

The Cockaynes in Paris eBook

The Cockaynes in Paris by William Blanchard Jerrold

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CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Rowe's.

The story I have to tell is disjointed. I throw it out as I picked it up. My duties, the nature of which is neither here nor there, have borne me to various parts of Europe. I am a man, not with an establishment—but with two portmanteaus. I have two hats in Paris and two in London always. I have seen everything in both cities, and like Paris, on the whole, best. There are many reasons, it seems to me, why an Englishman who has the tastes of a duke and the means of a half-pay major, should prefer the banks of the Seine to those of the Thames—even with the new Embankment. Everybody affects a distinct and deep knowledge of Paris in these times; and most people do know how to get the dearest dinner Bignon can supply for their money; and to secure the apartments which are let by the people of the West whom nature has provided with an infinitesimal quantity of conscience. But there are now crowds of English men and women who know their Paris well; men who never dine in the restaurant of the stranger, and women who are equal to a controversy with a French cook. These sons and daughters of Albion who have transplanted themselves to French soil, can show good and true reasons why they prefer the French to the English life. The wearying comparative estimates of household expenses in Westbournia, and household expenses in the Faubourg St. Honore! One of the disadvantages of living in Paris is the constant contact with the odious atmosphere of comparisons.

“Pray, sir—you have been in London lately—what did you pay for veal cutlet?”

[Illustration: *Crossing the Channel—rather squally.*]

The new arrivals are the keenest torments. “In London, where I have kept house for over twenty years, and have had to endure every conceivable development of servants’ extortion, no cook ever demanded a supply of white aprons yet.” You explain for the hundredth time that it is the custom in Paris. There are people who believe Kensington is the domestic model of the civilized world, and travel only to prove at every stage how far the rest of the universe is behind that favoured spot. He who desires to see how narrow his countrymen and countrywomen can be abroad, and how completely the mass of British travellers lay themselves open to the charge of insularity, and an overweening estimate of themselves and their native customs, should spend a few weeks in a Paris boarding-house, somewhere in the Faubourg St. Honore—if he would have the full aroma of British conceit. The most surprising feature of the English quarter of the French capital is the eccentricity of the English visitors, as it strikes their own countrymen. I cannot find it in me to blame Gallican caricaturists. The statuettes which enliven the bronze shops; the gaunt figures which are in the chocolate establishments; the prints in the windows under the Rivoli colonnade;

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the monsters with fangs, red hair, and Glengarry caps, of Cham, and Dore, and Bertall, and the female sticks with ringlets who pass in the terra-cotta show of the Palais Royal for our countrywomen, have long ago ceased to warm my indignation. All I can say now is, that the artists and modellers have not travelled. They have studied the strange British apparitions which disfigure the Boulevard des Italiens in the autumn, their knowledge of our race is limited to the unfortunate selection of specimens who strut about their streets, and—according to their light—they are not guilty of outrageous exaggeration. I venture to assert that an Englishman will meet more unpleasant samples of his countrymen and countrywomen in an August day's walk in Paris, than he will come across during a month in London. To begin with, we English treat Paris as though it were a back garden, in which a person may lounge in his old clothes, or indulge his fancy for the ugly and slovenly. Why, on broiling days, men and women should sally forth from their hotel with a travelling-bag and an opera-glass slung about their shoulders, passes my comprehension. Conceive the condition of mind of that man who imagines that he is an impressive presence when he is patrolling the Rue de la Paix with an alpenstock in his hand! At home we are a plain, well-dressed, well-behaved people, fully up in Art and Letters—that is, among our educated classes, to any other nation—in most elegant studies before all; but our travellers in France and Switzerland slander us, and the “Paris in 10 hours” system has lowered Frenchmen's estimate of the national character. The Exhibition of 1867, far from promoting the brotherhood of the peoples, and hinting to the soldier that his vocation was coming to an end, spread a dislike of Englishmen through Paris. It attracted rough men from the North, and ill-bred men from the South, whose swagger, and noise, and unceremonious manners in cafes and restaurants chafed the polite Frenchman. They could not bring themselves to salute the *dame de comptoir*, they were loud at the table d'hôte and commanding in their airs to the waiter. In brief, the English mass jarred upon their neighbours; and Frenchmen went the length of saying that the two peoples—like relatives—would remain better friends apart. The disadvantage is, beyond doubt, with us; since the *froissement* was produced by the British lack of that suavity which the French cultivate—and which may be hollow, but is pleasant, and oils the wheels of life.

[Illustration: *Robinson Crusoe and Friday*.

From French designs.]

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Mrs. Rowe's was in the Rue—say the Rue Millevoye, so that we may not interfere with possible vested interests. Was it respectable? Was it genteel? Did good country families frequent it? Were all the comforts of an English home to be had? Had Mrs. Grundy cast an approving eye into every nook and corner? Of course there were Bibles in the bedrooms; and you were not made to pay a franc for every cake of soap. Mrs. Rowe had her tea direct from Twinings'. Twinings' tea she had drunk through her better time, when Rowe had one of the finest houses in all Shepherd's Bush, and come what might, Twinings' tea she would drink while she was permitted to drink tea at all. Brown Windsor—no other soap for Mrs. Rowe, if you please. People who wanted any of the fanciful soaps of Rimmel or Piver must buy them. Brown Windsor was all she kept. Yes, she was obliged to have Gruyere—and people did ask occasionally for Roquefort; but her opinion was that the person who did not prefer a good Cheshire to any other cheese, deserved to go without any. She had been twenty-one years in Paris, and seven times only had she missed morning service on Sundays. Hereupon, a particular history of each occasion, and the superhuman difficulty which had bound Mrs. Rowe hand and foot to the Rue Millevoye from eleven till one. She had a faithful note of a beautiful sermon preached in the year 1850 by the Rev. John Bobbin, in which he compared life to a boarding-house. He was staying with Mrs. Howe at the time. He was an earnest worker in the true way; and she distinctly saw her *salle-a-manger* in his eye, when he enlarged on the bounteous table spread by Nature, and the little that was needed from man to secure all its blessings.

[Illustration: PAPA & THE DEAR BOYS.]

Mrs. Rowe took a maternal interest in me. I had made an economical arrangement by which I secured a little room to myself throughout the year, under the slates. I had many friends. I constantly arrived, bringing new lodgers in my wake. For the house was quiet, well-ordered, cheap, and tremendously respectable. I say, Mrs. Rowe took a maternal interest in me—that is, she said so. There were ill-natured people who had another description for her solicitude; but she had brought herself to believe that she had an unselfish regard for your humble servant, and that she was necessary to my comfort in the world, and I was pleased at the innocent humbug. It afforded me excellent creature comforts; and I was indebted to it for a constant welcome when I got to Paris—which is something to the traveller. We cling to an old hotel, after we have found the service bad, the cooking execrable, and the rooms dirty. It is an ancient house, and the people know us, and have a cheery word and a home look.

[Illustration: THE DOWAGER AND TALL FOOTMAN.]

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Many years were passed in the Rue Millevoys by Mrs. Rowe and her niece, without more incident than the packing and unpacking of luggage, and genteel disputes over items in the bills conducted with icy politeness on both sides, and concluded by Mrs. Rowe invariably with the withering observation, that it was the first remark of the kind which had ever been made on one of her little notes. People usually came to a settlement with complimentary expressions of surprise at the extreme—almost reckless—moderation of her charges; and expressed themselves as at a loss to understand how she could make it worth her while to do so very much for so very little. The people who came and went were alike in the mass. The reader is requested to bear in mind that Mrs. Rowe had a connexion of her own. She was seldom angry; but when an advertising agent made his way to her business parlour, and took the liberty of submitting the value of a Western States paper as a medium for making her establishment known, she confessed that the impertinence was too much for her temper. Mrs. Rowe advertise! Mrs. Rowe would just as soon throw herself off the Pont Neuf, or—miss church next Sunday.

“They don’t come a second time!” Mrs. Rowe would say to me, with a fierce compression of the lip, that might lead a nervous person to imagine she made away with them in the cellars.

When Mrs. Rowe took you into her confidence—a slow and tedious admission—she was pleased, usually, to fortify your stock of knowledge with a comprehensive view of her family connexions; intended to set the Whytes of Battersea (from whom she derived, before the vulgar Park was there) upon an eminence of glory, with a circle of cringing and designing Rowes at the base. How she—Whyte on both sides, for her father married his first cousin—ever came to marry Joshua Rowe, was something her mother never understood to her dying day. She was graciously open to consolation in the reflection that nobles and princes had made humble matches before her; and particularly in this, that the Prince Regent married Mrs. Fitzherbert.

Lucy Rowe was favoured with these observations, heightened by occasional hits at her own misfortune in that she was a Rowe, and could not boast one thimbleful of Whyte blood in her veins.

It was the almost daily care of Mrs. Rowe to impress the people with whom her business brought her in contact, with the gulf that lay between her and her niece; although, through the early and inexplicable condescension of a Miss Harriet Whyte, of Battersea, they bore the same name, Miss Rowe was no blood relation *whatever*.

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It was surprising to see how Lucy bore up under the misfortune. She was not a Whyte, but she had lived beside one. Youth is so elastic! Lucy, albeit she had the Rowe lip and nose, and, worse than all, the Rowe hair (a warm auburn, which Mrs. Rowe described in one syllable, with a picturesque and popular comparison comprehended in two), was daring enough to meet the daylight, without showing the smallest signs of giving way to melancholy. When new comers, as a common effort of politeness, saw a strong likeness between Mrs. Rowe and her niece, the representative of the Whytes of Battersea drew herself to her full height, which was a trifle above her niece's shoulders, and answered—"Oh dear, no, madam! It would be very strange if there were, as there is not the slightest blood relationship between us."

Lucy Rowe was about fifteen when I first saw her. A slender, golden-haired, shy and quiet girl, much in bashful and sensitive demeanour like her romantic namesake of "the untrodden ways." It is quite true that she had no Whyte blood in her veins, and Mrs. Rowe could most conscientiously declare that there was not the least resemblance between them. The Whyte features were of a type which none would envy the possessor, save as the stamp of the illustrious house of Battersea. The House of Savoy is not attractive by reason of its faultless profile; but there are persons of almost matchless grace who would exchange their beauty for its blood. In her very early days, I have no doubt. Lucy Rowe would have given her sweet blue eyes, her pouting lips, and pretty head (just enough to fold lovingly between the palms of a man's hand), for the square jaw and high cheek-bone of the Whytes. She felt very humble when she contemplated the grandeur of her aunt's family, and very grateful to her aunt who had stooped so far as to give her shelter when she was left alone in the world. She kept the accounts, ran errands, looked after the house linen, and made herself agreeable to the boarders' children; but all this was the very least she could do to express her humble thankfulness to the great lady-relative who had befriended her, after having been good enough to commit the sacrifice of marrying her uncle Joshua.

Lucy sat many hours alone in the business parlour—an apartment not decorated with the distinct view of imparting cheerfulness to the human temperament. The mantelpiece was covered with files of bills. There were rows of numbered keys against the wall. Mrs. Rowe's old desk—*style Empire* she said, when any visitor noticed the handsome ruin—stood in a corner by the window, covered with account books, prospectuses and cards of the establishment, and heaps of old newspapers. Another corner showed heaps of folded linen, parcels left for boarders, umbrellas and sticks, which had been forgotten by old customers (Mrs. Rowe called them clients), and aunt's walking-boots. One corner was Lucy's, which she occupied in conjunction with a little table, at

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which, from seven in the morning until bedtime, she worked with pen or needle (it was provoking she could not learn to ply both at one time), when she was not running about the house, or nursing a boarder's baby. On the rare evenings when her aunt could not find work of any description for her, Lucy was requested to take the Bible from the shelf, and read a chapter aloud. When her aunt went to sleep during the reading Lucy continued steadily, knowing that the scion of the illustrious house of Whyte would wake directly her voice ceased.

Occasionally the clergyman would drop in; whereupon Lucy would hear much improving discourse between her aunt and the reverend gentleman. Mrs. Rowe poured all her griefs into the ear of the Reverend Horace Mohun—griefs which she kept from the world. Before Lucy she spoke freely—being accustomed to regard the timid girl as a child still, whose mind could not gather the threads of her narrative. Lucy sate—not listening, but hearing snatches of the mournful circumstances with which Mrs. Rowe troubled Mr. Mohun. The reverend gentleman was a patient and an attentive listener; and drank his tea and ate his toast (it was only at Mrs. Rowe's he said he could ever get a good English round of toast), shaking his head, or offering a consoling “dear, dear me!” as the droning proceeded. Lucy was at work. If Mrs. Rowe caught her pausing she would break her story to say—“If you have finished 42 account, put down two candles to 10, and a foot-bath to 14.” And Lucy—who seldom paused because she had finished her task, as her aunt knew well—bent over the table again, and was as content as she was weary. When she went up to her bedroom (which the cook had peremptorily refused to occupy) she prayed for good Aunt Rowe every night of her dull life, before she lay upon her truckle bed to rest for the morrow's cheerful round of hard duties. Was it likely that a child put thus into the harness of life, would pass the talk of her aunt with Mr. Mohun as the idle wind?

The mysteries which lay in the talk, and perplexed her, were cleared up in due time.

CHAPTER II.

HE'S HERE AGAIN!

“He has but stumbled in the path
Thou hast in weakness trod.”—A. A. PROCTER.

“He's here again, Mum.”

He was there at the servant's entrance to the highly respectable boarding-house in the Rue Millevoys. It was five in the morning—a winter's morning.



Mrs. Rowe hastened from her room, behind the business parlour, in her dressing-gown, her teeth chattering, and her eyes flashing the fire of hate. The boarders sleeping upstairs would not have known the godly landlady, who glided about the house by day, rubbing her hands and hoping every soul under her roof was comfortable—or would at once complain to her, who lived only to make people comfortable—bills being but mere accidental accessories, fortuitously concurrent with the arrival of a cab and the descent of luggage.

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"At the back door, mum, with his coat tucked over his ears, and such a cold in his head. Shall I show him in?"

"My life is a long misery, Jane," Mrs. Rowe said, under her voice.

"La! mum, it's quite safe. I'm sure I shouldn't trouble much about it—'specially in this country, as——"

"Silence!" Mrs. Rowe hissed. The thorns in her cross consisted chiefly of Jane's awkward attempts at consolation. "The villain is bent on my ruin. A bad boy he was; a bad man he is. Show him in; and see that Francois doesn't come here. Get some coffee yourself, Jane, and bring it. Let the brute in."

"You're hard upon him, mum, indeed you are. I'm sure he'd be a credit to——"

"Go, and hold your tongue. You presume, Jane, on the privileges of an old servant."

"Indeed I hope not, mum; but——"

"Go!"

Jane went to summon the early visitor; and was heard talking amiably to him, as she led him to the bureau. "Now, you must be good, Mr. Charles, to-day, and not stay more than a quarter of an hour. Don't talk loud, like the last time; promise me. Missus means well—you know she does."

With an impatient "All right" the stranger pushed into the business parlour, and sharply closed the door.

Mrs. Rowe stood, her knuckles firmly planted upon the closed desk, her face rigidly set, to receive her visitor—keeping the table between him and herself. He was advancing to take her hand.

"Stand there," she said, with an authority he had not the courage to defy. He stood there—abashed, or hesitating as to the way in which he should enter upon his business.

"Well!" Mrs. Rowe said, firmly and impatiently.

Mr. Charles, stung by the manner, turned upon his victim. "Well!" he jeered, "yes, and well again, Mrs. Rowe. Is it necessary for me to explain myself? Do you think I have come to see *you*!"

"I have no money at present; I wrote you so."

“And I didn’t believe you, and have come to fetch what you wouldn’t send. If you think I’m going into a corner to starve for your personal satisfaction, you are very much mistaken. I’m surprised you don’t understand me better by this time.”

“You were a rascal, Charles, before you left school.”

“School! Pretty school! D—n it, don’t blame me—woman!”

Mrs. Rowe was alarmed by the outburst, lest it should wake some of the boarders.

“The Dean and his lady are sleeping overhead. If you don’t respect me, think——”

“I’m not here to respect, or think about anybody. I’m cast alone into the world—tossed into it; left to shift for myself, and to be ashamed of myself; and I want a little help through it, and it’s for you to give it me, and give it me YOU SHALL.”

Mr. Charles held out his left hand, and slapped its open palm vehemently with his right—pantomime to indicate the exact whereabouts he had selected for the reception of Mrs. Rowe’s money.

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"I told you I had no money. You'll drive me from this house by bringing disgrace upon it."

"That's very good," Mr. Charles said, with a cruel laugh. "That's a capital joke."

Jane entered with coffee. "That's right," she whispered, encouragingly to Mr. Charles; "laugh and be cheerful, Mr. Charles, and make haste with your coffee."

The face of Mr. Charles blackened to night. He turned like a tiger upon the servant. "Laugh and be cheerful?" he roared; and then he raised a hoarse mock laugh, that moved Mrs. Rowe, in her agony of fear, to turn the key in the lock of her desk.

Shaking her hands wildly in the air, Jane left the room, and shut the door.

"You are an arrant coward, Charles," Mrs. Rowe hissed, leaning across the table and shaking her head violently.

Mr. Charles imitated her gesture, answering—"I am what heartless people have made me. I have been dragged up under a cloud; made the scape-goat. How often in the course of your hypocritical days have you wished me dead? You hear I've a cough; but I cannot promise you it's a churchyard one. I'm a nuisance; but I suppose I'm not responsible for my existence, Mrs. Rowe. *I* was not consulted."

"Viper!"

"And devil too, when needful: remember that." Mr. Charles moved round the table in the direction of the desk.

"Stand where you are. I would rather give you the clothes from my back than touch you." Mrs. Rowe, as she stood still turning the lock of the bureau, and keeping her angry eyes fixed upon the man, was the picture of all the hate she expressed.

She never took her eyes off him, nor did he quail, while she fumbled in the drawer in which she kept money. The musical rattle of the gold smote upon the ear of Mr. Charles.

"Pretty sound," he said, with a smile of hate in his face; "but there is crisp paper sounds sweeter. Mrs. Rowe, I'm not here for a couple of yellow-boys. Do you hear that?" He banged the table, and advanced a step.

"You can't bleed a stone, miscreant."

"Nay, but you can break it, Mrs. Rowe. I mean business to-day. The rarer I make my visits the better for both of us."



"I am quite of that opinion."

"Then make it as long as you like; you know how."

"Is this ever to end? Have you no shame? Charles, you will end with some tragedy. A man who can play the part you are playing, must be ready for crime!"

Mr. Charles shook his head in impatient rage, and made another step towards Mrs. Rowe.

"Move nearer, and I wake the house, come what may." Mrs. Rowe's face looked like one cut in grey stone.

"What! and wake the Dean and his lady! What! affright the Reverend Horace Mohun who counts Mrs. Rowe among the milk-white sheep of his flock! No; Mrs. Rowe is too prudent a woman—Now." As he ended, she drew forth a roll of notes. He made a clutch at them—and she started back.

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“Charles, it has come to that! Robber! It will be murder some day.”

“This day—by——”

Mr. Charles looked the man to make his word good.

Mrs. Rowe was amazed and terrified by the fiend she had conjured up in the man. He seized the table, and looked a giant in the mighty expression of his iron will.

“Lay that roll upon the table—or I’ll shiver it into a thousand pieces—and then—and then——Am I to say more?”

Mrs. Rowe fell into a chair. Mr. Charles was at her in an instant, and had possession of the notes. The poor woman had swooned.

He rang the bell—Jane appeared.

“Look after her,” said Mr. Charles, his eyes flaming, as they fell on the unconscious figure of Mrs. Rowe. “But let me out, first.”

“You’ll kill me with fright, that you will. What have you done to your own——”

“Mind your own business. A smell of salts’ll put her right enough.”

Mr. Charles was gone.

“And what a sweet gentleman he can be, when he likes,” said Jane.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. ROWE’S COMPANY.

I must be permitted to tell the rambling stories that ran parallel during my experiences of Mrs. Rowe’s establishment in my own manner—filling up with what I guessed, all I heard from Lucy, or saw for myself. Mr. Charles was a visitor at intervals who always arrived when the house was quiet; and after whose visits Mrs. Rowe regularly took to her room for the day, leaving the accounts and the keys wholly to Lucy, and the kitchen to Jane—with strict injunctions to look after the Reverend Horace Mohun’s tea and his round of toast if he called—and let him see the *Times* before it went up to the general sitting-room. On these days Lucy looked pale; and Jane called her “poor child” to me, and begged me to say a few words of comfort to her, for she would listen to me.

What a fool Jane was!

Visitors came and went. The serious, who inspected Paris as Mr. Redgrave inspects a factory, or as the late Mr. Braidwood inspected a fire on the morrow; who did the Louvre and called for bread-and-butter and tea on the Boulevards at five. The new-rich, who would not have breakfasted with the general company to save their vulgar little souls, threw their money to the fleecing shopkeepers (who knew their *monde*), and misbehaved themselves in all the most expensive ways possible. The jolly ignorant, who were loud and unabashed in the sincerity and heartiness of their enjoyment, and had more litres of brandy in their bedrooms than the rest of the house, as Jane had it, "put together." The frugal, who counted the lumps of sugar, found fault with the dinners, lived with the fixed and savage determination to eat well up to the rate at which they were paying for their board, and stole in, in the evening, with their brandy hidden about them. Somehow, although there never was a house in which more differences of opinion were held on nearly every question of human interest, there was a surprising harmony of ideas as to French brandy. A Boulogne excursion boat on its homeward journey hardly contains more uncorked bottles of cognac, than were thrust in all kinds of secret places in the bedrooms under Mrs. Rowe's roof.

