

# The Argosy eBook

## The Argosy

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# Page 1

## THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1891.

## THE FATE OF THE HARA DIAMOND.

### CHAPTER XXII.

Mr. Madgin at the Helm.

Mr. Madgin's house stood somewhat back from the main street of Eastbury. It was an old-fashioned house, of modest exterior, and had an air of being elbowed into the background by the smarter and more modern domiciles on each side of it. Its steep, overhanging roof and porched doorway gave it a sleepy, reposeful look, as though it were watching the on-goings of the little town through half-closed lids, and taking small cognizance thereof.

Entering from the street through a little wooden gateway of a bright green colour, a narrow pathway, paved with round pebbles that were very trying to people with tender feet, conducted you to the front door, on which shone a brass plate of surpassing brightness, whereon was inscribed:—

|                     |
|---------------------|
| Mr. Solomon Madgin. |
| General Agent,      |
| Valuer, &c.         |

The house was a double-fronted one. On one side of the passage as you went in was the office; on the other side was the family sitting-room. Not that Mr. Madgin's family was a large one. It consisted merely of himself, his daughter Mirpah, and one strong servant-girl with an unlimited capacity for hard work. Mirpah Madgin deserves some notice at our hands.

She was a tall, superb-looking young woman of two-and-twenty, and bore not the slightest resemblance in person, whatever she might do in mind or disposition, to that sly old fox her father. Mirpah's mother had been of Jewish extraction, and in Mirpah's face you read the unmistakable signs of that grand style of beauty which is everywhere associated with the downtrodden race. She moved about the little house in her

inexpensive prints and muslins like a discrowned queen. That she had reached the age of two-and-twenty without having been in love was no source of surprise to those who knew her; for Mirpah Madgin hardly looked like a girl who would marry a poor clerk or a petty tradesman, or who could ever sink into the commonplace drudge of a hand-to-mouth household. She looked like a girl who would some day be claimed by a veritable hero of romance—by some Ivanhoe of modern life, well endowed with this world's goods—who would wed her, and ride away with her to the fairy realms of Tyburnia and Rotten Row.



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And yet, truth to tell, the thread of romance inwoven with the composition of Mirpah Madgin was a very slender one. In so far she belied her own beauty. For a young woman she was strangely practical, and that in a curiously unfeminine way. She was her father's managing clerk and *alter ego*. The housewifely acts of sewing and cooking she held in utter distaste. For domestic management in any of its forms she had no faculty, unless it were for that portion of it which necessitated a watchful eye upon the purse-strings. Such an eye she had been trained to use since she was quite a girl, and Mirpah the superb could on occasion haggle over a penny as keenly as the most ancient fishwife in Eastbury market.

At five minutes past nine precisely, six mornings out of every seven, Mirpah Madgin sat down in her father's office and proceeded to open the letters. Mr. Madgin's business was a multifarious one. Not only was he Lady Chillington's general agent and man of business, although that was his most onerous and lucrative appointment, and the one that engaged most of his time and thoughts, but he was also agent for several lesser concerns, always contriving to have a number of small irons in the fire at one time. Much of Mr. Madgin's time was spent in the collection of rents and in out-door work generally, so that nearly the whole of the office duties devolved upon Mirpah, and by no clerk could they have been more efficiently performed. She made up and balanced the numerous accounts with which Mr. Madgin had to deal in one shape or another. Three-fourths of the letters that emanated from Mr. Madgin's office were written by her. From long practice she had learned to write so like her father that only an expert could have detected the difference between the two hands; and she invariably signed herself, "Yours truly, Solomon Madgin." Indeed, so accustomed was she to writing her father's name that in her correspondence with her brother, who was an actor in London, she more frequently than not signed it in place of her own; so that Madgin junior had to look whether the letter was addressed to him as a son or as a brother before he could tell by whom it had been written.

As her father's assistant Mirpah was happy after a quiet, staid sort of fashion. The energies of her nature found their vent in the busy life in which she took so much delight. She was not at all sentimental: she was not the least bit romantic. She was thoroughly practical, and was as keen in money-making as her father himself. Yet with all this, Mirpah Madgin could be charitable on occasion, and was by no means deficient of high and generous impulses—only she never allowed her impulses to interfere with "business."

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Mr. Madgin never took any important step without first consulting his daughter. Herein he acted wisely, for Mirpah's clear, good sense, and feminine quickness at penetrating motives where he himself was sometimes at fault, had often proved invaluable to him in difficult transactions. In a matter of so much moment as that of the Great Hara Diamond it was not likely that he would be long contented without taking her into his confidence. He had scarcely finished his first pipe when he heard her opening the door with her latch-key, and his face brightened at the sound. She had been on one of those holy pilgrimages in which all who are thus privileged take so much delight: she had been to the bank to increase the little store which lay there already in her father's name. She came into the room tired but smiling. A white straw bonnet, a black silk mantle, and a muslin dress, small in pattern, formed the chief items of her quiet attire. She was carefully gloved and booted; but to whatever she wore Mirpah imparted an air of distinction that put it at once beyond a suggestion of improvement.

"Smoking at this time of day, papa!" exclaimed Mirpah. "And the whisky out, too! Are we about to retire on our fortunes, or what does it all mean?"

"It means, child, that I have got one of the hardest nuts to crack that were ever put before me. If I crack it, I get five thousand pounds for the kernel. If I don't crack it—but that's a possibility I can't bear to think about."

"Five thousand pounds! That would indeed be a kernel worth having. My teeth are younger than yours, and perhaps I may be able to help you."

Mr. Madgin smoked in silence for a little while, while Mirpah toyed patiently with her bonnet strings. "The nut is simply this," said the old man at last. "In India, twenty years ago, a diamond was stolen from a dying man. I am now told to find the thief, to obtain from him the diamond either by fair means or foul—supposing always that he is still alive and has the diamond still in his possession—and on the day I give the stone to its rightful owner the aforementioned five thousand pounds become mine."

"A grand prize, and one worth striving for!"

"Even so; but how can I strive, when I have nothing to strive against? I am like a man put into a dark room to fight a duel. I cannot find my antagonist. I grope about, not knowing whether he is on the right hand of me or the left, before me or behind me. In fact, I am utterly at sea; and the more I think about the matter the more hopelessly bewildered I seem to become."

"Two heads are better than one, papa. Let me try to help you. Tell me the case from beginning to end, with all the details as they are known to you."

Mr. Madgin willingly complied, and related *in extenso* all that he had heard that morning at Deepley Walls. The little man had a high opinion of his daughter's sagacity. That

such an opinion was in nowise lessened by the result of the present case will be best seen by the following excerpts from Mr. Madgin's diary, which, as having a particular bearing on the case of the Great Hara Diamond, we proceed at once to lay before the reader:—

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### EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF MR. SOLOMON MADGIN.

“July 9th, Evening.—After the wonderful revelation made to me by Lady Chillington this morning, I came home, and got behind a churchwarden, and set my wits to work to think the matter out. I shut my eyes and puffed away for an hour and a half, but at the end of that time I was as much in a fog as when I first sat down. Nowhere could I discern a single ray of light. Then in came Mirpah, and when she begged of me to tell her the story, I was glad to do so, remembering how often she had helped me through a puzzle in days gone by—but none of them of such magnitude as this one. So I told her everything as far as it was known to myself. After that we discussed the whole case carefully step by step. The immediate result of this discussion was, that as soon as tea was over, I went as far as the White Hart tavern in search of Sergeant Nicholas. I found him on the bowling-green, watching the players. I called for a quart of old ale and some tobacco, and before long we were as cosy as two old cronies who have known each other for twenty years. The morning had shown me that the Sergeant was a man of some intelligence, and of much worldly experience; and when I had lowered myself imperceptibly to the level of his intellect, so as to put him more completely at his ease, I had no difficulty in inducing him to talk freely and fully on that one subject which, for the last few hours, has had for me an interest paramount to that of any other. My primary object was to induce him to retail to me every scrap of information that he could call to mind respecting the Russian, Platzoff, who is said to have stolen the diamond. It was Mirpah’s opinion and mine, that he must be in possession of many bits of special knowledge, such as might seem of no consequence to him, but which might be invaluable to us in our search, and such as he would naturally leave out of the narrative he told Lady Chillington. The result proved that our opinion was well founded. I did not leave the Sergeant till I had pumped him thoroughly dry. (Mem.: An excellent tap of old ale at the White Hart. Must try some of it at home.)”I found Mirpah watering her geraniums in the back garden. She was all impatience to learn the result of my interview. I am thankful that increasing years have not impaired my memory. I repeated to Mirpah every word bearing on the case in point that the Sergeant had confided to me. Then I waited in silence for her opinion. I was anxious to know whether it coincided in any way with my own. I am happy to think that it did coincide. Father and daughter were agreed.”“I think that you have done a very good afternoon’s work, papa,” said Mirpah, after a few moments given to silent thought. ‘After a lapse of twenty years, it is not likely that Sergeant Nicholas should have a very clear recollection of any conversation

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that he may have overheard between Captain Chillington and M. Platzoff. Indeed, had he pretended to repeat any such conversation, I should have felt strongly inclined to doubt the truth of his entire narrative. Happily he disclaims any such abnormal powers of memory. He can remember nothing but a chance phrase or two which some secondary circumstance fixed indelibly on his mind. But he can remember a great number of little facts bearing on the relations between his master and the Russian. These facts, considered singly, may seem of little or no importance, but taken in the aggregate, and regarded as so many bits of mosaic work forming part of a complicated whole, they assume an aspect of far greater importance. In any case, they put us on a trail, which may turn out to be the right one or the wrong one, but at present certainly seems to be worth following up. Finally, they all tend to deepen our first suspicion that M. Platzoff was neither more nor less than a political refugee. The next point is to ascertain whether he is still alive." "Here again the clear logical intellect of Mirpah (so like my own) came to my assistance. Before parting for the night we were agreed as to what our mode of procedure ought to be on the morrow. This most extraordinary case engages all my thoughts. I am afraid that I shall not be able to sleep much to-night." "July 10th.—I owe it to Mirpah to say that it was entirely in consequence of a hint from her that I went at an early hour this morning to the office of the *Eastbury Courier*, there to consult a file of that newspaper. Six months ago the daughter of Sir John Pennythorne was married to a rich London gentleman. Mirpah had read the account of the festivities consequent on that event, and seemed to remember that among other friends of the bridegroom invited down to Finch Hall was some foreign gentleman, who was stated in the newspaper to belong to the Russian Legation in London. Acting on Mirpah's hint, I went back through the files of the *Courier* till I lighted on the account of the wedding. True enough, among other guests on that occasion, I found catalogued the name of a certain Monsieur H—— of the Russian Embassy. I had got all I wanted from the *Eastbury Courier*. "My next proceeding was to hasten up to Deepley Walls, to obtain an interview with Lady Chillington, and to induce her ladyship to write to Sir John Pennythorne, asking him to write to the aforesaid M. H——, and inquire whether, among the archives (I think that is the correct word) of the Embassy, they had any record of a political refugee by name Paul Platzoff, who, twenty years ago, was in India, etc. I had considerable difficulty in persuading her ladyship to write, but at last the letter was sent. I await the result anxiously. The chances seem to me something like a thousand to one against our inquiry being productive of any tangible result.

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What I dread more than all is that M. Platzoff is no longer among the living. "July 20th.—Nine days without a word from Sir John Pennythorne, except to say that he had written his friend Monsieur H——, as requested by Lady Chillington. I began to despair. Each morning I inquired of her ladyship whether she had received any reply from Sir John, and each morning her ladyship said: 'I have had no reply, Mr. Madgin, beyond the one you have already seen.' "Certain matters connected with a lease took me up to Deepley Walls this afternoon for the second time to-day. The afternoon post came in while I was there. Among other letters was one from Sir John Pennythorne, which, when she had read it, her ladyship tossed over to me. It enclosed one from M. H—— to Sir John. It was on the latter that I pounced. It was written in French, but even at the first hasty reading I could make it out sufficiently to know that it was of far greater importance than even in my wildest dreams I had dared to imagine. "I never saw Lady Chillington so excited as she was during the few moments which I took up in reading the letter. During the nine days that had elapsed since the writing of her letter to Sir John she had treated me somewhat slightly; there was, or so I fancied, a spice of contempt in her manner towards me. The step I had induced her to take in writing to Sir John had met with no approbation at her hands; it had seemed to her an utterly futile and ridiculous thing to do; therefore was I now proportionately well pleased to find that my wild idea had been productive of such excellent fruit. "I must certainly compliment you, Mr. Madgin, on the success of your first step,' said her ladyship. 'It was like one of the fine intuitions of genius to imagine that you saw a way to reach M. Platzoff through the Russian Embassy. You have been fully justified by the result. Madgin, the man yet lives!—the man whose sacrilegious hands robbed my dead son of that which he had left as a sacred gift to his mother. May the curse of a widowed mother attend him through life! Let me hear the letter again, Madgin; or stay, I will read it myself: your French is execrable. Ha, ha! Monsieur Paul Platzoff, we shall have our revenge out of you yet.' "She read the letter through for the second time with a sort of deliberate eagerness which showed me how deeply interested her heart was in the affair. She dropped her eye-glass and gave a great sigh when she came to the end of it. 'And what do you propose to do next, Mr. Madgin?' she asked. 'Your conduct so far satisfies me that I cannot do better than leave the case entirely in your hands.'

"With all due deference to your ladyship,' I replied, 'I think that my next step ought to be to reconnoitre the enemy's camp.'

"Exactly my own thought,' said her ladyship. 'When can you start for Windermere?'

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“‘To-morrow morning, at nine.’

“After a little more conversation I left her ladyship. She seemed in better spirits than I had seen her for a long time.

“I need not attempt to describe dear Mirpah’s delight when I read over to her the contents of Monsieur H.’s note. She put her arms round me and kissed me. ‘The five thousand pounds shall yet be yours, papa,’ she said. Stranger things than that have come to pass before now. But I am working only for her and James. Should I ever be so fortunate as to touch the five thousand pounds, one-half of it will go to form a dowry for my Mirpah. Below is a free translation of the business part of M.H.’s letter, which was simply an extract from some secret ledger kept at the Embassy:—“‘Platzoff, Paul. A Russian by birth and a conspirator by choice. Born in Moscow in 1802, his father being a rich leather-merchant of that city. Implicated at the age of nineteen in sundry insurrectionary movements; tried, and sentenced to three years’ imprisonment in a military fortress. After his release, left Russia without permission, having first secretly transferred his property into foreign securities. Went to Paris. Issued a scurrilous pamphlet directed against his Majesty the Emperor. Spent several years in travel—now in Europe, now in the East, striving wherever he went to promulgate his revolutionary ideas. More than suspected of being a member of several secret political societies. Has resided for the last few years at Bon Repos, on the banks of Windermere, from which place he communicates constantly with other characters as desperate as himself. Russia has no more bitter and determined enemy than Paul Platzoff. He is at once clever and unscrupulous. While he lives he will not cease to conspire.’

“After this followed a description of Platzoff’s personal appearance, which it is needless to transcribe here.

“I start for Windermere by the first train to-morrow.”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### MR. MADGIN’S SECRET JOURNEY.

Mr. Madgin left home by an early train on the morning of the day following that on which Lady Chillington had received a reply from Sir John Pennythorne. His first intention had been to make the best of his way to Windermere, and there ascertain the exact locality of Bon Repos. But a fresh view of the case presented itself to his mind as he lay thinking in bed. Instead of taking the train for the North, he took one for the South, and found himself at Euston as the London clocks were striking twelve. After an early dinner, and a careful consultation of the Post-Office Directory, Mr. Madgin ordered a hansom, and was driven to Hatton Garden, in and about which unfragrant locality the diamond merchants most do congregate. After due inquiries made and answered, Mr.

Madgin was driven eastward for another mile or more. Here a similar set of inquiries elicited a similar set of answers. Mr. Madgin went back to his hotel well pleased with his day's work.



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His inquiries had satisfied him that no green diamond of the size and value attributed to the Great Hara had either been seen or heard of in the London market during the last twenty years. It still remained to test the foreign markets in the same way. Mr. Madgin's idea was that this work could be done better by some trustworthy agent well acquainted with the trade than by himself. He accordingly left instructions with an eminent diamond merchant to have all needful inquiries made at Paris, Amsterdam, and St. Petersburg, as to whether such a stone as the Great Hara had come under the cognizance of the trade any time during the last twenty years. The result of the inquiry was to be communicated to Mr. Madgin by letter.

Next day Mr. Madgin journeyed down to Windermere. Arrived at Bowness, he found no difficulty in ascertaining the exact locality of Bon Repos, the house and its owner being known by sight or repute to almost every inhabitant of the little town. Mr. Madgin stopped all night at Bowness. Next morning he hired a small boat, and was pulled across the lake to a point about half a mile below Bon Repos, and there he landed.

Mr. Madgin was travelling *incog*. The name upon his portmanteau was "Joshua Deedes, Esq." He was dressed in a suit of glossy black, with a white neck-cloth, and gold-rimmed spectacles. He had quite an episcopal air. He did not call himself a clergyman, but people were at liberty to accept him as one if they chose.

Assisted by the most unimpeachable of malaccas, Mr. Madgin took the high-road that wound round the grounds of Bon Repos. But so completely was the house hidden in its nest of greenery that the chimney-pots were all of it that was visible from the road. But under a spur of the hill by which the house was shut in at the back, Mr. Madgin found a tiny hamlet of a dozen houses, by far the most imposing of which was the village inn—hotel, it called itself, and showed to the world the sign of The Jolly Fishers. Into this humble hostelry Mr. Madgin marched without hesitation, and called for some refreshment. So impressed was the landlord with the clerical appearance of his guest that he whipped off his apron, ushered him into the state parlour, and made haste to wait upon him himself. He, the guest, had actually called for a bottle of the best dry sherry, and when the landlord took it in he invited him to fetch another glass, and come and join him over it. Mr. Joshua Deedes was a tourist—well-to-do, without doubt; the landlord could see as much as that—and having never visited Lakeland before, he was naturally delighted with the freshness and novelty of everything that he saw. The change from London life was so thorough, so complete in every respect, that he could hardly believe he had left the great Babel no longer ago than yesterday. It seemed years since he had been there. He had thought Bowness a charming spot, but this little nook surpassed Bowness, inasmuch as it was still farther removed and shut out from the frivolities and follies of the great world. Here one was almost alone with Nature and her wondrous works. Then Mr. Deedes filled up his own glass and that of the landlord.

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"Perhaps, sir, you would like to stay here for a night or two," suggested the host timidly; "we have a couple of spare beds."

"Nothing would please me better," answered Mr. Deedes, with solemn alacrity. "I feel that the healthful air of these hills is doing me an immensity of good. Kindly send to the Crown at Bowness for my portmanteau, and ascertain what you have in the house for dinner."

After a while came dinner, and a little later on, Mr. Deedes having expressed a desire to see something of the lake, the landlord sent to borrow a boat, and then took his guest for an hour's row on Windermere. From the water they had a capital view of the low white front of Bon Repos. There were two gentlemen smoking on the terrace. The lesser of the two, said the landlord, was M. Platzoff. The taller man was Captain Ducie, at present a guest at Bon Repos. Then the landlord wandered off into a long, rambling account of Bon Repos and its owner. Mr. Deedes was much interested in hearing about the eccentric habits and strange mode of life of M. Platzoff, with the details of which the landlord was as thoroughly acquainted as though he had formed one of the household. Their row on the lake was prolonged for a couple of hours, and Mr. Deedes went back to the hotel much edified.

In the dusk of evening he encountered Cleon, M. Platzoff's valet, as he was lounging slowly down the village street on his way to The Jolly Fishers. Mr. Deedes scrutinised the dark-skinned servant narrowly in passing. "The face of a cunning, unscrupulous rascal, if ever I saw one," he muttered to himself. "Nevertheless, I must make his acquaintance."

And he did make his acquaintance. As Cleon and the landlord sat hob-nobbing together in the little snuggerly behind the bar, Mr. Deedes put in his head to ask a question of the latter. Thereupon the landlord begged permission to introduce his friend Mr. Cleon to the notice of his guest, Mr. Deedes. The two men bowed, Mr. Cleon rather sulkily; but Mr. Deedes was all affability and smiling *bonhomie*. He had several questions to ask, and he sat down on the only vacant chair in the little room. He wanted to know the distance to Keswick; how much higher Helvellyn was than Fairfield; whether it was possible to get any potted char for breakfast, and so on; on all which questions both Cleon and the landlord had something to say. But talking being dry work, as Mr. Deedes smilingly observed, brought naturally to mind the fact that the landlord had some excellent dry sherry, and that one could not do better this warm evening than have another bottle fetched up out of the cool depths of the cellar. Mr. Cleon, being pressed, was nothing loth to join Mr. Deedes over this bottle. Mr. Deedes, without condescending into familiarity, made himself very agreeable, but did not sit long. After imbibing a couple of glasses, he bade the landlord and the valet an affable good-night, and went off decorously to bed.

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Mr. Deedes was up betimes next morning, and took a three miles' trudge over the hills before breakfast. He spent a quiet day mooning about the neighbourhood, and really enjoying himself after his own fashion, although his mind was busily engaged all the time in trying to solve the mystery of the Great Diamond. In the evening he took care to have a few pleasant words with Cleon, and then early to bed. Two more days passed away after a similar quiet fashion, and then Mr. Deedes began to chafe inwardly at the small progress he was making.

