as to furnish us with an heroic opportunity."

"Not of the melodramatic sort, perhaps," observed our Austrian friend, with a touch of sarcasm in his habitually serene manner, "but those who have any plain prose heroism to dispose of can take it to the ambulances, where it will be thankfully received and gratefully acknowledged. I went yesterday to see a poor fellow who is lying in great agony at Beaujon. His mother and sister are watching him day and night; they dare not try to move him home lest he should die on the way. He lost both arms at Gravelotte. There are plenty more like him, mesdames, if you wish to offer them your services."

Berthe shuddered.

"Thank God I have no brothers!" she murmured under her breath.

“What is to be the end of it all?” I said; “admitting that the siege of Paris is an utter impossibility, half Europe must be overhauled before peace is definitively established?”

“So it will be,” asserted the Austrian, coolly; “wait a little and you will see all the powers trotted out; first Russia will put her finger in the mêlée, and then England’s turn will come.”

“I hope England will have the sense to keep out of it,” said Berthe, “she would be sure to get the worst of it, fighting single-handed, as she should do now.”

“That’s precisely why Russia will take care that she does not keep out of it,” remarked the Austrian.

“And what would Russia gain by England’s being worsted?”

“She would gain the satisfaction of paying off old scores. Do you fancy that she has forgotten that little episode in the Crimea, or that she is less bent on revenge because she doesn’t blast and blow,



and keep her victim on the qui-vive by forever threatening to annihilate her, and so forth? Not a bit of it. Russia neither boasts nor brags, but quietly holds her tongue, and keeps her temper, and bides her time. When she is quite ready, and the day is perhaps not so very remote, she will pick a fight with England, and every pope and peasant in holy Russia will light a candle to his holy images, and when the news comes in that England has been thrashed, they will light as many as will illuminate the Urals and the Caucasus."

"Après?" I said.

"Après what, madame?"

"When they have thrashed her, what will they do with her?"

"Do with her! Annex her."

He looked me straight in the face without a smile on his; but I could not believe he was speaking seriously, and I burst out laughing.

"The position of the conquered territory might offer some difficulties in the way of

annexation," I said presently; "but we will assume that the obliging Providence of pious King William interferes in behalf of his Muscovite brother, and overcomes all obstacles by land and by sea, and that the doughty little island is constituted a colony of the Czar's dominions, what could he do with it? What earthly use would it be to him?"

"Use!" echoed the Austrian, elevating his eye-brows with a supercilious smile; "in the first place, he might make it a little succursale to Siberia. There is a whole generation of those unmanageable half-mad Poles safely walking about this side of Europe, plotting, and dreaming, and rhapsodising; only think what a convenience it would be to their father the Czar, if he had a centre of action so near them! He would catch them like rabbits, and then instead of hawking them over the world to Nerchintz and Irkoutsk, he could sentence them to perpetual sciatica, or chronic lumbago, or a mild term of ten years' rheumatism in the Isle of Fogs, versus, the

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mines and the knout, and all the rest of the paternal chastisements administered in Siberia. Then, over and above this immense accommodation, he might have his docks in England: he might make the naughty Poles learn of his English subjects how to build ships, till, by-and-by, the navy of holy Russia would be the finest navy in the world, and big top-heavy Prussia would shake in her shoes, and hot-headed troublesome France would keep quietly on her knees in the mire, and all Europe would bow down before the Czar and swing the incense pot under his nose. Use, indeed! Let him catch England, and I promise you he'll find plenty of use for her.”

“Yes,” I said, “just so; let him catch her.”

It was near three when the wedding party broke up, and Berthe and I drove away. We found the excitement abroad still unabated. At the corner of many streets patriots were perorating to animated crowds; tongues innumerable were running up and

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down the gamut of noise with the most extraordinary variations. There is always something stirring in the sight of a great popular emotion; but in this instance it was more threatening than exhilarating. You felt that it was labelled "dangerous," that terrible elements of destruction were seething close under the surface-foam, and that the chattering, and shouting, and good fellowship might, in a flash of lightning, be changed to murderous hate and madness beyond control. It was madness already, but it was a harmless madness so far. Was it nothing more? Was there no method in it, I wondered, as we beheld the people haranguing and being harangued, rushing and gesticulating, and all showing in their faces and gestures the same feverish excitement. Were they no better than a cityful of apes, chattering and screaming from mere impulse? Was it all quackery and cant without any redeeming note of sacrifice, and truth, and valour, and would all this fiery twaddle die out presently in smoke and dumbness?


We had turned down to the Rue de Richelieu and were coming back, when our attention was arrested by a body of volunteers marching past the Place de la Bourse. They were in spruce new uniforms, and they were singing something that was not the *Marseillaise*, or *La Casquette au père Bugeaud*, or any other of the many chaunts we had been listening to; altogether their appearance and voices roused our curiosity, so Berthe desired the coachman to follow in their wake, that we might find out what troops they were, and what they were singing. They turned up the Rue de la Banque to the Place des Petits Pères, and there they entered the church of Notre-Dame des Victoires, as many of them as could find room, for they numbered some thousands, and nearly half had to remain outside. The great front doors were thrown open, so that those who were in the Place could see all that went on within; the soldiers were on their knees, bareheaded, and a venerable old priest was speaking to them; but his voice was so feeble

that what he said was audible only to those who were close to the altar. There was no need now to ask who those men were, or whence they came; none but the men of Brittany, the sons of the men who went out to death against the ruthless soldiery of Robespierre to the cry of *Dieu et le Roi!* were likely to walk through Paris bearing the Cross at their head, and making the ex-votos of Notre-Dame des Victoires shake on the walls to the echo of the grand old Vendean hymns; none but the descendants of the men whose "strength was as the strength of ten, because their hearts were pure," would dare in these days of sneaking, shame-faced Christianity, to commit such a brazen act of faith. The volunteers were accompanied by a great concourse of people, mostly relations and friends, but they remained outside, leaving the church to the soldiers.

It was a strange and beautiful sight to see those brave, proud Bretons kneeling down with the simplicity of little children before the shrine of the Virgin Mother and

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singing their hymn to the God of Hosts, asking His blessing on themselves and their arms before they went out to battle. When they came out of the church with the *curé* at their head, all the people of a common impulse fell upon their knees in the Place to get his blessing; the men received it with bare heads and in silence, the women weeping, most of them, while some lifted up their hands with the old priest and prayed out loud a blessing on the soldiers. Then he spoke a few words to them, not to the soldiers only, or chiefly, but to all, especially to the women. He bade them remember that they had their post in the national struggle, and that they might be a noble help or a guilty hindrance as they chose. Those who had husbands or brothers or sons in the ranks would understand this without any explanation from him. But there were many amongst them who had no near relations in danger, and who fancied, perhaps, that this exempted them from sharing the common burthen, and that they were privi-



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leged to stand aloof from the general anguish and anxiety. It was a pagan feeling, unworthy of a daughter of France and still more of a Christian. There could be no isolation at a time like this. All should suffer, and all should serve. Those, happily, who had no kindred of their own at the frontier should adopt in spirit the brave fellows who had left none behind; they should care for them and comfort and encourage them from a distance, like true sisters, helping them in the battle-field with their prayers, and in the camp and the hospital by their active and loving ministration; let such among them as were free and fit to do it go and learn of that other sisterhood of the diviner sort how to serve as they do who serve with the strong pure love of charity; let them who could not do this give abundantly wherewith the stricken soldier might be healed and comforted on his bed of pain; if they could not give their hands let them give their hearts and their money; let them help by sacrifice; sacrifice of some sort was



within the reach of all. He blessed them again at the close of his little exhortation, and then every one got up. The Bretons fell into rank, and, rending the welkin with one loud cry of *Dieu et la France!* marched on to the Northern railway.

Berthe and I had been kneeling with the crowd. "Let us follow and see the last of them," she said; and we got into the brougham, and went on at a foot pace.

The scene at the station was one never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. The pathos of those rough farewells, the lamentations of some of the women, the Maccabean courage of others, the shrill crying of little children, the tears of strong men who felt like men, but bore up with the courage of soldiers and the exulting hope of Christians; it was a sight to make one's heart glad to rapture, or sad to despair.

We had no sooner alighted than I lost sight of Berthe; indeed, I had forgotten her. My whole thoughts were absorbed in the scene going on around me. It was only

when the bell rang and the soldiers passed out to the *debarcadère*, leaving the space comparatively empty, that I looked about and saw her in the middle of the *trottoir* with her arms round a young girl who was sobbing as if her heart would break. It appeared that she was just a fortnight married to a Breton lad of her own age—nineteen; they had worked hard and saved all their little earnings these five years past in order to get married, and now, just as they were so happy, he had gone away from her, and she would never see him again; he was certain to be killed, he was so good and loving and clever. Berthe pressed the poor child to her heart, and committed herself to the wildest pledges for the safe return of the young hero; and, finally, after evoking a burst of passionate gratitude and love from the girl, who half believed her to be a beneficent fairy sent on a special mission of comfort to her, Berthe exacted a promise that she was to come and see her the next day, and we set our faces homewards.

We drove on for a little while in silence, looking each out of our separate *portière*, our hearts too full for conversation. I saw by Berthe's eyes that she had been crying, and I felt instinctively that a great struggle was going on within her. My whole heart was vibrating in sympathy with it, but I could not say so. After a few minutes the silence between us became oppressive. Berthe suddenly turning round, exclaimed :

"And I was thanking God that I had no brothers! Blind, selfish fool that I was!"

She burst into tears, and hid her face in her hands, sobbing convulsively. The change in her bright and volatile spirit seemed to make a change in all the world. I could no longer accuse the people, as I had done an hour ago, of being mere puppets dancing to a tune and throwing themselves into attitudes that meant no more than a sick man's raving. No, it was not all cant and tinkle and false echo; there was substance under the symbolizing; there were men amongst them who worshipped God and were proud to proclaim

it; there were hearts that seemed dead, but were only sleeping. Paris was dancing in mad mirth like a harlequin to-day, but to-morrow it would be different; to-morrow the smoke and the flame would go out, leaving behind them the elements of a great nation burnt pure of the corroding dross that had choked and held them captive so long.

On arriving at home Berthe found a costume which had just come from M. Grandhomme's laid out on her bed. At any other moment the sight would have claimed her delighted attention, but she turned from it with a feeling of indifference now, almost of disgust.

Clarisse, who had been puzzling over some new trick in the trimming, took it up in a flurry, and was for trying it on at once to see how it fitted, and whether the novelty became her mistress; but Berthe, with a movement of impatience, told her to put it away, that she was in no mood for attending to *bêtises* just then. The girl opened her eyes in astonishment. A costume of Grand-

homme's that cost eleven hundred francs to be called a *bétise*! It was flat profanity. She left the room with a painful presentiment that something serious was amiss with Madame la Comtesse.

As soon as Berthe was alone, she began to think. It was a new experience in her life this process of thinking, and she was hard pressed by it; for it was no vacant reverie that she was indulging in, but a sharp, compulsory review of her past and present existence, and the result was anything but soothing. Her life up to this day had been the life of a butterfly—gay, airy, amusing, very enjoyable to herself, and harmless enough as regarded her fellow-creatures. She had drunk her fill of the good things of life, enjoying herself in every possible way; legitimately; she was incapable of wronging or hurting any one; she was extravagant in her dress and other luxuries, but her fortune allowed this, and she made no debts. So far her life was blameless, and, indeed, if she compared it with many of the lives around

her it was a very respectable one. But suddenly her standard was knocked down, and all her comfortable theories collapsed. It turned out that she had a soul somewhere, which she had forgotten all about, living, as if happily free from that incumbrance, in selfishness and folly that were counted by this newly-revealed standard little short of guilt. It was an unexpected discovery, and a most unpleasant one. That exclamation which had escaped her twice, at the thought of the great general sorrow, kept ringing in her ears like a warning and a reproach: "Thank God, I have no brothers!" Who, then, were those men whom she had just seen going forth in voluntary self-devotion to fight for her and those who, like her, could not defend themselves? Was there such a thing in Christendom as a woman or a man who had no brothers? Yet Berthe had believed herself to be this impossibility; she had been living up to it in utter forgetfulness of her brothers, ignoring them as a heathen might, or using them solely for her own selfish

purposes, to work for her and minister to her interests or her pleasures.

Her eye wandered absently from one object to another till it fell upon a pale ivory figure on a velvet background fastened to the wall, and half shrouded by the curtains of the bed.

"I am young; it is not too late; I will begin life afresh," said Berthe, rising, and moving restlessly across the room. "I will begin to-morrow; no, to-day—now." She went close up to the bed, and stood for a moment with clasped hands, her lips moving in quick, low utterances, and then fell upon her knees before the pale thorn-crowned head looking down upon her.

They never knew it; but this conquest of a noble woman's life was perhaps the first victory won by the Breton soldiers who set out to battle that day.

## VII.

EXCELSIOR!

*Grandes nouvelles! Edition extraordinaire!  
Quinze centimes!*

The news vendor, a ragged little urchin who nearly collapsed under the weight of his *éditions extraordinaires*, was shouting these startling sentences at the top of his voice as I went out early in the morning. Two rheumatic old *chiffonnières* immediately suspended their investigation of the dust heaps, and dropping their crooks cried out to know the news. "Was it a victory, or a defeat, or something about the siege?" But the urchin, as hard hearted as any editor, waved the momentous sheet majestically above his head, and answered, "*Quinze centimes!*" To the renewed entreaties of the



chiffonnières he so far condescended as to assure them that it was well worth the money, that they never invested *quinze centimes* more profitable, for the news was wonderful news; but for less than *quinze centimes* they should not have it. I did not altogether believe either in the *édition extraordinaire*, or in the wonderful news, but the newspaper fever was upon me, as upon everybody else, so I produced the fifteen centimes, and got the paper. Whereupon the two chiffonnières, taking it for granted that the community were to benefit by my extravagance, came up to me, and stood to hear the news. I read it aloud to them, as well as to a milk-boy who happened to be passing at the moment, and stood likewise to get his share of the fifteen centimes, and an uncommonly sympathetic audience they made. The news was none of the best. The Prussians were at Chalons, and might be on the march to Paris before another week.

“That was MacMahon’s plan from the

first," observed the milk-boy, "and if the Prussians fall into the trap, the game is up."

The chiffonnières, not being so well up in military tactics and technicalities, meekly begged to be enlightened as to the aim and nature of the trap in question, and the young politician was so kind as to explain to them that the Marshal had all along been luring the Prussians on to Paris, which was to be their grave. Valerien and the fortifications would crunch them like flies; not a man of them would go back alive; the only fear was that *ce coquin de Bismark* would be too many guns for the Marshal, and force him to fight before Chalons, in which case, he declared, "it was all up with the Marshal, and consequently with France."

Having delivered himself of this masterly exposition of the case, the milk-boy swung his cans, touched his cap to me, and having achieved the most preternaturally knowing wink I ever beheld, strode off without waiting to see the effect of his words on the two old women.

They looked after him aghast. Had they been listening to a confidential agent of the war-office, or to an emissary of *ce coquin de Bismark* himself—a spy, in fact ?

“One ought to have one’s mouth sewed up these times,” remarked the elder beldame, casting a half-suspicious glance at me as I folded my *édition extraordinaire* and consigned it to my pocket ; “one never knows who one may be speaking to.”

This observation was too deep and too fearfully suggestive to admit of any commentary ; the only thing to be done in such a crisis was to take refuge in professional pursuits that offered no ground for suspicion, so, seizing their crooks, the chiffonnières plunged once more into rubbish.

A little further on, turning the corner of a street, I came on two gentlemen of my acquaintance standing in animated conversation. I stopped to ask what news ? None, except that the horizon grew blacker from hour to hour. The despatches of the morning were as bad as well could be. As to

pooh-pooing the siege any longer it was sheer stupidity; one of them declared that for his part he wished it were already began; it was the last chance left of retrieving the disasters of the campaign and crushing the remaining forces of the enemy. His companion indignantly scouted both the certainty and the desirability of the siege. The city, he said, was not to be trusted; no great city was; great wealth and patriotism never ran in the same harness; there were hundreds of capitalists ready to open the gates to the enemy on their own terms. Look at the proprietors, for instance! Did any one suppose there were fifty proprietors in Paris who would not cry "*Capitulons!*" before one week was out.

"Well," suggested the advocate of the siege, "let the proprietors be taken down to their own cellars, and kept sitting on their money-bags, under lock and key, till the siege is over."

"Then," retorted his companion, "you must lock up both the National Guard and

the Mobiles, for they are both full of those money-loving traitors.”

This was not very reassuring. I kept repeating to myself that at a moment like this public opinion was sure to be an alarmist, that the wisest plan would be to stay at home, and read no newspapers and consult nobody, but just wait steadily till events resolved themselves, as they always did sooner or later, into order, and then act as they should decide; but it was no use. I went home in dire perplexity and began to wish myself in Timbuctoo, or the Fiji Islands, or anywhere out of the centre of civilization and the arts and sciences.