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The hypocrisy and scandal which brandy produced in the general room were occasionally very fierce, especially when whispers had travelled quietly as the flies all over the house that one of the ladies had certainly, on one occasion, revoked at cards—for one reason, and one only. Free speculations would be cheerfully indulged in at other times on the exact quantity the visitor who left yesterday had taken during his stay, and the number of months which the charitable might give him to live.

[Illustration: ON THE BOULEVARDS.]

After the general brandy, in degree of interest, stood dress. The shopping was prodigious. The carts of the Louvre, the Ville de Paris, the Coin de Rue, and other famous houses of nouveautes were for ever rattling to Mrs. Rowe's door. With a toss of the head a parcel from the *Bon Marche* was handed to its owner. Mrs. Jones must have come to Paris with just one change—and such a change! Mrs. Tottenham had nothing fit to wear. Mrs. Court must still be wearing out her trousseau—and her youngest was three! Mrs. Rhode had no more taste, my dear, than our cook. The men were not far behind—had looked out for Captain Tottenham in the Army List; went to Galignani's expressly: not in it, by Jove, sir! Court paid four shillings in the pound hardly two years ago, and met him swelling it with his wife (deuced pretty creature!) yesterday at Bignon's. Is quite up to Marennes oysters: wonder where he could have heard of 'em. Rhode is a bore; plenty of money, very good-natured; read a good deal—but can't the fellow come to table in something better than those eternal plaid trousers? Bad enough in Lord Brougham. Eccentricity *with* the genius, galling enough; but without, not to be borne, sir. Last night Jones was simply drunk, and got a wiggling, no doubt, when he found his room. He looks it all.

We are an amiable people!

Happily, I have forgotten the Joneses and the Tottenhames, and the Courts and the Rhodes! The two “sets” who dwell in my memory—who are, I may say, somewhat linked with my own life, and of whom I have something to tell—were, as a visitor said of the fowls of Boulogne hotels—birds apart. They crossed and re-crossed under Mrs. Rowe's roof until they hooked together; and I was mixed up with them, until a tragedy and a happy event made us part company.

Now, so complicated are our treaties—offensive and defensive—that I have to refer to my note-book, where I am likely to meet any one of them, to see whether I am on speaking terms with the coming man or woman as the case may be.

I shall first introduce the Cockaynes as holding the greater “lengths” on my stage.



CHAPTER IV.

THE COCKAYNES IN PARIS.

The morning after a bevy of “the blonde daughters of Albion” have arrived in Paris, Pater—over the coffee (why is it impossible to get such coffee in England?), the delicious bread, and the exquisite butter—proceeds to expound his views of the manner in which the time of the party should be spent. So was it with the Cockaynes, an intensely British party.

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"My dears," said Mr. Cockayne, "we must husband our time. To-day I propose we go, at eleven o'clock, to see the parade of the Guard in the Rue de Rivoli; from there (we shall be close at hand) we can see the Louvre; by two o'clock we will lunch in the Palais Royal. I think it's at five the band plays in the Tuileries gardens; after the band——"

"But, dear papa, we want to look at the shops!" interposes the gentle Sophonisba.

"The what, my dear? Here you are in the capital of the most polished nation on the face of the earth, surrounded by beautiful monuments that recall—that are, in fact——"

"Well!" firmly observes Sophonisba's determined mamma; "you, Mr. Cockayne, go, with your Murray's handbook, see all the antiquities, your Raphaels and Rubens, and amuse yourself among the cobwebs of the Hotel Cluny; we are not so clever—we poor women; and while you're rubbing your nose against the marbles in the Louvre, we'll go and see the shops."

"We don't mind the parade and the band, but we might have a peep at just a few of the shops near the hotel, before eleven," observes Sophonisba.

Cockayne throws up his eyes, and laments the frivolity of women. He is left with one daughter (who is a blue) to admire the proportions of the Madeleine, to pass a rapturous hour in the square room of the Louvre, and to examine St. Germain l'Auxerrois, while the frivolous part of his household goes stoutly away, light-hearted and gay as humming-birds, to have their first look at the shops.

[Illustration: A GROUP OF MARBLE "INSULAIRES." *So cold and natural they might be mistaken for life.*]

I happen to have seen the shops of many cities. I have peered into the quaint, small-windowed shops of Copenhagen; I have passed under the pendant tobacco leaves into the primitive cigar-shops of St. Sebastian; I have hobbled, in furs, into the shops of Stockholm; I have been compelled to take a look at the shops of London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and a host of other places; but perfect shopping is to be enjoyed in Paris only; and in the days gone by, the Palais Royal was the centre of this paradise. Alas! the days of its glory are gone. The lines of splendid boulevards, flanked with gorgeous shops and *cafés*; the long arcades of the Rue de Rivoli; and, in fine, the leaning of all that is fashionable, and lofty, and rich to the west, are the causes which have brought the destruction of the Palais Royal. Time was when that quaint old square—the Place-Royale in the Marais—was mighty fashionable. It now lies in the neglected, industrious, factory-crowded east—a kind of Parisian Bloomsbury Square, only infinitely more picturesque, with its quaint, low colonnades. You see the fine Parisians have travelled steadily westward, sloping slowly, like "the Great Orion." They are making their way along the Champs-Élysées to the Avenue de l'Impératrice; and are constructing white stone aristocratic suburbs.

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So the foreigners no longer make their way direct to the Palais Royal now, on the morrow of their arrival in Paris. If they be at the Louvre, they bend westward along the Rue de Rivoli, and by the Rue de la Paix, to the brilliant boulevards. If they be in the Grand Hotel, they issue at once upon these famous boulevards, and the ladies are in a feminine paradise at once. Why, exactly opposite to the Grand Hotel is Rudolphi's remarkable shop, packed artistically with his works of art—ay, and of the most finished and cunning art—in oxidized silver. His shop is most admirably adapted to the articles the effect of which he desires to heighten. It is painted black and pointed with delicate gold threads. The rich array of jewellery and the rare ecclesiastical ornaments stand brightly out from the sombre case, and light the window. The precious stones, the lapis lazuli, the malachite, obtain a new brilliance from the rich neutral tints and shades of the chased dulled silver in which they are held.

Sophonisba, her mamma and sisters, are not at much trouble to decide the period to which the bracelet, or the brooch, or the earring belongs. "*Cinque cento*, my dear! I know nothing about that. I think it would suit my complexion."

"I confess to a more modern taste, Sophonisba. That is just the sort of thing your father would like. Now, do look at those—sphinxes, don't you call them—for a brooch. I think they're hideous. Did you ever see such ears? I own, that diamond dew-drop lying in an enamel rose leaf, which I saw, I think, in the Rue de la Paix, is more to my taste."

And so the ladies stroll westward to the famous Giroux (where you can buy, an it please you, toys at forty guineas each—babies that cry, and call "mamma," and automata to whom the advancement of science and art has given all the obnoxious faculties of an unruly child), or east to the boulevards, which are known the wide world over, at least by name, the Boulevards de la Madeleine, des Capucines, des Italiens, Montmartre. These make up the heart and soul of Paris. Within the limits of these gorgeous lines of shops and *cafes* luxury has concentrated all her blandishments and wiles. This is the earthly heaven of the Parisians. Here all the celebrities air themselves. Here are the Opera stars, the lights of literature, the chiefs of art, the dandies of the Jockey Club, the prominent spendthrifts and eccentrics of the day. About four o'clock in the afternoon all the known Paris figures are lounging upon the asphaltum within this charmed space. Within this limit—where the Frenchman deploys all his seductive, and vain, and frivolous airs; where he wears his best clothes and his best manners; where he loves to be seen, and observed, and saluted—the tradesmen of the capital have installed establishments the costliness and elaborateness of which it is hardly possible to exaggerate. The gilding and the mirrors, the marbles and the bronze, the myriad lamps of every

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fantastic form, the quaint and daring designs for shop fronts, the infinite arts employed to “set off” goods, and the surprising, never-ceasing varieties of art-manufacture—whether in chocolate or the popular Algerian onyx—bewilder strangers. Does successful Mr. Brown, who, having doffed the apron of trade, considers it due to himself to become—so far as money can operate the strange transformation—a *fine fleur*; does he desire also to make of plain, homely Mrs. Brown a leader of fashion and a model of expensive elegance?—here are all the appliances and means in abundance. Within these enchanted lines Madame B. may be made “beautiful for ever!” Every appetite, every variety of whim, the cravings of the gourmet and the dreams of the sybarite, may be gratified to the utmost. A spendthrift might spend a handsome patrimony within these limits, nor, at the end of his time, would he call to mind a taste he had not been able to gratify.

Sophonisba enters this charmed region of perfect shopping from the west. Tahan's bronze shop, at the corner of the Rue de la Paix, marks (or did mark) its western boundary. There are costly trifles in that window—as, book cutters worth a library of books, and cigar-stands, ash-trays, pen-trays, toothpick-holders (our neighbours are great in these), and match, and glove, and lace, and jewel-boxes—of wicked price. Ladies are not, however, very fond of bronze, as a rule. The great Maison de Blanc—or White House—opposite, is more attractive, with its gigantic architectural front, and its acres of the most expensive linens, cambrics, &c. Ay, but close by Tahan is Boissier. Not to know Boissier is to argue yourself unknown in Paris. He is the shining light of the confectioner's art. Siraudin, of the Rue de la Paix, has set up a dangerous opposition to him, under the patronage of a great duke, whose duchess was one day treated like an ordinary mortal in Boissier's establishment, but Boissier's clients (nobody has customers in Paris) are, in the main, true to him; and his sweets pass the lips still of nearly all the elegantes of the “centre of civilization.” Peep into his shop. Miss Sophonisba is within—*la belle insulaire!*—buying a bag of *marrons glaces*, for which Boissier is renowned throughout civilization. The shop is a miracle of taste. The white and gold are worthy of Marie Antoinette's bedroom at St. Cloud—occupied, by the way, by our English queen, when she was the guest of the French Emperor in 1855. The front of the shop is ornamented with rich and rare caskets. A white kitten lies upon a rosy satin cushion; lift the kitten, and you shall find that her bed is a *bon-bon* box!

“How very absurd!” exclaims Sophonisba's mamma, *bon-bon* boxes not being the particular direction which the extravagance of English ladies takes.

Close by the succulent establishment of M. Boissier, to whom every dentist should lift his hat, is the doorway of Madame Laure. Sophonisba sees a man in livery opening the door of what appears to be the entrance to some quiet learned institution. She touches her mamma upon the arm, and bids her pause. They had reached the threshold of a temple. Madame Laure makes for the Empress.

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“Ah! to be sure, my child, so she does,” Sophonisba’s mamma replies. “I remember. Very quiet-looking kind of place, isn’t it?” It is impossible to say what description of “loud” place had dwelt in the mind of Sophonisba’s mamma as the locale where the Empress Eugenie’s milliner “*made*” for her Majesty. Perhaps she hoped to see two *cent gardes* doing duty at the door of an or-molu paradise.

At every step the ladies find new excitement. By the quiet door of Madame Laure is the renowned Neapolitan Ice Establishment, well known to most ladies who have been in Paris. Why should there not be a Neapolitan ice *café* like this in London? Ices we have, and we have Granger’s; but here is ice in every variety, from the solid “bombe”—which we strongly recommend ladies to bear in mind next time—to the appetizing *Ponch a la Romaine*! Again, sitting here on summer evenings, the lounge will perceive dapper *bonnes*, or men-servants, going in and out with little shapely white paper parcels which they hold daintily by the end. Madame has rung for an ice, and this little parcel, which you might blow away, contains it. Now, why should not a lady be able to ring for an ice—and an exquisitely-flavoured Neapolitan ice—on the shores of “perfidious Albion?”

“I wish Papa were here,” cries Sophonisba; “we should have ices.”

Sophonisba’s mamma merely remarks that they are very unwholesome things.

Hard by is Christofle’s dazzling window, Christofle being the Elkington of France.

“Tut! it quite blinds one!” says the mamma of Sophonisba. Christofle’s window is startling. It is heaped to the top with a mound of plated spoons and forks. They glitter in the light so fiercely that the eye cannot bear to rest upon them. Impossible to pass M. Christofle without paying a moment’s attention to him. And now we pass the asphaltum of the boulevard of boulevards—that known as “the Italiens.” This is the apple of the eye of Paris.

“Now, my dears,” says Sophonisba’s mamma, “now we can really say that we are in Paris.” The shops claimed the ladies’ attention one by one. They passed with disdain the *cafés* radiant with mirror and gold, where the selfish men were drinking absinthe and playing at dominoes. It had always been the creed of Sophonisba’s mamma that men were selfish creatures, and she had come to Paris only to see that she was right. They passed on to Potel’s.

Potel’s window is a sight that is of Paris Parisian. It is more imposing than that of Chevet in the Palais Royal. In the first place Potel is on “the Italiens.” It is a daily store of all the rarest and richest articles of food money can command for the discontented palate of man. The truffled turkeys are the commonest of the articles. Everybody eats truffled turkeys, must be the belief of Potel. If salmon could peer into the future, and if they had any ambition, they would desire, after death, to be artistically arrayed in fennel

in the shop-window of Potel. Would not the accommodating bird who builds an edible nest work with redoubled ardour, if he could be assured that his house would be some day removed to the great window on “the Italiens?”

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Happy the ortolans whom destiny puts into Potel's plate of honour! Most fortunate of geese, whose liver is fattened by a slow fire to figure presently here with the daintiest and noblest of viands! The pig who hunts the truffle would have his reward could he know that presently the fragrant vegetable would give flavour to his trotter! And is it not a good quarter of an hour's amusement every afternoon to watch the gourmets feasting their eyes on the day's fare? And the *gamins* from the poor quarters stare in also, and wonder what those black lumps are.

Opposite Potel's is a shop, the like of which we have not, nor, we verily believe, has any other city. It is the show-store of the far-famed Algerian Onyx Company. The onyx is here in great superb blocks, wedded with bronze of exquisite finish, or serving as background to enamels of the most elaborate design. Within, the shop is crammed with lamps, jardinières, and monumental marbles, all relieved by bronzes, gold, and exotics. The smallest object would frighten a man of moderate means, if he inquired its price. There is a flower shop not far off, but it isn't a shop, it's a bower. It is close by a dram-shop, where the cab-men of the stand opposite refresh the inner man. It represents the British public-house. But what a quiet orderly place it is! The kettle of punch—a silver one—is suspended over the counter. The bottles are trim in rows; there are no vats of liquid; there is no brawling; there are no beggars by the door—no drunkards within. It is so quiet, albeit on the Boulevard, not one in a hundred of the passers-by notice it. The lordly Cafe du Cardinal opposite is not more orderly.

Past chocolate shops, where splendidly-attired ladies preside; wood-carving shops, printsellers, pastrycooks—where the savarins are tricked out, and where *petit fours* lie in a hundred varieties—music-shops, bazaars, immense booksellers' windows; they who are bent on a look at the shops reach a corner of the Grand Opera Street, where the Emperor's tailor dwells. The attractions here are, as a rule, a few gorgeous official costumes, or the laurel-embellished tail coat of the academician. Still proceeding eastward, the shops are various, and are all remarkable for their decoration and contents. There is a shop where cots and flower-stands are the main articles for sale; but such cots and such flower-stands! The cots are for Princes and the flower-stands for Empresses. I saw the Empress Eugenie quietly issuing from this very shop, one winter afternoon.

Sophonisba's mother lingered a long time over the cots, and delighted her mother-eye with the models of babies that were lying in them. One, she remarked, was the very image of young Harry at home.

And so on to "Barbedienne's," close by the well-known Vachette.

Sophonisba, however, will not wait for our description of the renowned Felix's establishment, where are the lightest hands for pastry, it is said, in all France. When last we caught sight of the young lady, she was *chez* Felix, demolishing her second *baba*! May it lie lightly on her—!

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I humbly beg the pardon of Mademoiselle Sophonisba!

CHAPTER V.

THE COCKAYNE FAMILY.

The Cockaynes deserve a few words of formal introduction to the reader, since he is destined to make their better acquaintance. We have ventured hitherto only to take a few discreet and distant glimpses at them, as we found them loitering about the Boulevards on the morrow of their appearance in Paris. Mr. Cockayne—having been very successful for many years in the soap-boiling business, to the great discomfort and vexation of the noses of his neighbours, and having amassed fortune enough to keep himself and wife and his three blooming daughters among the *creme de la creme* of Clapham, and in the list of the elect of society, known as carriage-people—he had given up the soap-boiling to his two sons, and had made up his mind to enjoy his money, or rather so much of it as Mrs. Cockayne might not require. It is true that every shilling of the money had been made by Cockayne, that every penny-piece represented a bit of soap which he had manufactured for the better cleansing of his generation. But this highly honourable fact, to the credit of poor Cockayne, albeit it was unpleasant to the nostrils of Mrs. C. when she had skimmed some of the richest of the Clapham *creme* into her drawing-room, did not abate her resolve to put at least three farthings of the penny into her pocket, for her uses and those of her simple and innocent daughters. Mrs. Cockayne, being an economical woman, spent more money on herself, her house, and her children than any lady within a mile of Cockayne House. It is certain that she was an excellent mother to her three daughters, for she reminded Cockayne every night regularly—as regularly, he said, as he took his socks off—that if it were not for her, she did not know what would become of the children. She was quite sure their father wouldn't trouble his head about them.

Perhaps Mrs. Cockayne was right. Cockayne had slaved in business only thirty-five years out of the fifty-two he had passed in this vale of tears, and had only lodged her at last in a brougham and pair. He might have kept in harness another ten years, and set her up in a carriage and four. She was sure he didn't know what to do with himself, now he had retired. He was much better tempered when he went off to business by the nine o'clock omnibus every morning; and before he had given himself such ridiculous airs, and put himself on all kinds of committees he didn't understand anything about, and taken to make himself disagreeable to his neighbours in the vestry-hall, and moving what he called amendments and riders, for the mere pleasure, she verily believed, of opposing somebody, as he did everybody in his own house, and of hearing himself talk. Does the reader perceive by this time the kind of lady Mrs. Cockayne was, and what a comfort she must have been to her husband in the autumn of his life?

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How he must have listened for what the novelists call “her every footstep,” and treasured her every syllable! It was mercifully ordained that Mr. Cockayne should be a good-tempered, non-resisting man. When Mrs. Cockayne was, as her sons pleasantly and respectfully phrased it, “down upon the governor,” the good man, like the flowers in the poem, “dipped and rose, and turned to look at her.” He sparkled while she stormed. He smiled when the shafts of her sarcasm were thrown point-blank at him. He was good-tempered before the storm began, while it lasted, and when it was over. Mrs. Cockayne had the ingenuity to pretend that Cockayne was the veriest tyrant behind people’s backs; he who, as a neighbour of his very expressively put the case, dared not help himself to the fresh butter without having previously asked the permission of his wife. Fate, in order to try the good-nature of Timothy Cockayne to the utmost, had given him two daughters closely resembling, in patient endurance and self-abnegation, their irreproachable mamma. Sophonisba—at whom the reader has already had a glimpse, and whom we last saw demolishing her second *baba* at Felix’s, was the eldest daughter—and the second was Theodosia. There was a third, Carrie; she was the blue, and was gentle and contented with everything, like her father.

The reader may now be prepared to learn that it was not Mr. Timothy Cockayne, late of Lambeth, who had planned the family’s journey to Paris. Mrs. Cockayne had projected the expedition. Everybody went to Paris now-a-days, and you looked so very stupid if you had to confess in a drawing-room that you had never been. She was sure there was not another family on Clapham Common, of their station, who had not been. Besides, it would exercise the girls’ French. If Mr. Cockayne could only consent to tear himself away from board-meetings, and devote a little time to his own flesh and blood. They would go alone, and not trouble him, only what would their neighbours say to see them start off alone, as though they’d nobody in the world to care a fig about them. At any rate, they didn’t want people to know they were neglected. Now Mr. Cockayne had never had the most distant idea of leaving the ladies of his family to go alone to Paris. But it pleased his wife to put the case in this pleasant way, and he never interfered with her pleasures. He wanted very much to see Paris again, for he had never been on the banks of the Seine since 1840, when he made a flying visit to examine some new patent soap-boiling apparatus. He was ordered about by both mother and daughters, by boat and railway. He was reproached fifty times for his manners in insisting on going the Dieppe route. He was loaded with parcels and baskets and rugs, and was soundly rated all the way from the railway station to the Grand Hotel, on the Boulevard des Capucines, for having permitted the Custom House officers to turn over Mrs. Cockayne’s boxes, as she said, “in the most impudent manner; but they saw she was without protection.”