Although he had been so successful in tracing out M. Platzoff, and in working the case up to its present point in a remarkably short space of time, he acknowledged to himself that he was completely baffled when he came to consider what his next step ought to be. He could not, indeed, see his way to a single step beyond his present standpoint. Much as he seemed to have gained at a single leap, was he in reality one hair's-breadth nearer the secret object of his quest than on that day when the name of the Great Hara Diamond first made music in his ears? He doubted it greatly.

When he first decided on coming down to Bon Repos, he trusted that the chapter of accidents and the good fortune which had so far attended him would somehow put it in his power to scrape an acquaintance with M. Platzoff himself, and such an acquaintance once made, it would be his own fault if, in one way or another, he did not make it subservient to the ambitious end he had in view.

But in M. Platzoff he found a recluse: a man who made no fresh acquaintanceships; who held the whole tourist tribe in horror, and who even kept himself aloof from such of the neighbouring families as might be considered his equals in social position. It was quite evident to Mr. Deedes that he might reside close to Bon Repos for twenty years, and at the end of that time not have succeeded in addressing half-a-dozen words to its owner.

Then again he had succeeded little better with regard to Cleon than with regard to Cleon's master. All his advances, made with a mixture of affability and *bonhomie* which Mr. Deedes flattered himself was irresistible with most people, were productive of little or no effect upon the mulatto. He received them, not with suspicion, for he had nothing of which to suspect harmless Mr. Deedes, but with a sort of sulky indifference, as though he considered them rather a nuisance than otherwise, and would have preferred their being offered to anyone else. Did Mr. Deedes, in conversation with him and the landlord, venture to bring the talk round to Bon Repos and M. Platzoff; did he hazard the remark that since his arrival in Lakeland several people had spoken to him of the strange character and eccentric mode of life of Mr. Cleon's employer—he was met with a stony silence, which told him as plainly as any words could have done that M. Platzoff and his affairs were matters that in no wise concerned him. It was quite evident that neither the Russian nor his dark-skinned valet was of any avail for the furtherance of that scheme which had brought Mr. Deedes all the way to the wilds of Westmoreland.

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He began to despair, and was on the point of writing to Mirpah, thinking that her shrewd woman's wit might be able to suggest some stratagem or mode of attack other than that made use of by him, when suddenly a prospect opened before him such as in his wildest dreams of success he dared not have bodied forth. He was not slow to avail himself of it.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

ENTER MADGIN JUNIOR.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said the landlord of The Jolly Fishers one morning to his guest, Mr. Deedes, "but I think I have more than once heard you say that you came from London?"

"I do come from London," answered Mr. Deedes; "*I* am Cockney born and bred. I came direct from London to Windermere. But why do you ask?"

"Simply, sir, because they are in want of a footman at Bon Repos, to fill up the place of one who has gone away to get married. Mossoo Platzoff don't like advertising for servants, and Mr. Cleon is at a loss where to find a fellow that can wait at table and has some manners about him. You see sir, the country louts about here are neither useful nor ornamental in a gentleman's house. Now, sir, it struck me that among your friends you might perhaps know some gentleman who would be glad to recommend a respectable man for such a place. Must have a good character from his last situation, and be able to wait at table; and I hope, sir, you will pardon the liberty I've taken in mentioning it to you."

Mr. Deedes was holding up a glass of wine to the light as the landlord brought his little speech to a close. He sipped the wine slowly, with his eyes bent on the floor; then he put down the glass and rubbed his hands softly one within the other. Then he spoke.

"It happens, singularly enough," he said, "that a particular friend of mine—Mr. Madgin, a gentleman, I daresay, whose name you have never heard—spoke to me only three weeks ago about one of his people for whom he was desirous of obtaining another situation, he himself being about to break up his establishment and go to reside on the Continent. I will write Mr. Madgin to-night, and if the young man has not engaged himself, I will ask my friend to send him down here. He will have a first-class testimonial, and I have no doubt he would suit M. Platzoff admirably. I am obliged to you, landlord, for mentioning this matter to me."

Mr. Deedes went off at once to his room, and wrote and despatched the following letter:

—

“MY DEAR BOY,—I saw by an advertisement in last week’s *Era* that you are still out of an engagement. I have an opening for you down here in a drama of real life. It will be greatly to your advantage to accept it, so do not hesitate for a moment. Come without delay. Book yourself from Euston Square to Windermere. Take steamer from the latter place to Newby Bridge. There, at the hotel, await my arrival. Bear in mind that down here my name is *Mr. Joshua Deedes*, and that yours is *James Jasmin*, a footman, at present out of a situation. To a person of your intelligence I need not say more.

“Your affectionate father,  
“S.M.

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"N.B.—This communication is secret and confidential. All expenses paid. Do not on any account fail to come. I will be at the Newby Bridge Hotel on Thursday morning at eleven."

This letter he addressed, "Mr. James Madgin, Royal Tabard Theatre, Southwark, London." Having posted it with his own hands, he went for a long, solitary ramble among the hills. He wanted to think out and elaborate the great scheme that had unfolded itself before his dazzled eyes while the landlord was talking to him. He had seen the whole compass of it at a glance; he wanted now to consider it in detail. There was an elation in his eye and an elasticity in his tread that made him seem ten years younger than on the previous day.

He had requested the landlord to tell Mr. Cleon what steps he was about to take with the view of supplying M. Platzoff with a new footman. In these proceedings the mulatto acquiesced ungraciously. Truth to tell, he was bored by Mr. Deedes and his friendly officiousness, and although secretly glad that the trouble of hunting out a new servant had been taken off his hands, he was not a man willingly to acknowledge his obligations to another.

Mr. Deedes set out immediately after breakfast on Thursday morning, and having walked to the Ferry Hotel, he took the steamer from that place to Newby Bridge. Mr. James Jasmin was at the landing-stage, awaiting his arrival. After shaking hands heartily, and inquiring as to each other's health, the two wandered off arm-in-arm down one of the quiet country roads. Then Mr. Deedes explained to Mr. Jasmin his reasons for sending for him from London, and with what view he was desirous of introducing him into Bon Repos. The younger man listened attentively. When the elder one had done, he said:

"Father, this is a very pretty scheme of yours; but it seems to me that I am to be nothing more than a cat's-paw in the affair. You have only given me half your confidence. You must give me the whole of it before I can agree to act as you wish. I want to hear the whole history of the case, and how you came to be mixed up in it. Further, I want to know how much Lady Chillington intends to give you in case you succeed in getting back the diamond, and what my share of the recompense is to be?"

"Dear, dear! what a headstrong boy you are!" moaned Mr. Deedes. "Why can't you be content with what I tell you, and leave the rest to me?"

The younger man made no reply in words, but turned abruptly on his heel and began to walk back.

"James! James!" cried the old man, catching his son by the coat tails, "do not go off in that way. It shall be as you wish. I will tell you everything. You headstrong boy! Do you want to break your poor father's heart?"

“Break your fiddlestick!” said Mr. Jasmin, irreverently. “Let us sit down on this green bank, and you shall tell me all about the Diamond while I try the quality of these cigars. I am all attention.”

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Thus adjured, Mr. Deedes sighed deeply, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, looked meditatively into his hat for a few seconds, and then began.

Beginning with the narrative of Sergeant Nicholas, Mr. Deedes went on from that point to detail by what means he had discovered that M. Platzoff was still alive and where he was now living. Then he told of his coming down to Bon Repos, and all that had happened to him since that time. He had already told his son with what view he had sent for him from London—that not being able to make any further headway in the case himself, he was desirous of introducing his dear James, in the guise of a servant, into Bon Repos, as an agent on whose integrity and cleverness he could alike depend.

“But you have not yet told your dear James the amount of the honorarium you will be entitled to receive in case you recover the stolen Diamond.”

“What do you say to five thousand pounds?” asked Mr. Deedes in a solemn whisper.

The younger man opened his eyes. “Hum! A very pretty little amount,” he said, “but I have yet to learn what proportion of that sum will percolate into the pockets of this child. In other words, what is to be my share of the plunder?”

“Plunder, my dear boy, is a strange word to make use of. Pray be more particular in your choice of terms. The mercenary view you take of the case is very distressing to my feelings. A proper recompense for your time and trouble it was my intention to make you; but as regards the five thousand pounds, I hoped to be able to fund it in toto, to add it to my little capital, and to leave it intact for those who will come after me. And you know very well, James, that there will only be you and Mirpah to divide whatever the old man may die possessed of.”

“But, my dear dad, you are not going to die for these five-and-twenty years. My present necessities are imperative: like the daughters of the horse-leech, they are continually asking for more.”

“James! James! how changed you are from the dear, unselfish boy of ten years ago!”

“And very proper too. But do let us be business-like, if you please. The role of the ‘heavy father’ doesn’t suit you at all. Keep sentiment out of the case, and then we shall do very well. Listen to my ultimatum. The day I place the Hara Diamond in your hands you must give me a cheque for fifteen hundred pounds.”

“Fifteen hundred pounds!” gasped the old man. “James! James! do you wish to see me die in a workhouse?”

“Fifteen hundred pounds. Not one penny less,” reiterated Madgin, junior. “What do you mean by a workhouse? You will then have three thousand, five hundred pounds to the good, and will have got the job done very cheaply. But there is another side to the



question. Both you and I have been counting our chickens before they are hatched. Suppose I don't succeed in laying hold of the Diamond—what then?

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And, mind you, I don't think I shall succeed. To begin with—I don't half believe in the existence of your big Diamond. It looks to me very much like a hoax from beginning to end. But granting the existence of the stone, and that it was stolen by your Russian friend, are not the chances a thousand to one either that he has disposed of it long ago, or else that he has hidden it away in some place so safe that the cleverest burglar in London would be puzzled to get at it? Suppose, for instance, that it is deposited by him at his banker's: in that case, what are your expectations worth? Not a brass farthing. No, my dear dad, the risk of failure is too great, outweighing, as it does, the chances of success a thousandfold, for me to have the remotest hope of ever fingering the fifteen hundred pounds. I have, therefore, to appraise my time and services as the hero of a losing cause. I say the hero; for I certainly consider that I am about to play the leading part in the forthcoming drama—that I am the bright particular 'star' round which the lesser lights will all revolve. Such being the case, I do not consider that I am rating my services too highly when I name two hundred guineas as the lowest sum for which I am willing to play the part of James Jasmin, footman, spy and amateur detective."

Again Mr. Deedes gasped for breath. He opened his mouth, but words refused to come. He shook his head with a fine tragic air, and wiped his eyes.

"Take an hour or two to consider it," said the son, indulgently. "If you agree to my proposition, I shall want it put down in black and white and properly signed. If you do not agree to it, I start back for town by this night's mail."

"James, James, you are one too many for me!" said the old man, pathetically. "Let us go and dine."

The first thing Madgin junior did after they got back to the hotel was to place before his father a sheet of note-paper, an inkstand and a pen. "Write," he said; and the old man wrote to his dictation:—

"I, Solomon Madgin, on the part of Lady Chillington, of Deepley Walls, do hereby promise and bind myself to pay over into the hands of my son, James Madgin, the sum of fifteen hundred pounds (L1,500) on the day that the aforesaid James Madgin places safely in my hands the stone known as the Hara Diamond. "Should the aforesaid James Madgin, from causes beyond his own control, find himself unable to obtain possession of the said Diamond, I, Solomon Madgin, bind myself to reimburse him in the sum of two hundred guineas (L210) as payment in full for the time and labour expended by him in his search for the Hara Diamond.

"(Signed) SOLOMON MADGIN.

"July 21st, 18—."

Mr. Madgin threw down the pen when he had signed his name and chuckled quietly to himself. "You don't think, dear boy, that a foolish paper like that would be worth anything in a court of law?" he said, interrogatively.

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“As a legal document it would probably be laughed at,” said Madgin junior. “But in another point of view I have no doubt that it would carry with it a certain moral weight. For instance, suppose the claim embodied in this paper were disputed, and I were compelled to resort to ulterior measures, the written promise given by you might not be found legally binding, but, on the other hand, neither Lady Chillington nor you would like to see that document copied in extenso into all the London papers, nor the whole of your remarkable scheme for the recovery of the Hara Diamond detailed by the plaintiff in open court, to be talked over next morning through the length and breadth of England. “Extraordinary Case between a Lady of Rank and an Actor.” How would that read, eh?”

“My dear James, let me shake hands with you,” exclaimed the old man with emotion. “You are a most extraordinary young man. I am proud of you, my dear boy, I am indeed. What a pity that you adopted the stage as your profession! You ought to have entered the law. In the law you would have risen—nothing could have kept you down.”

“That is as it may be,” returned James. “If I am satisfied with my profession you have no cause to grumble. But here comes dinner.”

Mr. James Madgin was first low comedian at one of the transpontine theatres. The height of his ambition was to have the offer of an engagement from one of the West-end managers. Only give him the opportunity, and he felt sure that he could work his way with a cultivated audience. When a lad of sixteen he had run away from home with a company of strolling players, and from that time he had been a devoted follower of Thespis. He had roughed it patiently in the provinces for years, his only consolation during a long season of poverty and neglect arising from the conviction that he was slowly but surely improving himself in the difficult art he had chosen as his mode of earning his daily bread. When the manager of the Royal Tabard, then on a provincial tour, picked him out from all his brother actors, and offered him a Metropolitan engagement, James Madgin thought himself on the high road to fame and fortune. Time had served to show him the fallacy of his expectations. He had been four years at the Royal Tabard, during the whole of which time he had been in receipt of a tolerable salary for his position—that of first low comedian; but fame and fortune still seemed as far from his grasp as ever. With opportunity given him, he had hoped one day to electrify the town. But that hope was now buried very deep down in his heart, and if ever brought out, like an “old property,” to be looked at and turned about, its only greeting was a quiet sneer, after which it was relegated to the limbo whence it had been disinterred. James Madgin had given up the expectation of ever shining in the theatrical system as a “great star;” he was trying to content himself with the thought of living and dying a respectable mediocrity—useful, ornamental even, in his proper sphere, but certainly never destined to set the Thames on fire. The manager of the Tabard had recently died, and at present James Madgin was in want of an engagement.

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As father and son sat together at table, you might, knowing their relationship to each other, have readily detected a certain likeness between them; but it was a likeness of expression rather than of features, and would scarcely have been noticed by any casual observer.

Madgin junior was a fresh complexioned, sprightly young fellow of six or seven and twenty, with dark, frank-looking eyes, a prominent nose, and thin mobile lips. He had dark-brown hair, closely cropped; and, as became one of his profession, he was guiltless of either beard or moustache. Like Mirpah, he inherited his eyes and nose from his mother, but in no other feature could he be said to resemble his beautiful sister.

Father and son were very merry over dinner, and did not spare the wine afterwards. The old man could not sufficiently admire the shrewd business-like aptitude shown by his son in their recent conference. The latter's extraction of a written promise by his own father was an action that the elder man could fully appreciate; it was a stroke of business that touched him to the heart, and made him feel proud of his "dear James."

"But how will you manage about waiting at table?" asked Solomon of his son as they strolled out together to smoke their cigars on the little bridge by the hotel. "I am afraid that you will betray your ignorance, and break down when you come to be put to the test."

"Never fear; I shall pull through somehow," answered James. "I am not so ignorant on such matters as you may suppose. Geary used to say that I did the flunkey business better than any man he ever had at the Tabard: I have always been celebrated for my footmen. Of course I am quite aware that the real article is very different from its stage counterfeit, but I have actually been at some pains to study the genus in its different varieties, and to arrive at some knowledge of the special duties it has to perform. One of our supers had been footman in the family of a well-known marquis, and from him I picked up a good deal of useful information. Then, whenever I have been out to a swell dinner of any kind, I have always kept my eye on the fellows who waited at table. So what with one thing and what with another, I don't think I shall make any very terrible blunders."

"I hope not, or else Mr. Cleon will give you your *conge*, and that will spoil everything. Further, as regards the mulatto, I have a word or two to say to you. It is quite evident to me that he is the presiding genius at Bon Repos. If you wish to retain your situation you must pay court to him far more than to M. Platzoff, with whom, indeed, it is doubtful whether you will ever come into personal contact. You must therefore, my dear boy, swallow your pride for the time being, and take care to let the mulatto see that you regard him as a patron to whose kindness you hold yourself deeply indebted."

"All that I can do, and more, to serve my own ends," answered the son. "Your words are words of wisdom, and shall live in my memory."

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Mr. Madgin stopped with his son till summoned by the whistle of the last steamer. The two bade each other an affectionate farewell. When next they met it would be as strangers.

Mr. Cleon and the landlord were enjoying the cool of the evening and their cigars outside the house as Mr. Deedes walked up to The Jolly Fishers. He stopped for a moment to speak to them.

"I had a note this morning from my friend Mr. Madgin, of Deepley Walls," he said, "in which that gentleman informs me that the young man, James Jasmin, will be with you in the course of the day after to-morrow at the latest. He hopes that Jasmin will suit you, and he is evidently much pleased that a position has been offered him in an establishment in every way so unexceptionable as that of Bon Repos."

The mulatto's white teeth glistened in the twilight. Evidently he was pleased. He muttered a few words in reply. Mr. Deedes bowed courteously, wished him and the landlord a very good night, and withdrew.

Late in the afternoon of the day but one following that of his visit to Newby Bridge, as Mr. Deedes was busy with a London newspaper three or four days old, the landlord ushered a young man into his room, who, with a bow and a carrying of the forefinger to his forehead, announced himself as James Jasmin, from Deepley Walls.

"Don't you go, landlord," said Mr. Deedes; "I may want you." Then he deliberately put on his gold-rimmed glasses, and proceeded to take a leisurely survey of the new corner, who was dressed in a neat (but not new) suit of black, and was standing in a respectful attitude, and slowly brushing his hat with one sleeve of his coat.

"So you are James Jasmin, from Deepley Walls, are you?" asked Mr. Deedes, looking him slowly down from head to feet.

"Yes, sir, I am the party, sir," answered James.

"Well, Jasmin, and how did you leave my friend Mr. Madgin? and what is the latest news from Deepley Walls?"

"Master and family all pretty well, sir, thank you. Master has got a tenant for the old house, and the family will all start for the Continong next week."

"Well, Jasmin, I hope you will contrive to suit your new employer as well as you appear to have suited my friend. Landlord, let him have some dinner, and he had better perhaps wait here till Mr. Cleon comes down this evening."

When Mr. Cleon arrived a couple of hours later, Jasmin was duly presented to him. The mulatto scrutinised him keenly and seemed pleased with his appearance, which was

decidedly superior to that of the ordinary run of Jeameses. He finished by asking him for his testimonials.

"I have none with me, sir," answered Jasmin, discreetly emphasising the *sir*. "I can only refer you to my late master, Mr. Madgin, of Deepley Walls, who will gladly speak as to my qualifications and integrity."

"That being the case, I will take you for the present on the recommendation of Mr. Deedes, and will write Mr. Madgin in the course of a post or two. You can go up to Bon Repos at once, and I will induct you into your new duties to-morrow."

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Jasmin thanked Mr. Cleon respectfully and withdrew. Ten minutes later, with his modest valise in his hand, he set out for his new home. He and Mr. Deedes did not see each other again. Next day Mr. Deedes announced that he was summoned home by important letters. He bade the landlord and Cleon a friendly farewell, and left early on the following morning in time to catch the first train from Windermere going south.

### CHAPTER XXV.

#### MADGIN JUNIOR'S FIRST REPORT.

Mr. Madgin senior lost no time after his arrival at home before hastening up to Deepley Walls to see Lady Chillington. He had a brief conference with Mirpah while discussing his modest chop and glass of bitter ale; and he found time to read a letter which had arrived for him some days previously from the London diamond merchant whom he had employed to make inquiries as to whether any such gem as the Great Hara had been offered for sale at any of the great European marts during the past twenty years. The letter was an assurance that no such stone had been in the market, nor was any such known to be in the hands of any private individual.

Mr. Madgin took the letter with him to Deepley Walls. In her grim way Lady Chillington seemed greatly pleased to see him. She was all impatience to hear what news he had to tell her. But Mr. Madgin had his reservations; he did not deem it advisable to detail to her ladyship step by step all that he had done. Her sense of honour might revolt at certain things he had found it necessary to do in furtherance of the great object he had in view. He told her of his inquiries among the London diamond merchants, and read to her the letter he had received from one of them. Then he went on to describe Bon Repos and its owner from the glimpses he had had of both. For all such details her ladyship betrayed a curiosity that seemed as if it would never be satisfied. He next went on to inform her that he had succeeded in placing his son as footman at Bon Repos, and that everything now depended on the discoveries James might succeed in making. But nothing was said as to the false pretences and the changed name under which Madgin junior had entered M. Platzoff's household. Those were details which Mr. Madgin kept judiciously to himself. Her ladyship was perfectly satisfied with his report; she was more than satisfied—she was pleased. She was very sanguine as to the existence of the diamond, and also as to its retention by M. Platzoff; far more so, in fact, than Mr. Madgin himself was. But the latter was too shrewd a man of business to parade his doubts of success before a client who paid so liberally, so long as her hobby was ridden after her own fashion. Mr. Madgin's chief aim in life was to ride other people's hobbies, and be well paid for his jockeyship.

"I am highly gratified, Mr. Madgin," said her ladyship, "by the style, *plein de finesse*, in which you have so far conducted this delicate investigation. I will not ask you what your



next step is to be. You know far better than I can tell you what ought to be done. I leave the matter with confidence in your hands.”

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"Your ladyship is very kind," observed Mr. Madgin, deferentially. "I will do my best to deserve a continuance of your good opinion."