Things went on in this way for another week, the tide advancing rapidly, but so gradually that it was difficult for those on shore to note its progress and be guided by it. No one would own to being frightened, but it was impossible to note the scared faces of the people as they stood in groups before every new *affiche*, setting forth either a fresh order from the Hotel de Ville, or

some dubious and disheartening despatch from the seat of war, without feeling that the panic was upon them, and that the complicated problems of the national struggle had narrowed to the one idea: dare we stay, or must we fly? When you met a friend in the street, the first, the sole, the supreme salutation was: "Do you believe in the siege? Are you going to stay?" The obduracy of the Parisians in refusing to believe in the siege up to the very last moment, was certainly one of the strangest phases in the history of the siege itself. They were possessed by a blind faith in the sacredness and inviolability of their capital, and they could not persuade themselves but that all Europe looked upon it with the same eyes. Prussia might perhaps, infatuated by a series of unparalleled successes, push audacity so far as to sit down before the gates of Paris, and bully her with big words and sham preparations, but beyond that she would never dare to go. Europe would not tolerate it; all the civilized world would stand up

and cry *hold!* not out of sympathy for France, but out of pure selfishness, for Paris was not merely the capital of France, but of the world. So the walls were white with proclamations, and *avertissements* and invitations to the *bouches inutiles* to withdraw, and practical advice to the patriotic citizens whose proud duty it was soon to be to defend the city; and the great exodus of *bouches inutiles* poured out, and the much more dangerous stream of *bouches inutiles* from without poured in—the homeless population of the neighbouring villages driven out of their houses, that were not thrown down, but left to afford convenient shelter to the enemy—a sorry sight it was to see little *ménages* trooping in, the husband trundling the few sticks of furniture on a handcart, with the inevitable household cat perched on the top of the promiscuous pile, while the wife carried a baby and a bundle, and a little one trotted by her side, holding the canary bird in its painted cage—all this went on, and still the real born Parisian said in his

heart of hearts, "It will never be. Europe will never allow it; Prussia will never dare," etc.

On the morning of the third of September, I went out to make some purchases on the Boulevards. Passing by the Madeleine, which was draped in black, I saw a mournful procession coming down the steps; I stood to let it pass, and meantime cast a glance round upon the crowd to see if there was a face in it that I knew. To my surprise, I saw Berthe in the midst of a group that had broken away from the mourners, and was standing apart in the space inside the rails; she was talking very emphatically, and whatever she was saying seemed to be of exciting interest to her hearers. When the cortège had nearly cleared away, I beckoned to her, and she ran out at once to me.

"You are the very person I wanted to see," she exclaimed, clutching me by the arm in her vehement way; "I was going straight to your house. I have just been to



the Etat Major. I met General Trochu there ; he came down on account of some despatches that have just come in, and put them all in a state of terrible consternation. There is not a doubt of it now, the city will be blocked in ten days from this. I thought of you immediately, and I asked the General what you ought to do ; he said by all means to go, and within forty-eight hours ; after that the rails may be cut from one moment to another ; he was very emphatic about it, and said it would be mad imprudence of you to remain, as there is nothing to keep you here. There is a terrible time before us. Of course you will abide by this advice ?”

I was too much taken aback to say what I would do. The news was so bewildering. I had never looked upon the siege as the impossible eventuality it had so long been considered, neither did I share the infatuation of the Parisians about the inviolability of Paris in the eyes of Europe ; for the last fortnight I had come to believe that the investment at least was now only a question

of time, yet I was as much startled by this cool, official announcement of it, as if the thing had never been seriously mentioned before.

“I don’t know what I will do,” I said; “if one had nerves equal to it, it would be the most fearfully interesting experience to go through.”

“No doubt,” assented Berthe, “but it will be an experience that will try the strongest nerves, and unless one had duties to keep one here, I think, as the General says, it would be mad imprudence to remain.”

“You mean to leave, of course?” I said.

“No, I mean to stay. I think I can trust my nerves; besides, as a Frenchwoman, I have a duty to perform. I must take my share of the common danger: it would be cowardly of me to fly; but with you it is different. I don’t think you would be justified in remaining simply out of curiosity, for the excitement of the thing. Only whatever you do, you must decide at once. Of course you have your passport?”

"No, I had not gone that far in believing in the siege."

"That was foolish," said Berthe; "every foreigner we know has, I am certain, got theirs."

"Well, I will go for mine now," I said. "Come with me, and let us talk it all over. Are you on foot?"

"No, but I will be glad of the walk; I will send away the brougham."

She did so, and we went on together.

"It is like death," I said, "no matter how long one is expecting it, it comes like a blow at the last. I can hardly realize now that the siege is actually at hand. Why, it was only the other day we were listening to all those people jesting about it all!"

"It was a sorry jest," replied Berthe; "but that is always the way with us French: we look on life as a *plaisanterie* from beginning to end. I believe if a Frenchman could speak in his coffin he would jest."

"And you really mean to stay, Berthe?"

"I do. I shall be of some use, I hope."

At any rate I shall try my best ; but we can talk of that presently. First, about you. Have you made up your mind ? ”

“I dont know,” I said; “I feel bewildered. I long to stay, and yet I dread it. It is not the possible horrors of the siege that frighten me; at least, I think not: it is the fear of being taken up as a spy.”

She burst out into one of her loud, merry laughs. “What a ridiculous idea! Why on earth should you, of all people, be taken for a spy ? ”

“There is no why or wherefore in the case,” I said, “and that is just the alarming part of it. The people are simply mad on the point ; they have barked themselves rabid, and are ready to bite every one that comes in their way. Twice this morning, on my way into town, I heard a hue and cry raised somewhere near, and when I asked what was the matter, a ‘mad dog or a house on fire?’ the answer was, ‘Oh, no, it’s an *espion* they’ve started, and he’s giving them chase!’ One man said to me half in jest, and half in

earnest : 'Madame would do well to hide her fair hair under a wig ; it's not prudent to go about in fair hair these times.' I own it made me feel a little uncomfortable. "

" Well it is not very comforting for me," said Berthe, laughing ; " my hair is *blond* enough to excite suspicion."

" Oh, your nationality is written on your face," I said ; " there is no fear of your ever being mistaken for anything but a French-woman."

On arriving at the Embassy we found a crowd of British subjects waiting for their passports, and considerably surprised at being kept waiting, and expressing their surprise in no measured terms. Surely they paid dear enough for the maintenance of their Embassies to be entitled to prompt and proper attendance when once in a way they called on their representative for a service of this kind ? " The attachés were so over-worked, they could really not attend to everybody at once." Then why were there not extra attachés, any number of attachés

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put on for the extra press of work? and so on. Some nervous old couples were anxious to have the benefit of his Excellency's personal opinion as to the prudence of leaving their plate-chest behind them; and if he thought there was a risk in so doing, would he be so kind as to suggest the safest and most economical way of conveying it to London; and how about the duty, which was very heavy in case they had to bring it back, being foreign plate? Also, whether it was quite prudent to leave their money in the Bank of France and other French securities, or whether it would be more advisable to withdraw it at once, even at a loss. Also, whether it would be a wise precaution to hang the Union Jack out of their windows—those who left furniture behind them—or whether the present state of feeling between England and France was likely to render such a proceeding rather dangerous than otherwise; it was not for outsiders to know how things stood between the two countries, so as to be able to guide their course in the

present crisis, but his Excellency being a diplomatist was sure to be well informed on these matters, and they would rely implicitly on his judgment and advice.

Berthe and I were so highly entertained by the naïf egotism and infantine stupidity displayed by these various specimens of British human nature, that we did not find it in our hearts to grumble at being kept nearly two hours waiting.

On reaching the Rond Point of the Champs Elysées, our curiosity was attracted by a silent, scared-looking crowd, collected on the *trottoir*, in front of the hotel Meyerbeer. The *persiennes* of the house were closed, as if there were a death within, and a few sergents-de-ville were standing at intervals with crossed arms, staring up at the windows. The owner of the hotel had been arrested as a spy the night before, on the strength of some foolish words which had escaped him about the possible entry of the Germans into Paris; the arrest had made a great noise in the neighbourhood, but Berthe and I had not

heard of it, so, prompted by curiosity, I asked one of the sergents what was the matter, if anything had happened? The man turned round, and, without uncrossing his arms, bent two piercing black eyes on me—piercing is not a figure of speech: they stabbed me through like a pair of blades—and after taking a deliberate view of my person from head to foot, he growled out:—

“ *Oui, il y a eu quelque chose. Il y a eu un espion !*”

There was something so diabolical in the tone of his voice and his expression that it terrified me, and I suppose my terror got into my face and gave it a guilty hue, for another sergent-de-ville, who had turned round on hearing his colleague speak, strode up to me and said nothing, but drove another pair of eyes through me with fierce suspicion. The crowd attracted by the incident veered round and stared at me, and I felt as if I had that morning posted a despatch to Bismark, or Bismark’s master, betraying every secret



that could facilitate the ruin of France and the triumph of Germany. Despair, however, came to my rescue. I put a bold face on it, and said with extraordinary pluck and coolness :—

“But they have caught him?”

“Yes, they have caught him, and they will keep him!”

“Ah! it is well!” I observed; and in abject dread of being done equally well by, and pounced upon there and then, I walked leisurely away.

When we had got to a safe distance, I ventured to look at Berthe. She was as white as a sheet, and if I looked half as guilty, it is nothing short of a miracle that we were not both seized on the spot and marched off to the Préfecture de Police.

“Let this be a lesson to us to ask no more questions in the street,” she said, when we were quite out of ear-shot of the sergents-de-ville; “indeed the safest way would be not to speak at all, especially in a foreign language, for whatever is unintelligible just

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now is German, and to be German is to be a spy."

After this we walked on in silence. It was quite clear Berthe was no longer disposed to treat my apprehensions about the spy fever as chimerical, or matter for laughter. Puerile as the above incident was, I believe it put an end to my hesitation and determined me to leave Paris within the forty-eight hours, as the governor of the city had suggested.

Berthe had not realized it as much as I had; but the spy fever had spread so alarmingly within the last few days, that from being at first a frequently-recurring panic, it was now an insane *idée fixe*. You saw suspicion and fear written on the faces of the people as you went along. They walked in twos and threes without speaking, glancing timidly on every side, and trying to carry it off with an air of indifference or preoccupation. Every one was in mortal fear of being pointed at and hooted at, and carried off to the nearest *violon*. No nationality was a safeguard. Even British subjects were liable

to fall a victim to the popular mania, and some few of them did. The event was of course published, and the account they gave of the entertainment prepared for casual visitors at the expense of the Government was anything but enticing: a small *salle* crammed full of prisoners of every social and political hue, all huddled together pêle-mêle without a chair to sit on or air to breathe. Those who were lucky enough to be let out after a short term of this promiscuous hospitality were warmly congratulated by their friends and forthwith retired into private life without further éclat. Some English guests of the Préfecture were simple enough, however, to enter an official protest against the proceedings, and these were politely reminded that the gates of the city were still open, and trains ready to convey them to places of more agreeable manners, where the sacred person of a British subject ran no risk of being mistaken for a common mortal, but that while they chose to remain within the gates they must take the consequences. And this was,

after all, the best answer the authorities could make, and it behoved all reasonable British subjects to abide by it.

I parted from Berthe at the corner of her own street, and went home to pack up and be ready to start by the twelve o'clock train next day.

On my way to the station I stopped to take leave of her. It was near eleven. Contrary to my expectations, I found her up and dressed, instead of lolling *en déshabille* on her *chaise longue*. But this was not the only surprise awaiting me. The whole appearance of the house was changed. Portières and curtains were done away with, the two salons were emptied of their furniture, and four iron beds placed in the large one, and two in the small one. A young woman was busy cutting out bandages from a pile of linen in a basket beside her in Berthe's room, that soft, Sybarite room, so unused to such company and such occupation; her face was concealed by a broad-frilled Vendéen cap, but on hearing us enter she turned

round, and I recognized the bride-widow of the Breton volunteer.

"We are going to work very hard together," said Berthe, putting her hand on the girl's shoulder. "Jeannette is going to teach me how to make poultices, and dress wounds, and all sorts of useful things; she is quite an adept in service, it seems; so I am in hopes our little ambulance will be nicely managed, and comfortable for the dear soldiers."

Jeannette's eyes filled with tears, and she took Berthe's hand and kissed it. Just at this moment François came in to say that there were two *sœurs de charité* who wanted to speak to madame. Berthe and Jeannette went out to meet them, and as they left the room, Clarisse came in through the dressing-room. As soon as she caught sight of me she threw up her arms and looked all round her with blank despair in her face.

"The world is upside down," she said, "everything is going topsy-turvy; what between the war, and the siege, and the rest

of it, one doesn't know what to expect next; but of all the queer things going, the queerest is what is happening in this house. To think of the salon of la Comtesse being turned into a hospital, and that I should stay to see it! Madame does well to go away; people are all going crazy in this country, and they say it's catching."

"So it is, Clarisse," I replied; "and the best thing I can wish you is that you may catch it too."

Berthe wanted to come with me to the station, but I would not allow it. I preferred to carry away my last impression of her as I saw her now. She was dressed in a plain dark silk, with a white apron before her, and a soft cambric handkerchief tied loose round her head, but the quaint, half nun-like dress seemed to me more becoming to her than the most artistic of M. Grandhomme's combinations. I watched her flitting from room to room, with a duster in her hand, changing the chairs and tables, and working as deftly as an accomplished housemaid, her face

flushed with the exercise, and radiant with a new found joy, and I thought I had never seen her look so beautiful. So we parted in that blue chamber, which was, henceforth, to have a new memory of its own to both of us.

Before I had started from my own house the news of the disaster of Sedan had come in, and spread like wildfire. All that I had previously witnessed of popular excitement was cold and tame compared with what I now beheld. The city as I drove through it to the *gare du Nord* was like a galvanized nightmare, electrifying, and electrified into demoniacal hubbub. Rage and despair were riding the whirlwind, with suspicion tied like a bandage on their eyes; the cry of *treason!* out-topped all other cries, and rose higher than curses or lamentations; men were deaf and blind to all other explanation: it was treason to gainsay treason.

Had there at that moment been found a voice loud enough to speak to the hurricane, and bid the winds be still and hearken, and gather up those shrill, shrieking tongues into

one strong unit of harmony and power that would have reached to the ends of France and spoken reason, what might not have come of it, what might not have been done and saved? But it was not to be. Nothing came of the discord but discord. The strong hand that might even then have welded those suicidal elements—hate, and fury, and suspicion—into a bond of vigorous and salutary action, was not forthcoming; the strife was to go on, and on, and on to the bitter end, until fair France was drenched in her own blood, her energies spent, her youth and chivalry laid low in bootless butchery.

The blocks that impeded our progress in every street made it a difficult matter to reach the station. When we eventually did get there, we were a quarter of an hour behind our time. But, as it happened, this was of no consequence; we had to wait another hour before the train started. Meantime, the confusion was indescribable. Several waggons full of wounded had arrived by the last train, and a



regiment of the line was waiting to start by the next. The *Place* was filled with soldiers. Some were lying at full length fast asleep under the hot noon sun; others were smoking and chatting near their arms that were stacked here and there; some of the poor fellows had been out before, and were only just recovered from their wounds: they looked wan and pale. Women were clinging to them, weeping and lamenting. Inside the station travellers were rushing about frantically from bureau to bureau; every now and then, in despair at ever getting through the crowd that hedged in every wicket, a traveller would buttonhole some unlucky underling with a band on his hat and adjure him to help him to a ticket, and when the underling protested that such a service was not "in his attributions," the traveller would belabour him with hard words, and make another charge at the bureaux.

At last we were off. It was a *voyage à sensation* such as I hope never again to make. The line was encumbered with trains full of wounded coming and troops going, and our

pace was regulated with a view to avoid running into those ahead, and escape being run into by those behind. Now we darted off at terrific speed, the train wriggling off and on the rails like a snake flying for its life; then we pulled up and crawled on at almost a foot pace for a little while; then off we flew again with the speed of a telegraph. Trains flashed past us every now and then with a roar and a shriek, and soldiers, with their heads bound up and their arms in slings, sang out snatches of war-songs, and we cheered and waved hands and handkerchiefs in return. We had started an hour and a quarter behind our time, and we arrived three hours after we were due. For two hours before we reached Boulogne the danger-lights were flaring ahead, red and lurid in the darkness, and it was with something like the sensation of being rescued from a house on fire that we set foot on the débarcadère.

Once in safety I was able to look back more calmly on the history of the past fortnight. It seemed to me that I had been

standing on a rock watching the tide roll in, "the cruel, crawling" tide, rising gradually higher and higher, nearer and nearer to my stand-point, till I felt the cold touch of the water on my feet, and then leaped ashore.