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I have always been at a loss to discover why certain classes of English travellers, who make their appearance in Paris during the excursion season, persist in regarding the capital of France, or, as the Parisian has it, “the centre of civilization,” as a Margate without the sea. I wonder what was floating in the head of Mr. Cockayne, when he bought a flat cloth grey cap, and ordered a plaid sporting-suit from his tailor’s, and in this disguise proceeded to “do” Paris. In London Mr. Cockayne was in the habit of dressing like any other respectable elderly gentleman. He was going to the capital of a great nation, where people’s thoughts are not unfrequently given to the cares of the *toilette*; where, in short, gentlemen are every bit as severe in their dress as they are in Pall Mall, or in a banking-house in Lombard Street. Now Mr. Cockayne would as soon have thought of wearing that plaid shooting-suit and that grey flat cap down Cheapside or Cornhill, as he would have attempted to play at leap-frog in the underwriters’ room at Lloyd’s. He had a notion, however, that he had done the “correct thing” for foreign parts, and that he had made himself look as much a traveller as Livingstone or Burton. Some strange dreams in the matter of dress had possessed the mind of Mrs. Cockayne, and her daughters also. They were in varieties of drab coloured dresses and cloaks; and the mother and the three daughters, deeming bonnets, we suppose, to be eccentric head-gears in Paris, wore dark brown hats all of one pattern, all ornamented with voluminous blue veils, and all ready to Dantan’s hand. The young ladies had, moreover, velvet strings, that hung down from under their hats behind, almost to their heels. It was thus arrayed that the party took up their quarters at the Grand Hotel, and opened their Continental experiences. I have already accompanied Mrs. Cockayne, Sophonisba, and Theodosia, on their first stroll along the Boulevards, and peeped into a few shops with them. Mr. Cockayne was in the noble courtyard of the Hotel, waiting to receive them on their return, with Carrie sitting close by him, intently reading a voluminous catalogue of the Louvre, on which, according to Mrs. Cockayne, her liege lord had “wasted five francs.” Mr. Cockayne was all smiles. Mrs. Cockayne and her two elder daughters were exhausted, and threw themselves into seats, and vowed that Paris was the most tiring place on the face of the earth.

[Illustration: BEAUTY & THE B——. *Normally a severe Excursionist.*]

“My dear,” said Mr. Cockayne, addressing his wife, “people find Paris fatiguing because they walk about the streets all day, and give themselves no rest. If we did the same thing at Clapham——”

“There, that will do, Cockayne,” the lady sharply answered. “I’m sure I’m a great deal too tired to hear speeches. Order me some iced water. You talk about French politeness, Cockayne. I think I never saw people stare so much in the whole course of my life. And some boys in blue pinafores actually laughed in our very faces. I know what I should have done to them, had I been their mother. What was it they said, Sophy, my dear?”

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"I didn't quite catch, mamma; these people talk so fast."

"They seem to me," Mrs. Cockayne continued, "to jumble all their words one into another."

"That is because——" Mr. Cockayne was about to explain.

"Now, pray, Mr. Cockayne, do leave your Mutual Improvement Society behind, and give us a little relief while we are away. I say the people jumble one word into another in the most ridiculous manner, and I suppose I have ears, and Sophy has ears, and we are not quite lunatics because we have not been staring our eyes out all the morning at things we don't understand."

Here Carrie, lifting her eyes from her book, said to her father—

"Papa dear, you remember that first Sculpture Hall, where the colossal figures were; that was the Salle des Caryatides, and those gigantic figures you admired so much were by Jean Goujon. Just think! It was in this hall that Henry IV. celebrated his wedding with Marguerite de Valois. Yes, and in this very room Moliere used to act before the Court."

"Yes," Mrs. Cockayne interjected, pointing to Carrie's hands, "and in that very room, I suppose, Miss Caroline Cockayne appeared with her fingers out of her glove."

"And where have you been all day, my dear?" Mr. Cockayne said, in his blandest manner, to his wife.

"We poor benighted creatures," responded Mrs. Cockayne, "have been—pray don't laugh. Mr. Cockayne—looking at the shops, and very much amused we have been, I can assure you, and we are going to look at them to-morrow, and the day after, and the day after that."

"With all my heart, my dear," said Mr. Cockayne, who was determined to remain in the very best of tempers. "I hope you have been amused, that is all."

[Illustration: PALAIS DU LOUVRE.]

[Illustration: THE ROAD TO THE BOIS]

"We have had a delightful day," said Sophonisba.

"I am sure we have been into twenty shops," said Theodosia.

“And I am sure,” Mrs. Cockayne continued, “it is quite refreshing, after the boorish manners of your London shopkeepers, to be waited upon by these polite Frenchmen. They behave like noblemen.”

“Mamma has had fifty compliments paid to her in the course of the day, I am certain,” said Sophonisba.

“I am very glad to hear it,” said Sophonisba’s papa.

“Glad to hear it, and surprised also, I suppose, Mr. Cockayne! In London twenty compliments have to last a lady her lifetime.”

“I don’t know how it is,” Theodosia observed, “but the tradespeople here have a way of doing things that is enchanting. We went into an imitation jeweller’s in the Rue Vivienne—and such imitations! I’ll defy Mrs. Sandhurst—and you know how ill-natured she is—to tell some earrings and brooches we saw from real gold and jewels. Well, what do you think was the sign of the shop, which was arranged more like a drawing-room than a tradesman’s place of business; why, it was called L’Ombre du Vrai (the Shadow of Truth). Isn’t it quite poetical?”

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Mr. Cockayne thought he saw his opportunity for an oratorical flourish.

"It has been observed, my dear Theo," said he, dipping the fingers of his right hand into the palm of his left, "by more than one acute observer, that the mind of the race whose country we are now——"

Here Mrs. Cockayne rapped sharply the marble table before her with the end of her parasol, and said—

"Mr. Cockayne, have you ordered any dinner for us?"

Mr. Cockayne meekly gave it up, and replied that he had secured places for the party at the *table d'hôte*.

Satisfied on this score, the matron proceeded to inform that person whom in pleasant irony she called her lord and master, that she had set her heart on a brooch of the loveliest design it had ever been her good fortune to behold.

"At the *L'Ombre*—what do you call it, my dear?" said the husband, blandly.

Mrs. Cockayne went through that stiffening process which ladies of dignity call drawing themselves up.

"You really surprise me, Mr. Cockayne. If you mean it as a joke, I would have you know that people don't joke with their wives; and I should think you ought to know by this time that I am not in the habit of wearing imitation jewellery."

"I ought," briefly responded Cockayne; and then he rapidly continued, in order to ward off the fire he knew his smart rejoinder would provoke—

"Tell me where it was, my dear. Suppose we go and look at it together. I saw myself some exquisite Greek compositions in the Rue de la Paix, which both myself and Carrie admired immensely."

"Greek fiddlesticks! I want no Greek, nor any other old-fashioned ornaments, Mr. Cockayne. One would think you were married to the oldest female inhabitant, by the way you talk; or that I had stepped out of the Middle Ages; or that I and Sphinx were twins. But you must be so very clever, with your elevation of the working-classes, and those prize Robinson Crusoes you gave to the Ragged-school children—which you know you got trade price."

"Well, well," poor Cockayne feebly expostulated, "if it's not far, let us go and see the brooch."

“There, mamma!” cried both Sophonisba and Theodosia in one breath. “Mind, the one with the three diamonds.”

[Illustration: MUSEE DU LUXEMBOURG.]

Mrs. Cockayne being of an exceedingly yielding temperament, allowed herself to be mollified, and sailed out of the hotel, with the blue veil hanging from her hat down her back, observing by the way that she should like to box those impudent Frenchmen’s ears who were lounging about the doorway, and who, she was sure, were looking at her. Mr. Cockayne was unfortunate enough to opine that his wife was mistaken, and that the Frenchmen in question were not even looking in her direction.

“Of course not, Mr. Cockayne,” said the lady; “who would look at me, at my time of life?”

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"Nonsense! I didn't mean that," said Mr. Cockayne, now a little gruffly, for there was a limit even to *his* patience.

"It is difficult to tell what you mean. I don't think you know yourself, half your time."

Thus agreeably beguiling the way, the pair walked to the shop in the Rue de la Paix, where the lady had seen a brooch entirely to her mind. It was the large enamel rose-leaf, with three charming dew-drops in the shape of brilliants.

"They speak English, I hope," said Mr. Cockayne. "We ought to have brought Sophonisba with us."

"Sophonisba! much use *her* French is in this place. She says their French and the French she learnt at school are two perfectly different things. So you may make up your mind that all those extras for languages you paid for the children were so much money thrown away."

"That's a consoling reflection, now the money's gone," quoth Mr. Cockayne.

They then entered the shop. A very dignified gentleman, with exquisitely arranged beard and moustache, and dressed unexceptionably, made a diplomatic bow to Mr. Cockayne and his wife. Cockayne, without ceremony, plunged *in medias res*. He wanted to look at the rose-leaf with the diamonds on it. The gentleman in black observed that it became English ladies' complexion "a ravir."

It occurred to Mr. Cockayne, as it has occurred to many Englishmen in Paris, that he might make up for his ignorance of French by speaking in a voice of thunder. He seemed to have come to the conclusion that the French were a deaf nation, and that they talked a language which he did not understand in order that he might bear their deafness in mind. For once in her life Mrs. Cockayne held the same opinion as her husband. She accordingly, on her side, made what observations she chose to address to the dignified jeweller in her loudest voice. The jeweller smiled good naturedly, and pattered his broken English in a subdued and deferential tone. As Mr. Cockayne found that he did not get on very well, or make his meaning as clear as crystal by bawling, and as he found that the polite jeweller could jerk out a few broken phrases of English, the bright idea struck him that he, Mr. Cockayne, late of Lambeth, would make his meaning plainer than a pike-staff by speaking broken English also. The jeweller was puzzled, but he was very patient; and as he kept passing one bracelet after another over the arm of Mrs. Cockayne, quite captivated that lady.

"He seems to think we're going to buy all the shop," growled Cockayne.

"How vulgar you are! Lambeth manners don't do in Paris. Mr. Cockayne."

"But they seem to like Lambeth sovereigns, anyhow," was the aggravating rejoinder.

“If you’re going to talk like that, I’ll leave the shop, and not have anything.”

This was a threat the lady did not carry out. She bore the enamel rose-leaf—the leaf with the three diamonds, as her daughters had affectionately reminded her—off in triumph, having promised that delightful man, the jeweller, to return and have a look at the bracelets another day. She was quite enchanted with the low bow the jeweller gave her as he closed his handsome plate-glass door. He might have been a duke or a prince, she said.

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"Or a footman," Mr. Cockayne added. "I don't call all that bowing and scraping business."

When Mr. and Mrs. Cockayne returned to the Grand Hotel, they found their daughters Sophonisba and Theodosia in a state of rapture.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried Sophonisba, holding up a copy of *La France*, an evening paper, "you know that splendid shop we passed to-day, under the colonnades by the Louvre Hotel, where there was that deep blue *moire* you said you should so much like if you could afford it. Well, look here, there is a '*Grande Occasion*' there!" and the enraptured girl pointed to letters at least two inches high, printed across the sheet of the newspaper. "Look! a '*Grande Occasion*!'"

"And pray what's that, Sophy?" Mrs. Cockayne asked. "What grand occasion, I should like to know."

"Dear me, mamma," Theodosia murmured, "it means an excellent opportunity."

"My dear," Mrs. Cockayne retorted severely to her child, "I didn't have the advantage of lessons in French, at I don't know how many guineas a quarter; nor, I believe, did your father; nor did we have occasion to teach ourselves, like Miss Sharp."

"Well, look here, mamma," Miss Sophonisba said, her eyes sparkling and her fingers trembling as they ran down line after line of the advertisement that covered the whole back sheet of the newspaper. "You never saw such bargains. The prices are positively ridiculous. There are silks, and laces, and muslins, and grenadines, and alpacas, and shawls, and cloaks, and plain *sultanes*, and I don't know what, all at such absurdly low prices that I think there must be some mistake about it."

"Tut," Mr. Cockayne said; "one of those 'awful sacrifices' and bankrupt stock sales, like those we see in London, and the bills of which are thrown into the letter-box day after day."

"You are quite mistaken, papa dear, indeed you are," Theodosia said; "we have asked the person in the *Bureau* down stairs, and she has told us that these '*Grandes Occasions*' take place twice regularly every year, and that people wait for them to make good bargains for their summer things and for their winter things."

The lady in the *Bureau* was right. The prudent housewives of Paris take advantage of these "*Grandes Occasions*" to make their summer and winter purchases for the family. In the spring-time, when the great violet trade of Paris brightens the corners of the streets, immense advertisements appear in all the daily and weekly papers of Paris, headed by gigantic letters that the fleetest runner may read, announcing extraordinary exhibitions, great exhibitions, and unprecedented spring shows. "Poor Jacques" offers

3000 cashmere shawls at twenty-seven francs each, 2000 silk dresses at twenty-nine francs, and 1000 at thirty-nine francs. “Little Saint Thomas,” of the Rue du Bac, has 90,000 French linos, 1000 “Jacquettes gentleman,”

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500 Zouaves, and 1000 dozen cravats—all at extraordinary low prices. Poor Jacques draws public attention to the “incomparable cheapness” of his immense operations: while Little St. Thomas declares that his assortment of goods is of “exceptional importance,” and that he is selling his goods at a cheapness *hors ligne*. For a nation that has twitted the English with being a race of shop-keepers, our friends the Parisians who keep shops are not wanting in devotion to their own commercial interests. Indeed, there is a strong commercial sense in thousands of Parisians who have no shutters to take down. Take for instance the poetical M. Alphonse Karr, whose name has passed all over Europe as the charming author of *A Journey round my Garden*. Nothing can be more engaging than the manner in which M. Karr leads his readers about with him among his flowers and the parasites of his garden. He falls into raptures over the petals of the rose, and his eye brightens tenderly over the June fly. One would think that this garden-traveller was a very ethereal personage, and that milk and honey and a few sweet roots would satisfy his simple wants, and that he had no more idea of trafficking in a market than a hard man of business has in spending hours watching a beetle upon a leaf. But let not the reader continue to labour under this grievous mistake.

M. Karr is quite up to the market value of every bud that breaks within the charmed circle of his garden at Nice.

He cultivates the poetry for his books, but he does not neglect his ledger. In the spring, when, according to Mr. Tennyson, “a fuller crimson comes upon the robin’s breast,” and “young men’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love,” M. Alphonse Karr, poet and florist, opens his flower-shop.

Carrie had taken up the newspaper which had moved the enthusiasm of her elder sisters. Her eyes fell on the following advertisement:—

“By an arrangement agreed upon,
M. ALPHONSE KARR, of Nice,

sends direct, gratuitously, and post free, either a box containing Herbes aux Turquoises, or a magnificent bouquet of Parma Violets, to every person who, before the end of March, shall become a subscriber to the monthly review entitled *Life in the Country*. A specimen number will be sent on receipt of fifteen sous in postage stamps.”

This is Alphonse Karr’s magnificent spring assortment—his Grand Occasion.

“So you see, Mr. Cockayne,” said his wife, “this Mr. Karr, whose book about the garden—twaddle, / call it—you used to think so very fine and poetic, is just a market-gardener and nothing more. He is positively an advertising tradesman.”

“Nothing more, mamma, I assure you,” said Sophonisba. “I remember at school that one of the French young ladies, Mademoiselle de la Rosiere, told me that when her sister was married, the bride and all the bridesmaids had Alphonse Karr’s *bouquets*. It seems that the mercenary creature advertises to sell ball or wedding *bouquets*, which he manages to send to Paris quite fresh in little boxes, for a pound apiece.”

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"Do you hear that?" said Mrs. Cockayne, addressing her husband. "This is your pet, sir, who was so fond of his beetles! Why, the man would sell the nightingales out of his trees, if he could catch them, I've no doubt."

"The story is a little jarring, I confess," Pater said. "But after all, why shouldn't he sell the flowers also, when he sells the pretty things he writes about them?"

"Upon my word, you're wonderful. You try to creep out of everything. But what is that you were reading, my dear Sophonisba, about the *grande occasion* near the Louvre Hotel? I dare say it's a great deal more interesting than Mr. Karr and his violets. I haven't patience with your papa's affectation. What was it we saw, my dear, in the Rue Saint Honore? The 'Butterfly's Chocolate'?"

"Yes, mamma," Theodosia answered. "*Chocolat du Papillon*. Yes; and you know, mamma, there was the linen-draper's with the sign *A la Pensee*. I never heard such ridiculous nonsense."

"Yes; and there was another, my dear," said Mrs. Cockayne, "'To the fine Englishwoman,' or something of that sort."

"Oh, those two or three shops, mamma," said Sophonisba, "dedicated *A la belle Anglaise!* Just think what people would say, walking along Oxford Street, if they were to see over a hosier's shop, written in big, flaring letters, 'To the beautiful Frenchwoman!'"

Mr. Cockayne laughed. Mrs. Cockayne saw nothing to laugh at. She maintained that it was a fair way of putting the case.

Mr. Cockayne said that he was not laughing at his wife, but at some much more ridiculous signs which had come under his notice.

"What do you say," he asked, "to a linen-draper's called the 'Siege of Corinth?' or the 'Great Conde?' or the 'Good Devil'?"

"What on earth has La Belle Jardiniere got to do with cheap trowsers, Mr. Cockayne?" his wife interrupted. "You forget your daughters are in the room."

"Well, my dear, the Moses of Paris call their establishment the Belle Jardiniere."

"That's not half so absurd, papa dear," Sophonisba observed, "as another cheap tailor's I have seen under the sign of the 'Docks de la Violette.'"

"I don't know, my dear; I thought when my friend Rhodes came back from Paris, and told me he had worn a pair of the Belle Jardinieres——"

"Mr. Cockayne!" screamed his wife.



“Well, unmentionables, my dear—I thought I should have died with laughter.”

“Sophonisba, my dear, tell us what the paper says about that magnificent shop under the Louvre colonnade; your father is forgetting himself.”

“Dear mamma,” said Sophonisba, “it would take me an hour to read all;” but she read the tit-bits.

“My dears,” said Mrs. Cockayne to her daughters, “it would be positively a sin to miss such an opportunity.”

Mr. Cockayne took up the paper which Sophonisba had finished reading, and running his eye over it, said, with a wicked curling of his lip—

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"My dear Sophy, my dear child, here are a number of things you've not read."

Sophonisba tittered, and ejaculated—"Papa dear!"

"We have heard quite enough," Mrs. Cockayne said, sternly; "and we'll go to-morrow, directly after breakfast, and spend a nice morning looking over the things."

"But there are really two or three items, my dear, Sophy has forgotten. There are a lot of articles with lace and pen work; and think of it, my love, ten thousand ladies' chem
_____"

Mrs. Cockayne started to her feet, and shrieked—

"Girls, leave the room!"

"What a pity, my dear," the incorrigible Mr. Cockayne continued, in spite of the unappeasable anger of Mrs. Cockayne—"what a pity the *Magasins de Louvre* were not established at the time of the celebrated emigration of the ten thousand virgins; you see there would have been just one apiece."

CHAPTER VI.

A "GRANDE OCCASION."

"Well, these Paris tradespeople are the most extraordinary persons in the world," cried Sophonisba's mamma, and the absolute ruler of Mr. Cockayne. "I confess I can't make them out. They beat me. My dear, they are the most independent set I ever came across. They don't seem to care whether you buy or you don't; and they ask double what they intend to take."

"What is the matter now, my dear?" Mr. Cockayne ventured, in an unguarded moment, to ask, putting aside for a moment Mr. Bayle St. John's scholarly book on the Louvre.

"At any rate, Mr. Cockayne, we do humbly venture to hope that you will be able to spare us an hour this morning to accompany us to the *Magasins du Louvre*. We would not ask you, but we have been told the crowd is so great that ladies alone would be torn to pieces."

"I forget how many thousands a day, papa dear," Sophonisba mercifully interposed, "but a good many, visit these wonderful shops. I confess I never saw anything like even the outside of them. The inside must be lovely."

"I have no doubt they are, my dear," Mr. Cockayne observed. "They were built about ten years ago. The foundations were——"

“There,” cried Mrs. Cockayne, rising, “there, your papa is off with his lecture. I shall put on my bonnet.” And Mrs. Cockayne swept grandly from the room.

Mrs. Cockayne re-entered the room with her bonnet on; determination was painted on the lady’s countenance. Cockayne should not escape this time. He should be led off like a lamb to the slaughter. Were not the silks marked at ridiculously low prices? Was not the shawl-room a sight more than equal to anything to be seen in any other part of Paris? Was not the folding department just as much a sight of Paris as that wretched collection of lumber in the Hotel Cluny?

Some wives had only to hint to have; but that was not the case with the hapless Mrs. Cockayne. She was sure nobody could be more economical than she was, both for herself and the children, and that was her reward. She had to undergo the most humiliating process of asking point-blank; even when twenty or thirty thousand pairs of gloves were to be sold at prices that were unheard of! Men were so stupid in their meanness!

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"Buy the shop," Mr. Cockayne angrily observed.

Perhaps Mr. Cockayne would be pleased to inform his lawful wife and the unfortunate children who were subjected by fate to his cruel tyranny—perhaps he would inform them when it would be convenient for him to take them home. His insults were more than his wife could bear.

"What's the matter now?" asked the despairing Cockayne, rubbing his hat with his coat-sleeve.

"Mamma dear, papa is coming with us," Sophonisba expostulated.

"Well, I suppose he is. It has not quite come to that yet, my dear. I am prepared for anything, I believe; but your father will, I trust, not make us the laughing-stock of the hotel."

"I am ready," said Cockayne, grimly, between his teeth.

"I am obliged, you see, children, to speak," icily responded the lady he had sworn to love and cherish. "Hints are thrown away. I must suffer the indignity for your sakes, of saying to your father, I shall want some money for the purchases your mother wants to make for you. It is not the least use going to this Grande Occasion, or whatever they call it, empty-handed."