"As week after week goes by, Mr. Madgin," resumed Lady Chillington, "the conviction seems to take deeper root within me that that man—that villain—M. Platzoff, has my son's diamond still in his possession. I have a sort of spiritual consciousness that such is the case. My waking intuitions, my dreams by night, all point to the same end. You, with your cold, worldly sense, may laugh at such things; we women, with our finer organisation, know how often the truth comes to us on mystic wings. The diamond will yet be mine!"

"What nonsense women sometimes talk," said Mr. Madgin contemptuously to himself as he walked back through the park. "Who would believe that my lady, so sensible on most things, could talk such utter rubbish. But women have a way of leaping to results, and ignoring processes, that is simply astounding to men of common sense. The diamond hers, indeed! Although I have been so successful so far, there is as much difference between what I have done and what has yet to be done as there is between the simple alphabet and a mathematical theorem. To-morrow's post ought to bring me a letter from Bon Repos."

To-morrow's post did bring Mr. Madgin a letter from Bon Repos. The writer of it was not his son, but Cleon. It was addressed, as a matter of course, to Deepley Walls, of which place the mulatto had been led to believe Mr. Madgin was the proprietor. The note, which was couched in tolerable English, was simply a request to be furnished with a testimonial as to the character and abilities of James Jasmin, late footman at Deepley Walls. Mr. Madgin replied by return of post as under:—

"Deepley Walls, July 27th.

"SIR,—In reply to your favour of the 25th inst, inquiring as to the character and respectability of James Jasmin, late a footman in my employ, I beg to say that I can strongly recommend him, and have much pleasure in so doing, for any similar employment under you. Jasmin was with me for several years; during the whole time I found him to be trustworthy, sober and intelligent in an eminent degree. Had I not been reducing my establishment previous to a lengthened residence in the south of Europe, I should certainly have retained Jasmin in the position which he has occupied for so long a time with credit to himself and with satisfaction to me.

"I have the honour, sir, to remain,  
"Your obedient servant,  
"SOLOMON MADGIN.

"—— CLEON, Esq., "Bon Repos, Windermere."

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After writing and despatching the above epistle, over the composition of which he chuckled to himself several times, Mr. Madgin was obliged to wait, with what contentment was possible to him, the receipt of a communication from his son. But one day passed after another without bringing news from Bon Repos, till Mr. Madgin grew fearful that some disaster had befallen both James and his scheme. At length he made up his mind to wait two days longer, and should no letter come within that time, to start at once for Windermere. Fortunately his anxiety was relieved and the journey rendered unnecessary by the receipt, next day, of a long letter from his son. It was Mirpah who took it from the postman's hand, and Mirpah took it to her father in high glee. She knew the writing and deciphered the post-mark. For once in his life Mr. Madgin was too agitated to read. He put his hand to his side, and motioned Mirpah to open the letter.

"Read it," he said in a husky voice, as she was about to hand it to him. So Mirpah sat down near her father and read what follows:—

"Bon Repos, July  
"(some date, but I'll be hanged if I know what).

"MY DEAR DAD,—In some rustic nook reclining, silken tresses softly twining, Far-off bells so faintly ringing, While we list the blackbird singing, Merrily his roundelay. There! I composed those lines this morning during the process of shaving. I don't think they are very bad. I put them at the beginning of my letter so as to make sure that you will read them, a process of which I might reasonably be doubtful had I left them for the fag end of my communication. Learn, sir, that you have a son who is a born poet!!!

"But now to business.

"Don't hurry over my letter, dear dad; don't run away with the idea that I have any grand discovery to lay before you. My epistle will be merely a record of trifles and commonplaces, and that simply from the fact that I have nothing better to write about. To me, at least, they seem nothing but trifles. For you they may possess an occult significance of which I know nothing."In the first place. On the day following that of your departure from Windermere, I was duly inducted by Cleon into my new duties. They are few in number, and by no means difficult. So far I have contrived to get through them without any desperate blunder. Another thing I have done of which you will be pleased to hear: I have contrived to ingratiate myself with the mulatto, and am in high favour with him. You were right in your remarks; he is worth cultivation, in so far that he is all-powerful in our little establishment. M. Platzoff never interferes in the management of Bon Repos. Everything is left to Cleon; and whatever the mulatto may be in other respects, so far as I can judge he is quite worthy of the trust reposed in him. I believe him to be thoroughly attached to his

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master. "Of M. Platzoff I have very little to tell you. Even in his own house and among his own people he is a recluse. He has his own special rooms, and three-fourths of his time is spent in them. Above all things he dislikes to see strange faces about him, and I have been instructed by Cleon to keep out of his way as much as possible. Even the old servants, people who have been under his roof for years, let themselves be seen by him as seldom as need be. In person he is a little, withered-up, yellow-skinned man, as dry as a last year's pippin, but very keen, bright and vivacious. He speaks such excellent English that he must have lived in this country for many years. One thing I have discovered about him, that he is a great smoker. He has a room set specially apart for the practice of the sacred rite to which he retires every day as soon as dinner is over, and from which he seldom emerges again till it is time to retire for the night. Cleon alone is privileged to enter this room. I have never yet been inside it. Equally forbidden ground is M. Platzoff's bedroom, and a small study beyond, all *en suite*. "Those who keep servants keep spies under their roof. It has been part of my purpose to make myself agreeable to the older domestics at Bon Repos, and from them I have picked up several little facts which all Mr. Cleon's shrewdness has not been able entirely to conceal. In this way I have learned that M. Platzoff is a confirmed opium-smoker. That once, or sometimes twice, a week he shuts himself up in his room and smokes himself into a sort of trance, in which he remains unconscious for hours. That at such times Cleon has to look after him as though he were a child; and that it depends entirely on the mulatto as to whether he ever emerges from his state of coma, or stops in it till he dies. The accuracy of this latter statement, however, I must beg leave to doubt. "Further gossip has informed me, whether truly or falsely I am not in a position to judge, that M. Platzoff is a refugee from his own country. That were he to set foot on the soil of Russia, a life-long banishment to Siberia would be the mildest fate that he could expect; and that neither in France nor in Austria would he be safe from arrest. The people who come as guests to Bon Repos are, so I am informed, in nearly every instance foreigners, and, as a natural consequence, they are all set down by the servants' gossip as red-hot republicans, thirsting for the blood of kings and aristocrats, and willing to put a firebrand under every throne in Europe. In fact, there cannot be a popular outbreak against bad government in any part of Europe without M. Platzoff and his friends being credited with having at least a finger in the pie. "All these statements and suppositions you will of course accept *cum grano salis*. They may have their value as serving to give you a

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rude and exaggerated idea as to what manner of man is the owner of Bon Repos; and it is quite possible that some elements of truth may be hidden in them. To me, M. Platzoff seems nothing more than a mild old gentleman; a little eccentric, it may be, as differing from our English notions in many things. Not a smiling fiend in patent boots and white cravat, whose secret soul is bent on murder and rapine; but a shy valetudinarian, whose only firebrand is a harmless fusee wherewith to light a pipe of fragrant cavendish. "One permanent guest we have at Bon Repos—a guest who was here before my arrival, and of whose departure no signs are yet visible. That is why I call him permanent. His name is Ducie, and he is an ex-captain in the English army. He is a tall, handsome man of four or five and forty, and is a thorough gentleman both in manners and appearance. I like him much, and he has taken quite a fancy to me. One thing I can see quite plainly; that he and Cleon are quietly at daggers drawn. Why they should be so I cannot tell, unless it is that Cleon is jealous of Captain Ducie's influence over Platzoff; although the difference in social position of the two men ought to preclude any feeling of that kind. Captain Ducie might be M. Platzoff's very good friend without infringing in the slightest degree on the privileges of Cleon as his master's favourite servant. On one point I am certain: that the mulatto suspects Ducie of some purpose or covert scheme in making so long a stay at Bon Repos. He has asked me to act as a sort of spy on the Captain's movements; to watch his comings and goings, his hours of getting up and going to bed, and to report to him, Cleon, anything that I may see in the slightest degree out of the common way." It was not without a certain inward qualm that I accepted the position thrust upon me by Cleon. In accepting it, I flatter myself that I took a common-sense view of the case. In the *petit* drama of real life in which I am now acting an uneventful part, I look upon myself as a 'general utility' man, bound to enact any and every character which my manager may think proper to entrust into my hands. Now, you are my manager, and if it seem to me conducive to your interests (you being absent) that, in addition to my present character, I should be a 'cast' for that of spy or amateur detective, I see no good reason why I should refuse it. So far, however, all my Fouché-like devices have resulted in nothing. The Captain's comings and goings—in fact, all his movements—are of a commonplace and uninteresting kind. But I have this advantage, that the character I have undertaken enables me to assume, with Cleon's consent, certain privileges such as under other circumstances would never have been granted me. Further, should I succeed in discovering anything of importance, it by no means follows that I should consider myself bound to reveal the same to Cleon. It might be greatly more to my interest to retain

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any such facts for my own use. Meanwhile, I wait and watch. "Thus you will perceive, my dear dad, that an element of interest—a dramatic element—is being slowly evolved out of the commonplace duties of my position. This nucleus of interest may grow and develop into something startling; or it may die slowly out and expire for lack of material to feed itself upon. In any case, dear dad, you may expect a frequent feuilleton from

"Your affectionate Son,  
"J.M. (otherwise JAMES JASMIN).

"P.S.—I should not like to be a real flunkey all my life. Such a position is not without its advantages to a man of a lazy turn, but it is terribly soul-subduing. Not a sign yet of the G.H.D."

"There is nothing much in all this to tell her ladyship," said Mr. Madgin, as he took off his spectacles and refolded the letter. "Still, I do not think it by any means a discouraging report. If James's patience only equal his shrewdness and audacity, and if there be really anything to worm out, he will be sure to make himself master of it in the course of time. Ah! if he had only my patience, now—the patience of an old man who has won half his battles by playing a waiting game."

"Is it not possible that Lady Chillington may want you to read the letter?"

"It is quite possible. But James's irreverent style is hardly suited in parts for her ladyship's ears. You, dear child, must make an improved copy of the letter. Your own good taste will tell you which sentences require to be altered or expunged. Here and there you may work in a neat compliment to your father; as coming direct from James, her ladyship will not deem it out of place—it will not sound fulsome in her ears, and will serve to remind her of what she too often forgets—that in Solomon Madgin she has a faithful steward, who ought to be better rewarded than he is. Write out the copy at once, my child, and I will take it up to Deepley Walls the first thing to-morrow morning."

*(To be continued.)*

## ABOUT THE WEATHER.

Why is it that we in England talk so much about the weather? One reason, I suppose, is because we are shy and awkward in the presence of strangers, and the weather is a safe subject far removed from personalities of any kind. Then the variableness of our climate furnishes an opportunity for comment which does not exist in countries where for months there is not a cloud in the sky, and you can tell long before what kind of weather there will be on any particular day.

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Whatever else may be said of our English climate, it cannot be accused of monotony. You are not sure of seeing the same sky every morning you arise, than which there is no greater source of ennui. Those of us who have lived long abroad know how tired we got of a cloudless blue sky. We can sympathise with the sailor who, on returning to London from the Mediterranean, joyfully exclaimed—"Here's a jolly old fog, and no more of your confounded blue skies!" Certainly we could do with a little more sunshine in England than we get. It is not true that while we have much weather we have no sunshine, but we have not as much of it as many of us would like. Still England is not as bad as some places; for instance, Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they have nine months' winter and three months' bad weather. Indeed, the English takes rather a good place amongst the climates of the world. It is free from extremes, and allows us to go out every day and at all hours.

However, judging from the way we grumble, it would seem that we are anything but satisfied with our climate.

*Scene*—Drawing-room at Scarborough. Melissa (writing): "Aunty, darling, how do you spell damnable?" "Good gracious, darling, never use such a word. I am surprised." "Well, but, auntie, I am writing to papa, to tell him about the weather." "Oh, well, my darling, I suppose I may tell you. D-a-m-n-a-b-l-e; but remember that you must not use the word except to describe the weather."

I suppose the clerk of the weather office has long ago ceased trying to satisfy us in this matter. What seems wretched weather to one person makes another happy. Cold, that the young enjoy because it makes them feel their vitality to the tips of their fingers, is death to the old. Those who are fond of skating look out of the windows of their bedrooms, hoping to see a good hard frost. The man who has three or four hunters "eating their heads off" in the stable wishes for open weather, so that he and they may have a run. The farmer says that frost is good for his land; the sportsman, who has hired an expensive shooting, does not like it. A young lady enjoys her walk and looks her best on a fine frosty morning; but she should not forget that the weather which is so pleasant to her puts thousands of people out of work.

Idle people feel changes of weather most. A man who lives a busy life in a hot climate once said to me: "I do not know why people growl about the heat; for my part, I have no time to be hot." And if the energetic feel heat less than do the indolent, they certainly feel cold less. They are too active to be cold; and perhaps it is easier to make oneself warm in a cold climate than cool in a hot one.



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A man who had been complaining because it had not rained for a good while, when the rain did come then grumbled because it did not come sooner. The rich, however, rather than the poor, talk of the “wretched weather,” because they have fewer real sorrows to grumble at. Indeed, the poor often set an example of cheerfulness and resignation in this matter which is very praiseworthy. “What wretched weather we are having!” said a man to an old woman of his acquaintance whom he passed on the road. “Well, sir,” she replied, “any weather is better than none.” Fuller tells us of a gentleman travelling on a misty morning who asked a shepherd—such men being generally skilled in the physiognomy of the heavens—what weather it would be. “It will be,” said the shepherd, “what weather shall please me.” Being asked to explain his meaning, he said, “Sir, it shall be what weather pleaseth God; and what weather pleaseth God, pleaseth me.”

The people who are most satisfied with their climate are the Australians and New Zealanders. I never met one of them who did not, in five minutes, begin to abuse the English climate and glorify his own. They will not admit that it has a single fault, though we have all heard of the hot winds that make the Australian summer terribly oppressive. The fact is that every country has a bad wind, or some other kind of supposed drawback, which is very trying to strangers, but which, whether they know it or not, suits the inhabitants. God knows better than we do the sort of weather that each country should have.

What are we to say about the winter we have lately been enduring? Well, it was very “trying” for us all, and an even stronger word might be used by the poor, the aged, and the delicate. Still, let us remember that without omniscience it is impossible to say whether any given season is good or bad. So infinitely complex are the relations of things that we are very bad judges as to what is best for us. How do we know that our past winter of discontent may not be followed by a glorious summer, and that the two may not be merely antecedent and consequent, but in some degree cause and effect?

On no other subject are people so prone to become panegyrists of the past as in this matter of the weather. “Ah,” they say, “we never now have the lovely summers we used to have.” Reading the other day Walpole’s Letters, I discovered that so far from the summers in his day being “lovely,” they were not uniformly better than the winters: “The way to ensure summer in England,” he writes, “is to have it framed and glazed in a comfortable room.” This remark was made of the summer of 1773; that of 1784 was not more balmy, judging from the same writer’s comment: “The month of June, according to custom immemorial, is as cold as Christmas. I had a fire last night, and all my rosebuds, I believe, would have been very glad to sit by it.”

Here is another weather grumble from the same quaint letter-writer: “The deluge began here but on Monday last, and then rained nearly eight-and-forty hours without intermission. My poor bag has not a dry thread to its back. In short, every summer one lives in a state of mutiny and murmur, and I have found the reason: it is because we will affect to have a summer, and have no title to any such thing.”



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This reminds us of Quin, who, being asked if he had ever seen so bad a winter, replied: "Yes, just such an one last summer." If people could be satisfied about the weather, this sort of summer ought to have pleased the Irishman who, as he warmed his hands at a fire remarked: "What a pity it is that we can't have the cold weather in the summer."

### SERENADE.

"Come out! the moon is white, and on the river  
The white mist lies;  
The twilight deepens, and the stars grow brighter  
In the pure, perfect skies;  
The dewy woods with silent voices call you;  
Come out, heart of my heart, light of my eyes!

"Come out, for where you are not, beauty is not;  
Come out, my Dear!  
See how the fairies will adorn the meadows  
The moment you draw near;  
And the world wear that robe and crown of glory  
It never wears except when you are here."

In vain!—a little light among the jasmine  
Her lattice gleams,  
Her white hand at the closing of it lingers  
A moment—so it seems—  
To drop an unseen rose down to her lover:  
White rose—whose scent will sanctify his dreams!

E. NESBIT

### A PHILANTHROPIST.

BY ANGUS GREY.

#### I.

"And when I had your own bottle finished, Doctor, an ould man that was passing by to the fair of Kinvarra told me that there was nothin' in the world so good for a stiff arm as goose's grease or crane's lard, rendered, rubbed in, and, says he, in a few days your arm will be as limber as limber. So I went to the keeper at Inchguile, and he shot a crane for me; but there wasn't so much lard in it as I thought there'd be, because it was just after rearing a chitch."

“Well, we must try and get you a better one next time,” said the Doctor, nodding farewell to his loquacious patient, one of those non-paying ones who look on a “dispensary ticket” as conveying an unlimited right of discourse on the one hand and attention on the other. But the Doctor was just now in a position of vantage, being seated on his car, on which he slowly jogged out of sight, leaving the victim of rheumatism who had stopped him still experimentally rubbing the joints of his arm.

It was the first of June by the calendar, but the outward signs of the season were but slightly visible in that grey West Country, where stones lay as the chief crop in the fields and innumerable walls took the place of hedges, and a drizzling mist from the Atlantic hid all distant outlines.

The Doctor had been all day face to face with such cheerless surroundings, and was on his way homewards. But presently he stopped at the entrance of a little “boreen,” where a wrinkled, red-skirted dame was standing sentry, leaning on a stout blackthorn stick. “Is it me you’re looking out for, Mrs. Capel?” he asked. “I hope Mary is no worse to-day.”

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"She's the one way always," was the reply; "and it wasn't of you I was thinking, Doctor, but standing I was to watch that ruffian of a pig of Mr. Rourke's that had me grand cabbages eat last night, and me in Cloon buying a pound of madder to colour a petticoat. Ah, then, look at him now standing there by the wall watching me out of the corner of his eye!" and flourishing her stick the energetic old lady trotted off to the attack.

"I may as well go in and see Mary," muttered the Doctor, tying the reins to an isolated gate-post, and walking up the narrow lane to the thatched cottage it led to.

"God save all here," he said, putting his head in over the half-door.

"God save you kindly," was the reply from an old man in corduroy knee-breeches and a tall hat, who sat smoking a short pipe in the deep chimney-corner, and watching with interest the assault of various hens and geese upon the heap of potato-skins remaining in a basket-lid which had done duty as a dinner-table.

The Doctor passed through to a little room beyond, whitewashed and containing a large four-post bed. The invalid, a gentle, consumptive-looking girl, lay on the pillows and smiled a greeting to the Doctor.

His eye, however, passed her, and rested with startled curiosity on a visitor who was sitting by her side, and who rose and bowed slightly. The stranger was a lady, young and slight, with dark eyes and hair and a small, graceful head. He guessed at once she must be Miss Eden, the new Resident Magistrate's sister, of whose ministrations to the poor he had heard much since his return from his late holiday.

He stopped awkwardly, rather confused at so unexpected a meeting; but the stranger held out her hand, and looking up at him said: "I am so glad you have come back; we have wanted you so much."

The Doctor did not answer. The sweet, low voice, with no touch of Irish accent, was a new sound to him, the little hand that she gave him was fairer and smaller and more dainty than any he had ever touched. To say the truth, his early farm-house life and his hospital training and dispensary practice had not brought him into contact with much refinement, and this girl with her slight, childlike figure and soft, earnest eyes seemed to him to have stepped from some unreal world. Then, finding he still held the little hand, he blushed and let it go.

"How are you getting on, Mary?" he asked, turning to his patient.

"Middling, sir, thank you," said the girl. "I do have the cough very bad some nights, but more nights it's better; and the lady, may God enable her, has me well cared."



"I could not do much," said the lady, with an appealing glance, "and you must not be angry with me for meddling with your patients. But now that you have come I am sure Mary will be better."

"Don't be troubling yourself about me," said the sick girl, gently. "I'll never be better till I see Laurence again."

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"Oh, don't be giving yourself up like that," said the Doctor, cheerily; "we won't let you die yet awhile."

"I won't die," she answered, gravely, "till the same day that Laurence died: the 13th of September. There's no fear of me till then."

She looked tired, and her visitors left, the Doctor telling his new acquaintance as they walked down the lane what a strong, bright girl this had been till a year ago, when her brother had died of consumption. From that day her health had begun to fail, the winter had brought a cough, and Easter had found her kept to her bed. It was a hopeless case, he thought, though she might linger for a time.

"Indeed, and she's a loss to us," put in old Mrs. Capel, who had now joined them, having returned from her pursuit of the predatory pig. "She was a great one for slavin', and as strong as any girl on the estate, but she did be frettin' greatly after her brother, and then she got cold out of her little boots that let in the water, and there she's lying now, and couldn't get up if all Ireland was thrusting for it."

The mist had now turned to definite rain, and Louise Eden accepted "a lift" on the Doctor's car, as he had to pass her gate in going home. His shyness soon wore off as the girl talked to him with complete ease and simplicity, first of some of his poor patients, then of herself and her interest in them.