And Berthe? She stood out, a bright star transfiguring the gloom and chaos of the retrospect. The change I had witnessed in her seemed like the pledge and herald of other changes—wider, deeper, universal. I had ceased to wonder at the choice she had made. The more I thought of it, the more I felt that it was worthy of her, as she of it. I could form but one wish for her now; that she might be strong to persevere unto the end. The course she had chosen was the noblest, the only true one for a Frenchwoman while France was wrestling in this gigantic duel, suffering and bleeding it might be to death. However the strife ended, so long as the war-cry and the battle-psalm were clanging around, it was not meet for the women of France to sit idly in luxurious ease and watch the struggle as a game that claimed nothing

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more than excited sympathy. It claims something more than this from all of us. Citizens or allies, far or near, we may none of us stand aloof in such a crisis, or take refuge in neutrality. In the brotherhood of Christendom, neutrality is but another word for desertion. We have each of us our appointed post in the battle, and if we desert it we are renegades and traitors. We must all fight somehow. Not of necessity with iron and steel; but we must fight. Moses was no neutral when, from the mountain, he, with uplifted arms, watched the conflict in the valley below. So it must be with all of us. We must fight somehow. We may never abide in selfish peace or isolated security while our brethren are at war. Whithersoever the battle goes, to victory or surrender, to glory or humiliation, we must bear our part in it, and let our hearts go on fighting faithfully to the end. We must love the combatants through good and evil alike; through the smoke and din we must discern every ennobling incident of the struggle, such as

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there abound on every battle field, in every land; seeing all things in their true proportions, shutting our hearts inexorably to despair, making them wide to endless sympathy with the good, to inexhaustible pity for the wicked. The smoke must not blind us; the crash and the roar must not deafen us; through the agony of souls, despair, and hate and sin, we must have our vision clear and strong to recognize the loveliness of virtue, the divine beauty of sacrifice, the infinite possibilities of repentance, the joy of the conquerors, the sweetness of the kiss of peace. Loving all love; hating all hate. We must see angels outnumbering fiends in incalculable degree; light triumphing over darkness, and the breath of purity healing the blue corruption of the world.

FINIS.

## MADemoiselle ADRIENNE.

A SKETCH AFTER THE BLOCUS.

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It was just five months since I had left it, the bright, proud Babylon, beautiful, and bold, and wicked, clothed in scarlet, and feasting sumptuously. King Chanticleer, strutting on the Boulevards, was crowing loudly, and the myriad tribe of the coq Gaulois, strutting up and down the city, crowed loud and shrill in responsive chorus—*petits crévés*, and *petits mouchards*, and *petits gamins*, and all that was *petit* in that grand, foolish cityful of humanity. Bedlam was abroad, singing, and crowing, and barking itself rabid, and scaring away from Babylon all that was not Bedlam. But there were many in Babylon who were

not afraid of Bedlam, who believed that the crowing would by and by translate itself into action, into those deeds of desperate daring which none but madmen can accomplish, that when the bugle sounded, these bragging, swaggering maniacs would shoulder the musket, and, rushing to the fore, save France, or die for her. No one saved her, but many did rush to the fore, and die for her. They were not lunatics though, at least not many of them. The lunatics showed, as they have often done before, that there was method in their madness. They cheered on the sane, phlegmatic brethren to death and glory, while they stayed prudently at home to keep up the spirits of the capital; they were the spirit and soul of the defence, the others were but the bone and muscle of it. What is a body without a soul, the frail arm of the flesh without the nerve and go and the spirit? Pshaw! If it were not for the crowing of King Chanticleer, there would have been no siege at all; the whole concern would have collapsed in its cradle.

The story of the Blocus has yet to be written. Of its outward and visible story, many volumes, scores of volumes, good and bad, true and false, have already been written. But the inward history, the arcana of the defence, the exposition of that huge, blundering machine, that with its springs and levers, and wheels within wheels, snapped and broke and collapsed in the driver's hand,—all this is still untold. The great *Pourquoi?* is still unanswered. History will solve the riddle some day, no doubt, as it solves most riddles; but before that time comes, other grander problems of mightier import to us will likewise have been solved, and we shall care but little for the true story of the Blocus.

“Yes, *monsieur*,” said my concierge, when we met and talked over the events which had passed since the first of September, when I fled, leaving my goods and chattels to her care and the tender mercies of the Prussians and the Reds, “yes, *monsieur*, it is surprising, but one doesn't hear



of anybody's having died of cold, though the winter was so terrible, and fuel so scarce. It ran short almost from the beginning. We had nothing but green sticks that couldn't be persuaded to burn, do our best. I used to sit shivering in my bed, while the *petiots* tried to warm themselves, skipping under the *porte-cochère*, running up and down the stairs till their little legs were dead beat. Oh, *monsieur*, I shall remember this war to my dying day."

"Did many die from starvation?" I asked—"many in this neighbourhood whom you knew?"

"Not one, *monsieur*! not one of actual hunger, though it's my belief that plenty of folks died of poison. The bread we ate was worse than no bread. Such an abomination made out of clay and bran, and oats and hay, and Lord knows what besides! Why, *monsieur*, a chiffonnier's dog wouldn't have touched it in Christian times. How it kept body and soul together for any of us, is more than I can understand."

“And yet nobody died of want?” I repeated.

“Not that I heard of, *monsieur*, unless you count Père Jacques as dead from starvation. He disappeared one morning, soon after he sold Mademoiselle Adrienne, and nobody ever knew what became of him. They said in the neighbourhood that he went over to the Prussians; but they said that of better men than Père Jacques; and, besides, what would the Prussians do with a poor old *toqué* like Père Jacques, I ask it of *monsieur*?”

Before I could say that I fully agreed with her, we were both startled by a sudden uproar in the street round the corner. We rushed out simultaneously from the *portecoehère*, where we were holding our confabulation, to see what was the matter. A crowd was collected in the middle of the Rue Billault, and was vociferously cheering somebody or something. As a matter of course, the assembly being French, there were counter-cheers; hisses and cries of “*Rénégat!*”

*Vendu aux Prussiens!*” etc., intermingled with more friendly exclamations.

“Bon Dieu, it is not finished then! Is the war going to begin again! Are we making a revolution?” cried my concierge, throwing up her hands, and then wringing them in despair; “will the *petiots* never again eat their panade and build their little mud-pies in peace! Oh, what a country! *Monsieur, monsieur*, you are happy not to be a Frenchman!”

Without at all demurring to this last proposition, I suggested that before giving up France as utterly lost, we would do well to see what the row was about, if row there were, for as the crowd grew, the cheering rose distinctly predominant above the hissing. Already reassured, I advanced towards the centre of disturbance, my concierge following, and, for greater security, keeping a tight grip of my coat-tails.

“*Vive Mademoiselle Adrienne! Donne la patte, Mademoiselle Adrienne! Vive le Père Jacques!*” These cries, capped by peals of

laughter, half-drowned in the sonorous braying of a donkey, reverberated down the street, and deafened us as we drew near. With a shout of laughter, my concierge dropped my coat, and clapped her hands in delight.

“How then!” she cried; “she is not dead! He did not eat her! He did not sell her! *Vive le Père Jacques ! Vive Mademoiselle Adrienne !*”

Those of my readers who have lived any time in the quarter of the Champs Elysées, will recognize Mademoiselle Adrienne as an old friend, and rejoice to learn that, thanks to the devotion and intelligence of Père Jacques, she did not share the fate of most of her asinine sisterhood, but has actually gone through the horrors of the siege of Paris, and lived to tell the tale. Those who have not the pleasure of her acquaintance will perhaps be glad to make it, and learn something of so remarkable a personage.

For years—I am afraid to say how many, but ten is certainly within the mark—Père

Jacques and his donkey have been familiar objects in the Rue Billault and the Rue de Berri, and that part of the Faubourg St. Honoré which includes those streets. Why Père Jacques christened his ass Mademoiselle Adrienne is to this day a mystery. Some say it was out of vengeance against a certain blue-eyed Adrienne who won his heart and jilted it; others say out of love for a faithful Adrienne who broke his heart by dying. But this is pure conjecture; Père Jacques himself remains impenetrable on the subject. When once questioned by a curious, impertinent man, he declined to explain himself further than by remarking:—“*Chacun avait son idée, et mon idée à moi c'est Mademoiselle Adrienne;*” and having said this much he took a lump of sugar from his pocket and presented it affectionately to his *idée*, who crunched it with evident satisfaction, and acknowledged the attention by an expressive bray.

“*Voyons, Mademoiselle Adrienne! Calmons nous! Calmons nous, ma fille!*” The

braying rose higher and higher. "Wilt thou be silent! *Uplà, Mademoiselle Adrienne! Ah, les femmes, les femmes! Toujours bavardes! La-a-a-à Mademoiselle Adrienne!*"

This was the usual style of conversation between the two. Père Jacques presented lumps of sugar, which were gratefully crunched and acknowledged by a bray, or more properly a series of brays in crescendo, such as no other donkey in France or Navarre could send forth; while the performance lasted Père Jacques kept up a running fire of remonstrance:

"*Voyons, Mademoiselle Adrienne! Sapristi. Wilt thou be still? A-t-on jamais vu! Saperlotte, veux-tu-en fini-i-i-i-ir!*"

It was an old novelty in the quarter, yet it never lost its savour; as soon as Père Jacques and his cart, full of oranges or cauliflowers as the case might be, were seen or heard at the other end of the street, the gamins left off marbles and pitch-and-toss to bully and chaff the charioteer, and greet his *idée* with a jocular "Bonjour, Mademoiselle

Adrienne!" while tradespeople looked up from weights and measures and laughed as the pair went by.

When provisions began to run short during the Blocus, Père Jacques grew uneasy, not for himself but for Mademoiselle Adrienne. Hard-hearted cynics advised him to fatten her up for the market; ass-flesh was delicate and rarer than horse-flesh, and fetched six francs a pound; it was no small matter to turn six francs in those famine times, when there were no apples, nor cauliflowers, nor ought else to trundle. Mademoiselle Adrienne was a burden now instead of a help to her master; the little cart stood in a corner; it was breaking his heart to see her growing thin for want of rations, and to watch her spirits drooping for lack of exercise and lumps of sugar. For more than a fortnight Père Jacques deprived himself of a morsel of the favourite dainty, and doled out his last demi-kilog to her with miserly economy, hoping always that the gates would be opened before she came to the last lump.

“Come, my daughter!” Père Jacques would say, as she munched a bit half the usual size of the now precious dainty, “cheer up, *ma bourriquette!* Be reasonable, Mademoiselle Adrienne, be reasonable, and bear thy trials like an ass, patiently and bravely; not like a man, grumbling and desponding. *Saperlotte, Mademoiselle Adrienne!* If it were not for thee I should be out on the ramparts, and send those rascals to the right-about myself. The cold-blooded ruffians! They are not content with killing and starving our soldiers and citizens, but they must rob thee of thy bit of sugar, my pretty one! *Mille tonnerres!* If I had their necks under my arm for but the twinkling of an eye!”

Entering into the feelings of her master, Mademoiselle Adrienne would bellow forth an agonized bray; and thus comforting one another, the pair bore on through those days. But by-and-by came the days of eating mice and rats, and bread that any respectable dog would have turned up his nose at a mouth



ago. Père Jacques shook in his wooden shoes. He dared not show himself abroad with Mademoiselle Adrienne, and not only that, but he lived in chronic terror of a raid being made on her at home. The mischievous urchins who had amused themselves at the expense of his paternal feelings in days of comparative plenty, gave him no rest now that the wolf was at the door. Requisitions were being made in private houses to see that no stores were hoarded up while the people outside were famishing. One rich family, who had prudently bought a couple of cows at the beginning of the Blocus, after vainly endeavouring to keep the fact a secret, and surrounding the precious beasts with as much care and mystery as ever Egyptian worshippers bestowed on the sacred Isis, were forced to give them up to the commonwealth. This incident made a great sensation in the quarter. Père Jacques was among the first to hear of it, and the *gamins* improved the opportunity by informing him that the Republic had issued a decree whereby every ass


in the city was to be seized next day, every one that could speak, they added facetiously, and there was to be a general slaughter of them—a *massacredes innocents*, the little brutes called it, at the shambles of the Rue Valois. The fact of the Rue Valois being chosen was a small mercy for which they bid Père Jacques be duly thankful; as it was close at hand he might accompany Mademoiselle Adrienne to the scene of execution, give her a parting embrace, and hear her last bray of adieu.

At this cynical climax, Père Jacques leaped from his stool, and seizing his stick, set to vigorously laying about the heads and backs of his torturers, who took to their heels, yelling like frightened guinea-pigs, while Mademoiselle Adrienne, ruminating in a corner, opened a volley of indignant brays on the fugitives.

All that night Père Jacques lay awake in terror. Every whistle of the wind, every creak in the door, every stir and sound set his heart thumping violently against his ribs; every moment he was expecting the

dreaded domiciliary visit. What was he to do? Where could he hide? How could he cheat the brigands, and save Mademoiselle Adrienne? The night wore out, and the dawn broke, and the raid was still unaccomplished. As soon as it was light Père Jacques rose and dressed himself, and sat down on his three-legged stool beside Mademoiselle Adrienne to ponder. Since her life had been in jeopardy he had removed her from her out-house in the court to his own den on the ground-floor close by.

“What dost thou advise, Mademoiselle Adrienne?” murmured the distraught old man, soliloquising aloud. He would often apostrophize his *idée* half unconsciously in this way when exercised painfully on any matter. Suddenly a bright idea struck him. He would go to Mère Richard. Mère Richard lived in a neighbouring court surrounded by a numerous family of birds of many species—canaries, bullfinches, and linnets. She had often proposed to Père Jacques to adopt a little songster by way of cheering his



lonely hours, and had once offered him a young German canary of her own bringing up.

“It’s as good as a baby for tricks,” she declared, “and nothing so dear to keep.”

But Père Jacques had gratefully declined. He would not be allured from his allegiance to Mademoiselle Adrienne. “She is company enough for me,” he said, “and it might hurt her feelings if I took up with a bird now ; thanks to you, all the same, Mère Richard.”

To-day, as he neared the house, he looked in vain for the red and green cages that used to hang in the sunshine on either side of Mère Richard’s windows. The birds were gone. Where ? Père Jacques’ prophetic soul answered with a thrill of horror. With a heavy heart and faltering step he mounted the dark little stair, that was wont to be made merry by the sound of chirping from the tidy room *au troisième*. He did not dare to ask any questions ; but, casting his eyes round the room, he beheld the empty cages ranged in a row behind the door. They told their own tale.

But Mère Richard had a donkey. This was the bond between her and Père Jacques. There was no comparison to be tolerated for a moment between hers and his : still it was a bond ; and now their positions were identical, they were both in danger of death. Mère Richard was a woman wise in her generation, she could help him in his difficulty perhaps ; or, if not, she would at any rate sympathize with him. To his great surprise, Mère Richard had heard nothing of the threatened raid on donkeys ; he broke the news to her as delicately as he could, but she listened smilingly incredulous. Père Jacques was forced to enter into details and explain to her exactly how the case stood. When at last she took it in, instead of breaking into tears and lamentations, the old woman burst into a chuckling laugh.

“ *Pas possible !* Bouriquette good to be eaten, and the Republic wanting to buy her, and pay me six francs a pound for her ! *Mon ami*, such news is too good to be true ;” This was the wicked old harpagon’s comment.

Père Jacques could not contain his indignation. He vowed that, for his own part, rather than let Mademoiselle Adrienne fall into the hands of the cannibals, he would destroy her with his own hand ; he would kill any man in the Republic, from Trochu to Gambetta, who dared to lay a finger on her ; ay, that he would, if he were to swing for it the next hour !

“Père Jacques, you are a fool,” observed Mère Richard, helping herself to a pinch of snuff ; “you put me in mind of a story my good man used to tell of two friends of his that he met on their way to be hanged : one of them was taking it easy, and walked on quietly, holding his peace ; but the other did not like it at all, and kept howling and whimpering and making a row. At last his comrade lost patience, and turning round on him, he cried, ‘*Eh ! grand bêtât, si tu n’en veux pas, n’en dégoute pas les autres !*’” Mère Richard nodded, and took another pinch.

Père Jacques saw the point of the story, and taking the hint, stood up to go.

As he was leaving the room he looked back.

“What did you do with the birds?” he demanded, sternly.

“Sold four of ’em for three francs a-piece,” was the old woman’s reply in a tone of triumph, “and cooked the rest and ate ’em, and uncommonly good they were.”

“Monster!” groaned Père Jacques, and clenching his fist at her, he hurried down the stairs.

All that day he and Mademoiselle Adrienne stayed at home with their door and window bolted and barred; but night came, and the domiciliary visit was still a threat. Next day, however, the little door stood open as usual, and Père Jacques was to be seen hammering away at the dilapidated legs of a table that he was mending for a neighbour at the rate of twenty-five centimes a leg; but Mademoiselle Adrienne was not there. Had Père Jacques put an end to his agony by killing her as he had threatened, and so rescued her from the ignoble fate of the

shambles? or, had he, daunted by the phantom, Hunger, that now stared at him with its pale spectral eyes from the near background, yielded to the old man's love of life, and sold his friend to prolong it, and escape from a ghastly death himself? Most people believed the latter conjecture, but nobody knew for certain.

When Mademoiselle Adrienne's name was mentioned, Père Jacques would frown, and show unmistakable signs of displeasure. If the subject was pressed, he would seize his stick, and, making a *moulinet* over his head with it, prepare an expletive which the boldest never waited to receive.

One day he was overheard crying bitterly in his now solitary home, and muttering to himself between the sobs, "*Ma pauvre fille! Mademoiselle Adrienne! Je te suivrai bientôt. Ah, les scélérats, les brigands, les monstres!*" This was held to be conclusive. The monsters could only be the Shylocks of the shambles who had tempted him with blood-money for Mademoiselle Adrienne.