"Will you allow me time to get change?" And Mr. Cockayne headed the procession through the hotel court-yard to the Boulevards.

"Walk with your father," the outraged lady said to Sophonisba. "It's positively disgraceful, straggling out in this way. But I might have known what it was likely to be before I left home."

Mr. Cockayne, as was his wont, speedily re-assumed his equanimity, and chatted pleasantly with Sophonisba as they walked along the Rue de la Paix, across the Place Vendome, into the Rue Castiglione. Mrs. Cockayne followed with Theodosia; Carrie had begged to be left behind, to write a long letter to her intellectual friend, Miss Sharp.

Mr. Cockayne stopped before the door of Mr. John Arthur.

"What on earth can your father want here?" said Mrs. Cockayne, pausing at the door, while her husband had an interview with Mr. John Arthur within.

Theodosia, peering through the window, answered, "He is getting change, mamma dear."

"At last!"

Mr. Cockayne issued radiant from Mr. John Arthur's establishment.

"There," said he to his wife, in his heartiest voice; "there, my dear, buy what you and the girls want."

"I will do the best I can with it. Perhaps we can manage our shopping without troubling you."

"It's not the least trouble in the world," gaily said Cockayne, putting that bright face of his on matters.

"I thought you had some idea of going to the Museum of Artillery this afternoon, to see whether or not you approved of the French guns."

Mr. Cockayne laughed at the sarcasm, and again gave Sophonisba his arm, and went under the colonnades of the Rue de Rivoli, wondering, by the way, why people stared at him in his plaid suit, and at his daughter in her brown hat and blue veil. Mrs. Cockayne wondered likewise. The French were the rudest people on the face of the earth, and not the politest, as they had the impudence to assert.

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When the party reached the colonnades of the Grand Hotel du Louvre, they found themselves in the midst of a busy scene.

The *Magasins du Louvre* stretch far under the Hotel, from the Rue de Rivoli to the Rue Saint-Honore. Year after year has the stretching process continued; but now the great company of linen drapers and hosiers have all the space that can be spared them. The endless lines of customers' carriages in the Rue Saint-Honore and on the *Place* opposite Prince Napoleon's palace betoken the marvellous trade going on within.

The father of the English family here turned his back upon the great shop, and glancing towards the Louvre and the Church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, exclaimed—
"Marvellous scene! A sight not to be equalled in the world. Yonder is the old church, the bell of which tolled the——"

"You're making a laughing-stock of yourself," Mrs. Cockayne exclaims, taking her husband firmly by the arm. "One would think you were an hotel guide, or a walking handbook, or—or a beadle or showman. What do you want to know about the massacre of St. Bartholomew now? There'll not be a mantle or a pair of gloves left. Come in—do! You can go gesticulating about the streets with Carrie to-morrow, if you choose; but do contrive to behave like an ordinary mortal to-day."

Mr. Cockayne resigned himself. He plunged into the magnificent shop. He was dragged into the crowd that was defiling past the fifteen-sous counter, where the goods lay in great tumbled masses on the floor and upon the counter. He was surprised to see the shopmen standing upon the counter, and, with marvellous rapidity, telling off the yards of the cheap fabrics to the ladies and gentlemen who were pressing before them in an unbroken line. Beyond were the packers. Beyond again, was the office where payment was made, each person having a note or ticket, with the article bought, showing the sum due. A grave official marshalled the customer to the pay-place. There was wonderful order in the seeming confusion. The admirable system of the establishment was equal to the emergency. An idea of the continuous flow of the crowd past the silk and mixed fabric counters may be got from the fact that many ladies waited three and four hours for their turn to be served. One Parisian lady told Mrs. Cockayne that, after waiting four hours in the crowd, she had gone home to lunch, and had returned to try her fortune a second time.

Poor Cockayne! He was absolutely bewildered. His endeavours to steer the "three daughters of Albion" who were under his charge, in the right direction, were painful to witness. First he threaded corridors, then he was in the carpet gallery, and now he was in the splendid, the palatial shawl-hall, where elegant ladies were trying on shawls of costly fabric, with that grace and quiet for which Parisians are unmatched.

"This is superb! Oh, this is very, very fine!" cried the ladies. "How on earth shall we find our way out?"

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Now they sailed among immensities of silk and satin waves. Now they were encompassed with shawls; and now they were amid colonnades of rolls of carpet.

Mrs. Cockayne stayed here and there to make a purchase, by the help of Sophonisba's French, which was a source of considerable embarrassment to the shopmen. They smiled, but were very polite.

"This is not a shop, it is a palace dedicated to trade," cried Cockayne.

"Stuff and nonsense," was his answer; "take care of the parcels. You know better, of course, than the people to whom it belongs."

The Cockaynes found themselves borne by the endless stream of customers into a vast and lofty gallery. Pater paused.

"This is superb! It would have been impossible to realize——"

"Don't be a fool, Cockayne," said his wife; "this is the lace department. We must not go away without buying something."

"Let us try," was saucily answered.

Mrs. Cockayne immediately settled upon some Chantilly, and made her lord, as she expressed it in her pretty way, "pay for his impudence."

The silk gallery was as grand and bewildering as the lace department; and here again were made some extraordinary bargains.

Obliging officials directed the party to the first staircase on the right, or to turn to the left, by the furnishing department. They made a mistake, and found themselves in the *salons* devoted to made linen, where Mrs. Cockayne hoped her husband would not make his daughters blush with what he considered to be (and he was much mistaken) witty observations. He was to be serious and silent amid mountains of feminine under linen. He was to ask no questions.

In the Saint Honore gallery—which is the furnishing department—Mr. Cockayne was permitted to indulge in a few passing expressions of wonder. He was hushed in the splendour of the shawl gallery—where all is solid oak and glass and rich gold, and where the wearied traveller through the exciting scene of a *Grande Occasion* at the marvellous shops of the Louvre, can get a little rest and quiet.

"A wonderful place!" said Pater, as he emerged in the Rue de Rivoli, exhausted.

"And much more sensible than the place opposite," his wife replied, pointing to the palace where the art treasures of Imperial France are imperially housed.

“*Grande Occasion!*” muttered Mr. Cockayne, when he reached the hotel—“a grand opportunity for emptying one’s pocket. The cheapness is positively ruinous. I wonder whether there are any cheap white elephants in Paris?”

“White elephants, Cockayne! White fiddlesticks! I do really think, girls, your father is gradually—mind, I say, *gradually—gradually* taking leave of his senses.”

“La! mamma,” unfortunate Carrie interposed, raising her eyes from a volume on Paris in the Middle Ages—“la! mamma, you know that in India——”

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“Hold your tongue, Miss—of course I know—and if I didn’t, it is not for *you* to teach me.”

Mr. Timothy Cockayne heaved a deep sigh and rang for his bill.

He was to leave for London on the morrow—and his wife and daughters were to find lodgings.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR FOOLISH COUNTRYWOMEN.

I Introduce at this point—its proper date—Miss Carrie Cockayne’s letter to Miss Sharp:

“Grand Hotel, Paris.

“DEAREST EMMY—They are all out shopping, so here’s a long letter. I haven’t patience with the men. I am sure we have had enough abuse in our own country, without travelling all the way to Paris for it; and yet the first paper I take up in the reading saloon of the hotel, contains a paragraph headed *Le Beau Sexe en Angleterre*. The paragraph is violent. The writer wants to know what demon possesses the Englishwomen at this moment. I might have been sure it was translated from an English paper. The creature wants to know whether the furies are let loose, and is very clever about Lucretia Borgia, and Mary Manning, and Mary Newell! One would think English mothers were all going to boil their children. This is just what has happened about everything else. In certain English circles slang is talked: therefore women have become coarse and vulgar. The Divorce Court has been a busy one of late; and scandals have been ‘going round’ as the American ladies in this hotel say; therefore there are to be no more virtuous mothers and sisters presently. Upon my word, the audacity of this makes my blood boil. Here the ladies paint, my dear, one and all. Why, the children in the Tuileries gardens whisk their skirts, and ogle their boy playmates. Vanity Fair at its height is here—I am not going to dispute it. Nor will I say papa is quite in the wrong when he cries shame on some of the costumes one meets on the Boulevards. My dear, short skirts and grey hair do *not* go well together. I cannot even bear to think of grand-mamma showing her ankles and Hessian boots! But what vexes and enrages me is the injustice of the sudden outcry. Where has the slang come from? Pray who brought it into the drawing-room? How is it that girls delight in stable-talk, and imitate men in their dress and manners? We cannot deny that the domestic virtues have suffered in these fast days, nor that wife and husband go different ways too much: but are we to bear all the blame? Did we build the clubs, I wonder? Did you or I invent racing, and betting, and gambling? Do *you* like being lonely, as you are, my dear? When women go wrong, who leads the way? The pace is very fast now, and we *do* give more time to dress, and that sort of thing than our mothers did. I own I’m a heavy hand

at pastry, and mamma is a light one. I couldn't tell you how many shirts papa has. I should be puzzled to make my own dresses. I hate needlework. But

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are we monsters for all this? Papa doesn't grumble *very* much. He has his pleasures, I'm sure. He dined out four times the week we came away. He was at the Casino in the Rue St. Honore last night, and came home with such an account of it that I am quite posted up in the manners and costumes of *ces dames*, yes, and the *lower* class of them. The mean creature who has been writing in the *Saturday Review* gives us no benefit of clergy. We have driven our brothers out into the night; we have sent our lovers to Newmarket; we have implored our husbands (that is, we who have got husbands,) not to come home to dinner, because we have more agreeable company which we have provided for ourselves. Girls talk slang, I know—perhaps they taught their brothers! I suppose mamma taught papa to describe a woman in the *Bois* as 'no end of a swell,' and when he is in the least put out to swear at her.

[Illustration: THE INFLEXIBLE "MEESES ANGLAISES."

They are not impressionable, but they will stoop to "field sports."]

"Now, my dear, shall I give you *my* idea of the mischief? Papa thinks I go about with my eyes shut; that I observe nothing—except the bonnet shops. I say the paint, the chignons, the hoops, and the morals—whatever they may be—start from here. My ears absolutely tingled the first evening I spent here *en soiree*. Lovers! why the married ladies hardly take the trouble to disguise their preferences.

"I was at an embassy reception the other night. Papa said it was like a green-room, only not half so amusing. They talked in one corner as openly as you might speak of the Prince Imperial, about Mademoiselle Schneider's child. There were women of the company whose *liaisons* are as well known as their faces, and yet they were *parfaitement bien recues*! Theresa is to be heard—or was to be heard till she went out of fashion—in private salons, screaming her vulgar songs among the young ladies. When I turn the corner just outside the hotel, what do I see in one of the most fashionable print-shops? Why, three great Mabilles prints of the shockingly indecent description—with ladies and their daughters looking at them. Those disagreeable pictures in the Burlington Arcade are, my dearest Emmy, moral prints when compared with them. We have imported all this. Paris is within ten hours and a half of London, so we get French ways, as papa says, 'hot and hot.'"

[Illustration: ENGLISH VISITORS TO THE CLOSERIE DE LILAS.—SHOCKING!]

"Who admires domestic women now? Tell an English *creve* that Miss Maria is clever at a custard, and he will sneer at her. No. She must be witty, pert; able to give him as good as he sends, as people say. Young Dumas has done a very great deal of this harm; and he has made a fortune by it. He has brought the Casino into the drawing-room, given *ces dames* a position in society, and

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made hundreds of young men ruin themselves for the glory of being seen talking to a Cora Pearl. Now what do you think he has done. He has actually brought out a complete edition of his pieces, with a preface, in which, Papa tells me, he plays the moralist. He has unfolded all the vice—crowded the theatres to see a bad woman in a consumption—painted the *demi-monde*—with a purpose! All the world has laboured under the idea that the purpose was piles of gold. But now, the locker being full, and the key turned, and in the young gentleman's pocket, he dares to put himself in the robe of a professor, to say it was not the money he cared about—it was the lesson. He is a reformer—a worshipper of virtue! We shall have the author of *Jack Sheppard* start as a penologist soon. My dear, the cowardice of men when dealing with poor women is bad enough; but it is not by half so repulsive as their hypocrisy. Ugh!

"Any news of the handsome Mr. Daker? It strikes me, dear Emmy, 'Uncle Sharp' didn't send him up from Maidstone with a letter of introduction to his niece for nothing.

"Your affectionate friend,
"CARRIE C."

CHAPTER VIII.

"OH, YES!" AND "ALL RIGHT!"

Lucy was privileged to read the following:—

Miss Carrie Cockayne to Miss Emily Sharp.

"Rue Millevoeye, Paris.

"MY DEAREST EMMY,—I should certainly not venture to offer any remarks on taste to you, my love, under ordinary circumstances. But I am provoked. I have passed a severe round of *soirees* of every description. Jaded with the fantastic activities of a fancy-dress genteel riot, I have been compelled to respond to the intimation of the Vicomtesse de Bois de Rose, that "*on sautera*". I have jumped with the rest. I have half killed myself with *sirops*, *petit-fours*, those microscopic caricatures of detestable British preparation—sandwiches (pronounced *sonveetch*), *bouillon*, and chocolate, in the small hours; ices in tropical heats; *foie-gras* and champagne about two hours after healthy bedtime, and tea like that which provoked old Lady Gargoyle to kick over the tea-table in her boudoir—in her eightieth year, too. The Gargoyles (I shall have much to tell you about them when we meet) were always an energetic race; and I feel the blood tingling in me while my eye wanders over the impertinences of the French chroniqueurs, when they are pleased to be merry at the expense of *la vieille Angleterre*. I hold I am right;



am I not?—that when even a chroniqueur—that smallest of literary minnows—undertakes to criticize a foreign nation, at least the equal of his own, he should start with some knowledge of its language, history, manners, and customs. But what do we find? The profoundest ignorance of the rudiments of English. The special correspondent sent to London by the *Figaro* to

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be amusing on our darker side, cannot spell the word theatre; but he is trenchant when dealing with what he saw at the Adelphi *Theater*. How completely he must have understood the dialogue, he who describes Webster as a *comique de premier ordre*! In the same paper the dramatic critic, after explaining that at the rehearsals of *L'Abime*, the actors, who continually are complaining that they are ordered off on the wrong side, are quieted with the information that matters dramatic are managed in this way in bizzare England—prints in a line apart, and by way of most humorous comment, these words, 'English spoken here.' Conceive, my dear, an English humorous writer interlarding his picture of a French incident with the occasional interjection of *Parlez-vous Francais*? Yet the comic writers of Paris imagine that they show wit when they pepper their comments with disjointed, irrelevant, and misspelt ejaculations in our vernacular. We have a friend here (we have made dozens) who has a cat she calls To-be—the godfather being 'To-be or not to be! 'All right' appears daily as a witticism; 'Oh, yes!' serves for the thousandth time as a touch of humour. The reason is obvious. French critics are wholly ignorant of our language. Very few of them have crossed the Channel, even to obtain a Leicester Square idea of our dear England. But they are not diffident on this account. They have never seen samples of the Britisher—except on the Boulevards, or whistling in the cafes—where our countrymen, I beg leave to say, do not shine; and these to them are representations of our English society. Suppose we took our estimate of French manners and culture from the small shopkeepers of the Quartier St. Antoine! My protest is against those who judge us by our vulgar and coarse types. The Manchester bully who lounges into the Cafe Anglais with his hat on the back of his head; the woman who wears a hat and a long blue veil, and shuffles in in the wake of the *malhonnete* to whom she is married; again, the boor who can speak only such French as 'moa besoin' and 'j'avais faim,' represent English men and women just as fairly as the rude, hoggish, French egg-and-poultry speculators represent the great seigneurs of France.

[Illustration: SMITH BRINGS HIS ALPENSTOCK.]

"I say I have, by this time, more than a tolerable experience, not only of French *salons*, but also of those over which foreign residents in Paris preside. I have watched the American successes in Paris of this season, which is now closing its gilded gates, dismissing the slaves of pleasure to the bitter waters of the German springs and gaming-tables. I have seen our people put aside for Madame de Lhuile de Petrole and the great M. Caligula Shoddy. The beauties of the season have been 'calculating' and 'going round' in the best *salons*, and they have themselves given some of the most successful entertainments we have had. Dixie's land has been fairyland. Strange and gorgeous Princesses

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from the East have entered mighty appearances. One has captivated the Prince, said to be the handsomest man in Paris. Russian and Polish great ladies have done the honours—according to the newspapers—with their ‘habitual charm.’ The Misses Bickers have had their beauties sung by a chorus of chroniqueurs. Here the shoulders of ladies at a party are as open to criticism as the ankles of a stage dancer. The beauties of our blonde Misses have made whole bundles of goose-quills tremble. Paris society is made up not even chiefly of Parisians; the rich of all nations flock to us, and are content to pay a few hundred pounds per month for a floor of glass and gilding. The Emperor has made a show capital as a speculation. All Europe contributes to the grandeur of the fashionable world of Paris. And suddenly what do we hear?

“That we, whose blood is good enough for England; who *can* speak a few foreign languages in addition to our own; who know our neighbours by having lived among them; who have travelled enough to learn that good breeding is not confined to England or to France, are accused of having destroyed the high tone of the Opera audiences in this city. We are good enough, as to manners, for Her Majesty’s Theatre, but not for the Italiens. Tell Mrs. Sandhurst of this: she will be so mad!

“A few nights before La Patti left us, to degrade herself by warbling her wood-notes in the ignorant ears of the Opera public whom Mr. Gye is about to assemble, and on whom the leadership of Costa is thrown away, an unfortunate incident happened at the Italiens. Patti had been announced, and Mdlle. Harris appeared instead. Whereupon there was an uproar that could not be stilled. La Patti wept; la Harris wept also. Finally, the spoilt child appeared, like Niobe, all tears. Who created the uproar? The French chroniqueur answers: a cosmopolitan audience—an audience from the Grand Hotel. He is good enough not to pick us out, but we are included with the rest. The foreign residents have degraded the Opera. The audience which greets Patti is a rabble compared with that which listened to Sontag. ‘The exquisite urbanity which is proverbially French,’ and which was apparent at the Italiens fifteen or twenty years ago, has disappeared since Paris has become the world’s railway terminus. M. Emile Villars, who is so obliging as to make the observation, proceeds to be very clever. Scratch the Russian, and you know what you will find. I answer, a gentleman uninfluenced by a stale proverb; we have a delightful specimen in this very house. M. Villars is great at scratching, since his readers are recommended to grate Peruvians and Javanese. Under the three articles, we are told, lies the one barbarous material! The ladies of these are charming, seductive, irresistible, but they want *ton*, and lack the delicacy of the *monde*. We foreigners are too proud of our beauty and our dollars, have an unquenchable thirst for pleasure, and we are

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socially daring. M. Villars is funny in the fashion of his class. He says that we English-speaking class of foreigners bear aloft a banner with the strange device 'All right.' M. Villars proceeds to remark, 'We take from foreigners what we should leave to them, their feet upon chairs, and their hats upon their heads, as at the Italiens the other night.' He finds that a cosmopolitan invasion has made French society less delicate, less gallant, less polite.

[Illustration: JONES ON THE PLACE DE LA CONCORDE.]

"We are to blame! Belgravia is not refined enough for the Avenue de l'Imperatrice. Clapham, I infer, would not be tolerated at Batignolles. I repeat, I have gone through some arduous times here, in the midst of the foreign invasion of polite society. I have scratched neither Russ, nor German, nor Servian, nor Wallachian. But I must be permitted to observe, that I have found their manners quite equal to any that were native. Shall I go further, Emmy, and speak all my mind? There is a race of the new-rich—of the recently honoured, here, who are French from their shoe-rosettes to their chignons. They come direct from the Bourse, and from the Pereire fortune-manufactory of the Place Vendome. They bring noise and extravagance, but not manners. I have seen many of my countrymen in Parisian drawing-rooms, in the midst of Frenchmen, Russians, Princes of various lands; and, do you know, I have not seen anything *much* better in the way of bearing, manners, and mental culture and natural refinement than the English gentleman. I feel quite positive that it is not he who has lowered the manners or morals of Napoleon the Third's subjects. I am bold enough to think that a probationary tour through some of our London drawing-rooms would do good to the saucy young seigneurs I see leaning on the balcony of the Jockey Club when we are driving past.

"I will remind M. Villars that his proverb has been parodied, and that it has been said, 'Scratch a Frenchman, and you find a dancing-master.' But I know this proverb to be foolish; and I am candid and liberal enough to say so.

"I hope you are not too lonely, and don't keep too much to your room. Now I know by experience what life in a boarding-house means. How must you feel, dearest Emmy, alone! Je t'embrasse. How gets on the German?

"We have such a specimen of the gandin here—the Vicomte de Gars. I think John Catt had better make haste over.

"Yours affectionately,

"CARRIE."

CHAPTER IX.

Miss Carrie Cockayne to Miss Sharp.

“Rue Millevoeye.