She was half-Irish, she said, her mother having come from this very West Country, but she had lost both her parents early and been brought up at school and with English relatives. Lately her brother, or rather step-brother, having been made an R.M. and appointed to the Cloon district, had asked her to live with him, and this she was but too happy to do. She had always longed to give her life to the poor and especially the Irish poor, of whose wants she had heard so much. She had even thought of becoming a deaconess, but her friends would not hear of it, and she had been obliged to submit herself to their conventional suburban life. "But here at last," she said, "I find my hands full and my heart also. These people welcome me so warmly and need so much, the whole day is filled with work for them; and now that you have come, Dr. Quin," she added, smiling at him, "I can do so much more, for you will tell me how to work under you and to nurse your patients back to health again."

It was almost dark when they came to the gate of Inagh, the house usually tenanted by the Resident Magistrate of the day, and here Louise Eden took leave of her new acquaintance, again giving him her hand in its little wet glove. The Doctor watched her as she ran lightly towards the house. She wore a grey hat and cloak, and the rough madder-dyed skirt of the peasant women of the district. None of the "young ladies" he had hitherto met would have deigned to appear in one of these fleecy crimson garments, so becoming to its present wearer. She turned and waved her hand at the

corner of the drive, and the Doctor having gazed a moment longer into the grey mist that shrouded her, went on his journey home.

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His little house on the outskirts of Cloon had not many outward charms, being built in the inverted box style so usual in Ireland. A few bushes of aucuba and fuchsia scarcely claimed for the oblong space enclosed in front the name of a garden. But within he found a cheerful turf fire, and his old housekeeper soon put a substantial meal on the table.

"Any callers to-day, Mamie?" he asked as he sat down.

"Not a one, sir, only two," was the reply. "The first was a neighbouring man from Killeen that was after giving himself a great cut with a reaping-hook where he was cutting a few thorns out of the hedge for to stop a gap where the cows did be coming into his oatfield. Sure I told him you wouldn't be in this long time, and he went to Cloran to bandage him up."

"And who was the other, Mamie?"

"The second first, sir, was a decent woman, Mrs. Cloherty, from Cranagh, with a sore eye she has where she was cuttin' potatoes and a bit flew up and hot it, and she's after going to the Friars at Loughrea to get a rub off the blessed cross, but it did no good after."

The old woman rambled on, but the Doctor gave her but a divided attention. He laughed and blushed a little presently to find himself gazing in the small round mirror that hung against the wall, his altitude of six feet just bringing his head to its level. The face that laughed and blushed back at him was a pleasant one: frank, blue eyes and a square brow surmounted by wavy fair hair were reflected, and the glad healthfulness of four-and-twenty years. He had been looked on as a "well-looking" man in his small social circle of Galway and Dublin, and had laughed and joked and danced with the girls he had met at merry gatherings, but without ever having given a preference in thought to one above another. Certainly no eyes had ever followed him into his solitude as the dark ones first seen to-day were doing.

He went out presently, the rain having ceased, and sauntered down the unattractive "Main Street" of Cloon.

The shops were shut, save those frequent ones which added the sale of liquor to that of more innocent commodities. In one a smart-looking schoolboy was reading the *Weekly Freeman* aloud to a group of frieze-coated hearers. At the door of another a ballad-singer was plaintively piping the "Mother's Farewell," with its practical refrain:—

"Then write to me often, *and send me all you can*,  
And don't forget where'er you are that you're an Irishman."

The Doctor might at another time have joined and enlivened one of the listless groups standing about, but, after a moment or two of hesitation, he turned his back to them and walked in the direction of the gate of Inagh. "There's Mrs. Connell down there, that I ought to go and see; she's always complaining," he said to himself, in self-excuse. But having arrived at her cottage, he saw by a glance at the unshuttered window that his visit would be a work of supererogation, as she was busily engaged in carding wool by the fireside, the clear light of the paraffin lamp, which without any intervening stage of candles had superseded her rushlight, showing her comely face to be hale and hearty.



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Half unconsciously the young man passed on, crossed a stile and walked up a narrow, laurel-bordered path towards the light of another window which was drawing him, moth-like, by its gleam. It also, though in the "Removable's" house, was unshuttered, testifying to the peaceful state of the district. He could see a cheerful sitting-room, gay with flowers and chintzes, the light of a shaded lamp falling on Louise Eden's fair head, bent over a heavy volume on the table, an intrusive white kitten disputing her attention with it. He drew back, with a sudden sense of shame at having ventured so far, and hurried homewards to dream of the fair vision the day had brought him.

It was the beginning of an enchanted summer for the young Doctor. Day after day he met Miss Eden, at first by so-called accident; but soon their visits were pre-arranged to fall together at some poor cottage, where she told him he could bring healing or he told her she could bring help.

She had thrown herself with devotion into the tending of the poor. "I have wasted so many years at school," she would say, "just on learning accomplishments for myself alone; but now I have at last the chance of helping others I must make the most of it, especially as it is in my own dear Ireland."

"The lady" was soon well known amongst the neglected tenants of an estate in Chancery. Her self-imposed duties increased from day to day. The old dying man would take no food but from her hands. The Doctor found her at his house one evening. She had cut herself badly in trying to open a bottle for him, and was deadly pale. "I can't bear the sight of blood," she confessed, and fainted on the earthen floor. It was with gentle reverence that he carried her out and laid her on the cushions of his car, spread by the roadside; but the sweet consciousness of having for that one moment held her in his arms never left him when alone. In her presence her frank friendliness drove away all idle dreams and visions.

It was on a Sunday afternoon of September that Dr. Quin and Louise Eden met again sadly at the house where they had first seen each other, that of the Capels. They were called there by a sudden message that the poor girl Mary was dying, and before they could obey the summons she had passed away.

The little room was brighter now; a large-paned window, the gift of her ministering friend, let the light fall upon the closed eyes. At the foot of the bed hung a beautiful engraving of the Magdalen at the Saviour's feet, while a bunch of tea-roses in a glass still gave out their delicate fragrance. Neighbours were beginning to throng in, but gave place to "the lady." The old father silently greeted her and wrung her offered hand, but moved away without speaking. The mother, staying her loud weeping, was less reserved.

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"It's well you earned her indeed, miss," she said; "and she did be thinking of you always. The poor child, she was ill for near ten months, but I wouldn't begrudge minding her if it was for seven year. Sure I got her the best I could, the drop of new milk and a bit o' white bread and a grain o' tea in a while, and meself and the old man eatin' nothin' but stirabout, and on Christmas night we had but a herrin' for our dinner, not like some of the neighbours that do be scattering. Sure we never thought she was goin' till this morning, when she bid us send for the priest. And when she saw the old man crying, 'Father,' says she, 'don't fret. I'll soon be in Heaven praying for you with me own Laurence.' Sure she always said she'd die on the same day as him, and she didn't after—it was of a Saturday he died and this is a Sunday."

Louise and the Doctor looked up suddenly at each other. This was indeed the 13th of September, the day on which Laurence Capel had last year passed away.

They presently left the house of mourning, soon to become, by sad incongruity, a house of feasting, Louise leaving a little money for "the wake" in the old woman's hands. They walked towards home together, the Doctor leading his horse.

"I hope there is nothing wrong, Miss Eden," he asked after a little, noticing how abstracted and depressed she seemed.

"Yes," she answered; "I have had news that troubles me. My brother has written to tell me that he is going to marry the lady at whose house he has been staying in Yorkshire; and that, as she has a large property there, he will give up his Irish appointment. They offer me a home, and I am sure they would be very kind. But what troubles me is the thought of leaving Cloon, where I have learned to help the people and to love them. I can never settle into a dull, selfish, luxurious life again." Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke.

The young man's heart beat fast. Might he—might he dare to lay himself at her feet? He nervously played with the horse's mane and said tremulously, "We can never do without you now, Miss Eden. We should all be lost without you."

He paused and looked at her. She was gazing sadly at the distant blue outline of the Clare hills, and the sun sinking behind them flashed upon her tearful eyes. She was on the other side of the horse and a little in advance, and he could not, had he dared, have touched her hand. The words came out suddenly:

"We can never do without you here: I can never do without you. Will you stay with me? I haven't much to offer you: two hundred pounds a-year is all I am earning now, and I may soon get the hospital. I can't give you what you are used to; but if I had the whole world and its riches, it's to you I would bring them."

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She had stopped now and listened to him, startled. Then she turned again, looked at the tranquil hills and the far-stretching woods of Inchguile, and the smoke curling from many a poor hearthstone. A vision flashed across her mind of a life spent here in the country she had learned to love, amongst the people she longed to succour, with for a helper the strong, skilful man who had stood with her by so many beds of sickness. Then she thought of what her future would be in a luxurious English household. She could see the well-regulated property, the tidy cottages, where squire and parson would permit her help, but not need it. An old woman looked from her doorway as they passed and said: "God speed ye! God bring ye safe home and to heaven!"

They had come to the high road now, and as they stopped to let a drove of cattle pass, she turned and met the Doctor's wistful eyes with a flash of enthusiasm in hers.

"I will stay," she said. "I will give my life to Cloon and its poor!"

Then, as they reached the stile which led into Inagh, she crossed it lightly and walked up the narrow path, scarcely remembering to look back before she was out of sight and wave her hand in farewell to her happy lover.

Happy was not, perhaps, the word to describe him by. A sudden rapture had swept over him, blinding his vision, when she had said, "I will stay." Yet now that she was out of sight without having deigned him one touch of her hand, one soft word, he felt as if all had been a dream; and was also conscious of a feeling, too subtle to be formed into a thought, that there was something wanting in this supreme moment which surely is not wanting when two hearts for the first time know themselves to be beating for each other. But she had always been such an object of worship to him, as one beyond his sphere, that he remembered how far away she had been from him but yesterday, and that doubtless the ordinary rules of love must be put aside when one so high stooped to crown the life of so unworthy a worshipper.

## II.

Colonel Eden returned that evening, and for some days Louise was constantly occupied with his affairs, driving and walking with him and listening to his plans and projects, and thus giving up her own solitary expeditions and visits.

She was glad of the excuse to do this. The moment of exaltation in which she had resolved to devote her life to these poor Galway peasants had passed away, and though she kept pictures before her mind of a redeemed district, and children brought up in health and cleanliness instead of disease and dirt, and home industries taking the place of the idleness that followed spasmodic labour, misgivings entered with them as she saw herself no longer "the lady" who stooped from a high level, but a mere doctor's

wife (she would not admit even to her thoughts the undesirable title of “Mrs. Quin”), living in that small staring house at the entrance

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of the town. Of one thing she was certain, she could not possibly suggest such an idea to her brother. She could imagine too well his raised eyebrows and sarcastic words. She must wait until he had broken all ties with the neighbourhood, and then she could come back without consulting him. Her affianced husband's personality she kept as much as possible in the background. He was to be her fellow in good works, her superior in the skill and knowledge of a healer. She had only seen him during her ministrations to the poor, only talked with him of their needs and his own aspirations, had hardly looked on him as a being in whom she could take a personal interest, until that moment in the sunset when she had in the impulse of a moment linked her life to his.

A dread began to creep over her of seeing him again. How should she meet him? Could she still keep him at a fitting distance? Would he not feel that he had some claim upon her even now?

One morning, hearing wheels, she looked up from her half-hearted study of an Irish grammar and saw the well-known car and the bony grey horse appearing. To fly out by the back door, catching up her hat on the way was the work of a second. She ran down the laurel walk, crossed the stile, and was soon safely on her way to the Inchguile woods.

She was overtaken presently by a frieze-coated man, Martin Regan, who, though an Inchguile tenant and out of her usual beat, she had met once or twice, his bedridden father having sent to beg a visit from her. Their holding was a poor one enough, but by constant hard work the son had managed to keep things going. She knew the old woman who ruled in the house was his stepmother, but had not noticed any want of harmony in the family. Rumours, however, had reached her lately that the old man had been making a will, by which he left the farm and all his possessions to his wife, who had already written to recall her own son from America to share the expected legacy with her.

These rumours came back to the mind of Louise Eden as she noticed the trouble in Martin Regan's face.

"I was just going up to speak to your honour, miss," he said, "when I seen you going through the gate, so I followed you to tell of the trouble I'm in."

"Is what I have heard true, then?" asked Louise. "Surely your father could not be so unjust as to leave the farm you have worked on so hard away from you?"

"It's true indeed, miss," said Martin. "And I'm after going to the agent about it, for Sir Richard is away, and if he could hear of it—he's a good landlord and would never see

me wronged. But he says all the power is gone from the landlord now, and that if the old man was to leave the land to Parnell or another and away from all his own blood the law couldn't stop him. So God help us! I dunno at all what'll I do."

"Had you any quarrel with your father that led to this?" asked Louise, with sympathy that won the confidence of her companion, who had walked on with her to the woods, where their path was brilliantly bordered by the opaque red berries of the mountain ash, and the transparent hues of the guelder-rose.

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"None at all," was the answer. "They made the will unknownst to me, and they have the little farm and the little stock, and all there is left to themselves, and for me nothing but the outside of the door and the workhouse."

"Do you think they threatened him or used force?" suggested the girl.

"Did they force him to do it, is it? They did not. But it's too much whisky and raisin cakes they had, and me coming into the house after selling a sick pig. I never heard word or sound about it till a neighbouring man told me they were gathered in the house with the priest, and looking for a witness, and I went in, and Peter Kane was in the house preparing to sign his name, and I took him by the neck and threw him out of the door, and the stepmother she took me by the skin of the shirt, and gave me a slap across the face with the flat of her hand, and I called Peter Kane to witness that she struck me, and he said he never saw it. And why? Because he had a cup of whisky given him before, and believe me, when he turned about, it smelled good! After that, no decent man could be found to sign his name, till they got two paid men. Sure there's schemers about that 'ud hang you up for half a glass of whisky."

"And who drew up the will?" inquired Miss Eden.

"The curate, Father Sheehy that did it. Sure our own priest would never have done it, but it was a strange curate from the County Mayo. And I asked him did he know there was such a one as me in the world, and he said he never did. Then yourself'll need forgiveness in heaven, Father, says I, as well as that silly old man."

"Could you not speak quietly to your father about it?" suggested Louise.

"Sure I never see the old man but when I go into the room in the morning to wipe my face with the little towel after washing it, and he don't speak to me himself, but to himself he do be speaking. And the old woman says to me, 'Go down now to your landlord and see what he can do for you;' and I said I will go, for if he was at home, there was never a bishop or a priest or a friar spoke better and honester words to me than his honour's self."

Martin Regan paused to take breath and wipe his mouth with his coat sleeve, and after a moment's abstracted gaze at the vista of tall fir trees before him, burst out again:

"And now it's whisky and tea for the old woman, and trimmings at two shillings the yard for the sister's dress, and what for Martin? what for the boy that worked for them the twelve months long? Me that used to go a mile beyond Cloon every morning to break stones, and to deal for two stone o' meal every Saturday to feed the childer when there was nothing in the field. And it's trying to drive me from the house now they are, and me to wet my own tea and to dress my own bed, and me after wringing my shirt twice, with respects to ye, after working all the day in the potato ridges."

“Could no one influence your stepmother; has she no friends here?” asked Louise, much moved.



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Martin Regan laughed bitterly.

“Sure she never belonged to the estate at all,” he said, “but came in the middle of the night on me and the little sister sitting by the little fire of bushes, and me with a little white coat on me. And we never knew where she came from, and never brought a penny nor a blanket nor a stitch of clothes with her, and our own mother brought seventy pounds and two feather beds. And now she’s stiffer than a woman that would have a hundred pounds. And now the old man’s like to die, and maybe he won’t pass the night, and where’ll I be? Sure if he would keep him living a little longer he might get repentance.”

“Had you not better ask the Doctor to see him?” said Louise. “He might bring him round for a time, and then we must do our best for you.”

“I was thinking that myself,” said Regan; “and I believe I’d best go look for him now; I might chance to find him at home. I heard the old woman had the priest sent for; but, sure, he’s wore out anointing him—he threatened to die so often. But he’s worse now than ever I saw him.” And taking off his hat with many expressions of gratitude, he left Louise to finish her walk alone.

An hour or two later she returned, her hands full of sprays and berries as an excuse for her wanderings. The Colonel was smoking contentedly on the bench outside the door.

“Ah, Louise,” he said, “you have missed your friend the Doctor you were so full of when you wrote to me. He seemed to want to see you—I suppose to have a crack about some of your patients; so I asked him to come and dine this evening.”

No escape now! Louise bit her lip, and proceeded to arrange her berries.

“He seems an intelligent young man,” the Colonel went on; “rather good-looking, if he had a drill-sergeant to teach him to hold himself up; and I hear he doesn’t drink, which can’t often be said of these dispensary doctors.”

The red deepened in the girl’s face. How could she ever say, “This is the man I have promised to marry?” With much uneasiness she looked forward to dinner-time. Dr. Quin sent no apology; nay, was worse than punctual. He came in rather shyly, looking awkward in a new and ill-fitting evening suit, for which he had put aside his usual rough homespun. Louise, furious with herself for having blushed as he appeared, gave him a cold and formal reception.

Dinner began uncomfortably for all three, as the Colonel, who had trusted to his sister to entertain their guest, found himself obliged to exert his own powers of conversation. The Doctor’s discomfort was intensified by what seemed to one of his simple habits the unusual variety of courses and dishes. His fish-knife embarrassed him; he waited to

use fork or spoon until he had watched to see which implement was preferred by his host. He chose “sherry wine” as a beverage; and left a portion of each viand on his plate, in the groundless fear that if he finished it he would be

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pressed to take a further supply. When dessert was at last on the table, he felt more at ease; his host's genial manner gave him confidence; and he was led on to talk of his work and prospects at Cloon, of the long drives over the "mountain roads," and the often imaginary ailments of the patients who demanded his attendance, and their proneness when really ill to take the advice of priest or passer-by on sanitary matters rather than his own. "But I'll get out of it, I hope, some day," he said, looking at Louise; "when I get a few more paying patients and the infirmary, I can give up the dispensary."

Louise listened, dismayed. It was the thought of succouring the poor and destitute that had led her to make the resolve of marrying their physician; and he now dreamed of giving up his mission amongst them! He, poor lad, only thought for the moment of how he might best secure a home for his fair bride not too much out of harmony with her present surroundings.

"And are you pretty sure of the infirmary?" asked the Colonel with an appearance of warm interest.

"Well, I'm not rightly sure," was the answer. "I have a good deal of promises and everybody knows me, and the other man, Cloran, is no doctor at all—only took to it lately. Sure his shop in Cloon isn't for medicine at all, but for carrot-seed and turnip-seed and every description of article. But there's bribery begun already; and yesterday, Mr. Stratton asked one of the Guardians to keep his vote for me, and says he, 'how can I when I have the other man's money in my pocket?'"

"And where did you learn doctoring?" asked the Colonel.

"Well, I walked St. James' Hospital in Dublin three years; and before that I was in the Queen's College, Galway, where I went after leaving the National School in Killymer."

"Were you well taught there?" inquired his host.

"I was indeed. I learned a great deal of geography and arithmetic. There's no history taught at all though, nor grammar. But you'll wonder how good the master was at mathematics, and he nothing to look at at all. His name was Shee," went on the Doctor, now quite over his shyness; "and he was terrible fond of roast potatoes. I remember he used to put them in the grate to roast and take them out with two sticks, for in those days there were no tongs; and one day I brought four round stones in my pocket and put them in the grate as if they were potatoes to roast for myself. By-and-by, he went over and took the stick and raked out one of them, and took it up in his hand and rubbed it on his trousers (so) to clean it, and not a tint of skin was left on his hand. And I out of the door and he after me, and I never dared go to the school again till my grandfather went before me to make peace."

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The Colonel laughed heartily and was proceeding further to draw out his ingenuous guest, but Louise, visibly impatient, rose to leave the room. She was chafing with shame and mortification. Had she ever thought of becoming the wife of that man with his awkward manners and Connaught brogue? Certainly she had never realised what it meant. She could never look her brother in the face again if the idea of the engagement should dawn on him. How could she escape it? Carry it out she could not. All her enthusiastic wish to spend her life in making this poor district better was now overshadowed by the unendurable thought of what her promise entailed.

Presently the Doctor came in alone, Colonel Eden having gone to write a letter he wished to send by late post. He came forward at first gladly, then timidly, repelled by the girl's cold expression as she stood by the fire in her long white dress. She felt that her only chance of avoiding dangerous topics was in plunging into the subject of their mutual patients.

"Did Regan find you in time to bring you to his father?" she asked.

"He found me," said the Doctor; "but I told him I couldn't come before to-morrow as I was to dine here. I thought there was no occasion for hurry."

"But did he tell you how much depends on his father's life?" said Louise, unconsciously glad to find something definite at which she might show displeasure. "Do you not know of the unjust will he has made, and that if he dies now his son will be disinherited?"

"He was telling me about it, but there's no danger of his dying yet awhile," answered the Doctor, unaware of the gathering storm. "That old man has a habit of dying; he was often like that before."

"I thought it was your duty to go at once when you are told there is urgent necessity," said Louise, with heightened colour; "and until now I thought it was your pleasure also."

"I'd have gone quick enough, Miss Eden, if I'd known *you* were so anxious about it," was the rather unfortunate reply; "and I'll go now this minute if you wish me to."

"My wishes are not in question," said the girl, yielding to the irritation she felt against herself and against him; "but if you neglect the call of the dying on such a trivial plea as a dinner invitation, I do not think you are justified in holding the position you do."

Colonel Eden at this moment came in, and the Doctor, feeling he had given offence, but rather puzzled as to the cause, asked at once that his car might be ordered, as he had to go and see a patient some way off.

"So late, and on such a dark night!" said the Colonel, good-naturedly; "surely he could wait till to-morrow. Don't you think so, Louise?"