Curiosity being thus far appeased, people ceased to worry Père Jacques—the lonely old man became an object of pity to every body, even to the *gamins*; when they met him now they touched their caps, with, “*Bon-jour, Père Jacques !*” and spared him the jeer which had been their customary salutation of late: “*Mademoiselle Adrienne à la casserole ! Bon appétit, Père Jacques !*”

The days wore on, and the weeks, and the months. Paris, wan, and pale, and hunger-stricken, still held out. Winter came, and threw its icy pall over the city, “hiding her guilty front” under innocent snow. The nights were long and cold; the dawn was bleak and desolate; the tepid noon brought no warmth to the perishing fire-girt multitudes. No sign of succour came to them from without. In vain they watched and waited, persecuting time with hope. The cannon kept up its booming sob through the black silence of the night; through the white stillness of the day. Hunger gnawed into their vitals, till at last even hope,

weary with disappointment, sickened and died.

One morning the neighbours noticed Père Jacques' door and window closed long after the hour when he was wont to be up and busy. They knocked, and getting no answer, turned the handle of the door; it opened at once, being neither barred nor locked, only closed as if the master were within; but he was not: the little room was tenantless; the mattress and the scanty bed-clothes were gone; the iron bedstead, a table, a stool, and two cane chairs were the only sticks of furniture that remained; the shelves were bare of the bright pewter tankards and platters that used to adorn them; the gilt clock with its figure of Pegasus bestrid by a grenadier, which had been the glory of the mantelpiece, had disappeared.

What did it all mean? Had the enemy made a raid on Père Jacques and his property during the night, and carried away the lot in a balloon? Great was the consternation, and greater still the gossip of the little

community, when the mysterious event became known in the *quartier*. What had become of Père Jacques? Had he been kidnaped, or had he been murdered, or had he taken flight of his own accord, and whither, and why?

Nothing transpired to throw any light on the mystery; the gossips, tired of guessing, soon ceased to think about it, and like many another nine-days' wonder, Père Jacques' disappearance died a natural death.

A day came at last when the mitrailleuse hushed its hideous shriek, the cannon left off booming, the wild beasts of war were silent. Paris cried *Merci!* and the gates were opened. The city, like a sick man, healed of a palsy, rose up and shook herself, and rubbed her eyes, and ate plentifully after her long fast. Many came back from the outposts who had been wept over as dead. There were strange meetings in many ways during those first days after the capitulation. But no one brought any news of Père Jacques. No one thought of him. There were too

many interests, nearer and dearer, to think of, and, in the universal excitement of shame and vengeance and rare flashes of joy, he and Mademoiselle Adrienne were forgotten as if they had never been.

But when, on the day of my return to Paris, my conversation with my concierge was interrupted by the cheering of the crowd in the Rue Billault, and when the cause of the hubbub was made known, the fact that both Père Jacques and his *idée* were well remembered—and, as the newspapers put it, universally esteemed by a large circle of friends and admirers—was most emphatically attested. Nothing could, indeed, be more gratifying than the manner in which their resurrection was received. The pair looked very much the worse for their sojourn in the other world, wherever it was, to which they had migrated.

Mademoiselle Adrienne's appearance was most affecting. She was worn to skin and bone: certainly, if, in her present condition, Père Jacques had sacrificed his *idée* to his

life, and taken her to the shambles, she would not have fetched over ten francs, or a good brace of rats from the butchers of the Rue Valois. She dragged her legs, and shook and stumbled as if the weight of her attenuated person were too much for them. Even her old enemies, the *gamins*, were moved to pity; while Père Jacques, laughing and crying, and apostrophising Mademoiselle Adrienne in the old familiar way, cheered her on to their old home. How she ever got there is as great a marvel as how she had lived to be led there to-day, for what between physical exhaustion and mental anxiety, and what between the well-meant but injudicious attentions of sundry little boys who kept stuffing bits of straw and lumps of sugar into her mouth all the way, it is little short of a miracle that she did not choke, and give up the ghost on the macadam of the Rue Billault.

Many an ass has been lionized before, and many a one will be again no doubt; it is a common enough sight in these days; but

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never did, or will, or could hero or heroine of the tribe bear themselves more becomingly on the trying occasion than did Mademoiselle Adrienne. As to Père Jacques, he bore himself as well as he could, striving hard to look dignified and unconscious, while in his inmost heart he was bursting with pride. A facetious spectator observed, as he and Mademoiselle Adrienne ambled on side by side, "that Père Jacques looked quite beside himself." And truly this was a great day for him and his ass. Yet notwithstanding that his heart was moved within him, and softened towards all men—nay, towards all boys—he could not be induced to say a word as to where he had been, or what he had done, or how he and Mademoiselle Adrienne had fared in the wilderness, or what manner of wilderness it was, or anything which could give a clue to their existence since they had disappeared separately from the horizon of the Rue Billault. Provisions were too dear during the first fortnight after the capitulation to allow of Père Jacques resuming his

old trade in apples and cauliflowers at once; besides Mademoiselle Adrienne wanted rest.

“*Pauvre chérie! Il faut qu'elle se remette un peu de la vache enragée!*” he remarked tenderly, when his friends condoled with him on her forced inactivity. He would not hear of hiring her out for work, as some of them had proposed. Mère Richard came and offered a fabulous price for the loan of her for three days, with the view to a stroke of business at the railway station, where food was pouring in from London; but Père Jacques shook his fists at the carnivorous old hag, and warned her never to show her unnatural face in his house again, or it might be worse for her.

FINIS.

## NUMBER THIRTEEN.

AN EPISODE OF TWO SIEGES.

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MADemoiselle DE LUNAQUE and her sister, Madame de Chanoir, lived at No. 13, Rue Royale. They were the daughters of a military man, whose whole fortune when he married, consisted in his sword, and of a noble Demoiselle de Cambette, whose wedding portion, in accordance with the good old French custom, was precisely the same as her husband's, minus the sword. Over and above this joint capital, the young people had a good stock of hope and courage, and an inexhaustible fund of love, consequently they had as fair a chance of getting on in life as any other young folk who embark on the journey to fortune furnished with the same light impedimenta.



Monsieur de Lunaque, moreover, had friends in high place, who had promised him countenance and protection. There was no reason therefore, that he and his wife could see, why he should not in due time clutch that legendary bâton which Napoleon declared every French soldier carried in his knapsack. Nor, indeed, considering things from a retrospective point of view, was there any reason that we can see why he should not have died a Marshal of France, except that he died too soon. The young soldier was in a fair way of climbing to the topmost rung of the military ladder, but just as he had got his foot on the third rung, death stepped down and met him, and he climbed no more.

His wife followed him to the grave three years later.

They left two little girls, Félicité and Aline, the only fruit of their short and happy union. The orphans were educated at the Legion of Honour, and then sent adrift on the wide, wide world to battle with its winds

and waves—to sink or swim as best they could. They swam. Perhaps we ought rather to say they floated. The eldest, Félicité, was married from St. Denis to an old General, who, after a remarkably short time, had the delicacy to betake himself to a better world, leaving his young widow at the head of an income of about forty pounds a year. Aline might have married under similar circumstances, but having turned it over in her mind she came to the conclusion that since there was only a choice of evils, and that she was condemned to earn her bread in some way, she preferred, on the whole, earning and eating it independently as a single woman. This decision of hers gave rise to the only quarrel the sisters had yet known in their lives. Félicité resented the disgrace Aline was going to inflict on the family name by degenerating into a *coureuse de cachet*, when she might have secured forty pounds a year for ever by a few years' dutiful devotion to a brave man who had fought his country's battles.

“ Well, if you can find me a nice little old

warrior of ninety," said the younger sister on her eighteenth birthday, which occurred a month before she left St. Denis, "I'm not sure that he might not persuade me; but I never will capitulate under ninety. No man is to be trusted below that. They live for ever when they marry between sixty and eighty, and there are no tyrants like them. Now, I could stand a year or two of dutiful devotion, as you call it, but I've no notion of taking a situation as *garde-malade* for fifteen or twenty years, and that's what one gets by marrying a youngster of seventy or thereabouts."

Félicité urged her own case as a proof to the contrary. General de Chanoir was only sixty-eight when she married him, and he retired at seventy; but Aline maintained that this was the one exception necessary to prove the rule to the present generation, and as no eligible *parti* of fourscore and ten presented itself before she left school, she held to her resolve, and started at once as a *coureuse de cachet*.

The sisters took an appartement together—if two rooms, and a cabinet de toilette, and a cooking-range in a dark passage dignified by the name of kitchen, can be called an appartement—at 13, Rue Royale.

Madame de Chanoir was small and fair, and very distinguished looking. She had never known a day's illness in her life, but she was a hypochondriac, and believed herself afflicted with a spine disease which necessitated reclining all day long on the sofa, in a Louis XV. dressing-gown and a Dubarry cap.

Aline was tall and dark, not exactly pretty, but indescribably piquante. Without being delicate, her health was far less robust than her sister's; but she was blessed with indomitable spirits and a fund of energy that carried her through a variety of aches and pains, and often bore her successfully through her round of daily work, when another would have given in. The domestic establishment of the sisters consisted in a femme de ménage who rejoiced in the name of Madame

Cléry. She was a type of a class now almost extinct in Paris. A dainty little cook, clean as a sixpence, honest as the sun, orderly as a clock, a capital servant in every way; she came twice a day to No. 13, two hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon, and the sisters paid her twenty francs a month; she might have struck for more wages, and rather than let her go they would have managed somehow to raise them; but Madame Cléry was born before strikes came into fashion; it was quite impossible to say how long before; her age was incalculable; her youth belonged to that class of facts spoken of as beyond the memory of the oldest man in the district. Aline used to look at her sometimes and wonder if she could really ever have been born, and if she meant to die like other people; the crisp, wiry, old woman looked the sort of person never to have either a beginning or an end. They had had her now for eight years—at least Madame de Chanoir had—and there was not the shadow of change in her. Her gowns were like herself, they

never wore out. Neither did her caps, high Normandy caps, with flaps extended like a windmill in repose, stiff, white, and uncompromising. Everything about her was antiquated. She had a religious regard for antiquity in every shape, and a proportionate contempt for modernism; but of all earthly things, what her soul loved best was an old name, and what it most despised a new one. She used to say that if she chose to cook the *rôtis* of a parvenu she might make double the money, and it was true; but she could not bend her spirit to it: she liked dry bread and herbs better from *des gens de bonne maison*, than a stalled ox from *des gens d'hier*. She was as faithful as a dog to her two mistresses, and consequently lorded it over them like a stepmother, perpetually bullying and scolding, and bewailing her own infatuation in staying with them while she might be turning a fatter poulet on her own spit at home than the miserable *coquille* at No. 13 ever held a fire to. Why had she not the sense to take the ménage

that Monsieur X——, the agent de change across the street had offered her again and again!

The femme de ménage was, in fact, as odious and exasperating as the most devoted old servant who ever nursed a family from the cradle to the grave. But let any one else dare so much as cast a disrespectful glance at either of her victims! She shook her fist at the concierge's wife one day for venturing to call Madame de Chanoir, Madame de Chanoir *tout court*, instead of Madame la Générale de Chanoir, to a flunkey who came with a note; and she boxed the concierge's ears for speaking of Aline as "l'Institutrice." As Madame la Générale's sofa was drawn across the window that looked into the court, she happened to be an eye-witness to the two incidents, and heard every word that was said; and this accidental disclosure of Madame Cléry's regard for the family dignity before outsiders covered a multitude of sins in the eyes of both the sisters. Indeed, Madame de Chanoir came at last, by force of

habit, almost to enjoy being bullied by the old soul.

“ *Cela nous pose, ma chère,*” she would remark complacently, when the wind from the kitchen blew due north, and Aline threatened to mutiny.

Aline never could have endured it if she had been as constantly tried as her easy-going sister was ; but, luckily for all parties, she went out immediately after breakfast, and seldom came in till late in the afternoon, when the old woman was busy getting ready the dinner.

It was a monotonous life they led, the two young women ; but on the whole it was a happy one. Madame de Chanoir, seeing how bravely her sister carried the burthen she had taken up, grew reconciled to it in time. They had a pleasant little society too ; friends who had known them from their childhood, some rich and in good positions, others struggling like themselves in a narrow cage, and under difficult circumstances ; but one and all liked and respected the sisters, and



brought a little contingent of sunshine to their lives. As to Aline, she had sunshine enough in herself to light up the whole Rue Royale. Every lesson she gave, every incident of the day, no matter how trivial, fell across her path like a sunbeam; she had a knack of looking at things from a sunny focus that shot out rays on every object that came within its radius, and of extracting amusement and interest from the most commonplace things and people; even her own vexations she turned into fun. Her position of governess was a fountain of fun to her. When another would have drawn gall from a snub, and smarted and been miserable under a slight, Aline de Lunaque saw a comic side to the circumstance, and would dress it up in a fashion that diverted herself and her friends for a week. Moreover, the young lady was something of a philosopher.

“You never find out human nature till you come to earn your bread—I mean women don’t,” she would say sometimes to Madame de Chanoir. “If I were the mother of a

family of daughters and wanted to teach them life, I'd make every one of them, no matter how big their *dots* were, begin by running after the cachet ; nobody who hasn't tried it would believe what a Castle of Truth it is to one, a mirror that shows up character to the life, a sort of moral photography. It is often as good as a play to me to watch the change that comes over people when, after talking to them and making myself pass for a very agreeable person, I suddenly announce the fact that I give lessons. Their whole countenance changes ; not that they look on me straightway with contempt, oh, dear no ! Some good Christians, those of the *aide-toi-et-Dieu-t'aidera* sect, conceive on the contrary a great respect for me ; but I become metamorphosed on the spot—I am not what they took me for ; they took me for a *femme du monde*, a *femme comme tout le monde*, and I was all the time a governess ! Without blaming me they cannot but feel they have been taken in, that I am an altogether different variety from themselves, and that it

is very odd they did not recognize the fact at first sight. But these are the least exciting experiences. The real fun is when I get hold of an out-and-out worldly individual, man or woman, but a woman is best, and let them go on till they have thoroughly committed themselves, made themselves gushingly agreeable to me, perhaps gone the length of asking me in a significant manner whether I live in their neighbourhood; then comes the crisis. I smile my blandest, and say: ‘*Monsieur, or Madame, je donne des leçons!*’ *Changement de décoration à vue d’œil, ma chère.* It’s just as if I *lancéd* an obus into the middle of the company, only it rebounds on me and hits nobody else; the eye-brows of the company go up, the corners of its mouth go down, and it bows to me as I sit in the ruins of my respectability, shattered to pieces by my own obus.”

“I cannot understand how you can laugh at it; in your place I should have died of vexation and mortified pride long ago,” said Madame de Chanoir one day, as Aline related

in high glee an obus episode that she had had that morning; "but I really believe you have no feeling."

"Well, whatever I have, I keep it out of the reach of vulgar impertinence; I should be very sorry to make my feelings a target for insolence and bad breeding," replied Aline pertly.

This was the simple truth. Her feelings were out of the reach of such petty shafts, they were cased in cheerfulness and common-sense, and a nobler sort of pride than that in which Madame de Chanoir considered her wanting. If, however, the obus was often fatal to Mademoiselle de Lunaque's social standing, on the other hand it occasionally did her good service. But of this later. Its present character was that of an explosive bomb which she carried in her pocket and *lancéd* with infinite gusto on every available opportunity.

On Saturday evenings the sisters were "at home." These little soirées were the event of their quiet lives. All the episodes

and anecdotes of the week were treasured up for that evening, when the intimates came to see them, and converse, and sip a glass of cold *eau sucrée* in summer, and a cup of hot ditto in winter (but then it was called *thé*), by the light of a small lamp with a green abat-jour. There was no attempt at entertainment or finery of any sort, except that Madame Cléry, instead of going home when her dinner things were washed up, stayed to open the door. It was a remnant of the kind of society that used to exist in French families some thirty years ago, when conversation was cultivated as the primary accomplishment of men and women, and when they met regularly to exercise themselves in the difficult and delightful art. It was not reserved exclusively to the well born and wealthy to talk charmingly and cleverly in those days when the most coveted encomium that could be passed on any one was, "il cause bien;" all educated classes vied for it; every circle had its centre of *causerie*, the modest *fauteuil de l'aieule* and the brilliant salon of

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the *femme d'esprit*—each had its audience, attended as assiduously, and perhaps enjoyed as keenly as the Ambigus and Vaudeville, that have since drawn the bourgeois away from the one, and the man of fashion from the other. Besides its usual habitués, each circle had one habitué who took precedence of all the others, and was called the *ami de la maison*. The *ami de la maison* at No. 13, was a certain professor of the Sorbonne, named Monsieur Dalibouze. He was somewhere on the sunny side of fifty, a bald, pompous little man, who wore spectacles, took snuff, and laid down the law, very prosy and very estimable, the type and pink of a professor. M. Dalibouze had never married, but it was the dream of his life to marry; he had meditated on marriage for the last thirty years, and of course knew a vast deal more about it than any man who had been married double that time. He was never so prosy or so emphatic as when expounding the duties and joys of domestic life; no matter how tired he was after a long day's scientific

research, how disappointed by the failure of some pet scientific scheme, the moment marriage came on the tapis, he cheered up and was as bright as a cricket. This hobby of the professor's was a great amusement to Madame de Chanoir, who delighted to see him jump into the saddle and ride off at a canter while she lay languidly pulling at her canvass, patting him on the back every now and then by a smile of approval or an encouraging word. Sometimes she would take him to task seriously about putting his theories into practice and getting himself a wife, assuring him that it was quite wicked not to marry when he possessed all the qualities necessary to make a model husband.