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“My dearest Emmy,—No answer from you? How unkind! But still I continue to give you my ideas of the moment from this. What do we want? A writer in one of the frivolous sheets which are called newspapers on this side of the Channel, has been giving himself great airs; looking out of his window, with two or three touches of his pen he dismisses the poor women who pass under his balcony, and closes the casement with the conviction that woman’s rights and wrongs are put away for another generation. Foolish women! They are plentiful enough, and they muster in fair numbers at the Wauxhall meetings which have been going on here, to the infinite amusement of the superior creatures who drink absinthe, smoke cigars, and gamble, hours after we silly things have gone to bed. I am not writing to deny woman’s weakness, nor her vanity, nor the ridiculous exhibition she makes of herself when she takes to “orating”—as the Yankees say—and lecturing, and dressing herself up in her brother’s clothes. Do you think, my dear Emmy, there are many women foolish enough to applaud Dr. Mary Walker because she dresses like an overgrown school-girl, and shows her trousers? What is she like in society? Neither man nor woman. But how many have imitated her? How many women in England, France, and America have taken to the platform? One would think that all womankind was in a state of revolution, and about to make a general descent upon the tailors and tobacconists, turning over the lords of the creation to the milliners and the baby-linen warehouses. This is just the way men argue, and push themselves out of a difficulty. This French philosophical pretender, who has been observing us from his window (I can’t imagine where he lives), describes one or two social monstrosities—with false complexions, hair, figure,—and morals; brazen in manner, defiant in walk—female intellectual all-in-alls. His model drives, hunts, orates, passes resolutions, dissects—in short does everything except attend to baby. This she leaves to the husband. He takes the pap-bowl, and she shoulders the gun. He looks out the linen while she sharpens her razors. The foolish public laugh all along the boulevards, and say what a charming creature a woman will be when she drives a locomotive, commands a frigate, and storms a citadel!

“Every time a meeting is convened at the Wauxhall to consider how the amount of female starvation or misery may be reduced, the philosopher throws his window open again, and grins while he caricatures, or rather distorts and exaggerates to positive untruth. M. Gill gets fresh food. The *chroniqueurs* invent a series of absurdities, which didn’t happen yesterday, as they allege. I am out of patience when I see all this mischievous misrepresentation, because I see that it is doing harm to a very just and proper cause. We are arguing for more work for our poor sisters who have neither father, husband, brother, nor fortune to depend upon; and these French

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comic scribblers describe us as unsexed brawlers, who want top-boots. I want no manly rights for women. I am content with the old position, that her head should just reach the height of a man's heart; but I do see where she is not well used—where she is left to genteel dependence, and a life in the darkest corner of the drawing-room, upon the chair with the unsafe leg, over the plate that is cracked, in the bedroom where the visitor died of scarlet fever.

[Illustration: FRENCH RECOLLECTION OF MEESS TAKING HER BATH.

The faithful Bouledogue gazes with admiration at the performance of his Mistress.]

[Illustration: THE BRAVE MEESS AMONG THE BILLOWS HOLDING ON BY THE TAIL OF HER NEWFOUNDLAND.]

“She is not unsexed wearing her poor heart out against these bars; but she would be a free, bright, instructed creature, helping her rich sister, or a trusty counsellor when the children are ill. She would be unsexed issuing railway tickets or managing a light business; but she is truly womanly while she is helpless and a burden to others.

“Foolish women! Yes, very stupid very often, but hardly in hoping that the defenceless among us may be permitted to become, by fair womanly exertion, independent. I am directed to observe how amusing the *Figaro* has been recently at our expense, hoping to obtain the suffrages of the really thoughtless of our sex thereby. We are our own worst enemies and well do you men know it. The frivolous are an immense host, and these have reason to laugh at serious women who want to get a little justice and teaching for their dependent sisters—not manly avocations, nor masculine amusements. I go to the Wauxhall, my dear Emmy, not to help my sex to unsex itself, but, I must repeat, to aid my poor sisters who want to work, that, if left without the support of male kindred, they may lead honourable, independent lives; to this end they must have certain rights, and these, and no more, I advocate.

[Illustration: VARIETIES OF THE ENGLISH STOCK.

The Parent Flower and two lovely Buds.]

[Illustration: COMPATRIOTS MEETING IN THE FRENCH EXHIBITION.

Bar-maids in the English Department recognising a fellow-countryman.]

“You see, the old story is told over again. We beg a little independence; and we are answered with ancient jests. You are quite as unjust, and not so amusing or clever in your injustice in England. They have not imitated the medical students in St. James's Hall at this Wauxhall. We have seen no such monstrous spectacle as a host of young

men hooting and yelling at one poor, weak, foolish little woman in black pantalettes. Truly, you must be as tired of the comic view of the question as you are ashamed of your medical students. I know what the highly-educated English ladies think on the subject. They detest the orating, blustering, strangely-costumed advocates of woman's rights; but don't fall into the common error of believing that they are not earnest about many of the points we have been discussing here, in the midst of this mocking race. Depend upon it, we are not foolish enough—fond as you men are of crying 'foolish women!'—to unsex ourselves.

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"The woman who wants to get into Parliament is, to my thinking, a monster; and I would sentence her to stocking-mending for life. The creature who appears before men in black pantalettes, and other imitations of his dress, should be rigorously held clear of decent houses, until she had learned how to dress herself modestly and becomingly. The Missy who talked about eating her way to the bar, I would doom to the perpetual duty of cooking chops for hungry lawyers' clerks.

"But you will have had enough of this.

"Not a word? and you promised so many. Somebody has whispered a name to me. It is Charles. Is that true? I will never forgive you.

"Ever yours,

"CARRIE."

Emmy never answered, poor girl!

CHAPTER X.

"THE PEOPLE OF THE HOUSE."

Lucy Rowe would have been fast friends with Carrie Cockayne during their stay in her aunt's house, had Mrs. Cockayne, on the one hand, permitted her daughter to become intimate with anything so low as "the people of the house," and had Mrs. Rowe, on the other, suffered her niece to "forget her place." But they did approach each other, by an irresistible affinity, and by the easy companionship of common tastes. While Sophonisba engaged ardently in all the doings of the house, and was a patient retailer of its scandals; and while Mrs. Cockayne was busy with her evening whist, and morning "looks at the shops"—quiet and retiring Theodosia managed to become seriously enamoured of the Vicomte de Gars, who visited Mrs. Rowe's establishment, as the unexceptionable friend of the Reverend Horace Mohun.

The young Vicomte was a Protestant; of ancient family and limited means. Where the living scions of the noble stock held their land, and went forth over their acres from under the ancestral portcullis, was more than even Mrs. Rowe had been able, with all her penetrating power in scandal, to ascertain. But the young nobleman was Mr. Mohun's friend—and that was enough. There had been reverses in the family. Losses fall upon the noblest lines; and supposing the Count de Gars in the wine trade—to speak broadly, in the Gironde—this was to his honour. The great man struggling with the storms of fate, is a glad picture always to noble minds. Some day he would issue from his cellars, and don his knightly plume once more, and summon the vulgar intruders to begone from the Chateau.



As for Mrs. Cockayne, to deny that she was highly contented at the family's intimacy with a Viscount, would be to falsify my little fragmentary chain of histories. She wrote to her husband that she met the very best society at Mrs. Rowe's, extolled the elegant manners and enclosed the photograph of the Vicomte de Gars, and said she really began to hope that she had persuaded "his lordship" to pay them a visit in London. "Tell Mrs. Sandhurst, my dear Cockayne, that I am sure she will like the Vicomte de Gars."

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The Vicomte de Gars was a little man, with long wristbands. Miss Tayleure described him as all eye-glass and shirt-front. Comic artists have often drawn the moon capering on spider-legs; a little filling out would make the Vicomte very like the caricature. He was profound—in his salutations, learned—in lace, witty—thanks to the *Figaro*. His attentions to Miss Theodosia Cockayne, and to Madame her mother, were of the most splendid and elaborate description. He left flowers for the young lady early in the morning.

It was very provoking that Theodosia had consented to be betrothed to John Catt of Peckham.

“Carrie, my dear,” Mrs. Cockayne observed, having called her daughter to her bedroom for a good lecture, “once for all, I WILL NOT have you on such intimate terms with the people of the house. What on earth can you be thinking about? I should have thought you would show more pride. I am quite sure the Vicomte saw you yesterday when you were sitting quite familiarly with Miss Rowe in the bureau. I WILL NOT have it.”

“Mamma dear, Lucy Rowe is one of the most sensible and, at the same time, best informed girls I ever knew; and her sentiments are everything that could be desired.”

“I will not be answered, Carrie; mind that. I wonder you haven’t more pride. A chit like that, who keeps the hotel books, and gives out the sugar.”

“Her father was——”

“Never mind what her father was. What is she? I wonder you don’t propose to ask her home on a visit.”

“She would not disgrace——”

This was too much for Mrs. Cockayne. She stamped her foot, and bore down upon Carrie with a torrent of reasons why Miss Rowe should be held at a distance.

“You wouldn’t find Theodosia behaving in such a manner. She understands what’s becoming. I dare say she’s not so clever as you are——”

“Dear mamma, this is cruel——”

“Don’t interrupt me. No, no; I see through most things. This Miss Howe is always reading. I saw her just now with some novel, I’ve no doubt, which she shouldn’t read——”

“It was Kingsley’s——”

“Hold your tongue, child. Yes, reading, and with a pen stuck behind her ear.”

“She’s so very lonely: and Mrs. Howe is so very severe with her.”

“I have no doubt it’s quite necessary; there, go and dress for the table d’hote, and mind what I say.”

Poor Lucy wondered what on earth could have happened that Carrie Cockayne avoided her: and what those furtive nods of the head and stolen smiles at her could mean? On the other hand, how had she offended Mrs. Cockayne? Happily, Mrs. Rowe was on Lucy’s side; for it had pleased Mrs. Cockayne to show her social superiority by extravagant coldness and formality whenever she had occasion to address “the landlady.” One thing Mrs. Cockayne admitted she could NOT understand—viz., Why Jane the servant took so much upon herself with her mistress; and what all the mystery was about a Mr. Charles, who seemed to be a dark shadow, kept somewhere as far as possible in the background of the house.

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Mrs. Rowe, on her side, was amply revenged for Mrs. Cockayne's airs of superiority, when Mr. Cockayne arrived in the company of Mr. John Catt, the betrothed love of Theodosia.

"You must be mad, Mr. Cockayne," was his wife's greeting directly they were alone—"raving mad to bring that vulgar fellow John Catt with you. Didn't you get my letters?"

"I did, my dear; and they brought me over, and John Catt with me. I, at least, intend to act an honourable part."

"Perhaps you will explain yourself, Mr. Cockayne."

"I have travelled from Clapham for that purpose. Who the devil is this Viscount de Gars, to begin with?"

Mrs. Cockayne drew herself up to her full height, and looked through her husband—or meant to look through him—but just then he was not to be cowed even by Mrs. Cockayne.

With provoking coolness and deliberation over the exact relative quantities, Mr. Cockayne mixed himself a glass of grog from his brandy flask; while he proceeded to inform his wife that Mr. John Catt, who had been engaged, with their full consent, to their daughter, had, at his instigation, travelled to Paris to understand what all this ridiculous twaddle about Viscount de Gars meant.

"You will spoil everything," Mrs. Cockayne gasped, "as usual."

"I don't know, madam, that I am in the habit of spoiling anything; but be very certain of this, that I shall not stand by and see my daughter make a fool of a young man of undoubted integrity and of excellent prospects, for the sake of one of these foreign adventurers who swarm wherever foolish Englishwomen wake their appearance. I beg you will say nothing, but let me observe for myself, and leave the young people to come to an understanding by themselves."

In common with many Englishmen of Timothy Cockayne's and John Catt's class, Theodosia's father at once concluded that the poor polite little Vicomte de Gars was an adventurer, and that his coronet was pasteboard, and his shirt studs stolen. Mr. John Catt distinguished himself on his arrival by loud calls for bottled beer, the wearing of his hat in the sitting-room, and by the tobacco-fumes which he liberally diffused in his wake.

When the little Vicomte made his accustomed appearance in the drawing-room, after the table d'hôte, he offered the Cockayne ladies his profoundest bows, and was most reverential in his attitude to Mr. Cockayne, who on his side was red and brusque. As neither Mr. nor Mrs. Cockayne could speak a French word, and Mr. John Catt was not in a position to help them, and was, moreover, inclined to the most unfavourable

conclusions on the French nobleman, the presentations were on the English side of the most awkward description. The demoiselles Cockayne “fell a giggling” to cover their confusion; and the party would have made a ridiculous figure before all the boarders, had not the Reverend Horace Mohun covered them with his blandness.

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Mr. John Catt was not well-mannered, but he was good-hearted and stout-hearted. He was one of those rough young gentlemen who pride themselves upon “having no nonsense about them.” He was downright in all things, even in love-making. He took, therefore, a very early opportunity of asking his betrothed “what this all meant about Monsieur de Gars?” and of observing, “She had only to say the word, and he was ready to go.”

This was very brutal, and it is not in the least to be wondered at that the young lady resented it.

I am, as the reader will have perceived, only touching now and then upon the histories of the people who passed through Mrs. Rowe’s highly respectable establishment while I was in the habit of putting up there. This John Catt was told he was very cruel, and that he might go; Mrs. Cockayne resolutely refused to give up the delights and advantages of the society of the Vicomte de Gars; the foolish girl was—well, just as foolish as her mamma; and finally, in a storm that shook the boarding-house almost to its respectable foundations, the Cockayne party broke up—not before the Vicomte and Miss Theodosia Cockayne had had an explanation in the conservatory, and Mrs. Cockayne had invited “his lordship” to London.

I shall pick up the threads of all this presently.

CHAPTER XI.

MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLERS.

Poor girl! she was timid, frightened. I saw at once that the man with whom she was, and who packed her feet up so carefully in the travelling rug in her state cabin, was not of her class. She could not have been daintier in mien and shape than she appeared. Hands round and white as pearls, feet as pretty as ever stole from a man’s hand to the stirrup; a sweet wee face, that had innocence and heart in it. Country bred, I thought: nested in some Kentish village: a childhood amid the hops: familiar with buttermilk and home-baked bread.

Who has not been blessed by looking upon such an English face: ruddy on the cheek, and white and pink upon the brow and neck: the head poised upon the shoulders with a wondrous delicacy? Such girls issue from honest Englishmen’s homes to gladden honeymoon cottages, and perpetuate that which is virtuous and courageous in our Saxon race. She lay muffled in shawls, pillowed upon a carpet-bag, softened with his fur coat, frightened about the sea, and asking every few minutes whether we were near the port.

He fell into conversation with me before we were clear of Folkestone harbour. He was a travelled man, accustomed to do his journeying socially, and not in the surly, self-contained, and selfish manner of our countrymen generally. I confess—and it is a boldness, knowing all I do know now—that I was drawn towards Daker at the outset. He had a winning manner—just that manner which puts you on a friendly footing with a stranger before you have passed an hour in his company. He began,

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as though it was quite natural that we should become acquainted, in the tone your neighbour at dinner assumes, although you are unacquainted with his name. We were on an exact level: gentlemen, beyond fear or reproach. I repeat emphatically, I liked Daker's manner, for it was easy and polished, and it had—which you don't often get with much polish—warmth. I was attracted by his many attentions to his young wife. Who could be near her, and not feel the chivalry in his soul warm to such a woman? But Daker's attentions were idiosyncrasies. While he was talking to me at the cabin-door, he saw the fur coat slip, and readjusted it. He divined when she wanted to move. He fanned her; and she sought his eyes incessantly with the deep pure blue of hers, and slaked her ever-thirsty love with long, passionate gazing. She took no notice of me: he was all her world.

Daker was in an airy humour—a man I thought without guile or care, passing away from England to happy connubial times along the enchanting shores which the Mediterranean bathes. We fell, as fellow-travellers generally do, upon old stories of the ways of the world we had seen. He had taken wider ranges than my duties had ever entailed on me.

Autumn was cooling to winter; it was early November when we met.

"I have been," he said, "killing time and birds pleasantly enough in Sussex."

Mrs. Daker overheard him, and smiled. Then we shifted carelessly, as far as I was concerned, away. He continued—

"And now we're off on the usual tramp. My wife wants a warm winter, and so do I, for the matter of that."

"Nice?" I asked.

A very decided "no" was the answer.

"I shall find some little sleepy Italian country-place, where we shall lay up like dormice, and just give King Frost the go-by for once. Are you bound south?"

"Only to Paris—as prosaic a journey as any cotton-spinner could desire."

"Always plenty to be done in Paris," Daker said; "at least I have never felt at a loss. But it's a bachelor's paradise."

"And a wife's," I interposed.

“Not a husband’s, you think?” Daker asked, turning the end of his moustache very tight. “I agree with you.”

“I have no experience; but I have an opinion, which I have been at some pains to gather—French society spoils our simple English women.”

“Most decidedly,” said Daker.

“They are too simple and too affectionate for the artificial, diplomatic—shall I say heartless?—society of the salons. Their ears burn at first at the conversation. They are presented to people who would barely be tolerated in the upper circles of South Bank, St. John’s Wood.”

“You are right; I know it well,” said Daker, very earnestly, but resuming his normal air of liveliness in an instant. “It’s a bad atmosphere, but decidedly amusing. The *esprit* of a good salon is delicious—nothing short of it. I like to bathe in it: it just suits me, though I can’t contribute much to it. We Englishmen are not alert enough in mind to hold our own against our nimble neighbours. We shall never fence, nor dance, nor rally one another as they can. We are men who don’t know how to be children. It’s a great pity!”

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"I am not so sure of that," was the opinion I uttered. "We should lose something deeper and better. We don't enjoy life—that is, the art of living—as they do; but we reach deeper joys."

Daker smiled, and protested playfully—

"We are running into a subject that would carry us far, if we would let it. I only know I wish I were a Frenchman with all my heart, and I'm not the first Englishman who has said so. Proud of one's country, and all that sort of thing: plucky, strong, master race of the world. I know it. But I have seen bitter life on that side"—pointing to the faint white line of Dover—"and I have enjoyed myself immensely on that"—pointing to the growing height of Cape Grisnez.

I thought, as he spoke, that he must be an ungrateful fellow to say one word against the country where he had found the sweet little lady whose head was then pillowed upon his rough coat. I understood him afterwards. He started a fresh conversation, after having made a tender survey of the wraps and conveniences of Mrs. Daker, who followed him with the deep eyes as he returned to my side with his open cigar-case, to offer me a cheroot.

"Do you know anything of Amiens?" he said. "Is it a large place—busy, thriving?"

I gave him my impression—a ten-year old one.

"Not a place a man could lose himself in, evidently," he joked; "and they've been mowed down rather smartly by the cholera since you were there."

I could not quite like the tone of this; and yet what tenderness was in the man when he turned to his young wife! "St. Omer, Abbeville, Montreuil, and the rest of the places on the line, are dreary holes, I happen to know. You have been to Chantilly, of course?"

[Illustration: A PIC-NIC AT ENGHIEEN]

I had lost a round sum of money in that delightful place, where our ambassador was wont to refresh himself after his diplomatic labours and ceremonials.

"I know the place," Daker went on; "I know Chantilly well. It wakes up a curious dream of the long ago in my mind."

"And Enghien?"

"*Comme ma poche.*" Daker knew his Enghien well—and Enghien was profoundly acquainted with Daker. Daker appeared to be a man not yet over his thirtieth year. He was fair, full-blooded, with a bright grey eye, a lithe shapely build, and distinguished in air and movement withal. There were no marks upon his face; his eyes were frank and



direct; his speech was firm and of a cheery ring; and emotions seemed to come and go in him as in an unused nature. Yet his conversation, free as it was, and wholly unembarrassed, cast out frequent hints at a copious history and an eventful one, in which he had acted a part. I concluded he was no common man, and that, until now, the world had not treated him over well; albeit he had just received ample compensation for the past in the girlish wife who had crept to his side, and who, the swiftest runner

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might have read, loved him with all her soul. We all pride ourselves on our skill in reading the characters of our fellow-creatures. A man will admit any dulness except that which closes the hearts of others to him. I was convinced that I had read the character of Daker before we touched the quay at Boulogne: he was a man of fine and delicate nature, whom the world had hit; who had been cheery under punishment; and who had at length got his rich reward in Mrs. Daker. I repeat this confession, and to my cost; for it is necessary as part explanation of what follows.

My conversation with Daker was broken by the call of a sweet voice—"Herbert!" We were crossing the bar at the entrance of Boulogne harbour. The good ship rolled heavily, and Herbert was wanted! When the passengers crowded to the side, pressing and jostling to effect an early landing, and the fishwives were scrambling from the paddles to the deck, I came upon Daker and his wife once more. She glanced shyly and not very good-humouredly at me, and seemed to say, "It was you who diverted the attention of my Herbert from me so long."

"Good morning," Daker said, meaning that there was an end of our fortuitous intercourse, and that he should be just as chatty and familiar with any man who might happen to be in the same carriage with him between Boulogne and Paris. I watched him hand his wife into a basket phaeton, smooth her dress, arrange her little parcels, satisfy her as to her dressing-case, and then seat himself triumphantly at her side, and call gaily to the saturnine Boulonnais upon the box, "Allez!" I confess that a pang of jealousy shot through me. It has been observed by La Rochefoucauld that it is astonishing how cheerfully we bear the ills of others; he might well have added that, on the other hand, it is remarkable how we fret over the happiness of our neighbours. I envied Daker when I saw him drive away to the station with the gentle girl at his side; I knew that she was nestling against him, and half her illness was only an excuse to get nearer to his heart. Why should I envy him? Could I have seen through his face into his heart at that moment I should have thanked God, who made me of simpler mould—a lonely, but an honourable man.