“I have no opinion to give on the matter,” said his sister, coldly.

She was now really vexed by the young man’s quick obedience to what he interpreted to be her wish. He had no sooner taken leave than she went to her room and burst into sobs of mortified pride and real perplexity.

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A day or two passed by during which she stayed in the house and garden. The Colonel was away, doing duty for some fellow "Removable" absent on leave. On his return he told his sister that he had found a letter awaiting him calling for his immediate return to Yorkshire on business connected with settlements.

"I must go the day after to-morrow," he said; "and would it not be a good plan, Louise, for you to come with me and make friends with Agnes?"

A light flashed in the girl's eyes. Was not this a way of escape for her? Oh, that she might leave Cloon while no one knew of the momentary folly that now she blushed to remember!

She quickly assented, and next morning began to make her preparations. She knew, though she would not confess to the knowledge, that she was saying good-bye for ever to Inagh, the bright little home where she had been so happy; but a thought of changing her resolution never crossed her mind. She still nervously dreaded a visit from the man she was conscious she was about to wound cruelly, and in the afternoon, hearing wheels, was relieved to see only her brother driving up. He had called for a cup of tea, having to drive on and wind up some business at another village in his jurisdiction.

"I was sorry to hear of Dr. Quin's accident," he said as he waited. "I hope it is not so serious as they say."

"What accident?" asked Louise, startled.

"Oh, did you not hear that the night he dined here he went on up that narrow road to Ranahasey to see some old man, and in the dark he was thrown off his car and the wheel went over him? They brought him back to Cloon on the car; which was a mistake, and must have caused him agony. Dr. Cloran, his rival, is looking after him, and seems rather puzzled about the case, and says if he is not better to-morrow he will send to Limerick for further advice. I am very sorry, for he seemed an intelligent, good-hearted young fellow."

Louise remained alone, sick at heart. What had she done? Had she brought upon this poor lad, in return for his worship of her, actual bodily injury even before the keener pain that was to follow?

The dignified letter of dismissal and farewell she had been meditating all day became suddenly inadequate. She must ask his pardon and break to him very gently the hard sentence of renunciation and separation. Keen remorse took hold of her as she remembered his gentle ways with the sick and suffering, his strength and wisdom, when fighting against disease and death. Oh that she had never come across his path, or that she had had a mother or friend to warn her of the dangerous precipice to which she was unconsciously leading him. What could she do now? She could not write to him,



not knowing into what hands the letter might fall. She could not leave him to hear by chance next day of her departure. It was growing dark, and there was no time to lose. She would go to his house, and at all events leave a message for him. It was hardly a mile away, and she was not likely to meet anyone on the road.

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The low terraced hills looked bleak and dreary, a watery sky above them. The pale sunset gleams were reflected in the pools of water on the roadside, not yet absorbed into the light limestone soil. The straggling one-sided street forming the entrance to Cloon looked more squalid than usual, the houses more wretched under their grass-grown thatch, the gleam and ring from the smithy the only touch of light and sound that relieved their gloom.

Louise Eden walked up the little path to the Doctor's house, and, knocking at the door, asked the old woman who appeared for news of her master.

"Indeed, he's the one way always," was the reply; "no better and no worse since they brought him and laid him on the bed. You'd pity him to see him lying there, me fine boy."

"Will you give him a message from me?" asked Louise. "Will you say I have come to ask how he is, and to say good-bye, as I am going back to England?"

"He'll be sorry for that, indeed," said the old woman. "Sure, you'd best go up and see him yourself."

"Oh, no," said Louise, shrinking back, "unless—his life is not in danger, I hope?"

"Danger, is it," echoed old Mamie, indignantly, though not without a momentary glance of uneasiness. "Why would he be in danger? Sure he wasn't so much hurted as that. He bled hardly at all only for a little cut on the head, and sure he has all he wants, and a nurse coming from Dublin and one of the nuns sitting with him now. It'd be a bad job if he was in danger, only twenty-four year old, and having such a nice way of living, and, indeed, he has the prayers of the poor. Go up the stairs and see him—here's his reverence coming, and might want me," she continued, as a car stopped at the gate.

Reluctantly, yet not knowing how to draw back, and unwilling to meet the priest, whom she knew slightly, Louise went up the narrow staircase. She knocked at a door standing ajar, and hearing a low "come in," entered. It was a small bare room enough, no carpet save one narrow strip, whitened walls, and a great fire smouldering under the chimney-board of black painted wood. Even at that first glance she noticed that the only attempt at ornament was a vase containing a bunch of the red-seeded wild iris; she remembered having gathered and given it to the Doctor a little time before as a "yerb" sometimes in request amongst his patients.

The fading light fell on the low iron bed upon which the young man lay, propped up with pillows. His face was much altered by these two or three days of suffering. The fair hair was covered by a bandage and the blue eyes looked larger for the black shades beneath them. But as he saw who his visitor was, a smile, very sweet and radiant, lighted them up, and a little colour came into the pallid cheeks. A nun, dressed in black



and with a heavily-veiled bonnet half concealing her face, sat by his bedside, and looked with curiosity at the girl as she came in and gave her hand to the patient.

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"I have come to ask how you are," she said, "and to tell you how very sorry I am—we are—for your accident. I am doubly grieved because—" and she stopped, embarrassed at having to speak before a third person. The Doctor's eyes were fixed on her face with the same glad smile.

"I wanted to see you," he said gently, "but I never thought you would come to this poor place. I wanted to tell you I had seen old Regan before I was hurt, and I did my best for him, and I think he won't die yet awhile."

"I am sorry," began Louise again, and then hesitated. How could she explain for how much she was sorry? How could she at this moment make any explanation at all? "I am going away," she went on—"I am going to England with my brother to-morrow. I have come to say good-bye."

The eyes that rested on her lost none of their glad look of content; she was not sure if her words had been understood, and went on talking rather hurriedly of her brother's arrangements, and who was to take his place, and of the long journey to Yorkshire.

"And now I must go," she concluded, "for I have a good deal to do at home."

The hand which lay on the counterpane sought a little packet beside the pillow.

"This was for you," he said, handing it to her.

She said good-bye again, and went slowly away; but, turning at the door, she was filled once more with keen remorse at the sight of the strong frame laid low, and the glance that followed her was so full of wistfulness that she felt that she would have stooped and, in asking forgiveness, have kissed the white-banded brow, if it had not been for the nun's silent presence.

It was not until late at night that she remembered and opened the little packet. It contained a massive marriage ring, such as were used by the fisher-folk on the Galway coast. She was troubled at seeing it. The strong-clasped hands and golden heart were an emblem that vexed her. She felt that while she kept it she could not be free from the promise she had given, and that her farewell could not have been understood as a final one. She determined to leave it at the Doctor's house as she passed to-morrow, and wrote, to enclose with it, a letter, penitent, humble, begging forgiveness for the wrong she had thoughtlessly done to so good and loyal a friend. She did not care now if others read it; she must confess her desertion and implore pardon. The letter was blotted with tears as she folded it round the heavy ring.

But that ring of betrothal was never returned. In the morning, as Colonel Eden and his sister drove for the last time into Cloon, they saw groups of frieze-coated men and blue-

cloaked women whispering together with sad faces, and a shutter being closed over each little shop window.

And when they came to the Doctor's house they saw that the blinds were all drawn down.

## **SONNET.**

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Our life is one long poem. In our youth  
We rise and sing a noble epic song,  
A trumpet note of sound both clear and strong,  
With idyls now and then too sweet for truth.  
A lyric of lament, it swells along  
The tide of years, a protest 'gainst the wrong  
Of life, an unavailing cry for ruth,  
A wish to know the end—the end forsooth!  
'Tis not on earth. The end which makes or mars  
The song of life, we who sing seldom know.  
That end is where, beyond the pale fair stars  
Which have looked down so calmly on our woe,  
Eternal music will set right the jars  
Of all that sounds so harsh and sad below.

JULIA KAVANAGH.

## THE BRETONS AT HOME.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN SUNNY CLIMES," "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC. ETC.

We were very sorry to leave Morlaix. The old town had gained upon our affections. We had found the Hotel d'Europe very comfortable, and Mr. and Mrs. Hellard kind and attentive beyond praise. The indiscretions of that fatal night were more than effaced and forgotten. Morlaix, at the time of the Fair, was a Pandemonium: at the Regatta, if not exactly Paradise, it was at least very lively and amusing; whilst, when neither Fair nor Regatta was in question, Morlaix was full of the charm of repose; a sleepy atmosphere that accorded well with its old-world outlines.

[Illustration: FISHWOMEN, BRITTANY.]

Not least was our regret at saying good-bye to Catherine. She was an original character, who had much amused and entertained us. There was a vein of humour in her composition which the slightest touch brought to the surface. The solemnity of her features never relaxed, and whilst she made others laugh, and laugh again, her own face would invariably be grave as a judge's. It was also a pleasure—in these days of incapacity—to meet with a woman who managed the affairs of her little world with all the discretion of a Prime Minister.

"Ces messieurs are going to Quimper," she exclaimed that last morning. We were alone in the dining-room, taking an early breakfast. Our small side-table faced the end window, and we looked upon the old square, and the canal, where a long row of women

were already washing, beating, rinsing their linen, their white caps conspicuous, their voices raised in laughter that rippled down the troubled waters. It was a lively scene; very picturesque; very suited to the old town.

“Ces messieurs are going to Quimper,” said Catherine, speaking the name in the very italics of scorn. “They would do much better to remain in Morlaix, where at least there is a good hotel, and a Catherine who is ready to serve them night and day. But human nature is curious and must see everything. One house is like another; one street like another; the sea coast is the same everywhere; the same water, the same air, the same sky; but just because one shore is a bay and the other a point, because one coast is flat and the other has cliffs, mankind must rush about and call it seeing the world.”

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"Would you have us stay here for ever?" we asked, amused at Catherine's idea of life and travel.

"Well, no," she acknowledged; "I suppose not. It would hardly do. Morlaix, after all, is not exciting. Only I am sorry you are going, and it makes me unjust to the rest of the world," she acknowledged. "We shall have a quiet time all this week, and I could have served you better than I did last. But I don't like Quimper. There is not a decent hotel in the place, and I wouldn't live there for a hundred francs a week. I cannot breathe there; I grow limp. It has a dreadful river right in front of the hotels—you will have benefit. I have heard that there are seventy-two separate smells in Cologne—in Quimper the seventy-two are concentrated into one."

This was not encouraging; but we knew that as Catherine's strong nature saw things in extremes, so her opinions had to be taken cum grano salis. In spite of what she said, we departed with much hope and expectation.

Everyone assisted in seeing us off the premises. They declared it to be a melancholy pleasure, a statement hard to reconcile with their beaming faces. Catherine alone was grave and immovable as the Man with the Iron Mask. Yet she actually presented us—this downright, determined, apparently unromantic woman—with buttonholes of small white roses tied up with white ribbon: ribbon that in our grandmothers' days, I believe, was called *love ribbon*.

"We shall look quite bridal," we said, as she placed them in the destined receptacle next our hearts. "Catherine, why have you never married?"

Catherine laughed. "Thereby hangs a tale," she replied, actually blushing. "It has not been for want of offers, you may be sure; I might have married twenty times over had I so wished." And so we gathered that Catherine, too, had had her little romance. Perhaps it had helped to form her character, and develop her capacities. "And now, be sure that some day you come back to Morlaix," she added, as she finally accomplished her delicate task to her satisfaction.

"Shall we find you here?" we asked. "You may have married and gone away."

"To toil and slave like Madame Mirmiton!" cried Catherine. "I would not marry if it was the President of the Republic, or even the Marquis de Carabas. Besides, who would have me at my age? No? no! I know when I am well off. Men, do you see, are not angels; they are much nearer allied to the opposite, *sauf votre respect*! Of course, *gentlemen*, I admit, *are* angels—sometimes. But then, no gentleman would have me. No; I am a fixture, here, every bit as much as the doors and the windows. Monsieur and Madame and the hotel would go to ruin without me."

And, although Monsieur and Madame assisted at this conference, Catherine's statement went uncontradicted. She was certainly their right hand, and added no little to the popularity of the establishment.

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Finally we were off. The omnibus took our traps, whilst we walked up Jacob's Ladder. We let our gaze linger and rest upon all the old familiar points; the quaint gables, the dormer windows in the red, red roofs; the latticed panes, behind which life must seem less sad and sorrowful than it really is; the antiquarian and his old curiosities. He knew we were leaving, and was on the look-out for us. The pale, spiritual face stood out conspicuously amidst its surroundings: the spiritual strangely contrasting with the material. The eyes looked into ours with their sad, dreamy, far-away gaze, so full of the pain and suffering of life. Behind him stood his Adonis of a son, the flush of genius making the countenance yet more beautiful. Perched on his shoulder was the cherub. He held out his arms as soon as he saw us, and seemed quite ready to go forth with us and, as Catherine would have said, see the world. Some of the old Louis Quatorze furniture had been transferred from the seclusion of the monastery to the glitter of the outer world, and here found a temporary repose.

"You are leaving," said the old antiquarian sadly—but his tones were always sad. "I am sorry. I am always sorry when anyone leaves who possesses the true artistic temperament. The town feels more deserted. There are so many things around us that appeal only to the few. But you have made quite a long stay amongst us; people generally come one day and depart the next. And now you are bound for Quimper?"

"Yes. What shall we find there?"

"Much that is interesting; the loveliest church in Brittany; many quaint and curious houses and perspectives; some things that are better than Morlaix, but nothing better than our Grande Rue. Brittany has nothing better than that in its way; nothing so good. Du reste, comparisons should never be made. But you will find few antiquities in Quimper—and no old antiquarian," he added with a quiet smile.

"I am under the impression," said H.C., a sensitive flush mantling to his poetical and expressive eyes, "that some of these good people are mistaking us for dealers in curiosities, and fancy that this is our object in travelling."

[Illustration: QUIMPER.]

"What would your aunt, Lady Maria, say to her nephew's being so degraded?" we asked.

"She would diminish her supply of crystallised violets," he returned. "You know she lives by weight—Apothecaries' Weight—and measures everything she takes. She would put a few grains less into the balance, and incense her rooms."

All the same, I thought him mistaken, and asked the old antiquarian the plain question. He smiled; the nearest approach we ever saw him give to a laugh.



“No, sirs,” he replied; “I have not so far erred. We do not make those mistakes. Besides, you have too much love and veneration for the beautiful. Indeed we know with whom we have to deal, and in our little way possess a knowledge of the world.”

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But time and tide wait for no man. Our hour was up; the omnibus had rumbled past us, and we had to depart. We reluctantly turned away from this interesting group. The rift within the lute was probably busy with household matters above, and no discordant element marred our farewell. But we were sad, for we felt that somehow here was being lost and wasted a great deal of that true talent which is so rare in the world.

The train rolled away from Morlaix. We had a long journey before us; a journey right through the heart of Finistere. The first portion of it as far as Landerneau had already been taken; the remainder was new ground. The trains are slow and lingering in Brittany; this goes without saying, and has already been said; but patience was an easy virtue. In spite of Catherine, new ground must always be interesting.

The guard had put us into a compartment at Morlaix containing two people; a young bride and bridegroom or an engaged couple; we could not be quite sure at which stage they had arrived. The train was almost in motion and we had no time to change. The gentleman glared at us, and we felt very uncomfortably in the way. At the next station we left and went into the next compartment, which contained nothing but a priest reading his breviary; a dignified ecclesiastic; proving once more that there is only one step from the ridiculous to the sublime. We carefully removed all our small traps, including H.C.'s numerous antique parcels. But he forgot his umbrella, which he had placed up in the rack. A dreadful umbrella, which had been a martyrdom to me ever since we had left England. An umbrella that was only fit for a poet or a Mrs. Gamp; huge, bulky, tied round like a lettuce, with half a yard of stick above the material, and a crane's head for a handle with a perpetual grin upon it that was terribly irritating. H.C. called it one of his antiquities, and was proud of it. When he had first bought it he had offered it to his aunt, Lady Maria, for a carriage sunshade, who straightway went off into one of her fainting fits, and very nearly disinherited him. At Quimper I could stand it no longer, and when his back was turned, I quietly put it up the chimney. There it no doubt still remains, unless it has suffered martyrdom in the flames, in return for the martyrdom it had inflicted upon others. But I am dating forward.

This horrible apparition he left in the rack of the first compartment. I saw the omission, and was delighted to think that we had at last got rid of the encumbrance. Had I only remembered the tale of the Eastern Slippers I might have taken warning. The train went off; he took a sketch of the priest, and then hastily looked round.

"My umbrella!" he exclaimed in an agony. "Where is it? You have not thrown it out of window?"

My will had been good to do it many a time, as the familiar saying runs; but he carried a stick as well as an umbrella, and he was five times as strong as I.

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"You may have left it at Morlaix," I suggested. "Now I come to think of it—"

"The next compartment," he interrupted. "I distinctly remember putting it up in the rack, and thinking how quaint and pretty the crane's head looked as it gaped through the netting."

It is always so. The fateful crossness of events pursues us through the world. The only time when he should have been absent-minded and oblivious, his memory served him well. At the next station he got out for his umbrella, and returned after quite a long interval, not looking exactly triumphant; rather flushed and uncomfortable; but in proud possession of the horror.

"I had quite a difficulty in getting it back," he said. "They had actually put it up and were sitting under its shade. He complained of the glare of the sunshine. You see, although these are first-class compartments, there are no blinds to the windows. So very public."

"But the morning is grey," I observed. "There is no sunshine."

H.C. looked out; he had not observed the absence of sunlight.

"Oh, well," he returned, doubtfully, "perhaps it was the draught they complained of. You know I am rather dull at French, and have to make a shot at a good deal that's said. Any way," he added, with a frank look of innocence, "I am sure they are only an engaged couple, not married. Married people wouldn't sit in a railway carriage under one umbrella. She's very pretty—I wonder whether she's very fond of him? It looks like it. One compartment—one umbrella. It was *my* umbrella—then I ought to have had his place," he added dreamily, as if in some way or other he felt that something was wrong and the world was a little out of joint.

The priest looked up from his breviary. I should have thought he understood English, only that his expression was rather comical than reproving. I changed the subject and asked him a question. He immediately closed his book and disposed himself for conversation. We found him an extremely intellectual and entertaining companion. He intimately knew both Brittany and the Breton character.

"I am not a Breton," he said in reply to a remark, "but I have lived amongst them for thirty years. My early days were passed in Paris, and to live in Paris up to the age of twenty-one is alone an education. My father was X——, the great minister of his time. My grandfather went through all the horrors of the French Revolution. He saw the beautiful head of Marie Antoinette roll into the sawdust; heard the last footfall of Charlotte Corday as she ascended the scaffold. He always said that she was one of our most heroic martyrs, and as she walked patiently and full of courage to her doom, the expression of a saint upon her features. She was a saint, more worthy of canonisation than some who are found in the calendar. He was a young man in those

days, but its horrors turned his hair white. Later on he was of great assistance to Napoleon, although we have always been Royalists. But he held that it was well to sacrifice private opinion for the good of one's country. It is of no use fighting against the stream. Life is short, the present only is ours; therefore why waste the present in vainly wishing for what is not?"

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"And you have chosen neither sword nor portfolio?" we observed.

"The lot is cast into the lap," he quoted. "I was to have been a soldier, but just at that moment my sight failed. I was threatened with blindness. Fortunately it passed off with time, and I now see better than I did at twenty. But my career as a soldier was ended. I had no taste for politics—the world is not sufficiently honest. It seems to me a constant struggling for party and power rather than an earnest union of hearts and minds to do one's very best for King and country, *avienne que pourra*. And as extremes meet in human nature just as they sometimes meet in the physical world, so I, throwing aside the sword, took to the cowl. Yes; I withdrew from the world; I entered a monastery; the severe order of the Trappists. But I made a mistake—I did not know myself. A life of seclusion, of inactivity, could never be mine. I should have become demoralised. Half the men who enter monasteries make the same mistake, but they have not the courage to withdraw. I went back into the world before my novitiate was six months over. Not to forsake religion, but to enter the Church."

"We have heard of you as a great preacher," we remarked.

"I believe that it is my vocation," he returned with a smile which quite illumined his face. "Heaven has bestowed upon me the gift of sympathy; I have influence with my fellow mortals—Heaven grant that I use it well. I first touch their hearts, then I have gained their minds. This is especially necessary with the good Breton folk. They are fervently religious, but not intellectual. They are sterling, but narrow-minded and superstitious. Nor did I choose my sphere of action; it was placed before me and I accepted it. I would rather have preached to Parisian congregations, the refined and cultivated of the earth; but I should probably not have done more good—if I have done good at all—and it might have been a snare to me. I might have grown worldly; intellectually proud; too fond of the good things of this life at the tables of the rich and great. All that is not possible in Brittany. With us, more or less, it is Lent all the year round, intellectually as well as physically. We need very few indulgences from his Holiness."

There was something extremely winning about him. It must have been the charm of character, for he had long passed the charm of youth. His hair, worn long, was white as snow; he must have been verging upon sixty. His face was pale and very pure in expression; his eyes were large, dark, and singularly soft and luminous, without a trace of age about them, or of their early weakness. He was tall and powerfully made, and a tendency to embonpoint only added to his dignity and importance. He had a fund of quiet humour about him also, which made him an excellent companion.

[Illustration: OLD MILL, LANDERNEAU.]

"We should much like to hear you preach," we said. "Is there no chance of our doing so?"

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"I am bound for Quimper," he returned; "so are you. Next Sunday I shall preach in the cathedral, and if you are still there your wish may easily be gratified."