“Oh, madame, if I thought I was capable of making *le bonheur d'une jeune femme!*” M. Dalibouze would exclaim, with a sigh; “but at my age!”

“Comment, monsieur, at your age!” the Générale would protest; “why, it is the very flower of manhood, the moment of all others for a man to marry; you have outlived the

delusions of youth, but none of its charms ; you have crossed the rubicon that separates folly from wisdom, and you have left nothing on the other side but the silly chimera of boyhood. Believe me, the woman whom you would select would never wish to see you a day older." And M. Dalibouze would caress his chin, and observe thoughtfully, "Vous croyez, madame ?"

Aline had no sympathy with his rhapsodies or his jérémiades—they bored her to extinction, and it was sometimes all she could do not to tell him so ; but she disapproved of his being made a joke of, and testified against it stoutly, when Félicité in a spirit of mischief led him up to some more than usually ridiculous culmination. It was not fair, she said, to make a greater fool of the good little man than he made of himself, and instead of encouraging him to talk such nonsense one ought to laugh him out of it, and try to cure him of his conceit.

"I don't see it at all in that light," Madame de Chanoir would argue ; "in the



first place, if I laughed at him, or rather, if I let him see that I did, he would never forgive me, and as I have a great regard for him I should be sorry to lose his friendship; in the next place, it's very amusing to see him swallow my little doses of flattery so complacently, and as nothing I, or anybody else, could say could possibly add one grain to his self-conceit, I have no scruple about its doing him any harm."

It was partly by way of protesting against this system of flattery that Aline periodically snubbed the professor, and partly because she had reason to suspect his dreams of married bliss centred upon herself; in fact, she knew they did. He had never told her so outright, for the simple reason that whenever he approached that crisis, Aline cut him short in such a peremptory way, that it cowed him for weeks; but she knew in her heart of hearts that she reigned supreme over M. Dalibouze's. She would not have married him, no, not if he could have crowned her Queen of the Sorbonne and the Collège de

France, but the fact of his being her slave, and aspiring to be her master constituted a claim on her regard which a true-hearted woman seldom disowns. Félicité would have favoured his suit if she thought there had been the ghost of a chance for him, but she suspected there was not.

Madame Cléry looked coldly on it. Needless to say, neither M. Dalibouze nor his relentless lady love, had ever made a confidant of the femme de ménage; but she often remarked to her mistresses when either of them ventured an opinion connected with her special department: "*Je ne suis pas née d'hier,*" an assertion which, strange to say, even the rebellious Aline had never attempted to gainsay. Madame Cléry was not, indeed, born yesterday; moreover, she was a Frenchwoman, and a particularly wide-awake one; and from the first evening that she saw Aline sugaring M. Dalibouze's tea, dropping in lump after lump in that reckless way, while the little man held his cup, and beamed at her through his spectacles as if he meant to

stand there for ever, simpering: "*Merci ! encore !*" it occurred to Madame Cléry that there was more in it than tea-making. Of course it was natural and proper that a young woman, especially an orphan, should think of getting married, but it was right and proper that her friends should think of it too, and see that she married the proper person. Now, on the face of it, it was very doubtful that M. Dalibouze could be the proper person. Madame Cléry waited, however, till the suspicion that he had settled it in his own mind that he was that man, took the shape of a conviction in her before she considered it her duty to interfere. By interfering, Madame Cléry understood going *aux renseignements*. Nobody ever got true *renseignements* when a marriage was in question, except people like her. Ladies and gentlemen never get behind the scenes with each other, or if they do, they never tell what they see there; they are very sweet and smiling when they meet in the salon, and nobody guesses that madame has been rating her *femme-de-*

chambre for not putting the flowers in her hair exactly to her fancy, or that monsieur has just flung the boot-jack at his valet for bringing him his shaving water too hot or too cold. If you want the true renseignements you must get them by the back stairs. This was Madame Cléry's opinion ; and acting on it, she set off one morning to the Rue Jean Beauvais, where M. Dalibouze lived, with a view to taking up his character from the concierge.

The first thing to be ascertained before entering on such secondary details as temper, conduct, etc., was whether or not the professor was of sufficiently *bonne maison* to be entertained at all as a prétendant for Mademoiselle de Lunaque. On this *sine qua non* point, the concierge could unfortunately throw no light. His locataire had a multitude of friends, all *gens comme-il-faut*, many of them *décorés*, who drove up to the door in their own coupés, but of his family Pipelet knew nothing. Of his personal respectability there could be no doubt whatever

he was the kindest of men, the pearl of locataires, always in before midnight, and gave forty francs to Pipelet on New Year's Day, not to speak of sundry other bonuses on minor fêtes through the year. But so long as her mind was in the dark on the main point, all this was no better than sounding brass in the ears of Madame Cléry.

"Has he, or has he not the *particule*?" she demanded, cutting short Pipelet in the midst of his panegyric.

"The *particule*?" repeated Pipelet. "The *particule nobiliaire*," explained Madame Cléry, with a touch of contempt; "there's some question of a marriage between him and a lady whom I know, but if M. Dalibouze hasn't got the *particule* it cannot be thought of."

"Madame," said Pipelet, assuming a confidential tone, and unwilling to own that he was quite at sea as to what this essential piece of property might be, "I'm not a man to betray any confidence that my locataires think fit to place in me; M. Dali-

bouze has more than once spoken to me of different *placements* he had made with his money; but, as I say, I am a discreet man, and I would rather not speak about those things. I could, however, give you the name of his *homme-d'affaires*, if I thought you would not compromise me."

"I'm not that woman to compromise anyone that showed me confidence," said Madame Cléry, bristling up, and bobbing her flaps at him; "but you need not give me the name of his *homme-d'affaires*; what sort of a figure should I make at his *homme-d'affaires*? Give me his own name. How does he spell it?"

"Spell it?" echoed Pipelet.

"A big *D*, or a little *d*?" said Madame Cléry.

"Why, a big *D*, of course! Who ever spelt their name with a little *d*!" sneered Pipelet.

"Ah!" Madame Cléry smiled a smile of serene pity on the benighted ignoramus, and then observed coldly: "I suspected it.

I'm not easy to deceive on those sort of things. I was not born yesterday. Good morning, Monsieur le Concierge!"

She moved towards the door.

"Stop!" cried Pipelet, seizing his berette, as if a light had suddenly shot through his skull. "Stop! now I think of it, it's a little *d*! I've not a doubt but it's a little *d*. I noticed it only yesterday on a letter that came for monsieur; and I said to myself, '*Tiens!* what a funny thing for an *homme distingué*, like M. le Professeur, to spell his name with a little *d*!' Là, if I did not say those very words to myself no later than yesterday!"

Madame Cléry was sceptical. She asked if there was no letter just then in Monsieur Dalibouze's box, that would have settled the question at once; unluckily there was not, so she had nothing for it but to go home, and turn it in her mind what was to be done next.

After all, it was a great responsibility she felt. The old soul considered herself in the light of a protector towards the two young

women—one a cripple on the broad of her back, the other a light-hearted creature who believed in everybody and everything; it was her place to look after them as far as she could.

That afternoon, when Madame Cléry went to No. 13 after her fruitless expedition to the Rue Jean Beauvais, she took up a letter to Madame de Chanoir. She had never seen, or at any rate never noticed, the writing before; but, as she handed the envelope to her mistress, it flashed upon her that it was from Monsieur Dalibouze, and that it bore on the subject of her recent peregrination. She seized a plumeau that hung by the fireplace, and began vigorously threatening the clock and the candlesticks as an excuse for staying in the room and observing Madame de Chanoir in the looking-glass while she read the letter. The *femme de ménage* was an irascible enemy to dust; they were accustomed to see her at inopportune times pounce on the plumeau and begin whipping about her to the right and left, so Madame de Chanoir took



no notice of this sudden castigation of the chimney-piece at four o'clock in the afternoon. She read her note, and then, tossing it into the basket beside her, resumed her tapestry as if nothing had occurred to divert her thoughts from roses and Berlin wool.

“Madame la Générale, pardon et excuses,” said Madame Cléry, deliberately hanging the plumeau on its nail, and going up to the foot of la Générale’s sofa; “I have it on my mind to ask something of madame.”

“Ask it, ma bonne.”

“Does Madame la Générale think of marrying Mamzelle Aline?”

Madame de Chanoir opened her eyes and stared for a moment in mild surprise at her femme de ménage; then a smile broke over her face, and she said reproachfully:

“You have been thinking that you would not like to go on living with me if I were alone.”

“I was not thinking of that, madame,” replied Madame Cléry, in a ceremonious tone that was unusual with her, and would have

boded no good—the femme de ménage was never so polite as when she was going to be particularly disagreeable — except that she looked at her rather affectionately, Félicité thought, as their eyes met.

“Well,” said Madame de Chanoir, “I suppose we must marry’ her some day; perhaps I ought to bestir myself about it more than I do; but there is time enough to think of it, and mademoiselle is in no hurry.”

“Dame!” said Madame Cléry, testily; “when a demoiselle has *coifféd* Sainte Catherine there’s not so much time to lose. Pardon et excuses, Madame la Générale, but, I don’t know why, I thought that letter might have something to do with it?”

“This letter! What could have put that into your head?”

Madame de Chanoir took up the note to see if there was anything on the envelope which warranted the romantic suspicion; but it bore no trace of anything more peculiar than the post-mark.

“As I have told Madame la Générale before, I was *not* born yesterday,” observed Madame Cléry, emphasizing the *not* as if Madame Chanoir had denied that fact, and challenged her to swear to it on the Bible; “and I don’t carry my eyes in my pocket, and when a demoiselle heaps lumps of sugar into a gentleman’s cup till it’s as thick as honey for the spoon to stand in, and a shame to see the substance of the family wasted in such a way, and she never grudging it a bit, but looking as if it would be fun to her to turn the sugar-bowl upside down over it; I say, when I see that sort of thing, I’m not femme Cléry if there isn’t something in it.”

Félicité was inclined to laugh; but she checked herself, and observed interrogatively:

“Well, Madame Cléry, suppose there is?”

This extravagance in sugar on the part of Monsieur Dalibouze was an old grievance of Madame Cléry’s. In fact, it had been her only one against the professor till she came to look upon him as the possible husband of Aline; and then the question of whether he had

or had not the particule assumed such alarming importance in her mind, that it magnified all minor defects, and she believed him capable of every misdemeanour under the sun.

“Madame la Générale,” she replied, “one does not marry every day; one ought to think seriously about it. Mamzelle Aline has no experience, she is *vive* and light-hearted; she is a person to be taken in by outward appearances; such things as learning, *esprit*, and good principles would blind her to serious shortcomings. It is the duty of Madame la Générale to prevent such a misfortune in time.”

“What shortcomings are you afraid of in Monsieur Dalibouze!” inquired Madame de Chanoir, dropping her canvass, and looking with awakened curiosity at the old woman.

“*Partons d'un principe*, Madame la Générale,” explained Madame Cléry, demurely, slapping the back of her left hand; “Mamzelle Aline is *née*, the father and mother of mamzelle were both of excellent *maison*, con-

sequently it is of the first necessity that her husband should be so too. The first thing, therefore, to be considered in a prétendant is his name. Now, has Monsieur Dalibouze the *particule*, or has he not?"

It was an effort for Madame de Chanoir to maintain her gravity under this *charge and deliver!* with which the old woman closed her speech, and then stood waiting the effect on her listener; still, such is the weakness of human nature, the Générale de Chanoir, *née* de Lunaque, was flattered by it. It was pleasant to be looked up to as belonging to a race above the common herd, to be recognized in spite of her poverty, even by a femme de ménage, as superior to the wealthy parvenus whose fathers and mothers were not *des gens d'excellente maison*.

"My good Madame Cléry," she said, after a moment's reflection, "you, like ourselves, were brought up with very different ideas from those that people hold now-a-days. Nobody cares a straw to-day who a man's father was, or whether he had the *particule*

or not ; all they care about is that he should be well educated, well conducted, and well off. *Autres temps, autres mœurs, ma bonne.* One must go with the times, and give in to the force of public opinion around one. I would, of course, much rather have a brother-in-law of our own *pâte* than one richer and cleverer who was not ; but, *que voulez-vous ?* One cannot have everything. It is not pleasant for me to see Mademoiselle de Lunaque earning her own bread, running about the streets by herself like a milliner's apprentice. I would overlook something to see her married to a kind, honourable man who could keep her in comfort and independence."

"*Bonté divine !*" exclaimed Madame Cléry, with a look of deep distress, and throwing up her hands in consternation ; "Madame would then actually marry mamzelle to a *bourgeois sans particule ?* For madame admits that M. Dalibouze has not the *particule* ; that he spells his name with a big *D ?*"

"Alas ! he does," confessed la Générale,

“but he comes, nevertheless, of a good old Normandy stock, Madame Cléry. His great-grandfather was procureur du roi under——”

“Tut, tut!” interrupted Madame Cléry. “His great-grandfather might have been anything he liked. If he wasn’t a gentilhomme he has no business marrying his great-grandson to a de Lunaque; *cette chose là n’est pas dans l’ordre*, Madame la Générale. Mamzelle’s father would turn in his grave if he saw her married to a man that spelt his name with a big *D*.”

The conversation, happily for Madame de Chanoir, was interrupted at this point by a ring at the door. It was Aline. She was earlier than usual, owing to one of her pupils not being able to take her lesson. The young girl was flushed and excited; she flung herself into a chair and burst into tears the moment she entered.

Madame de Chanoir sat up in alarm, and thinking her sister was seized with an abnormal hysterical weakness, suggested some fleur d’oranger in a glass of eau sucrée.

“Oh, it’s nothing! I am an idiot to let such impertinence vex me,” she said, brushing away the tears defiantly.

“What was it? Who was impertinent to mamzelle?” inquired Madame Cléry.

“A horrid man that followed me the length of the street, making impudent speeches all the way,” sobbed Aline.

“*Est il possible!*” exclaimed the old woman aghast, and clapping her hands together. “Well, mamzelle does astonish me! I thought young men knew better now-a-days than to be at those sort of tricks. Fifty years ago it was common enough. I remember how they used to persecute me every time I went out to church or to market, till I never knew which way to turn; but now, bless you! I come and go, and nobody makes free so much as to look at me. To think of their daring to speak to mamzelle!”

“That’s what one is subject to when one walks about alone at her age,” said the Générale, dryly, with a significant glance at Madame Cléry, which that good lady under-



stood, and resented by compressing her lips and bobbing her flaps, as much as to say : “ One has a principle, or one has not ! ” Principle being in this instance synonymous with *particule*.

After this incident things remained *in statu quo* for some years. Madame de Chanoir did not enlighten her sister on the subject of her conference with Madame Cléry, but she worked as far as she could in favour of the luckless suitor who spelt his name with a capital *D*. It was of no use, however. Alinè continued to snub him so pertinaciously that Madame de Chanoir at last gave up his cause as hopeless, and the professor himself, seeing this, his solitary stronghold, surrender, thought it best to raise the siege and make a friendly truce with the victor. He withdrew therefore frankly from the field of *prétendants* and took up his position as *ami de la maison*. Having once done this, he adopted the consequences ; he accepted the prerogatives and responsibilities of the place, and held himself on the *qui vive* to render any service in his

power to Madame de Chanoir; he kept her concierge in order, and brought bonbons and flowers to No. 13 on every possible occasion. He knew Aline was passionately fond of the latter, and he was careful to keep the jardinière that stood in the pier of the little salon freshly supplied with her favourite plants, and the vases filled with her favourite flowers. He never dared to offer her a present, but under cover of the Générale he kept her supplied with the most interesting books that came out. Finally, Frenchman-like, having abandoned the hope of marrying her himself, he set to work to find some more fortunate candidate. This was, par excellence, the duty of *l'ami de la maison*, and M. Dalibouze was fully alive to its importance. The zeal he displayed in the discharge of it would indeed have been comical but for the spirit of self-sacrifice that animated him and touched it with pathos. One by one every eligible *parti* in the range of his acquaintance was led up for inspection to No. 13.

Madame de Chanoir entered complacently

into the presentations; they amused her, and she tried to persuade herself that, sooner or later, something would come of them. But she knew Aline too well to let her into the secret of the Professor's matrimonial manoeuvres; the result would have been to furnish Mademoiselle de Lunaque with an *obus* opportunity, nothing more.

But do what she would, the Générale could never cheat Madame Cléry. The old woman *flairéd a prétendant* as a cat does a mouse—it was an instinct, there was no putting her off the scent. She never said a word to Madame de Chanoir, but she had a most aggravating way of making her understand tacitly that she knew all about it, that in fact she was not born yesterday. This was her system: when ever Monsieur Dalibouze brought a *parti* to tea in the evening, Madame Cléry was seized next day with a violent dusting fit; and when the Générale testified against the feathers that kept flying in her face out of the plumeau, Madame Cléry would observe significantly,

drawing in her lips : “ Madame la Générale, that makes an impression when one sees a salon well *épousté*, that proves that the demoiselle of the house has order, that she looks after the ménage; Madame does not think of those things, but strangers do.”