We were on our way to Paris in due time. At Amiens, where we enjoyed the usual twenty minutes' rest, Daker offered me a light. I saw him making his way to the carriage in which his wife sat, with a basket of pears and some *caramels*. The bell rang, and we all hurried to our seats. I remarked that, at the point of starting, there was an unusual stir and noise on the platform. *Messieurs les voyageurs* were not complete; somebody was missing from one of the carriages. The station-master and the guard kept up a brisk and angry conversation, which ended in an imperious wave of the hand to the engine-driver.

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The guard and the commissioner (who travels in the interest of the general vagrant public from London to Paris, making himself generally useful by the way) shrugged their shoulders and got to their places, and we went forward to Creil. Here the carriages were all searched carefully. A lady was inquiring for the gentleman. My French companions laughed, and answered in their native light manner; and again we were *en route* for Paris. Past Chantilly and Enghien and St. Denis we flew, to where the low line of the fortifications warned us to dust ourselves, fold our newspapers, roll up our rugs, and tell one another that which was obvious to all—that we were in the centre of civilization once more.

It was dark; and I was hungry, and out of humour, and impatient. I had fallen in with unsympathetic companions. That half-hour in the waiting-room, while the porters are arranging the luggage for examination, is trying to most tempers. I am usually free from it; but on this occasion I had some luggage belonging to a friend to look after. I was waiting sulkily.

Presently the guard, the travelling commissioner, and half-a-dozen more in official costume, appeared, surrounding a lady, who was in deep distress. Had I seen a gentleman—fair, &c., &c.? I turned and beheld Mrs. Daker. She darted at me, and I can never forget the look which accompanied the question—

“You were with my husband on the boat. Where is he?”

He was not among the passengers who reached Paris. We telegraphed back to Creil, and to Amiens. No English traveller, who had missed his train, made answer. We questioned all the passengers in the waiting-room; one had seen the *blonde* Englishman buying pears at Amiens; this was all we could hear. I say “we,” because Mrs.

[Illustration: EXCURSIONISTS & EMIGRANTS. *Sketches in Paris*]

Daker at once fastened upon me: she implored my advice; she narrated all that had passed between her husband and herself while the train was waiting at Amiens. He had begged her not to stir—kind fellow that he was—he had insisted upon fetching fruit and sweetmeats for her. I calmed her fears, for they were exaggerated beyond all reason. He would follow in the next train; I knew what Frenchmen were, and they would not remark a single traveller, unless he had some strong peculiarity in his appearance, and her husband had a travelled air which was cosmopolitan. He spoke French like a Frenchman, she told me; and he had proved, on the boat, that he was familiar with its idioms. I begged her to get her luggage, go to her hotel, and leave me to watch and search. What hotel were they to use? She knew nothing about it. Her husband hadn’t told her, for she was an utter stranger to Paris. I recommended the Windsor (I thought it prudent not to say Mrs. Rowe’s); and she was a child in my hands. She looked even prettier in her distress than when her happy eyes were beaming, as I first caught sight

of them, upon Herbert Daker. The tears trickled down her cheek; the little white hands shook like flower bells in the wind. While the luggage was being searched (fortunately she had the ticket in her reticule), I stood by and helped her.

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"But surely, madam, this is not all!" I remarked, when her two boxes had been lightly searched. She caught my meaning. Where was her husband's portmanteau?

"Mr. Baker's portmanteau was left behind at Boulogne—there was some mistake; I don't know what exactly. I——"

At this moment she marked an expression of anxiety in my face. She gave a sharp scream, that vibrated through the gloomy hall and startled the bystanders. "Was madame ill? Would she have some *eau sucrée*?" She had fainted! and her head lay upon my arm!

Unhappy little head, why stir again?

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. DAKER.

"You must come, my dear fellow. You know, when I promise you a pleasant evening I don't disappoint you. You'll meet everybody. You dine with me. *Sole Joinville*, at Philippe's—best to be had, I think—and a bird. In the cool, the Madrid for our coffee, and so gently back. I'll drop you at your door—leave you for an hour to paint the lily, and then fetch and take you. You shall not say me nay."

I protested a little, but I was won. I had a couple of days to spend in Paris, and, like a man on the wing, had no particular engagements.

We met, my host and I, at the *Napolitain*. He knew everybody, and was everybody's favourite. Cosmo Bertram, once guardsman, then fashionable saunterer wherever society was gayest, quietly extravagant and sentimentally dissipated, had, after much flitting about the sunny centres of the Continent, settled down to Paris and a happy place in the English society that has agglomerated in the west of Napoleon's capital. Fortunately for his "little peace of mind"—as he described a shrewd, worldly head—he was put down by the dowagers, after some sharp discussions of his antecedents, as "no match." There was the orphan daughter of a Baronet who had some hundred and twenty a year, and tastes which she hoped one day to satisfy by annexing a creature wearing a hat, and a pocket with ten times that sum. She had thought for a moment of Cosmo Bertram when she had enjoyed her first half-hour of his amusing rattle; but she had been quickly undeceived—Bertram could not have added a chicken to her broth, a pair of gloves to her toilette; so she shut up the thing she called a heart, for lack of some fitter name, and cruised again through the ominous gold rings of her glasses round the *salons*, and hoped the growing taste for travel might send her some one for annexation at last.

“We’re jiggling on pretty much as usual,” Bertram said at Philippe’s. “Plenty of scandal and plenty of reason for it. The demand creates the supply—is that sound political economy?”

“I am surprised that political economy, together with an intimate acquaintance with hydrostatics, are not exacted in these mad examination days from a queen’s messenger; but I am not bound not to be a fool in political economy, so I elect to be one.”

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“Chablis?”

“Ay; and about ice?”

“My dear Q. M., when you have had a headache, has it ever fallen to your lot to be in the company of a pretty woman?”

“Else had I been one of the most neglected of men.”

“Well, she has fetched the Eau-de-Cologne, bathed your manly brow, and then blown her balmy breath over your temples. That sweet coolness, my dear fellow, is my idea of the proper temperature for Chablis.”

“It’s a great bit of luck to pounce upon you, Bertram, when a man has only a few hours to spend in Paris, after a year or two’s absence. Nearly upon two years have passed since I was here. Yes, November, ’62—now August, ’64.”

“In that time, my dear Q. M., reputations have been made and lost by the hundred. I have had a score of eternal friendships. You can run through the matrimonial gauntlet, from courtship to the Divorce Court, in that time. We used to grieve for years: now we weep as we travel; shed tears, as we cast grain, by machinery. Two years! Why, I have passed through half-a-dozen worlds. My bosom friend of ’62 wouldn’t remember me if I met him to-morrow. I met old Baron Desordres, who has made such a brilliant *fiasco* for everybody except himself, yesterday; I knew him in ’62 with poor little Bartle, who lent him a couple of thousands. Bartle died last month. In ’62 Desordres and Bartle were inseparable. I said to the Baron yesterday, ‘You know poor little Bartle is dead.’ The Baron, picking his teeth, murmured, turning over the leaves of his memory, ‘*Bartel! Bartel!* I remember—*un petit gros, vrai?*’ and the leaves of the Baron’s memory were turned back, and Bartle was as much forgotten in five minutes as the burnt end of a cigarette. I daresay his sisters are gone as governesses for want of the thousands the Baron ate. Two years! Two epochs!”

“I suppose so. While the light burns, and the summer is on, the moths come out. Tragedy, comedy, and farce elbow each other through the rooms. I have seen very much myself, for bird of passage. I took part in a strange incident when I passed through last time.”

“Tell your story, and drink your Roederer, my dear Q. M.”

“Story! I want to get at the story. I travelled with a man and his wife from Folkestone to Paris. On the boat he was the most attentive of husbands; at the terminus he had disappeared. Poor woman in tears; fell into my arms, sir, by Jove!”

“No story!” cried Bertram, winking at the floating air-beads in his glass. “No story! my good, simple Q.M. Egad! what would you have? Pray go on.”

“Go on! I’ve finished. I was off in the afternoon by the Marseilles mail. Of course, I did my utmost to find the husband. She went to the Windsor; I thought it would be quiet for her. I went to the police, paid to have inquiries kept up in all the hotels; and lastly, put her in communication with a good business man—Moffum, you know; and left her, a wreck of one of the prettiest creatures I have ever seen.”

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"What kind of fellow was the husband? You got his name, of course?"

"Daker—Herbert Daker. Man of good family. A most agreeable, taking, travelled companion; light and bright as——"

"The light-hearted Janus of Lamb," Bertram interrupted, his words dancing lightly as the beads in his glass.

The association of Daker with Wainwright struck me sharply. For how genial and accomplished a man was the criminal! a stranger conglomeration of graces and sins never dwelt within one human breast. I was started on wild speculations.

"I've set you dreaming. You found no clue to a history?"

"None. She had been married three months to Daker. She was a poor girl left alone, with a few hundreds, I apprehend. She would not say much. A runaway match, I concluded. Not a word about her family. When I left Paris, after dinner, he had made no sign. She promised to write to me to Constantinople. I gave her my address in town. I told her Arthur's here would reach me. But not a word, my dear boy. That woman had the soul of truth in voice and look, or I never read Eve's face yet."

"Ha! ha!" Bertram laughed. "I wish I had not got beyond the risk of being snared by the un-gloving of a hand. You only pass through, I live in Paris."

"Paris or London, a heart may be read, if you will only take the trouble. I shall never hear, in all human probability, what has become of Mrs. Daker, or her husband; she may be an intrigante, and he a card-sharper now; all I know, and will swear, is that she loved that man to distraction then, and it was a girl in love."

"And he?"

Bertram's suspicions seemed to be fixed on Daker, whom he had never seen; although I had described his eminently prepossessing qualities.

"I can't understand why you should suspect Daker of villany, as I see you do, Bertram."

"I tell you he was a most accomplished, prepossessing villain, my dear Q.M. Your upper class villains are always prepossessing. Manners are as necessary to them as a small hand to a pickpocket."

"Sharp, but unfair—only partly true, like all sweeping generalizations. I think, as I hope, that the wife found the husband, and that they are nestling in some Italian retreat."

"And never had the grace to write you a word! No, no, you say they had manners. That, at any rate, then, is not the solution of the mystery."

Bertram was right here. Then what had become of Mrs. Daker? Daker, if alive, was a scoundrel, and one who had contrived to take care of himself. But that sweet country face! Here was a heart that might break, but would never harden.

"Mystery it must and will remain, I suppose."

"One of many," was Bertram's gay reply. "How they overload these matches with sulphur!"

He was lighting his cigar. His phaeton was at the door. A globule of Chartreuse; a compliment for the *chef*, a bow to the *dame de comptoir*, and we were on our way to the Bois, at a brisk trot, for the great world had cleared off to act tragedy and comedy by the ocean shore, or the invalid's well, or the gambler's green baize.

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Bertram—one of that great and flourishing class of whom Scandal says “she doesn’t know how they do it, or who pays for it”—albeit a bad match, even for Miss Tayleure, was, as I have said, in good English and French society, and drove his phaeton. He was saluted on his way along the Champs Elysees and by the lake, by many, and by some ladies who were still unaccountably lingering in Paris. A superb little Victoria passed. Bertram raised his hat.

“An Irish girl,” he said, “of superb beauty.”

At the Madrid we met a few people we knew; and, driving home, Bertram saluted Miss Tayleure, who was crawling round the lake with her twin sister, and was provoked to be recognised by a man of fashion in a hack vehicle in the month of August.

[Illustration: BOIS DE BOULOGNE.]

“Charming evening they’re having,” said Bertram: “taking out their watches every two minutes to be quite sure they shall get back within the hour and a half which they have made up their minds to afford. Beastly position!”

“What! living for appearances?”

“Just so; with women especially. Their dodges are extraordinary. Tayleure would cheapen a penny loaf, and run down the price of a box of lucifer matches. There’s a chance for you! She would be an economical wife; but then, my dear fellow, she would spend all the savings on herself. Her virtue is like Gibraltar!”

“And would be safe as untrenched tableland, I should think.”

“Hang it!” Bertram handsomely interposed, “let us drop poor Tayleure. She believes that her hour of happiness has to be rung in yet; and she is always craning out of the window to catch the first silver echoes of the bells. The old gentlewoman is happy.”

“Suppose you tell me something about your Irish beauty,” I suggested.

“Quite a different story, my good Q.M. Wait till I get clear of this clumsy fellow ahead. So, so, gently. Now, Miss Trefoil; the Trefoil is a girl whose success I can understand perfectly. To begin with—the girl is educated. In the second place, she is, beyond all dispute, a beautiful woman. There is not another pair of violet eyes in all Paris—I mean in the season—to be matched with hers. Milk and roses—nothing more—for complexion: and *no* paint; which makes her light sisters—accomplished professors of the art of *maquillage*—hate her. A foot!” Bertram kissed the tip of his glove, by way of description. “A voice that seems to make the air rich about her.”

“Gently, Bertram. We must be careful how we approach your queen, I see.”



“Not a bit of it. I am telling you just what you would hear in any of the clubs. She has a liberal nature, my boy, and loves nobody, that I can find, in particular. What bewitches me in talking to her is a sort of serious background. I hate a woman all surface as I hate a flat house. The Trefoil—queer name, isn’t it?—can put a tremor in her voice suddenly. The Trefoil

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has memories—a fact: something which she doesn't give to the world, generous as she is. It is the shade to her abounding and sparkling passages of light. Only her deep art, I dare say; but devilish pleasant and refreshing when you get tired of laughing—gives a little repose to facial muscles. The Trefoil has decidedly made a sensation. At the races she was as popular as the winner. She must have got home with a chariot full of money. Of course, when she bet, she won—or she didn't pay. A pot of money is to be made on that system: and the women, bless 'em, how kindly they've taken to it!"

This kind of improving discourse employed us to my gate. Bertram dropped me to return for "the painted lily" in an hour.

I am no squeamish man, or I should have passed a wretched life. The man who is perpetually travelling must bear with him a pliant nature that will adapt itself to any society, to various codes of morals, habits of thought, rules of conduct, and varieties of temperament. I can make myself at home in most places, but least in those regions which the progress of civilization, or the progress of something, has established in every capital of Europe, and to the description of which the younger Dumas has devoted his genius. The atmosphere of the *demi-monde* never delighted me. I see why it charms; I guess why it has become the potent rival of good society; the reason why men of genius, scholars, statesmen, princes, and all the great of the earth take pleasure in it, is not far to seek; silly women at home are to blame in great part. This new state of the body social is very much to be regretted; but I am not yet of those who think that good, decent society—the converse of honourable men with honourable women—is come or coming to an end. I am of the old-fashioned, who have always been better pleased and more diverted with the society of ladies than with that of the free graces who allow smoke and indulge in it, and who have wit but lack wisdom. I was not in high glee at the prospect of accompanying Cosmo Bertram to his free dancing party.

They are all very much alike. The fifteen sous basket, to use Dumas' fine illustration, in Paris, is very like the Vienna, the Berlin, or the London basket. The ladies are beautiful, exquisitely dressed, vivacious, and, early in the evening, well-mannered. At the outset you might think yourself at your embassy; at the close you catch yourself hoping you will get away safely. Shrill voices pipe in corners of the room. "*On sautera!*" People are jumping with a vengeance. The paint is disturbed upon your partner's face. Pretty lips speak ugly words. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*; but then the gentleman is between two and three wines, and the lady is rallying him because he has sense enough left to be a little modest. A couple sprawl in a waltz. A gentleman roars a toast. The hostess prays for less noise. An altercation breaks out in the antechamber. Two ladies exchange slaps on the face, and you thank madame for a charming evening.

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The next morning you are besieged, at your club, for news about Aspasia's reception. She did the honours *en souveraine*; but it is really a pity she will not be less attentive to the champagne. Everything would have gone off splendidly if that little *diabliesse* Titi had not revived her feud with Fanchette. You are not surprised to hear that Aspasia's goods were seized this morning. The duke must have had more than enough of it by this time, and has, of course, discovered that he has been the laughing-stock of his friends for a long time past. Over the absinthe tripping commentary Aspasia sinks from the Chasusee d'Antin to the porter's lodge. A little *creve* taps his teeth with the end of his cane, blinks his tired, wicked eyes, like a monkey in the sun, through his *pince-nez*, and opines, with a sharp relish, that Aspasia is destined to sweep her five stories—well.

Pah! What kind of discourse is all this for born and bred gentlemen to hold in these days, when the portals of noble knowledge lie wide open, and every man may grace his humanity with some special wisdom of his own!

Bertram, a ribbon in his buttonhole, and arrayed to justify his fame as one of the best-dressed men in Paris, came in haste for me.

"We are late, my dear Q.M. This is not carnival time, remember. We jump early."

The rooms were—but I cannot be at the pains of describing them. The reader knows what Sevres and Aubusson, St. Gobain, Barbedienne, Fourdinois, Jeanseline, Tahan, and the rest, can do for a first floor within a stone's throw of the Boulevard des Italiens. The fashion in all its most striking aspects is here. The presents lie thick as autumn leaves. The *bonne* says you might fill a portmanteau with madame's fans. Bertram is recognised by a dozen ladies at once. The lady of the house receives me with the lowest curtsy. No ambassadress could be more *gracieuse*. The toilettes are amazing. It is early, after all Bertram's impatience. The state is that of a duchesse for the present. Bertram leaves me and is lost in the crowd. The conversation is measured and orderly. The dancing begins, and I figure in the quadrille of honour. I am giving my partner—a dark-eyed, vivacious lady—an ice, when I am tapped upon the shoulder by Cosmo Bertram. Bertram has a lady on his arm. He turns to her, saying—

"Permit me to present my friend to you, Madame Trefoil——"

"What! Mrs. Daker!" I cried.

Mrs. Daker's still sweet eyes fell upon me; and she shook my hand; and by her commanding calmness smothered my astonishment, so that the bystanders should not see it.

Later in the evening she said—passing me in the crowd—"Come and see me."

I did not—I could not—next morning, tell Lucy nor Mrs. Rowe.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT BOULOGNE-SUR-MER.

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I had an unfortunate friend at Boulogne in the year 1865—then and many years before. He lived on the ramparts in the upper town; had put on that shabby military air, capped with a naval *couvre-chef* (to use a Paris street word that is expressive, as street words often are), which distinguishes the British inhabitant of Boulogne-sur-mer; and was the companion of a group of majors and skippers, sprinkled with commercial men of erratic book-keeping tendencies. He had lost tone. He took me to his club; nothing more than a taproom, reserved to himself and men with whom he would not have exchanged a cigar light in London. The jokes were bad and flat. A laid-up captain of an old London boat—sad old rascal was he!—led the conversation. Who was drunk last night? How did the Major get the key into the lock? Who paid for Todger's last go? "My word," said I, to my friend, who had liquored himself out of one of the snuggest civil berths I know, "how you can spend your time with those blackguards, surpasses my comprehension." They amused him, he said. He must drink with them, or play whist with another set, whose cards—he emphatically added, giving me to understand much thereby—he did not like. It was only for a short time, and he would be quit of them. This was his day dream. My friend was always on the point of getting rid of Boulogne; everything was just settled; and so, buoyed with a hope that never staled, death caught him one summer's afternoon, in the Rue Siblequin, and it was the bibulous sea captain and the very shady major who shambled after him, when he was borne through those pretty *Petits Arbres* to the English section of the cemetery. Wrecks of many happy families lie around him in that narrow field of rest; and passing through on my state errands, I have thought once or twice, what sermons indeed are there not in the headstones of Boulogne cemetery.

I was with my poor friend in the December of 1865. I was on way home to pass a cheery Christmas with my own people—a luxury which was not often reserved for me—and he had persuaded me to give him a couple of days. It would have been hard to refuse Hanger, who had been gazing across Channel so many weary months, seeing friends off whither he might not follow; and wondering when he should trip down the ladder, and bustle with the steward in the cabin, and ask the sailors whether we shall have a fine passage. To see men and women and children crowding home to their English Christmas from every corner of Europe, and to be left behind to eat plum-pudding in a back parlour of an imitation British tavern, with an obsolete skipper, and a ruined military man, whose family blushed whenever his name was mentioned, was trying. Hanger protested he had no sentiment about Christmas, but he nearly wrung my hand off when he took leave of me.

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It was while we were sauntering along the port, pushing hard against a blustering northerly wind, and I was trying to get at the truth about Hanger's affairs, advising him at every turn to grasp the bull by the horns, adopt strong measures, look his creditors full in the face—the common counsel people give their friends, but so seldom apply in their own instance—that we were accosted by a man who had just landed from the Folkestone boat. He wanted a place—yes, a cheap place—where they spoke English and gave English fare. Hanger hastened to refer him to his own British tavern, and, turning to me, said, “Must give Cross a good turn—a useful fellow in an emergency.”

I returned with Hanger to the tavern, much against my will; but he insisted I should not give myself airs, but consent to be his guest to the extent of some bitter ale. Cross's new client was before a joint of cold beef, on the merits of which, combined with pickled onions, pickled by the identical hands of Mrs. Cross, Cross could not be prevailed upon to be quiet.

“Not a bad bit of beef,” said the stranger, helping himself to a prodigious slice. “Another pint of beer.”

Cross carried off the tankard, and returned, still muttering—“Not bad beef, I should think not—nor bad ale neither. Had the beef over from the old country.”

The stranger brought his fist with tremendous force upon the table, and roared—“That's right, landlord; that's it; stick to that.”

Cross, thus encouraged, would have treated the company to a copious dissertation on the merits of British fare, had not the company chorused him down with—“Now Cross is off! Cross on beef! Cross on beer!”