"We are Protestant," I remarked. "You will look upon us as a heretic."

"Indeed, no," he returned quickly. "I am not so narrow-minded as some of my cloth. One is of Paul, another of Cephas. I would not even try to convert you, though I am aware that my Church demands it. But to a certain extent man must be a free agent and judge for himself. I do not hold with my Church in all things. We are all bound for the same goal, just as two rivers flowing from opposite directions may empty themselves into one sea. All roads lead to Rome—it would be sad if only one road led to Heaven."

Thus the hours passed swiftly and pleasantly. The country on either side was diversified and interesting. Occasionally a river, flowing to the sea, reflected the sky and clouds above, giving poetry to the landscape. Now hills and gently sloping undulations, here rocky and barren, there fringed with trees whose graceful curves and branches were traced against the pale background of sky. Again there were long stretches of plain, dreary and monotonous, sad and sombre, like the Breton character.

The peasantry, indeed, are much influenced by their climate, by the sad aspect of the long reaches of field and plain that so often meet their gaze, unbroken perhaps by any other object than a cross or calvary erected under religious influence in days gone by. And these very crosses, beautiful in themselves, have a saddening tendency, reminding them constantly of the fact that here they have "no continuing city." These wide reaches, artistically, are full of tone and beauty, but here again they are at fault. They know nothing of "tone," of "greys and greens;" they only know that the general influence is melancholy; that the sun shines too seldom in their skies, and that those skies too often weep. They cannot argue and analyse; cannot tell why the tendency of their nature, individually and collectively, is grave and sombre; reasoning is beyond them, and if they think of it at all, they arrive at the truth by instinct. For instinct takes the place of reason, and gradually dies out as the higher powers of the intellect are developed.

They stood out here and there in the fields, few and far between, very picturesque objects; something sad and patient in their very attitudes. But it was not the time for ploughing and seed-sowing, when they are seen to greatest advantage; for what is more picturesque than a peasant following a plough drawn by the patient oxen, who are never, like so many of the men and women of the world, "unequally yoked together." Here and there a woman would be kneeling in the fields, her favourite attitude when minding cattle; kneeling and knitting; there they stay from sunrise to sunset, their mind a blank; vegetating; expecting nothing better from life; untroubled by the mysterious problems that disturb and perplex so many of us; in very many ways so much to be

envied; escaping the heritage of those more richly endowed: the mental and spiritual pain and oppression of existence.

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The day passed on and we approached Quimper. We thought of Catherine and wondered what we should find awaiting us. Much, according to her, that would be better avoided. But as we drew near to the ancient town and saw, rising heavenwards, the beautiful spires of her cathedral, standing out in the romantic gloaming as an architectural dream against the background of sky, we felt that here would be our reward, come what else might. The train steamed into the station; our day's journey was over. We must now part from our pleasant travelling companion.

"I hope not, for ever," he said, as he bared his head on the platform, according to the polite custom of his country. "We have some things in common; we see much from the same point of view; accident made me a Frenchman and a priest, and I would not have it otherwise; but I think that I could also have been very happy as an Englishman and a member of your Church. Here I think that we meet half-way; for if I find myself so much in touch with an Englishman, you seem to me in still closer union with the French nature."

Then he gave us his card and asked us if we would go and see him.

"Do not be afraid," he laughed; "I will not try to convert you—pervert, you would call it. I think we are both too broad-minded to meddle with things that do not concern us. Here, I am the guest of the Bishop, but he is absent, and will only return the day before my departure. It is a pity, for he would charm you by many delightful qualities, though he may not be quite so tolerant as I."

We parted with an understanding that it was to meet again, and went our different ways. We consigned our traps to the omnibus, H.C. for once trusting his precious treasures out of sight, but retaining his umbrella with all the determination of an inquisitor inflicting torture upon a fellow mortal. A short avenue brought us to the river, which flowed through the town, and, not without reason, had been condemned by Catherine. We crossed the bridge and went down the quay. It was lined with trees, and in fine weather is rather a pleasant walk. The chief hotels of the town are centred here, and some of the principal shops and cafes. It is fairly bustling and lively, but not romantic.

We had been recommended to the Hotel de l'Epee as the best in Quimper, and soon found ourselves entering its wide portals; a huge porte-cochere that swallowed up at a single mouthful the omnibus and the piled-up luggage that had quickly followed us from the station.

Ostlers and landlord immediately came forward with ladders and other attentions, and we were soon domiciled.



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It was a rambling old inn, with winding staircases, dark and dirty, and guiltless of carpet. The walls might have been painted at the beginning of the century, but hardly since. "In fact," said H.C., "they look quite mediaeval." There were passages long and gloomy, in which we lost ourselves. Ancient windows let in any amount of draught and rain, and would have been the despair of old maids. But we were given a large room, the very essence of neatness, and beds adorned with spotless linen. A chambermaid waited upon us, dressed in a Breton cap that was wonderfully picturesque, and made us feel more in Brittany than ever. She had long passed her youth, but possessed a frank and expressive face, and was superior to most of the hotel servants. In early life she had lived with a noble family, and had travelled with them for many years. She had seen something of the world.

Our windows looked on to the back of the hotel, in comparison with which the front was tame and commonplace. Below us we saw an accumulation of gables and angles; a perfect sea of wonderful red roofs, with all the beauty and colouring of age. Some of them possessed dormer windows, that just now reflected the afterglow of sunset; small dormer windows high up in the slanting roofs that perhaps had reflected the changes of light and shade, and day and night, for centuries. Here and there we traced picturesque courtyards and gardens that were small oases of green in this wilderness of red-roofed buildings. On the one side flowed the second river of Quimper, on the other, like a celestial vision, rose the wonderful cathedral. A dream, a vision of Paradise, it did indeed look in this fast falling twilight. The towers, crowned by their graceful spires, rose majestically above this sea of houses. Beyond, one traced the outlines of pinnacle and flying buttress, slanting roof and beautiful windows.

We were just in time for table d'hôte, and groped our way down the dark, winding stairs. The way to the dining-room lay through the bureau, where Madame sat in state at her desk, entertaining a select party of friends, who had evidently called in upon her for a little scandal and conversation. She was a tall, majestic woman, with a loud voice, and apparently a long life before her; but at a second visit we paid Quimper not long after, she, too, had passed into the regions that lie "beyond the veil."

The dining-room was long and large and crowded. Most of the people at table were evidently commercial travellers, and more or less habitués of the place. All the women who served wore those wonderful Brittany caps, and quite redeemed the room from its common-place elements.

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The shades of night had quite fallen upon the old town when we went out to reconnoitre. It would only be possible to gain a faint and scarcely true impression of what the town was like. At night, new things often look old, and old new, outlines are magnified, and general effects are altogether lost. The river ran down the quay like a dark and sluggish thread; there was no poetry or romance about it. The banks were built up with granite, which made it look more like a canal than a river. To be at all picturesque it wanted the addition of boats and barges, of which just now it was free and void. The trees whispered in the night breeze. On the opposite bank, covering a large space, a fair was holding its revelry; a small pandemonium; shows were lighted up with flaring gas, and houris in spangles danced and threw out their fascinations. Big drums and trumpets made night hideous. The high cliffs beyond served as a sort of sounding-board, so that nothing was lost.

We turned away and soon found ourselves in the cathedral square. Before us rose the great building in all its majesty, distinctly outlined against the dark sky. In Brittany, one rather hungers for these fine ecclesiastical monuments, Normandy is so full of them that we miss them here. Brittany has the advantage in its old towns, but the mind sometimes asks for something higher and more perfect than mere street architecture.

[Illustration: BRITTANY PEASANT.]

Therefore, even to-night, in the darkness, we revelled and gloried in the magnificent cathedral that stood before us in such grand proportions. The spires seemed to touch the skies. The west front was in deep shadow. We traced the outlines of flying buttresses, of heavier buttresses between the windows, of the beautiful apse. The windows, faintly lighted up, added wonderfully to the effect. Surely the church was not closed? We tried the west door, it yielded, and we entered.

The interior was in semi-darkness; a gloom that almost inspired awe; a silence and repose which forbade the faintest echo of our footsteps. Pillars and aisles and arches could be barely outlined. Everything seemed dim and intangible; we felt that we were going through a vision, there was so little that was real or earthly about it; so much that was beautiful, mysterious, full of repose and saintly influence. The far east end was lost in obscurity, and we could barely trace the outlines of the splendid roof. Far down, near a confessional, knelt a small group of hooded women, motionless as carven images. Their heads were bowed, their whole attitude betrayed the penitential mood. There might have been eight or ten at most, and they never stirred. But every now and then a fair penitent issued from the confessional box; and, cloaked and hooded, glided back to the seat she had lately occupied, and resumed the penitential attitude. The ceremony was drawing near its end when we entered, and when all was over they rose in a group and, noiselessly as phantoms, like spirits from the land of shadows, passed down the long aisle and disappeared into the night.

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It was a strange hour for confession, and there must have been some special reason for it. They were strangely dressed, too, in their silken cloaks and hoods, as if they belonged to some religious order, or some charitable institution. We wondered much.

When the west doorway had closed behind them, and not before, the priest left his box, and we started as we recognised our fellow traveller. How came it that he was confessing so soon after his arrival, or confessing at all, in a church to which, as far as we knew, he was not attached? His tall and portly form looked magnificent and commanding as he stepped forth into the shadowy aisle, and, preceded by a verger, or suisse, bearing a lighted flambeau and a staff of office, was soon lost in the sacristy.

We lost ourselves in dreams. It is wonderfully refreshing to fall out of the influence of the crowded and commonplace world into these silent resting-places, which whisper so much of Heaven, and seem to breathe out a full measure of the spiritual life. They seem steeped in a religious, a celestial atmosphere; just as, on the Sabbath, in quiet country places, far from crowded haunts, surrounded only by the beauties of nature, there seems a special peace and repose in earth and sky, and people say to each other, "One feels that it is Sunday."

But we were very nearly in danger of prolonging our dreams until the night shadows passed away, and the day-dawn broke and lighted up that far-off east window. H.C. was a very broken reed to trust to on such occasions. He was not only wrapped in visions—his spirit seemed altogether to have taken flight. I was rudely brought back to earthly scenes and necessities by hearing the key hastily turned in the west door by which we had entered, and the verger commencing to retrace his steps, preparatory to putting out the lights and departing himself through the sacristy.

We hurried up to him, having no mind to pass the night in silent contemplation, with the pavement for couch and a stone for pillow. The influence we had just experienced must have given us "pallid sorrowful faces," for the verger almost dropped his torch, and his keys fell to the ground and awoke mysterious echoes in the distant arches.

It was a weird, wonderfully expressive scene. The torch threw lights and shadows upon aisle and arch, which flickered and danced like so many ghosts at play, until our nerves felt overwrought and our flesh crept. In our present mood it all seemed too strange, too mysterious for earth. We felt as if we had joined the land of shadows in very truth. But the verger's voice awoke us to realities: a very earthly voice, unmusical and pronounced, not at all in harmony with the moment. It grated upon us; nevertheless, under the circumstances, it was good hearing.

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"Sirs, you are very imprudent," he cried. "You might have been locked up for the night, and I promise you that it is neither warm nor lively in this great building at three o'clock in the morning. You also alarmed me, for I took you for ghosts. I have seen them and believe in them, and I ought to know. When I die I am persuaded that I, too, shall visit these haunts, whose pavement I have trod with staff and torch for fifty years. I took you for ghosts, look you, for you seem harmless and peaceable, incapable of visiting these sacred aisles for sacrilegious purposes."

We felt flattered. The countenance is undoubtedly the index to the inner man, though it is not given to everyone to read the riddle. It was consoling to hear that we did not exactly look like midnight assassins.

"I have never come across anyone like this before," continued the verger. "I was not in the least prepared for you. What could have induced you to come in and contemplate all this darkness, and risk being locked up for the night? If I had been at the other end when I discovered you, I should have fled, quite sure that you were ghosts. I tell you that I have seen ghosts, but I do not care to converse with them; they rather frighten me."

"Those fair penitents," murmured H.C. "They looked very graceful and picturesque; therefore they ought to be very pretty. Could I go and see them, and make a sketch of them? Do you think they would admit me? Are they nuns?"

"They are not nuns, or they would not be here," returned the old verger. "But they do a great deal of good. For my part I should say their confession was superfluous. They can have no sins. I never go to confession. What could I say? My life is always the same. I get up in the morning, open the church; lock it up at night, go to bed. I eat my meals in peace, do harm to no one, am in charity with all men. There is my life from January to December. What have I to confess?"

"You are an extremely interesting character, but not so interesting as the fair penitents," said H.C., bringing him back to the point from which he had wandered. "Who are they, and can I go and call upon them?"

"I don't believe they would admit you if you took them an order from the Pope," returned the old verger emphatically. "Without being nuns, they have taken a vow of celibacy, and live in partial retirement. No man is ever admitted within their portals, excepting their Father Confessor, and he is old and ugly; in fact, the very image of a baboon. A very good and pious man, all the same, is his reverence, and very learned. These ladies teach the children of the poor; they nurse the sick; they have a small orphanage; and they are full of good works."

"Why were they here to-night?"

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"Whenever that very holy man, the Reverend Father, visits Quimper, they always make it a point of going to confess to him the very first night of his arrival. The good Mother of the establishment, as she is called, is his cousin. I am told that she is Madame la Comtesse, by right, but renounced the world for the sake of doing good. The Reverend Father arrived only this evening by train. He went straight to the palace, took a bouillon, and immediately came on here. He is a great man. You should come on Sunday and hear him preach. There have been times when I have seen the women sob, and the men bow their heads. But it grows late, sirs. It is not worth while opening that west door again. If you will follow me, I will let you out by the sacristy. We will lock up together, and leave this great building to darkness and the ghosts."

And ghosts indeed there seemed to be as we followed him up the aisle. He put out the few lights that remained, until his torch alone guided our footsteps, which sounded in the immense space, and disturbed the mysterious silence by yet more mysterious echoes. Lights and shadows cast by the torch flitted about like wings. The choir gates were closed, and within them all was darkness and solemnity. Finally we entered the sacristy, where again the surplices hanging up in rows looked strange and suggestive. The old verger opened the door, extinguished his torch, and we stood once more in the outside night, under the stars and the sky.

"How often we come in for these experiences," said H.C. "How delightful they are; full of a sacred beauty and solemnity. How few ever attempt to enter a cathedral at night, and how much they lose. And yet," he mused, "perhaps not so much as we imagine. If their souls responded to such influences, they would seek them out. The needle is attracted to the pole; like seeks like—and finds it. You cannot draw sweet water from a bitter well."

The town was in darkness. The shops were now all closed, but lights gleamed from many windows. The beautiful latticed panes we had found in Morlaix were here very few and far between. Here and there we came upon gabled outlines, but much that we saw seemed modern and unpicturesque; very tame and commonplace after our late experience in the cathedral. The streets were silent and deserted; all doors were closed; the people of Quimper, like those of Morlaix, evidently carried out the good old rule of retiring early. Occasionally we came upon a group of buildings, or a solitary house standing out conspicuously amidst its fellows, which promised well for the morrow, and made us "wish for the morning."

When we found our way back to the quay, all was in darkness. The fair had put out its lights, closed its doors, and dismissed the assembly. Where the people had gone to, we knew not; we had seen none of them. A few cafes were still open, and their lights fell across the pavement and athwart the roads, and gleamed upon the rustling trees. We turned in to the hotel, where all was quiet. The night was yet young, but the staircases were in darkness and we had to grope our way. Decidedly it was the most

uncivilized place we had yet come to, and Catherine was not very far wrong in her judgment.

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[Illustration: A BRITTANY SERVANT.]

The next morning we awoke to grey skies. "It always rains at Quimper," said Catherine, and she was only quoting a proverb. There was something close and oppressive and depressing about the town. The air was enervating. The hotels were unfavourably placed. The quays were commonplace—for Brittany. There was nothing romantic or beautiful about the river, which, I have said, resembled a canal. Its waters were black and sluggish, confined, as they probably were, by locks. In front rose high cliffs which shut out the sky and the horizon and heaven's glorious oxygen. We many of us know what it is to dwell for some time under the shadow of a great mountain. Gradually it seems to oppress us and crush down upon us until we feel that we must get away from it or die of suffocation. Here there was a heaviness in the air which taxed all our mental resources, our reserve of energy, our amiability to the utmost.

The cathedral by daylight should be our first care, and we found it worthy of all the effect it had produced upon us last night. All its mystery and magic had gone, but all the beauty and perfection of architecture remained. Certainly we had seen nothing like it in Brittany.

It is dedicated to St. Corentin, a holy man who is supposed to have come over from Cornwall in the very early ages of the Christian era. Quimper was then the capital of the Cornouaille, a corruption, as we can easily trace, of the word Cornwall. The cathedral, commenced about the year 1239, was only completed in 1515. The spires are modern, but of such excellent workmanship and design that they in no way interfere with the general effect. The harmony of the whole is indeed remarkable when it is considered that it was nearly three centuries in process of construction. The west front is very fine and stately, with deep portals magnificently sculptured. It was commenced in 1424, and is surmounted by two flamboyant windows, one above the other. Within the contour of the arch is a triple row of angels, sculptured with a great deal of artistic finish. Time, however, whilst beautifying it, has robbed it of some of its fineness.

The towers were also commenced in 1424, and the great bell of the clock which they contain dates from 1312. The north and south doorways are both fine. The latter is dedicated to St. Catherine, and a figure of the saint adorns a niche in the left buttress. Both portals possess scrolls bearing inscriptions or mottoes, such as, A ma Vie, one of the mottoes of the House of Brittany. In the pediment of the west doorway is the finest heraldic sculpturing that the Middle Ages of Brittany produced. In the centre, the lion of Montfort holds the banner of Brittany, on which may be read the motto of Duke John V.: Malo au riche duc. In the corner to the left are the arms of Bishop Bertrand de Rosmadec, stamped with the mitre and crozier, and the motto, En bon Espoir. Many other mottoes, such as Perac (Wherefore?); A l'aventure; Leal a ma foy; En Dieu m'attens, belonging to different lords of Brittany, will also be found here.



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The effect of the interior is extremely grand and imposing. It is of great height, whilst the side chapels and outer aisles give it an appearance of more breadth than it deserves. The apse is polygonal. The principal nave, with its large arches, its curved triforium, and its flamboyant windows, bears the mark of the fifteenth century. The choir is thirteenth century, and possesses a triforium with a double gallery, surrounded by gothic arches supported by small columns, of which the capitals are extremely elegant.

The church has a peculiarity which is not often found, at any rate in so pronounced a manner. The chancel is not in a line with the nave, but inclines to the left, or north. Thus, in standing at the west end, only a portion of the apse can be seen. The effect is singular, and, at the first moment, seems to offend. But after a time the peculiarity becomes decidedly effective. The stiffness of the straight line, of the sides running exactly parallel one with the other, is lost. One grows almost to like the break in the uniformity of design. It appeals to the imagination. Certain other cathedrals incline in the same way, but in a more modified form. The architects' reasons for thus inclining the choir are lost in obscurity. By some it has been supposed that their motive was purely effect; by others that it was in imitation or commemoration of our Lord, Who, when hanging upon the cross, inclined His Head to the left.

Many of the windows are old, and add greatly to the fine effect of the interior. Those in the nave date from the end of the fifteenth century. Some of those in the choir—unfortunately the most conspicuous—are modern; but a few are ancient. The whole interior has suffered in tone by restoration and scraping.

The high-altar is richly decorated with enamels and precious stones. The tabernacle—in the centre of which is a figure of the Saviour in the act of blessing—is flanked by twelve arcades, containing the figures of the Apostles in relief, holding the instrument of their martyrdom. It is crowned by a cross with double rows, or branches, at the foot of which are the evangelists with their symbolical animals. The lower arms of the cross bear the figures of the Virgin and St. John weeping at the feet of the crucified Redeemer.

Amongst the treasures of the cathedral are preserved three drops of blood, of which the following is the legend:—

A pilgrim of Quimper, on starting for the Holy Land, had confided a sum of money to a friend. On returning, he claimed the money, but the friend denied having received it, offering to take an oath to that effect before the crucifix in the church of St. Corentin. At the moment of raising his hand to take the oath, he gave a stick that he carried to his friend to hold. The stick was hollow and contained the gold. As soon as he had taken the oath, the stick miraculously broke in two, and the money rolled on to the pavement. At the same moment the feet of the crucifix, held together by a single nail, separated, and three drops of blood fell on to the altar. These drops were carefully absorbed by



some linen, which is preserved amongst the treasures of the church. The miracle is reproduced in a painted window of one of the chapels.

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Last night we had seen the interior in the gloom and mystery of darkness; this morning we saw it by the dim religious light of day. It was difficult to say which view was the more impressive. The results were very different. We now gazed upon all its beauty of detail, all the harmony of perfect architecture. The coloured rays coming in through the ancient stained windows added their glamour and refinement to the scene; to those that were more modern we tried to shut our eyes. The lofty pillars of the nave, separating the aisles, rose majestically, fitting supports for the beautiful gothic arches above them, in their turn surmounted by the triforium; in their turn again crowned by the ancient windows. Above all, at a great height, came the arched roof. Thus the eye was carried up from beauty to beauty until it seemed lost in dreamland. Wandering aside, it fell upon the aisles and side chapels, visions of beauty interrupted only by the wonderful columns, with their fine bases and rich capitals. The east window seemed very far off, a portion of it lost in the curve to the left, together with the beautiful gothic arches and double triforium of that side of the choir.