It became at last a sort of cabalistic ceremonial with the old woman, intelligible only to herself and Madame de Chanoir. If Aline came in when the fit was on her, and ventured to expostulate, and ask what she was doing with the plumeau at that time of day, Madame Cléry would reply sententiously, “ *Mademoiselle Aline, j’épouste.*”

Aline at length came to believe it was a modified phase of St. Vitus’s dance, and that the old beldame, always possessed by her *idée fixe*, vented her nerves on imaginary dust, pursuing it into holes and corners with her feathery weapon.

This went on till Mademoiselle de Lunaque was six-and-twenty. She was still a bright, brave creature, working hard, and accepting the privations of her life of toil in a spirit of

sunshiny courage. But the sun was no longer always shining. There were days now when he drew behind a cloud and hid himself, when toil pressed like a burthen, and she beat her wings and hated the cage that cooped her in, and longed not so much for rest or happiness as for freedom, for larger space, for wider aims, for fuller sympathies. When these cloudy days came round, Aline felt the void and thralldom of her life with an intensity that amounted at times to anguish. She felt it all the more keenly that she could not speak of it. The sisters were sincerely attached to each other, but there was little sympathy of character between them. On many points they were as utter strangers to each other as the tenants in the next house. They knew this, and sensibly agreed to keep clear of certain subjects on which they could never meet except to disagree. The younger sister, therefore, when the sky was overcast, and when her spirits flagged, never tried to lean upon the elder, but worked against the

enemy in silence, denying herself the luxury of complaint.

If her looks betrayed her, as they sometimes would, and prompted Madame de Chanoir to inquire if there were anything more amiss with her than the dulness of life in general, Aline's quiet assurance that there was not, was invariably met by the rejoinder, "My sister, I wish you were married." Which Aline as invariably answered with, "I am happier as I am, Félicité." It was true—or at any rate Mademoiselle de Lunaque thought it was. Under her surface indifference she carried a woman's heart. She had dreamt her dream of woman's Paradise, of ideal sympathy, of tender fireside joys, and the dream was so fair and sweet that it filled her life like a reality through the years of her blooming spring-time. But the spring passed, and the summer came, and with its ripening flowers it brought stronger lights, maturer thoughts, a more practical knowledge of human beings, and Aline discovered, or

fancied she did, that the dream was too beautiful to be ever anything but a dream. She accepted the discovery with a pang, but without idle repining, and laid aside all thought of marriage as a "quest that was not for" her. As to the marriages that she saw made around her every day, she would no more have bound herself in one of their ignoble bonds than she would have sold herself to an eastern pacha. Marriage was an altogether different thing in her eyes from what it was in Madame de Chanoir's. On no point were the sisters more asunder than on this, and Aline understood it so well that she carefully avoided touching on it. When the subject was introduced by others she put on a mask of frivolity to hide her real feelings, and avoid bringing down Félicité's ridicule on what she would stigmatize as preposterous sentimentality.

Monsieur Dalibouze alone guessed something of this substratum of deep feeling that underlay the surface of the young girl's character. With the subtle instinct of affec-

tion he penetrated the disguise in which she wrapped herself; and with a delicacy that she scarcely gave him credit for, he never let her see that he did. Sometimes, indeed, when one of those fits of *tristesse* was upon her, and she strove to dissemble it by increased cheerfulness towards everybody, and sauciness towards him, the Professor would adapt the conversation to the tone of her thoughts with a skill and apropos that surprised her. Once, in particular, Aline was startled by the way in which he betrayed either a singularly close observation of her mind, or a still more singular sympathy with its moods and sufferings. It was on a Saturday evening; the little circle was gathered round the fire, and the conversation fell upon poetry and the mission of poets amongst common men. Aline declared it was the grandest of all missions; that no missionary, whether prophet, philosopher, artist, or soldier, did so much for the happiness and spiritual redemption of his fellows as the poet, that in fact he combined all ministries



if he wished ; if he was a patriot he could serve his country better than the bravest soldier, he could fire the souls of her sons by singing her wrongs, her hopes, and her glories, and make all mankind vibrate to the touch of his inspired hand in pain, in joy, in noble, emancipating revenge. She quoted Moore and Krazinski, Arndt, and other patriotic bards, who, living, had ruled their people, and sent down their names a legacy of glory to unborn generations, till, by degrees, warming with her subject, she grew quite eloquent, and broke off in a passionate cry of admiration and envy :—

“ Oh what a glorious thing to be a poet ! To be even a man with power of action, of living a noble life, instead of being a weak, good-for-nothing woman !”

The little ring of listeners smiled at her enthusiasm, and thought she must have a very keen appreciation of poetry to be so carried away in speaking of it. But M. Dalibouze saw more in it than this ; he saw an under-current of impatience, of disap-

pointment, of restless longing to go and do likewise, to spread her wings and fly, to wield a sceptre of some sort that had power to make others spread their wings; there was a spirit's war-cry in it, a rebel's impotent cry against the narrow, inexorable bondage of her life.

“Yes,” he said; “it is a grand mission, I grant you, but not such a rare one as you make it out, Mademoiselle Aline. There are more poets in the world than those who write poetry; few of us are given to be poets in language, but we may all be poets in action if we will; we may live out our lives in poems.”

“If we had the fashioning of our lives no doubt, we might,” assented Aline, ironically; “but they are most of them so shabby that I defy Homer himself to manufacture an epic or an idyll out of them.”

“You are mistaken. There is no life too shabby to be a poem,” said M. Dalibouze; “it is true, we cannot fashion our lives as you say, but we can colour them, we can

harmonize them; but we must begin by believing this, and by getting our materials in order, we must sort them and arrange them, just as Madame la Générale is doing there with her threads and silks, and then we must go on patiently, working out the pattern leaf by leaf; by and by, when the threads get tangled, as they are sure to do with the best worker, instead of pulling angrily at them, or cutting them with the sharp scissors of revolt, we must call up a soft breeze from the land where the spirit of the true poet dwells, and bid it blow over them, and then let us listen, and we shall hear the spirit-wind draw tones out of our tangled web, sweeter than the music of the breeze sweeping the strings of an eolian harp. It is our own fault, or, perhaps, oftener our own misfortune, if our lives look shabby to us, we look at them piecemeal, bit by bit, instead of considering them as a whole."

"But how can we look at them as a whole?" said Aline; "we don't even know whether they will ever develop into a whole;

how many of us remain on the easel a sort of washed-in sketch to the end? It seems to me we are pretty much like apples in an orchard: some drop off in the flower, some when they are little green buttons, hard and sour, and good-for-nothing; it is only a tithe of the tree that comes to maturity."

"And is there not abundance of poetry in every phase of the apple's life, no matter when it falls?" demanded M. Dalibouze. "How many poems has the blight of the starry blossom given birth to? And the little green button! who may count the odes that the school-boy has sung to it, not in good hexameters, perhaps, but in sound heart-poetry, bubbling with the zest and gusts of youth, when all bitters were sweet! *Eh, mon Dieu!* when I think of the days when a stolen bite at a sour green apple was honey in my mouth, I could be a poet myself! No *paté de foie gras* ever tasted half so sweet as that *fruit défendu* of my childhood."

"*Va pour le fruit défendu!*" said Aline, amused at the Professor's sigh of *attendrisse-*

*ment* over the reminiscence ; “ but that is only one view of the question, if the apples could speak they would give us another.”

“ Would they ? ” said M. Dalibouze, “ I’m not sure of that. If the apples discuss the point at all, believe me, they are agreed that whatever befalls them is the very best thing that could. We have no evidence of any created thing—vegetable, mineral, or animal,—grumbling at its lot: that is reserved to man. Discontent is man’s prerogative ; he quarrels with himself, with his destiny, his neighbours, everything by turns. If we could but do like the apples, blossom, and grow, and fall, early or late as the winds and the gardener decreed, we should be happy. Fancy an apple quarrelling with the sun in spring for not warming it as he does in August ! It would be no more preposterous than it is for men to quarrel with their circumstances. The fruit of our lives have their seasons like the fruit of our gardens ; the winter snows and the sharp winds are just as necessary to both as the summer heat ; all growth is gradual, and

we must accept the process through which we are brought to maturity just as the apples do ; it is not the same for all of us ; some are ripened under the hot, vibrating sun, others resist it, and like certain winter fruit, require the cold, twilight days, to mellow them. But it matters little what the process is, it is sure to be the right one if we wait for it and accept it."

"I should very much like to know what stage of it I am in at the present moment," said Aline. "I can't say the sun has had much to do with it ; so far, the wind and the rain have been the busiest agents in my garden."

"Patience, mademoiselle !" said M. Dalibouze ; "the sun will come in his own good time."

"You answer for him ?"

"I do."

Aline looked him straight in the face as she put the question, and M. Dalibouze met the saucy bright eyes with a grave glance that had more of tenderness in it than she

had ever seen there before. It flashed upon her for a moment that the sun might come to her through a less worthy medium than this kind, faithful, honourable man, and that perhaps she had been a fool to her own happiness in shutting the garden-gate on him so contemptuously. Perhaps the Professor read the thought on her face, for he said in a penetrating voice, and fixing his eyes upon her :

“ *Le vrai soleil de la vie c'est le mariage.*”

It was an unfortunate remark. It broke the spell.

Aline tossed back her head, and burst into a merry laugh.

“ A day will come, I hope, when some one will tell you so, and you will not laugh, Mademoiselle Aline,” said Monsieur Dalibouze humbly, and hiding his discomfiture under a smile.

This was the only time within the last two years that he had betrayed himself into any expression of latent hope with regard to Mademoiselle de Lunaque, and it had no

sooner escaped him than he regretted it. The following Saturday, by way of atonement, he brought up a most desirable *parti* for inspection, and next day Madame Cléry was seized with the inevitable dusting fit. Nothing, however, came of it.

Things went on at No. 13 without any noticeable change till September, 1870, when Paris was declared in a state of siege. The sisters were not among those lucky ones who wavered for a time between going and staying, between the desire to put themselves in safe keeping, and the temptation of living through the blocus and boasting of it for the rest of their days. There was no choice for them but to stay. Aline therefore made the best of it; she must stay, so she settled it in her mind that she liked to stay, that it would be a wonderful experience to live through, the most exciting episode that could have broken up the stagnant monotony of their lives, and that in fact it was rather an enjoyable prospect than the reverse.

Madame Cléry was commissioned to lay



in as ample a store of provisions as their purse would allow, and the little group encouraged each other to face the coming events cheerfully and bravely like patriotic citizens. Of the magnitude of those events or their own probable share in the national calamities, they had a very vague notion. "The situation was critical," M. Dalibouze assured them, "*mais nullement désespérée*; on the contrary, France, instead of being at the mercy of the enemy, was now *à la veille de l'écraser, de remporter une de ces victoires qui font pâlir l'histoire*. It was the incomparable superiority of the French arms that had brought her to this pass, that had driven Prussia mad with rage and roused her to defiance. Infatuated Prussia! She would mourn her own folly once and for ever. She would find that Paris was not alone the queen of civilization and the arts and sciences, but that she was also the most impregnable fortress that ever defied the batteries of a foe. Europe had deserted Paris, after betraying France to her enemies; now the day

of retribution was at hand, Europe would reap the fruits of her base jealousy, and witness the triumph of the capital of the world!"

This was M. Dalibouze's opinion, and he gave it in public and private to any one who cared to hear it. When Madame de Chanoir asked if he meant to remain in Paris through the siege, the Professor was so shocked by the implied affront to his patriotism, that he had to control himself before he ventured to reply.

"*Comment, Madame la Générale!* you think so meanly of me as to suppose I would abandon my country at such a moment! Is it a time to fly when the vandals are at our gates, and when the nation expects every citizen to stand forth and defend the capital, and scatter to the winds those miserable *mangeurs de choucroute!*"

And straightway acting up to this patriotic credo, M. Dalibouze had himself measured for a National Guard uniform. No sooner had he endossed it than he rushed off to Nadar's and had himself photographed. He counted the hours till the proofs came

home, and then, bursting with satisfaction, he set out for No. 13.

“It is unbecoming,” he said with a shrug, as he presented his *carte de visite* to the Générale, “*mais que voulez-vous?* a man must sacrifice everything to his country; what is personal appearance that it should weigh in the scales against duty? Bah! I would get myself up en polichinelle, and perch all day on the top of Mont Valérien if it could scare away one of those despicable brigands from the walls of Paris!”

“You are wrong in saying it is unbecoming, monsieur,” protested Madame de Chanoir, attentively scanning the portrait where the military costume was set off by a semi-heroic *pose*, and then glancing at the original, she added, “I think the dress suits you admirably.”

“You are too indulgent, madame,” said the Professor; “you see your friends through the eyes of friendship; but in truth it was purely from an historical point of view that I made the little sacrifice of personal feeling;

the portrait will be interesting some day when we, the actors in the great drama, have passed away.”

But time went on and the prophetic triumphs of M. Dalibouze at which history was to grow pale, were not accomplished. The *mangeurs de choucroute* held their ground, and provisions began to grow scarce at No. 13. The purse of the sisters, never a large one, was now seriously diminished, Aline's contribution to the common fund having ceased altogether from the beginning of the siege. Her old pupils had left, and there was no chance of any new ones at a time like this. No one had money to spend on lessons, or leisure to learn; the study that absorbed every body was how to manufacture food and fuel out of impossible elements. Every one was suffering in a more or less degree from the miseries imposed by the state of blocus; one would have fancied that the presence of death in so many shapes—by fire without, by cold and famine within—would have detached people generally

from life, made them forgetful to a certain extent of the wants of the body, and absorbed them in sublimer cares. But it was not so. After the first shock of hearing the cannon at the gates close by, they got used to it. Later, when the bombardment came, there was another momentary panic; but it calmed down and they got used to that too. Shells could apparently fall all round without killing them. So they turned all their thoughts to the comforting and cherishing of their poor, afflicted bodies.

It must have been sad, and sometimes grimly comical, to watch the singular phases of human nature developed by the blocus. One of the oddest and most frequent was the change it wrought in human beings concerning their food. People who had hitherto been ascetically\*indifferent to it, and never cast a thought on their meals till they sat down to them, now grew monomaniacal on the point, and could think and speak of nothing else. Meals were in fact talked of, as far as we can gather, more than politics, or the

Prussians, or the probable issue of the siege, or any of the gigantic problems that were being resolved both inside and outside the besieged city. Intelligent men and women discussed by the hour, with gravity and gusto, the best way of preparing cats, and dogs, and rats, and mice, and all the other abominations that necessity had substituted for food. Poor human nature was fermenting under the process like wine in the vat, and all its dregs came uppermost; selfishness, greediness, callousness to the sufferings of others, ingratitude, all the pitiable meannesses of man boiled up to the surface and showed him a sorry figure to behold.

But other, nobler things came to the surface too. There were innumerable silent dramas, soul-poems being evolved in many unlikely places, making no noise beyond their quiet sphere, but travelling high and sounding loud behind the curtain of grey sky that shrouded the winter sun of Paris. The cannon shook her ramparts, and the shells flashed like lurid furies through the midnight

darkness; but far above the din, and the darkness, and the death-cries, rose the low, sweet music of many a brave heart's sacrifice—the stronger giving up his share to the weaker, the son hoarding his scanty rations against the day of still scantier supplies, when the weakened frame of an aged father or mother would suffer more cruelly from the diet that grew worse and less as time went on, talking big about the impossibility of surrender, and lightly about the price of resistance.

There were mothers in Paris—and where mothers are, there is ever to be found self-sacrifice in its loveliest, divinest form. How many of them toiled and sweated, aye, and begged, subduing all pride to love, that the little ones might eat their fill, unconscious of the tooth that was gnawing the breadwinner's vitals. We who heard the thunder of the artillery and the blasting shout of the mitrailleuse, we did not hear these things; but other ears did, and not a note of the sweet music was lost: angels were hearkening for them, and as they rose above

the discord—like crystal bells tolling in a storm-wind—the white-winged messengers caught them on golden lyres and wafted them on to Paradise.

There was music enough chiming at No. 13 to keep a choir of angels busy. Madame de Chanoir, with the petulance of a weak nature, grumbled unceasingly, lamenting the miseries of her own position and utterly ignoring everybody else's, whinging and whining from morning till night, pouring out futile invectives against the Prussians, the Emperor, the Republic, General Trochu, everybody and everything remotely instrumental to her sufferings. She threatened to let herself die of hunger rather than touch horseflesh, and for some days she held so energetically to the threat that Aline was terrified, and believed she would carry it out to the end. The only thing of value that remained to the younger sister was her mother's watch, a costly little gem with the cypher set in brilliants; it had been her grandfather's wedding-present to his daughter-



in-law. Aline took it to the jeweller who had made it, and sold it for a hundred and fifty francs. With this she bought a ham and a few other delicacies that tempted Madame de Chanoir out of her suicidal abstinence; she ate heartily, neither asking nor guessing at what price the dainties had been bought; and Aline, glad to have had the sacrifice to make, said nothing of what it had cost her.