In a furious passion Cross left the room, rowing that he would be even with “the captain” before the day was over. Hanger considered himself bound to ask the stranger whether he was satisfied with his recommendation.

“Couldn't be better, thankee,” the stranger answered; “but the landlord doesn't seem to know much about the place. New comer, I suppose?”

“Was forty years ago,” the old captain said, looking round for a laugh; “but he doesn't go out of the street once a month.”

“I asked him where Marquise was, and he hanged if he could tell me. I want to know particularly.”

The major glanced at the captain, and the captain at a third companion. Was somebody wanted? Who was hiding at Marquise?



"Thought every fool knew that," the captain said, in the belief that he had made a palpable hit.

"Every fool who lives in these parts, leastwise," the stranger retorted. "Perhaps you'll direct me?"

"Now, look you here, sir," the captain was proceeding, leisurely emphasizing each word with a puff of tobacco smoke.

But the stranger would not be patient. He changed his tone, and answered, fiercely—

"I'm in no mind for fun or chaff. I've got d——d serious business on hand; and if you can tell me how to get to Marquise, tell me straight off, and ha' done with it—and I shall be obliged to you." With this he finished his second tankard of ale.

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Hanger, feeling some responsibility about the man he had introduced, approached him with marked urbanity, and offered his services—

“I know Marquise and Wimille.”

“Wimille! that’s it!” the stranger cried. “Right you are. That’s my direction. This is business. Yes, between Marquise and Wimille.”

“Precisely,” Hanger continued, as we proceeded towards the door.

I heard the major growl between his teeth in our rear—“Hanger’s got him well in tow.”

I should have been glad to show the man his way, and leave him to follow it; but Hanger, who could not resist an adventure, drew me aside and said—“We may as well drive to Marquise as anywhere else. We shall be back easily for the *table d’hote*.” The expedition was not to my taste; but I yielded. The stranger was glad of our company, for the reason, which he bluntly explained, that we might be of some use to him; for the place was not exactly at Marquise nor at Wimille. We hired a carriage, and were soon clattering along the Calais road, muffled to our noses to face the icy wind.

The stranger soon communicated his name, saying, “My name is Reuben Sharp, and I don’t care who knows it. Ask who Reuben Sharp is at Maidstone: they’ll tell you.”

Reuben Sharp was a respectable farmer—it was not necessary for him to tell us that. He was a man something over fifty: sharp eyes, round head, ruddy face, short hair flaked with white, which he matted over his forehead at intervals with a flaming bandanna; a voice built to call across a field or two; limbs equal to any country work or sport. In short, an individual as peculiar to England as her chalk cliffs. When he found that we knew something—and more than something—of the hunting-field, and that I knew his country, including Squire Lufton, to say nothing of the Lion at Farningham (one of the sweetest and most charming hostelryes in all England), he took me to his heart, and told me his mission and his grief.

“I don’t know how I shall meet him,” Reuben Sharp said; “I’m not quite certain about myself. The man I’m going to see—this Matthew Glendore—has done me and mine a bitter wrong. The villain brought dishonour on my family. I knew he was in difficulties when he came into our parts, and took two rooms in Mother Gaselee’s cottage. But he was a gentleman, every inch of it, in appearance. A d—d good shot; rode well; and—you know what fools girls are!”

I could only listen: any question might prove a most indiscreet one. Hanger was not quite so sensitive. “Fools!” he cried—“they are answerable for more mischief in the world than all the men and children, and the rest of the animal creation put together.”

“And yet no man’s worth a woman’s little finger, if you know what I mean,” Reuben Sharp went on, struggling manfully to get clear expression for the tumult of painful feeling that was in him. “They don’t know what the world is; you cannot make ’em understand. The best fall into the hands of the worst men. She was the best, and he was the worst: the best, that she was. And I sent him to her, where she was living like an honest woman, and learning to be a lady, in London.”

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"And who is this Matthew Glendore, whom you are going to see?"

"The worst of men—the basest; and he's on his death-bed! and I'm to forgive him! II

"Where is she? where is she, Glendore? for I know you through your disguise."

We stared at the farmer while he raved, lit his cigar, and then, in the torrent of his passion, let it out again. As we dipped to the hollow in which Wimille lay, passing carts laden with iron ore, Sharp became more excited.

"We cannot be far off now. He's lying at one of the iron-masters' houses, half a mile beyond this Wimille. Let's stop: I must have some brandy-and-water."

Hanger joyfully fell in with this proposition, vowing that he was frozen, and really could not stand the cold without, unless he had something warm within, any longer. We alighted at the village cabaret, and drew near the sweet-smelling wood fire, from which the buxom landlady drove two old men for our convenience. I protested they should not be disturbed; but they went off shivering, as they begged us to do them the honour of taking up their post in the chimney-corner.

We threw our coats off, and the grog was brought. The woman produced a little carafon of brandy.

"Tell her to bring the bottle," Sharp shouted, impatiently. "Does she take us to be school girls? Let the water be boiling. Ask her—Does she know anything of this Matthew Glendore?"

The farmer mixed himself a stiff glass of brandy-and-water, while he watched Hanger questioning the landlady with many bows and smiles.

"Plenty of palavering," Sharp muttered; then shouted—"Does she know the scoundrel?"

"One minute, my friend," Hanger mildly observed, meaning to convey to Sharp that he was asking a favour of gentlemen, not roaring his order to slaves. "Permit me to get the good woman's answers. Yes; she knows Monsieur Glendore."

"Mounseer Glendore! She knows no good of him."

"On the contrary," mildly pursued Hanger, sipping his grog, and nicely balancing it with sugar to his taste—"on the contrary, my good sir, she says he is a brave fellow—what she calls a *brave garcon*."

"Doesn't know him then, Mounseer Glendore! I wonder how many disguises he has worn in his life—how many women he has trapped and ruined! Ask her how long he has been here?"

The landlady answered—"Two years about the middle of next month."

"And he has never left this since?" Sharp went on, mixing himself by this time a second glass of brandy-and-water.

The landlady had never been a day without seeing him. He came to play his game of dominoes in the evening frequently. The dominoes exasperated the farmer. He would as soon see a man with crochet needles.

"D—n him!" Sharp shouted; "just like him."

I now ventured to interfere. Reuben Sharp was becoming violent with passion inflamed by brandy. The landlady was certain poor Monsieur Glendore would never rise from his bed again. I said to Sharp—"Whatever the wrong may be this man has done you, Mr. Sharp, pray remember he is dying. He is passing beyond your judgment."

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"Is he? Passing from my grip, is he? No—no—Herbert Daker."

Sharp had sprung from his chair, and was shaking his fist in the air.

"Daker! Herbert Daker!" I seized Reuben Sharp by the shoulder, and shook him violently. "What do you know about Herbert Daker?"

Sharp turned upon me a face shattered with rage, and hissed at me. "What do I know about him? What do *you* about him? Are you his friend?"

"I am not: never will, nor can be," was my reply. Sharp wrung my hand till it felt bloodless. "Herbert Daker is Matthew Glendore—Mounseer Glendore. When did you meet him?"

"On the Boulogne steamer, about three years ago, when he was crossing with his wife."

"Then!" Sharp exclaimed, and again he took a draught of brandy-and-water.

At this moment Hanger, who had been talking with the landlady, joined us, and whispered—"Be calm, gentlemen; this is a time for calmness. Glendore is at hand—in a little cottage on Monsieur Guibert's works. Madame says if we wish to see him alive, we had better lose no time. The clergyman from Boulogne arrived about an hour ago, and is with him now. His wife!——"

"His wife!" Sharp was now a pitiable spectacle. He finished his glass, and caught Hanger by the collar of his coat—staring into his face to get at all the truth. "Glendore's wife!"

Hanger was as cool as man could be. He disengaged himself deliberately from the farmer's grip, put the table between them, and went smoothly on with the further observation he had to make!

"I repeat, according to the landlady, whose word we have no reason to doubt, his wife is with him—and his mother!"

Sharp struck the table and roared that it was impossible. I stood in hopeless bewilderment.

"Would it be decent to intrude at such a moment?"

"Decent!" Sharp was frantically endeavouring to button up his coat.

"D—n it, decent! Which is the way? My girl—my poor girl!"

“Show him,” I contrived to say to Hanger, and he took the landlady’s directions, while I passed my arm through Reuben Sharp’s. We stumbled and blundered along in Hanger’s footsteps, round muddy corners, past heaps of yellow ore, Sharp muttering and cursing and gesticulating by the way. We came suddenly to a halt at the little green door of a four-roomed cottage.

“Knock! knock!” Sharp shouted, pressing with his whole weight against the door. “Let me see her!—the villain!—Mounseer Glendore!—No, no, Herbert Daker!”

The power of observation is at its quickest in moments of intense excitement. I remember looking with the utmost calmness at Sharp’s face and figure, as he stood gasping before the door of Herbert Daker’s lodging. It was the head of a satyr in anger.

“Daker—Herbert Daker!” Sharp cried.

The door was suddenly thrown open, and an English clergyman, unruffled and full of dignity, stood in the entrance. Sharp was a bold, untutored man; but he dared not force his way past the priest.

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"Quiet, gentlemen—be quiet. Step in—but quiet—quiet."

We were in the chamber of Matthew Glendore in a moment. A lady rose from the bedside. Humble, and yet stately, a white face with red and swollen eyelids, eyes with command in them. We were uncovered, and in an instant wholly subdued.

"My child—my girl!" Reuben Sharp moaned.

The clergyman approached him, and laid his hand upon him.

"Whom do you want?"

"Mrs. Daker—my—"

The pale lady, full of grief, advanced a step, and looking full in the face of Reuben Sharp, said, "I, sir, am Mrs. Daker."

I had never seen that lady before.

"You!" Sharp shouted, shaking with rage.

But the minister firmly laid his hand upon him now, saying, "Hush! in the chamber of death! His mother is at his bedside; spare her."

At this, a little figure with a ghastly face rose from the farther side of the bed.

"Mrs. Rowe!" I cried.

She had not the power left to scream; and her head fell heavily upon the pillow of the dying man.

"Enough, enough!" the clergyman said with authority—closing the door of the chamber wherein Herbert Daker, the "Mr. Charles" of the Rue Millevoeye, lay dead!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CASTAWAY.

Cosmo Bertram was at a very low ebb. No horse. Had moved off to Batignolles. Had not been asked to the Embassy for a twelvemonth. When he ventured into the Tuileries gardens in the afternoon, it somehow happened that the backs of the ladies' chairs were mostly turned towards him. He was still dapper in appearance; but a close observer could see a difference. Management was perceptible in his dress. He had no watch; but the diamond remained on his finger—for the present; and yet society had nothing

seriously compromising to say against him. It was rumoured that he had seen the interior of Clichy twice. So had Sir Ronald, who was now the darling of the Faubourg; but then, note the difference. Sir Ronald had re-issued with plenty of money—or credit, which to society is the same thing; while poor Bertram had stolen down the hill by back streets to Batignolles, where he had found a cheap nest, and whence he trudged to his old haunts with a foolish notion that people would believe his story about a flying visit to England, and accept his translation to Batignolles as a sanitary precaution strongly recommended by his physician. If society be not yet civilized enough to imitate the savages, who kill the old members of the community, it has studied the philosophy of the storks in Jutland, who get rid of their ailing, feeble brother storks, at the fall of the year. Bertram was a bird to be pecked to pieces, and driven away from the prosperous community, being no longer prosperous.

First among the sharp peckers was Miss Tayleure, who always had her suspicions of Captain Bertram, although she was too good-natured to say anything. The seasons had circled three or four times since she had had the honour of being introduced to the gentleman, and yet the lady was waiting to see what the improved facilities for travel might bring her in the matrimonial line. She had, her dearest friends said, almost made up her mind to marry into commerce.

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"Poor Tayleure!" one of the attaches said, at the Cafe Anglais, over his Marennes oysters, after the opera; "doomed to pig-iron, I'm afraid. Must do it. Can't carry on much longer. Another skein of false hair this season, by Jove."

In a society so charmingly constituted, the blows are dealt with an impartial hand; and it is so mercifully arranged, that he who is doubling his fist seldom feels the blow that is falling upon his own back. It was a belief which consoled the poor Baronet's orphan through her dreary time at the boarding-house—that, at least, she was free from damaging comment. Her noble head was many inches out of water; the conviction gave her superb confidence when she had to pass an opinion on her neighbour.

Two old friends of Cosmo Bertram are lounging in the garden of the Imperial Club.

"Hasn't old Tayleure got her knife into Bertram! Poor dear boy. It's all up with him. Great pity. Was a capital fellow."

"Don't you know the secret? The old girl had designs on Bertram when he first turned up; and the Daker affair cast her plot to the winds. Mrs. Daker, you remember, was at old Tayleure's place—Rue d'Angouleme!"

"A pretty business that was. But who the deuce was Daker?"

"Bad egg."

The threads of this story lay in a tangle—in Paris, in Boulogne, and in Kent! I never laboured hard to unravel them; but time took up the work, and I was patient. Also, I was far away from its scenes, and only passed through them at intervals—generally at express speed. It so happened, however, that I was at hand when the crisis and the close came.

Mrs. Daker was living in a handsome apartment when I called upon her on the morrow of the ball. She wept passionately when she saw me. She said—"I could have sunk to the earth when I saw you with Bertram—of all men in the world." I could get no answers to my questions save that she had heard no tidings of her husband, and that she had never had the courage to write to her father. Plentiful tears and prayers that I would forget her; and never, under any temptation, let her people, should I come across them, know her assumed name, or her whereabouts. I pressed as far as I could, but she shut her heart upon me, and hurried me away, imploring me never to return, nor to speak about her to Cosmo Bertram. "He will never talk about me," she added, with something like scorn, and something very like disgust.

I left Paris an hour or two after this interview; and when I next met Bertram—at Baden, I think, in the following autumn—great as my curiosity was, I respected Mrs. Baker's wish. He never touched upon the subject; and, since I could not speak, and my



suspicious affected him in a most painful manner, I did not throw myself in his way, nor give him an opportunity of following me up. Besides, he was in a very noisy, reckless set, and was, I could perceive before I had talked to him ten

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minutes, on the way to the utter bad. When I remembered our conversation about Daker, his light, airy, unconcerned manner, and the consummate deceit which effectually conveyed to me the idea that he had never heard the name of Daker, I was inclined to turn upon him, and let him know I was not altogether in the dark. Again, at the ball, he had carried off the introduction to Mrs. Trefoil with masterly coolness, making me a second time his dupe. Had we met much we should have quarrelled desperately; for I recollected the innocent English face I had first seen on the Boulogne boat, and the unhappy woman who had implored me not to speak her name to him. The days follow one another and have no resemblance, says the proverb. I passed away from Baden, and Bertram passed out of my mind. I had not seen him again when I spent those eventful few days at Boulogne with Hanger.

Another year had gone, and I had often thought over the death scene of Daker, and Sharp's trudges about Paris in search of his niece. I could not help him, for I was homeward bound at the time, and shortly afterwards was despatched to St. Petersburg. But I gave him letters. There was one hope that lingered in the gloom of this miserable story; perhaps Mrs. Daker had won the love of some honest man, and, emancipated by Daker's deceit and death, might yet spend some happy days. And then the figure of Cosmo Bertram would rise before me—and I knew he was not the man to atone a fault or sin by a sacrifice.

I was in Paris again at the end of 1866. I heard nothing, save that Sharp had returned home, having tried in vain to find the child to whom he had been a father since the death of his brother. He had identified her as Mrs. Trefoil; he had discovered that shame had come upon her and him; and he had made out the nature of the relations between his niece and Captain Cosmo Bertram. But Captain Bertram was not in Paris; Mrs. Trefoil had disappeared and left no sign. So many exciting stories float about Paris in the course of a season, that such an event as the appearance of a Kentish farmer in search of Mrs. Daker, afterwards Mrs. Trefoil, and the connexion of Captain Bertram with her name, is food for a few days only. This is a very quiet humdrum story, when it is compared with the dramas of society, provincial and Parisian, which the *Gazette des Tribunaux* is constantly presenting to its readers.

When I reached Paris it was forgotten. Miss Tayleure had moved off to Tours—for economy some said; to break new ground, according to others. There had been diplomatic changes. The English society had received many accessions, and suffered many secessions. I went to my old haunts and found new faces. I was met with a burst of passionate tears by Lucy Rowe, and honest Jane, the servant. Mrs. Rowe was lying, with all her secrets and plots, in Pere Lachaise—to the grief, among others, of the Reverend Horace Mohun, who would hardly be comforted by Lucy's handsome continuance of the buttered toast and first look at the *Times*. Lucy, bright and good Lucy, had become queen and mistress of the boarding-house—albeit she had not a

thimbleful of the blood of the Whytes of Battersea in her veins. But of the Rue Millevoye presently.

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I came upon Bertram by accident by the Montmartre cemetery, whither I had been with a friend to look at a new-made grave. As I have observed, Bertram had reached a very low ebb. He avoided his old thoroughfares. He had discovered that all the backs of the Tuileries chairs were towards him. Miss Tayleure had had her revenge before she left. He had heard that “the fellows were sorry for him,” and that they were not anxious to see him. The very waiters in his cafe knew that evil had befallen him, and were less respectful than of old. No very damaging tales, as I have said, were told against him; but it was made evident to him that Paris society had had enough of him for the present, and that his comfortable plan would be to move off.

Cosmo Bertram had moved off accordingly; and when I met him at Montmartre he had not been heard of for many months. I should have pushed on, but he would not let me. A man in misfortune disarms your resentment. When the friend who has been always bright and manly with you, approaches with a humble manner, and his eyes say to you, while he speaks, “Now is not the time to be hard,” you give in. I parted with my fellow-mourner, and joined Bertram, saying coldly—“We have not met, Bertram, for many months—it seems years. What has happened?”

The man's manner was completely changed. He talked to me with the cowed manner of a conscious inferior. He was abashed; as changed in voice and expression as in general effect.

“Ruin—nothing more,” he answered me.

“Baden—Homburg, I suppose?”

“No; tomfoolery of every kind. I'm quite broken. That friend of yours didn't recognise me, did he?”

“Had never seen you before, I'm quite sure.”

I took him into a quiet cafe and ordered breakfast. His face and voice recalled to me all the Daker story; and I felt that I was touching another link in it. He avoided my eye. He grasped the bottle greedily, and took a deep draught. The wine warmed him, and loosed “the jesses of his tongue.” He had a long tale to tell about himself! He disburdened his breast about Clichy; of all the phases of his decline from the fashionable man in the Bois to the shabby skulker in the *banlieue*, he had something to say. He had been everybody's victim. The world had been against him. Friends had proved themselves ungrateful, and foes had acted meanly. Nobody could imagine half his sufferings. While he dwelt on himself with all the volubility and wearying detail of a wholly selfish man, I was eager to catch the least clue to a history that interested me much more deeply than his; and in which I had good reason to suspect he had not borne an honourable part. The gossips had confirmed the fears which Mrs. Daker had created. I had picked up scraps here and there which I had put together.

“I am obliged to keep very dark, my dear Q.M.,” Bertram said at last, still dwelling on the inconvenience to himself. “Hardly dare to move out of the quarter. Disgusting bore.”

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"A debt?" I asked.

"Worse."

"What then, an entanglement; the old story, petticoats?"

"Precisely. To-day I ought to be anywhere but here; the old boy is over, or will be, in a few hours."

The whole story was breaking upon me; Bertram saw it, and my manner, become icy to him, was closing the sources upon me. I resolved to get the mystery cleared up. I resumed my former manner with him, ordered some Burgundy, and entreated him to proceed.

"You remember," he said, "your story about the girl you met travelling with her husband on the Boulogne boat—Mrs. Daker." His voice fell as he pronounced the name. "I deceived you, my dear Q. M., when I affected unconcern and ignorance."

"I know it, Bertram," was my answer. "But that is unimportant: go on."

"I met Mrs. Daker at her hotel, very soon after she arrived in Paris. She talked about you; and I happened to say that I knew you. We were friends at once."

"More than friends."

"I see," Bertram continued, much relieved at finding his revelation forestalled in its chief episodes; "I see there is not much to tell you. You are pretty well posted up. I cannot see why you should look so savage; Mrs. Daker is no relation of yours."

"No!" I shouted, for I could not hold my passion—"had she been——"

"You would have the right to call me to account. As it is," Bertram added, rising, "I decline to tell you more, and I shall wish you good-day."

After all Bertram was right; I had no claim to urge, no wrong to redress. Besides, by my hastiness, I was letting the thread slip through my fingers.

"Sit down, Bertram; you are the touchiest man alive. It is no concern of mine, but I have seen more than you imagine—I have seen Daker; I have been with Sharp."

Bertram grasped my arm.

"Tell me all, then; I must know all. You don't know how I have suffered, my dear Q. M. Tell me everything."

“First let me ask you, Bertram, have you been an honourable man to Mrs. Daker?”

“Explain yourself.”

“Where is she? Her uncle has broken his heart!”

“All I need say is, that she is with me, and that it is I who have sacrificed almost my honour in keeping her with me, after——”

I understood the case completely now.

“You found the prey at the right moment, Bertram. Poor forsaken woman! You took it; you lost it; it falls into your hands again—broken unto death.”

“Unto death!” Bertram echoed.