We sat and gazed upon all, and lost ourselves in the spell of the vision; and presently our old friend the verger found us out.

“But you *live* in the cathedral!” he exclaimed.

“No,” we replied; “we should only like to do so. We envy you, whose days are chiefly passed here.”

“I don’t know,” he returned, with the resigned air of a martyr. “If you had trodden this pavement for fifty years as I have, I think you would like to change the scene. And I have not the chance of doing it even in the next state, for you know I have a conviction that I shall come back here as a ghost. I thought *you* were ghosts last night, and a fine fright you gave me. I don’t know why ghosts should frighten one, but they do. I don’t like to feel that when I get into the next state, and come back to earth as a ghost, I shall frighten people. It would be better not to come back at all.”

“What are they like, those that you have seen?” we asked, out of curiosity.

He closed his eyes, as if invoking a vision, put on a very solemn expression, and then opened them with a wide stare into vacancy. We quite started and looked behind us to see if any were visible.

“No, they are not there,” he said. “They only come at night. How can I describe them? How can you describe a shadow? They are all shadows, and they seem everywhere at once. I never hear them, but I can see them and feel them. I mean that I feel them morally—their influence: of course you cannot handle a ghost. The air grows cold, and an icy wind touches my face as they pass to and fro.”

“Then if the wind is icy they cannot come from purgatory?” suggested H.C. very innocently.

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The old verger seemed a little doubtful; the idea had not occurred to him. "I don't know about that," he said. "I have heard that the extremes of heat and cold have the same effect upon one. So perhaps what feels like ice to me is really the opposite. But my idea is that the ghosts who appear on earth are exempt from purgatory: to visit the scenes of their former haunts under different conditions must be sufficient punishment for their worst sins."

[Illustration: QUIMPER.]

So that our verger was also a philosopher.

"Have you never spoken to one, and made some inquiry about the next world?" we asked. "Have they never given you some idea of what it is all like?"

"Never," he replied. "I am much too frightened. Just as frightened now as I was when I first saw them fifty years ago. Nor would they reply. How can they? How can shadows talk? I only once took courage to speak," he added, as if by an after recollection. "I thought it was the ghost of a woman who promised to marry me, and then jilted me for a journeyman cabinet-maker. He treated her badly and she died at the end of two years. Somehow I felt as if it was her spirit hovering about me, and I took courage and spoke."

"Well?"

"I received no answer; only a long, long sigh, which seemed to float all through the building and pass away out of the windows. But it was a windy night, and it may have been only that. For if shadows can't talk, I don't see how they can sigh."

The old verger evidently had faith in his ghosts. The fancy had gained upon him and strengthened with time into part of himself; as inseparable from the cathedral as its aisles and arches.

"Have you never tried the experiment of passing a night in these old walls?" we asked.

"Once; thirty years ago."

"And the result?"

He turned pale. "I can never speak of that night. What I saw then will never be known. I cannot think of it without emotion—even after thirty years. Ah, well! my time is growing short. I shall soon know the great secret. When we are young and going up-hill, we think ourselves immortal, for we cannot see the bottom of the other side, where lies the grave. But I have been going down-hill a long time; I am very near the end of the journey, and see the grave very distinctly."

"Yet you seem very happy and cheerful," said H.C.



“Why not?” returned the old verger. “Old age should not be miserable, but the contrary. The inevitable cannot be painful and was never intended to be anything but a source of consolation; I have heard the Reverend Father say so more than once. Shall you come and hear him preach next Sunday? The whole place will be thronged. He spoke to me about you this morning—it must be you—I have just been to the Eveche for his commands—and said that in case you came I was to reserve two places for you inside the choir gates—quite the place of honour, sirs. You will see and hear well; and when preaching, it is almost as good to watch him as to listen. Ah! I have been here fifty years, but I never saw his equal.”



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“And the Bishop?”

“I never make comparisons; they must always be to the disadvantage of one or the other,” replied this singular old man. “And now I must away to my duties.”

“One word more,” said H.C. hastily. “Will those picturesque ladies come again to Confession to-night?”

“To-night!” he returned reproachfully. “Do you think those virtuous creatures pass their lives in sinning—like ordinary beings? No, no. Besides—enough’s as good as a feast, and they were well shriven last night. They are now reposing in the odour of sanctity. Au revoir, messieurs. I see your hearts are in the cathedral, and I know that I shall meet you here again before Sunday.”

He departed. We watched his stooping figure and his white hair moving slowly up the aisle, so fitting an object for the venerable building itself. He disappeared in the sacristy, and a few moments after we found ourselves without the building, standing in the shadow of the great towers, under the grey skies of Quimper.

## TO MY SOUL.

*From the French of Victor Hugo.*

You stray, my soul, whilst gazing on the sky!  
The path of duty is the path of life!  
Sit by the cold hearth where dead ashes lie,  
Put on the captive’s chain—endure the strife.  
Be but a servant in this realm of night,  
O child of light!

To lost and wandering feet deliverance bring;  
Fulfil the perfect law of suffering;  
Drink to the dregs the bitter cup; remain  
In battle last; be first in tears and pain—  
Then, with a prayer that much may be forgiven,  
Go back to Heaven!

C.E. MEETKERKE.

## SO VERY UNATTRACTIVE!

“Yes,” meditated pretty Mrs. Hart; “I suppose it would be invidious to pass her over and ask the other three, but I would so much rather have them.”



“Cannot you ask the whole four?” suggested her sister.

“Does it not strike you as being almost too much of a good thing? You see, our space is not unlimited.”

“Ask the three eldest,” said Bertie Paine decidedly.

“But I do not want her. What use is she? She can sing, certainly, but you cannot keep her singing all the evening; and the rest of the time she neither talks nor flirts. And she is altogether so very unattractive,” ended Mrs. Hart, despondently.

“Who is it?” asked the handsomest man in the room, strolling up to the group by the window. “Who is this unfortunate lady? I always feel such sympathy with the unattractive, as you know.”

“Naturally,” laughed Mrs. Hart. “The individual in question is a Miss Mildmay, a plain person and the eldest of four sisters.”

“Mildmay? Who are they? I used to know people of that name, and there were four girls in the family. One of them—her name was Minnie, I remember—promised to grow up very pretty.”

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“So she is; Minnie is the third. They are certainly your friends, Mr. Ratcliff. They are all pretty but the eldest, and all their names begin with M: Margaret, Miriam, Minnie, and Maud. Absurd, is it not?”

“Somebody had a strong fancy for alliteration. So Miss Mildmay is plain?”

“Very plain, very dull, very uninteresting,” said Mrs. Hart and her sister in a breath. “Much given to stocking-knitting and good works.”

“And good works comprise?” quoth Mr. Ratcliff, interrogatively.

“She sat up every night for a week with Blanche Carter’s children when they had diphtheria, and saved their lives by her nursing,” said Elsie Paine indignantly. “That is the woman that those good people sneer at. You are not fair to her, Mrs. Hart. She has a sweet face when you come to know her.”

“There, you have put Elsie up,” cried mischievous Bertie. “No more peace for you here, Mrs. Hart. Come out into the garden with me, and postpone this question in favour of tennis.”

The conclave broke up and Mark Ratcliff said and heard no more of Margaret Mildmay. He betook himself to solitude and cigars, and as he strode over the breezy downs he wondered what a predilection for stocking-knitting and good works might signify in the once merry girl, and if they might be possibly a form of penance for past misdeeds.

“She did behave abominably,” he said to himself, flinging a cigar-end viciously away into a patch of dry grass, which ignited and required much stamping before it consented to go out. “Yes, she behaved abominably, and at my time of life I might amuse myself better than in thinking of a fickle girl. Poor Margaret! stockings and good works—she might have done as well taking care of me!”

Then he lit another cigar, put up a covey of partridges, remembered how he used to shoot with Margaret’s father, told himself that there was no fool like an old fool—not referring to Mr. Mildmay in the least—and took himself impatiently back into the town.

And there he did a very dishonourable thing.

A bowery lane ran at the bottom of the gardens attached to a row of scattered villas, picturesque residences inhabited by well-to-do people; and along the bank were placed benches here and there, inviting the passer-by to rest.

From one of the gardens came the sound of quiet voices, one of which he knew, though it had been unheard for years. He sat himself deliberately down upon the bench conveniently near the spot, and hearkened to what that voice had to say.





“Sing to me, Margaret, dear,” pleaded the other speaker. “I am selfish to be always wanting it, I know, but it will not be for long now, and if you do not sing me ‘Will he Come?’ I shall keep on hearing it till I have to try to sing it myself, and that hurts.”

“Hush, Ailie. You know I will sing,” and Mark Ratcliff held his breath in surprise as the notes of the song rose upward.

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Margaret used to sing, but not like this. Every note was like a winged soul rising out of prison. He had never heard such a voice before. No wonder that Mrs. Hart had said that she could sing, and no wonder that this sick girl wanted to hear it. By the way, this was one of the good works, of course!

“Rest to the weary spirit,  
Peace to the quiet dead,”

repeated Ailie as the song died away. “He never came, Margaret, and he never will come to me. It may be wicked, but I could die gladly if I could see him first and know that he had not betrayed me. It is terrible to lie drifting out into the dark without a word from him!”

“Dear Ailie, why do you make me sing this wretched song? Why do you try to dwell on the thought of faithless loves? Have patience a little; your letters may yet find him.”

“Too late. In time for him to drop a tear over my grave and tell you that he never meant to hurt me,” cried the girl hysterically. “Oh, Margaret! Why do I tell you all the anguish that eats upon my heart? If you could only know the comfort you are to me! the blessed relief of lying in your arms and telling you what nobody else could forgive or understand! You are the best person I know, and yet you never make me feel myself lost beyond redemption.”

“You are talking nonsense, darling,” said the voice of the very dull person.

“Am I, you pearl of womanhood? What would you say if I told you all the fancies I have about you? Ah, Margaret, I do not want to know that you have had your heart broken by a false lover!”

“My dear, I was always a plain and unattractive person, just as I am at this day,” answered Margaret in a voice of infinite gentleness. “But why should you not know? There are more faithless than faithful lovers, may be; the one I had grew tired of so dull a person and he went away. That was all.”

Then the two women moved away towards the house and the garden lay in silence.

Mark Ratcliff sat stiff with astonishment.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed at last. “She flings all the blame on me! The whole treachery was hers, and this is positively the coolest thing that ever I heard. Faithless lover, indeed! When she dismissed me with actual insult! But a woman with such a voice might do almost anything, you plain and unattractive Miss Mildmay!”

He lit another cigar, rose in leisurely fashion and sought the way to the front entrances of the villas. Under the shade of the horse-chestnuts, which his critical eye decided to



be, like himself and Margaret, approaching the season of the sere and yellow leaf, he loitered, smoking and watching, and counting up the years since he had waited and watched for the same person before.

At last the right door opened and down the steps came a very sober-looking and unconscious lady. She was thinking of nothing but the dying girl from whom she had just parted.

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"Margaret!"

She started violently. She knew the voice well enough, but after these years it was impossible that it should be sounding here.

"Margaret!" he said again imperatively.

"Mr. Ratcliff," she faltered. "I did not expect to see you again."

"Your expectations seem to be a little curious," he replied, surveying her coolly. "There is a great deal that you have to explain to me. What do you mean by calling me a false lover?"

"Who told you that I accused you of falsehood?" she asked, dropping the book she was carrying in her surprise. "If I did you could scarcely contradict me, but this is not quite the place for such discussions."

He possessed himself of the book and led the way to the public gardens, where the principal walks offered privacy enough at an hour when most of the world was busy over tennis. Children and nursemaids do not count as intruders on privacy.

"See here, Margaret, I was eavesdropping under the garden-fence, while you talked with your sick friend, and I heard you giving me a famously bad character. At least," suddenly recollecting himself, "unless I have made a fool of myself, and it was somebody else you meant."

Margaret said nothing.

"Had you ever any other love?"

"Never," said she, and the colour flew up into her pale face. She did not at all understand the accusation brought against her, or the fierceness of the accuser.

"Then apologise at once for the charge you have brought against me."

She looked up at him with knitted brows. She wanted to look at him, but her eyes would drop again immediately.

"Are you not unreasonable?" she asked. "Years ago you made love to me. Then you went away. Your father was ill, and you could not choose but go, but you gave me to understand that you were coming back to me. You never came. Do you call that faithfulness?"

"I wrote."

“Never.”

“Margaret!” he cried indignantly. “I wrote and had your answer. Are you dreaming?”

“You never wrote. In my life I never wrote to you.”

“Good heavens! When I have your letter in my pocket! I wrote to you asking if I might come back as your accepted lover, and you sent me this in return,” said he, giving her the paper for which he had searched his pocket-book.

She took it and looked it over. When she gave it back her glance was fixed far away over the miraculous river that ran with mimic waterfalls through the gardens, and she was ghastly pale.

“I did not write that,” she said. “You ought to have known it.”

“It is your signature and your hand.”

“It is like my hand. I never signed myself M. Mildmay. How could I, when we were all M. Mildmay?”

A light broke in upon him. They were all M. Mildmay, of course, and he remembered a long-forgotten feud with Miriam. He bit his lip and stamped his foot angrily. What a fool he had been!

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"I am sorry," said Margaret humbly. "For all the world I would not have insulted you, and it is cruel that you should have had to think it of me. I do apologise for any share I have had in it."

Her heart and throat were almost bursting with agony as she spoke in those quiet tones, and he stamped away up the path with his back to her.

"Margaret!" he said, coming back and seizing her hands. "I thought I was case-hardened, but just tell me that you loved me then!"

"I love you now," she answered, crying a little. "I am not of the sort that changes in the matter of loving. Is it bold to say that, and I so unattractive?"

"Hang your unattractiveness! Margaret, just say, 'I love you, Mark Ratcliff,' and set me some atoning penance for my idiocy. You do not know what a curse that vile paper has been to me," and he shot the offending missive into the foolish little river and broke into vigorous and ungraceful language with regard to the writer.

"Hush, hush!" cried Margaret, in deep distress. "She is my sister, and she could not know how much it meant to me."

"Of course not! And what did it matter to her that I must go hungry and thirsty all these years, cursing the whole of womankind because you had tricked me!"

"Oh, why did you distrust me?" exclaimed she sorrowfully, leaning back against the holly arbour in which they had sheltered, and bursting into downright weeping.

"What an amiable desire you evince to throw the fault on me, Margaret," and he drew her hands from her face very gently; "must there be tears now that I have found you again? Forgive me, dear. I was worse than a fool to doubt you, but now we will leave room for no more possibilities of trouble and parting. I am going to find out that other poor distrusted beggar, your friend Ailie's lover, and let him know what you women accuse him of, and when I come back, we shall see!"

"See what?" gasped Margaret.

"What we shall see!" he returned, triumphantly.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Awfully sorry to have been late for dinner, Mrs. Hart," said Mr. Ratcliff, without the least appearance of distress, when he joined the ladies in the drawing-room; "I was unavoidably detained. By the way, your party is not for another month, I think?"

“No,” she replied, wondering why her handsome friend looked so gleefully mischievous. “I have fixed upon the thirtieth; I do not want to clash with Mrs. Dent and Mrs. Clarence.”

“Then I am commissioned to tell you that you may invite all the Misses Mildmay, without the least inconvenience. Miss Mildmay the undesirable will not be in a position to accept your invitation. It is anticipated that she will then be on her wedding tour as Mrs. Mark Ratcliff.”

“Good gracious! How sudden!” exclaimed Mrs. Hart, opening her pretty blue eyes to their widest extent; and for the life of her she could not help adding under her breath, “And she so very unattractive!”

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### MADEMOISELLE ELISE.

BY EDWARD FRANCIS.

#### I.

M. Lorman, director of the Theatre Royal, Rocheville, stood at a window of Mademoiselle Elise's apartment that looked on the Rue Murillo, Paris. His gloves were drawn on, he carried his hat and stick, and he waited impatiently—now smoothing his grey moustache, now looking at his watch, now tapping his well-polished boot with the tip of his cane. Then he turned his back to the window and began to walk to and fro. At the second turn, he paused before a picture—a little water-colour sketch—that hung from the wall. It was a painting of a girl dressed in a rich costume of the Empire. Her slight figure was bent a little forward, and her tiny hands drew back a pale green skirt, just so much as to show one dainty pink shoe. M. Lorman adjusted his spectacles to make a closer inspection.

The door of the room opened, and Mademoiselle Elise came in, carrying an open notebook in her hand.

Mademoiselle was about twenty-four years of age, and not tall, her figure was slender and well-proportioned, her dress fitted perfectly. Her hair and eyes were dark, her lips thin. When she talked her features grew animate, and she became beautiful.

"Yes," she said, "you may take rooms for me at the Hotel St. Amand. I want to be close by the cathedral."

Then she looked at the picture.

"Did you recognise me?"

"Of course. But who did it? It is charming."

"It is very nice. Bouvard painted it and gave it to me. I am very fond of it."

"It is an excellent likeness!"

"I think it is. I am vain enough to be proud of it. But tell me—what shall I do with myself at Rocheville?"

"As if you were ever at a loss! You will have enough society; and there are the students and the officers—"



“Bah! I am sick of them all. I shall turn recluse and spend all my days in some quiet nook by the sea. After Paris, one hates society.”

“After Paris,” said M. Lorman, “one hates many good things.”

He laughed self-complacently, and held out his hand.

“Good-bye.”

She went with him to the hall, and waited, leaning against the table and breaking to pieces a shred of grass that she had taken from a vase, while he drew a great packet of loose papers from the breast-pocket of his coat, and tried to discover the time of his train.

“Who will play the dance in ‘Le vrai Amant?’” she asked.

“Monsieur Raoul—a man who fiddles for love of the thing. He is a hunchback, or nearly so, and will interest you.”

“Why will he interest me?”

Monsieur, as he answered, ran his gloved finger slowly down the line of close figures.

“He will interest you for several reasons. Firstly, because he plays superbly and asks for no pay. He is rich. Secondly, because he is clever and dislikes women; and, finally —because you won’t understand him.”

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Mademoiselle laughed defiantly.

"He is a gentleman, then?"

"Yes."

"Will he dislike *me*?"

"Perhaps I have used a wrong word. It is more disdain than dislike."

"Will he disdain me?"

M. Lorman replaced the papers in his pocket and looked with comic gravity at her, as if to judge the effect she would be likely to have on his friend. Then, his eyes twinkling with mischief, he answered deliberately:

"Yes."

He took up his hat and stick and prepared to go.

"Eh bien," she retorted, "that is a challenge. You have found something to occupy me. Adieu. Take care that my room faces the cathedral."

## II.

Someone had gone out by the stage-door and the noise of the storm came in along the low passage. The theatre was almost in darkness. Only Monsieur Raoul and old Jacques Martin were there. In the shadow, as he bent over his violin case, the younger man seemed tall and well-made; but when he stood up, though he was tall, his bent shoulders became apparent, and the light fell on a stern, pale face that seemed older than its thirty years. He began to button his cloak around him.

"You might tell ma femme, Monsieur Raoul, that I shall be late. I must prepare for tomorrow."

The old man and his wife kept house for Raoul, who was a bachelor.

"Assuredly I will tell her." Then Raoul went away.

The rain had ceased, but the scream of the wind sounded again and again. The thin, weather-beaten trees bent low, like reeds; and heavy clouds, suffused with moonlight, drove inland in rugged broken masses.

For a few moments Jacques lingered on; then he put out the lights, locked up, drew his coat closer round his spare body, and hurried across to the more cheerful shelter of the Cafe des Artistes.

In the Rue Louise the door of Raoul's house opened directly into the kitchen. Madame Martin was sitting patiently by the fire, knitting. She rose and took the violin case and wiped the raindrops from its waterproof covering. Then she hung up Raoul's cloak.

"And Jacques, Monsieur?" she inquired.

"Jacques will be late. He bade me tell you, Julie."

"He is always late!"

"He has to prepare for Mademoiselle Elise, who comes to-morrow."

Raoul went to his room, and in a few moments Julie carried his supper up to him there. Then, with the assurance of an old servant, she stood a moment at the door, with her hands crossed before her.

"The new actress comes from Paris, Monsieur?"

"Yes."

"It will be a good thing."

"A very good thing—for the Theatre Royal."

"She will require a great salary."

"Of course; but the proprietors will gain. Everybody will want to see her."

"She lodges at M. Lorman's?"

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"No. She will stay at the Hotel St. Amand, opposite the cathedral."

"Is she old, Monsieur?"

"No, not old; not thirty years."

"Ah!—The sea is very rough to-night, Monsieur."

"Yes; more so than we often see it."

She went downstairs. By-and-by, as she sat knitting, she heard Monsieur's fiddle as he played over a passage in the morrow's score.

### III.

Mademoiselle Elise was down early at the theatre, which looked very grey and very miserable in the pitiless daylight. M. Lorman was with her. When Raoul appeared, she said:

"So this is your monster. Introduce him to me."

And the hunchback, with his fiddle under his arm and his bow hanging loosely from his left hand, was duly presented. Mademoiselle's eyes beamed graciously as she held out her hand and said what pleasure it gave her to make the acquaintance of one who loved art for its own sake. Then, while M. Lorman bustled here and there, she took the violin and begged Raoul to show her how to hold it. She laughed like a child when the drawing of the bow across the strings only produced a horrid noise. Then she asked him to play the dance movement from the garden scene.

He played.

"A little slower, please."

He played more slowly. She moved a few steps, and then paused and sat down, marking the time of the music with her foot.