Gradually everything that could be sold, or exchanged for food, went. Aline would have fared uncomplainingly on the miserable siege diet if she had been alone; but it was a hard trial to listen to Madame de Chanoir's never-ending *jérémiades*, to see her childish anger at the great national disasters which her egotism contracted into direct personal wrongs. Fortunately for herself Mademoiselle de Lunaque was not a constant witness of the irritating scene. From nine in the morning till late in the afternoon she was away at the ambulance, active and helpful, cheering many a burning heart by her bright and gentle ministry, and forgetting her own

sufferings in the effort to alleviate greater ones.

“If you could come with me, Félicité, and see what our poor soldiers suffer, it would make your own privations seem nothing,” she would often say, when on coming home from her labour of love she was met by the querulous complaining of the invalid; “and it is such a delight to feel oneself a comfort and a help to them. I don’t know how I am ever to settle down again to the make-believe work of teaching after this long spell of real work. What a pity that ladies cannot be nurses without being nuns!”

She enjoyed the work so much, in fact, that, if it had not been for the sufferings, real and imaginary, of her sister, this would have been the happiest time she had known since her school-days. The make-believe work, as Aline called it, had never filled her heart. It was a means of living that kept her hands and her brain at work, nothing more; and it had often been a source of wonder to her to find herself in her busiest

days seized with ennui. That light, hackneyed word hardly, perhaps, expresses the void, the sort of hunger-pang that more and more frequently of late years had made her soul ache and yearn, and which she had never been able to give a reason for. But now the light seemed to break upon her, and show her why it had been so. The work itself was too superficial, too external. It had overrun her life without satisfying it; it had not brought out the deepest resources of her mind and heart; it had only broken the crust and left the soil below untilled. She had flitted, like a butterfly, from one study to another; history, and literature, and music had by turns attracted her; she had gone into them enthusiastically, mastered their difficulties, and appropriated their beauties; but after a time the spell waned, and she glided imperceptibly into the dry mechanism of the thing, and went on giving her lessons because it brought her so much a *cachet*.

But this work of a sister of mercy was a different sort of thing altogether. The enthu-

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siasm, instead of waning, grew as she went on. At first the prosaic details, the foul air, the physical fatigue and moral strain of the sick nurse's life were unspeakably repugnant to her; her natural fastidiousness turned from them in disgust, and she would have thrown it all up after the first week but for sheer human respect. At the end of a fortnight she had grown interested in her patients; by degrees she got reconciled to the obnoxious duties their state demanded of her, and before the month was out it had become a ministry of love, and her whole soul had thrown itself into the perfect performance of it. She was often tired and faint on leaving the ambulance, but she always left it with regret, and the evident zest and gladness of heart with which she set out every morning to her work became a grievance to Madame de Chanoir. She vented her discontent by harping all the time of breakfast on the hard-heartedness of some people who could look at wounds and all sorts of horrors without flinching, whereas the very sight of

a drop of blood made her almost faint ; but then she was so constituted as to feel other people's sufferings as if they were her own ; it was a misfortune. She envied people who had hard hearts ; it certainly enabled them to do more, while she could only shudder and pity. Aline bore the illogical reproaches as stoically as if she had been blessed with one of those organs of stone that the Générale so envied. She had found the secret of making her life a poem, and extended the indulgence of a happy heart to the follies and weaknesses of those around her.

But the nurse's courage was greater than her strength. After the first three months' material privations, added to the arduous attendance on the wounded, began to tell upon her health.

M. Dalibouze was the first to notice it. He came punctually every Saturday to No. 13, as in the old peaceful days ; his age, luckily, exempted him from the terrible out-post work on the ramparts, and he profited by the circumstance to keep up as far as possible his

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ordinary habits and enjoyments, *afin de soutenir le morale*, as he said to himself. When he noticed this change in Aline, exercising his prerogative of *ami de la maison*, he interfered; he took her severely to task about her imprudent zeal, and begged her while exerting herself with such praiseworthy self-devotion in behalf of the poor victims of the war, to remember that her life was very precious to her sister and her friends. Aline met the advice very kindly, but assured him that far from wearing out her strength, as he supposed, her work was the only thing that sustained it. The tone in which she said this carried conviction to M. Dalibouze, who began to consider what he could next accuse as being the cause of her palor and languid appearance. It occurred to him that it must be the siege diet. Everybody suffered in a more or less degree, but, as it always happens, those who suffered most said least about it. The *gros rentier* who fared sumptuously on kangaroo and Chinese puppies, and elephant at a hundred francs a pound,

talked loud about the miseries of starvation that he underwent for his country's sake; but the *petit rentier* whose frugal pot-au-feu had long since been replaced by a scanty ration of horse-flesh, and that only to be had by "making tail" for hours at the butcher's shop, the *petit rentier* said very little. He was perishing slowly off the face of the earth, but with the pride of poverty strong in death, he gathered his rags around him, and made ready to die in silence.

It was on such people as Madame de Chanoir and her sister that the siege pressed hardest; their concierge was far better off than they. She could claim her *bons* and fight for her rations, and she had fifteen sous a day as the wife of a National Guard.

As to Madame Cléry, she proved herself equal to the occasion. She had no National Guard to fall back on, but she was a good patriot, and the thought that she was suffering for her country upheld her. Patriotism, however, had its limits of endurance, and hay bread was the border line that Madame Cléry's

patriotism refused to pass. When the staff of life was rationed she showed signs of mutiny, but when it degenerated into that repulsive compound of ground bones, clay, bran and hay, of which many of us have seen specimens, her indignation could no longer contain itself. The first time a loaf of the spongy, tawny dough was handed to her after three hours' *queue* at the baker's, she broke it in two, and pulling out a long straw, held it up to the wrathful scorn of the citizens. "*Sommes-nous donc des bêtes pour qu'on nous fasse manger du foin !*" she exclaimed, and was answered by a howl of sympathy from the spectators. When Madame de Chanoir saw it and tasted it, she went into hysterics for the rest of the day.

But Providence was mindful of No. 13. Just at this crisis, when Aline's altered looks aroused the Générale from the selfish contemplation of her own ailments, M. Dalibouze arrived one morning soon after Mademoiselle de Lunaque had started for the ambulance, and announced that he had received the



opportune present of several hams, tins of preserved meat, condensed milk, and an indefinite number of pots of jam; it was three times as much as he could consume before the siege was raised, for raised it infallibly would be, and that within the next forty-eight hours if he were not greatly mistaken, so he begged Madame de Chanoir to do him the favour of accepting the surplus. Madame de Chanoir, with infantine simplicity, believed this credible version of the story, and did M. Dalibouze the favour he requested. Thus the Professor had the delight of seeing Aline revive on the substantial fare that arrived so apropos. Well, it came at last, the end of the blows. Not, indeed, as M. Dalibouze had prognosticated; but that was not his fault. He had not reckoned with treachery. He could not suspect what a brood of serpents the glorious capital of civilization was nourishing in her patriotic bosom. But wait a little! It would be made square yet. Europe by and by would see France rise like the phoenix from her ashes, and spread her wings and

take a flight that would astonish the world. As to the Prussians, those vile vandals who were unworthy to clean the boots of Paris with their beards, let them bide a while, and they would see . . . etc. Thus did M. Dalibouze resume *la situation* while Paris on her knees waited for the terms that Prussia was dictating as the price of a loaf of bread for her starving patriots.

But the worst was yet to come. Hardly had the little ménage at No. 13 drawn a long breath of relief after the capitulation of the city, when that saturnalia, the like of which the world never saw before—and, let us hope, never will again—the Commune, began. Like a fiery flood it rose in Paris, and rose and rose till the red wave swept the city from end to end, spreading ruin and death everywhere, and making the limp, pusillanimous party of order sigh for the Prussians to come back to help them to get out of their cellars. How it grew and how it ended, we have heard till we know the miserable story by heart. I am not going

to tell it here. The Commune is merely the last episode in the history of No. 13.

There was work to do, and plenty, for Aline during this last and fearfullest ordeal, and her courage did not fail her. She bound up wounds, and smoothed pillows, and whispered words that dying ears are open to when spoken in faithful love. She asked no questions as to the politics of the wounded men, but did the best she could for them.

Madame de Chanoir was disgusted and shocked to see her sister attending on Red Republicans: they were a race of vipers, and the sooner they died out the better; it was no part of a Christian woman's duty to preserve the lives of such fiends.

"There are dupes as well as fiends amongst them," Aline assured her, "and even if they were not, the guiltier they were, the more to be pitied."

After a time, however, the dangers of going out at all became so great that Aline was compelled to remain indoors. Barricades were thrown up in every direction, and made

circulation next to impossible to members of the party of order. The Rue Royale, which had been safe during the first siege, was now a centre of accumulated danger. It was armed to the teeth. The faubourg end of it was locked by a massive stone barricade, with two cannon, like black slugs, peeping over a hedge, couched on the top of it, ready to give tongue at any moment. After eight mortal weeks the moment came, and they opened their iron throats and bellowed, and every battery around them bellowed in response. The troops came in, and there was the final tug when Greek met Greek. Shell and shot rained like hailstones ; it was the discord of hell broke upwards through the earth, and echoing along the streets of Paris.

Aline de Lunaque and her sister sat in the little salon at No. 13, listening to the war-dogs without, and straining their ears to catch every sound that shot up with any significant distinctness from the chaos of noise. Madame Cléry was with them. She

stayed altogether at No. 13 now, sleeping on the sofa at night. To-day the old woman was as restless as a squirrel; she could not keep quiet, but was constantly running up and down stairs, putting her ear to the porte-cochère, and trying to hear some news through the chinks. Once she went down, and before she returned an explosion reverberated through the street, shaking the house from cellar to garret, and, like a shock from an electric battery, flinging both the sisters on their knees.

Madame de Chanoir's spine had recovered itself during the last week as if by magic; she had altogether abandoned her recumbent position, and came and went like anybody else.

"Félicité, I must go and see what's the matter. I fancy I hear groans. Perhaps a shell has burst in the court and killed her," said Aline, rising and going to the door.

"Don't leave me! For the love of heaven don't leave me alone, Aline!" implored her

sister ; " I'll die if that comes again while I'm by myself."

" Come with me, then," said Aline, taking her hand, and they went down together.

Madame Cléry was not killed. This fact was made plain by the spectacle of the old woman standing under the porte-cochère and shaking her fist vehemently at somebody or something at the further end of it.

" Stay here," said Aline, motioning Madame de Chanoir back into the house, " I will see what it is, and if you are wanted, I'll call you."

It was the concierge that Madame Cléry was apostrophizing, and this was why : A shell had burst, not in the court, as the sisters fancied, but in the street just outside, and the explosion was instantaneously followed by a loud blow at the door, while something like a body fell heavily against it.

" *Cordon !*" cried Madame Cléry. " It's somebody hit by the shell."

" More likely a Communist coming to

pillage and burn'; I'll *cordon* to none of 'em!" declared the concierge. "The door is locked; if they want to get in let them blow it open."

But Madame Cléry flew at her throat, and swore if she did not give up the key and pull the string, she, Madame Cléry, would know the reason why.

The concierge groaned, and felt in bitterness of spirit, "*combien le cordon etait un sacerdoce difficile.*" But she opened the door.

Right under it lay two wounded men. One of them was evidently dying; he had been struck in the side by a fragment of the shell that had burst over the door and dealt death around and in front of it. The other was wounded too, but not fatally; he had been flung down by his companion, and the shock of the fall had stunned him.

Madame Cléry dragged them in under the shelter of the *porte-cochère*, and proposed laying them on the floor of the lodge. But the concierge had no mind to take in a pair of dying men, and vowed she would

not have her lodge turned into a *morgue*. The dispute was waxing warm, Madame Cléry threatening muscular argument, when Aline made her appearance. Her training in the ambulance stood her in good need now.

“Poor fellow! He will give no more trouble to any one,” she said, after feeling the pulse of the first, and laying her hand for a moment on his heart; “bring a cloth and cover his face. He must lie here till he can be removed.”

They composed the features, threw a napkin over them, and laid the body under cover of the gateway.

Aline then turned her attention to the other. His left arm was badly wounded. While she was examining it, the young man opened his eyes, stared round him with the speculative gaze of returning consciousness, and then made an effort to rise. He fell back at once.

“You are wounded; not seriously, I hope,” said Aline, “but you must not



try to move till we have dressed your arm."

She dispatched Madame Cléry for the box containing her hospital appliances—lint, bandages, etc.—and then, with an expertness that might have done credit to a medical student, she washed and dressed the shattered limb; Madame de Chanoir, meantime, watching the operation from a safe distance through the glass door at the foot of the stairs.

What to do next was the puzzle. The concierge resolutely refused to take him into her premises. There was no knowing who he was or what he was, and she was a lone woman and had no mind to compromise herself by taking in bad characters.

The poor fellow was so much exhausted by loss of blood that he was incapable of helping himself, and it would have been cruelty to leave him down in the courtyard, where his unfortunate comrade lay stiffening within sight of him. Aline saw there was no alternative but to take him up to their own apartment. How to get him there was the

difficulty. He looked about six feet long and might have weighed any number of stone; they would never be able to carry him, she feared. There was nothing else for it, however, so she beckoned to the concierge, in a determined manner, and told her to come and help.

As a preliminary to the undertaking, Madame Cléry poured out some wine which she had had the wit to bring down with the lint-box, and held it to the sufferer's lips, while Aline supported his head. He drank it with avidity, and it seemed to restore him at once; he sat up, leaning on his right arm.

"We are going to carry you upstairs, *mon petit*," said Madame Cléry, patting him on the shoulder with the patronizing manner a little woman loves to assume towards a big fellow-creature.

"You carry me!" said the young man, measuring the short, trim figure of the femme de ménage with a sceptical twinkle in his eyes. They were dark, grey eyes, particularly clear and piercing.

“Me and Mamzelle Aline,” said Madame Cléry, in a tone that resented the supercilious way in which her measure was being taken.

Aline was behind her. He turned to look at her with a jest on his lips; but, changing his mind apparently, he bowed. Then, with a resolute effort, he bent forward, and before either she or Madame Cléry could interfere, he was on his feet. It was well, however, that they were within reach of him, for he staggered and must have fallen but for their prompt assistance.

“Là!” said Madame Cléry; “what it is to be proud; lean on Mamzelle Aline and me, and try to get upstairs without breaking your neck.”

“*A la guerre, comme à la guerre, mademoiselle!*” said the gentleman, laughing, and accepting the shoulder that Aline turned towards him.

They accomplished the ascent in safety; and then, in spite of his assurance that he was all right now, Madame de Chanoir insisted on their guest lying down on her sofa, while

Madame Cléry concocted some specific *tisane* for him.

The stranger who had introduced himself so unexpectedly to No. 13 told his good Samaritans that he had formed one of the party of order who had gone unarmed, with a flag of truce, to the federals in the Rue de la Paix. He had witnessed the ghastly butchery that followed, and only escaped as if by miracle himself; he had fought as a Mobile in the first siege, and received a sabrecut in the head that had kept him in the hospital for weeks; on his recovery he had, of course, refused to join the Commune, and it was at the risk of his life that he showed himself abroad in Paris. Just now he was making an attempt to join the troops when that shell burst and stopped him in his venturesome career.

All day, and all that night, the four inmates of the little entresol watched and waited in breathless anxiety for the close of the battle that was raging near them. It never flagged for an instant. The noise was terrific. The

tocsin rang from every belfry in the city, the drum beat to arms in every street, the Chassepots hissed, the cannon boomed, and the yells and shrieks of fratricidal murder filled the air, mingling with the smell and smoke of blood and powder. It was a night that drove hundreds mad who lived through it. And yet there was worse even than this at hand.

Late the next afternoon Aline, who was constantly at the window, peeping from behind the mattress stuffed into it to protect them from the shells, thought she discerned something in the atmosphere indicative of a new phase. She said nothing, but slipped out of the room, and ran up to an œil-de-bœuf at the top of the house, that served as a sort of observatory to those who had the courage of their curiosity, as the French put it, and liked to risk their heads a moment to the mercy of the missiles flying amongst the chimney-pots.

It was an awful sight that met her. A fire was raging close to the house. Where it began or ended it was impossible to say; but

clearly it was of immense magnitude, and blazed with a fury that threatened to spread the flames far and wide. She stood rooted to the spot, literally paralyzed with terror. Were they to be burnt to death after living through such agonies, and escaping death in so many shapes? Flight was their only chance, and was flight possible? On every side they were locked in by barricades; if they were not shot down like dogs before they reached the first—which was probable—would they be allowed to pass? All this rushed through her mind as she gazed in blank despair out of the little œil-de-bœuf that embraced the whole area of the Rue Royale and the adjacent streets.

As yet there was a space between the fire and No. 13. Mercifully there was no wind, and she saw by the swaying of the flames that they drew rather towards the Madeleine than the direction of the Rue de Rivoli. Flight was a forlorn hope; but still they must try it. She turned abruptly from the window, and was crossing the room, when a

loud crash made her heart leap. The roof of another house, one nearer to No. 13, had fallen in, and the flames leaping through, like rattle-snakes out of a bag, sprang at the sky writhing and hissing as they licked it with their long red tongues.