I related to him my adventure in Boulogne; and when I came to Baker’s end, and his bigamy, Bertram exclaimed—

“The villain! My dear Q. M., I loved—I do love her; she might have been my wife. The villain!”

“You say she is with you, Bertram. Where? Can I see her?”

“You cannot, she’s very ill So ill, I doubt——”

“And you are here, Bertram?”

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"Her uncle—Sharp—is with her by this time. She implored me not to be in the way. There would be a row, you know, and I hate rows."

It was Bertram to the last. *He* hated rows! I suddenly turned upon him with an idea that flashed through my mind.

"Bertram, you owe this poor woman some reparation. You love her, you say—or have loved her."

"Do love her now."

"She is a free woman; indeed, poor soul, she has always been. Marry her—take her away—and get to some quiet place where you will be unknown. You will be happy with her, or I have strangely misread her."

"Can't," Bertram dolefully answered. "Not a farthing."

"I'll help you."

Bertram grasped my hand. His difficulty was removed.

I continued rapidly, "Give me your address. I'll see Sharp, and, if they permit me, Mrs. Daker. Let us make an effort to end this miserable business well. You had better remain behind till I have settled with Sharp."

Bertram remained inert, without power of thinking or speaking, in his seat. I pushed him, to rouse him. "Bertram, the address—quick."

"Too late, my dear Q. M.—much too late. She's dying—I am sure of it."

The address was 102 in the next street to that in which we had been breakfasting. I hurried off, tearing myself, at last, by force from Bertram. I ran down the street, round the corner, looking right and left at the numbers as I ran. I was within a few doors of the number when I came with a great shock against a man, who was walking like myself without looking ahead. I growled and was pushing past, when an iron grip fell upon my shoulder. It was Reuben Sharp. He was so altered I had difficulty in recognising him. At that moment he looked a madman; his eyes were wild and savage; his lips were blue; his face was masked by convulsive twitches.

"I was running to see you. Come back," I said.

"It's no use—no use. They can ill-treat her no more. My darling Emmy! It's all over—all over—and you have been very kind to me."

The poor man clapped his heavy hands upon me like the paws of a lion, and wept, as weak women and children weep.

Yea, it was all over.

It was on New Year's Day, 1867, I supported Reuben Sharp, following a hearse to the cemetery hard by. Lucy Rowe accompanied us—at my urgent request—and her presence served to soften and support old Reuben's honest Kentish heart in his desolate agony. As they lowered the coffin a haggard face stretched over a tomb behind us. Sharp was blinded with tears, and did not see it.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST TO BE MARRIED.

It will happen so—and here is our moral—the bonnets of Sophonisba and Theodosia, bewitching as they were, and archly as these young ladies wore them, paling every toilette of the Common, were not put aside for bridal veils. Carrie, who was content with silver-grey, it was who returned to Paris first, sitting at the side of the writer of the following letters, sent, it is presumed, to his bachelor friend:—

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“Paris, ‘The Leafy Month of June.’

“MY DEAR MAC,—I will be true to my promise. I will give you the best advice my experience may enable me to afford you. Friendship is a sacred thing, and I will write as your friend. Only ten days ago Caroline murmured those delicious sounds at the altar, which announce a heaven upon earth to man. I see you smile, you rogue, as you read this, but I repeat it—that announce a heaven upon earth to man.

“Some men take a wife carelessly, as they select a dinner at their club, as though they were catering only to satisfy the whim of the hour. Others adopt all the homely philosophy of Dr. Primrose, and reflect how the wife will wear, and whether she have the qualities that will keep the house in order. Others, again, are lured into matrimony by the tinkling of the pianoforte, or the elaboration of a bunch of flowers upon a Bristol board. Remember Calfsfoot. His wife actually fiddled him into the church. Was there ever an uglier woman? Two of her front teeth were gone, and she was bald. Fortunately for her, Beauty draws us with a single hair, or she had not netted Calfsfoot. Now what a miserable time he has of it. She is a vixen. You know what fiddle-strings are made of; well, I’m told she supplies her own. But why should I dwell on infelicitous unions of this kind? It was obvious to every rational creature from the first—and to him most concerned—that Mrs. Calfsfoot would fiddle poor C. into a lunatic asylum. And if he be not there yet, depend upon it he’s on the high road.

“Between Mrs. Calfsfoot and my Caroline (you should have seen her hanging upon my shoulder, her auburn ringlets tickling my happy cheek, begging me to call her Carrie!)—between Mrs. Calfsfoot and my Carrie, then, what a contrast! As I sat last evening in one of the shady nooks of the Bois de Boulogne, watching the boats, with their coloured lights, floating about the lake, my Carrie’s hand trembling like a caught bird in mine, I thought, can this sweet, amiable, innocent creature have anything in common with that assured, loud-voiced, pretentious Mrs. Calfsfoot. Calfsfoot told me that he was very happy during the honeymoon. But, then, people’s notions of happiness vary, and I cannot for the life of me conceive how a man of Calfsfoot’s sense—for he has sound common sense on most points—could have looked twice at the creature he took to his bosom. I have heard of people who like to nurse vipers; can friend C. be of this strange band? Now, I am happy—supremely happy, I may say, because I honestly believe my Carrie to be the most adorable creature on the face of God’s earth. A man who could not be happy with her would not deserve felicity. You should see her at the breakfast-table, in a snow-white dress, with just a purple band about her dainty waist, handling the cups and saucers! The first time she asked me whether I would take two lumps of sugar (I could have taken both of them from

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her pretty lips, and I'll not say whether I did or did not), was one of those delicious moments that happen seldom, alas, in the chequered life of man. And then, when she comes tripping into the room after breakfast, in her little round hat, and, putting her hand upon my shoulder, asks me in the most musical of voices whether I have finished with my paper, and am ready for a walk, I feel ashamed that I have allowed myself to distract my attention even for ten minutes from her charming self, to read stupid leading articles and wretched police cases. But men are utterly without sentiment. Reading the *Times* in the honeymoon! I wonder how the delightful creatures can give us two minutes' thought. Carrie, however, seems to live only for your unworthy humble servant. Shall I ever be worthy of her? Shall I ever be worthy of the glorious sky overhead, or of the flowers at my feet? My dear Mac, I feel the veriest worm as I contemplate this perfect creature, who, with that infinite generosity which belongs to goodness and beauty, has sworn to love, honour, and obey me. That she loves me I know full well; that she obeys my lightest wish, I allow, on my knees. But how shall she honour me? To all this you will answer, puffing your filthy pipe the while, 'Tut! he has been married only ten short days!'

"My dear Mac, life is not to be measured by the hour-glass. There are minutes that are hours, there are hours that are years, there are years that are centuries. Again, some men are observant, and some pay no better compliment to the light of day than moles. You did me the honour of saying one evening, when we were having a late cigar at the Trafalgar (we should have been in bed hours before), that you never knew a more quick-sighted man, nor a readier reader of the human heart than the individual who now addresses you. It would ill become me to say that you only did me justice; but permit me to remark, that having closely watched myself and compared myself with others, for years, I have come to the conclusion that I am blessed with a rapid discernment. Before Mrs. Flowerdew (I have written the delightful name on every corner of my blotting-paper) honoured me with her hand, I brought this power to bear on her incessantly. Under all kinds of vexatious circumstances I have been witness of her unassailable good temper. I have seen her wear a new bonnet in a shower of rain. These clumsy hands of mine have spilled lobster-salad upon her dress. That little wretch of a brother of hers has pulled her back hair down. Her sister Sophonisba has abused her. Still has she been mild as the dove!

"Then, her common sense is astonishing. She says any woman can manage with three bonnets and half-a-dozen good dresses. I wanted to buy her a bracelet the other day, price ten guineas. 'No,' she answered; 'here is one at only six guineas, quite good enough for me in our station of life;' and the dear creature was content with it.

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“As for accomplishments, she may vie with any fine lady in the land. Last night she played me a piece from Mendelssohn, and her little hands danced like lightning about the keys. It was rather long, to be sure; but I could not help stealing from behind her and kissing the dear fingers when it was over.

“She has written some exquisite verses, much in the style of Byron—a poet not easily imitated, you will remember. She has read every line of Thackeray; and during one of our morning walks, she proved to me, who am not easily moved from my point, that Carlyle has only one idea. Let me recommend you to peruse this writer’s ‘French Revolution’ again, and you will be satisfied that my Carrie is right.

“I trouble you, my dear fellow, with all these details, that you may not run away with the notion that Flowerdew is blindly in love. My faculties were never more completely about me than they are at this moment. I am at a loss to imagine why a man should throw his head away when he yields his heart. I can look dispassionately at my wife, and if she had a fault, I am confident that I should be the first to see it. But, *que voulez-vous?* she has not yet given me the opportunity.

“Marriage is a lottery. In a lottery, somebody must draw the prize; if I have drawn it, am I to be ashamed of my luck? No; let me manfully confess my good fortune, and thank my star.

“I have snatched the time to write you these hurried lines, while the worshipped subject of them has been trying on some new—but I forgot; I am writing to a bachelor. I have still a few minutes; let me make use of them.

“My dear Mac, when I return to foggy London—(I hear you have had terrible weather there)—you will see little or nothing of me. My Carrie allows me to smoke (she permits me everything), but I should be a mean brute if I took advantage of her boundless generosity. I smoke one cigar *per diem*, and no more. And as for wine—the honey of the loved one’s lips is the true grape of the honeymoon. I must tell you that Carrie and I have made a solemn compact. Her head was nestled against my waistcoat as we made it. We are not going to live for the world, like foolish people whom we know. For society my little wife needs me; and I, happy man, shall be more than content for ever while the partner of my bosom deigns to solace me with her gentle voice. She has friends without number who will mourn her loss to society. Her dear friends the Barcaroles will be inconsolable; her sister Theodosia will break her heart. Life has its trials, however, which must be bravely borne; and Carrie’s friends must be consoled when they learn that she is happy with the man of her choice. In the same way, be comforted, my dear Mac (for I know how warmly you regard me), when I tell you that henceforth we shall meet only at rare intervals. My life is bound up in that of the celestial being who is knitting in the window, not an arm’s length from me.

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"My dear Mac, we have drank our last gin-sling together. Recal me affectionately to the memory of Joe Parkes, and young Square, and all friends of her Majesty's Pugilistic Department; and may they all speedily be as happy as I am. How the wretches will laugh when you tell them that Flowerdew has reformed his ways, and has blackened his last Milo; but I think, my dear fellow, I have convinced you that I write after cool reflection. We have taken a cottage four miles south of my office. A sixpenny omnibus will take me back at four o'clock daily, to my little haven. My Carrie is fond of a garden; and I shall find her, on summer afternoons, waiting at the gate for me, in her garden hat, and leaning upon the smartest little rake in the world. You, and Joe, and the Pugilistic Department fellows may laugh; but this is the happy life I have chalked out for myself. As I have told you, some men marry with their eyes shut; but I live only to congratulate myself on my sagacity. To think that I, of all men, should have won Caroline Cockayne!

"We shall remain here for another week, when we go to Fontainebleau, and thence we return to London. I may write to you from our next stage; but if not, expect to hear from me on my return, when, if I can persuade my love to brave the presence of a stranger, for friendship's sake, you shall have a peep at our felicity.

"Your old friend,
"HAPPY TOM FLOWERDEW."

Mr. Mac's observations on the foregoing were, no doubt, to this effect: "He'll come to his senses by-and-by. I shouldn't like to be compelled to buy all the cigars he'll smoke before he turns his toes up."

Flowerdew, from Fontainebleau.

"Fontainebleau, July 1.

"MY DEAR MAC,—I am tempted to send you a few lines from this wonderful place. You have heard of Fontainebleau grapes—you have tasted them; but you have not seen Fontainebleau. My dear Mac, when you marry (and, as your friend, I say, lose no time about it)—yes, when you marry, take the *cara sposa* to Fontainebleau. Let her see the weeping rock, in that wonderful battle between granite and trees, they call the forest. Let her feed the fat carp with *galette* behind the Palace in the company of those Normandy nurses (brown and flat as Normandy pippins), and their squalling basked-capped charges. Give her some of that delicious iced currant-water, which the dragoons who are quartered here appear to drink with all the relish the children show for it. Never fear that she will look twice at these soldiers, in their sky-blue coats and broad red pantaloons, and their hair cut so close that their eyes must have watered under the operation. Imagine dragoons drinking currant-water; and playing dominoes for shapeless sous, which they rattle incessantly in their preposterous trousers! I am meditating a book on the French army, in which I shall lay great stress on the above, I flatter myself, rather acute bit of observation. Carrie (she grows

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prettier daily) rather inclines to the idea that the moderation of these French dragoons is in their favour; and this is the first time I have found her judgment at fault. But then it would be unreasonable indeed to hope that on military subjects she could have that clear insight which she displays with such charming grace, whether we are contemplating the Marriage of Cana, in the Louvre, or thinking over the scenes some of those orange-trees in the Tuileries gardens have shed leaves upon. For, let me tell you, my dear Mac, there are trees there, the flowers of which have trembled at the silver laugh of unhappy Antoinette. Sallow Robespierre has rubbed against them. They were in their glory on that July day when the mob of blouses tasted of the cellars of a King.

“But you can get in Murray all I can tell you of the wonderful place in which it has been my fortune to find myself with my little wife. When, on the morning after our arrival, I threw my bedroom window open, the air was, I thought, the sweetest that had ever refreshed my nostrils. The scene would have been perfect, had it not been for swarms of wasps that dashed their great bodies, barred, as Carrie said, like grooms’ waistcoats (wasn’t it clever of her?) into the room. If everything were not flavoured with garlic (peaches included), I should say without hesitation, that our *hote* is THE *cordon bleu* of the country. Omelettes, my dear Mac, as light as syllabub; wild strawberries frosted with the finest white sugar I ever put to my lips; coffee that would make a Turk dance with delight; only, in each and all of these dainties, there is just a pinch of garlic. But love makes light of these little drawbacks. Carrie has made a wry face once or twice, it is true, but only in the best of humours, and when the garlic was very strong indeed.

“We had a rainy day yesterday: but we enjoyed it. We sat all the morning at our window, gossiping and flirting, and watching the peasants sauntering home from market, apparently unconscious that they were being drenched. I had bought Carrie a huge sugar stick (*sucre de pomme*, I think they call it), and she looked bewitchingly as she nibbled it, and then coaxingly held it to my lips. You remember my old antipathy to sweets; well, strange to say, I thought I had never tasted anything more delicious than this sugar stick; but remember, it came direct from Carrie’s lips. Then we speculated on what our friends were doing at that very moment, peeped into Clapham, and we made bad guesses enough, I have no doubt. It ended by our agreeing that none of you were half so happy as we were.

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“In the evening the weather cleared a little, and we went out for a stroll. A stroll through the streets of Fontainebleau is not one of the pleasantest exploits in the world. I thought every moment that my wife (delightful word, that thrills me to the finger tips as I write it) would sprain an ankle, for the paving is simply a heap of round stones thrown out of a cart; but she stepped so nimbly and lightly, that no harm came to her. I wish, my dear Mac, you could hear her conversation. From morning till night she prattles away, hopping, skipping, and jumping from one subject to another, and saying something sensible or droll on each. You must know that Carrie has an immense fund of humour. Her imitations of people make me almost die with laughter. You remember Mrs. Calfsfoot's habit of twitching her nose and twirling her thumbs when she is beginning an anecdote about somebody one never saw, and never cared to see. Well, Carrie stopped in the middle of our rambles in the forest, and imitated her squeaky voice and absurd gestures to the life. The anecdote, concocted impromptu, was a wonderfully sustained bit of pure invention. On my honour, when she had finished her little performance, I could not help giving her a kiss for it.

“You will smile, my dear Mac, at this: remembering the horror we mutually expressed one night at Ardbye's chambers, of female mimics. But there is a difference, which we do not appear to have recognised on that occasion, between good-natured and ill-natured mimicry. Now nothing can be more harmless fun than my Carrie's imitations. She never has the bad taste to mimic a deformity, or to burlesque a misfortune. She certainly said of Mrs. Blomonge (who is known to be the stoutest person in the parish of St. Bride's) that her head floated on her shoulders like a waterlily on a pond; but then the joke was irresistible, and there was not a touch of malice in the way the thing was said. How much there is in manner!

“Carrie is beginning to yearn for the repose of Arcady Cottage. She wants to see herself mistress of a house. She longs to have to order dinner, inspect the dusting of the drawing-room, pour out tea from our own tea-pot, and work antimacassars for our chairs. I can see already that she will make the most perfect little housewife in the world.

“There are dolts and dullards who declare that women who are witty and accomplished, generally make bad housewives. They are said to lie on sofas all day through, reading books they cannot understand; playing all kinds of tortuous music; and painting moss roses upon velvet. I am not an old married man (twenty days old only), but I am ready to wager, from what I have already seen of my Carrie, that there is not the slightest ground for those charges against clever women; on the contrary, it seems to me that your clever woman will see the duty, as well as the pleasure, of ordering her husband's house in a becoming manner. Why should empty-headed girls,

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who haven't a word to say for themselves, nor an accomplishment to their back—why should they be the superlative concocters of custards, and menders of shirts and stockings? Do you mean to tell me that a woman must be a fool to have a light hand at pastry? I believe these libels on clever women have been propagated by designing mothers who had stupid daughters on their hands. Whenever you see a heavy-eyed, lumpish girl, who hides herself in corners, and reddens to the very roots of the hair when you say a civil thing to her, you are sure to be told that she is the very best housekeeper in the world, and will make a better wife than her pretty sister. In future I shall treat all such excuses for ugliness and dulness as they deserve. For I say it boldly beforehand, ere Carrie has tried her first undercrust, she will be a pattern housewife—although she reads John Stuart Mill.

“Tom, darling!’ sounds from the next room, and the music goes to my soul. Good-bye. The next from Aready Cottage. Thine,

“TOM FLOWERDEW.

“P.S.—We met yesterday a most charming travelling companion; and although, as I think I hinted in my last, I and Carrie intend to suffice for each other, he had so vast a fund of happy anecdote, we could not find it in our hearts to snub him. Besides, he began by lending me the day's *Galignani*.”

“That travelling companion,” remarked shrewd Mr. Mac, “marks the beginning of the end of the honeymoon. I shall keep him dark when I dine with Papa Cockayne on Sunday.”

CHAPTER XVI.

GATHERING A FEW THREADS.

Is there a more melancholy place than the street in which you have lived; than the house, now curtainless and weather-stained, you knew prim, and full of happy human creatures; than the “banquet-hall deserted:” than the empty chair; than the bed where Death found the friend you loved?

The Rue Millevoye is all this to me. I avoid it. If any cabman wants to make a short cut that way I stop him. Mrs. Rowe rests at last, in the same churchyard with the Whytes of Battersea: her faults forgiven; that dark story which troubled all her afterlife and made her son the terror of every hour, ended and forgotten.

If hers was a sad life, even cheered by the consolations of Mr. Mohun given over refreshing rounds of buttered toast; what was the gloom upon the head of Emily Sharp, whom the child of shame (was it in revenge) brought to shame? I never tread the deck

of a Boulogne steamer without thinking of her sweet, loving face; I never wait for my luggage in the chilly morning at the Chemin de Fer du Nord terminus, without seeing her agony as the deserted one.

The Cockayne girls are prospering in all the comfort of maternal dignity in the genteel suburbs; and yet were they a patch upon forlorn Emmy Sharp? Miss Sophonisba, with her grand airs, in her critical letters from Paris—what kind of a heart had she? Miss Theodosia was a flirt of the vulgarest type who would have thrown up John Catt as she would throw away a two-button glove for a three-button pair, had not the Vicomte de Gars given her father to understand that he must have a very substantial *dot* with her. Mademoiselle Cockayne without money was not a thing to be desired, according to “his lordship.”

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John Catt was a rough diamond, as the reader has perceived, given to copious draughts of beer, black pipes, short sticks, prodigious shirt-collars, and music-halls. But he was a brave, honest, chivalrous lad in his coarse way. He loved Miss Theodosia Cockayne, and was seriously stricken when he left Paris, although he had tried to throw off the affair with a careless word or two. He hid his grief behind his bluntness; but she had no tears to hide. It was only when the Vicomte, after a visit to Clapham (paid much against Mr. Cockayne's will) had come to business in the plumpest manner, that the young lady had been brought to her senses by the father's observation that he was not prepared to buy a foreign viscount into the family on his own terms, and that "his lordship" would not take the young lady on her own merits, aroused Miss Theodosia's pride;—and with it the chances of John Catt revived. He took her renewed warmth for repentance after a folly. He said to himself, "She loved me all the time; and even the Vicomte was not, in the long run, proof against her affection for me." Miss Theodosia, having lost the new love, was fortunate enough to get on with the old again, and she is, I hear, reasonably happy—certainly happier than she deserves to be, as Mrs. John Catt.

I am told she is very severe upon Emma Sharp, and wonders how her sister Carrie can have the creature's portrait hung up in her morning room. But there are a few things she no longer wonders at. Carrie speaks to Lucy Rowe; kisses Lucy Rowe; puts her arm round Lucy Rowe's neck; and tumbles her baby upon Lucy Rowe's knees; and Mrs. John Catt wonders no longer. Not, I suspect, because she is fonder of Lucy now than she was in the Rue Millevoys, but because—well, *I* married her, as the reader, who is not a goose, has suspected long ago.

And a little Lucy writes for me, in big round hand, her mother guiding the pen—

THE END.

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