"Yes, that is beautiful!" she said.

Raoul sat and watched while the rehearsal proceeded.

They played "Le vrai Amant." Mademoiselle infused a new life into all, and scarcely seemed to feel the labour of it. Raoul marvelled that a woman, apparently delicate, should be possessed of such tireless energy. She criticised so freely, and insisted so much on the repetition of seeming trivialities, that, as the morning wore on, Augustin—

who was “le vrai Amant”—lost patience and glanced markedly at his watch. But she did not heed him.

Beside Raoul sat M. Lorman, in high spirits. “Good! good!” he ejaculated at intervals. “But she is marvellous!” And after each outburst of satisfaction he took a pinch of snuff.

When at last Mademoiselle sank exhausted into her chair, the others seized hats and cloaks and fled hurriedly, lest she should revive and begin all over again.

She called to Raoul to bring his score, that she might show him where to play slowly and where to pause; and M. Lorman having wrapped a shawl around her shoulders, she began gossiping with Augustin. When they differed, she appealed to Raoul, and agreed prettily with his decision. Augustin succumbed to her influence at once, and lost all his sulkiness. He had played at the Odeon, and he knew what art was. M. Sarcey had said of him that he would do well; and M. Regnier had been pleased to advise him. He told Mademoiselle this, and he promised to bring to her a copy of the *Temps* that she might read the great critic’s words for herself. She ended the conversation with coquettish abruptness, and begged Raoul to kneel beside her chair a moment, and follow her pencil as she marked the manuscript and explained what her marks were intended to mean.

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When Augustin had gone, she leaned back to where M. Lorman stood waiting behind her.

“Beg of your friend,” she said, “to be my chevalier and to protect me from the dreadful people while I look at the sea.”

Then at once, turning with a pleading glance towards Raoul, she added with comic earnestness:

“Have mercy on me, Monsieur, I beseech you.”

M. Lorman looked uncomfortable. There was an awkward pause. Then Raoul stammered a fit reply and reddened, and, as he packed his violin away, he muttered angrily: “Shall I never rid myself of this childish sensitiveness? It is a shame to me that an accident has deformed me.”

As Mademoiselle came from her room she whispered wickedly to M. Lorman:

“You may prepare your forfeit.”

But he shook his head and laughed.

“No, no,” he said. “Not yet; there is time enough.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Along the sea front the folk stared covertly at the new actress, as she chatted volubly of the doings of the morning.

“Bah! they act badly—very badly,” she said. “They should work harder—they are too lazy. Work—work—work—that is the only cure for them. But to-morrow they will do better, and we shall have a success.”

Then she became more serious and talked of her own experience, and of the long hours that she had spent in study. “Often I used to be so tired,” she said, “that I could not even sleep.”

To his great astonishment Raoul found himself at his ease with her as he discussed the necessity of steady labour and the uselessness of sitting down and waiting for inspiration. In the heat of the argument they reached the Rue Louise. The violin was handed in, and they turned back again towards the sea. Madame held the door ajar to watch them.

Afterwards they strolled up through the town to the Place St. Amand. Then, because he must be tired, Mademoiselle insisted that he should stay and rest awhile, and they sat

by the window like very old friends. Finally, she permitted him to depart, in order, she said, that he might get to sleep early and be strong for the morrow.

As she moved here and there in her room, she laughed quite quietly to herself, and wondered what M. Lorman had meant when he had said that she would not understand his friend.

## **IV.**

Gerome Perrin, the collector, of Rouen, whose reputation as a connoisseur in the matter of violins has never been questioned, once offered Raoul for his violin six thousand francs. The mere record of this offer will explain why the hunchback always carried the instrument to and from the theatre. He held that he could only be quite sure of its safety so long as it remained in his keeping. It was generally agreed that the famous violin was heard at its best on the night that Mademoiselle Elise made her appearance at the Theatre Royal, Rocheville, as Lisette, in "Le vrai Amant."

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The theatre was crowded. In the first and second scenes the new actress justified her fame, and won outright the sympathy of the audience. In the third scene she surpassed herself. To Rocheville it was an artistic revelation. Even the inveterate critics praised her, despite their creed that, outside the Comedie Francaise, one should not seek perfection.

The scene was the garden of an old chateau. In the bright light the costumes of the players made a mass of rich colour. Mademoiselle stood, prettily defiant. A ripple of music burst from the orchestra, and died away in a stately movement. With a merry laugh the revellers posed for the dance. They bowed low in courtesy—joined hands—advanced—retired. Then Raoul's violin alone continued the measure, as, one by one, the others drew away and left Mademoiselle alone. It was the Bouvard water-colour, but living and moving. Her lithe, slender body seemed light as air. Every gesture, every pose, was full of a grave dignity. In the dark theatre there was complete silence. All eyes were centred on the supple, graceful form of the dancer. Music, life, and colour were in harmony. Gradually the full orchestra took up the strain again—Mademoiselle, panting, flung herself into the ready arms of Augustin, and the stillness was broken by the thunder of applause.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the curtain had fallen, and while the folk were yet streaming out, Jacques summoned Raoul to Mademoiselle's room. She met him with her hands outstretched.

"Chevalier, you played beautifully," she said; "and I have never danced better. You inspired me; you are my good angel. Come to me to-morrow and take me to mass."

Is she acting still? he thought. He was not sure, but it was admirably done. He felt her hands on his and he could only bow obedience and escape as speedily as possible.

Before he went to bed he took a candle and placed it so that he might see himself in the mirror. He gazed long and steadily as at a picture of a stranger. He saw a man with black hair, with a pale, earnest face, clean shaven, and with shoulders bent. In the darkness, afterwards, when he remembered the face of Mademoiselle, as she came to him with her arms outstretched, he remembered also what the mirror had shown him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mademoiselle, in her room at the Hotel St. Amand, wrote to Paris:

"He is a hunchback and I have appointed him chevalier. Do not laugh, my dear Helene; you would not, if you could but see him. His sad eyes would command your pity. His face is pale and stern, but handsome, and he is kind and gentle. They say that he dislikes women; from what I have seen of the women here I do not think he is altogether



to blame. He is to escort me to mass to-morrow. The good people will think that I am mad. So much the better."

\* \* \* \* \*

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She laid her pen down and leaned back with her hands clasped behind her head.

Suddenly the half smile faded from her lips, and a pained expression flashed across her face. She sat up and finished the letter quietly. As she rose to seal it she said to herself: "No; he is too good. A grande passion would kill him."

For a week she gave herself up to Raoul's guidance. At the end of that time she knew Rocheville almost as if she had lived her life there.

### V.

A month passed. Mademoiselle Elise still retained her guide. Every afternoon they wandered together somewhere or other; either through the town, or by the sea, or in the woods. At a loss for any logical explanation of the strange friendship, people assumed that the two were old acquaintances. Mademoiselle never contradicted this assumption.

"He is my chevalier," she explained.

During the first few days, she commanded him with a playful authority, and talked a great deal of nonsense, much as she would have talked with any acquaintance for whom she felt but a passing interest. But it was impossible to continue in this strain with Raoul. He treated her as a reasoning being, and not as a creature fit merely to be humoured and flattered. Despite herself she began to speak from her heart and without any constraint. But she adhered honourably to her decision not to inspire him with a grande passion, and to this end she conducted herself with a simple propriety which recalled to her mind the convent discipline of the gentle Ursuline Sisters, who had taught her her first lessons.

Each day her respect for Raoul increased, as closer acquaintance revealed his character. Finally, her respect became reverence. His nature stood out in such strong contrast with the even, easy-going, selfish natures of the others with whom she came into contact. He was unlike them. He thought about life, they merely lived it. He seemed to her to be superior to the common pains and pleasures of the world. She could not imagine him being swayed by circumstances, by petty likes and dislikes. She felt that it would be easy to bear any trouble with such a friend near. His strong will attracted her. His impenetrable reserve and the strange, stern mood that came over him at times mystified and almost frightened her.

One day, on the Boulevard, they met the troops marching with quick step into the town. She thought that he tried, involuntarily, to straighten his shoulders as the stalwart figures passed. She seemed to know how the sight of them must sadden him, and her heart became filled with an inexpressible pity. But when he spoke, there was not the least tinge of dissatisfaction in his voice.

“I admire their happy nonchalance,” he said. “Unconsciously they are very good philosophers. They take life as it comes to them and gauge it at its true value.”

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"Yes," she said; "they are happy enough now. But it must be terrible in war-time, to have to march straight to death."

"Do you think so?" he replied. "I doubt whether they perceive the terror of it. It is part of their business to die."

"Do you not fear death?" she asked him afterwards.

He was silent for a moment. Then he said slowly: "I can quite imagine circumstances in which death would be preferable to life."

"It is because life has been so unjust to him that he disdains it," she thought.

Another evening, as they sat together, looking on to the square where the women were selling flowers, he began, casually, to talk of himself. He spoke impassively of the time, eight years before, when he had fallen by accident, in the winter. For months he had lain in agony; and then slowly he had returned, almost from the grave. In three years he had regained his strength, but deformed for the rest of his life.

Her lips quivered ominously as she listened.

"It makes my heart ache to think of it," she said. "I could not have borne it."

"You would have got used to it as I did," he replied.

"I would have prayed to die."

"There was no need. I could have died if I had chosen."

He spoke simply and without the least emotion. She shuddered.

"I do not understand," she said.

"Of course you do not understand," he answered gently; "neither do the angels."

She made no response, but pressed her lips tightly together and aimlessly watched the market-people.

When he had gone away, she sat for a long time quite still.

"If he had someone to love," she said to herself at last, "he would not be so stern."

## VI.

A fortnight later Raoul went on business to Rouen, and Mademoiselle was left alone.

The first day of his absence she busied herself as usual, going down to rehearsal in the morning and playing in the evening. But at night, for some indefinable reason, she felt unhappy and discontented. The next morning she sat in her room and sewed, and the hours seemed long—very long. In the afternoon she went out and, almost irresponsibly, bought a little present and carried it down to the Rue Louise to Madame Martin. She stayed there and chatted until evening. Madame was delighted to find anyone who would listen with pleasure to praise of Monsieur Raoul. The third morning Mademoiselle said to herself “It would be pleasant to go to Rouen and see the shops,” and she dressed ready to start. Then her face flushed and she took off her cloak again and set it aside. After midday Raoul returned and brought her a great bunch of roses. Her face beamed with pleasure as she took them, but immediately she became self-conscious and disquieted and would not let her eyes meet his. After he had gone she sat pensive, with a smile on her lips. Suddenly the blood mounted to her face, her expression changed, she became agitated in every nerve. “Of what folly do I dream!” she exclaimed. She went to dress for the theatre and took the roses and placed them in water on the table by her bedside. When she was ready to set out, she turned round, raised the flowers to her lips and kissed them.

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At the theatre she met him again and grew unaccountably nervous. It needed all her power of will and all the prompter's aid to enable her to retain the thread of her part. At times her mind would wander and she would forget the words. Yet, to judge by the applause with which she was rewarded, her acting did not suffer noticeably.

When the curtain fell, she complained that her head ached, and sent for Raoul, and begged him to take her to walk by the sea, that the cool air might restore her.

They walked down to the Rue Louise and left the violin and then strolled on for half-an-hour by the water. Then they turned away to the Place St. Amand. The square was deserted. A single lamp fluttered in the wind. The stars shone brightly and the milky way stretched like a faint, pale cloud high over the huge black mass of the cathedral.

She was leaning on his arm, and she made him pause a moment while she stood to look up.

"If I were in pain," she said, after a moment, "or if a passion consumed me, I should watch the stars all night. They are so cold and passionless: they would teach me patience."

"You are beginning to talk poetry," he answered quietly, "and that shows that you are tired out."

"Yes," she said, "I am tired out. To-morrow I shall be better, and we will go to the woods."

Then she stood in the shadow of the hotel door and watched him until his figure disappeared in the darkness.

## VII.

The morning was bright and warm. The woods above Rocheville were brown with autumn foliage, and the brambles were heavy with long sprays of berries, red and black. Mademoiselle gave Raoul her cloak to carry, and wandered here and there, gathering the ripest fruit. By-and-by she cast away all she had gathered, and came to walk soberly beside him.

At St. Pierre, a little beyond the woods, they lunched merrily.

In the afternoon they strolled slowly back until they came to the brow of the hill that rises to the west of Rocheville.

Overhead, white clouds floated in a clear blue sky. Below, the purple-roofed houses huddled around the grey cathedral, and the distant sea, flashing in the sunlight, broke against the yellow beach.

Beside the dusty hill path were rough seats. On one of these Mademoiselle spread her cloak and rested, bidding Raoul sit on the grass beside. The birds stirred in the trees, and the low, long surge of the sea sounded monotonously.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was after a long silence that Raoul looked up as if he were about to speak. Their eyes met. He paled visibly. Her face became scarlet. With a manifest effort he regained self-possession and stood up.

"It grows late, Mademoiselle," he said; "let us go home." And his voice sounded dry and harsh.

She rose obediently. He wrapped the cloak about her, and they walked on down the hill in silence, and entered the avenue that leads to Rocheville. The swallows wheeled and fell in long graceful circles, and the setting sunlight streaming through the trees made of the white road a mosaic of light and shadow. The glow had faded from Mademoiselle's face. Once as he moved her arm the cloak half fell. He replaced it tenderly.

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At the hotel door he kissed her hand and left her.

### VIII.

For an hour he walked aimlessly, often baring his hair to the cold sea-wind. Then he went back to the Place St. Amand and from under the shrine at the corner watched her lighted window. Then he went home, and until long past midnight sat without moving. Mademoiselle seemed to be near him. He recalled every event of the day. The pleasant sunlight in the woods; the merry nonsense of the lunch at St. Pierre; the homeward walk; the distant heaving waters. The blood surged like fire through his veins; he bowed down his face and groaned aloud.

Day by day he had maintained a secret battle with himself. The very philosophy which had frightened and saddened Mademoiselle was evidence of the bitter struggle, though she did not know this. If he had someone to love, she had said mentally, he would not be so stern. She deceived herself. It was because he wrestled with a passion that threatened to overwhelm his reason that he wore so often the mask of sternness.

Early in the morning he left Rocheville for Rouen. Madame, when she found his bed undisturbed, said to her husband that Monsieur must have had bad news.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mademoiselle woke from a fitful sleep with her head aching. She waited anxiously, but Raoul did not come. It was past midday when M. Lorman, with a grim smile, showed to her a note he had received.

"It is necessary for me to go to Rouen," it ran, "and I shall probably remain there for a few days. I beg of you to excuse me, and to convey my compliments and good wishes to Mademoiselle Elise when she departs for Paris."

As Mademoiselle read she grew cold and shuddered.

M. Lorman eyed the untouched food on the table and smiled slyly.

"You have won," he said. "I am your debtor. What is to be the forfeit?"

"I am not well to-day," she answered peevishly. "Don't be stupid, please. What was it that you came to see me about?"

He looked embarrassed, and replied hastily:

"Nothing—I was passing, and called in on my way to meet Augustin. I dare not stay. He will be waiting for me. I am sorry you are ill. You must rest. Good-bye."



In the street he took out his snuff-box and excitedly inhaled two large pinches.

“Parbleu!” he muttered; “it has surprised me. I didn’t think it possible.”

Mademoiselle went to her bedroom and locked the door, as if to shut all the world out from her. Then she cast herself down and sobbed as if her heart would break. “Why did he not come to me?” she moaned. “Why did he not let me know?—I cannot live without him.”

At Rouen, Raoul engaged a room at the Hotel de Bordeaux. Then he started off to visit M. Gerome Perrin, but turned aside and went into the country instead. The peasants saluted him as they passed, but he did not reply. At times he talked half aloud and laughed bitterly.

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Once he paused abruptly. It occurred to him that perhaps, after all, his own vanity was misleading him. No doubt Mademoiselle had already forgotten what had happened, and was wondering what had become of him. "I must write to her," he said. And the idea that he was acting unaccountably strengthened itself in his mind, and gradually he regained the mastery of himself. Was it not stupid, he thought, to suspect that Mademoiselle had discerned his secret. He had guarded it so carefully; he had never given the least sign—until her eyes had robbed him of his self-control. But to think that she should for a moment dream that a hunchback would dare.—The idea was absurd. He began to see things clearly again.

Half-an-hour later he turned and walked back to Rouen, paid his bill at the Hotel de Bordeaux, drove to the station, and took the train to Rocheville. He had resolved to explain to Mademoiselle that he had been called unexpectedly away.

M. Lorman frowned when Jacques came to tell him that Monsieur Raoul had been able to return.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was dark when Mademoiselle, pale and trembling, rose from her bed, her face wet with tears. She lighted a candle and began to write. Note after note she altered and destroyed. When at length she had written one to her liking, she sealed it up. Then she put on her cloak and went down towards the Rue Louise.

### IX.

Outside, the rain pattered against the window; within Jacques and his wife sat at supper. Someone tapped at the door and Madame went to open it: "Ciel!" she cried. "But you are wet!"

Mademoiselle Elise spoke with quickened breath as if she had been hurrying.

"I only come to see Jacques—Jacques do you know where Monsieur Raoul is staying at Rouen? I have a message for him."

Jacques looked at his wife. It was she who answered: "Monsieur returned unexpectedly this afternoon, Mademoiselle; he is upstairs now."

The muscles of Mademoiselle's face twitched as with a sudden pain. A look of terror came into her bright eyes. She rested her hand on the chair beside her, as if she were faint.

"Take off your cloak," said Madame, "and Jacques will tell Monsieur that you are here."

Jacques rose, but Mademoiselle stopped him. “No,” she said; “I will go to him, if I may. I have a message for him.”

Mademoiselle Elise went up. Raoul opened the door.

“Did you wonder what had become of me?” he stammered. The unexpectedness of her coming unnerved him. He forgot his planned excuse.

“I thought you were at Rouen,” she said mechanically, and without raising her eyes, “or I should not have come. I have a message for you.”

“You are wet,” he said. “Give me your cloak, and rest until Madame Martin has dried it.”

He gave the cloak to Julie and closed the door.

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The small room was lighted by a single candle. Opposite the door the wall was covered with books from floor to ceiling. In a corner an open bureau was strewn with papers. The violin was laid carelessly on an old harpsichord.

Mademoiselle saw these things as she walked over and stood by the fireplace. Her dark hair, disordered by the hood of the cloak, hung loosely over her forehead and heightened the worn expression on her white face. She drew back her black dress slightly and rested one foot on the edge of the fender, and watched the steam that rose from the damp shoe.

Jacques brought up a cup of coffee, with a message that Mademoiselle was to drink it at once, lest she should catch a cold. She smiled sadly, took the cup, raised it, touched it with her parched lips, and set it aside.

Raoul came and stood facing her. Though she did not look up she felt his gaze upon her and became uneasy, and pressed her clasped hands nervously together.

"I came to get your address from Jacques," she said. "I thought you were at Rouen." She paused and caught her breath. "I am going away to-morrow."

As he listened and watched her, he found himself noticing how like a little child she seemed.

"Sit down," he said, speaking with effort. "You are not well."

"I have scarcely slept," she answered. "I have been thinking all night—and all day—." Her bosom heaved. The tears sprang to her eyes. She covered her face with her hands.

Raoul paled, and trembled from head to foot. He clenched his teeth. His hand that rested on the edge of the mantel-shelf grasped it as if it would have crushed it.

"Why did you go away?" she said, with plaintive vehemence. "Why did you not come to me?"

Then, as if her strength failed her, she sat down.

He knelt beside her. "You have been too kind to me—Elise," he said unsteadily. "I went away from you because I feared lest I should lose command of myself; lest I should forget that I was—what I am."

At the sound of his voice pronouncing her name a strange, sudden happiness shone in her eyes. She looked at him. He read the truth, but could only believe in his happiness when, the next moment, she was clasped in his arms.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was eleven o'clock when Madame Martin knocked at the door.

"I thought you would like to know, Monsieur," she said, "that the rain has stopped, that it grows late, and that Mademoiselle's cloak is quite dry."

**X.**

I subjoin the following extract for the information of those who may be sufficiently interested:—

"LA LANTERNE (*Journal Conservateur de Rocheville, Jeudi, 5 Fevrier*).—Mariage—M. Berhault, Raoul Joseph Victor, 30 ans, et *Mlle*. Lanfrey, Elise Marie, 25 ans."



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### OLD CHINA.

My china makes my old room bright—  
On table, shelf and chiffonnier,  
Sevres, Oriental, blue and white,  
Leeds, Worcester, Derby—all are here.

The Stafford figures, quaint and grim,  
The Chelsea shepherdesses, each  
Has its own tale—in twilight dim  
My heart can hear their old-world speech.

That vase came with a soldier's "loot,"  
From Eastern cities over seas,  
That dish held golden globes of fruit,  
When oranges were rarities.

That tea-cup touched two lovers' hands,  
When Lady Betty poured the tea;  
That jar came from far Mongol lands  
To hold Dorinda's pot-pourri.

That flask of musk, still faintly smelling,  
On Mistress Coquette's toilet lay;  
And there's a tale, too long for telling,  
Connected with that snuffer-tray.

What vows that patch-box has heard spoken!  
That bowl was deemed a prize to win,  
Till the dark day when it got broken,  
And someone put these rivets in.

My china breathes of days, not hours,  
Of patches, powder, belle and beau,  
Of sun-dials, secrets, yew-tree bowers,  
And the romance of long ago.

It tells old stories—verse and prose—  
Which no one now has wit to write,  
The sweet, sad tales that no one knows,  
The deathless charm of dead delight.