“ Oh, God have pity on us ! ”

Aline fell on her knees for one moment, and the next she was flying down the stairs.

“ We must leave this at once, ” she said, speaking calmly, but with white lips ; “ the street is on fire. ”

Monsieur Varlay, Citoyen Varlay, as he gave his name, started to his feet ; and pulling aside the mattresses looked out. The flames were visible now above the house-tops.

“ Allons ! A la garde de Dieu ! ” he exclaimed, “ we must make for the Rue de Rivoli. ”

Madame de Chanoir and the femme de ménage, as soon as they caught sight of the fire, shrieked in chorus and made a headlong rush at the stairs.

“Voyons, du calme, madame!” cried M. Varlay in a tone that arrested both the women; “if we loose our presence of mind we had better stay where we are. Have you any *valeurs*, papers or money, that you can take in your pocket?” he cried, turning to Aline. She alone had not lost her head.

Yes. There were a few letters of her parents, and some trinkets, valuable only as souvenirs, which she had had the forethought to put together. She took them quickly, and then they hurried down stairs. The lodge was empty. The concierge had taken refuge in her cellar, and her husband was supposed to be saving France somewhere else. But Madame Cléry knew the trick of the *cordon*; she pulled it, and the little band sallied forth into the street. The air was so thick they could hardly see their way, except for the fiery forks that shot up far and near incessantly through the fog, illuminating dark spots with a lurid light, while now and then the crash of a roof or the fall of a heavy beam was followed by a pillar of sparks that



rattled up to the sky like rockets. The Babel of drums, and bells, and artillery, added to the bewildering effect of the scene, as the fugitives hurried on, one by one, under the shadow of the houses. They fared safely out of the Rue Royale and turned to the left. The Tuileries was enveloped in smoke, but the flames were nearly spent, only here and there a tongue of fire crept out of a crevice and licked the wall, and twisted, and twirled, and drew in again. A crowd was gathered under the portico of the Rue de Rivoli watching the dying throes of the conflagration and discussing many questions in excited tones.

Our travellers pushed on and came unmolested to the corner of the Rue St. Florentin, when a sentinel levelled his Chassepot before them and cried, "*Halte !*" Madame de Chanoir, who walked first, responded by a scream. Citoyen Varlay drew her quickly behind him.

"Stand here while I speak to him," he said, and putting his hand in his pocket, he advanced to parley with the federal.

They had not exchanged half-a-dozen words, when the latter shouldered his Chassepot and said :—

“ *Vite alors filez !* ”

Varlay stood for the woman to pass first. Madame de Chanoir and the femme de ménage rushed on, but no sooner had they stepped off the trottoir than clasping their hands, they dropped on their knees with a scream of terror.

The sight that met them was indeed enough to make a brave heart quail. To the left, extending right across the street, rose a barricade—a fortress rather—surmounted at either end by a warrior of the Commune bending over a cannon as if in the very act of firing; in the centre two amazon pétroleuses stood with Chassepots *en bandelière*, and a red rag in their hand which they waved proudly aloft like women who feel the eyes of Europe are upon them; the space on either side of them was filled up with soldiers, singly or in groups, and *poséd* in the attitude of men whom forty centuries look down upon.

Just as Madame de Chanoir and her *bonne* came in front of the terrible *mise en scène*, and before they could rush backward or forward, the word *fire!* rang out from the fortress; two matches flashed in the hands of the gunners, muskets were levelled, and the women dropped down with a cry that would have waked the dead.

“What’s the matter now?” cried the sentinel.

“They are going to shoot us!”

“*Imbéciles!* They are going to be photographed!”

And so they were. A photographic battery was established against the railings opposite. Aline and Citoyen Varlay seized the half fainting women and dragged them across, and out of the range of the formidable *tableau vivant*.

Meanwhile the fire was gaining on No. 13. Three doors down from it the house was *flambée*. It had been deserted the day before by all its occupants save one family, M. and Madame X——, and their servant, who had

obstinately refused to believe in the danger. They were friends of M. Dalibouze's, and on his way to No. 13 this afternoon he turned in to try and persuade them to fly now. "*La situation était grave,*" he said, "it were foolhardy to defy it, and the time was come when good citizens might save themselves." He succeeded in impressing this view of the case on his infatuated friends, and casting a last farewell look at their home and its precious penates, they left the apartment accompanied by their servant. The latter was an old soldier, a *sapeur*, too old for military service, but as hale and hearty as a youth of twenty. The Professor had got in by a back way from the faubourg St. Honoré, and thither he led his party now. But the exit was already blocked; the wall of the neighbouring house had fallen and stopped it up. There was nothing for it but to go boldly out by the front door and trust to Providence.

But they reckoned without the pétroleuses. Those zealous daughters of the Commune,

braving the shot and the shell and the vengeful flames of their own creation, sped from door to door, pouring the terrible fluid into holes and corners, through the gratings of cellars, through the chinks of the windows, under the doors, everywhere, dancing and laughing, and singing all the time like tigers in human shape—tigers gone mad with fire and blood. When the sapeur opened the door he beheld a group of them on the trottoir. One was rolling a barrel of petroleum on to the next house; another was steeping rags in a barrel half empty, and handing them as fast as she could to others who stuffed them into appropriate places and set fire to them, and then the flame rose and was hailed by a demoniacal shout of exultation.

The sapeur banged the door in their faces.

“We must set to work and cut our way through the wall,” he said. “It’s the last chance left us.”

No sooner said than done. He knew where to lay his hands on a couple of crow-

bars and a pickaxe; the Professor fired the contents of his Chassepot at the wall, and then the three men went at it, and worked as men do when death is behind them and life before. It was an old house, built chiefly of brick and mortar, very little iron, and it yielded quickly to the hammering blows of the workmen. A breach was made; a small one, but big enough to let a man crawl through. M. X—— passed out first, and then helped out his wife. The sapeur and M. Dalibouze followed. They hurried through the next apartment. M. Dalibouze reloaded his gun. Whiz! whiz! went the bullets, bang, bang, went the crowbars, down rattled the stones; another breach was made, and again they were saved. Three times they fought their way through the walls, while the fire, like a lava torrent, rolled after them, and then they found themselves at No. 13. M. Dalibouze's first thought was for the little apartment or the entresol at the other side. They made for it, but as they were crossing the court, a blow, or rather a succession of blows, struck the great oak

door; it opened like a nutshell, and fell with a crash like thunder. The burglars beheld M. Dalibouze in his National Guard uniform scudding across the yard, and greeted him with howls like a troop of jackals.

Whiz! whiz! went the grape-shot. Monsieur Dalibouze fell. Before the door gave way, M. and Madame X—— had taken refuge in the house, and thus escaped observation. No one was left but the old sapeur.

“Voyons!” he said, bearding the men with soldierly pluck. “What’s this about? What do you mean by knocking down doors and breaking into the houses of honest citizens?”

“You had better break out of this one if you don’t want to grill,” answered one of the ruffians; they were five. “We are going to fire it, *par ordre ed la Commune.*”

The women had disappeared and left their implements in the hands of the men.

“Ah! *par ordre de la Commune!*” echoed the sapeur. “Then I’ve nothing to say. Fire away! I hope they pay you well for the work?”

“Not over and above for such work as it

is," said one of the incendiaries, rolling a barrel into the concierge's lodge.

"How much?"

"Ten francs a piece."

"Ten francs for burning a house down! Pshaw! You're fools for your pains!"

The sapeur shrugged his shoulders, turned on his heel, and walked off with his hands in his pockets. Suddenly, as if a bright thought struck him, he turned round, and said:

"Suppose you got twenty for leaving it alone?"

"Twenty a-piece?"

"Twenty a-piece every man of you!"

They stopped their work and looked from one to another.

"Ma foi, I'd take it and leave it alone!" said one.

"Pardie! We've had enough of it, and, as the citizen says, it's beggarly pay for the work," said another.

"Done!" said the sapeur.\*

\* This incident is authentic, and occurred at No. 13, Rue Royale



He pulled out a leathern purse and counted out five gold pieces to the five Communists.

“*Une poignée de main, citizens!*” said the first spokesman. The others followed suit, and the sapeur, after cordially wringing the five rascally hands, sent them on their way rejoicing to the cabaret round the corner.

This is how No. 13 was saved. No. 11 was burnt to the ground, and then the fire stopped.

But to return to Aline and her friends. They got on well till they came to the Rue d’Alger, where they were caught in a panic—men, women, and children struggling frantically to get out of reach of the flames that girt them far and near on all sides, and threatening to crush each other to death in the effort. Our travellers got clear of it, but when they found themselves free at separate points, the sisters found they had lost each other. Madame de Chanoir had held by Madame Cléry, and was satisfied that Aline was safe under the wing of Citoyen Varlay.

But she was mistaken. He had indeed kept by her while he could, lifting her off the ground and carrying her with his one strong arm above the crowd, and saving her very likely from being thrown down and trampled to death, but when Aline found herself on her feet once more, and turned to speak to him, he was gone. It would have been madness to attempt to look for him in the *mêlée*, so she determined to wait under shelter till it dispersed, and then they would be sure to meet. She made for the doorway of a mourning house at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré, but she had not been many minutes there when she heard a hue and cry from the Tuileries end of the street. Presently a troop of men came flying along, driving some people before them, and firing at random as they went. The sensible thing for Aline to do was of course to flatten herself against the wall and stay where she was, and of course she did not do it. She saw a flock of people running, and without asking why or wherefore, she started from her hiding place and turned and

ran with them. They flew along the Rue St. Honoré till they came to the Rue Rohan. Here the band broke up into fragments, and many disappeared at opposite points, but one little group unluckily kept together, and though considerably diminished from the starting point, it still held in view and gave chase to the pursuers. Mademoiselle de Lunaque kept with this. On they flew like hares before the hounds, till rounding the corner of the *Place Palais Royal* they were stopped by two federals, who levelled their Chassepots and bid them *stand!* The fugitives turned, not like hares at bay to face the hunters and die, but to rush into an open shop and fall on their knees and cry *merci!*

The pursuers were after them in a minute. But, instead of shooting them right off, they began to discuss the propriety of taking them out, and standing them in regulation order with their backs to the wall, and doing the thing in a proper, business-like manner.

While this parley was going on, Aline de

Lunaque cast a glance round her and saw that her fellow-victims were two young lads and half-a-dozen women, all of them of the working-class apparently, most of them wore caps.

The men who were making ready to shoot them, like so many rats, without rhyme or reason, were evidently of the very dregs of the Commune, and looked half-drunk with blood, or wine, or both, it was hard to say; all trace of manhood was blotted out from their faces, and there was little hope of mercy having still a lurking-place in their hearts.

One of the women suddenly sprang to her feet.

“What!” she cried; “you call yourselves men, and you are going in cold blood to shoot unarmed women and boys. Shame on you for cowards! There isn’t a man amongst you!” And she snapped her fingers right in their faces with an impudence that was positively sublime.

The cowards were taken aback. They

looked at each other, and then burst out laughing.

"Sapristi! she's right," exclaimed one of them, "they're not worth wasting our powder on!"

Like lightning the women were on their feet, fraternizing with the men, embracing, shaking hands, and swearing eternal friendship in true Communistic fashion. Mademoiselle de Lanaque alone stood aloof, a silent, terror-stricken spectator of the scene.

"What have we here? Une canaille d'aristocrate, I'll be bound! It's written on her face," said one of the ruffians, seizing her, by the arm; "let us make away with her comrades! It will be a good job for the Republic to rid it of one more of the lazy aristos that live by the *ouvrier's* sweat."

There was a lull in the kissing and handshaking, and they turned to stare at Aline. Her life hung by a thread. A timid word, a guilty look, she was lost. But the soldier's blood rose up in her; she bethought her of her *obus* and *lancéd* it.

“Lazy!” she cried, “I am a soldier’s daughter; my father fought for France, and left his children nothing but his sword. I work for my bread as hard as any of you!”

The effect was galvanic. They gathered round her and shouted,

“Bravo! Bravo! Donnez la main, citoyenne!”

And Aline gave it; like the statesman who thanked God he had a country to sell, she blessed her stars she had a hand to give.

\* \* \* \* \*

Blood ran like water in the sewers for a few days, and then the troops remained masters of the field, and order was restored. Restored so far as to enable honest men to sleep in their beds at night.

Madame de Chanoir was back again in the little salon at No. 13. Her spine complaint had been radically cured by the Commune, and she sat erect in her chair now like other people. She was diligently reading the newspaper aloud to a gentleman who was lying on the sofa near her. The invalid’s face and head

were so elaborately swathed and bandaged that it was impossible to judge what either were like, while his bodily proportions disappeared into vague rotundity under a voluminous travelling-rug. He listened without comment for some time to the article which Madame de Chanoir was reading—a political tirade against France, and her soldiers, and her generals, and the nation at large, a sweeping anathema, in fact, of everybody and everything, till at last he could bear it no longer, and, sitting bolt upright, he exclaimed :

“Madame, the man who wrote that article is a traitor. France is greater to-day in her unmerited misfortunes than she was in the apotheosis of her glory. She is more sublime in her widowed grief than her ignoble foe in his barbarous successes! She is, in fact, still la France! *La situation est momentanément compromise; mais . . .*”

“*Là, là voyons!*” broke in Madame Cléry, putting her head in at the door, and shaking the lid of a saucepan at the invalid, “how is the tisane to take effect if you will

talk politics and put yourself in a rage about *la situation*? *Madame la Générale, faites-le taire.*”

The Générale, thus adjured, laid down the newspaper and gently insisted on Monsieur Dalibouze resuming his horizontal position on the couch.

Aline was not there. She was off at her old work at the ambulance again. The hospitals had been replenished to overflowing by the street-fighting of the last week of the Commune, *le dénouement de la situation*, as Monsieur Dalibouze called it, and nurses were in great demand.

Citoyen Varlay had not turned up since the day they lost him in the crowd. The excitement and confusion which had reigned in the city ever since had made it difficult to set effective inquiries on foot, even if the sisters had been accurately informed regarding their quondam guest's circumstances and identity, which they were not; all they knew of him was his name, his appearance, and his wound. This was too vague to assist



much in the search. Madame de Chanoir was sincerely sorry for it. She had been attracted at once by the frank bearing and courteous manners of the young citizen ; but the self-forgetfulness, the stoical contempt of bodily pain, and the cool courage he had displayed on the occasion of their flight, had kindled sympathy into admiration, and she looked upon him now as a hero. She spoke of him constantly at first, loudly lamenting his loss ; for lost she believed him. He had, no doubt, been overpowered by the crowd ; his disabled arm deprived him of half his strength, the remainder he expended in his efforts to save Aline, and that done he had probably fainted, and had been suffocated or crushed to death. But when Madame de Chanoir mentioned to Aline the conclusion she had arrived at, the deadly paleness that suddenly overspread her sister's features made Félicité bitterly regret her words. From that hour the young soldier's name was never pronounced between them.

Madame Cléry had formed, on her side,

an enthusiastic affection for him, and sincerely regretted his fate; but, with a woman's instinct, she guessed that the one who regretted it most said least about it. She never mentioned Citoyen Varlay to Aline, but made up for the self-denial by pouring out his praises and her own grief into the sympathizing ear of the Générale.

“What a pretty couple they would have made!” said the old woman one morning, wiping her eyes in the corner of her apron, “he was such a *beau garçon*, and so merry; he only wanted the *particule* to make him perfect. But who knows? he may not have been as good as he looked. One never can trust those *parvenus*.”

A month passed. Madame de Chanoir was alone one afternoon when Madame Cléry rushed into the room, panting with excitement, her eyes literally dancing out of her head.

“Madame! madame! I guessed it! I knew it! I'm not that woman but to know a gentleman when I see him, and I told

madame he was ! Let madame never say but I did !”

And, after this lucid preliminary explanation, she held out a card to her mistress.

Madame de Chanoir took it, and read aloud :

“ *Le Baron de Varlay,*  
*Avocat à la cour de cassation.*”

Another month elapsed, and the great door of the Madeleine was opened for a double marriage.

The first bridegroom was a tall, slight man who carried the word *distingué* stamped unmistakably on his face and figure. The second was a plump, dapper, little man who, as he walked up the carpeted aisle of the church, seemed hardly to touch the ground, so elastic was his step. His countenance beamed. He was radiant and, it is hardly a figure of speech to say, that he was buoyant with satisfaction. If he could have given utterance to the emotions that filled his soul, he would have said that “la situation

•

était parfaite et ne laissait absolument rien à désirer.”

Madame Cléry was present in her monumental cap, trimmed with Valenciennes, brand-new for the occasion, and a chintz gown with a peacock pattern on a pea-green ground, that would have lighted up a room without candles. She, too, looked the very personification of delight. The first couple was all her heart could wish, and more than her wildest ambition had ever dreamed of for her favourite Aline. The second she had grown philosophically reconciled to. The marriage had one drawback, a grievous one; but the femme de ménage consoled herself with the reflection that Madame de Chanoir might condone the bourgeoisie of her new name by signing herself:

“Félicité Dalibouze,  
née de Lunaque.”

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